School Governance, School Leadership and School Effectiveness

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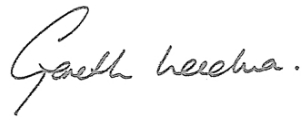
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Ethics committee approval has been obtained for this research (protocol numbers 5201400547 and 5201600275).

Signed

Gareth David Leechman

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Abstract

Good school governance by way of school boards and school councils has long been recognised in the Australian Independent school sector and elsewhere as being a key factor in contributing to the development of high performing schools. This practice has now moved into government schools where current policies, in Victoria and Western Australia, devolve school management in some instances to locally created school boards and councils. This devolution of management responsibility away from centralised control in education has also occurred internationally. The use of school councils in government schools in England for instance, is well established and the growth of charter schools in the United States of America, over the past twenty years, has witnessed the increased need for locally created school boards and councils. The expansion of school councils emerged from the neo-liberal ideas of school choice and the belief that local school governance leads to greater autonomy, effectiveness and financially efficient schools which meet the needs of their local community albeit most often within regulatory frameworks for curriculum, assessment and teacher standards.

Whilst research in the area of governance in general is quite significant, little research has been undertaken internationally, and in Australia, on the processes that lead to good school governance. In particular little research exists which relates to the relationships that exist between the chair of school council, school principal, members of school council and the school executive. This reflexive study used a mixed methods approach to analyse the processes of good school governance within 18 schools of the Anglican Schools Corporation in NSW Australia, which together represent a wide cross-section of school types and contexts. Its intention was to investigate and, if possible, create a good practice school governance framework. The study commenced with the development of a conceptual framework derived from the available corporate, organisational and educational literature. The next phase of research was qualitative in nature and involved one-to-one interviews with six chairs of council and nine school principals, further developing the framework. The final phase used quantitative research methodology to survey chairs of school council, school principals, members of school council and school executive teams about their opinions of the emerging framework. The good school governance framework generated by the study contributes to further research and theory development in the field of educational leadership, education policy, and school practice.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Whilst research in the area of governance in general is quite significant, little research has been undertaken internationally, and in Australia, on the processes that lead to good school governance. In particular little research exists which relates to the relationships that exist between the chair of school council, school principal, members of school council and the school executive. This reflexive study used a mixed methods approach to analyse the processes of good school governance within 18 schools of the Anglican Schools Corporation in NSW Australia, which together represent a wide cross-section of school types and contexts. Its intention was to investigate and, if possible, create a good practice school governance framework. The study commenced with the development of a conceptual framework derived from the available corporate, organisational and educational literature. The next phase of research was qualitative in nature and involved one-to-one interviews with six chairs of council and nine school principals, further developing the framework. The final phase used quantitative research methodology to survey chairs of school council, school principals, members of school council and school executive teams about their opinions of the emerging framework. The genesis of the study is outlined in the following section.

1.1   Personal reflection on school governance

When commencing their educational career, very rarely do people start at the top as a school principal. Virtually all school principals experience a similar career journey: they start their professional lives as a teacher, achieving a high level of competency and, at some later stage, experience the opportunity to work in middle leadership. Then, if they so desire or are approached, they will take the next step to an executive role, such as a deputy principal. Finally, if they aspire to experience the final step they can pursue the role of school principal.

For those school principals in the independent educational sector, and for an increasing number in the public education sector, this final step will not only involve leading their school communities but reporting to, working with and serving a board of school governors. This relationship brings greater complexity to the role of school principal and is one area of which aspirant principals are very apprehensive (McCulla & Degenhardt, 2015).

From my own personal journey of leading two independent schools, a great deal was learnt very quickly about the importance of school governance and its intersection with the management of the school. At the time there was very little in the way of preparation for aspiring or new school principals

in the art of school governance. The experience in both positions of school leadership revealed the need to "manage up" was as crucial as the need to "manage down".

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to investigate how school governors intersect with the leadership and management of the school and how, in a reciprocal fashion, the leadership and management of the school intersect with the school governors. The study had its genesis in my personal reflections on governance in my own role as a school principal. Insight into these is provided in the sections which follow.

My first appointment as school principal

My first appointment to the role of school principal was to a newly established regional low-fee Anglican school. Through the interview process for this role a great deal of discussion centered on school development, establishing and nurturing a school vision, improving academic performance, and facilitating enrolment growth. Only a few questions related to the issue of school governance.

The school was governed by a school council with a total of eight members consisting of local clergy, a retired teacher, parents, other interested parties and Bishop in Council appointments. The Diocesan Investment Fund was the school's bank and the school's financial position was tabled at the monthly Bishop in Council meetings. The school held significant financial debts which were at that stage guaranteed by the Anglican Diocese who owned the school.

Within weeks of arrival, the Diocesan Registrar informed me that the Diocese was no longer in a position to guarantee the school's debt and that prudent financial management of the college was urgently required. As a result of the shared information by the Diocesan Registrar and my own findings a detailed analysis of the school's financial position was created. In short, the conclusion was that the school was in fact trading insolvent and capitalising its debts by borrowing to pay its interest bills.

A serious issue relating to the governance of the school now had to be solved effectively and quickly for the Anglican Diocese risked facing financial bankruptcy as a result of the debt the school had created. The role I had been originally appointed for had fundamentally changed. This role now required creation of a viable financial model for the school to adopt, at the centre of which would be the potential to grow and in time pay its debts. What followed over the course of the next two and a half years was a complete reconstruction of the school's business model, and additionally the role of school council and Bishop in Council.

What governance lessons were learnt from my first appointment as principal?

During those two and a half years a great deal was learnt about school governance, in particular, how important it was for school governors to successfully intersect with the management of the school and, in a circular fashion, how important it was for school management to effectively intersect with

the school governors. Such understanding was not gained from textbooks, courses, articles or workshops but from a lived and personal experience focused on on-the-ground decisions and interactions with the governance arrangements of the school served and in the context in which it operated.

One of the earliest and most valuable lessons learnt was the importance of appointing the right people to the role of school governor. As stated earlier, the council was comprised of eight people which theoretically possessed a balance of skills that could be drawn upon: local businessmen, four Anglican Diocese representatives, a doctor and a retired teacher. These people should have had the collective experience and skill set to manage a small rural school which operated on a tight budget. So why then were they not the right people?

The reality was these school governors were not trained nor equipped with the right skills to do the following:

- possess a deep understanding of the core business of the school. It became clear that they did not fully understand the context in which the school was created, the type of school that needed to be nurtured nor the appropriate business model and financial ratios which would support the continued and successful existence of the school.

- ask the right questions of the school principal to ensure that they possessed a deep understanding of the operations of the school, including correct enrolment positions, budget irregularities and so on. In short, it was clear that the school principal's reports were not being adequately questioned or probed.

- the ability to hold the school principal to account. No formal performance review structure existed for the school principal and there seemed to be no accountability measures put in place. This was of real concern because since the school's inception no budget target had been met and there seemed to be no account as to the reasons why this was occurring.

- the ability to see the critical problem that they were now facing. The real and true financial position of the school had to be clearly and directly pointed out to the school council. Once pointed out to them they initially showed an inability to handle the problem that they needed to immediately grapple with. Indeed, the position they now faced was actually more challenging than what any small local school council could realistically be expected to handle. It did require the intervention of a larger, more powerful body and this came in the form of senior representation from the Anglican Diocese itself and the Anglican Church nationally.

However, over a two and a half year period, the governance of the school improved significantly and as a result, so did the overall performance of the school in virtually every aspect including academic

achievement, budget performance, enrolment growth and its reputation in the local area all improved. Lessons learnt about school leadership and school governance from my first, but relatively brief time as principal of this school prepared me well for my second appointment as a school principal. However, the second appointment taught me more about the importance of school governance.

My second appointment as a principal

When appointed to the role of principal at my second school, the school council and the Board of the Anglican Schools Corporation knew there was a requirement to reinvigorate an underperforming school. At the time, the school was suffering from a number of issues including falling enrolments, budget blowouts, low staff morale and poor levels of educational attainment. Like the previous appointment, this leadership role required a reconstruction of the college and the need to turn it into a viable entity, not just administratively but educationally as well. This mission had to be achieved without de-stabilising staff, parents, enrolment base and the college in general. Any increase in costs was out of the question. There was one important point of difference in this appointment in comparison to the first which was that the new school council was clearly aware that the school had issues that needed to be urgently addressed and that the new Headmaster was charged with implementing the required changes to effectively deal with them.

A second important point of difference in this appointment was that a double governance structure existed in the organisation. The Anglican Schools Corporation (ASC) owned and operated, at that time (2010), seventeen schools within the Anglican Diocese of Sydney and possessed a centralised administrative structure. This provided a series of benefits, one of which was an increased level of financial security for member schools. However, at a practical level, the day to day operations of the school rested in the leadership of the school principal and the school's performance and that of the principal was largely assigned to a local school council. Thus as stated earlier, there was little interference from the Board of the ASC in the day to day operations of the school but regular educational, financial and management reports were submitted by each member school to the Board of ASC as a means of maintaining an active, though relatively distant, oversight of each member school. In theory, this double governance structure was designed to prevent schools from spiraling out of control, thus weakening the long-term viability of each individual school and the ASC itself.

Very similar issues relating to matters of school governance existed in this school as had been the case previously. The school council struggled to understand its core business and educational context. It failed to ask the right questions of the school principal and it did not hold the principal to account. Moreover, it was reluctantly coming to terms with the critical problems that the school faced and, finally, it did not attract the right people onto the school council. However, whilst there were clear similarities there were also some very important differences in their approach to the governance of the school that both helped and hindered the situation the school was facing.

The most helpful characteristic was the council's open admission that the school was facing issues. Right from the point of interview, the council members knew what the issues were, and wanted them addressed. The school council was acutely aware of the declining enrolment and budget position, and the general decline of the school's reputation within the wider region. They knew that they had performance-related issues with several members of the teaching staff, middle leadership and even executive members of the school. They also knew that there were behavioural issues with several students and that the school itself was not engaging properly with their school community. All of these issues were made clear during the final stages of the appointment and interview process. As the incoming principal, it was most useful to have a clear picture of what needed to be done in the first few months as leader.

Whilst characterised in a broad sense by these positive features, the governance structure was equally hindered by an exceptionally strong chair of council who clearly moved from a position as governor to one as pseudo manager. Therefore, during a time of crisis for the school, the demarcation line between governing the school and leading and managing the school had clearly been blurred, if not broken, and this was severely impeding the reform process.

By being able to observe a dominant chair of council in action whilst serving in the position of school principal, the following governance implications were identified:

- school council meetings became restricted in terms of discussion and other members of council became reluctant to express their views even if their ideas, opinions and views were of clear value.

- school council meetings became drawn out and the timing of the meetings was questionable. Late Friday night meetings were not the right time for strategic decisions to be considered, let alone made.

- a dominant chair of council who became too personally involved distorted effective decision making and the implementation of the resulting decisions even more challenging. At times this led to an inability to achieve clarity of thought when it came to matters of important strategic weight.

Over time a clear process of governance change was nonetheless implemented and the school is now in an improved position and is achieving pleasing outcomes. Enrolment growth, a lift in academic achievement, budget surplus, reinvestment in the school and a growing reputation within the community have all been tangible outcomes of governance changes.

Summary

From the first two appointments in the role of school principal, a great deal was learnt about the importance of school governance and somewhat ironically, the lack of preparation aspiring or new school leaders receive in the way of it. One key lesson learnt was that effective school governance can lead to positive outcomes for the school communities that they serve, but the opposite was also true that ineffectual school governance can have a negative impact on their school communities. This simple thesis has been supported anecdotally by various conversations I have had, in a variety of different contexts, with school principals and school governors. Consistently emerging from these discussions and my own personal experience was the important issue of how school governors and the leadership and management of schools intersect with one another for the betterment of their school communities.

Reflecting on my principalships to date, a number of propositions in the area of school governance started to emerge.

1. Chairs of school council who understand their role and what constitutes effective governance looks like, tend to lead effective school councils

2. School Principals who understand the context of the schools they serve and who can build effective working relationships with their school council can have a positive impact on the schools they lead

3. School Principal preparation must include professional development in the area of school governance

4. Effective school governance is essential if schools are going to be effective places of learning and development

5. There is a lack of awareness by members of school council as to what their responsibilities are. This has important implications to the recruitment and induction programs for new members of school council.

Finally, these reflections led to a number of important questions: What is indeed best practice for effective school governance? How is this defined? Is it impacted upon by the development stage of the school? Does the geographic location of the school impact the availability of school council members?

The Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate and develop these early observations, reflections and propositions of good school governance through an exploration of the related literature and by

undertaking research within the governance structures of the Anglican Schools Corporation to identify what characterises good school governance.

The study is structured in the following way.

Chapter 2 represents Phase 1 of the research design. It provides an overview of the literature in the area of governance and school governance and how it intersects with the leadership and management of schools. The chapter explores ideas and themes about school governance from within the Australian independent education sector, the British public education sector, the charter school movement across the United States of America as well as governance literature taken from the corporate not-for-profit sector.

Chapter 3 provides a provisional framework, based on the findings of Chapter 2, of the processes which lead to good school governance.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the research design and methodology for the within school component of this study. It outlines and discusses the processes used to conduct the research and the methods by which data was analysed, conclusions drawn and recommendations made in Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the study.

Chapter 5 analyses the data and discusses the results from Phase 2 of the research, the qualitative component, that focuses on interviews about school governance held with school principals and chairs of council from within the Anglican Schools Corporation.

Chapter 6 analyses the data and discusses the results from Phase 3 of the research, the quantitative component, which was gathered from surveying members from the various school councils and executive staff from within the Anglican Schools Corporation, further developing the tentative framework created in the first phase of the study.

Chapter 7 provides a detailed discussion of the findings from all three phases of the research and makes a series of recommendations.

Chapter 8 takes the findings from the research and seeks to identify implications these might have for further research in the area of school governance.

Chapter 9 provides an overview of the conceptual governance framework

Chapter 10 provides a conclusion to the thesis

Chapter 2
Literature Review

Chapter 2, as Phase 1 of the study, provides an overview of the literature in the area of governance and, more specifically, school governance and how it intersects with the leadership and management of schools. The chapter explores ideas and themes about school governance from within the Australian independent education sector, the British public education sector, the charter school movement across the United States of America as well as governance literature taken from the corporate not-for-profit sector.

2.1   Introduction – Phase 1 of the study

The first phase of the study involved an exploration of the research literature available in the area of governance and school governance. Literature that pertained to the not-for-profit sector, the Australian Independent education sector, the English education system and the charter school movement emerging from the United States of America was analysed. A comparison of the themes that emerged from these four sectors enabled a first draft of a conceptual framework for good school governance to be formed.

2.2   Corporate governance – Characteristics of effective not-for-profit organisation Boards and Councils

The literature that focuses closely on corporate governance points to a comprehensive set of characteristics which effective not-for-profit boards display, these being: vision, strategy, accountability, trust, chair capacity, chair - CEO relationship, CEO appointment, board recruitment, board induction and relationships and finally procedures and content.

