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Perceptions of leaders, teachers, students and parents in high performing West Australian Catholic secondary schools within the context of tertiary entrance examinations

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate the factors attributed to the success of nine selected secondary schools in the Catholic education system of Western Australia (WA) that had consistently outperformed other 'like' schools in the context of tertiary entrance examinations. The study sought to investigate the perceptions of leaders, teachers, students and parents in relation to their individual role and their perceptions of the role of other key stakeholders in their school's success. In order to situate the study within the context of existing research a literature review was undertaken. The literature review was structured around four key themes:

- The role of leaders in effective and improving schools
- The role of teachers and their influence on student academic achievement
- The role of students and peer influence on academic achievement
- The role of parents and their influence on their child's academic achievement

These four themes are aligned to the four research questions described in chapter one. The investigation of the literature under these four headings helps position the current study within what Cresswell (2009, p. 25) referred to as "the ongoing dialogue in the literature", as well as establishing the importance of the current study and framing the findings and discussion chapters.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The literature review provides a background on key fields related to each of the four research questions. The key fields relevant to the study are the influence of leaders in effective schools, the role of teachers and quality teaching, the role of students and their peers and the role of parents. For each area the relevant literature will inform the research and provide a foundation for the analysis of findings. Each group of leaders, teachers, students and parents, while making a singular contribution, is interconnected to the others and it is argued their collective influences contribute to the schools' high performance. Within these four groups, the perceptions of each, on the role of others will be investigated and will form sub-themes within the findings section. The following Conceptual Framework (Figure 2.1) illustrates the inter-connectedness of the critical areas under investigation, as

well as highlighting the notion that each area contributes to the 'gestalt' of effective schools at the heart of the study.

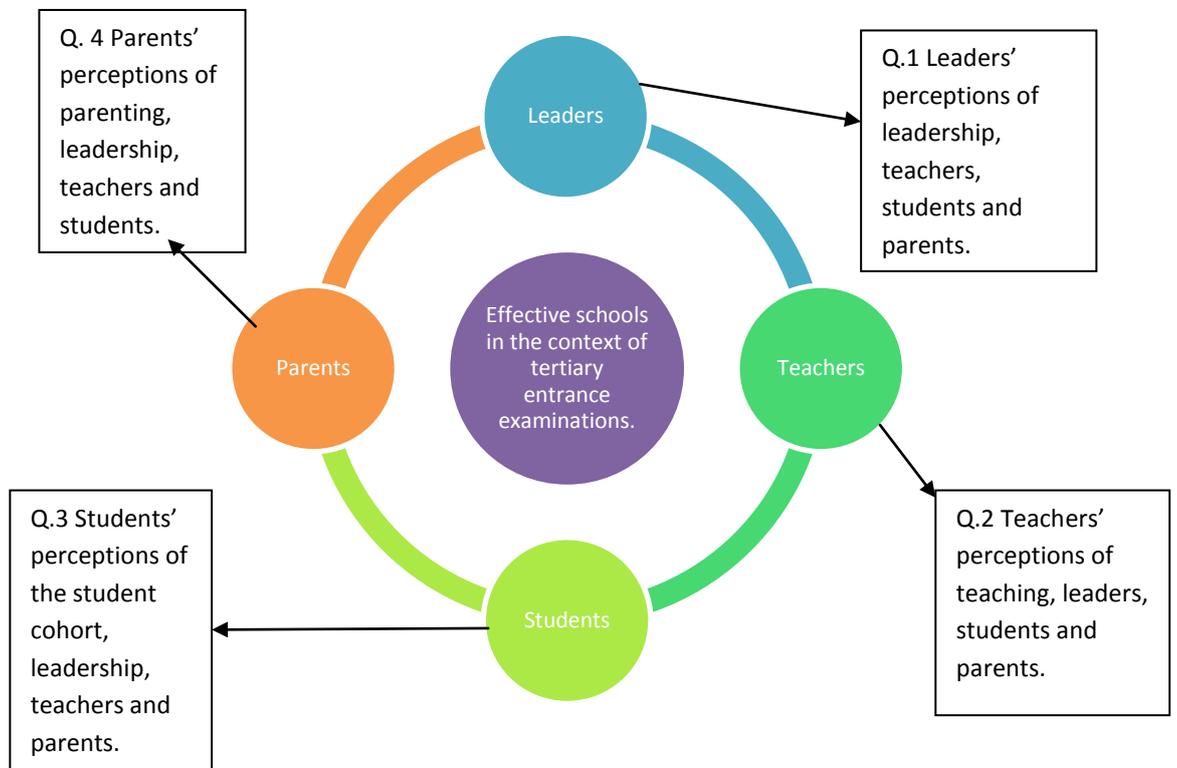


Figure 2.1. Conceptual Framework.

2.3 The Role of Leaders in Effective and Improving Schools

Educational leaders play a key role in schools. Effective educational leadership is as necessary as it is important. Research has shown that leaders have both a direct and indirect influence on school improvement and student achievement (Southworth, 2004). Recognising the role of leadership, an understanding of subtly different models of leadership can enhance approaches to improving student achievement (Mulford, 2008).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development notes that school leadership "has become a priority in education policy agendas across OECD and partner countries because it plays a key role in improving classroom practice, school policies and connections between schools and the outside world" (OECD, 2008, p. 19). Thus, wherever school systems and sectors seek to strategically target improvement in school effectiveness and student outcomes, the capacity of leaders

to indirectly influence student learning has been strongly present (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Principals face a variety of challenges in their role; many of them determined by contextual factors related to student background, school size, teacher quality, whether the school is rural or metropolitan, even historical factors (OECD, 2008). Adopting an appropriate leadership style suited to particular contexts is therefore a valid consideration when attempting to address school improvement. It is important not to fall into the comfort of a ready-made label to identify a preferred model of leadership that suggests “one type or ‘size’ of leadership fits all” (Leithwood and Riehl, cited in Mulford, 2008, p.38). There is much to be gained from a broader view of leadership that recognises the varying contextual needs of each school. In a useful approach, Mulford, (2008) narrowed the field of leadership styles to focus on four major conceptual models of leadership: instructional, transformational, distributed and sustainable leadership. As will be seen, each model has a particular relevance to this study. A study of this nature, centred as it is in faith based schools, might also be tempted to draw on other models such as moral leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992), or servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2002), however the researcher has made a deliberate decision based on the ‘instructional’ focus of the study, to stay within the four conceptual models outlined above.

2.3.1 Instructional Leadership

The degree to which individual leaders and the leadership team focus on learning and teaching is an important avenue for exploration and ‘instructional’ leadership suits the investigation well. For the purpose of this study the leadership team is defined as the executive leadership group of the school, the principal and deputy principals.

Instructional leadership was born out of the effective schools literature of the late 70’s and early 80’s in the United States. Related studies focused on poor urban schools that had been regarded as successful in terms of their student outcomes despite student socio-economic disadvantage. In this context, instructional leadership was conceived as a means of targeting improved student outcomes and not unlike the late 90’s to now, answering the pressure of increased accountability. In a review of the literature from 1980 – 2000 (Hallinger, 2003, p. 332) offered the following conceptual summary of instructional leadership:

1. Instructional leadership focuses predominantly on the role of the school principal in coordinating, controlling, supervising and developing curriculum and instruction in the school (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).
2. With its birthplace in the 'instructional effective elementary school' (Edmonds 1979), instructional leadership was generally conceived to be a unitary role of the elementary (primary) school principal (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982).
3. Similarly, the fact that studies of effective schools focused on poor urban schools in need of substantial change, it is not surprising to note that instructional leaders were subsequently conceived to be 'strong directive leaders' (Edmonds, 1979, Hallinger & Murphy, 1986).
4. Instructional leaders lead from a combination of expertise and charisma. They are hands-on principals, 'hip deep' in curriculum and instruction, and unafraid of working with teachers on the improvement of teaching and learning (Cuban, 1984; Hallinger & Murphy 1986).
5. Instructional leaders are goal-oriented, focusing on the improvement of student academic outcomes. Given the dire straits in which they find their schools, these principals focus on a narrower mission than many of their peers.
6. Instructional leaders are viewed as culture builders. They seek to create an 'academic press' that fosters high expectations and standards for students, as well as for teachers (Mortimer, 1993; Purkey & Smith, 1984).

The present study seeks to ascertain to what degree some of these characteristics are evident in the nine secondary schools that have been chosen for investigation. In large secondary schools, it remains to be seen how much instructional influence a principal can have on student outcomes. Another important question raised by Hallinger's (2003) conceptual framework is whether schools with high academic results see their mission as being necessarily narrowed. Do they become singularly focused on academic outcomes to the detriment of other worthy goals for example equity, recognition of diversity and students' social and emotional well being?

Hallinger and Heck (1998) argued that leaders' influence on the classroom takes three forms; direct effects, mediated or indirect effects and reciprocal effects. Direct effects are derived from personal influence. Indirect effects recognise that the leader's goals are largely mediated through other people, events and organisational

factors such as teachers, classroom practices and school culture. Reciprocal effects recognise that leaders affect teachers and that teachers behaviours can affect leaders and that this interactive process combines to influence outcomes (pp. 163-169).

Southworth (in Davies, 2005) focused on the second and third form of leaders' influence as outlined by Hallinger and Heck (1998). Southworth noted that 'indirect' effects are by far the largest because leaders rely on others to put their aspirations into practice: "Really effective leaders implicitly know this and work very carefully on their indirect effects. In other words: 'effective school leaders work directly on their indirect influence'" (p. 78). Southworth's comments are a reminder that the leadership of a school must be strong in the articulation of its aspirations but at the same time, they are vulnerable in their reliance on other staff to take up the message related to instructional goals. He responds to this possible vulnerability by offering three major strategies; modelling, monitoring and dialogue. Modelling utilises the power of example, namely, the time given to teaching and learning by the 'leadership team' gets noticed by staff. Their involvement in meetings centred on curriculum, their ability to visit classrooms and encourage discussions about teaching and learning with colleagues, sends strong signals to those who observe them. In some ways, these behaviours indicate that leaders are still teachers.

Monitoring includes the analysis of and action on student performance data, school performance trends and surveys. Southworth (2005) noted that empirical data is not the only source of student performance, observing and encouraging students to talk about their learning experiences is also valuable (student reflections will be addressed further in the third theme of this literature review). Sharrat and Fullan (2012) take this concept further by challenging leaders and teachers to 'put faces on the data' arguing that "we are wired to feel things for people not for numbers" (p. 2) and personalising the data leads to powerful interventions for individuals. Monitoring ensures that both leaders and teachers remain informed and have an evidence base from which to make decisions about curriculum design. Dialogue involves the development of learning networks to foster conversations around instructional practice which arise from the processes of monitoring. In a recent examination of high performing school systems in Asia, Jensen (2012) also found that peer visitation, observation and then conversation concerning practice, was a strong contributing factor to school improvement.

The powerful role of instructional leadership has been reinforced in a meta-analysis by Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008), examining the relative impact of different types of leadership on students' academic achievement by comparing instructional and transformational leadership. The authors defined instructional leadership as a set of practices that involve planning, evaluation, coordination and improvement of teaching and learning. Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008), compared the effects of instructional versus transformational leadership on student outcomes and concluded that the effect of instructional leadership was three to four times as great as that of transformational leadership, stating:

The reason is that transformational leadership is more focused on the relationship between leaders and followers than on the educational work of school leadership, and the quality of these relationships is not predictive of student outcomes. Educational leadership involves not only building collegial teams, a loyal and cohesive staff and sharing an inspirational vision. It also involves focusing such relationships on some very specific pedagogical work, and the leadership practices involved are better captured by measures of instructional leadership than of transformational leadership (p. 665).

Frost (2009) further explored the necessity for 'connecting leadership and learning' by drawing on research from projects in seven different countries including Australia. The research explored what it means to lead schools that put learning at the centre of their mission. From the findings, Frost offered five key principles for practice:

- A focus of learning
- An environment for learning
- A learning dialogue
- Shared leadership
- Accountability – both internal and external.

He argued that the five principles are dynamically interrelated and a blended view of leadership is clear where an instructional focus is inseparable from a distributed or shared practice, noting,

A focus on learning and shared leadership is mediated by conditions for learning. Dialogue connects them, and all these four principles are framed by a fifth principle, accountability – to one another and to external groups and agencies that have invested faith and finance in our schools (Frost, 2009, p. 71).

Frost's recognition of a 'focus on learning' indicates that schools striving for high academic outcomes must see teaching and learning as their core business. Robinson (2010) argued that "the more leaders focused their relationships, their

work and their learning on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes” (p. 2). As discussed in chapter one, accountability is both an external and internal driver that can be harnessed to develop an effective and improving school. It is increasingly acknowledged that the standards agenda “and high stakes testing have generated an expectation of improved performance and increased educational achievement” (Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Hopkins, 2007, p. 337).

Sammons, Gu, Day and Ko (2011) three year study in the UK supported and complemented Frost’s work and focus on the ‘instructional leader’ but added an emphasis on managing some teachers learning for improved performance with a focus on a culture of research and innovation. This strongly supported Jensen (2012) in his review of high performing Asian school systems and their focus on mentoring and research.

While an instructional focus is arguably as important now as it has ever been, in order to respond to such an agenda, an appropriate environment needs to be created that privileges conversations about teaching and learning and promotes dialogue that enhances practice. There needs to be clear vision that develops a culture supportive of an instructional focus and capable of engaging and motivating individuals. School improvement frameworks such as those offered by Masters (2010) and studies examining the relationship between leadership and improved instruction (Dinham, 2008) acknowledge this. Transformational leadership offers principals and their deputies a model that helps motivate staff and creates a culture that supports the attainment of established instructional goals.

2.3.2 Transformational Leadership

Mulford (2008) saw transformational leadership developing from the pioneering work of Burns (1978) who argued for a more sophisticated style of leadership than simply a managerial or transactional approach. Burns suggested that leadership required greater engagement with others to raise intrinsic motivation. Bass (1998) took Burns work further identifying four dimensions of transformational leadership namely, charisma, inspirational motivation, individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) applied earlier theories to the more specific context of schools. They identified six dimensions of transformational leadership which they felt would help support organisational conditions and improve

student engagement: “Building school vision and goals, building a culture that symbolises certain professional practices and values, developing structures to foster participation in school, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individual support and demonstrating high performance expectation” (p. 114).

Leithwood’s (2010) later work developed these concepts further but narrowed the dimensions to four headings as the model reached a new phase of refinement:

- Setting directions
 - Building a shared vision
 - Fostering acceptance of group goals
 - High performance expectations
- Developing people
 - Providing individual support and consideration
 - Intellectual stimulation
 - Providing an appropriate model
 - Redesigning the organisation
- Building collaborative cultures
 - Restructuring
 - Building productive relationships with families and communities
 - Connecting the school to its wider environment
 - Managing the instructional program
- Staffing the program
 - Providing instructional support
 - Monitoring school activity
 - Buffering staff from distractions to their work

The model above addressed deficiencies cited in Leithwood & Jantzi’s (2000) earlier work by including more transactional practices that improved “organisational stability” (p. 114). The current study seeks to investigate the prevalence of these four dimensions within the schools under investigation.

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) argued that Leithwood and his colleagues over time moved from surface, first order transactional elements of the principals’ work, to a deeper second order level, signified by “a pursuit of common goals, empowerment of people, development and maintenance of a collaborative culture as well as promoting processes of teacher development” (p. 99). Leithwood and Jantzi (2005)

argued that the critical role of transformational leadership is helping staff to develop shared understandings of the organisational goals:

...that undergird a sense of purpose and vision. People are motivated by goals which they find personally compelling, as well challenging but achievable. Having such goals helps people find meaning in their work and enables them to find a sense of identity for themselves within their work context (p. 39).

As addressed previously in the discussion of instructional leadership and here in transformational leadership, it becomes increasingly clear that leaders do not and cannot, work in isolation. Schools are organic communities, highly interrelated and interdependent and as such, a shared or distributed leadership has much to offer in the framework of leadership.

2.3.3 Distributed Leadership

In the introduction to this review it was noted that the 'indirect' but powerful influence of leadership on student outcomes is often mediated through other school personnel, deputy principals, assistant principals, heads of subject departments and senior teachers, in what has been termed a shared or distributed leadership model, (Caldwell & Spinks, 1998; Caldwell, 2006; Duignan 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Harris et al., 2007, 2008a, 2008b; Spillane, 2006; Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Spillane, 2009; Spillane & Healey, 2010; Silins & Mulford, 2002). Thus, while the role of the principal is important and Fullan (2001) argued that school improvement will never be achieved without a principal who is good at leading improvement; this study seeks to define leadership in its plurality and focuses on the team of leaders in effective schools. The current study seeks to investigate what leaders do collaboratively and what might be their collective influence. It is acknowledged that such a collaborative leadership model can only be established through the agency of the principal and his or her decision to abdicate some authority in the pursuit of a shared wisdom. Prevailing over all of the above is the pragmatic benefit of distributed leadership. No one individual can realistically carry the burden of turning around schools that have been underperforming. Gone are the days when the 'heroic' principal was required to effect change through inspirational and charismatic leadership alone, for, as Hargreaves and Fink, (2006) pointed out,

Heroic leaders who turn failing schools around stand out most in the public imagination. Transformational leaders rather than transformational leadership get the greatest attention in leadership research. Yet leadership

also exerts (or fails to exert) its influence beyond individuals across many years (p. 56).

Distributing responsibilities engages what Duignan (2006) referred to as the “contours of expertise” (p. 111) in the school community. As such contours are traversed, the present study might expect to gauge the layers of leadership in the identified schools to ascertain what binds those relationships together. Fullan (2007) observed that, it is “the primacy of personal contact” (p. 139) between leaders and teachers, between teachers and students, between teachers and parents that promotes harmonious change and improvement. Fullan’s thesis could well be tested in the present study.

Conceptually, a model of distributed leadership is a natural fit for a study that seeks to represent the perceptions of at least three layers of leadership in a group of secondary schools; the principal, deputy principal, and head of subject department (HOD). A model of distributed leadership would also seem apt when there is an expectation of finding an empowered and competent teaching staff that might be considered teacher leaders in their own right. Gronn (2000) who has done much to shape an understanding of distributed leadership explains this mutually beneficial relationship well:

In activities in which there is greater scope for discretion, examples of reciprocally expressed influence abound. In the relations between organisational heads and their immediate subordinates or between executives and their personal assistants for example, couplings form in which the extent of the conjoint agency resulting from the interdependence and mutual influence of the two parties is sufficient to render meaningless any assumptions about leadership being embodied in just one individual (p. 331).