2.2.1 – Vision

The first characteristic of an effective, not-for-profit organisation is a clearly articulated vision or mission statement based in results terminology, succinctness and authoritative generation. This vision or mission statement is embodied throughout the organisation. Importantly, it is not something that remains unexamined, rather, it is constantly reviewed. The boards or councils of these organisations exhibit the capacity to cradle the vision, identify what might derail it and plan to cope with any internal or external forces that might impede the aim of achieving the vision they have set for themselves (Carver, 1997; Brountas, 2004; Walkley, 2011; McCormick et al, 2006). These boards or councils remain committed to achieving the long-term vision. In attempting to 'think big' they set themselves appropriate long and short-term goals centered on the collective task of turning the vision

into a reality (Carver, 1997; O'Connell & Brountas, 2004). In view of this, they are clearly forward thinking and value-orientated (Carver, 1997).

2.2.2 – Strategy

A further key feature of effective boards and councils is their focus on matters of strategic importance rather than operational activity. In other words, they provide strategic oversight of the organisation, not the management of it and, crucially, understand the fundamental differences in respect of these. They understand that it is their responsibility as governors to develop strategy, review it and assess whether it is being achieved in the organisation. Conversely, they leave the managing of the organisation to the appointed executive staff under the direction of the CEO. (Carver, 1997; Brountas, 2004; Kiel & Nicholson, 2003; Walkley, 2014). The board is tasked with setting the policy and the management team is required to implement it but as part of establishing their strategies boards must have the capacity to explicitly develop effective board policies (Carver, 1997). However, the bigger an issue, the more likely it is the problem of the board (Carver, 1997; Holly, 2003).

2.2.3 – Accountability

Accountability to key stakeholders is an additional trait of effective boards and councils. They must have a well-developed understanding that there might, at times, be the need to make decisions that cause short-term displeasure. In demonstrating the courage and leadership to make the right decisions, it is acknowledged that this can often result in commendation of the governors or the CEO, or both. In a diametric sense, effective boards and councils can just as easily be endorsed for their wisdom and foresight. Good governance therefore is equally about accountability and responsibility (Carver, 1997; Brountas, 2004; Kiel & Nicholson, 2003; McCormick et al, 2006).

Not only do effective boards and councils remain accountable to their key stakeholders, they also keep their CEO accountable to the board. They empower the CEO to make the required decisions to turn the vision of the organisation into a reality, but in turn they must also hold the CEO to account for their decisions.

2.2.4 – Trust

Effective boards and councils have the capacity to build an effective and trusting working relationship between themselves and the CEO (Carver, 1997). It is well demonstrated across the literature that the CEO can often become a gatekeeper of information to the board. Therefore, it is essential that the CEO never surprises the board with controversial information or anything potentially problematic that threatens the success of achieving the organisation's vision (Brountas, 2004). In instances where sensitive matters demand attention, this should be raised prior to the board meeting, especially with the chair of council who will then be in a position to steer an effective resolution to the matter (Walkley, 2012).

In developing this process of trust, the CEO needs to understand that the board and especially the chair must know him or her. If a strong relationship of trust can be built then there will be an increased willingness to share information and knowledge. The more information and knowledge that can be shared the greater the atmosphere of trust. This integral component of trust can also create an environment where boards can develop the capacity to question and act as a critical friend to the CEO. As an extension of this, the literature often emphasises disagreements as a virtue not a vice (Carver, 1997; Brountas, 2004; Walkley, 2012). Therefore, the relationship between the board and the CEO is often seen as essential to the success of the organisation (Brountas, 2004; Kiel & Nicholson, 2003; Walkley, 2011).

2.2.5 – Capacity of the chair

Trust in a board will be significantly built around the capacity of the chair of the board. Effective chairs are characterised by their ability to set appropriate agendas, enable board meetings to run smoothly (Carver, 1997), keep the board focused on core business, enable efficient use of time, deal with matters pertaining to public relations, mentor other members of the board and work with the CEO (Kiel & Nicholson, 2003; Walkley, 2011; McCormick et al, 2006; Holly, 2003). Effective chairs are able to instill a desire within the board to regularly challenge themselves as well as review their own performance (Brountas, 2004;Kiel & Nicholson, 2003) and they never view the company as reaching a point of completion, rather they empower the board to constantly imagine and plan for future goals (Carver, 1997).

2.2.6 – Chair and CEO relationship

The final component of trust is the relationship the CEO has with the chair (Walkley, 2011; Holly, 2003). If an open, positive and respectful relationship can be created between the CEO and the board chair, it will go a long way in developing trust amongst the board. Therefore, a board will be looking to their CEO to have the capacity to set the company's direction, act as the company's chief communicator and set the tone of the company's culture. The CEO will be assessed by how well he/she is able to lead their executive team and manage both the human and financial resources of their company. CEO's will be expected to shape the organisations structure and have a commitment to continual learning (Kiel & Nicholson, 2003; Holly, 2003). An effective governance structure will then accurately assess how well the CEO is achieving the aforementioned targets (Brountas, 2004).

2.2.7 – CEO Appointment

Effective boards and councils also realise that when there is a need to change direction, for whatever reason that might be, they must have the courage to change the CEO if need be. Not all CEOs will have the capacity to change mid appointment. If there is a clear need to change the direction of the company then there might well need to be a change of CEO. The opportunity to appoint a CEO is always the greatest opportunity to set a new agenda for the organisation and effective boards and

councils are willing and able to take this opportunity if the need presents itself (Carver, 1997; Kiel & Nicholson, 2003; Walkley, 2011; McCormick et al, 2006).

2.2.8 – Board recruitment and induction

In order for boards to be effective they need to recruit the right people to the board. Raw material makes a difference and they need to recruit board members who have the ability to be assertive, deliberate and willing. Some writers, such as Carver (1997), even argue that if fewer than half the board members would make a good chairperson then the recruitment and selection process needs improvement. Brountas (2004) and others support the notion that an effective board is characterised by a good blend from the skills matrix. To ensure that the right people are recruited an induction program for new members is required (Brountas, 2004; Walkley, 2012; Holly, 2003). As part of this induction program, boards are able to clearly articulate to a prospective member their corporate governance charter which outlines the various governance roles they will be expected to fulfil, how the process of the board works and identify the key functions and sub-committees of the board (Kiel & Nicholson, 2003; Walkley, 2011).

Effective boards or councils are made up of effective board or council members. These members according to Brountas (2004) should embody the following qualities: independence, initiative, integrity, as well as being informed and involved. Independence refers to the desire for board members to not be directly linked to the organisation that they are serving.

2.2.9 – Right relationships, procedures and content

Underpinning effective governance is the development of right relationships, processes and content (Carver, 1997; Walkley, 2011). If a positive relationship between the board and the CEO can be established, especially between the board chair and the CEO, it will greatly increase the level of effective governance. This positive relationship built on mutual trust and respect will often lead to the development of the right processes at board level, thereby creating an environment in which strategic thinking can occur. This strategic thinking will be enhanced if they have access to the right content to base decisions on. Therefore the concept of right relationships should not be glossed over. Rather, it needs to be something that effective boards cherish, nurture and protect.

For boards and councils, access to the right content enables them to better understand their market and can help them make decisions which will help them pass the market test (Carver, 1997; Walkley, 2012). Good governors know the community that they serve, know what their community wants and how their community would like the product or service to be presented. Strategically, they are able to deliver what their potential customer would like, thus making their mission and vision accessible to their community which then enables the mission and vision to become a reality.

The theory follows that the more independent the member, the more independent the decision-making and thus the level of independent analysis and thought increases. Integrity is the capacity to

set a high moral compass; the members of the board or council set the tone when it comes to matters of greed or dishonesty. Informed, board or council members commit the necessary time and effort required to become fully aware of the issues facing the organisation. Involved, they are enthusiastic and excited about being part of the board or council and this energy will flow through the organisation. Finally, effective board members are those who display initiative and are not afraid of being bold. That could be asking bold questions, no matter how unpopular or bold in setting the vision for the organisation to achieve.

2.3   Charter school governance

There is a considerable amount written on choice, autonomy and innovation in the area of school governance. In particular, there is a growing amount of literature about where these three concepts intersect in the charter school movement currently occurring in the United States of America. Additionally, student achievement, the role of the principal and the liability of newness are further strands of research which has occurred within charter schools. However, one area that needs further exploration in charter schools is that of school governance. As Sandra Vergari (2007, pp. 31-32) asserts

> *Beyond student achievement, there are numerous important questions about charter schools that merit scrutiny but are relatively neglected in the scholarly and political arenas. These include district responses to charter school competition, how charter schools are governed, the subsequent activities of charter school graduates, and what happens to students when a charter school is closed.*

Whilst most of these pertinent questions sit outside the remit of this study, clearly the question of how charter schools are governed is of fundamental concern here.

2.3.1 – Charter school governance – the gap

There certainly exists a gap in the charter school literature regarding school governance and its effectiveness in promoting positive educational outcomes across the charter schools of the United States. Abe Feuerstein (2002, p. 21) points out that *in an era of growing concern about the performance of public education, the way our schools are governed has come under intense scrutiny.* This is not to imply that the governance arrangements of charter schools has not received scholarly attention. On the contrary, a number of researchers have discussed the area of governance within their fields of interest. Rare though is the paper or researcher who identifies the governance structures across charter schools as one of the central points of focus, if not the chief focus of their academic pursuits. Bulkley and Fisler's (2003, p. 324) work highlights this point: *The governance of charter schools is very diverse and includes schools that are dominated by teachers, administrators, and parents. As in traditional public schools, school leaders are also important … but they come from more varied backgrounds than in the traditional system.* The consequence of this diversity is seen

throughout the governance structures of charter schools from state to state and as there is no certain clarity or full agreement on the true meaning of *school governance*, or about the role of a school council/board, in the context of charter schools. Put simply, this is attributable to the fact that *all school boards are not the same* (Hess, 2002, p. 41).

Mirroring much of the broader writing on charter schools, scholarship centered on charter school governance presents a variety of passionately argued, challenging and, at times, conflicting views. Where it differs from the wider literature is that it appears to make a consistent and stronger effort of introducing more questions about charter school governance than it does in attempting to answer them, which again signifies this area as one that appears to be under researched. Examining school governance at a broader national scale, Frederick Hess (2002, p. 6) observes

> *For more than two centuries, school boards have been charged with governing the education of our nation's children. Despite the magnitude of this responsibility, popular understanding of school boards and their work generally rests on anecdotes and news stories. Our lack of knowledge leaves us ill-equipped to appreciate or address the challenges school boards face.*

It is useful, therefore, to attempt to better understand the relatively new conditions from which the governance of charter schools has been conceived. Despite the disclaimer asserted by Feuerstein (2002, p. 23) that *the role of school boards in this reform proposal is unclear* there are certain realities around which the governance structures of charters must adhere to. As outlined by Malloy (2003), *like other approaches to urban reform, a key element of the charter school concept involves decentralizing management to the school site so that individual schools are self-governing* (p. 219). In one view elaborating on this aim of the charter reform charter *schools offer a radical approach to decentralizing management in education that allows individual schools to become self-governing. Proponents argue that autonomous schools – schools unencumbered by state and district rules and regulations – will be better able to design programs to suit the particular needs of their students* (Wohlstetter, Wenning & Briggs, 1995, p. 332).

In this politically driven framework of charter school governance, it is further argued (Karlsen, 2010, p. 527) that *Decentralization was perceived more and more as a governance strategy for achieving rationalization and efficiency*. It follows therefore that research into the various governance arrangements of charter schools is pursued here, with a particular emphasis placed on their operating procedures in order to determine whether charter schools do in fact secure the efficiencies that signal good school governance.

2.3.2 – Charter school governance models

The literature (McCabe & Vinzant, 1999, p. 361) makes clear the fact that *the policy questions raised by charter schools involve not only organizational and management concerns but also key issues of governance*. In their contribution to the literature on charter school governance, the New York City

Charter School Center (NYSCCSC, 2014) created a guidebook entitled *Building the Foundation for an Effective Charter School Governing Board* which canvassed the governance models available to charter schools and examined the merits of the methods accompanying each operation. They assert (2014, p. 23) that fundamentally the *development of an effective governing board is an essential component of building an effective charter school*. In both a theoretical sense and as a necessary reality, the authors allude to the important relationship shared between an effective governing board and an effective charter school. In this assessment, one cannot exist without the other. The result therefore is a relationship of interdependence, whereby the governing board and school administrator or leader/s carry out their core responsibilities autonomously yet do so in the knowledge that:

> *Building an effective charter school board is a process. Most assuredly, things don't change overnight in organizations. It takes a commitment on the part of the leaders of the board and the charter school administrator to make it happen. Experience suggests that it can take 2-5 years to create an effective, self-renewing governing board. If the commitment is present, dramatic improvements in existing boards are possible almost immediately by applying the proven practices, tools and techniques that follow. In charter schools that have yet to open their doors, it's possible to build these practices into the governance design from the beginning, thus avoiding many of the governance problems that now plague many established charter schools.* (NYSCCSC, 2014, p. 25)

The guidebook of the NYCCSC provides an account detailing the various governance models espoused by charter schools. As they note early in their writing (NYSCCSC, 2014, pp. 13-14), *every board has the responsibility to develop its own structure, policies, and procedures consistent with applicable laws, requirements of the charter authorizing body as well as the governance philosophy of the charter school leaders.* The research of Gary Gruber[1], provides an account of the three dominant models of governance that prevail throughout most charter schools operating today (NYSCCSC, 2014):

Model 1. *School committee or council composed of parents, teachers, administrators and others*

This model is based upon the school shared decision-making structures and site based management councils that have operated in various forms in traditional district public schools. According to Gruber, this model may be among the most democratic and representative as it is inclusive, fully representational and delegates management and oversight to one or more of its members. Those in charge have a clear understanding of procedural matters and full inclusion in the decision-making process.

Model 2. *A board of directors with a structure of officers, by-laws, and delegation of management to a principal, chief administrator/director or head of school*

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[1] Consultant with Carney Sandoe & Associates in Santa Fe and a moderator of the USCS governance discussion group.

This model is based upon the approach to board governance traditionally found in not-for-profit organisations. In this model, there is a clear distinction made between the governance work of the board of directors and the administrative / management work of the paid staff. The board is not involved in handling the day-to-day details of running the school, dealing with specific personnel issues or addressing individual student needs. Consistent with the best practices of not-for-profit corporation management, the board delegates the responsibility for running the charter school and implementing the board's policies to a principal or charter school administrator.

Model 3. *Owner/Operator, either not-for-profit foundation or for-profit, with or without a board or committee*

In this model, an advisory committee may function to provide information and support or a board of directors of the corporation or foundation serve in that capacity. Often a larger holding group or company may operate several schools in different locations but still depend upon a local group for advice and guidance.