The reciprocity and interdependence described above captures the complexity and dynamism of relationships in schools where not just two parties but often three or four are interacting, each party contributing to the whole. Spillane and Healey (2010) described the conceptual anchors of distributive leadership as involving two aspects; the “leader-plus aspect and the practice aspect” (p. 256). The leader-plus aspect recognizes that the task of leading schools involves multiple individuals and that an exclusive focus on the school principal is limiting.

This view, ‘the leader-plus aspect and the practice aspect’ supports the approach of the current study in its three layered focus on formal leadership as well as its focus on teachers and students because it seeks, as Spillane noted, to describe

how these individuals operate as a 'collective' and how they complement each other. The practice of 'leadership' is not just about the actions of individual leaders but practice is "framed as the product of the interactions among leaders, followers and aspects of their situation" (Spillane & Healy, 2010, p. 256) or as Gronn, (2000) described it above, the product of "conjoint agency" (p. 231).

Harris et al. (2007) argued that distributed leadership "is an idea that is gaining momentum in the leadership field" (p. 339). As a model, it has an innate attraction in that it appeals to a democratized view of the world, even the collective distribution of power, but the 'field' also raises the need for more empirical evidence to support the claims and assertions made. Harris (2008a) made the precautionary observation that:

1. Leadership needs to be distributed to those who have, or can develop the *knowledge or expertise* required to carry out the leadership tasks expected of them.
2. Effective distributed leadership needs to be *coordinated*, preferably in a planned way. (p. 52)

These observations imply that careful consideration needs to be given to the appointment of staff to leadership positions as well as the allocation of particular tasks to appropriate personnel. As a consequence, principals need to know their staff and their capabilities (and look for opportunities to develop them), in order to build capacity as well as deepen 'bench strength'. Sergiovani (2001) noted that once greater depth has been developed, the school can reap rich rewards, such as an increase in involvement in decision making, more staff being trusted with information, being exposed to new ideas and in turn becoming involved in knowledge creation and transfer.

Elmore (2000) states the case well:

Distributed leadership does not mean that no one is responsible for the overall performance of the organization. It means, rather, that the job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result. (p.15)

This concept of productive relationships is pertinent for a study focusing on large secondary schools where the role of the deputy principal responsible for curriculum and the role of the head of subject department (HOD) will be examined closely. The deputy principal role is closely aligned with that of the principal as part of an executive leadership team. The role of the HOD, positioned as it is between the executive leadership and the wider teaching body is a unique middle management role and deserving of close analysis in the context of a distributed leadership model.

2.3.3.1 The Head of Department (HOD)

Because of their size, secondary schools have the capacity to appoint subject specialists who lead curriculum departments and teams of teachers within them. The HOD is expected to provide specialised leadership in curriculum design, assessment and pedagogical practice in their discipline. In light of the preceding discussion of leadership models, the leadership role of the HOD is highly instructional, but at the same time they are also required to employ transformational strategies in building the culture of their team, setting high expectations and creating communities of learning specifically centred on the subject discipline of their particular department. In a sense, their experience might not be far removed from the experience of those leaders above them, in that, they find themselves adopting characteristics of a variety of models. The role of the HOD has been the focus of significant study in Australia (Deece, 2003; Dinham, 2007; Dinham, S., Brennan, K., Collier, J., Deece, A. and Mulford, D. 2000; White, 2001), New Zealand, (O'Neill, 2000), the United Kingdom (Brown, Boyle & Boyle 2000; Brown, Rutherford, Boyle, 2000; Brown & Rutherford, 1999; Harris, 1995, 1998, 2000) and the United States (Siskin, 1991, 1994,). Such research has supported the view that heads of subject departments have the capacity to be highly influential leaders with a great deal to contribute in the process of whole school improvement. Harris (2000) suggested that “heads of department within UK secondary schools contribute to departmental performance in much the same way as head teachers contribute to overall school performance” (p. 81).

Brown, Rutherford, and Boyle (2000) explored the role of the HOD as middle managers and leaders in secondary schools. They argued that “strategies for school improvement are increasingly focused on teaching and learning of the subject, hence our claim that the department is the most important ‘unit of change’ rather than the whole school or even the individual classroom” (p. 238). While an ambitious

claim, it does have merit, as the department is by its nature the hub of subject specific deliberations which have the potential to make an impact on classroom practice. Huberman (as cited in Brown, Rutherford & Boyle, 2000) supports this view:

... I would rather look to the departments as the unit of collaborative planning and execution in a secondary school, or to the grade unit. This is where people have concrete things to tell one another and concrete instructional help to provide one another – where the contexts of instruction actually overlap (p. 239).

White (2001), in an Australian study of forty six heads of department in six schools in the state of Victoria, illustrated the capacity of HODs who were perceived as contributing positively to student learning outcomes. His study illustrated that HODS were capable of creating a culture of motivated and enthused teachers, leading innovation in curriculum design at the departmental level, acting as a role model and “encouraging staff to push students academically” (p. 144).

In another study of 38 high performing junior secondary schools in the NSW public school system, Dinham (2007) presented another optimistic picture of the role of the head of subject department. In the context of high performing schools, he found a number of contributing categories in their leadership:

- Personal qualities, relationships.
- Professional capacity, strategy.
- Promotion and advocacy, external relations.
- Department planning, organisation.
- Common purpose, collaboration, team building.
- Teacher learning, responsibility, trust.
- Vision, expectations and culture of success. (p. 68)

The personal qualities cited were dedication, commitment, energy and enthusiasm for teaching, a capacity to motivate others and an ability to exhibit empathy (Dinham, 2007). In both Dinham and White’s studies, there is evidence of Southworth’s (2005) key strategy for instructional leadership, namely, ‘modelling’. In respect of advocacy HOD’s were strong advocates for their departments, able to secure appropriate resources and were highly respected in their school community. They had a major influence on curriculum design and an indirect influence on teacher effectiveness.

What is found in the analysis of literature concerning the role of the HODs is recognition that when leadership is distributed, those to whom it is devolved experience many of the same challenges as those above them in the hierarchy of the school structure. Many of the understandings derived from instructional, transformational and distributed leadership are clearly required for leadership at the middle management level. The role is highly sophisticated, made even more complex by its position 'in the middle' of hierarchical structures. This complexity is captured by Siskin (as cited by Brown, Rutherford & Boyle, 2000) who suggests that HODs have "hermaphroditic roles" (p. 240), neither fully teacher nor fully administrator. Dinham (2007) would challenge this description arguing that HODS can be recognised as both leaders and teachers in the finest sense.

Brown & Rutherford (1999) argued that there is an urgent need for more research into the strengths and weaknesses of leadership of middle managers especially with regard to management rather than administration. The focus group interviews of well over thirty HODs, across nine schools in the present study, have the capacity to further examine the contribution of this unique group of leaders in secondary schools. Analysis of the role of HODs has the potential to increase our understanding of the role of secondary teachers because as Siskin (1994) observed, teachers locate their sense of identity, practice and community in their departments. The leadership and culture of subject departments has the potential to directly influence the quality of teacher performance.

It is clear that an overriding benefit of distributed leadership, if executed with discernment, is its potential to build capacity across the teaching staff which is also an underlying foundation of sustaining school improvement. The current study used the criterion of sustained high academic achievement over a period of five years as one method of identifying the nine schools that were selected and as such, a review of sustainable leadership as a theory has much to offer.

2.3.4 Sustainable Leadership

Having reached a targeted, measurable level of improvement and having provided the evidence of such attainment, the goal of leaders is to maintain and drive continuous improvement. This quality of leadership has been termed *sustainable leadership*. In educational leadership, sustainable leadership has chiefly

been applied by Fullan (2005) and Hargreaves and Fink, (2006) in arguing that sustainable leadership theory is a by-product of distributed leadership and that among a number of its qualities or even preconditions, shared leadership is one. Kotter (1996), in his seminal text, described sustainable leadership as the capacity to “anchor new approaches in the culture” (p. 21) so that they provide capacity for longer term organizational learning.

Fullan (2005, p. 14) identified sustainability as an *adaptive* challenge consisting of eight elements:

1. Public service with a moral purpose
2. Commitment to changing context at all levels
3. Lateral capacity building through networks
4. Intelligent accountability and vertical relationships (encompassing both accountability and capacity building)
5. Deep learning
6. Dual commitment to short-term and long-term results
7. Cyclical energising
8. The long lever of leadership

Public service with a moral purpose emphasises the notion of education for the common good, enhanced by a moral purpose whose primary aim is “raising the bar and closing the gap of student learning; treating people with demanding respect and altering the social environment” (p. 15). Commitment to changing the context is an acknowledgement that context is everything and that institutions must analyse their own unique circumstances before they are able to adapt, change and improve. Contexts are defined as the “structures and cultures within which one works” (p. 16). Recognising the contextual structures and cultures as impediments or facilitators of change is the first step in improving schools. The researcher is interested to ascertain what contextual structures and cultures, if any, challenged or sustained improving schools in this study.

Fullan argued that the remaining six elements provide practical experiences and capacities for sustainable leadership. In lateral capacity building through networks, his theory further develops the fundamental outcome of distributed leadership which builds capacity through flatter structures of dispersed leadership. He recognised vertical capacity built through networks of external trainers and consultants and more laterally through networks of colleagues in other schools. Intelligent accountability and vertical relationships focuses on the relationship between schools

and the central office. Fullan subtly noted that “too much intrusion de-motivates people; too little permits drift, or worse” (p. 20).

An obvious and perhaps workable link to enhance a flourishing and mature co-dependence is the use of both internal and external data on school performance. Mulford and Silins (2011), in a study of the impact of leadership on student outcomes in Tasmanian schools, strongly supported the use of accountability and evaluation mechanisms as having a significant direct impact on student achievement. Mulford and Silins (2011) suggested that “the higher the reports of accountability and evaluation mechanisms in a school, the higher the reports of student achievement” (p. 70). The current study seeks to explore the way in which the nine schools utilised accountability mechanisms in the guise of external data supplied by outside agencies and their central office the CEOWA.

Deep learning, the fifth element in Fullan’s model, is contextualised in a data-driven society and as a consequence, in data-driven schools. In such a context, Fullan argued, if there is to be sustained deep learning there is a need to “drive out fear; set up a system of transparent data-gathering, coupled with mechanisms for acting on the data; and make sure all levels of the system learn from their experience” (p. 22). Failure needs to be managed carefully and underperforming schools need to be managed very carefully. There should be a culture that recognises failure as an opportunity to recover and learn. Strategies that enhance capacity to act on data are crucial for deeper organizational learning. This is where the connection between leaders and teachers comes into play. Significant writers such as Hattie (2009); Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005); and Timperley (2010) all support Fullan’s thesis. As Timperley proposes:

For teachers to use evidence to improve teaching and learning they need information about what their students know and can do, evidence about their own practice and its impact on students and knowledge from the research evidence and other sources...Teachers however cannot be expected to do all this on their own but need the support of well informed leaders who have sufficient knowledge to lead both teachers’ evidence informed inquiry and to engage in their own inquiry into their leadership practice (p. 1).

Principals and deputy principals alike also need support from the system itself, namely, district or head offices that can work with them to develop their knowledge of the system’s performance and their school’s performance within the system. In so doing, Fullan’s sixth element places a small caveat on his caution concerning fear driving short term responses. He reminds those involved in school and system improvement that there needs to be a dual commitment to short term and long term

results. Where schools are severely underperforming, immediate action is necessary and early results must be pursued. In a sense, this immediate action buys time for the longer term goals to be articulated and targeted.

Fullan's seventh element, cyclical energising, similar in some ways to Covey's (1989) 'sharpening the saw' concept, argued that sustainability is cyclical not linear. Energy directed to improvement can be diminished through overuse or underuse and therefore needs to be balanced. As Elmore (2004) expressed it, "routinized accountability" (p. 80) means schools are evaluating performance consistently and regularly but not in such a way as to burn out staff. Such a sentiment is also supported by Barber & Mourshed (2007) in the McKinsey Report, *How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better*:

.....three ways those improving school systems do this are: by establishing collaborative practices between the teachers within and across schools, by developing a mediating layer between the schools and the centre and by architecting tomorrow's leadership. Many systems in our sample have created a pedagogy in which teachers and school leaders work together to embed routines that nurture instructional and leadership excellence (p. 27).

Cyclical energising is a tool enabling the embedding of routines at an appropriate time and place in the cycle, allowing for renewal rather than burnout. This concept requires subtle management in a school, evidenced in Fullan's (2005) last element, the long lever of leadership.

Archimedes said, "Give me a lever long enough and I can change the world." For sustainability that lever is leadership. If a system is to be mobilised in the direction of sustainability, leadership at all levels must be the primary engine. The main work of these leaders is to help put into place the eight elements of sustainability: all eight simultaneously feeding off each other (p. 27).

While there is much value to be gained from consideration of Fullan's eight elements, it would be foolish to think that any one list of elements or capabilities will exclusively meet the needs of all schools. There is no single cure-all for underperforming schools and there is no single conceptual model for sustainable leadership.

Hargraves and Fink (2006) offer seven principles of sustainability arising out of a study of seven American schools over three decades. The principles that underpinned their findings were, depth, length, breadth, justice, diversity, resourcefulness and conversation. The authors move away from Fullan's (2005) emphasis on accountability and short as well as long term results. Their first principle of deep learning is that not all learning is measurable:

Deep Learning is often slow learning, – critical, penetrative, thoughtful, and ruminative. It is learning that engages people’s feelings and connects with their lives. It isn’t too preoccupied with performance. It cannot be hurried. Targets don’t improve it. Tests rarely take its measure. You can’t do it just because someone else says you should. (p. 53)

While there is obvious merit in this argument, it fails to recognise that there is a real danger in not responding immediately to data that alerts teachers and schools to underperformance. Fullan’s moderate position of recognising that both short and long term results equally matter, is perhaps a more responsible approach and it might be argued that in addressing both the long term and short term there can still be institutional learning that is “critical, penetrative, thoughtful and ruminative” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 53).

The second principle of Hargreaves and Fink’s (2006) model, ‘length’, is an insightful contribution to the discussion of sustainable leadership as the authors make a compelling observation that “the most central challenge for maintaining improvement in innovative schools is leadership succession” (p. 56). While not guaranteeing enduring improvement, planned succession is an integral part of allowing the smooth transition from one leader to the next. Good succession planning enables the survival of innovations that have been developed. The best way to secure succession is by distributing, stretching and spreading leadership across other people in the school. Hargreaves and Fink referred to this as their third principle ‘breadth’.

The authors’ fourth and fifth principles of justice and diversity are tightly linked. Justice challenges schools “to think beyond our own schools and ourselves” (p. 158) so that resources are shared, collaborative partnerships are encouraged and successful schools can work with struggling schools. This develops a “collective accountability” (p. 157) that focuses less on competition with others and more on working with colleagues in other schools.

The sixth principle in Hargreaves and Fink’s (2006) model is resourcefulness. Essentially this principle requires the development of a culture in schools and systems that is respectful of the fact that improvement results in the expenditure of considerable energy both in terms of material and human resources. Such a notion, suggesting prudent and thoughtful management of resources, is a requirement of a sustainable as well as an ethical model of leadership. In some respects, the concept of resourcefulness is similar to Fullan’s (2005) cyclical energising, in that it demands leaders are conscious of the fact that in the pursuit of improved performance staff

are not left beleaguered and burned out. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) present the power of renewal as a method of managing the exhaustion that can come from the relentless pursuit of improvement.

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) argued that emotion is “an indispensable source of human energy....positive emotion creates energy; negative emotion saps it” (p. 218). A leader’s capacity to appreciate the level of emotional intelligence required to lead is becoming increasingly important, where more is expected of teachers and schools in a highly accountable climate. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) cite the work of the sociologist Hochschild (1983) who coined the term ‘emotional labour’ to describe the work of those involved in the service professions and industry. Emotional labour can be very draining as leaders and teachers are often expected to mask their own emotions in the service of others but it can also be a positive and uplifting experience, or as Fineman (2000) described it, even a labour of love. The degree to which leaders sensitively relate to the emotional state of their staff and the degree to which teachers relate to the social and emotional well-being of their students may also be a factor in the success of the nine schools in this study.

Leaders and teachers’ emotional connection to their work is something that enhances the culture of the workplace and is of significant interest to the researcher. Several researchers (Everall & Paulson, 2004; Mathieu, 2007; Patsiopoulos & Buchanan, 2011) cautioned it is important to recognise that in the caring professions such as counselling, psychiatry, nursing, and teaching there is real potential for burnout and compassion fatigue. The researcher seeks to investigate what factors might contribute to the reduction of burnout and compassion fatigue in schools where teachers might see their work as a labour of love and where a high degree of emotional energy is invested.

The final and salient principle in Hargreaves and Fink’s work is the notion of ‘conservation’ as a key element of sustainable leadership. This principle respects history and legacy. As such, it goes against the grain of the dominant discourse in leadership and change management which rarely has time for the past in its constant pursuit of reform. If we are to sustain and ensure the retention of novice teachers it is vital that they are exposed to the professional wisdom of their older more experienced peers. The result can be a reciprocal relationship where both are renewed.

2.3.5 Summary: Models of Leadership

Four dominant models of leadership; instructional, transformational, distributed and sustainable leadership have been examined. Clearly, while they all have unique attributes there is also much that connects them and indeed overlaps between them. There is also recognition in the literature that leaders need to be adaptive, sourcing approaches that suit context, requiring an integrative approach. In the current study, with nine quite different schools from varied demographic backgrounds, it is of interest to the researcher to ascertain whether there is a blended approach to leadership utilising a variety of models and whether or not any other models not already discussed come to the fore.

The literature describing the effects of leadership on student performance consistently notes that it is a significant, but indirect influence. Leaders, particularly executive leaders, such as principals and deputy principals, rely on the agency of middle managers and teachers in the classroom, to ensure their aspirations are enacted. In fact Mulford and Silins (2003) suggested that:

Reforms for schools, no matter how well conceptualised, powerfully sponsored, brilliantly structured, or closely audited are likely to fail in the face of cultural resistance from those in schools. By their actions, or inaction, students, teachers, middle managers, and head teachers help determine the fate of what happens in schools, including attempts at reform (p. 1).

Hattie (2003, 2009, 2012) and Dinham (2008) both argued that the teacher is the major in-school influence on student achievement. Hattie (2003) stated “it is what teachers know, do and care about which is very powerful in this learning equation” (p. 1-2). What teachers know, do and care about, may well provide important insights into their respective schools’ success. An analysis and synthesis of the literature on teacher effectiveness will provide a useful starting point for the discussion of teachers’ perceptions of their role in the nine schools in this study as well as the commentary of leaders, students and parents on quality teaching.

2.4 The Characteristics of Effective Teachers in High Performing and Improving Schools

2.4.1 School and Teacher Effectiveness: Introduction

Early studies on school and teacher effectiveness Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer and Wisenbaker (1979), Edmonds (1979a, 1979b) and Rutter, Maughan, Mortimer, Outsen and Smith (1979) sought to contest the deterministic claims by

Coleman et al. (1966) that home background was more influential in terms of influence on student achievement than schools and teachers. Their research focused on leadership and the influence of school culture on student achievement. Later literature suggested it is important to recognise the influence of teaching and teacher quality as a specific influence. Brophy and Good (1986) in their review of the literature on teacher behaviours that contributed to student achievement finally commented that: “the myth that teachers do not make a difference in student learning has been refuted” (p. 370). Mortimer (1991) also noted that effective schools are defined as schools in which students progress further than might be expected from consideration of their intake as a result of specific teacher practices. This observation supports the purposive sample of the current study with schools being selected on the basis of their performance over and above that which their socio-economic index would have predicted. Dutch studies, such as Scheerens (1992, 1993); and Scheerens and Bosker (1997) found an increased influence attributed to ‘between class’ and ‘between teacher’ effects. These findings prompted further studies (Creemers, 1992, 1994; Hattie, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2012; Marzano, 2003, Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2005; Rowe, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004; Reynolds, 1998) which confirmed the validity of a focus on teacher quality and instructional effectiveness that Levine and Lezotte (1990) had earlier suggested was warranted. As Rowe (2004) argued:

What matters most? Certainly NOT the ‘pimple’ of student ‘compositional’ characteristics such as *gender*, *socio-economic differences*, nor school *structural* arrangements of interest to ‘school effectiveness’ researchers but the ‘pumpkin’ of **quality teaching** and learning provision, supported by strategic *teaching standards* and ongoing professional development (p. 19-20 emphasis in original).

The current study seeks to examine the perceptions of teachers and elicit ‘what matters most’ to them concerning their practice in the context of high achieving secondary schools. The researcher now seeks to situate the present study within the context of existing research on teacher effectiveness through a review of the literature. The researcher, supporting Rowe (2004), who recognised the need to approach the literature of teacher effectiveness in a singular fashion, will however, at a later date in the study, endeavour to place this discussion within the ‘gestalt’ of effective schools, as one part of the whole under investigation. In doing so, it is argued that the balance between structural arrangements and the function of schools might be more properly addressed as Rowe (2004) noted:

The 'myth' of 'school effectiveness' (or 'making schools better') is grounded in a widespread failure to understand the fundamental distinction between *structure* and *function* in school education. Whereas a key *function* of schools is the provision of quality teaching and learning experiences that meet the developmental and psycho-social needs of students is dependent on organizational *structures* that support this function, the danger is a typical proclivity on the part of educational policy makers and administrators to stress *structure* at the expense of *function* (p. 19).

In seeking to address that balance it now behoves the researcher to provide a review of the literature on teacher effectiveness.

2.4.2 Teacher Effectiveness

Initially, a number of seminal studies from the 80's and 90's will be presented and a synthesis provided, followed by an analysis of more recent studies. The review by Levine and Lezotte, (1990), summarized American research on 'unusually effective schools' and their emphasis on effective instruction. In addition to factors concerning school climate and culture, the authors found that the following elements of instructional effectiveness influenced student achievement:

- A focus on student acquisition of central learning skills;
- Maximum availability and use of time for learning, particularly literacy and numeracy;
- Availability of instructional support personnel;
- Appropriate monitoring of student progress;
- Practice oriented staff development at the school site;
- Learning enrichment;
- Emphasis on higher order learning in assessment (Adapted from Levine & Lezotte, 1990).

Across the Atlantic at a roughly similar time the early major study of teacher effectiveness was the Junior School Project (JSP) carried out by Mortimer, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis, & Ecob (1988). The JSP project found the following factors attributed to teachers had a positive influence on student achievement: Structured lessons, intellectually challenging teaching, a focused work centred environment, maximum communication between teacher and student about the content of their work and monitoring student progress as an aspect of planning and assessment.

Several years later, Sammons, Hillman and Mortimer (1995) in another UK review of school effectiveness literature found the following elements related to teacher effectiveness:

- High quality teaching and learning;
- High expectations of children's possible achievements;
- Teacher mastery of academic content;
- Use of positive reinforcement and rewards;
- Careful monitoring of children's progress;
- Purposeful teaching with maximisation of teaching time;
- High quality staff development. (Adapted from Sammons, Hill & Mortimer, 1995)

Purposeful teaching is a term that rewards deeper elaboration. Sammons, Hill and Mortimer (1995) defined the term as having a number of elements: efficient organisation, clarity of purpose, structured lessons and adaptive practice. Effective organisation develops an internal locus of control for the teacher and enables clarity of purpose. Clarity of purpose provides a sense of direction for students. Structured teaching involved balanced lessons that utilised strong whole class open ended questioning skills and interrogation of student answers with constructive feedback. Structured teaching was complemented with opportunities for a degree of pupil independence and responsibility for managing their own work. An earlier study in the UK by Galton, Simon & Croll (1980) entitled the ORACLE project strongly supported the concept of 'purposeful teaching' and found that the group of teachers who utilised a high proportion of whole-class teaching were more effective in producing gains in mathematics and language. Scheerens (1992) Dutch study, strongly supported 'structured teaching' where teachers made clear what was to be learnt, organised teaching into manageable units, used material in which students make use of 'hunches and prompts' and regular testing of progress. The researcher is interested to investigate what elements of 'purposeful teaching' described above are evident in the practices of teachers in the current study.

Reynolds, (1998) in his international review of research on teacher effectiveness in the context of literacy, noted a number of factors that influenced student achievement. For Reynolds opportunity to learn which relates to effective time on task in the subject to be assessed and the teacher's 'academic orientation' where instruction and learning are the main classroom goal were key influences. Other important factors were, strong classroom management skills, high expectations for all students, and an emphasis on teacher led classroom discussion where the teacher 'carries the content personally to the student' (pp. 148 – 150). Reynolds argued that the emphasis on teacher led classroom discussion was not to be

confused with 'chalk and talk' teaching, but was rather characterised by active teaching, with high questioning skills which facilitated monitoring for understanding.

The researcher in the present study notes that these reviews cannot by any means exhaust the literature but because they are 'reviews' they present a fair coverage of the research from the 80's through to the 90's on teacher effectiveness. In the context of the present study concerning teachers in high performing secondary schools the researcher is particularly interested in investigating the prevalence of particular findings from a synthesis of the literature above, namely:

- A focus on student acquisition of central learning skills;
- Maximum availability and use of time for learning;
- Structured lessons;
- High expectations and intellectually challenging teaching;
- Emphasis on higher order learning in assessment;
- Monitoring of student progress;
- Purposeful, teacher led whole-class discussion;
- Teachers 'academic orientation' and ability to 'carry the content to the student' (Reynolds 1998);
- Teacher engagement in professional development.

While the researcher has synthesised the key elements above to frame future discussion of findings within the present study, he notes Sammons, Hillman and Mortimer's (1995) comments when they argued that no one particular teaching style should be seen as more effective than others: "Indeed in our view debates about the virtues of one particular teaching style over another are too simplistic and have become sterile. Efficient organisation, fitness for purpose, flexibility of approach and intellectual challenge are of greater relevance" (p. 54-55). Reviews of the literature provide a platform for common sense application of strategies that are indeed fit for purpose, not literal checklists that become overly prescriptive and deny flexibility and adaptability. With that in mind it is useful to examine more recent literature on teacher effectiveness in order to expand this overview and broaden perspectives.

2.4.3 Recent Studies

More recent studies have both added to the field of teacher effectiveness and confirmed many earlier findings (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000; Day, 2007;

Dinham, 2008; Hattie, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2012; Hattie & Anderman, 2013; Marzano, 2003; Marzano, Ofsted, 2009; Pickering & Pollock 2005; Rubie-Davies, Hattie & Hamilton, 2007; Shields & Miles 2008; Zbar, Kimber and Marshall, 2009).

Marzano (2003), argued that applying the research on teacher effectiveness is an idea whose time has come. Marzano (2003) highlighted three key factors affecting student achievement in his review of the literature over the previous thirty five years. These are presented in Table 2.1 overleaf:

Table 2.1

Factors Affecting Student Achievement (Marzano, 2003, P. 10).

Factor	Example
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guaranteed and viable curriculum • Challenging goals and effective feedback • Parent and community involvement • Safe and orderly environment • Collegiality and professionalism
Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional strategies • Classroom management • Classroom curriculum design
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home atmosphere • Learned intelligence and background knowledge • Motivation

An analysis of Table 2.1, shows that a number of the ‘school factors’ clearly overlap with the ‘teacher factors’. They rely heavily on the agency of teachers for their implementation but equally they must also be driven by the leadership of any school. It is useful to interrogate Marzano’s examples further, as they have the potential to contribute a great deal to the current study of nine successful schools and the work of leaders and teachers within them. Marzano elaborated on his concept of a “guaranteed and viable curriculum” which he ranked as highest in its influence on student achievement. This was again confirmed in a later study by Dufour & Marzano (2011) in which leaders were reminded that a guaranteed and viable curriculum is the basic tenet for a strong professional learning community. For

Marzano (2003) a viable curriculum is the combination of an “opportunity to learn” and “time” (p. 22). Opportunity to learn was first introduced as a term some thirty years ago “when it became a component of the first and then the Second International Mathematics Study (FIMS and SIMS respectively) now Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). It was found that some students had not had an equal opportunity to learn because they did not share the same ‘strategic experience’. A FIMS technical report noted:

One of the factors which may influence scores on an achievement examination is whether or not students have had an opportunity to study a particular topic or learn how to solve a particular type of problem presented by the test. (as cited in Marzano, 2003, p. 22)

Opportunity to learn while arguably self-evident has become a major issue in debates concerning teaching and learning. With the increased prevalence of external standardised testing and in high stakes testing such as tertiary entrance exams there is concern that ‘teaching to the test’ rather than an approach that fosters deep learning and a breadth of knowledge might impose limitations on teachers and students. This concern will be investigated in the current study particularly the hypothesis that opportunities to solve particular tasks present in tests may not necessarily imply prescriptive ‘teach to the test’ approaches.

Marzano (2003) argued that teachers must protect instructional time, ensure essential content is addressed and sequence and organise essential content (p. 25–31). The two elements of Marzano’s key school level factor, ‘a guaranteed and viable curriculum’, are of major interest to the current study. Of particular interest to the researcher will be the way the nine identified academically successful schools grapple with the tensions of a curriculum that is extensive, prescriptive, and time intensive. Marzano’s (2003) second school level factor, providing challenging goals and effective feedback, is evident in earlier studies. Citing the school effectiveness literature, he argued that setting challenging goals has strong support as an important factor in effective schools, particularly in low socio-economic schools. He observes that without adequate feedback, there is no way of knowing whether goals have been achieved. He also points out that feedback must be specific to the content being learned and as a consequence, the design of assessment tasks must closely parallel the curriculum being taught. Marzano also adds that feedback must be timely and regular. He is a strong advocate for regular formative assessment which he argued in the United States often takes second place to state and national standardised testing. Of interest in the current study of nine schools will be the

emphasis placed on assessment policy, assessment design and whether there is evidence of timely feedback linked to clear expectations and goals.

Marzano (2003) argued that a safe and orderly environment is fundamental to high student achievement. It is a factor that pertains to whole school culture as well as the efficient operation of the classroom. The researcher seeks to explore the degree to which schools in the current study place an emphasis on the maintenance of a supportive environment for learning, or if in turning around a school, the development of an orderly environment has been a high priority.

Marzano (2003) offered a final school level factor that is of considerable relevance to the current study, namely, collegiality and professionalism. Marzano identifies collegiality and professionalism arising from a number of studies which attribute organisational climate as having an influence on student achievement. Collegiality is defined as the manner in which teachers interact with one another. Collegiality is demonstrated by supportive behaviours, honest professional interactions and courteous and respectful relationships. It should also be noted that collegiality should not be confused with the disposition of friendliness or congeniality; collegiality demands a great deal more of the teacher. Sergiovanni (2005) signals a cautious note when he distinguishes between collegiality and congeniality: "Though congeniality is pleasant and often desirable, it is not independently linked to better performance and quality schooling" (p. 12). Sergiovanni describes three layers of professional relationships: congeniality is the first layer, building to collegiality and finally a community of practice. Communities of practice work to bring teachers together, build capacity and improve their effectiveness through increased professional knowledge they are often found where transformative and distributed leadership practices are evident.

In the development of professionalism, Marzano (2003) suggested that a sense of efficacy on the part of teachers was required to confirm to teachers that they are valued and can effect change. Experience and professional qualifications also build efficacy. Arguably the most important aspect attributed to professionalism in teachers was their capacity to access and participate in quality professional development. In a study of 7,500 eighth grade teachers, Weglinsky (2000), found that professional development for mathematics and science teachers had as much influence on student achievement as did student background.

Having discussed Marzano's school level factors it is important to address his 'teacher level factors later fully developed in Marzano, Pickering and Pollock (2005).

Marzano argued that his studies were based on achievement in assessment that was specific to the content being taught at a given time, as opposed to more broad standardised tests. He also produced effect size data for each of these instructional strategies. Effect size data will be referred to in other following studies and it therefore requires a definition here. Hattie (2009) suggested that an effect size:

provides a common expression of the magnitude of study outcomes for many types of outcome variables, such as school achievement. An effect size of $d = 1.0$ indicates an increase of one standard deviation on the outcome – in this case the outcome is improving school achievement. A one standard deviation increase is typically associated with advancing childrens' achievement by two to three years improving the rate of learning by 50% (p. 7).

Utilising such a metric Cohen (1988) proposed that an effect size of $d = 0.2$ was small, $d = 0.5$ was medium and $d = 0.8$ was large. Hattie (2009) in his studies suggested that $d = 0.2$ was small, $d = 0.4$ was medium and $d = 0.6$ is large when judging educational outcomes. Marzano argued that due to the “curriculum sensitive” nature of the assessments the effect sizes were relatively high but his rank order was a valuable table of effective strategies. His list appears in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2

Categories of Instructional Strategies that Affect Student Achievement (Marzano, 2003, p. 80).

Category	Average effect size
Identifying similarities and differences	1.61
Summarising and note taking	1.00
Reinforcing effort and providing recognition	0.80
Homework and practice	0.77
Non-linguistic representations	0.75
Cooperative learning	0.73
Setting objectives and providing feedback	0.61
Generating and testing hypotheses	0.61
Questions cues and advanced organisers	0.59

Identifying similarities and differences is not a strategy that appears in many other studies as a discrete item, yet its very high effect size ($d = 1.61$) warrants some attention. Marzano describes this strategy as the utilisation of tasks that involve comparison and classification and teaching that uses metaphors and analogies. Summarising and note-taking is a category with a very high effect size in Marzano's study ($d = 1.00$). Hattie (2009) places it within a suite of meta-cognitive strategies he describes generally as study skills with an overall effect size of $d = 0.59$. While there is some variation between the effect sizes found in the various studies it is clear that note taking and study skills should be accorded serious attention as an instructional strategy. Reinforcing effort and providing recognition was a key influence in Bennet (1986) and again appears here in Marzano's study ($d = 0.80$). Homework and practice ($d = 0.77$) is accorded a high effect size by Marzano. Marzano found cooperative learning to have an effect size of $d = 0.73$ and while this factor is not rated highly in previous studies, it warrants recognition and use as a strategy. Marzano's study supports the use of setting objectives and providing feedback ($d = 0.61$) and it is a strategy found in all the studies examined here. Questioning, cues and advance organisers have also been evident in the previous studies.

Generating and testing hypotheses ($d = 0.61$) is a significant strategy in Marzano's study supporting Bennet (1986). Marzano claims that student projects that involve experimental inquiry, problem solving and the development of hypotheses have a significant effect on student achievement. Applying research-based findings about effective instructional strategies should be done sensibly and moderately. Teachers, particularly novices, should not feel compelled to incorporate as many of the strategies they can in every lesson. Strategies should be used in a balanced manner over time and it must be noted that some strategies are particularly suited to certain subjects, certain age groups and even certain individuals. Just as in theories about leadership, there is no one size fits all approach to effective instruction. Marzano (2009) in commenting on the impact of his own research argued "that perhaps the most pervasive mistake is focusing on a narrow range of strategies" (p. 31) He later also stated "categories of strategies are only part of a comprehensive view of teaching" (p. 31). This cautionary note on applying particular strategies exclusively is borne out in the analyses of various categories across different researchers in this review. As such, any absolute view of what works is a very dangerous position to take. What the research shows is that while there is agreement in a number of very important key instructional areas it is

the diversity of the findings that should also make teachers pause and reflect. The current study will have a clear focus on instructional strategies seeking to confirm findings in the literature and ascertain what might be the dominant strategies that appear in the nine successful secondary schools in the study, bearing in mind that the classroom focus is predominantly on upper secondary teaching.

Supporting Scheerens and Bosker (1997) who found an increased influence attributed to between-class and between-teacher effects, Hattie (2003) argued that researchers need to ask where the “major source of variance in student’s achievement lie”, so that practitioners can “concentrate on enhancing these sources of variance to truly make the difference” (p. 1). He found that the major sources of variance were sixfold:

- (1) Students account for 50% of the variance of achievement. It is what students bring to the table that predicts achievement more than any other variable.
- (2) Home accounts for 5-10% of the variance – considering that the major effects of the home are already accounted for by the attributes of the student.
- (3) Schools account for 5-10% of the variance: finances, school size, class size, buildings etc are important but have a relatively small effect on student achievement.
- (4) Principals are accounted for in the variance attributed to schools and mainly because of their influence on the climate of the school.
- (5) Peer effects contribute about 5-10% of the variance. Hattie argued that the influence of peers is relatively small.
- (6) Teachers account for 30% of the variance. It is what teachers know, do and care about which is very powerful in this learning equation. (p. 1-2)

Given such a profile, Hattie (2003) argued that the attention of researchers should be focused on “the person who gently closes the classroom door and performs the teaching act – the person who puts into place the end effects of so many policies, who interprets these policies, and who is alone with students during their 15,000 hours of schooling” (p. 1). In so doing, he found in a meta-analysis that many strategies teachers employ have a positive effect on student achievement, however, he sought to find what it was that had a “marked or meaningful effect” (p. 4). Hattie’s findings are represented in Table 2.3 overleaf.