In spite of the clarity offered by the New York City Charter Schools Center on the main models of charter school governance, the surrounding literature is lacking by its comparative absence of discussing the governance structures of charter schools with such detail. Still, some of the research located for this study offers useful insights into the governance arrangements in charter schools. Indeed, the work of Hill and Lake (2006, p. 1) shows that *in all but a handful of states (Arizona, Colorado, Michigan, Virginia, and Wisconsin) charter schools must be governed by nonprofit boards*. This system of governance resembles the second model of governance outlined by Gruber, where a clear delineation is drawn between the governing board and the management team. It is argued by Hill and Lake (2006, p. 16) that *under the best circumstances nonprofit boards can stabilize schools and free up school leaders to focus on instruction by supporting them on business and marketing*. The fact that Hill and Lake preface their observation with 'under the best circumstances' needs to be underscored because it exemplifies the poor consequences suffered by charter schools when their circumstances for not-for-profit board governance are less than desirable. Unsurprisingly, a large component of the literature addresses the negative outcomes resulting from the requirements of not-for-profit boards and this will be addressed below. There is another possible arrangement for the governance of charter schools, as Vergari (2007, p. 19) explicates. *In most states, a charter school governing board can hire a for-profit entity to operate the school, but the charter itself cannot be awarded to the for-profit company.*

2.3.3 – Charter school board membership

It is the observation of Hill and Lake (2006, pp. 1-2) that although *state laws do not mandate that [not-for-profit] boards be constructed in a certain way, not-for-profit boards in general must be broadly representative of community groups and people potentially affected by the nonprofit's performance*. It is interesting to note that *All not-for-profit boards also hire and fire staff – in the*

case of charter schools they can even fire the principals who founded the school and assembled the board in the first place (2006, pp. 1-2). Some of the literature (Wohlstetter, Wenning & Briggs, 1995, p. 349) identifies the attitudes which led to these regulatory frameworks around charter school governance to come into existence. That is, *policymakers seemed most comfortable allowing schools to decide how to govern themselves. Several states (Arizona, Kansas, and New Mexico) left the composition of the governing bodies up to individual schools, whereas most others specified only broad guidelines.* While in principle this was designed to restore greater freedoms to charter schools and their governing bodies, the opposite has been reported by multiple sources. Hill and Lake (2006), for example, comment on the unanticipated challenges of charter school boards that have proven difficult to fully resolve: *The not-for-profit boards and 'one school, one board' provisions in most states required creation of many new boards, often in communities where few adults have the expertise or the free time necessary for board membership. The sheer number of people required to fill charter boards is larger than the number of people who have direct experience in maintaining board-management relationships in productive institutions. Charter boards must therefore include people who do not understand the limitations of board members or the need for clear delegation to management* (p. 11). Board membership of charter school governance emerges as a key feature within the literature and most specifically, the issue charter schools have in filling their governing boards. Vergari builds upon this explaining that *Some charter school laws regulate board membership with provisions such as those that prohibit charter school employees and members of school district boards from serving on charter school boards and requirements that charter school boards include parents* (2007, p. 19).

Ultimately it has been observed that *the requirement that every charter school be governed by a not-for-profit board has created internal stresses that take time, amplify conflicts that might otherwise be minor, and de-stabilize school leadership and program offerings* (Hill & Lake, 2006, p. 2). The view of Hill and Lake, which exposes not-for-profit board governance to not merely limit the freedoms of charter schools but also severely jeopardise their performance is confirmed in the conclusion they draw, which suggests that *these requirements have indeed handicapped charter schools and caused some to fail* (2006, p. 11). Ironically, the external political drivers that gave impetus to the charter school movement sit at odds, in many ways, with the internal governance structures that charter schools must grapple with under the terms discussed by Hill and Lake. The view that Hill and Lake espouse in respect to this is one whereby *charter schools' internal governance arrangements help take away the freedom of actions that their external governance arrangements are supposed to promote* (2006).

2.3.4 – Roles and responsibilities in charter school boards

The guidebook from NYCCSC stresses the importance of clarity and agreement about who does what in board-management relationships, explaining that *many problems arise when there is a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities between the board and staff of the charter school*

(NYSCCSC, 2014, p. 20). They further stipulate that *an effective governance model will require clear and detailed descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of the board, its committees, its officers, and staff* (NYSCCSC, 2014, p. 20). Hill and Lake state that *some charter schools have reached accommodations between board and management and have slowly developed board expertise* (2006, p. 13) yet somewhat worryingly, *many other charter boards have suffered from unstable memberships and had trouble establishing boundaries between board and management* (2006, p. 13). Another cause for ineffective board governance of charter schools is that because of their newness, board members sitting on the board of a charter school *cannot benefit from the historical perspective and commitment to the institution that alumni board members of private schools often provide* (Hill & Lake, 2006, p. 14). Finally, *board melt-downs have de-stabilized many charter schools, and leadership and staff turnover due in part to conflicts with the board have been a major reason for charter school failure* (Hill & Lake, 2006, p. 13).

A number of case studies are cited throughout the literature of charter school governing bodies who have simply eschewed their responsibilities of governance. A clear example of this is the elected DC Public School Board, which announced in 2006 that charter oversight was simply too challenging. In consequence, it asked to be relieved of all responsibility for approving charter school applications and monitoring the performance of operating charters (Hill & Lake, 2006). Clearly then, this begs the question of why is the governance of charter schools so difficult? Hill and Lake offer one explanation, arguing that this type of governance *establishes a completely different relationship between a government agency and a school, and requires government to develop entirely new capacities* (2006, p. 5). Whilst pointing to the obstacles of charter school governance, Hill and Lake also observe that *At the same time that school boards like DC's are trying to lay down the burden of charter authorization, many others are recognizing that they must abandon traditional compliance-based modes of school oversight, and focus on school performance* (2006, p. 8).

2.3.5 – Successful charter school governance

The task of beginning to think about how governing boards might oversee the work of charter schools in light of their performance is not entirely straightforward, not least because this is an area which seemingly lacks research to genuinely support such thinking. An exception to this is the Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota that conducted a national review which involved a sample of 30 charter schools from nine states. From the data they created a set of key elements of successful governance structures that were common among charter schools. They identified an effective system of charter board governance which was built around three core tenets:

1. Distinction between the governance work of the board and management work of the staff,

2. Ends/means distinction with a bias in favour of high impact decision-making,

3. Clarity about the roles and actions of boards and staff.

The second principle identified by the authors interrelates with the work of John Carver (1997) found elsewhere in the literature on governance. His popular distinction between ends and means in his model of board policy governance serves a clear use in the construct of successful charter governance here, which in turn signifies an observable trend within the literature which is that the Carver model can, and has, migrated from the crux of corporate governance research and into the area of charter school governance.

The characteristics of effective charter school governance is further developed by work from the Northwest Regional Educational. They pinpoint three key instructions to support charter boards in staying strategically focused. The first is the need to define clear expectations for the board. The second relates to the imperative to create clear expectations for the charter school administrator or principal. The third is to structure meetings in such a way that the board's attention is committed to matters of policy and strategy (1999).

The work of Hill and Lake (2006) on the governance structures internal to charter schools was conducted with the effect of revealing their inherent and unpredictable weaknesses that ultimately serve to impede school performance. In support of this argument that weak governance is causing problems for charter schools, the question asked by Hill and Lake was;

> *If school-level governing boards do not provide useful forums for setting strategy and working out differences, what purpose do they serve? Some schools have assembled boards that include experts in legal, finance, personnel, real estate, and public relations issues. These resemble the boards of private companies, and are often able to help rather than impede management. However, such expert boards are rare and there is nothing in the state laws requiring school-level boards to require them* (2006, p. 15).

2.3.6 – Conclusion on charter school governance

Finally, this discussion questions whether charter schools are positioned to succeed in the areas they purport Geske, Davis and Hingle ask, *Will schools with new governance structures actually promote and encourage innovative strategies for teaching and learning? Do these schools represent a viable reform that will serve to improve student achievement? Who benefits and who loses under these highly decentralized forms of local school programs?* (1997, p. 15).

It can clearly be seen that, to use the metaphor of Hill and Lake, *Governance looks like a blind alley for charter schools* (2006, p. 15). The accuracy of their assertion is qualified when one considers the challenging task of mounting a counter argument using the available evidence. In what is perhaps one of their most neutral observations, Hill and Lake state that *whether the exact arrangements (of internal and external governance) work as intended is an empirical question, but it is clear why they exist* (2006, p. 3). This conveniently alludes to the wider literature's treatment of charter school governance, where the primary interest is not located around the question of the performance of

charter school governance but rather in the manner through which such governance arrangements have been secured and *how* they have come to be established. Ultimately, on the matter of charter schools and their governance structures, the most concrete and convincing viewpoint offered by the literature again comes from Hill and Lake who *fear that the internal governance arrangements imposed on charter schools have prevented what they were supposed to cause, i.e. responsible management and attention to all stakeholders, while preventing desirable innovation and adaptation to the needs of students* (2006, p. 15). The question that hangs over how best to educate America's children has been long and complex and, as McCabe and Vinzant predict, *Issues related to the curriculum, cost, quality and accountability of schools have been, and will continue to be, controversial* (1999, p. 361).

2.4   School governance from and Australian perspective

The literature on school governance in Australia is growing. The rise of the alternative school movements (such as Montesorri, Steiner and smaller parent controlled Christian or other faith-based schools) since the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the instigation of school councils in public schools in some states of Australia, such as Victoria, from the mid-1980s, has generated growing research into educational administration and school governance. Most recently the push from some state governments such as Western Australia for more autonomous school governance structures for public schools prompted the need for further research. In Western Australia the particular issues that surface in the literature engage the questions of how the governance of public schools should be operated and whether greater autonomy in school governance will lead to better educational and student outcomes. This last point seems to be the driving force for the introduction of school councils into public education – that is, the belief that autonomous school councils charged with the power to directly hire the Principal, manage their performance, and establish and monitor an annual school budget will lead to more efficient, effective, higher achieving and outcome driven schools that meet the needs of their local community. There is a distinct move away from the currently centralised model that governs most of the public education systems in Australia.

Research into school governance in Australian schools is not purely limited to the public sector. In the private or independent sector there appeared to be limited research into what constitutes effective or good school governance.

The private or independent sector in NSW has a much longer history of school governance, with the first independent school in Australia, The Kings School, now based at North Parramatta, opening in 1831. Given this history, its school council can reflect on over 180 years of school governance. Added to this list of long-established school councils could be The Hutchins School and Launceston Grammar School both commencing operations in 1846 in Tasmania, or the Hale School in 1858 in Perth, Western Australia – all of which possess school councils that have existed for over 150 years. Despite these histories, there seems to be little in the way of research as to why these school councils

have been able to function for so long or what precisely has characterised their effectiveness. This question could be directed to several other well-established independent schools from around the country. In the early 1990s a series of reflections, musings and some doctoral research papers were provided by several principals and chairs of school council from the independent sector. These are discussed below. They provide some valuable insights into how they define good school governance.

2.4.1 – Good school governance in Australian independent schools

In the eyes of educational leaders such as Beavis (1997), Kefford (1993), Paterson (1995), McKeown (1993) and Mills (2005), good school governance would be reflective of the following practices. First, it will possess a clearly articulated vision: what the school believes in, what it stands for and what it is trying to achieve. This requires both current and future members of school council to believe in and advocate for the established vision. Board members become custodians or trustees of the school, its values, its culture and its ethos which in turn leads to the construction and size of school councils.

Many independent schools originated from religious foundations, such as the Anglican, Catholic or Presbyterian churches, and many to this day possess a strong connection to their original founding body. A consequence of this foundation is the right of these founding organisations to have representation on the school council. For example, the Ordinance for the Sydney Church of England Grammar School requires the appointment of six locally-based Anglican clergy, six appointees from the Diocese Synod and allows for a further five from the Old Boys Union.[2] In total this particular school council will have up to 17 members, plus the Archbishop of Sydney as President and the Headmaster and Bursar as ex-officio members. The structure of this school council is quite representative and symbolic of other Anglican schools in Sydney and from across the country. The members of these councils then become custodians or trustees of the ethos and values espoused by the college.

Secondly, the creation of a school council requires an appropriate skills mix for effective governance. Recruited members bring to the school council a range of skills such as: accountancy, financial acumen, legal capacity, creativity and design capabilities and educational experience[3]. It is argued that this cross section and deliberate blend of skills will assist them as they govern the school to meet both current and future needs. In terms of the construction of the school council, research advocates that the school council be broken down into a series of sub-committees. McKeown (1993) clearly identified and then described the most popular construction of sub-committees as being an Executive Committee, Finance and Audit Committee, Governance Committee, Education Committee and a Buildings Committee.

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[2] The ordinance for the Sydney Church of England Grammar School can be found at
http://www.sds.asn.au/site/102093.asp?ph+cp#1
[3] This skill set correlates to the work of Carver, 1997.

The Executive Committee is made up of the Chair of Council, Deputy Chair of Council, Chairs of the other sub-committees as well as the principal and bursar. This committee would meet more regularly than the full school council and would be the committee where a great deal of the strategic discussion and debate as to the ongoing affairs of the school would be generated. The final decisions from this committee would then be reported back to the full meetings of school council for their final discussion and approval. The other sub-committees are relatively self-explanatory. The Finance and Audit Committee would assess the monthly financial reports, as well as prepare future budgets. This sub-committee would most likely be chaired by an experienced and skilled accountant. The Governance Committee would look at a range of matters relating to their responsibilities as governors as well as the possible recruitment of new governors. This committee would most likely be chaired by someone with a legal background.

The Education Committee's role is to ensure that the educational needs of the students are being met both now and into the future. This committee is often chaired by someone from a tertiary organisation. Having someone with this skill set can also help the school gain valuable connections into the tertiary education sector and this has the potential to bring wider benefits to the school. Finally the Buildings Committee is charged with the responsibility to make sure that the physical fabric of the school meets the current legal standards as well as prepare for the future physical needs of the school community. This committee will often require someone with an architectural or engineering background as chair. The ultimate effectiveness of the school council is for all of these sub-committees to do their job properly and to be able to effectively communicate with and work together as one larger team.

The success of the school council working together as an effective team is often reliant on the effectiveness of the chair. The readings under examination here, especially McKeown (1993) and Mills (2005), highlight the principle that an effective chair of school council is required if the school council is to fulfil its collective responsibility. They both acknowledge the need for the chair of school council to set and keep the council on task, to ensure that all members of school council are fulfilling their responsibilities to each other and oversee the effective management of the principal and his/her actions. They also both argue the relationship between the chair of council and the principal as vital for the functioning of the school council and hence the school itself. Therefore those that take on the role as chair of council, do so knowing that they will clearly be required to be more actively involved in the life of the school and the council if they are to succeed in that role – and henceforth experience success in the school. Therefore, it is not a role to be taken lightly.

Finally, Beavis (1993), Kefford (1993), Mills (2005), McKeown (1993) and Paterson (1995) all appear to agree that the role of the school council is purely about governance and that means strategy. The primary role of school council is to devise strategy, often in line with the principal and other key stakeholders, combining with the policy framework under which the school is conducted. The principal, charged with the implementation of the policy and strategic framework set by the council,

will have their performance measured against the successful implementation of these policies and strategies. In this structure there was no room for the active and involved management of the school by the school council. Rather, this was to be the domain of the principal, with the demarcation line to be clearly made and adhered to.

Information so far gleaned from the research literature has suggested that the creation of school councils in the independent or private sector correlate to the governance structures derived from the corporate and not-for-profit sectors. Beavis (1997) also noted the possible usage of the Carver model of governance as having much to add to the development of independent school governance. But where does this leave their public or government school counterparts?

2.4.2 – School councils in government schools

Interestingly enough, it seems that there are trends in Australia for public or government schools to move towards embracing a more corporate style of school governance structures for state schools; structures that would not be out of place in the independent education sector. By 2009 over 40% of public schools in Western Australia had applied for and had been granted IPS (Independent Public School) status (Gray, Campbell-Evans & Leggett, 2013; Payne, 2001 & 2005) and this has further increased to 65% at the start of 2017 (Clarke, 2017). IPS schools are served by corporate governance styles and research from Gray (et al, 2013) and Payne (2001, 2005) point to the need for clearly defined roles and responsibilities for members of school council, for school councils to possess an appropriate skills mix amongst their membership, for a clearly defined set of sub-committees; the importance of effective chairs and an effective relationship with the principal and the responsibility of the school council to assess and manage the principal.