Table 2.3

Effect Size of Influences on Student Achievement (Hattie, 2003)

INFLUENCE	EFFECT SIZE	SOURCE OF INFLUENCE
Feedback	1.13	Teacher
Student's prior cognitive ability	1.04	Student
Instructional quality	1.00	Teacher
Direct instruction	.82	Teacher
Remediation / feedback	.65	Teacher
Students disposition to learn	.61	Student
Class environment	.56	Teacher
Challenge of goals	.52	Teacher
Peer tutoring	.50	Teacher
Mastery learning	.50	Teacher
Parent involvement	.46	Home
Homework	.43	Teacher
Teacher style	.42	Teacher
Questioning	.41	Teacher
Peer effects	.38	Peers

These findings were elaborated as Hattie explored the difference between expert and experienced teachers across five major dimensions. The first was the ability of expert teachers to identify the essential representations of their subject. He found that expert and experienced teachers do not necessarily differ in their content knowledge but the difference lay in how they organised and used content knowledge. In particular, experts use knowledge in a more integrated fashion

combining new subject matter with prior knowledge and with other subjects in the curriculum, as well as “changing, combining and adding” (p. 5) to lessons, according to students’ needs. Because of these deeper representations expert teachers:

- Can spontaneously relate what is happening to these deeper sets of principles;
- Can quickly recognise sequences of events occurring in the classroom which affect the learning of the topic;
- Can detect and concentrate on information that has instructional significance;
- Can make better predictions based on their representations about the classroom;
- Can identify a greater store of algorithms that students might use to solve a problem;
- Can be much more responsive to students (p. 5).

In terms of the first dimension, deeper representation of their subject, Hattie (2003) found that expert teachers consistently sought further information over and above local data or resources. They were adept at anticipating problems and not afraid to improvise. They “seek and use feedback information about their teaching” (p. 6). Timperley (2010) concurred with this finding, challenging a dominant notion that evidence about student learning is far too often used to make judgments about students’ abilities rather than be used to guide effective teaching and help in decisions about what to change in terms of pedagogical approaches. Hattie’s second dimension, guiding learning through classroom interactions, involves the creation of an optimal classroom climate for learning. In particular this means increasing the “probability of feedback.... where error is welcomed, where student questioning is high and where engagement is the norm” (p. 7). Experts are also more effective scanners of the room constantly making references to the language of instruction and learning. Experts were very context oriented “they needed to know about the ability, experience, and background of the students” (p. 7).

Hattie’s (2003) third dimension, focuses on the importance of monitoring learning and providing feedback, the influence with the highest effect size (1.13) on student achievement. Expert teachers seek and provide more and higher quality feedback than do experienced teachers. Experts use feedback to develop hypotheses about their student’s learning and they also develop a higher degree of automaticity in their responses to complex circumstances in the classroom. The fourth dimension of

expert teachers is their capacity to attend to affective attributes, that is, they have a high respect for students. Hattie argued that too often the difference between experienced and expert teachers was the physical and psychological distance between the teachers and their students. Expert teachers were able to respect students as learners and as people, demonstrating both care and commitment in their relationship with students. Expert teachers displayed a degree of passion about their work, they had a sense of responsibility and as Berliner (1988) claimed, they showed more emotion about their successes and failures. Day (2007) defined a passion for teaching as the “combination of the emotional and the intellectual ... it creates energy, determination conviction and commitment” (p. 2).

The fifth and final dimension that Hattie (2003) argued was evident in the work of expert teachers was their capacity to influence student outcomes:

Expert teachers aim for more than achievement goals. They aim to motivate their students to master rather than perform, they enhance students' self-concept and self-efficacy about learning, they set appropriate and challenging tasks and they aim for both surface and deep learning (p. 9).

The distinction between surface and deep learning, built as it is on the work of Saljo (1975), and Ramsden, Martin & Bowden (1989), is described by Hattie as knowing the content to gain a passing grade as opposed to a deeper understanding which gave students the capacity to relate and extend ideas connecting existing knowledge with knowledge from other areas. For Hattie expert teachers are more successful than experienced teachers at both types of learning.

In all, for each of the five dimensions discussed above, there was a total of sixteen attributes related to teaching. Out of those sixteen attributes, using regression analysis, Hattie claimed that three attributes most effectively separated expert from experienced teachers: setting challenging tasks, deep representation and monitoring with feedback.

Citing “several years of research into teacher expectation effects” (Rubie-Davies, Hattie & Hamilton, 2006, p. 429) argued that expectations can positively or negatively influence student performance and achievement. This confirmed Rosenthal and Jacobson's seminal study (1968) identifying the “Pygmalion Effect” further explicated by Schunk and Meece (2012). Setting appropriate yet challenging tasks enables high expectations. This researcher seeks to investigate the degree to which teachers in the current study provide evidence for this practice.

In an interview in the *North American Journal of Psychology*, Hattie (2008) noted that “the higher the challenge, the higher the probability that one seeks and needs feedback, but the more important it is that there is a teacher to ensure that the learner is on the right path to successfully meet the challenge” (p. 240). This proposition about the relationship between feedback and challenge effectively illustrates a key argument in Hattie’s earlier paper that the dimensions and attributes discussed are connected and overlapping. Of particular interest to the researcher is the connection between teachers setting challenging and appropriate tasks and the teachers’ capacity to provide appropriate teaching through deep representation of the subject matter that develops a platform for the learner to find the ‘right path to meet the challenge’. It is hoped the current study might document what such teaching looks like, through the perceptions of teachers themselves and even more significantly their students and whether these perceptions accord with Hattie’s (2003) findings. Just as importantly, Rubie-Davies, Hattie and Hamilton (2006) argued that expectations “may be exemplified in the learning opportunities provided, in the affective climate created and in the interactional content and context of the classroom” (p. 430). The researcher is interested to investigate whether there is a connection between the pedagogical skills of the teacher and his or her capacity to also make a pastoral connection with the student in opportunities that present themselves through feedback.

In later studies, Hattie (2007, 2009) further refined his earlier work, each time presenting more fine-grained analysis that produced slight variations in the rank order by effect size of the influences on student achievement. His 2007 meta-analysis included over 750 meta-analyses based on 50,000 studies representing over 2 million students. This study showed the increasing influence of classroom behavioural strategies on student achievement and the need to address disruptive students, perhaps a mirror of the changing social phenomena currently witnessed in relation to disengaged and disruptive students in schools (Cornelius-White, 2007; Marzano, 2003; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2005; McDonald, 2010; Seligman, 2011). Table 2.4 overleaf provides a ranked order of influences on student achievement according to effect size.

Table 2.4

Effect Size of Influences on Student Achievement. Adapted from (Hattie, 2007).

RANK	CATEGORY	INFLUENCE	Effect Size
1	Student	Self-report grades	1.44
2	Teacher	Absence of disruptive students	.86
3	Teacher	Classroom behavioural strategies	.80
4	Teacher	Quality teaching	.77
5	Teaching	Reciprocal teaching	.73
6	Student	Prior achievement	.73
7	Teacher	Teacher-student relationships	.72
8	Teacher	Feedback	.72
9	Teacher	Formative evaluation	.70
10	Teaching	Creativity programs	.70

Quality of teaching, teacher student relationships and feedback still remained extremely high in the ranking that ordered one hundred items in terms of effect size on student achievement. Of the top ten influences above, eight are attributed directly to the teacher and to his or her teaching. While a useful strategy to employ with students, self-reported grading is typically seen as another form of prior achievement in that students (particularly secondary students) have a very good understanding of their achievement and thus in terms of expectation may not challenge themselves enough. This raises the question of the role of the teacher in motivating students and setting the bar higher than the expectations imposed by students themselves. As Vygotsky (1978) noted, students may be able to do tasks at a higher level if they are 'scaffolded' to move beyond the zone of proximal development and have their own expectations exceeded by the challenging tasks Hattie had already alluded to in his earlier study.

Presented as a standardised measure, reciprocal teaching ($d = 0.74$) is another influence that did not directly appear in the 2003 study although it might be argued that it could be found under peer tutoring ($d = 0.50$). Hattie (2009) described reciprocal teaching as a strategy where students take turns to be the teacher, using “cognitive strategies such as summarising, questioning, clarifying and predicting” (p. 210). The effects were highest when there was explicit teaching of the cognitive strategies before beginning the reciprocal teaching dialogue. Another feature of Figure 2.4 is the appearance of the influence of formative evaluation of teachers. The effect size ($d = 0.70$) is clearly large and sends a signal to schools and teachers that peer mentoring is a strategy worthy of examination. Hattie (2009), in a further iteration of his work, noted that the effect size of providing formative evaluation had increased ($d = 0.90$), noting that “it is these attributes of seeking formative evaluation of the effects (intended and unintended) of their programs that makes for excellence in teaching” (p. 181). In recent studies of high performing school systems at the international level, Jensen (2011, 2012) strongly supported Hattie’s findings in that peer mentoring was a strong feature of the best performing systems in the world.

By 2009, Hattie had increased the size of his meta-analysis to a synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses (Hattie, 2009). While an analysis of Hattie’s work (2003, 2007 & 2009) shows some changes in the rank order of influences over time, the review of his studies reinforces the key role of the teacher and teaching strategies in terms of impact on student achievement. Table 2.5 overleaf provides a further ranked order of influences on student achievement according to effect size.

Table 2.5

Effect Size of Teacher Influences on Student Achievement (adapted from Hattie, 2009)

Rank	Domain	Influence	Effect size
1	Teaching	Formative evaluation of teachers	0.90
2	Teaching	Micro teaching	0.88
3	Teaching	Interventions for disabled students	0.77
4	Teacher	Teacher clarity	0.75
5	Teaching	Reciprocal teaching	0.74
6	Teaching	Feedback	0.73
7	Teacher	Teacher-student relationships	0.72
8	Teaching	Spaced vs mass practice	0.71
9	Teaching	Meta-cognitive strategies	0.69
10	Teaching	Self verbalisation / self questioning	0.64
11	Teacher	Professional development	0.62
12	Teaching	Problem-solving teaching	0.61

Of the 138 factors identified by Hattie, 12 from the first twenty, in rank order of effect size, directly relate to the teacher and teaching. Three (not represented) relate to curriculum where the teacher makes deliberate decisions in terms of choice and approaches. Classroom behavioural influences, while assigned as a school influence by Hattie, could also arguably be reliant on the role of the teacher. Thus sixteen out of twenty influences are strongly centred around the teacher and his or her teaching. The current study does not seek to search for evidence of each one of these influences in the approaches of teachers in the nine schools in a check list fashion. Rather, the researcher seeks to allow teachers to speak to their strengths

and determine some points of commonality and difference with the findings in the literature.

Having examined the work of Marzano (2000, 2003, 2005, 2009) in some depth based on his international and predominantly American studies and illustrating the relationship between his research and the research of Hattie (2003, 2007, 2009) whose meta-analyses were predominantly international studies, it is now useful to address the work of Dinham (2008). Dinham's work parallels and draws on both of the previous authors as well as the research of Bransford, Brown and Cocking (2000). Dinham's study brings a particular Australian perspective to the literature review on the work of effective teachers. The original research carried out by Ayres, Dinham and Sawyer (2000) and reported in Dinham (2008) focused on performance data from 1991-1996 for government schools in the tertiary entrance exams Higher School Certificate (HSC) in New South Wales (NSW). Teachers were selected by identifying a number of subject departments that had gained significant success in the HSC. Success was defined as having students in the top 1% of the candidates for HSC courses over a significant period of time (at least five years). Thirty two schools were selected, eighteen metropolitan and fourteen non-metropolitan. In total twenty five teachers took part in the study. The sample size of teachers in the Dinham (2008) report was small which could suggest that the study might draw criticism. Nevertheless, its focus on HSC results in the New South Wales context make it relevant to the present project with its focus on TEE results in Western Australia. The study also verified the researcher's 26 years of 'lived experiences' in secondary schools.

Dinham (2008) cited seven broad factors as contributing to HSC teaching success:

- School background
- Subject faculty
- Teachers' personal qualities
- Teachers' relationships with students
- Teachers' professional development
- Teaching – resources, planning
- Teaching strategies (p. 25)

Dinham (2008) argued that "school level factors were reported by those involved in the HSC to be influential, but of minor importance overall in the success of individual

teachers and students” (p. 26). A healthy school culture was indeed reported with students regarded very positively by staff and that high regard reciprocated by students. Staff also spoke of support from the leadership for their subject faculty.

Individual teachers spoke of the importance of subject faculties in contributing to their success. This was evidenced by: the faculty acting as a team, high expectations of each other, whole faculty approaches to programming, faculty having achieved a certain profile within the school, faculty success breeding success and faculty rapport with students (p. 26). Faculty based influences had a strong impact on teacher effectiveness and consequently student achievement however Dinham (2008) argued that while significant, these influences were still less than the impact of the individual teacher.

Teachers’ personal qualities were significant in contributing to student achievement. Dinham argued that the teacher’s “orientation to the subject” (2008, p. 28) that is, their strong subject content knowledge, was evident in classroom visits. Another element of their orientation to the subject was their obvious passion and love for the subject matter, which supports Day (2007) as discussed earlier. A second personal quality cited by Dinham (2008) was teachers’ “orientation to the students” (p. 28). This behaviour was captured in teachers’ approachability inside and outside of the classroom. Finally, a third element in teachers’ personal qualities was their “orientation to their work” (p. 28). Teachers involved in the study were hard working, committed and organised.

In a similar vein, teachers’ relationships with their students played a significant role in their capacity to influence student achievement. Dinham (2008) found several aspects of student teacher relationships particularly useful in promoting student achievement. It was important for teachers to “be themselves” (p. 28), relaxed and not remote authority figures. Teachers who were able to “relate to students as people” (p. 28), taking a personal interest in the lives of their students but still maintaining an appropriate personal and professional distance, were able to engage and motivate students.

Teachers’ professional development was another contributing factor to the high achievement of students in the Dinham (2008) study. A number of the teachers in the study were regularly sought out by teachers in other schools to provide advice and offer professional development but equally they themselves recognised the importance of renewing their own professional knowledge. For these teachers, professional development was accessed in four ways. The first form of professional

development was through networking. Most of the teachers in the study were active networkers in professional associations. Of interest to Dinham was the observation that many teachers sought out experiences in their “host discipline”, that is, music teachers with musicians, legal studies teachers with lawyers, art teachers with artists. The second form of professional development was “In-school professional development” (p. 29). When teachers had been involved in outside professional experiences they gave presentations to the faculty. The larger the faculty the more often this occurred. Smaller faculties tended to source external professional support. “Out of school professional development” (p. 30) was cited as the other major source of support. Two thirds of these teachers, spoke of courses that were ‘subject content specific’ as being the most beneficial, the other third cited courses that focused on teaching strategies as most beneficial.

Finally, “development through experience” was commented on by a number of teachers. They spoke about accruing knowledge and expertise over time but were careful to note that time alone does not enrich experience; it is engagement with colleagues and developmental experiences over time which contributes to the furthering of knowledge. “Resources and planning” (p. 30) were identified as a key aspect contributing to effective teaching. These teachers used a variety of resources on top of traditional textbooks to ensure they had current and relevant resources that were both challenging and motivating.

Dinham (2008) noted that the central aim of the study was to ascertain the dominant teaching strategies leading to HSC success. Even though the teachers in the study ranged across a number of subject areas “they had far more in common than not” (p. 30). It was found that certain strategies made up the common ground shared between them. Teachers’ capacity to create a certain “classroom climate” (p. 31) was an integral part of their success. There was an expectation, usually unspoken, for students to demonstrate on task behaviours. Teaching time in class was seen as a valued commodity. Group learning was more common than expected. Teachers affirmed students, giving feedback and recognising achievement. There was evidence of routine and repetition as important in the provision of structured learning. There was an ethos of student cooperation despite the relatively competitive environment of the HSC. There was a strong “HSC focus” (p. 31) in that the HSC or its requirements were addressed specifically in half the lessons observed. Half the teachers felt that regular practice on HSC exam components was important. Half the teachers felt their HSC exam marking experience was vital in their success. “Knowing marking standards and what

markers looked for” (p. 32) was most beneficial and very good professional development.

The third instructional strategy that led to HSC success was “building understanding” (p. 32), which was typified by an awareness of the interrelatedness of the subject which saw teachers “linking different areas and topics of the subject and previous lessons to develop a big picture” (p. 32). There was a strong emphasis on interpretation rather than reproduction of knowledge.

“Note-making” (p. 32) was seen as a valuable instructional strategy. “Building notes through teacher facilitation” (p. 32) and records of student discussions and presentations was seen as a useful way to fill in gaps in knowledge. Teachers did not give out notes, they encouraged “independent note making” (p. 32) requiring students to use their own words that helped develop analysis and synthesis.

Writing essays and organising information was seen as a key instructional strategy. Projects or extended essays were not seen as valuable, rather writing essays that replicated questions and time scales found in the exam were far more beneficial. This finding supported Marzano’s notion of curriculum sensitive assessment. Students were expected to “answer problems” (Dinham, 2008, p. 33) not relying on ready-made solutions offered by the teacher but challenged to find solutions to problems that stretched them.

The sixth instructional strategy cited by Dinham (2008) was “questioning”. Dinham found that while teachers are generally encouraged not to use closed questions and instead opt for richer open ended questioning techniques, there was evidence of many examples of both types. Open questions were generally used to “explore, interpret and predict” (p. 33). In whole class discussion closed questions were used for assessment, review, linking and building of concepts.

The use of whole class discussion supported earlier findings in the literature (Galton, Simon & Croll, 1980; Joyce & Showers, 1988; Sammons, Hill and Mortimer, 1995; Scheerens, 1992). Dinham (2008) found that in whole class discussion there was a “climate of open debate” (p. 33). However, whole class discussion, group work and independent student activities were used in equal measure as organisational structures. Group work was a favoured strategy where students were asked to make deductions from source materials, learn from each other and solve problems collaboratively, less evident in earlier studies and not a strong influence in Hattie’s research.

Assessment was the final dominant instructional strategy cited by Dinham (2008). “Two things that characterised the teaching of these successful teachers were frequent, varied assessment and frequent, constructive feedback Designed to help students know what they can and cannot do” (p. 34). The concluding commentary suggested these teachers were not exam-crammers or teachers who taught to the test. Rather than teaching to the HSC, they saw their role as teaching beyond it and stretching their students.