2.4.3 – Emerging issues from school governance in Australian schools

Some interesting themes from an Australian perspective emerged from the literature. Firstly, the importance of recruiting the right people to school councils is underscored throughout. Whether they be independent or state schools, recruiting the right people and securing an appropriate skill mix can often be difficult, especially if the school is servicing a more challenging social demographic or student populace. The research suggests that the higher performing the school community, the more likely the school council is able to recruit people to their school council. For some independent schools there might be rules and regulations with respect to the time one can serve on a particular school council. The concern raised here is the potential loss of institutional memory if there is a high turnover of school council members (Mills, 2005). Successful independent schools are often built around long tenures of principals and chairs of council. This should be no different to public schools. The question then arises, should there be limits placed on the length of council service? Whilst it is a positive feature that members of school council can serve for long periods of time, it can also be detrimental if they stop functioning effectively on council. But what other factors can hinder length

of service? Workload, legal responsibility and bureaucracy were all identified in the literature as factors that prevented people from joining their local school council. Could these factors be dealt with, especially in areas where it might be difficult to recruit not just people, but the right people to council? Finally, there is the acknowledgement that school councils go through development and evolutionary phases (Payne, 2005). It is therefore essential that a school council is managed appropriately through each phase so that it can then successfully enter the next phase of its development.

2.5   School governance from an English perspective

Three of the main themes which emerged from the literature in the area of school governance in England were:

1.   How does an effective school council conduct its business?

2.   How do you recruit the right people to the school council?

3.   Do members of school council have the capacity to act as a critical friend to the Head Teacher?

2.5.1 - How does an effective school council conduct its business?

The research in this area reflected a great deal of what has already been written about in the sections relating to corporate governance (both for the profit and not-for-profit sector) as well as that obtained from the literature on Australian school governance. It is therefore not the intention to elaborate greatly here but rather point out areas of consensus.

Research undertaken in the United Kingdom and, more specifically, England identified that effective school councils are characterised by strong chairs of councils who keep their school council focused and on task in leading a culture of school improvement. The chair is able to establish an effective working relationship with the head teacher and is able to build confidence with the head teacher that they have the capacity to do their jobs to great effect. Effective school councils have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and in many cases have established a series of sub-committees on the council (in the areas of buildings, education, finance and recruitment) so that the work of the council can be conducted efficiently and effectively. They have established protocols relating to the induction, professional development and review of school council member performance and see all of these areas as integral in fulfilling their capacity as a member of a school council. The school council actively seeks to maintain an appropriate skill mix on council so that a complementary set of skills on council exists and the school council is able to work together as a team for the betterment of the school. All of this resonates with the findings from the literature read in the corporate, charter reform and Australian spheres.

What emerged in the UK context is the issue of board size. The school council size is largely dependent upon the type of school served, though, on average, the typical English school council has about 14 members (Balarin et al, 2008). Interestingly the position of the current conservative government is for smaller school council sizes as it believes this will create a more efficient and effective structure (Gove, 2012). The research indicated that it was not the size of the school council that mattered, rather it was the ability and capacity of those on the school council that will determine whether it was effective or not (McCrone, Southcott & George, 2011). This very point is supported by the corporate literature and the Australian literature on school governance. It is about recruiting the right people to the school council who have the ability to work together as a team that is important.

2.5.2 How do you recruit the right people to the school council?

The challenge of recruiting to school councils continues to exist in certain areas within the English government education system. Whilst the overall picture of recruitment is relatively strong with only an 11% vacancy rate across all school councils in England, there can be a greater disparity in vacancy when the location of the school is taken into account (House of Commons Education Committee, 2013). In those areas deemed as being more disadvantaged it can be harder to recruit suitably qualified people to join a school council. Several reasons were:

- belief that they have nothing to offer the school council

- belief that they are unable to do the job of a school council member

- the fact that the school is not high achieving is in itself unattractive for a potential member to join

- the legal responsibilities and perceived workload of being a school council member is also unattractive.

Though serving in areas of disadvantage created difficulties in recruiting appropriate members of school councils, it did not necessarily mean that the school council ended up being dysfunctional by default (Dean, Dyson, Gallannaugh, Howes & Raffo, 2007). Instead, if the right people were recruited in joining they overcame perceived difficulties and weaknesses as a result of appropriate development and education. The initial challenge may be the difficulty faced in recruiting them onto the school council in the first place.

However, school councils that continually recruit members were most likely those active in the process of recruitment (McCrone et al, 2011). High performing councils, as seen in the Ofsted reports, regularly recruit appropriate school council members to join their governance structure. The other correlating factor here is that these high performing school councils were typically found in areas of social advantage and served high performing schools, which in turn made them more attractive for potential members of school councils to join.

Also, if education is to assist in social mobility, it is essential that school councils and governors from areas of social disadvantage are actively supported in their roles. This is in fact occurring, with a series of professional organisations becoming actively involved in the school governance industry which now exists in the United Kingdom (Dean et al, 2007). Such organisations include the School Governor's One Stop Shop, National Governors' Association, The Association for all School Leaders, and Association of School and College Leaders. All of these have become actively involved in the development, induction and recruitment of school governors. It is interesting to note that this level of support in Australian education is emerging through organisations such as the Association of Independent Schools and The Australian Institute of School Governance.

2.5.3 - Do members of school councils have the capacity to act as a critical friend to the Head Teacher?

An area of governance research that was of particular interest was the belief of the majority of school governors that they were not comfortable acting as a critical friend to the head teacher (Farrell, 2005). The majority of studies found that school governors enjoy their role as supportive friend, as strategist, as developer of the school and take pride from seeing the school reach its potential (McCrone, 2011, Balarin et al, 2008). However, they found it difficult to fulfil their obligation as a governor to act as critical friend to the head teacher.

There were many reasons why school governors felt incapable of acting as a critical friend, some of which included:

- the head teacher was seen as the educational expert and the governor's knowledge base prevented them from challenging the head teacher

- the fear that acting as a critical friend brought conflict on to the school council

- the desire not to be seen as a problematic members of school council who prevents the school from reaching its potential

Whatever the reason for their inability to act as a critical friend, and somewhat ironically, most head teachers surveyed wanted their school council to act as a critical friend (Balerin et al, 2008; James et al, 2008). Head teachers saw this as very important in moving the school forward and exploring ideas and thoughts that were not originally considered. The breadth of experience from outside of the educational industry on the school council was seen as an advantage by those head teachers willing to embrace the diversity of expertise available to them (McCrone et al, 2011).

It can be seen that much useful research has been conducted in the United Kingdom in relation to the governance of the education system. A lot of what was written in regards to effective governance practice in these schools aligned strongly with the literature on corporate governance. Equally though, much is written on the topic of how governance structures can become more flexible and

relevant to meet the variety of needs expressed by the 23,000 schools all needing high-performing school councils. A great deal is also written on how to streamline governance processes so that schools which find it challenging or difficult to retain governors can overcome these problems. Despite the emergence of this body of work within the United Kingdom, there did not appear to be a lot, or at least not enough, written from a Public School (that is a private or independent school) perspective in the United Kingdom on school governance.

This chapter has provided an overview of the literature in the area of governance and school governance and how it intersects with the leadership and management of schools. It has explored ideas and themes about school governance from within the Australian independent education sector the British public education sector, the charter school movement in the United States of America and the governance literature from the not-for-profit sector. Chapter 3 which follows provides a provisional conceptual framework based on the findings of this chapter.

Chapter 3
A theoretical framework of school governance

This chapter provides a provisional conceptual framework, based on the findings of Chapter 2, of the processes which lead to good school governance. It centres on school vision and values, school board/council recruitment, the role of the chair, the conduct of boar/council members and their relationships with the school principal.

3.1 - School vision and values

The underpinning vision and values of the school must be a clearly articulated in a charter statement (Carver, 1997; McCormick et al, 2006). The school council has the responsibility for the active and continued oversight of this vision and set of values. In effect, they become the custodians and guarantors passing the vision and values from one generation to the next. Good school councils acknowledge this significant responsibility and prioritise it, ensuring that the vision remains clearly articulated and relevant.

Unquestionably it is the vision and values of the school which determines the various strategic decisions made by the school council. These decisions should turn the school's vision and values into a tangible, definable and measurable reality (Carver, 1997; Walkley, 2011). Whether it is the appointment of the principal, which is the school council's greatest responsibility (Kiel & Nicholson, 2003; McCormick et al, 2006; Young, 2011; Mills, 2005) or the decision to erect the next school building, the central governance tenet is one that asks 'Does this decision turn the school's vision and values into a definable and measurable outcome?'

3.2 - School board/council recruitment

The recruitment of the right people to the school council is essential for good school governance. The literature (Craver, 1997; Brountas, 2004; Holly, 2003; Dean et al, 2007; House of Commons Education Committee, 2013) identified a significant problem that it is often not easy to recruit the right people to not-for-profit boards or councils of which school councils are an example. When appointing members of school council several questions need answering, two of which are:

1. Does the prospective member of school council embody the values articulated in the school's vision and values statement?

2. Will the prospective member of school council add value to the existing board/council composition? School councils should possess an appropriate skill mix to ensure that balanced and reasoned decisions can be made (Carver, 1997; Brountas, 2004; Walkley, 2011; House

of Commons Education Committee, 2012; Grey et al, 2013). This skill mix not merely refers to professional qualifications or experience, though this is very important, but can also refer to age, gender, religious background (especially in faith-based schools) and personality types.

Vacancies that occur on school councils provide an opportunity for existing school councils to add to the skill mix and thus, theoretically, increasing their governance capacity.

Finally, good school councils recruit new members. They may possess recruitment policies (Kiel & Nicholson, 2003; House of Commons Education Committee, 2013) or keep it as a regular agenda item at their meetings – whatever it might be, good board/councils actively try to attract the right people.

3.3 - Role of the chair of the school council

An effective chair of the school council is essential if good governance is to occur (Carver, 1997; Brountas, 2004; McCormick et al, 2006). The role of the chair of the school council is quite varied, however an effective chair will at best be able to:

- keep the school council focused on the vision and values of the school;
- keep school council meetings on task and outcome driven;
- build an effective relationship with the principal, based on trust, openness and mutual respect and
- build the governance capacity of the other members of the school council as well as that of the principal.

Good school councils possess high achieving people, all of whom may one day, in their own right, make an effective chair themselves. However, because of their own personal strengths, they may act individually, with their own specific agenda, rather than acting as a team. Without a strong chair, these councils can often splinter and may even divide. When this occurs, good governance ceases and this will have significant implications and ramifications for the schools being served by these councils.

3.4 - School board/council conduct

Good councils focus their discussions, decisions and meetings on the development of strategy and empower the principal to implement these strategies in the day to day operational matters of the school (Carver, 1997; Walkley, 2011; McCormick et al, 2006; Holly, 2003; Carmichael & Wild, 2011; Mills, 2005). For this to occur, effective councils have in place policies and procedures which keep their discussions, decisions and meetings focused on developing strategy. Councils keep themselves accountable for achieving these strategies in a variety of ways, but two key ones are:

1. An annual review of their performance (Kiel & Nicholson, 2003; House of Commons Education Committee, 2013; Hills, 2005). It is essential governors actively assess their own performance and that of the council they belong to. This process of review could be external or internal and there are a variety of methods by which this could be achieved. However, it is essential that the review is undertaken and that quality data gleaned from the review is actually used to improve their performance.

2. An annual review of the performance of the role of the principal to implement policy and strategy as determined by the governors. Throughout the course of the year, an effective principal will regularly report to the board or council as to how well the school is achieving the pre-determined outcomes. However, a more formal review of the principal's performance should be undertaken and any identified areas of under achievement should be appropriately dealt with. Failure to do so is a failure in governance.

For a good school council to conduct its business appropriately, it must ensure that the council possesses a clearly defined set of roles and responsibilities (Kiel & Nicholson, 2003; House of Commons Education Committee, 2013; Clarke, 2017). Confusion in these two areas will lead to a confused council, which in turn increases the likelihood that they will not work effectively as a team.

Finally, good school councils achieve their desired outcomes by understanding the community they serve (Carver, 1997; Walkley, 2011). There is little value in offering a high quality education if it does not meet the needs of the community that it serves. Therefore, the school council must constantly renew its familiarity with and understanding of the stakeholders that it is beholden to. Lack of an understanding of the environment in which a school council operates threatens not only effective governance but the continued operation of the school it governs.

3.5 - School council's relationship with the principal

Good school councils create a positive working relationship with their principal (Kiel & Nicholson, 2003; Walkley, 2011; McCormick et al, 2006). This positive relationship can be achieved in a variety of ways, but will include the following:

- development of effective lines of communication between the principal and the chair of school council. Other members of school council will have opportunity to engage in conversation with the principal, however, one-on-one discussions with the principal over sensitive matters should only occur with the express knowledge of the chair of the school council.

- members of school council should create an open and trusting relationship with the principal as this will create an environment where the principal can, if and where necessary, be effectively challenged (Brountas, 2004; Kiel & Nicholson, 2003; Young, 2011; Farrell & Law, 1997; House of Commons Education Committee, 2013). This does not endorse a

culture of regular conflict with the principal. Rather, it implies that a relationship built on openness and trust will often evoke more candid discussions and this can be of significant benefit to the overall performance of the school. Therefore, good school councils challenge their principal in such a way that displays the trust they have in them to complete the task they are assigned to complete.

- if an environment of openness and trust is created in a school council then they will be able to discuss the important issue of succession planning. Succession planning is not necessarily an easy thing to do but if an effective relationship between the school council and the principal is created then it will increase the possibility that a positive discussion on this very important issue can occur. At heart, it places the organisation ahead of the individual.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a provisional conceptual framework that emerged from the general organisational literature as well as literature on school governance of independent schools in Australia, government schools in England and charter schools in the United States of America. Chapter 4 which follows outlines the subsequent research design and methodology used in the within-school component of this study.

Chapter 4
Research Focus

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the research design and methodology for the within-school component of this study. It outlines and discusses the processes used to conduct the research and the methods by which data was collected, analysed, conclusions drawn and recommendations made in Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the study.

4.1 The focus of the research

The research takes as its primary focus the processes that best enable good school governance. These processes do not and cannot sit in isolation just within school councils. They instead rely on the complex and necessary interplay between the council of a school, its school leadership team, and of course, the principal. Therefore, in the many instances where the term 'processes' is deployed throughout this study, I am referring to those procedures which inform school governance yet only assume their full meaning in the intersection of an equilateral triangle, the points of which are school council, school leadership and principal.

In highlighting where school governance intersects with school management via the principal, the research aims to investigate and identify those processes which secure good school governance. In view of this, the key research question that the study aims to address is:

> *How, and in what ways, can the processes of school councils positively intersect with the leadership, management and operations of the schools they govern?*

To support the task of answering this major question, a set of secondary research questions was created. Their specific focus was influenced by the literature investigated and reviewed insofar as they seek to promote a research design and elicit research answers that have not yet been explored in this field of scholarship. In other words, the particular construction of these supporting questions serves to close an existing gap in the literature and broader work concerning the processes involved in school governance and school leadership.