More than any other study reviewed, Dinham’s (2008) research had many similarities to the present study, operating in a similar tertiary exam context. Dinham’s analysis of leaders and teachers in NSW secondary schools found that school culture, faculty teams, teachers personal knowledge and relationships with students, their engagement with professional development and the teaching strategies they adopted, all contributed greatly to student success. The current study also focused on similar features of leaders and teachers work in the context of Western Australian Catholic secondary schools, twelve years on from Dinham’s project.

Another Australian study, Zbar, Kimber and Marshall (2009) undertook a review of eight high performing disadvantaged schools; two secondary and six primary in the state of Victoria. They sought to ascertain characteristics of the leadership of these schools, teaching practices and common cultural features. They argued, echoing the language of Marzano et, al., that “good, strong, stable leadership, which does the right things, is the pre-condition for improving teaching.” (p. 6). The findings of Zbar, Kimber and Marshall (2009) highlight the importance of shared leadership, high levels of expectation and teacher efficacy, an orderly learning environment, a focus on what matters most (in this case literacy and numeracy) and attention to sustaining improvement over time. While the students in this study came from disadvantaged backgrounds, the authors quoted the then Prime Minister of Australia Julia Gillard as they argued that “disadvantage is not destiny” (p. 5) and cannot be used as an excuse for poor outcomes. Having high expectations raised both student achievement and teacher efficacy.

There is a consistent message in almost every study cited in this chapter, clear goals and high expectations have a strong influence on student outcomes. Research on expectancy theory over many years indicates that teacher expectations can have either a positive or negative effect on student achievement

(Good, 1987; Good & Brophy, 2003; Good & Weinstein 1986; Raudenbush, 1984; Warren, 2002; Weinstein, 2002). Pellegrini and Blatchford (2000) noted that lowered expectations, particularly for minority groups were a major factor in their poor academic achievement. Rubie-Davies, Hattie and Hamilton (2006), also made a salient point when they argued that “expectations may be exemplified in the learning opportunities provided, in the affective climate created and in the interactional content and context of the classroom” (p. 430).

Zbar, Kimber and Marshall (2009) strongly supported the contention of Rubie-Davies et al. (2006) when they argued that a safe and orderly environment is a prerequisite for strong student achievement, stating that it was “a fundamental precondition for improved teaching and learning to occur” (p. 5). In the schools in their study they found a commitment to structured and explicit teaching approaches complemented by “assessments that ensure the students are well known, that their needs have been identified and that programs are put in place to meet them” (p. 9). All of the schools in the Zbar, Kimber and Marshall (2009) study used data from assessments to drive improvement. These approaches were complemented by “comprehensive wellbeing arrangements which ensure that all students are connected to at least one teacher, particularly in the secondary schools” (p. 9). The authors referred to a study of nine urban high schools in the United States that Shields and Miles (2008), described as “leading edge” (p. 9) where researchers found an emphasis on a rigorous academic program, relevant curriculum and personalisation, where students were known by at least one significant teacher.

In another remarkably similar study, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED, 2009) examined 20 outstanding primary schools in the United Kingdom and found that the following key features were common across the 20 schools:

- They provide affection, stability and purposeful structured experiences
- They build and rebuild children’s belief in themselves
- They teach what matters and how to learn for themselves
- They listen to their pupils, value their views and act on them
- They build bridges with parents and communities
- They have high aspirations and expectations (OFSTED, 2009, p. 6).

Thus, as noted in OFSTED, (2009), the capacity of schools to ‘build bridges’ with their school communities is significant in the development of high performing and improving schools. Equally important is the ‘primacy of personal contact’, as Fullan

(2007) noted. Accordingly the present study endeavours to make the key stakeholders, students and parents, in that intangible concept the *school community*, a major focus. The next two themes in the review of the literature will focus on those two stakeholders, students and parents respectively.

2.5 The Influence of Students and their Peers on Academic Achievement

2.5.1 Introduction

Gentilucci (2004) said that “what you see depends on where you stand” (p. 133). The current study having examined the literature on leaders’ and teachers’ influence on student achievement seeks to stand in the place of students to attempt to see what they see. This theme recognises that student perceptions of their own learning are complex and significant and must be understood in any analysis of student achievement in high performing schools. Therefore, an understanding of student motivation, students’ perceptions of the affective climate of the school and the classroom, an appreciation of the influence of peers and a willingness to listen to the student voice, enriches an analysis of student achievement. Through focus group interviews with students across the nine schools, the current study seeks to give students a voice in the description of key influences on their academic achievement. The researcher now seeks to situate the present study within the context of existing research on student motivation, the influence of the affective climate of the school and the classroom, peer influences and the power of the student voice, through a review of the literature.

2.5.2 Motivation

Motivation is generally described as the driving force by which students achieve their goals. “Motivation is a need or desire that energizes behaviour and directs it toward a goal” (Myers, 2009, p. 339). Researchers have found a strong positive correlation between motivation and achievement (Geisler-Bernstein & Schmeck, 1996; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002; Schunk & Mullen, 2013; Schunk, Pintrich & Meece, 2008; Stipek, 2002; Willingham, Pollack & Lewis, 2002). An appreciation of this relationship demands that researchers attempt to understand why students are driven to learn and achieve.

2.5.3 Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation

It has long been recognised that there are two broad categories of motivation, extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation directs students to engage in activities as a means to an end whereas intrinsic motivation engages students in an activity for its own sake. Students can be engaged in an activity because the experience is worthwhile and in addition they may also wish to attain a high grade or score on the test that assesses their learning, (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). Eggen and Kauchak (2010) argued that intrinsic motivation is preferable because of its primary focus on learning and understanding that learners are more intrinsically motivated by activities or experiences that:

- *Present a challenge.* Challenge occurs when goals are moderately difficult.
- *Provide the learner with feelings of autonomy.* Learners are more motivated when they feel they have command over their own learning.
- *Evoke curiosity.* Interesting, novel and surprising experiences create intrinsic motivation.
- *Involve creativity and fantasy.* Such experiences allow learners to personalise content by using their imaginations (p. 285, italics in original).

The current study acknowledges that the context of university entrance examinations provide extrinsic motivation for many students as they aspire to gain a place in a course that meets their vocational interest. The current study also seeks to gauge what other factors similar to those outlined by Eggen and Kauchak (2010) above, intrinsically motivate students in this high stakes context to enable them to perform at their optimal level. In particular, as Schunk & Mullen (2013) argued, “it is helpful to show students how learning will help them perform better. Learners can be taught to attribute learning difficulties to causes they can control, such as low effort or poor use of strategies” (p. 68). The current study seeks to ascertain student perceptions concerning strategies they believed enhanced their learning. Exploring key motivational theories in the literature will help situate the findings and discussion of student perceptions concerning academic motivation.

2.5.4 Theories of Motivation

Eggen and Kauchak (2010) argued that there are three major theoretical views of motivation: behavioural theories, humanistic theories and social cognitive theory.

2.5.5 Behavioural Theories of Motivation

Behavioural theories of motivation are more closely linked to extrinsic drivers as they focus on rewards that change and reinforce behaviour. In secondary school settings, high test scores, grades and constructive feedback, both verbal and written, are viewed as rewards. While positive grades, test results and feedback, can be viewed as rewards and motivators, this should not infer that they play a superficial role in the learning process. Grades and test results serve as a measure of performance and aligned with feedback play an integral part in the instructional process. Using rewards to recognise increasing competence rather than simply participation is a valid exercise (Covington, 2000). Teachers who use feedback adeptly and sensitively can also enhance the teacher-student relationship and build self-efficacy in students. The current study seeks to ascertain the degree to which students view feedback and test scores as key motivators in their learning and achievement.

2.5.6 Humanistic Theories of motivation

Humanistic psychology portrays motivation as people's attempt to fulfil their potential as human beings (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). The humanistic movement places an emphasis on the whole person and is perhaps best portrayed in the work of Maslow (1968, 1970), who argued that human beings are motivated by a hierarchy of needs; namely, deficiency needs and growth needs. Maslow (1970) argued that people, will not move to higher needs such as intellectual achievement, aesthetic appreciation and self-actualisation until the deficiency needs of survival, safety, belonging and self-esteem are met. Survival needs such as shelter, warmth and food are generally taken for granted in most advanced economies and in the schools within the current study. However, in some schools catering to disadvantaged students, even these needs are sometimes not met and in extraordinary cases, schools become involved in their provision through the access of social services such as child protection agencies and onsite services such as school breakfast clubs (Red Cross, 2013). Having met what might be considered basic needs, Maslow (1970) suggested that safety from physical and emotional threat, belonging that is derived from love, acceptance from family and friends, and self-esteem which is attained through recognition and approval, is a pre-condition for intellectual achievement. Of particular interest in the current study is the degree to which students attest to teachers' and schools' awareness of and ability to meet

student needs in regard to safety, belonging and self-esteem. The research also seeks to investigate students' perceptions of the impact this provision or lack thereof has on their achievement.

While recognising the contribution of Maslow's theories it should also be noted that the earlier work of Adler (1935, 1937) and the school of individual psychology was a foundation for much of Maslow's ideas, particularly the development of the powerful motivation of the need to belong. For Adler, the need to belong and bond with others is a fundamental human motivation which he described as the "urge to community" (Adler, 1937, p. 114). Once human beings feel they belong in community, Adler argued, "they develop a desire to contribute to that community through "Gemeinschaftsgefühl" or social interest, also sometimes translated as social feeling" (Ferguson, 1989, p. 359). For Adler, belonging and a heightened sense of social interest enables contribution and encourages cooperation. Goodenow (1991), in a study of 600 early adolescent students, found that a sense of belonging in the classroom was strongly correlated with students' expectations of academic success, students' intrinsic interest and teachers' rating of student effort. Rosenberg, Mckeon and Dinero (1999) found that children who feel a sense of belonging are considered mentally healthy and "are more apt to perform proficiently, competently and responsibly" (p. 23). Schaps and Lewis (1999) argued that a sense of belonging or community was,

causally linked to students' later development of intrinsic academic motivation, concern for others....altruistic behaviour, intrinsic pro-social motivation, enjoyment of helping others learn, inclusive attitudes toward out groups and positive interpersonal behaviour in class (p. 216).

In the current study of nine high performing secondary schools, the researcher is interested to ascertain whether there is evidence to support claims that a sense of belonging and community can contribute to increased academic achievement and whether in a naturally competitive environment of selection for university placement, altruistic and pro-social motivations can co-exist in schools that build a sense of community.

Edwards and Mullis (2001) suggested that an Adlerian view of schooling places great emphasis on developing increased belonging in schools through what has been termed a 'three C's' approach by enhancing connection, capability, and the capacity to contribute. Providing students with opportunities to "connect with teachers and other students is critical to feeling a sense of belonging" (p. 200). Finding ways to enhance students' feelings of capability so that students feel

confident in facing challenges also increases their sense of belonging. Edwards and Mullis (2001) advocated finding opportunities for students to display individual strengths and talents, thus finding a personal niche. Rather than doing things for students, providing students with opportunities to contribute in meaningful ways to their school community enhances connection with others and builds capability (Edwards & Mullis, 2001). Activities that foster contribution are programs of community service, peer tutoring, peer support and charitable programs. The current study seeks to find evidence for the argument that a sense of connection, capability and contribution enhance belonging and academic achievement. More recent research (Shields & Miles, 2008; Ofsted, 2009; Darling–Hammond, 2010) has designated practical approaches to create a sense of belonging as the “personalisation” (Shields and Miles, 2008, p. 7) of the school experience.

2.5.7 Personalisation

Shields and Miles (2008) found personalisation occurred when “personal relationships between adults and students are fostered to ensure all students are known well by at least one adult” (p. 7). Personalisation was also confirmed as a key influence by Darling-Hammond (2010) in studies of disadvantaged and minority students in schools in New York and California. As previously mentioned the OFSTED (2009) study in the UK also supported this proposition.

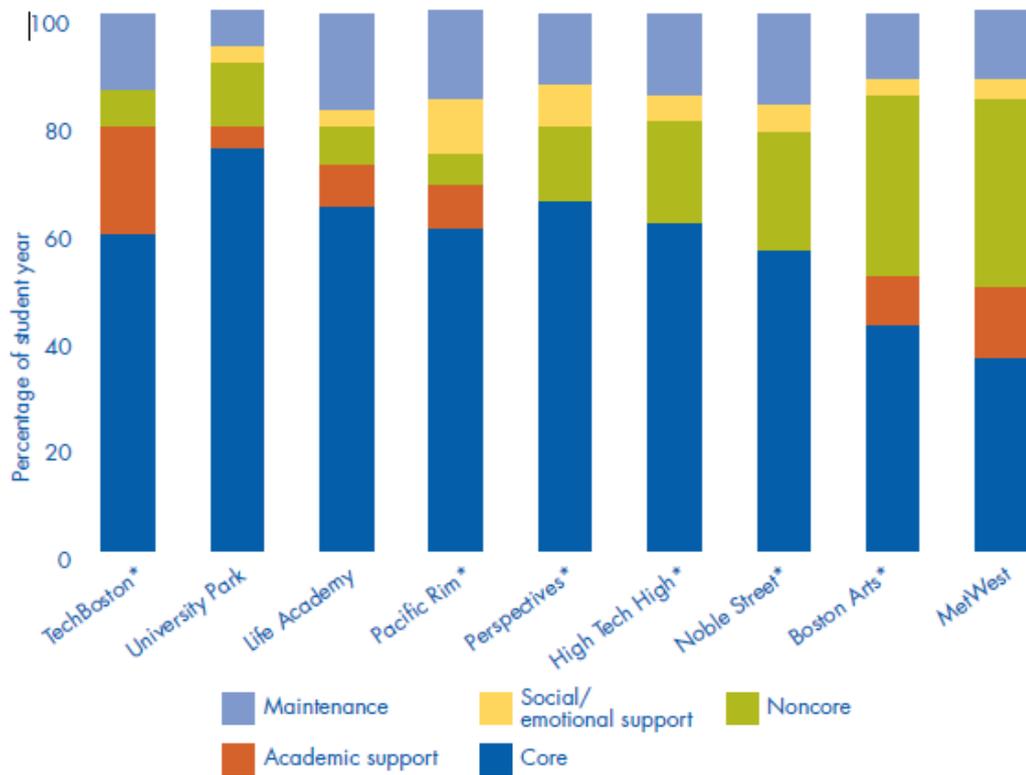
Shields and Miles (2008) conducted a USA study of nine disadvantaged small urban high schools, dubbed Leading Edge Schools, in the states of California, Massachusetts and Illinois. They found a number of common features in their instructional approaches that enabled them to outperform similar schools in their districts: an emphasis on core academics, relevance in the curriculum and a focus on personalisation. Personalisation was described as the school’s capacity to “weave into school designs, multiple ways of fostering relationships between teachers and students, rather than relying solely on advisory structures” (p. 8). Such structural supports included an endeavour to maintain smaller than usual class sizes, individual academic support and pastoral groupings where students stayed with a teacher for two years or more to help create a greater sense of community.

Shields and Miles (2008) noted that small class size alone “does not guarantee deep understanding of student needs or effective response” (p. 52). In order to promote individual attention the Leading Edge Schools used multiple data sources

to assess students' needs at entry and as they progressed through to graduation. In essence, such schools were doing what Timperley (2010) had advocated when she suggested that monitoring data on student progress was crucial to supporting motivation. In particular, most of the schools in the study focused on tests in mathematics and literacy on entry and consistent monitoring of progress through a variety of data sources thereafter:

What distinguishes Leading Edge Schools from other schools is the deliberate and active use of multiple data sources to inform school-based academic support, family and external support, and student self-monitoring.... Collaboration opportunities allowed teachers to continually monitor student progress against content benchmarks... and to differentiate academic support based on student needs. They typically do this through individual and small-group support outside the standard academic courses (p. 56)

Small class sizes of approximately 20 students and smaller teaching loads than other comparable schools enabled the offering of targeted support outside standard courses but within academic hours. These schools had extended school hours in order to facilitate these programs. It was the personalised individual attention to students needs through academic and social emotional support structures that characterised the majority of the schools in the study. Figure 2.1 overleaf represents various support structures (Shields and Miles, 2008, p. 45).



* Indicates charter or pilot school with flexibility over length of day and year.
 Note: "Maintenance" covers typical activities taken as a given in most urban high schools, such as homeroom, passing periods, and lunch.

Figure 2.2. Percentage of student year by use of time

Figure 2.1 indicates the strong attention devoted to core academic subjects and the significant amount of time in six out of the nine schools devoted to academic support in scheduled class time. The academic support was facilitated by classroom teachers as opposed to outside tutors. This enabled support time to be aligned with classroom instruction as teachers providing support already knew the individual students and the curriculum. This supports Sharratt & Fullan's (2012) call to 'put faces on the data' and individualise student support. The three schools in the study that do not appear to provide academic support; Perspectives, High Tech. High and Noble Street all offered support programs before and after school hours and during summer vacation. A typical day's timetable is illustrated by Figure 2.3 overleaf which shows the Year 9 timetable at Tech Boston. The light blue shading illustrates the time where students receive pastoral and academic support in home room, project room, or MCAS prep.

Period	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00–8:15	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom
8:20–9:17	Digital Art	IT Essentials	Freshman Seminar	Learning Center	Web Development
9:20–10:17	World History	Physics	English Language Arts	Algebra	World History
10:20–11:17	Algebra	World History	Physics	English Language Arts	Algebra
11:20–12:17	Project Room				
12:20–12:57	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:02–1:57	English Language Arts	Algebra	World History	Physics	English Language Arts
2:00–2:57	Physics	English Language Arts	Algebra	World History	Physics
3:00–4:00	MCAS Prep	MCAS Prep		MCAS Prep	

IT = Information technology, MCAS = Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

Figure 2.3 Sample student timetable at TechBoston High School (Shields & Miles, 2008, p. 44).

Project room is typical of the number of academic support programs in the schools; it is fluid and based on student need. While most students are required to attend at least one project room a number of students who have greater need would be required to attend two or three. The above timetable is illustrative of the effective use of time as a resource and a schools' capacity to set timetabling priorities that can deliver greater personal attention for students as the need is required.

In addition to the strategies discussed above, Shields and Miles (2008) cite three other common factors across the nine schools: Individual practices that emphasize knowing students more deeply through individual relationships, community practices in which relationships are developed through belonging to an established group that shares norms and time and multi-year practices that group students and teachers that extend relationships across the grades (p. 62).

Most of the schools in the Shields and Miles study used advisory programs to foster personalisation through individualized advisory programs. Such programs typically provide academic and emotional support to facilitate academic success, focus on transition programs from primary school to junior high to senior high

school, help set goals and teach appropriate study skills, provide career counselling and advise on preparation for university applications.

Community practices in the Leading Edge Schools focused on the creation of small or strategic groupings in which “students and teachers get to know each other and share interests norms and values” (Shields & Miles, 2008, p. 63). For larger schools the creation of smaller schools eg. middle schools and / or “houses” was a useful strategy to create a sense of belonging. Older students were expected to be involved in the orientation of younger students into the school community. Regular school wide meetings and house meetings also helped promote responsibility and attention to school culture.

Darling-Hammond (2010) also noted personalisation as a contributing factor in the high achieving schools that she and her colleagues studied in California and New York. These studies of large urban high schools that have been re-designed to become several smaller high schools have achieved much higher graduation rates and university entry for minority groups. One network of small schools in New York, the Internationals network, that accepted “only recent immigrant students who score in the bottom quartile on the English language proficiency test, in 2005 graduated 89% of the cohort that commenced in 1998. This compared to “only 31% for the same cohort of English language learners citywide” (p. 244).

Another large high school supporting over 3000 students, Julia Richman High School in Manhattan was redesigned into a number of smaller high schools under a project named the Coalition Campus Schools. When it was closed down in 1992, Julia Richman had a graduation rate of 36.9%, four years later as a re-established coalition of smaller schools, the graduation rate had climbed to 73% with 91% of those students college bound, well above city averages. Darling-Hammond (2010) noted that the Julia Richman model of smaller schools with an emphasis on a safe vibrant community with strong supportive social services has now become a model that has been “used to replace most of the neighbourhood zoned high schools in New York. By 2009, there were more than 300 new small schools, in New York City” (p. 244).

In the Californian study of five smaller high schools, New Tech High another low income, large minority population school, “had a graduation rate of 96% with 100% of the predominantly minority low-income students going on to 2- or 4 year college,

more than twice the rate of the state as a whole” (p. 245). Darling-Hammond (2010) noted the shared features of these five schools in California and five schools in New York, included:

1. Small size for the school or learning communities within the school
 2. Structures that allow for personalisation
 3. Intellectually challenging and relevant instruction
 4. Performance-based assessment
 5. Highly competent teachers who collaborate in planning and problem solving.
- (p. 244)

There are strong common elements between the work of schools in Darling-Hammond’s studies and the study by Shields and Miles (2008). A personalised environment, as opposed to a de-personalised environment, facilitated by smaller school size or the creation of smaller communities within a school was one key common feature. Another strong feature was the greater emphasis on teacher-student relationships which led to a parent commenting that “there is a lot more opportunity for the kids to be seen, be heard, and be noticed, to participate in just about anything they want” (p. 245). The final common feature was the creation of environments where students felt safe and where they were known. Darling-Hammond (2010) argued that such commentary emphasizes that schools focusing on the personalised experience “are associated with greater safety, more positive attitudes to schooling, higher levels of student participation and attendance, much lower drop-out rates and, depending on other design features, higher achievement” (p. 245). The current study will seek to find whether elements of the schools in the Californian and New York studies are also evident in the nine West Australian schools.

2.5.8 Social Cognition: Attribution theory

Attribution theory seeks to describe students’ explanations for their successes and failures and the way in which this influences their motivation. Weiner (1992, 2000) argued that attributions occur on three dimensions. The first is the locus or location of the cause; usually defined as internal or external in relation to the student. As an example, ability and effort are classified as internal whereas luck or task difficulty is classified as external. The second is stability, whether the cause is likely to change

or not. Ability and effort are considered quite stable and arguably controllable causes, whereas luck and task difficulty is unstable and less manageable. The third dimension is control, the extent to which students accept responsibility for their success or failure and feel they are in control of their learning. As a consequence, the way in which students respond to success or failure and attribute cause can influence their reactions to success or failure, their future success and effort and ultimately their achievement (Forsyth, Story, Kelley, & McMillan, 2009).

Brophy (2010) argued that “effort and persistence are greater when we attribute our performance to internal and controllable causes” (p. 50). Such attributions related to effort and ability give students greater belief that they can continue to achieve on similar tasks. Even when students experience poor performance, if it is attributable to insufficient knowledge or effort, these attributes are controllable and can be remedied in the future. If, for example, a student or a teacher attributed performance to low ability sense of hopelessness is possible. It is clear that attributions can affect emotional responses. Strong achievement attributed to internal causes can result in increased self-esteem and efficacy. Failure attributed to internal causes can cause guilt if related to lack of effort or shame if related to lack of ability. Conversely, success attributed to external causes such as support and care provided by a teacher can generate gratitude which can in turn be a powerful motivator. Failure attributed to an external cause such as a teacher perceived as incompetent or unable to care for a student can generate blame.

The implications for teaching are relatively self-evident, but most importantly, teachers need to appreciate how powerful attributions are and use them to either sustain student performance or turn it around. As an example, a belief in the power of effort can help students develop a positive outlook under most circumstances and avoid a learned helplessness that could arise from the perception that a lack of success was due to a lack of ability. Subtle careful feedback that builds understanding about the task and information related to the performance should be combined with expressions of appreciation of effort which reinforces confidence in ability. Effort also allows students to reject what Seligman (2011) refers to as ‘learned helplessness’ which can influence students affectively in terms of the development of anxiety and depression. Cognitively such students run the risk of developing a learned behaviour in that they expect to fail. Seligman suggested that students should be moved towards a more success oriented learning approach, namely ‘learned optimism’. His theory is best understood in the context of positive psychology where he and others (Nobel & McGrath, 2013; Seligman &

Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder, Lopez & Pedrotti 2011; Waters, 2013) have advocated for the use of positive psychology to foster character strengths and wellbeing in students.

2.5.9 Positive Psychology and Well Being

Our capacity to control our emotions to a point where fear of failure for example does not develop into anxiety can have a significant effect on achievement. Supporting this argument' and taking it further, Seligman (2011) said "optimal performance is tied to good well-being; the higher the positive morale, the better the performance" (p. 147). Seligman defined well-being as consisting of five elements:

- Positive emotion
- Engagement
- Meaning
- Accomplishment
- Positive relationships (p. 16-21)

Positive emotions are characterised by a happiness derived from self-esteem, life satisfaction and optimism. Engagement comes when we are so immersed in something that time almost stands still, as individuals are completely absorbed in the task. Meaning in our lives is defined by Seligman (2011) as "belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self ... connections to other people and relationships are what give meaning and purpose to life" (p. 17). Possibly the most contentious of Seligman's claims is that accomplishment (or achievement), "the achieving life", pursued for its own sake, is an integral part of well-being. There is a natural tendency to be cautious around such a claim because it might be argued that not everyone can achieve and be accomplished. In a similar observation of the earlier analysis of motivation, where de-motivation is even more influential than motivation, a life without any achievement and sense of accomplishment has the potential to be a life devoid of well-being. The current study seeks to ascertain the perceptions of students about the degree to which their teachers were able to foster a sense of accomplishment and achievement in their pupils that was authentic and which contributed to their personal well-being.

A positive relationship is the fifth element of Seligman's definition of well-being. Seligman (2011) noted that "when asked what, in two words or fewer, positive

psychology is about, Christopher Peterson, one of its founders, replied, 'other people' " (p. 20). Seligman made a very good case when he said:

Very little that is positive is solitary. When was the last time you laughed uproariously? The last time you felt indescribable joy? The last time you sensed profound meaning and purpose? The last time you felt enormously proud of an accomplishment. Even without knowing the particulars of these high points of your life, I know their form: all of them took place around other people (p. 20).

In many ways, this last element of Seligman's construct of well-being and his commentary above, validates the earlier discussion of the important place that has been accorded to the teacher-student relationship (and that of accomplishment within it). Learning is not generally a solitary pursuit; we learn in relationship with others, even in community with others. Noble and McGrath (2013) also attest that a range of relationships including the parent-child relationship, relationships with a caring adult, positive teacher-student relationships and peer relationships are a foundation for resiliency (pp. 21-26). Miller and Rollnick (2002) noted that "motivation in many ways is an interpersonal process... it arises from an interpersonal context... and is itself a proper task even the most important and necessary task in helping relationships such as health, care and education" (p. 22). The interpersonal relationship is particularly important in the context of the peer cohort. Having addressed a number of theoretical positions concerning the role of motivation and its influence on student achievement and recognising its complex and powerful interpersonal context it is useful to analyse the influence of peer association on academic achievement of students as another key interpersonal context.

2.5.10 Peer Association

There is a strong body of evidence that peer relationships play a significant role in academic achievement and motivation (Buhs, Ladd, & Herald, 2006; Hattie, 2009; Nichols & White, 2001; Rosenberg, McKeon & Dinero, 1999; Ryan, 2011; Stewart, 2008; Wentzel, 2009; Wilkinson & Fung, 2002). Hattie (2009) stated that "peers can influence learning in a myriad of ways such as helping, tutoring, providing friendship, giving feedback and making class/school a place students want to come to each day" (p. 105). Peers ability to provide emotional support and social facilitation is cited by Hattie (2009) as contributing positively in the development of a school and classroom environment. Hattie (2009) found that peer influences on student

achievement can be considerable ($d = 0.53$) and in particular, peer tutoring had a significant effect size ($d = 0.55$). Conversely, Buhs, Ladd and Herald (2006) showed the link between low classroom peer acceptance and student disengagement with negative influences on academic achievement.

The study by Stewart (2008) of nearly 12,000 students from 715 American high schools, showed “that individual-level predictors, such as student effort, parent–child discussion, and associations with positive peers, played a substantial role in increasing students’ achievement” (p. 179). Student effort is characterized by the level of school attachment, involvement, and commitment displayed by students. Peer association is cited by Stewart (2008) as a significant influence on achievement:

Peer groups have been cited as important to adolescent development (Nichols & White, 2001). In fact, as Nichols and White pointed out, there is a recognized need to account for peer group context as an important factor in adolescent socialization, motivation, and achievement (p. 181).

Stewart (2008) found that in addition to the need for a strong relationship with an adult teacher, students also require a connection with their peers and benefit from the supportive influence of their parents. Stewart (2008) noted that peer relationships serve varied functions and could potentially be either positive or negative, but students who had relationships with positive peers who support academic achievement had significantly higher academic attainment: “As adolescents associate with friends who value education and are committed to academic pursuits, they create attachments to school and conform to the ideals associated with it” (p. 197).

Nichols and White (2001), in a study of adolescent high school students, argued that student peer groups had a strong positive influence on achievement and that when achievement occurred, it also became a “significant clustering factor for clique group formation”, and where that formation occurred there was evidence of further academic achievement. When peer groups are closely linked as friends and acquaintances they tend to yield more influence (Goldsmith, 2004). Significantly, students who were identified as lying on the periphery of the larger student body described as “floaters, loaners or invisible and overlooked” (Nichols & White, p. 268) had lower mean scores on achievement. This was particularly true of students identified as loners or overlooked, who had mean scores less than the peripherals

and less than the those identified as belonging to the larger body of clique groups. The authors suggested that teachers and schools would do well to first recognise the powerful influence of peer networks, and if possible, to enhance student opportunities to find a niche group to belong to by creating classroom opportunities for cooperative learning activities that not only serve an instructional purpose but a social one. Rosenberg, McKeon and Dinero (1999) strongly supported this view by advocating the use of specially designed programs that create and support positive peer groups. In such programs, students are given opportunities to learn responsibility and are asked to contribute to their school community through service activities. In many ways the program reflects the earlier notion of Adler's "Gemeinschaftsgefühl", or social interest, and also lends itself to the earlier observations of programs that attempt to foster personalisation of the school environment.

In the current study of academically high performing schools, the researcher seeks to ascertain the influence of peers on attitudes to academic achievement. Specifically, whether within a year 12 cohort, there can be a dominant collective peer disposition to achieve that reinforces a pro-school culture and strengthens performance. Chen, Dornbusch and Liu (2007) argued that "the predictive power of attitudinal similarity on friendship is recognised by early social psychologists" (p. 3). In essence a "selection effect" comes into play and students with similar attitudes congregate together and over time similar dispositions intensify. While it must be recognised that this is just as true of peer relationships that are based on delinquent or negative dispositions, the current study which focuses on high performing cohorts seeks to investigate whether a critical mass of students with pro-academic dispositions might be an influence on the cohort as a whole and more particularly whether students themselves recognise this. The current study also seeks to examine whether teachers and the school leadership can enhance the creation of such a culture without their efforts appearing artificial and if so, determine what students observe as positive interventions?

Stewart (2008) and Nichols and White's (2001) findings are supported by Seligman (2011) when he noted that positive relationships are a crucial element of personal well-being and it might be argued that positive peer relationships may even heighten that sense of well-being. Such relationships, argued Seligman, provide connections to others that give a purpose and meaning to life. Cooperative, collaborative experiences between peers in supportive relationships and community

has the potential to influence learning in a significant manner (Snyder, Lopez & Pedrotti, 2011).

In the specific context of high achieving schools where it might be argued competition could potentially negate collaboration, cooperation and positive peer relationships; the researcher is particularly interested to ascertain the degree to which both competition and cooperation can co-exist. In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to privilege the student voice and align the findings from student perspectives with leaders, teachers and parents. The literature concerning the role of student voice has argued that students must be heard, their participation in the conversation concerning what makes an effective school and what are the characteristics of effective teachers cannot thus be ignored.

2.6 The Student Voice: Introduction

Ruddock (2006) looked at the concept of student voice literature from the 1970's onwards and made the telling observation that early researchers in the field were told that "children were not competent to judge these (effective teaching) matters" and Meighan (as cited in Ruddock, 2006) noted that at the time "there were only a few studies of schooling from the point of view of the learners" (p. 131). However, Ruddock made the further observation that now there is an almost 'zeitgeist commitment' to student voice.

Including student perceptions in this study has the capacity to both enhance and validate data gained from leaders and teachers. If leaders and teachers are making claims about their practice, it will be important to see to what degree those claims are confirmed by students and to what degree the views of students around leadership and teaching practice enhance an understanding of their impact on student motivation and achievement. There is a large body of literature (Dinham, 2008; Frost, 2009; Hattie, 2003, 2009, 2012, 2014, Leithwood, 2010; Marzano, 2003; Masters, 2010; Robinson, 2010; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008) on leaders' and teachers' perceptions on effective teaching and schools, however there is relatively little on student perceptions of effective teachers and leaders. Given the enormous resources and energy directed at improving student achievement, there is a significant body of research that has argued students are capable of insightful reflections concerning their experiences of learning in the classroom (Beresford, 2003; Flutter & Ruddock, 2004; Pedder and McIntyre, 2006; Robinson and Taylor,

2007; Ruddock, 2006; Watts and Youens, 2007). More recently, there is an increasing call to put structures in place that formally facilitate student feedback on teaching performance (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013; Jensen and Reichl, 2011b; Nous Group, National Institute of labour Studies & Melbourne Graduate School of Education, 2011).

2.6.1 The role of the student voice

In the earlier reference to the role of leadership on student achievement, the ‘indirect’ or mediated influence on student achievement by leaders was noted. Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003), in a meta-analysis of 70 studies on principal leadership, found certain ‘direct’ leadership practices such as classroom visitation, frequently interacting with students, publicly celebrating accomplishments and maintaining visibility around the school as correlated with improved student achievement. Gentiluci and Muto (2007) argued that research identifying relationships between leadership and student achievement is problematic unless it considers the perspectives of the ‘consumer’ (i.e., the students). They noted the earlier commentary of (Foster, 1997; & Gentiluci, 2004) which expressed concerns that schools do not routinely ask their students what they think about their experiences, instead they rely on evidence provided by adults who are “outside” of the student perspective. Gentiluci and Muto (2007) refer to the sociologists Hammersley and Woods (1984) who stated that:

There can be little doubt that pupils’ own interpretations of school processes represent a crucial link in the educational chain. Unless we understand how pupils respond to different forms of pedagogy and school organization and why they respond in the ways that they do, our efforts to increase the effectiveness, or to change the impact of schooling will stand little chance of success (p. 3).

In their study of 39 eighth graders in three USA middle schools, Gentiluci and Muto (2007) noted that students identified direct and highly influential instructional leadership behaviours, impacting on student achievement. Among these were principal approachability, interactive classroom observation and/or visitation, and instructional leadership behaviours that firmly establish administrators as the “principal teachers” (p. 219). A significant finding was the observation of students that “distinguished between principals who acted merely as watchful ‘sentries’ around campus and those who cultivated an approachable persona by consistently engaging with students” (p. 228).

Birkett (2001) in the Guardian newspaper's survey of 15,000 students entitled *The School We'd Like* identified nine key concerns summarised as "schools we'd like":

- A beautiful school
- A comfortable school
- A safe school
- A listening school
- A flexible school
- A respectful school
- A school without walls
- A school for everybody from all backgrounds (p.1)

Birkett noted that at the heart of every entry was the common plea of being heard. But there is more to being heard as Furman (2004) observed. Being heard must be complemented by deep or intentional listening which is an invitation for others "to tell their stories of who they are and what their lives are like" (Furman, 2004, p. 224) and in doing so, she suggested community and connectedness will be developed. She reminds her readers that in order for this to occur, deep listening "involves suspending one's own assumptions, judgments and emotional reaction" (Furman, 2004, p. 224). This is precisely why an interpretative phenomenological analysis which utilises bracketing as a tool has been chosen as the methodological approach for the current study. Isaacs (1999) made an astute point when he said "often when we listen to others we may discover that we are *listening from disturbance*, in other words, we are listening from an emotional memory rather than from the present moment" (p. 98). This is an apt reminder for the researcher intent on capturing the authentic voice of students in the dialogue of semi structured interviews.

Ruddock (2006) argued that students are analytical and observant and should not be viewed as passive objects but as active players in any effort to gather data on effective schools and effective teaching. A major aim of this study is to hear students' views not only about the leadership in their school but most importantly about the elements of effective teaching they have experienced. The current research seeks to investigate what students claim is effective for them and to amplify the student voice from a whisper on the periphery of the school improvement research to confident commentary about the intimate phenomenon described as the teacher-student relationship.