> *How do school councils recruit and retain council members?*

> *How do chairs of school councils develop their effective working relationship with the school principal?*

> *How and in what ways, if at all, do members of a school council act as a 'critical friend' to their school principal?*

How does a school council operate as a unified team?

How do school councils develop their capacity?

How do school councils deal with the regulatory restrictions they must comply with?

What impact does the context of the school have on the membership and performance of the school council?

In addition to eliminating a gap in the broader literature and research work surrounding school governance, this set of secondary research questions serves a dual purpose of defining the outer limits of the scope of this project. Put simply, they tighten the research framework in a way that positively draws a line that determines what the project is, and is not, concerned with and does so without limiting the scholarly ambition of the study.

A research opportunity resided in the network of schools belonging to the Anglican Schools Corporation in the state of New South Wales (NSW), Australia. This fixed the focus of the research to a particular research environment and enabled the study of a number of school councils. In using the Anglican Schools Corporation as the context of the research, an opportunity opened up to explore governance in action across a series of like-minded and philosophically aligned school councils. Fundamental to the selection of this sample of school councils and leadership teams was that, in spite of their faith alignment secured through their membership of the Anglican Schools Corporation, all the schools serve a series of different educational markets. Thus, whilst not altogether free of the alleged biases attached to any and all non-random samples, studying the schools belonging to the Anglican Schools Corporation offered the project a clear focus through which rich data collection could be obtained, analysed and reflected upon.

In advancing this model of inquiry, thought has been given not just to the sequence of the research and its key components, but to the particular design of the research and the methodology employed. As social researchers Johnson and Christensen (2012) assert, the purpose of research is *to help people in many fields advance their knowledge and solve problems* (p.3). If this project has, from its inception, been born from an awareness of the problems and weaknesses extending from school governance, then it most certainly operates to contribute to the resolution of these by advancing knowledge in the area of school governance while keeping prominently in mind the potential links this has to increasing the level of educational outcomes in school communities.

For this research to have validity it must also, as Johnson and Christensen (2012) maintain, constantly prioritise its aim of conducting high quality research. Therefore, it is useful at this stage to briefly reflect on my unique role in leading the research whilst concurrently serving as an employee of the Anglican Schools Corporation. This represents an undeniable tension as a result of the closeness between myself and the research environment, with the research environment being my work environment. The ethical implications of this are elaborated on at length and resolved at a later point

in this chapter. Pertinent to the focus of this research though, and the fashion in which it has been conducted, is that given its contextual circumstances the project pursues a collegial research design wherein the researcher, that is, myself, occupies a role as a participant observer, co-investigating issues of school board effectiveness and governance and its intersection with school leadership.

The focus of the research, therefore, is neatly confirmed through being clearly and tightly defined. It is centered on the task of investigating and identifying those processes which lead to good school governance. The Anglican Schools Corporation emerges as the research environment where pinpointing and testing such processes is possible with both school councils and leadership teams.

Enmeshed in this overarching research goal is the unstated, anticipated outcome of the research findings facilitating improved learning outcomes for students. Whilst comfortable in suggesting this as a probable benefit of the research, this is not in itself a central aim of the project, nor does it influence the project's precise focus. Similarly, it is reasonable to assume that from the research there will be a likely outcome of school improvement for the schools involved in the study, both individually and collectively. School improvement, in this context, pertains chiefly to improved educational outcomes for students though is not limited to this. Again, whilst a positive anticipated outcome of the study, this is not a central research goal of the project nor is it its focus.

Finally, the sensitive nature of the research require an exploration of the various relationships contained in school governance structures to identify processes which enable good school governance. This exploration may result in tension occurring which could have an impact on the research to be undertaken. While the potential point of tension is acknowledged, the researcher being an employee of the Anglican Schools Corporation, the research focus is of the kind where a degree of trust is also called for. Inquiring into the relationships that exist on and between school councils and school leadership teams and, more specifically, between chair of school council and principal, does call on a measure of trust. The implications of this are discussed in the following sections.

4.2   The research opportunity

As noted above, the context in which this study takes place is the Anglican Schools Corporation in the state of New South Wales, Australia. In centering the research objectives on the Anglican Schools Corporation, a brief history of the organisation is necessary in order to facilitate a comprehensive overview and understanding of the climate and culture in which the research is conducted. In particular, an exploration of the organisation's changing governance structures since its inception offers key insights into the context and the ways individual school councils conduct, manage and operate their particular school. From this, the merits in selecting the Anglican Schools Corporation as the prime organisation through which the study's research can be advanced are demonstrated.

4.2.1 - The Anglican Schools Corporation: A Brief History

It is important to note the political hierarchy whereby the Anglican Schools Corporation sits within the Anglican Diocese of Sydney. Within the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, there are currently 40 Anglican schools. The operation and ownership structure of these schools breaks down as follows: 17 are owned and operated by the Anglican Schools Corporation (the Anglican Schools Corporation purchased two schools giving it a total of 19 schools as at the end of 2014, but these are located in the Anglican Diocese of Bathurst[4]). 14 other Anglican schools are owned and operated by the diocese as other diocesan organisations and 9 other Anglican schools are owned and operated by companies limited by guarantee, therefore not controlled by the Diocese.

In total, the Anglican Schools Corporation is currently responsible for the education of over 14,000 students, connects with more than 8,500 families and employs over 1,800 teaching and non-teaching staff[5]. Its recurrent budget as at the end of 2016 was almost $275 million per annum. It is therefore observable that the Anglican Schools Corporation is in no way an insignificant educational provider in the current educational market within Sydney and more broadly NSW. Possessing the character of a very large not-for-profit organisation with an extensive reach and impact in terms of education, the Anglican Schools Corporation invites the type of study articulated through this research project and its aims.

The Anglican Schools Corporation formally came into existence in 1947 by ordinance of Synod (the Anglican Diocese of Sydney's parliament) as *The Council for Promotion of Sydney Church of England Diocesan Schools*. It was subsequently incorporated as a separate legal entity under the 1938 Anglican Church (Bodies Corporate) Act in 1964. The incorporation of *The Council for Promotion of Sydney Church of England Diocesan Schools* enabled this organisation to own property independent of the diocese itself, negating the earlier requirement of the council to seek Synod approval to purchase land. *The Council for the Promotion of Sydney Church of England Diocesan Schools Ordinance 1947 Amendment Ordinance 1978* served as an opportunity to clarify the purpose, governance structure and accountability processes under which the council operated and conducted its business.

In 1982, Synod removed Church of England from its title, substituting it with Anglican. Then in 1992 *The Council for Promotion of Sydney Anglican Diocesan Schools* changed its name again to the *Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation* and again in 2016 to *Anglican Schools Corporation* (the title used throughout the thesis). Put simply, the Anglican Schools Corporation was originally designed to assist financially struggling Anglican schools to either become financially viable or facilitate their closure. It existed to also create a mechanism by which to separate the finances of member schools

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[4] In 2014, the Anglican Schools Corporation purchased two schools from the Anglican Diocese of Bathurst. The schools needed to be sold, the funds of which were used by the Anglican Diocese of Bathurst to pay accrued debts.
[5] All as at the commencement of 2017, the Anglican Schools Corporation – Report to Synod 2017.

of the Anglican Schools Corporation from the finances of the Diocese itself, thus divorcing the financial issues that a potentially bankrupt school might have from the financial position of the diocese and vice a versa.

At its inception in 1947, the Anglican Schools Corporation commenced supporting four schools. By 1993 the Anglican Schools Corporation remained relatively small with just five member schools with total enrolment of just 2,536 students, a significantly different position from which the Corporation now finds itself.

A number of factors are attributable to the growth of the Anglican Schools Corporation since 1993. Specifically, one can cite the election of a new federal government in 1996 and their policy changes to federal government funding of schools (which centered on neo-liberal ideas of school choice), the introduction of the NSW state-based interest subsidy scheme (which was later removed in 2009) and the desire of the Board of the Anglican Schools Corporation to expand Anglican schooling significantly. At the beginning of 2014, an additional 14 schools had either been commenced or purchased by the Anglican Schools Corporation, with a series of other schools planned for future development.

Hence, by the beginning of 2014, a period of almost twenty years of continual growth has seen the then *Council for Promotion of Sydney Church of England Diocesan Schools*, now the Anglican Schools Corporation, grow from four schools with a few hundred students to an organisation of 19 schools collectively educating over 13,000 students. A close reading of their current strategic plan reveals that the Anglican Schools Corporation has no desire to merely consolidate this growth or limit its influence but rather seek to be involved in the education of 20,000 students by 2020.

4.2.2 - The Changing Nature of the Governance Structure of the Anglican Schools Corporation

The following background information is crucial to developing a complete picture of the context in which each individual school council conducts, manages and operates its particular school. The Anglican Schools Corporation is governed by an ordinance of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney Synod. When the Anglican Schools Corporation came into being in 1947 the Ordinance was a mere four pages in length and gave it the following powers:

1. *Assist in the acquisition, establishment and maintenance of schools*
2. *Established the method by which members of the Board of the Anglican Schools Corporation would be appointed*
    a. *In 1947 this involved 16 members*
        i. *Eight were to be clergy*
        ii. *Eight were to be appointed by the Anglican Diocese of Sydney Synod (four of whom could be women)*
3. *The Archbishop of Sydney was the President of the Board*

4. *In reading the Ordinance, no reference is made to the local school council and their responsibility within the governance structure*

5. *It clearly established a requirement for the Board of the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation to report back to the Synod of the Sydney Diocese once a year, specifically relating to the financial position of each one of the schools under its control*

Over the next 70 years, a further 18 ordinances relating to the governance of the Anglican Schools Corporation were passed. Some of these ordinances have been relatively minor, such as allowing the purchasing and selling of land (1950, 1951, 1954 and 1957). Others have been quite significant such as the 1964 Ordinance which incorporated the Anglican Schools Corporation and the 1978 Ordinance which outlined the first real governance re-structure for the corporation. The 1983 Ordinance not only refined the governance structure created by the 1978 Ordinance but also provided a clear outline of the governance structure of each school council and their specific responsibilities. Then followed a 1992 ordinance which was a further detailed revision of the 1983 Ordinance. One key feature of the 1992 Ordinance was the establishment of the right of the CEO (or their appointee) to attend meetings of every school council. Then, in 1999, the Anglican Diocese of Sydney confirmed a new ordinance for the Anglican Schools Corporation, this time providing a nine page document which clearly outlined the mission and purpose of the Anglican Schools Corporation as well as providing a far more detailed account of its powers and organisational structure. It utilised the following headings:

1. Definitions and Interpretations
2. Constitution
3. Objects
4. Powers and Authorities
5. Indemnification
6. Liabilities and Expenses
7. Common Seal
8. Reports and Accounts
9. Membership
10. Duration of Office
11. Meetings of the Members of the Corporation
12. Appointments made by the Meeting of Members
13. Casual Vacancies
14. The Board of Directors
15. School Councils

Interestingly enough, the fact that a far more detailed ordinance was created at this time also coincided with the significant growth of the Anglican Schools Corporation during this period of its history. Within this ordinance, the Anglican Schools Corporation now had a far clearer understanding

of its function, its structure and how it was to be governed. In, fact the Ordinance created a three tier governance structure.

At the top level of the governance structure were the Members of the Corporation – in total the 1999 Ordinance allowed the appointment of up to 35 Members. The Members were to be made up of the following:

1. The Archbishop of Sydney
2. Up to six persons appointed by the Archbishop
3. Twenty-Four persons elected by the Synod
4. Up to four persons appointed by a Meeting of Members of the Corporation

The role of the Members of the Corporation, length of tenure, as well as who could be appointed as a Member of the Corporation were clearly articulated in the Ordinance. The Members of the Corporation were required to meet twice a year so that reports could be tabled and elections could be held. In short, the two main powers of the Members of the Corporation were to appoint the Board of Directors and the School Councils for each of the schools owned or operated by the Anglican Schools Corporation. Noteworthy too is that the Board of Directors had to be elected from within the members of the Corporation themselves and by the members of the Corporation. This in itself raised a series of quite significant governance issues; however, the Ordinance does also clearly state that the Board of Directors should reflect a cross-section of experience and skills which would assist in the overall conduct of the Anglican Schools Corporation. Such experience and skills included financial, business, legal, construction, Christian ministry and educational backgrounds.

The Board of Directors created the next level of governance within the 1999 Anglican Schools Ordinance and this required the election of at least nine and up to twelve Members of the Corporation. Again the 1999 Ordinance stipulated the responsibilities of the Board of Directors, which in effect was the general oversight of the Anglican Schools Corporation, with the responsibilities akin to those required of any publicly listed company. It was this group which in effect had the responsibility to see that all of the various school councils were compliant, effective and successful in overseeing their respective school.

The last tier of governance in this structure were the school councils themselves who were also clearly identified within the 1999 Ordinance. The election of members of school council was also the responsibility of the members of the corporation. The role of the school council was to oversee the day-to-day operations of the school, via the appointment of a school principal, who would have managerial oversight of the school and report back to the school council at its monthly meeting. Every school council would have a chair of council, once again appointed by the Members of the Corporation, and all council appointees were tenured positions with the possibility for re-election.

Surrounding this governance and organisational structure was a clear statement of the objects of the Anglican Schools Corporation:

> *'The objects of the Corporation are to establish and efficiently operate, strategically placed Anglican schools offering quality education, which are financially accessible to local communities and communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ to students, staff, parents and the wider community'.* Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation Ordinance 1947 (1999 Amendment)

This statement within the Ordinance reflected a significant change from the original 1947 Ordinance. Internationally, the Anglican Church has regarded the Anglican Diocese of Sydney as being a strong evangelical Diocese since its inception but its evangelical position and purpose in supporting the Anglican Schools Corporation was now made explicit. A very clear and strong reason for the Corporation's existence now existed. No longer was the sole purpose of the Corporation to assist financially struggling Anglican schools. Rather, the focus is now on creating a well-governed organisation able to offer affordable quality education, strategically placed with a clear agenda of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the various stakeholders who comprise the educational communities that the schools serves.

To assist in fulfilling this vision the Ordinance defined the type of person appropriate to fulfil the roles of school principal, teacher and staff member of the Anglican Schools Corporation itself. This again was a significant shift from the original 1947 ordinance.

Finally, the most recent changes to the original 1947 and 1999 ordinances occurred in 2013. This time the two most significant changes were a further update to the Objects of the Corporation and the removal of the first tier of governance – the Members of the Corporation. In terms of the Objects of the Corporation, the desire to offer affordable high quality education which is strategically placed was reinforced, but the evangelical nature of the Corporation and its schools were furthered with the inclusion of: *'…within a Christian worldview shaped by the Bible and communicate in word and deed the gospel of Jesus Christ…'.* (Ordinance, 2013 p. 39)

In respect of the Members of the Corporation, they were replaced directly by the Board of Directors. Therefore the Anglican Schools Corporation now has two tiers of governance: the Board of Directors and the School Councils. Thirteen Board of Directors can now be appointed and these are made up of two appointees from the Archbishop of Sydney, nine elected by the Synod and two appointed by the Board itself. The eligibility for those to be elected or appointed to the Board has been clearly defined and they reflect the evangelical nature of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney but a significant shift has occurred. Again it is interesting to note that the change of governance structure has also occurred at a time in the Corporation's history when further numerical growth is observable.