Hattie (2009) noted that while teachers have the capacity to make a real difference in student achievement they are also the single greatest cause of variance within schools. His work interrogates what specific practices separate “expert” teachers from “experienced” teachers. He speaks of the concept that teaching and learning are highly visible.

What is most important is that teaching and learning is visible to the student, and that the learning is visible to the teacher. The more the student becomes the teacher and the more the teacher becomes the learner, then the more successful the outcomes (p. 25).

If this is so, it strengthens the case that the closest observers of visible teaching and learning are the students; therefore researchers should be examining what is visible to them. Hattie argued that the quality of teaching ‘*as perceived by students*’ is a critical factor in teachers’ influence on student achievement. It can be argued therefore that students’ perceptions will be a valid data source.

The United Kingdom Home Office (2003) report, *Every Child Matters*, highlighted the concern with young people’s perspectives replicated in an increased body of literature devoted to listening to the views of students. The UK government green paper was a response to an increased incidence of children in the United Kingdom suffering from neglect and in a number of extreme cases dying at the hands of violent parents or carers. In its consultation with children, the report concluded that there were five immediate outcomes that needed to be achieved and which mattered most to children and young people:

- Being healthy: enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle;
- Staying safe: being protected from harm and neglect;
- Enjoying and achieving: getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood;
- Making a positive contribution: Being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour;
- Economic well-being: not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life (p. 6).

While the report was responding to broad social welfare issues and in particular, services related to child protection, it had much to offer the educational community as well and touched on a number of concepts visited in the earlier discussion of Adler (1937), Maslow (1968, 1970) and Seligman (2011). The most striking feature

of the report is the immediacy of the children's voices and their emphasis on social and emotional wellbeing, opportunities for achievement, the need to feel safe and the desire to be connected to a community. Needless to say, the importance of being asked 'what mattered' to them is the other salient element of such a report.

Frost and Holden (2008) explored the concept of student voice in a broader fashion emphasizing the importance of consultation with students in the search for school improvement and noting that the process has the capacity to gain insights into academic achievement and social and emotional wellbeing. They suggest that this has enormous potential for seeing students as partners in making decisions about their schools and their own future. Frost and Holden (2008) reviewed research over fifteen years and suggested schools should explore ways to involve students more in future oriented work such as school improvement. This study hopes to do just that and in doing so, may help inform the work of a number of individual schools as well as the collective work of the Catholic school system in Western Australia. Without the student voice there is a risk of not seeing what is so clearly visible to those who matter most, our students, as this quote from Beresford (2003) so lucidly illustrates:

A Dutch student, following on from a Finnish head who had claimed to know everything about his own school, suggested to the audience of an international education conference that I see things you could never see (p. 122).

It is hoped this study might bring those 'things' to light. Pedder and McIntyre (2006), confirming the sentiment of the Dutch student above, argued that such a process of consultation has the potential to unearth valuable "social capital" (p. 145). Social capital as defined by Bourdieu (1992), Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000) implies that benefits accrue from membership of social groups but unless we realise that potential, such benefits may be lost. Social capital is embodied in groups that develop relationships of trust and mutual respect, regarding each other as a resource. Pedder and McIntyre (2006) argued that pupils and teachers make claims on each other. Pupils make claims on the professional expertise of their teachers while teachers make claims on the insights of their students' experiences of teaching and learning. Notwithstanding the criticism of the use of the term 'social capital' by researchers such as Fine (2002), Fischer (2005), Haynes (2009) and Woolcock (1999) who contest the colonisation of an economic term 'capital' by sociologists such as Bourdieu (1992), Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000); the researcher sees value in the way Pedder and McIntyre (2006) and later Mulford

(2007) use the term in an educational setting. This is particularly evident in the term's capacity to describe bonding and bridging relationships between teachers and students, between leaders and teachers, in professional learning communities of teachers and between schools and external partners where relationships accrue trust and trust creates attachment and belonging.

Thus, Pedder and McIntyre (2006) regard consultation with students as a valuable 'social capital' resource. In a study of three secondary schools in the United Kingdom, the authors sought the views of year 8 students about the quality of teaching in their English, Mathematics and Science classes. Student perceptions were investigated concerning what they did, or did not, find helpful in their teachers' teaching. The year 8 pupils in the study revealed: Awareness of how they prefer to learn and what motivates them, awareness of how their peers prefer to learn and what motivates them and awareness of the perspectives that shape the practice of their teachers (p. 149). This commentary not only reflects an impressive 'meta-cognitive' grasp of their learning, but also of the wider classroom context of their peers' learning and decisions taken by their teachers to support such learning.

2.6.2 Summary: The role of the student voice.

The case for the inclusion of the student voice in the current study has been shown to be compelling. The literature has argued that students are credible observers of leaders and teachers and as Watts and Youen (2007) stated, we should "harness the potential" (p. 18) of student perceptions. Student perceptions concerning what they have seen and experienced should be heard, and indeed, without their voice, schools and teachers may not be capable of developing targeted responses to identified needs. In a similar fashion, the voice of parents must be respected and the current study seeks to exploit parental observations of their children's learning, their children's connection to teachers and the school, as well as the role that they themselves play as an influence on their children's achievement.

2.7 The role of parents and their influence on student academic achievement: Introduction

Having established the importance of the place of the teacher-student relationship, the student-peer relationship, and the need to be cognisant of the

student voice, it is clear that relational factors play a key role in the day-to-day life of the school community. Last but not least in the themes of this literature review, is the role of parents as partners in the education of their children and the fundamental importance of the parent-child relationship, the teacher-parent relationship and the broader parent-school relationship. The literature confirms the presence of parents in the social relationships of the school and importantly for this study, their potential to influence academic achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Bryk, Lee and Holland, 1993; Epstein, 2009, 2010; Fullan, 2005; Jeynes, 2005, 2007; Spera, Wentzel and Matto, 2009; Simon, 2009; Stewart, 2008).

The researcher seeks to situate the present study within the literature examining the effect of parents' relationships with teachers, schools and their children. Fullan (2005) stated that "in all of our work with schools and districts, the question of how best to relate to parents and the community is right up there with changing school cultures on the scale of difficulty" (p. 60). It is pertinent that Fullan uses the verb "to relate" as it is indeed the relationship that parents have with teachers and the school that can be a powerful force for good, or a benign force that can promote indifference at best and subversion at worst.

Bryk and Schneider (2002) argued that the "social relationships at work in school communities comprise a fundamental feature of their operations" (p. 5). In response and in recognition of Fullan's claim that the relationship with parents can be difficult, Bryk and Schneider (2002) offer the notion of relational trust as a key resource for school improvement and academic achievement.

2.7.1 Relational trust.

For Bryk and Schneider (2002), relational trust is comprised of "the distinctive qualities of interpersonal social exchanges in school communities" (p. 12). The authors cited the following qualities as integral features of relational trust: respect, competence, personal regard for others and integrity. Bryk and Schneider (2002) stated that respect in the context of schooling, "involves recognition of the important role each person plays in a child's education and the mutual dependencies that exist among various parties in this activity. Key in this regard is how conversation takes place within a school community" (p. 23). It must be noted that 'conversation' can be both formal and informal. There are obvious formal avenues of communication such as parent teacher evenings and student reports that can promote opportunities for

conversation. However, opportunities for informal conversation between parents and teachers need to be encouraged in schools and in order for this to happen, schools need to be inviting places where parents are made to feel welcomed as valued partners. Parents desire and deserve communication about their children's progress. Conversely, teachers and schools in general need to be affirmed for the valuable work that they do. Bryk and Schneider (2002) argued that:

...good teaching touches the soul of those who practice it...Thus, for instrumental reasons regarding effective instruction and for teachers to derive psychic rewards from their personal interactions with students, teachers remain quite dependent on parental support to feel good about their work. (p. 27-28).

This observation captures the interdependent nature of human relationships that drive social relationships and builds what the authors refer to as social capital. Bryk and Schneider (2002) drawing on the work of Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000) argued "that civic engagement depends on the nature of social ties among community members, in particular their levels of interpersonal trust" (p. 13). In turn, these social ties create what Coleman (1988) defined as social capital, a concept referred to in the earlier theme which addressed the value of the student voice. Coleman argued that social capital is evidenced by high levels of interconnectedness and as a consequence, greater levels of communication, understanding and appreciation of mutual obligation, which produces trustworthiness.

Applied to schools, Bryk and Schneider (2002) posited that this theory of interconnectedness allows individuals "to define themselves as connected to that person or organisation (for example, these are *my friends, my school, my community*) and undertake subsequent actions because this identification is meaningful to them" (p. 15). Putnam's work in the context of American society has challenged all involved in social organisations to reflect on the decline of connectedness or social capital. Putnam (2004) cited declines in "ties to family, friends, civic associations, political parties, labour unions, religious groups and so on.... many people in other countries feel that a similar decay in community and family bonds has occurred there too" (p. 15). Reflecting on this proposition, it might be argued that schools as Bryk and Schneider (2002) noted above, have the capacity to address the deficit of connectedness precisely because they are an "intrinsically social enterprise" (p. 19), but if they are to do so, they must be inclusive and draw on the potential of the parent body as an equally valid vein of social capital.

The second integral feature of Bryk and Schneider's (2002) concept of interpersonal trust is competence, an aspect of an individual's formal role responsibility. As an example, parents have the right to expect that teachers are capable of managing a class and providing adequate instruction. They also have the right to expect that a principal is capable of providing administrative and instructional leadership so that the school is well maintained, orderly and meeting educational standards. In return the school has the right to expect that parents are supportive of the school's mission, get their children to school regularly and on time. Incompetence on the side of either party, damages trust and the relationship is likely to falter.

Personal regard for others is the third key ingredient in relational trust. Bryk and Schneider (2002) define personal regard as "any actions taken by a member of a role set to reduce others' sense of vulnerability....such actions are typically interpreted as an expression of benevolent intentions" (p. 25). It could be argued that parents are often one of the most vulnerable groups in school communities, sitting as they do in the grandstand of the everyday enactment of schooling; they are rarely invited onto the field of play. More often than not, they are not even at the stadium, relying on a wide variety of reports from their children and living their child's experience vicariously. The most vulnerable of parents are often those with the least confidence to enter into a relationship because of prior lack of education themselves, migrants with language impediments, or a self-consciousness based on socio-economic difference.

Attempts to reduce this vulnerability translates as an expression of care; principals caring for teachers, teachers caring for students and teachers willing to meet with parents outside of school hours and in wider local community events. Such actions invite reciprocation and intensify relationships, and as a consequence, Putnam's perceived deficit of social capital is addressed and members of the community may begin to experience a high degree of social affiliation. In an earlier study of Catholic urban high schools, Bryk, Lee and Holland (1993) in a 10 year study of Catholic schools argued the level of care provided by the schools significantly enhanced relational connections. The researcher in the current study seeks to investigate whether there is evidence of a significant level of care in the nine identified Catholic secondary schools.

The fourth and final feature of interpersonal trust is the concept of integrity. The authors defined integrity as consistency in what people say and do. In an

institutional sense, this would be evidenced in the way a school lives its mission and attempts to meet the competing needs of its constituents, particularly evidenced by its capability to authentically recognise parents as partners in their children's education. In relation to this concept of integrity, the Catholic school system in Western Australia is mandated by the Bishops of Western Australia to be true to an articulated ethos and purpose, stressing its responsibilities to students and parents, CECWA, 2009. In a welcome to parents and carers the Bishop's Mandate noted the following:

As parents we acknowledge that you...

- are the first educators of your child
- support your child's faith journey
- value the Catholic school's identity and ethos
- seek educational excellence
- support the educational process
- expect what is best for your child
- expect your child's educational needs to be met
- expect your child's gifts to be celebrated
- hope your child makes a valuable contribution to Australian society
- endorse pastoral care as a priority
- work at building constructive relationships with the school
- support the partnership between parish and school
- are aware that financial grounds should not prevent your child from experiencing a Catholic education (CECWA, 2009 p. 1)

The Mandate emphasises the important role that parents play in the education of their children but equally and very subtly, notes that there is a reciprocal responsibility in the school-parent relationship. This 'mandate' reminds the schools in the system that if they are to have the integrity that Bryk and Schneider (2002) refer to, they must live such a mission in their everyday interaction with parents and conversely, parents are invited to work with and support the schools in this endeavour. The current study seeks to ascertain to what degree the nine identified schools in the Catholic system exhibit the qualities that build interpersonal trust; respect, competence, personal regard for others and integrity that Bryk & Schneider have argued for. Perhaps even more importantly the current study may be able to

measure the extent to which the identified schools live out the expectations of the above mandate, a challenge in itself.

2.7.2 Parental involvement and academic achievement.

Having established the importance of relational trust in schools and specifically, trusting relationships between parents and teachers and parents and the school itself, it is important to address the literature that explores how increased parental involvement can influence academic achievement. Jeynes (2007) conducted a meta analysis of 52 studies with well over 300,000 subjects involving urban secondary schools in the United States. Jeynes' study found that influence of parental involvement significantly affected academic achievement for secondary school students. Parental involvement affected all the academic variables under study, namely, "academic achievement, combined grades, standardised tests, and other measures that generally included teacher rating scales and indices of academic attitudes and behaviours" (p. 82). Parental involvement as a whole had an effect size of $d = 0.55$, with the positive effect holding for both white and minority groups. In an earlier study, Jeynes (2005a) found that for primary school children the effect size was even larger, up to $d = 0.75$, which may be explained by the greater amount of time and involvement of parents in the earlier years of children's education.

In the Jeynes (2007) study, specific variables of parental involvement were measured. These included parental expectations, attendance and participation in school functions, communication between parents and students about school activities and the extent to which they reported a high level of communication overall, involvement with homework and parental style. Most of these terms are self explanatory, however, "parental style" (p. 89) requires some elaboration. Jeynes (2007) described parental style, as the "extent to which a parent demonstrated a supportive and helpful parenting approach... this most frequently referred to a simultaneous ability to be loving and supportive and yet maintain an adequate level of discipline in the household" (p. 89). Of the variables mentioned above, parental expectations and parental style had the greatest influence. Parental expectations had an effect size of $d = 0.80$ and parental style had an effect size of $d = 0.40$, all other variables were statistically significant but not as large as these two variables. The current study of high performing academic schools seeks to ascertain the influence of parental expectations and parental style on student achievement.

In a study where 13,500 middle and high school parents in the United States from one large public school system were surveyed, Spera, Wentzel and Matto (2009), examined parental aspirations for their children in relation to ethnicity, parental education, children's academic performance and parental perceptions of school climate. Their study indicated that all parents, regardless of ethnicity (African American, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic), had relatively high aspirations for their children and the literature argued that parental aspirations are "significantly and positively related to their children's setting of goals, persistence in school and intellectual accomplishments" (p. 1140). Many of the minority parents also confirmed education as a vehicle for upward mobility, but interestingly, the authors noted this did not translate to ongoing university enrolments after high school. Spera, Wentzel and Matto (2009) suggested that such a finding may be due to the fact that with little educational background of their own, ethnic parents "may not be able to easily translate their educational aspirations into parental involvement in schoolwork and fostering of educational activities" (p. 1149).

Spera, Wentzel and Matto's (2009) findings raises the question of what schools and teachers do to overcome this vulnerability, a term which was alluded to in the study by Bryk and Schneider (2002). It may also be argued that there could be a significant number of non-ethnic parents in many schools who also experience a similar frustration based on socio-economic disadvantage and poor educational attainment. The current study seeks to observe what actions schools have taken to minimise parental vulnerability where it may occur, in high performing schools, admittedly in slightly different socio-cultural contexts. Notwithstanding the Australian context and the variation in cultural and socio-economic background across the nine schools, parental vulnerability can manifest itself for many reasons, for example, parents who are time poor due to work commitments, a lack of encouragement from schools to become involved in the school community, few volunteering opportunities and poor communication between school and home.

The study by Spera, Wentzel and Matto (2009) also found that there was a "bi-directional" (p. 1150) relationship between children's academic performance and parental aspirations. Children who performed well in school had parents with high aspirations and they argued that these parents influenced students' performance "perhaps by influencing children's' own expectations about their academic attainment" (p. 1149). Such findings suggest that schools should take advantage of this knowledge in order to disseminate the importance of 'high aspirations' and help build and intensify the reciprocal relationship described here. The researcher will be

interested to examine whether any of the schools in the current study communicate concepts concerning high expectations to parents in formal or informal avenues.

In a national sample of 715 high schools in the United States, Stewart (2008) used data to examine, among other variables, parental involvement and its relationship to student achievement. Stewart argued that a growing body of research (Epstein, 1991; Feuerstein, 2000; Parcel & Dufur, 2001; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005), has shown that “students perform better academically when their parents are involved with their child’s schooling... overall the research has shown that parents are instrumental to their children’s academic success” (p. 182). It was also suggested by Stewart (2008) that parental involvement may have an indirect influence on their child’s in-school activities and academic success through involvement with school and academic policies. Students in the Stewart (2008) study (some 12,000) were surveyed on a number of items that related to how they viewed their parents involvement in school activities, meeting and volunteer programs, with a view to creating an index of parental involvement. Students were also asked to indicate the degree to which they engaged in discussion with their parents concerning “selection of courses, school activities, and things studied in class (p. 189)”.

Parent-child discussion was found by Stewart (2008), to be significantly associated with academic achievement which the author argued could be utilised as an effective tool to raise student achievement. Parental involvement in school activities was not found to be a significant influence on academic achievement. Stewart argued that this did not mean parental involvement in formal activities in school was not desirable; merely that academically relevant discussion about school at home was more influential. Thus it might be reasonable to assume that parents who initiate conversation about school, show an interest in their child’s study and homework, send positive signals about school and are generally supportive, can have an influence on their child’s achievement. A similar study by Simon (2009), of well over 11,000 parents of high school seniors also found that family partnerships positively influenced academic achievement in the final years of schooling and that schools who reached out to parents facilitated this influence. The current study seeks to ascertain whether this is also evident in the perceptions of parents in the nine identified schools in Western Australia.