In concluding this section, it is highly relevant to consider the way the Anglican Schools Corporation has evolved over its 70 year history. As an organisation, it has behaved in such a way that made the prospect of stagnating unlikely. Even its aversion to keeping or maintaining the original governance structure points to the Anglican Schools Corporation's inclination to respond and adapt to change accordingly. This is seen extensively throughout its successful attempts to remain relevant to its changing market. The changes it has implemented to its governance structure reflect its desire to meet both the current and future needs of the organisation. For example, some thirty plus years ago, the principals of member schools were allowed to vote at their school council meetings. This was a consequence of the 1983 Ordinance. However, decisions such as this were changed over time as governance structures developed and became further refined in response to a changing educational climate.

4.3   Ethical issues

In identifying the Anglican Schools Corporation as the context of the research, a number of key ethical implications follow. The selection of the Anglican Schools Corporation was grounded in the opportunity it provided to explore governance in action across a series of like-minded and philosophically aligned school councils, but who all service a range of very different educational markets. This context in which research is to be conducted allows for rich data collection to be obtained, considered and analysed. However, as an employee of the Anglican Schools Corporation, a series of ethical issues needed to be addressed throughout the process of undertaking the research.

The Anglican Schools Corporation has a specific ethos that characterises the schools it owns and operates as distinctly different from the broader independent educational community. The unique quality of schools belonging to the independent educational community is their independence – the school boards and councils of each school should be aware that their particular strength rests in their ability to act independently of each other. In other words, although they might share a common set of expectations, ideals and values, their ability to work independently affords them with the opportunity to provide a unique view on education which, in turn, can be championed and marketed to the community that they serve. This is not quite the case for schools and colleges that are members of the Anglican Schools Corporation.

All nineteen member schools of the Anglican Schools Corporation (as at the end of 2014) must abide with, and are bound by, the requirements as outlined in the Anglican Schools Corporation Ordinance 1947 Amendment Ordinance 2013, specifically in relation to the following:

Objects

The Objects of the Corporation are to serve Christ by equipping students for his world through efficiently operating strategically placed Anglican educational establishments that-

> *a.   Offer high quality education within a Christian worldview shaped by the Bible, and*

<ol type="a" start="2">
Communicate in word and deed the gospel of Jesus Christ to students, staff, parents and the wider community, and
Are financially accessible to local communities.

Membership

The Members of the Corporation are-

<ol type="a">
Up to two persons appointed by the Archbishop;
Nine persons elected by the Synod; and
Up to two persons appointed by the Board.

At least two of the Members are to be ordained clergy licensed in the Diocese of Sydney with at least a three year theological degree from Moore Theological College or another college that is endorsed by the Archbishop for the purposes of this clause.

To be eligible for appointment or election as a Member, a person must –

<ol type="a">
Be of Christian faith and character;
Attend regularly and be actively involved in a Bible-based Christian Church;
Have signed a "Statement of Personal Faith" in the form last approved by the Synod; and
Have signed a statement in the form last approved by the Board that indicates that he or she is willing to promote the Objects of the Corporation.

Employment

To be eligible for appointment as the Chief Executive Officer or as a principal or as an Other Executive Officer, a person must-

<ol type="a">
Be of Christian faith and character;
Attend regularly and be actively involved in a Bible-based Christian Church;
Have signed a "Statement of Personal Faith" in the form last approved by the Synod; and
Have signed a statement in the form last approved by the Board that indicates that he or she is willing to promote the Objects of the Corporation.

School Councils

A School Council is a committee of the Board.

Responsibilities of a School Council

The responsibilities of a School Council include-

a. *To promote the Objects of the Corporation by ensuring that each School for which it has governance responsibility operates in a manner that-*

 i. *Upholds the Corporation's Objects,*

 ii. *Supports the Corporation's Philosophy of Education, and*

 iii. *Implements the School's strategic plan and policies that are consistent with the Corporation's Strategic Plan and Policies; and*

b. *To develop the individual character of each School for which it has governance responsibility in the context of its local environment and in a relationship of interdependence with the Corporation*

There is an important reason why several large sections of the Ordinance have been directly quoted at length here. A close reading of these sections clearly points to the consistent faith base shared by the Anglican Schools Corporation and each of its member schools. That this faith base is to be necessarily shared amongst all members of the Corporation Board, and hence all school council appointees given that each school council is a sub-committee of the Corporation Board, is indicative of the cultural and religious alignment secured by the Anglican Schools Corporation. This faith commonality extends beyond members of school council and must be found in each appointed school principal as well. The effect created in consequence is a faith-based alignment across those in governance responsibility of these schools and the Corporation.

It is also vital that each member school of the Anglican Schools Corporation actively and demonstrably meets the common Objects of the Corporation itself. Put simply, they cannot work independently of the Corporation's Objects. This is not to intimate that each school is unable to have its own unique value or values. On the contrary, they clearly do and are encouraged to *'develop the individual character of each school'* as is required of each school council, but they do so in a manner of *'interdependence'* with one another and the Corporation itself. In view of this, a common set of family resemblances is observable across the nineteen member schools of the Anglican Schools Corporation.

Working concurrently as the researcher of this study and serving as an employee of the Anglican Schools Corporation, I therefore actively operate within this articulated and well-established ethos and work closely and collegially with those involved in the leadership of the member schools. Namely, I dealt regularly with those who serve on the various school councils and the principals themselves. It is in view of these pre-existing relationships that extend from my role as an employee of the Corporation that a series of ethical issues emerged. Specifically, ethical consideration pertaining to the research and conducting it became framed through the following key ethics questions:

- will my close working relationship with each of the school principals make it difficult to obtain objective data?

- will my close working relationship with several chairs of school councils make it difficult to obtain objective data?

- will the research that I undertake within the Anglican Schools Corporation provide my employer with any material advantage (and hence comprise the authenticity of the research that I am intending to undertake)?

Each of these questions centre on the degree of proximity between myself, in my role as the researcher, and my objects of study, those being individuals who work and operate within the selected research environment of the Anglican Schools Corporation. There is, I think, a good answer to this potential disharmony. Margarete Sandelowski and Julie Barroso (2002) point to a multitude of errors made by researchers when working with samples and with qualitative data. In particular, Sandelowski and Barroso cite failing to demonstrate reflexivity as instrumental to misinterpreting or distorting data. They define reflexivity as

> *"[T]he ability and willingness of researchers to acknowledge and take account of the many ways they themselves influence research findings and thus what comes to be accepted as knowledge. Reflexivity implies the ability to reflect inward toward oneself as an inquirer; outward to the cultural, historical, linguistic, political, and other forces that shape everything about inquiry; and, in between researcher and participant to the social interaction they share"* (2002, p.216).

The latter component of Sandelowski and Barroso's assertion reveals a crucial and necessary point salient to the ethics of this study. Insofar as recognising the pre-existing personal and professional relationships shared with each of the participants involved in the study, I have demonstrated a clear readiness to be aware of this variable which undoubtedly has the potential to influence the findings of the study. The qualitative research pursued here, and the results that are found, cannot exist in a vacuum. I am self-aware and sensitive to the social interaction shared with the subjects contributing to the qualitative findings of this study. To this end, I am both confident and comfortable with the contextual circumstances around which the research has been advanced.

The question of whether my close working relationship with each of the school principals will complicate the aim of obtaining objective data is problematic only insofar as it illustrates the fact that a connection had been shared with these individuals prior to their serving as research participants in the study. Naturally, an alleged risk of bias or distortion emerging in the process to obtain objective data presents itself. However, as outlined above, in drawing on the work of Sandelowski and Barroso (2002) around qualitative research, I do not believe that the pre-existing personal and professional relationships shared with each of the principals within the Anglican Schools Corporation has hindered my capacity to undertake objective research in respect of their qualitative contributions.

Central to overcoming this ethical dilemma is the stated trait of reflexivity displayed throughout conducting my research where I have exhibited an overt awareness of the relationships shared with the research participants, both prior to and during the research phases, as well as of the social interaction we share at any given point and the particular purpose/s attached to it.

Another element of the research that circumvents the ethical risk associated with using research participants I have had pre-existing relationships with is the tightly defined focus of the project. That this study seeks to answer the question of how the governance of Anglican schools and its intersection with school leadership might be enhanced anchors it as a project whose key research focus is unambiguously articulated. In consequence, this precise focal point does not invite contributions during the qualitative research component that are unguided or outside the remit of the particular scope of topic under investigation here.

Further, investigative research conducted with the principals within the Anglican Schools Corporation was purely voluntary. An open invitation to participate was afforded to all school principals within the Corporation. There was no exclusivity in the process of interview in Phase 2 of the study. In total, nine school Principals expressed a willingness to be involved in the second phase of the study, which exceeded the original intended number of five. As such all nine were interviewed thereby avoiding the issues of exclusivity and selection. Further to this, those that were involved remained anonymous in the process. Principals who did participate did so with an understanding of their anonymity to be preserved at all points throughout the project, from their initial record of responses to the final representations of salient contributions published here.

The permission of the Chair of the Anglican Schools Corporation Board was sought at the outset, prior to the commencement of any research. In seeking permission to specifically access the principals, chairs of councils and potentially other members of school councils, it was made explicitly clear to the Chair of the Anglican Schools Corporation Board that all involvement in the research study would be on voluntary and anonymous terms. The guarantee of anonymity extended to all research participants and even precluded the Chair of the Anglican Schools Corporation Board from knowing who was involved in the research. It was also made clear to the Chair of the Anglican Schools Corporation Board that all data obtained would be made available for public use, thus negating any possible ethical issues that might arise in respect of this information.

Establishing the degree to which my close working relationship with several chairs would problematise the core aim of obtaining objective data from them mirrored the ethical considerations given to the principals. Reflexivity needed to be displayed toward the chairs, my pre-established professional relationships with them and the social interaction opportunities through which I am otherwise engaged with them. The adoption of this research approach narrows the possibility for bias to emerge, influence or skew the interpretation of data. Additionally, in a similar vein to the principals, all research and work conducted with the chairs of school councils within the Anglican

Schools Corporation was voluntary and anonymous in nature. An open invitation was distributed to eighteen of the chairs of school councils who belong to the Anglican Schools Corporation.

There is a very important reason why only eighteen (of the nineteen schools within the Anglican Schools Corporation) chairs of council were invited to participate in the study. The decision was made to remove my own school from the research pool early in the investigative process. It is my belief that for the research to be authentic it would be in the best interests of the project to remove my own school and my own chair of school council. In particular, to include myself in the project and treat me as another principal in the research sample, while leading the research of this study, carried ethical implications of considerable weight. Namely, the reflexivity strived for in conducting the research would be under evident threat had I chosen to keep my own school as a participant school. By removing it from the research sample, this has limited the potential for any conflict of interest to emerge from the research, if not altogether eliminated it. This key decision aimed to have a positive impact on the objectivity of the research conducted, making the results drawn from it more objectively meaningful.

Also, as stated previously in this chapter, there is a clear case that a level of trust in the researcher (Fink, 2016) is essential if the relationships that exists between chairs of school council and principals, and between the principal and school leadership team, is to be explored effectively. Trust was exhibited between the researcher and the chairs of school council, principals and school leadership teams as a result of the researcher's professional relationship with them.

Finally, there exists a need to consider the question of whether the Anglican Schools Corporation might gain any material benefit from this study and, if so, whether they would instruct further pursuit of this. From an overarching perspective, the chief benefit to be delivered by this research is an improvement of the overall quality of school governance, whether that is for those who are a part of the Anglican Schools Corporation or any other school governed by a school council, either private or state-owned. The real beneficiaries of this research would therefore be the students and wider communities, benefiting from being better served by their school councils, as educational outcomes are improved. To this end, there are no ethical problems represented by this likely material gain for either the Anglican Schools Corporation or the broader educational community. The material benefit would thus be the by-product of improved educational deliverables stemming from school governance better intersecting with school management via the principal. In this way, the material gains to be had present themselves as the potential and natural consequence of the research pursued here, though are not in and of themselves the central aims of this research project.

4.4   Research methodology

The task of selecting the methodological framework that most appropriately met the crux of the research problem of this study was not straightforward. It relied on the consultation of literature dealing with research methods with the particular objective of learning about the strengths and

weaknesses associated with different kinds of methodologies. To further explore the merits attached to differing research methods, a close reading of research studies and projects within the social sciences, bearing some or little resemblance to the terrain of my study, was pursued. This analysis revealed the practical application of the research methods that have, for one reason or another, emerged as being of relevance to determining the processes that best enable effective school governance.

Proceeding on the assumption that methodology refers to the general framework that guides a research project, one of the earliest choices to be made in connection to this study had to do with the relationship it shared to theory. The literature devoted to methodology unveils a common tension that pervades the social sciences. At its core, this dichotomy results from two different styles of research, those being theory testing and theory building. Both represent an approach to empirical research. Theory testing, on the one hand, describes an approach that begins with using a theory to guide which observations to make. From this, as David de Vaus states, *[t]he observations should provide a test of the worth of the theory* (2001, p.6). In this way, theory testing is characterised by its approach in moving from the general to the specific. On the other hand, theory building, as its name intimates, is a process in which research commences with observations and follows using inductive reasoning to derive a theory from these observations. Put simply, as de Vaus observes, *[t]hese theories attempt to make sense of observations* (2001, p.6).

The dichotomous treatment of these two research styles stretches across much of the literature. Their discussion and deployment by various social researchers has led to considerable debate surrounding the credibility of both as valid research approaches and techniques. In particular, this academic tension is perhaps best epitomised in view of an approach known as grounded theory, first accounted for in 1967 by its originators Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the text *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Here, Glaser and Strauss used the term grounded theory at the time to describe an intention within the social sciences to create and develop a theory from data collected, particularly qualitative data, rather than commence with a pre-existing theory that needed to be tested (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). To this end, grounded theory, in its earliest account here, mirrors what is otherwise more broadly acknowledged as theory building. Indeed, a number of scholars have in their studies claimed to employ the grounded theory approach (Baszanger, 1997; Lempert, 1997). Irrespective of this, it would be erroneous of this study to fail acknowledgement of the strong disagreements in the later literature between Glaser and Strauss regarding what grounded theory in fact is. This is because an unpacking of these scholarly tensions shores up the contemporary applications of what can be more commonly called theory building, exposing its uses but also its limitations as a research approach.

The domain of theory building was recognised early in the development of this thesis as representing an approach that successfully suited the research goals and matched the empirical nature of its inquiry. This was also an extension of the relative absence in the literature of theorising about school

governance. Therefore, to confidently select the precise methodological framework appropriate for this project, a better understanding of the academic conflict between Glaser and Strauss and the nuances of the subsequent perspectives championed by both was pursued. For Glaser, the theory building approach had been refined in such a way that it privileged a holistic view of the data. The self-evident nature of theory was, by contrast, more ambiguous for Strauss, who penned his later writings solo as well as with his collaborator Juliet M. Corbin. As such, detailed analytical methods applied to qualitative research were deemed necessary by Strauss in order for theory to be extracted from data. These included such tools as word-by-word or sentence-by-sentence categorising, a densely codified means of generating categories that shared a relationship to basic social processes. This meticulous data analysis was termed 'microanalysis' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.57). It marks a significant shift away from Glaser and Strauss' original conception of groundedness which foregrounded the notion of emergence, whereby meaning is extrapolated from data and the construction of theory is legitimised by the relationship it shares with holistic qualitative observation and assessment.

The separation between the academic opinions of Glaser and Strauss highlights the degree to which research methodology is not simple or benign. It additionally points to the fraught and imperfect nature of tackling social research, from whichever lens or theoretical position is selected to advance a research inquiry. Furthermore, the divorce of Glaser and Strauss's academic partnership signifies the politicisation of language that the social sciences contend with. The differences between theory building and grounded theory, for instance, illustrate this point well. For the purposes of this study, the politics around this terminology is expanded on shortly. Despite the lack of support this project demonstrates toward Strauss and Corbin's later methodological refinements to grounded theory, it does draw inspiration for its chosen methodology from their essential premise rearticulated in their 1990 text, *Basics of qualitative research: grounded theory procedures and technique*? That is, one does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge (p.23). The research framework mounted in support of this project employs grounded theory methodologies in accessing and assessing data, but does not necessarily create a grounded theory position, given the preparatory conceptual work already undertaken in first phase of the study. Acknowledging the value underpinned in Strauss and Corbin's general assumption about social research secures the use of grounded theory as a methodological tool throughout this research study. It has clearly been demonstrated that grounded theory can be traced back to the original work co-authored by Glaser and Strauss (1967). In an overarching view, however, this study also locates grounded theory methodologies within the more global research style of theory building (de Vaus, 2001). In this scheme, grounded theory exists as an offshoot of theory building. Whilst the exact details of strategies, instruments and data collection and analysis methods following the use of grounded theory does not warrant elaboration here, it is key to identify that data collection and analysis in grounded theory are concurrent and continual activities. The process of data collection and the analysis of it overlap in a manner that does not merely allow

meaning to be built but demands that this outcome is secured, through which theory can then be considered. Furthermore, the most popular data collection method in grounded theory is the tool of an open-ended interview (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

A further characteristic of grounded theory methodology that renders it suitable to this study is its claim to be the method of choice in research circumstances where one is attempting to understand people's *experience* of a *process* (Morse, 1994). Given that the focus of the research problem addressed in this study relates to the processes that enable school councils to positively intersect with the leadership, management and operations of the schools they govern, accessing people's understandings about their experience of meeting and working at the intersection of s*chool council*, *school leadership* and *principal* is foundational in answering the research question. In this view, the methodologies of grounded theory, under the terms discussed earlier, provide an appropriate methodological approach to advance this research inquiry.

Open-ended interviews were used as the essential means for collecting data about the experiences of chairs of school councils and principals with respect to processes of school governance. This gives shape to the qualitative research component of the project. In this way, qualitative research fixes the researcher – that is, myself – as the primary *instrument of data collection* (Johnson & Christensen 2012, p.36). It is the researcher who asks the questions, collects the data, draws interpretations and observes what occurs. In reality, this process started with an initial in-depth study of (at least) five school governance structures from within the Anglican Schools Corporation. This specifically involved individual interviews conducted with those principals and chairs of school councils from schools belonging to the Anglican Schools Corporation.

The qualitative approach positions the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the issues set for study. However, this does not mean the research style is without its weaknesses. As Johnson and Christensen observe, *[m]ost qualitative researchers argue that some qualitative research studies are better than others, and they use the term validity and trustworthiness to refer to this quality difference* (2012, p.264). Specifically, what Johnson and Christensen term *researcher bias* (2012, p.264) emerges as a potential threat to the validity of qualitative research studies. Several strategies have been deployed throughout this study to minimise the presence of such a threat and instead promote qualitative research validity, including the request for participant feedback, the employment of methods triangulation as well as the constant use of reflexivity on the part of the researcher, which is discussed in the earlier section of this chapter concerning ethical issues. The use of qualitative research in the light of these circumstances links to the central aim of establishing a conceptual framework for the thesis, one that develops during the research and is being regularly adjusted as a result of the accumulation of the qualitative data collected.

In considering the uncontentious claim that the use of multiple research methods promotes qualitative research validity, the question of using additional research methods within the scope of this study is

brought sharply into focus. To continue thinking about the issue of researcher bias during a process of qualitative research, Johnson and Christensen offer a useful insight: *It is true that the problem of researcher bias is frequently an issue in qualitative research because qualitative research tends to be exploratory and is open-ended and less structured than quantitative research* (2012, p.264). With this observation kept prominently in mind, the study here recognises the inherent value in additionally utilising quantitative research methods. This research decision ultimately shifts the methodological framework away from a single methods procedure towards a mixed methods approach.

The methodological apparatus used in facilitating the quantitative research component of the study was primarily the use of a questionnaire. Following the completion of the open-ended interviews with chairs of school councils and principals as part of the qualitative research method, a more detailed questionnaire was created and used as an equally integral part of the research process. It was created for subsequent members of school council and school executive teams, from within the Anglican Schools Corporation, willing to be involved in the study. The quantitative data was collected using surveys, with on-line questionnaires being made available to participants. The value in conducting this research component resides in the opportunity to test and corroborate the assumptions derived from the grounded theory emerging via the qualitative research study. David de Vaus asserted that inherent to the task of theory building is the step of asking whether the observation is *a particular case of a more general factor*, or how the observation *fits into a pattern or a story* (2001, p.6). What quantitative research allows for is the establishment of a pattern, or story, which connects the earlier original qualitative research, and the interpretations, assumptions and theorisations drawn from it, to the broader, more structured findings of the quantitative research component. In other words, the quantitative research, which occurred sequentially, served a primary purpose of collecting data that was then used to both assess and enhance the grounded theory formed in consequence of the qualitative data collected in the second research phase.

These individual yet related research components of the project together constituted a mixed methods approach. A mixed methods approach as defined by Johnson and Christensen (2012) is one that employs both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. For the purposes of this study the qualitative component allowed the researcher to explore, whilst the quantitative methodology enabled the researcher to confirm.

As previously outlined, a clear research structure was created for Phase 2 of the study involving qualitative research tools, namely the use of open-ended interviews, and this led to the use of a quantitative method for Phase 3 of the study entailing a voluntary on-line questionnaire for all members of school councils and school executive teams from within the Anglican Schools Corporation. There are many advantages to using a mixed methods approach, one of which is that it overcomes the weaknesses that social researchers have with using only one dominant research methodology, either a qualitative or quantitative method. Johnson and Christensen (2012) effectively

highlight this problem by stating that, in the opinion of mixed researchers, they *view the use of only quantitative or qualitative methods as limiting and incomplete for many research problems* (p.35), especially in the area of the social sciences where it is difficult to control variables. The social researchers go on to argue that the fundamental principle of mixed methods research is to mix methods, procedures or other paradigm characteristics in a such way that the resulting mixture or combination has complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses (2012, p.195). To this end, the mixed methods approach pursued in this study was seen to enable a more complete and thorough investigation of the research problem and increase the validity and usefulness of the research undertaken.

4.5   Research design

As noted above, a three-stage design approach was developed for the research. The use of other methodologies in the overall research design is summarised in the sections which follow. Phase 1 involved an analysis of the literature on governance and school governance, in particular the corporate literature in the not-for-profit sector, charter schools from within the United States of America, the Australian independent school sector and the government school sector in England. Phase 2 of the study involved a series of one-to-one, open-ended interviews with at least five chairs of school councils and five school principals. (The selection process used for the interviews is outlined on page 55 of the study). This phase was designed to help crystallise the conceptual framework and serve as a precursory step to a wider survey of schools from within the Anglican Schools Corporation, forming the crux of Phase 3.

4.5.1 - Phase 2: Interviews

The selection of the open-ended interview as the primary methodological tool was steeped in its merits and uses in developing a grounded theory position. In terms of this study's overarching adoption of a mixed methods approach that was conducted sequentially, it was crucial that the qualitative component of the research, the interviews with the chairs of school councils and school principals, was conducted first. The data from these interviews helped to further develop and establish the conceptual framework Categorising and analysing the qualitative data collected achieved this. The process of data analysis is more fully accounted for in the chapter which follows.

The alleged potential for distortion or disruption to qualitative research validity resulting from researcher bias was considered carefully in designing not just the approach to interviewing but the very language which framed the interview questions. In their work, Sandelowski and Barroso (2002) point to the repetitive habits of social researchers that weaken, if not discredit, certain processes when working with qualitative data. These include confusing data with findings, claiming patterns or coming to conclusions that are unsupported by interviewee quotes and treating the qualitative data

of interviews as somehow objective rather than the result of the researcher's selective data gathering process (2002). Together they highlight the various ways in which research bias can manifest.

The concerns relating to the impact of researcher bias on the validity and strength of the study reported findings was a real issue for the research undertaken in Phase 2 of this project. It was particularly so because the researcher knew those being interviewed from a previous context, either the interviewees were professional colleagues of the researcher or they had governance oversight of the organisation that the researcher worked for. Therefore, to ensure that the qualitative research that was undertaken continued to have validity and trustworthiness, the following design strategies were employed to mitigate any perceived elements of bias or conflicts of interest:

- anonymity was guaranteed. Interviews were recorded so that written transcripts of the interviews could be completed and these transcripts remained anonymous. The typist used to transcribe the interviews acknowledged the need for confidentiality. This process enabled descriptive validity to occur as a factual account of each interview was made (Johnson &Christensen, 2012).

- confidentiality was ensured. The researcher treated the identity and school location of all respondents with total confidentiality. All email communication was sent as blind copy so that no individual participant's name appeared visibly in a group-based email. All hard copies (of either emails, consent forms, expressions of interest) were securely locked away. Once data was analysed all material (including tapes and transcripts) were de-identified. To this end, all participants in the interviews were assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

- participation in the research was entirely voluntary and was only conducted as a result of written permission from the Chair of the Anglican Schools Corporation Board. The letter from the researcher to the Chair of the Anglican Schools Corporation (ASC), and his response, are included as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

- the individual transcriptions of the interviews were provided to each relevant interviewee for cross checking and this invited appropriate participant feedback to occur (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

- the researcher actively engaged in reflexivity – that is, critical self-reflection about his own potential biases and predispositions, especially in trying to remain impartial and as unobtrusive to the interview candidates as possible (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

In spite of the caution shown toward the risks of researcher bias, the use of people known to the researcher in the second phase of the study also had some advantages, one of which was the ability of the researcher to possess a positive rapport with those being interviewed. Johnson and Christensen

(2012) argue that if the individual being interviewed trusts the interviewee, they are more likely to provide more unbiased responses as a result of their degree of comfort and willingness to be more open. More generally, the use of interviews throughout Phase 2 permitted the researcher to use probes or prompts to clarify for further meaning or to gain additional information during the interviews (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Overall, it is believed that these research measures, as previously asserted, added to the validity and trustworthiness of the qualitative research undertaken. The questions for the school principals in the second phase of the study can be found in Appendix 6.

Using Patton's (1987) classification of interview types, a standardised open-ended interview style was adopted for the research in Phase 2. As Patton points out, this approach meant that the wording and sequencing of questions were determined in advance; however, it did not preclude probes to be used so that responses could be explored if this was deemed appropriate. In view of this, standardised questions may indeed place constraints on the responses of interviewees and limit what they have to offer. It is an interview style that unintentionally removes flexibility in relation to the interviews and the specific circumstances that might arise in the context of them (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). These issues were potentially overcome through this study by the probes used by the interviewer. The strength of this type of response is that the interviewees all respond to the same questions, thus helping the data collected from these questions to be easily compared and helping to remove the potential impact of bias. It also permits an evaluation of the questions used as they are common to all participants, which in turn clearly aids the organisation and analysis of the data collected (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

4.5.2 - Phase 2: Data analysis of interviews

A two-stage data analysis process was used to unpack the data obtained through Phase 2, as recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The first stage was an open coding exercise where the transcripts of the interviews were categorised and labelled in attempt to discover the main themes from the data. The second stage, known as axial coding, was used and this involved the researcher developing the themes, organising them and looking for groups and relationships between the data provided. Appendix 8 provides an example of how the two-stage coding process was used to analyse an interview with a chair of council. Appendix 9 is an example of how the two-stage coding process was used to analyse an interview with a school principal. The first reading was in black pen and included annotated notes on the side of the interview. The yellow highlighter was used to for the second reading which looked at these comments in an attempt to identify main themes.

4.5.3 - Phase 3: Surveys

Phase 3 of research was the subject of a follow-up ethics application to the Ethics Committee of Macquarie University, pending the outcomes of the Phase 2 investigations. It followed the qualitative research of the second phase, using a survey (Appendix 7) distributed to members of school councils

and school executive teams residing within the Anglican Schools Corporation. School executive teams were included in this phase of the research, as the researcher sought to discover what, if anything, executive teams knew about school governance. This had the potential to identify pre-principalship experiences in relation school governance and the conceptual framework, motivated by the thought that the resulting data may have important implications for policy and practice in principal preparation and leadership succession.

In Phase 3 of the study, 145 participants were invited to be involved. Potential participants were identified as those who were current members of the eighteen (out of the nineteen) different school councils that have governance oversight of the schools currently operated by the Anglican Schools Corporation, and their respective school executive team. To reiterate, the reason for using eighteen of the nineteen school councils is because my members of school council were not used for the obvious ethical and conflict of interest issues that could arise from using my own school in the study. Of the 145 invited participants, 51 signed the consent form and completed the survey.

Participation in answering the survey, which assumed the form of a questionnaire (Johnson & Christensen, 2012), was purely voluntary and was the result of candidates responding to a letter of invitation by myself as researcher. Given this process of non-random sampling and seeing as though no ethnic group or specific community with its distinct set of characteristics was used as part of this phase of the study, there was no need to identify a representative from the participants who responded to the questionnaire as none existed in this particular research setting.

In dealing with the fundamental issue of school governance there was the potential, though very minimal, for sensitive information to be gleaned from the participants that might indicate illegal behaviour at a governance level. Such activities could include the misappropriation of funds, though the risk of discovering this information was minimal, it was still an outcome made possible by the nature of the research informing Phase 3 of the study. School governors, on the whole, are not in positions of responsibility characterised by a requirement of them to authorise the spending of the financial resources of the school. Therefore, their involvement in this study, though it did contain a potential risk, was very minimal indeed. Had it been discovered in the research that they were using the financial resources of a school illegally then this would have been identified and exposed accordingly.

4.5.4 - Phase 3: Data analysis of surveys

Phase 3 of the research, which was quantitative in nature, involved the creation of an on-line questionnaire centered on the governance framework created from Phase 2 of research. An on-line Google questionnaire was created. It was confidential and was completed, purely voluntarily, by various members of eighteen school councils from within the Anglican Schools Corporation. The on-line questionnaire required each participant to respond to a series of statements which related to each of the six dominant themes from the second phase of the research: accountability, school vision,

leadership, strategy and implementation, trust and value add. The responses were two fold. Firstly, they were required to rate their views on each statement using a Likert scale and secondly, they were offered the opportunity to clarify their response via further comment. The only school governance structure that was excluded from the invitation to participate was the school of the researcher, thus removing a conflict of interest.