The recognition of the social capital that parents bring to the educational endeavour is documented in the context of Singapore. Khong and Ng (2005) made

the case that while Singapore achieves outcomes in both educational and economic terms disproportionate to its size, with the country consistently being one of the top five countries in the world on Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMSS) data, (in fact it was first in mathematics and science in 1995, 1999, 2003 and more recently in 2011); its education system seeks to examine ways it can further improve. Policy levers such as Community and Parents in Support of Schools (COMPASS, 1998), that produced greater collaboration with parents in a partnership in the educational process, are seen as one way of improving student achievement further. Epstein's (2010) model of school-home-community partnership has been adapted and implemented in the Singaporean context. Epstein's six types of involvement interactions operate within a theory of overlapping spheres and act as a framework for school personnel, family and community members to collaborate in the interests of increasing parental involvement and student achievement. The six types of involvement are defined as:

- Type 1 - Parenting – helping all families establish home environments to support children as students
- Type 2 - Communicating – design effective forms of school to home and home to school communications about school programs and student's progress
- Type 3 - Volunteering - recruit and organise parent help and support
- Type 4 - Learning at home – provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum related activities, decisions, and planning
- Type 5 - Decision making – Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives
- Type 6 - Collaborating with community – identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development (p. 704).

Epstein also argued that if schools can put the six types of family and community involvement in schools into practice, that a number of "caring" behaviours emerge:

Synonyms for "caring" match the six types of involvement: Type 1, parenting: supporting, nurturing, and rearing; Type 2, communicating: relating, reviewing, and overseeing; Type 3, volunteering: supervising and fostering; Type 4, learning at home: managing, recognizing, and rewarding; Type 5, decision making: contributing, considering, and judging; and Type 6, collaborating with the community: sharing and giving. (p. 710)

Epstein's (2010) model supports the claim that behaviours that build relational trust are in essence caring behaviours and while schools have a pastoral responsibility to care for students, there is an argument that suggests such care should also be extended to parents.

Setting up Parent-Teacher Associations and Parent Support Groups throughout the public school system in Singapore was the first step in the process of facilitating the six types of school-home-community involvement. Such an endeavour was undertaken, not just with the aim of enabling student achievement, but to also have a pro-social influence in supporting parents who face greater social challenges such as single parenting due to higher divorce rates, dual income parents who are time poor, parents who work overseas for long periods of time and challenges to traditional value systems by influential media (Khong & Ng, 2005).

Relevant literature certainly supports the proposition that parental involvement in the educational lives of their children can enhance achievement. In addition, a Flemish study by Vyerma and Vetterburg (2009) of 250, ten year old students, found that students themselves "on average 'rather liked' parent participation" (p. 112) in their school life and that children from lower socio-economic schools appreciated parental involvement the most. The degree to which Vyerma and Vetterburg's study translates to the current study of older, late adolescent students is debateable, but it raises a worthwhile observation, that it is appropriate to ask students whether they see value in their parents participation in their school life and if so, what type of participation do they report and prefer. Such perceptions may be ascertained through the semi-structured interviews of students across the nine schools in the current study.

In an Australian study, Ewington and McPherson (1998) examined parents' perceptions of the effectiveness of schools in the state of Tasmania. A key finding from this study was that parents want to have a voice in both how their schools operate and in being provided with opportunities to express their views. The study found that only 2-5% of Tasmanian parents were involved in school governance. Lower socio-economic, single parents, ethnic minorities and those working shift hours were rarely involved in school governance. In the light of increasingly complex family structures often with both parents working, there is a need for more flexible modes of communication with parents and more flexible opportunities to participate. Ewington and McPherson stated that "In essence they will have to have their say at a time that is convenient to them and in ways they find congenial". Parents also

observed that a common language of communication with them is preferable to the “specialised language professionals use” (p. 39). The difficulty that parents have with specialised educational jargon was also borne out in a New Zealand study by Clinton, Hattie and Dixon (2007) which noted that specialised educational jargon can be an impediment to the realisation of parents’ expectations of their children. Parent’s perceptions on the accessibility and clarity of school communication will be investigated in the current study.

2.7.3 Parent constructive behaviour and adolescent affiliation.

Highlighting the complex nature of parental influence on student achievement Chen, Dornbusch and Liu (2007) investigated “direct and indirect pathways through which parental constructive behaviour may influence adolescent’s affiliation with achievement-oriented peers” (p. 837). In a longitudinal study of parents and Year 9 – 12 students from nine Californian high schools, the authors sought to test both direct and indirect effects of parental influence on student peer association. Indirect pathways are described by the authors as aspects of family life “such as parenting styles that are not explicitly designed to affect peer relationships, whereas the direct pathway includes parental strategies that aim at controlling or enhancing children’s experiences with peers” (p. 838). In all, the authors surveyed well over 5,000 students. Findings revealed that parents may have an influence on adolescent peer associations through facilitation, approval or disapproval, conversations about friends and meeting other parents (Dornbusch & Liu, 2007). They also found that while there is the expectation that parental influence on peer associations in adolescence is expected to decrease, some studies have found that this is not so.

In the earlier discussion of peer association in the third theme of this literature review, it was noted that adolescents who endorse academic achievement could be expected to develop relationships with other students who hold similar attitudes. Chen, Dornbusch and Liu (2007) noted the predictive power of attitudinal similarity. However, they attempted to observe indirect processes of the peer selection effect *and* parental socialisation in friendship formation, through the provision of a “supportive milieu” (p. 839). The authors also expected to find a direct effect of parental constructive behaviour on adolescents’ association with achievement-oriented friends due to the literature that had observed this influence in studies of younger children. Rubin and Sloman (1984) argued that parents have the power of influencing children’s pool of friends through selection of residential areas and

schools, arranging playmates visits, providing rides and enrolling their children into specific programs. Parke et al. (1989) noted that parents serve as gatekeepers in the management of children's relationships because they often initiate, facilitate and monitor friendship groups.

Of interest to the researcher in the current study, is that Chen, Dornbusch and Liu (2007) found that:

“the perceived achievement orientation of friends at 11th and 12th grades remain comparable to, and sometimes stronger than, the within wave correlations in the 9th and 10th grades....concurrent parental constructive behaviour has a direct association with the adolescent perception of friends' achievement orientation above and beyond the stability effect of the prior perceived achievement orientation of friends” (p. 852).

The authors also found that direct effects of “parental behaviour on adolescents' peer affiliation remain” (p. 852). A by-product of the study was that adolescent girls had a higher affiliation with achievement-oriented peers than adolescent boys, suggesting that parental support for boys is possibly more crucial. This study by Chen, Dornbusch and Liu (2007) recognised that attentive and supportive parents not only have the potential to influence their child's academic achievement on an individual level, through their involvement in their child's academic pursuits at home, but they may have the capacity to compound their influence on student academic achievement by indirect and direct behaviours that affect their sons' and daughters' peer associations, confirming that parental influence on student academic achievement is indeed a multi-dimensional construct.

Chen, Dornbusch and Liu (2007) recognised that a limiting feature of their study was an exclusive reliance on student perceptions of parental behaviours. The current study, while not employing a comprehensive survey of students, does seek to interview *both* students and parents, concerning perceptions about student achievement and parental behaviours, as well as behaviours that may support such achievement and influence affiliations with achievement oriented peers. The latter influence of affiliations with achievement oriented peers may be more conspicuous in the context of the current study, given that its focus is on high performing schools.

A study that did utilise data from both parents and young adolescents in the context of the transition to high school was that undertaken by Falbo, Lein and Amador (2001). The authors sought to find what types of parental involvement were effective in facilitating the transition of students from elementary school into high school. The success of the transition was defined by student academic performance

as determined by final grades and their school attendance. The authors conducted in-home interviews with 26 students as well as their parents. They concluded that there were five major contributing behaviours of parents that enabled a successful transition to high school:

- Monitoring the teens academic and social life
- Evaluating the information obtained about the teen
- Helping the teen with school work
- Creating positive peer networks for the teen
- And participating directly in the school (p. 511)

Of interest to the researcher was the inter-relatedness of some of these factors because it is apparent that one behaviour might be a medium for another type of interaction with a son/daughter. For example, parents who assiduously monitored their teens' academic and social life, were in a much better position to gain information and evaluate it in order to offer support. This was particularly true for interventions such as helping with homework which was also not simply an academic exercise. More often than not, the authors noted that helping with homework became an occasion when empathy and support were required as conversations turned to broader interpersonal student concerns. Attachment to parents and peers can provide students with the capacity to adapt to the academic and social challenges of school.

2.7.4 Influence of parental and peer attachment.

Having noted the multi-dimensional nature of parental influence on student achievement, it is useful to refer to Fass and Taubman's (2002) study of the influence of parental and peer attachment on university students' achievement, in the context of another transition, from school to university. The study of 357 multi-ethnic university students sought to examine relationships between attachment to parents and peers, cognitive ability, psychosocial functioning and academic achievement. Their study was particularly relevant as the cohort was a late adolescent group not much older than the students in the current study who were also making a similar transition from high school to university.

Fass and Tubman (2002) found that:

“perceived attachment to both parents and peers is a component of wider patterns of social competence and adjustment, that may function as protective or compensatory factors during key transitions in young adulthood such as participation in college and its attendant demands for academic achievement” (p. 561).

The study found a relationship between attachment to parents or peers and academic performance, and concluded that “attachment quality may be a significant compensatory factor in social transitions in the college years” (p.569). Students with the highest attachment to parents and to peers were significantly better functioning than all groups in the study.

Fass and Tubman (2002) argued that psycho-social turning points or stressful transitions are often significant opportunities to observe how protective factors operate within broader systems (such as schools), to direct, in this case young adults, into adaptive pathways. In the context of the current study, this observation is particularly useful, as the researcher is inquisitive to see what schools, teachers and of course parents, might be able to offer as protective or compensatory interventions to reduce stress and anxiety. The minimisation of stress and anxiety may possibly enhance performance at this critical transition, enabling the experience to become a turning point rather than a tipping point. Further, the current study may have the capacity to make an observation about whether the “joint effects of parental and peer attachment” (p. 561) described by Fass and Tubman (2002) exist in the lives of the students interviewed in the nine schools under investigation.

2.7.5 Teachers and family-school partnerships.

In this review of the literature, it has been established that parents do have the capacity to influence the achievement of their sons and daughters through a variety of behaviours, and as a group, they generally do desire to have a say and be involved in the school. If parents are to play a constructive part in their child’s education they require the support of the school but most importantly a willing reception from teachers. Pelco and Ries (1999) examined the attitudes and behaviours of teachers towards family-school partnerships by surveying over 400 public school teachers from the American state of Virginia, who taught children from the ages of 4-18. The survey asked teachers to reflect on the importance of family involvement in schools, how often they used strategies to contact families, the percentage of their student’s families who participated in school activities, the quality of strategies employed by their schools to engage parents, the importance of

teacher-family initiated activities and the level of support they perceive for family school collaboration from parents, colleagues and administrators. The authors found that across all groups, teachers reported an “overwhelming level of support for family involvement in schools.... (99%) agreed or strongly agreed that parental involvement is important for a good school” (p. 269). However, when teachers were asked to assess their individual support of parental involvement, lower school teachers reported slightly higher levels of involvement with parents than their middle or upper school counterparts.

On the topic of teacher initiated contact, middle and upper school teachers were more likely to contact parents when their child was in trouble or having problems. Teachers from all levels disagreed with the proposition that teachers did not have the time to contact parents. Teachers across all levels agreed that “teachers need in-service education to implement effective parent involvement practices” (Pelco & Ries, 1999, p. 270) in fact 77% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposition.

Pelco and Ries (1999) found that the majority of teachers did have high expectations of parents supporting the education of their children, but in reality, teachers across all levels said that there was only weak support from parents for family-school collaboration. Such a finding was not evident in earlier studies discussed in this review (e.g., Epstein, 1995; Bryk and Schneider, 2002). Moreover, the majority of upper school teachers believed that parents “do not want to be involved more than they are” (p. 270). This perception may not be a negative finding, as it might be argued that students at this age need to develop independence and resilience and it is only normal for parents to be a little less involved with their children’s schooling in the upper secondary context. Slightly less involvement does not mean they are less supportive, rather their support may come from more indirect and less public involvement such as emotional support at home, “as family involvement is a multi-dimensional construct” (p. 272).

These findings are important for the current study, given that far too often the researcher would suggest that teachers and schools assume that parents of older students are less inclined to be involved in their children’s education. The literature has recognised this desire for involvement and also argued that teachers in the upper years do participate in that relationship in a significant manner. The researcher is interested in seeing the degree to which teachers in the nine identified schools share similar values to those expressed in the Pelco and Ries (1999) study

noting that the teaching cohort interviewed, teach predominantly in the upper years an area that the authors argued needed more research.

2.7.6 School choice: What parents value.

Given that there have been relatively few studies in Australia that have deliberately engaged the parent voice concerning perceptions of their child's secondary school experience, it is perhaps useful to examine the school choice debate as it has enabled discussion concerning what parents value in schools. In Australia, the capacity for parents to provide insights into what they, as a group, valued in schooling was borne out by Beavis (2004). While contextualized in the public versus private schools debate, parental commentary nevertheless raised a concern that "to date there has been little real evidence to show what really does influence parents when choosing a school" (p. 2). The report examined what perceptions of schools parents have, which may shape their selection of private or public schools. A brief glimpse into parent perceptions is provided in the following quotation from the report:

Parents selecting private schools spoke about their provision of traditional values as being important, the emblematic school uniform and the cultural traditions of the school. Parents choosing Catholic schools spoke of the provision of sound discipline, religious values and, like their other private counterparts, the school uniform. Parents selecting government schools spoke of the academic and social and cultural security. The range of subjects available and the location of the school were also important (p. 4).

The current study seeks to explore the degree to which parents in the nine Catholic schools being investigated attach similar importance to discipline, religious values and uniform or whether other values come to the fore.

A more recent (2011) study by Independent Schools Queensland, entitled 'What Parents Want' found that academic performance of a school, while important, is not the most important reason for sending children to private schools. The single most important factor cited by parents was 'preparation for the student to fulfil potential in later life' (20.3%) followed by the school's capacity to 'meet the individual needs of their child' (9.4%). The third highest ranking factor was 'strong academic reputation' (8.8% of responses) (p. 24).

The current study seeks to ascertain what factors parents describe as influential in their choice of Catholic schools and whether the description of the relationship

between parents and schools, described by the National Catholic Education Commission of Australia (NCEC, 2011) below is evident in the nine schools in the current study.

Catholic school parents have an expectation that their children's education is focused on the growth of the child both cognitively, physically, socially and spiritually. NCEC believes that, as a school's primary function is the development of the whole person, schools must necessarily work in close connection with families and communities. Catholic schools embrace the parent-school partnership and endeavour to offer formal and informal environments where parents' involvement and engagement are encouraged and welcomed through high quality parent-teacher relationships, parent associations and school boards (p.14).

The NCEC argued such emphases are prime examples of the residual 'value add' for Catholic schools, apparent after all student-level and school-level influences on performance (that are more readily subject to quantitative analysis) are considered. Marks' (2009) study, which examined university admission scores across different school sectors, reinforced this view. He noted that higher levels of academic school performance, despite similar socio-economic backgrounds to government school students, may be attributed to higher levels of parental and community involvement and the academic environment within Catholic schools. More specifically, "the academic environment (as indexed by average PISA test scores) is the major school-level contributor to sector differences in tertiary entrance performance" (p. 34). The current study, while not comparing Catholic school performance with government school performance, seeks to ascertain whether parent involvement, standards of discipline and an emphasis on academic performance are evident in the high performing schools in this study.

2.7.7 Parent feedback

Of further interest to this study are parents' perceptions about the attributes of school leaders and teachers in high achieving schools because their insights may contribute to further school improvement and feedback to both groups. Jensen (2011a) in a report by the Grattan Institute put forward an argument for greater parental involvement in the provision of feedback to schools on teacher performance, stating that:

Parent feedback broadens the view of teacher performance and provides the perspective of a distinct and important party in education. Parent feedback allows teachers to reflect on how they relate to both students and parents. It

strengthens collaboration between parents and teachers. Parents' unique knowledge about their child's education can be used to inform appraisals and contribute to teacher improvement (p. 22).

Jensen refers to the work of Dwyer (1995), Stronge and Ostrander (1997) and Peterson et al. (2003) who suggest that parent surveys are best used in conjunction with other data sources such as student surveys, teacher tests, pupil achievement data and documentation of professional activity conceptually linked to school improvement. The present study seeks to do just that, recognising that a multidimensional approach to the gathering of data that links a variety of sources and correlates the findings, will provide a richer picture of schools that work well.

In summarising the literature on parental influence on student achievement, Hargraves and Fink (2006) emphasise that sustainable leadership in improving schools focuses as a matter of priority, on involving parents in their child's learning. As Ewington and Macpherson (1998) argued, the "enduring lesson from all the research on effective schools is that better schools are more tightly linked structurally, symbolically and culturally than less effective ones. Staff, parents and students share a sense of direction" (p. 32). This study will seek to ascertain whether the identified schools provide evidence for such an assertion.

Jeynes (2011) suggested that having recognised the powerful influence of parental involvement on student achievement, "schools need to identify what creative actions are most likely to attract parents to become involved" (p. 172). The current study, in its examination of high performing Catholic secondary schools, seeks to confirm whether parents have had a significant influence on achievement and if so, how the nine identified schools provided opportunities for parental participation. The current study also seeks to ascertain whether there are any unique cultural features of the identified schools that enhanced parental participation.

2.8 Chapter Summary

The literature review has been structured around four key themes:

- The role of leaders in effective and improving schools
- The role of teachers and their influence on academic achievement
- The role of students and their peers on academic achievement
- The role of parents and their influence on student academic achievement

These four themes are aligned to the four research questions outlined in chapter one. They have highlighted the role of key agents in high performing schools: leaders, teachers, students and parents. It is clear from the literature that they do not operate in isolation from each other and indeed there is inter-connectedness between them all. In relation to their study Mulford et al. (2007, p. 228) argue that:

In examining who should provide the evidence for successful school leadership the need for triangulation, that is multiple sources of evidence, became clear. Research employing only principal perceptions of success, especially on the importance in student outcomes, should be examined much more critically than has occurred in the past.

The current study in its focus on four separate data sources goes some way to answering the challenge of Mulford et al.

Having situated the study within an extensive body of literature, it is important to outline the methodological procedure that might best suit an investigation that seeks to describe the 'gestalt' of these four roles and their influence on academic achievement in schools. As noted in Chapter 1, Walker (2011) described effective leadership as "connective activity" (p. 3). He argued that this activity utilises three connective pathways: 'cultural connectors' of beliefs and values of the school collective, 'structural connectors' or formal physical structures and 'relational connectors' how people relate to each other personally (p. 9). It is argued that the review of the literature confirms his claim. Further, as Denzen and Lincoln (2003) noted, a methodology consisting "of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (p. 4), is required to best represent the world of the nine schools under investigation in the current study. The qualitative methodological approach is outlined in Chapter 3.