Upon approval from the Ethics Committee of Macquarie University, the researcher wrote to the Chair of the Anglican Schools Corporation Board seeking permission to invite school principals, chairs of school council and school council members of the eighteen schools within the Anglican Schools Corporation to participate (the letter from the researcher to the Chair of the Anglican Schools Corporation in included as Appendix 3). Once this request was acknowledged and approved in writing from the Chair of the Anglican School Corporation Board (the letter from the Chair of the Anglican Schools Corporation to the researcher is included as Appendix 4), the researcher contacted each potential participant, via an email request, to voluntarily participate in the survey. This request outlined the process involved, provided the necessary approval form for completion and emphasised the voluntary nature of the research. If a school principal from within the Corporation responded positively to completing the survey, that school principal was contacted, via email, by the researcher to seek their permission to contact the executive staff members from within that school to also participate in the research. Contact with the executive staff members was also in line with way the researcher contacted other participants, via email invitation and with all necessary details about the research to be undertaken.

This process of invitation commenced in late June 2016 and finished in late September 2016. Throughout these three months, the researcher sent a number of emails, via blind copy, approximately every three weeks, providing an update as to how many people had agreed to complete the survey and inviting further participation. Due to the nature of the organisation and the relationship the researcher had with the invited participants it was not perceived as being an email of annoyance or demand, rather an email of sharing updates and reminding participants when the survey would close. It emphasised the collegial nature of the research design.

Once the on-line survey was closed the information was downloaded into an excel spreadsheet, which was one of the main reasons Google Documents was used to conduct the research. One version of the survey existed, but each survey was given an identification number and that identification number correlated to the school that the governance member was from. This enabled the data to not only be analysed collectively but, if required, also at a school-based level. Only the researcher kept the master file on which the identification number for each school was kept. It was not possible for the participants to figure out the identification number, thus maintaining the anonymous nature of the research.

There were several advantages of being able to identify the school in the research. The first advantage was that because each survey was the same, collective data about each response to each question could be obtained. The second advantage was because each school could be identified, not only could a collective view of the data be created, data could be collected about each school and compared against the collective data. Also, in the background information section of the survey, every respondent was required to identify the specific role they fulfilled within the governance model. This enabled horizontal analysis to occur if required, including analysis of specific themes or trends that emerged from within particular membership definitions.

The data collected was analysed, where applicable, in three ways:

1. Holistically

2. School-based level

3. Governance role

This enabled the researcher to cross check the data and see if any further patterns emerged while also maintaining the confidentiality of each school's response.

4.6 The value and significance of the study

The significance of this study is located in its desire to advance the scholarship pertaining to school governance, an area that has attracted considerable academic attention though not from the tailored angle of assessing the processes that secure good school governance. In view of this, the project's value is ascribed to its tightly considered and defined research focus: an investigation into those processes which secure good school governance. In identifying such processes, the study also purports to have the potential to affect the likely benefit of improved learning outcomes for students in consequence of schools and school governors being better equipped with those procedures that promote optimal performance at a governance level.

The significance of the study, and the value it offers therein, is the observable trend where school governance is no longer the sole domain of the independent education sector. It now also reaches publicly owned schools that are embracing new school governance structures. In the light of this, it is hoped that the findings and recommendations put forward here will help these governors not just understand their role with clarity but perform it more dutifully and more meaningfully. Returning to the abovementioned anticipated outcome of the research, it is similarly hoped that a reciprocal consequence of good school governance will be more effective schools which can then, in turn, produce improved student outcomes.

The potential benefits to be had in consequence of this research have clearly been shown to connect with an overall improvement in the quality of school governance, whether that is for those governors who are a part of the Anglican Schools Corporation or any other independent school, irrespective of

whether they are private or state-owned. In view of this, the real beneficiaries of this research are the students and communities that are served by school councils. Enmeshed in this possible outcome of the research is a move toward schools making a more effective use of funding spent on education, another positive consequence of this research.

4.7   Limitations of the study

The focus of this study, as mentioned frequently throughout this chapter, is tightly defined. It is centered on the processes that enable good school governance and it takes the Anglican Schools Corporation as the research environment through which these processes are explored, tested and theorised. To this end, the study is marked by one considerable limitation – that is, its findings are drawn solely from the schools belonging to the Anglican Schools Corporation and, as such, assume their meaning fully within this research context alone. The implication of this is that the thesis built in consideration of processes tied to good school governance might not be extrapolated to contexts other than that of the specific structure and culture of the Anglican Schools Corporation without some method of testing. This task sits beyond the scope of this study and thus represents one limitation inherent to it.

An additional limitation of the research emerges once more in light of its tightly defined focus. The research has its focus grounded in the conduct, management and operations of the individual school councils under study. In other words, it is the school councils and their habits of professional practice that are fixed as the focal points of this study. However, what this means is that the behaviours and relevancies of the Board of Directors of the Anglican Schools Corporation is not unpacked or considered within the scope of this study. Admittedly, this would be an interesting research endeavour with clear pertinence to the research goals of this project. Similarly, a study of the way the Board of Directors interrelates to the various school councils would be revealing for the impact this has on the practice of school governance. It is, however, like school case studies outside of the Anglican Schools Corporation, not the focus of this research project.

4.8   Authenticity and Trustworthiness of the study

Through an iterative process of reflexivity, through stages of individual interviews and questionnaires that linked to a tentative conceptual framework in the literature and underpinned by cross-checking of triangulation among the participants, an audit trail of data collection and analysis was created within the study. This assisted in developing the authenticity and trustworthiness of the results. This chapter has provided an overview of the research design and methodologies used for the within-school components of this study. It outlined and discussed the processes used to conduct the research and the methods by which the data was analysed, conclusions drawn and recommendations made in what have been described as Phases 2 and 3 of the study. The next chapter, Chapter 5 analyses the data and discuss the results from Phase 2 of the research, the qualitative component of the study.

Chapter 5
Phase 2 of the Research: Interviews with school principals and chairs of school council

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Chapter 5 analyses the data and discusses the results from Phase 2 of the research, the qualitative component that focused on interviews about school governance held with school principals and chairs of council from within the Anglican Schools Corporation.

5.1   Introduction

The literature review highlighted the growth of scholarship regarding governance in general and specifically that relating to the governance of schools. The literature pointed to a belief that good governance can lead to high performing organisations and schools are no exception. The purpose of Phase 2 of the research was to explore in detail an emerging good school governance framework and, more specifically, how school governance intersects with school leadership in the overall governance of the school. It did this through interviewing chairs of school councils and school principals within the Anglican Schools Corporation, focusing on how they work together in the governance of their schools.

To assist in this process, approval was sought and obtained from the Chair of the Anglican Schools Corporation Board to invite all chairs of school council and school principals from within the Anglican Schools Corporation to be involved in the research. In total nine school principals and six chairs of school council were willing to be interviewed. It was decided to interview all volunteers to avoid selectivity, therefore no purposive sampling took place. What follows is an outline of the process used to obtain the data, and the identification and reflections on the dominant themes that emerged.

5.2   Process

Nine school principals and six chairs of council were willing to be interviewed. Each school principal and each school chair was asked the same set of questions ascribed to their role. The questions asked of the chairs of council are outlined in Appendix 5 and Appendix 6 outlines the questions asked of the school principals. Handwritten notes were made during each interview and each interview was voice recorded. Each recorded interview was transcribed. A transcript was made available to each respective interviewee for their own checking and approval. Once endorsement was obtained from each interviewee, their interview was read four times by the researcher. Annotated notes were made on each interview as part of the first reading. The second reading of the transcripts led to the identification of dominant themes, with further annotations as required. A third reading extended the analysis by matching themes across questions. Once this cross analysis had been completed the final

coding occurred for the responses. This led to the identification of six dominant themes, each containing their own secondary themes. The six dominant themes are identified below and are in bold, with secondary themes and further sub themes identified as necessary.

1. **Accountability**
    i. School Council Accountability
        a. CEO Representative
        b. Financial Reports
        c. Meeting Agendas
        d. Parental Responsibility
    ii. School Council Self-Reflection
        a. School Council's Perspective
        b. Principal's Perspective
    iii. School Principal Accountability
    iv. School Council as setters of the framework
    v. School Principal as suppliers of information
        a. Public Examination Results
        b. Strategic Plan
        c. Outcomes
        d. The Good and the Bad

2. **Alignment**
    i. The School Council united in purpose
    ii. School Council as custodians of the vision
    iii. School Principal appointment
    iv. School Context
    v. Recruitment and induction of School Council membership
        a. Recruitment
    vi. Recruitment of the Chair of School Council
    vii. The School Chair and the School Principal

3. **Leadership**
    i. Attributes of the School Chair
        a. Background
        b. Reason for Appointment
        c. Setting the Tone
    ii. Leadership of the School Principal
        a. Day to Day Management
        b. Strategic Plan Implementation

        c.   Effectively relate to school council

   iii. Role of the School Chair in relation to the School Principal

        a.   Confidant

        b.   Chief Supporter

4. Strategy and Implementation

    i. School Council as strategic thinkers

    ii. Principals Implement Strategic Thinking

        a.   Budget Outcomes

        b.   Reporting

   iii. When strategy and implementation meet

        a.   Appointment of Staff

        b.   Appointment of Key Staff

        c.   Creation of a Strategic Plan

        d.   Implementation of a Strategic Plan

        e.   Meeting Agendas

   iv. Stability

    v. School Council and Conflict of Interest

        a.   Parents on School Councils

        b.   Competitors on School Councils

5. Trust

    i. Chair/Principal relationships

        a.   Access

        b.   Communication

        c.   Trust and respect

        d.   Restriction

        e.   Boundaries

        f.   Time

    ii. Trust as the backbone of relationships on the School Council

        a.   The capacity of the Chair and the capacity of the School Principal

        b.   When trust can turn sour

        c.   Faith as a basis for trust

        d.   How trust is built

6. Value Add

    i. School Council skill set

    ii. People who will challenge

Each of these themes is now discussed in greater detail in the sections which follow.

Theme 1: Accountability

Accountability emerged as a dominant theme from the second phase of research into the operations of the school council and its interaction with the management of the school. In particular the dominant theme of accountability was divided into: school council accountability, school council self - reflection, school principal accountability, school council as setters of the framework, and school principals as suppliers of information.

School Council accountability

Chairs of school councils believed they were accountable to the owners of each school, in this case the Board of the Anglican Schools Corporation and the parental body each school council served. The main way each school council held itself to account to these two main stakeholders was by holding their school principal to account for their performance.

a.   CEO Representative

Each school council was held accountable through the CEO's representative on school councils. Under the governance structure of the Anglican Schools Corporation, the CEO of the ASC has the right to attend, or have a representative attend on their behalf, each school council meeting of every school within the ASC. With nineteen schools (in 2017) it was impractical for the CEO of the ASC to attend every school council meeting of every school so an appointed representative to each council was used to act on their behalf. Each interviewed chair of council believed that one of the main roles of the CEO Representative was to report back to the CEO any concerns from their council meetings.

b.   Financial Reports

Chairs of school council believed they were accountable to the Board of the Anglican Schools Corporation via the monthly financial performance of their school. Each month financial reports were tabled and discussed at both school council and ASC Board level. Chairs of school council believed it was their council's responsibility to have oversight of their school's fiscal responsibilities and ensure that budget targets were met.

c.   Meeting Agendas

The chairs of school council kept the council accountable by following consistent and established agendas for their meetings. What was interesting to note was the consistency of this process across all schools with each school following a similar agenda consisting of devotions, acknowledgement of responsible persons, receiving of previous minutes of meetings, financial and principal's reports, correspondence and a report on work health safety matters.

All chairs of school council acknowledged that written reports were taken as read. There was a clear expectation that members of school councils would have taken the time to read reports and be prepared for discussion and questioning of these reports once they had been tabled for discussion. To enable reports to be taken as read, all chairs of school council required that written reports be distributed in advance of each meeting so that sufficient time for the reading of the report could occur. In reality this meant distribution of the reports three to five days prior to the meeting.

d.   Parental Responsibility

Five out of the nine chairs of school council believed they held themselves accountable to parents by making themselves available at relevant public events such as school speech nights or school fairs. It was believed that members of school councils needed to be appropriately accessible and visible to their school communities. Chairs of school council also noted that they held themselves accountable to the parents by writing to them each year in the annual report and the notice of school fees.

School Council self-reflection

Another way the principals and the chairs of school council believed they could hold themselves to account was to actively self-reflect on their performance both individually and collectively.

a.   School Council's Perspective

All chairs of school council interviewed as part of this research acknowledged that none of their school councils had actually undertaken any formal review or self-reflection relating to their performance. However, several chairs of council noted that they would like to see a process of self-reflection happen within their council. One chair of council in particular wanted to *'bring in [a] system where the chair will have discussion with each council member around the end of the year on how they see their contribution'* to the school council has facilitated its growth (Chair 6). This chair also reflected that *'some assessment of the chair itself by the council'* would also be worthwhile.

An interesting by-product from this perspective was the issue of how to effectively deal with a member of school council who was no longer performing in their role. Though it was acknowledged that members of school council were volunteers, this did not preclude them from being held accountable in their role. Questions arose as to whether such accountability might be achieved through some form of self-reflective tool or something more akin to a formal performance review, but no real answer to this was provided. However, it was acknowledged that this was a matter that needed to be further addressed.

b.   Principal's Perspective

No principal interviewed was actually able to say whether their school council made a formal review of their own performance as a school council, *'I don't know if they do, assess their effectiveness'* (Principal 9). However, some principals stated that their school council had started to informally

reflect on their performance. This was as a direct result of some professional development their council had attended in the area of school governance organised by the ASC, *'...it's sometimes confronting and that's difficult for individuals particularly chairs if there are council member they need to move on'* (Chair 6).

School Principal accountability

Nearly all chairs of school council believed the most effective way of holding themselves to account to the parents was by holding the principal to account for their leadership of the school. As part of their process of energising and managing the principal, all schools involved in the research stated that they annually appraised the principal's performance. This was summed up well by a comment in the interview from Chair 4 who said, *'I've got to want to get the best out of the principal'*. This appraisal process centered on assessing how well the school principal had implemented the agreed set of goals and was seen as extremely important in holding the principal to account, *'you can only be held accountable for things you can be accountable for'* (Chair 1).

Principals believed their performance was actually assessed each month through their monthly report to school council. This was reflected on by Principal 4: *'a two page summary document basically dot points under certain headings. Obviously I'd expand on those dot points if council want to know more. So if anyone's got any queries on what I have/haven't reported on they're more than welcome to ask them. So in that sense I'm held to account monthly'*.

However, one principal, Principal 7, highlighted the need for effective processes in the sharing of information between the principal and the school council in their comment, *'I don't mind being made accountable, I expect to have questions asked, and it's good, but I don't know, they just didn't trust me or our decision making; they trusted the grapevine more than they trusted me'*. Other illustrative comments made were:

> *'I can't be an uncritical supporter of my Head' (Chair 5)*
>
> *'let's bring him/her to account' (Principal 5)*
>
> *'the council have very much kept me accountable for ensuring that I employ quality staff and provide adequate professional development' (Principal 8)*

School Council as setters of the framework

Another sub theme that emerged was the need for the school council to set the framework and parameters under which the school conducted its business. Within the context of this research the parameters set by the school council would also need to meet any required guidelines established by the Anglican School Corporation. The idea of framework is a broad one and encapsulates a range of concepts.

'The key role I see of the council is advisory, the key role for council is to set framework, the key role is to be a part of the longer time strategic plan, looking at trends, having a sense of the local context, the local environment, the educational agendas that are going on and bring that wisdom to bear on the elements of that operation inside the college'. (Principal 5)

School Principal as suppliers of information

The school principal was the conduit by which information was filtered through to the school council and the importance of this cannot be underestimated. The school council will want to access a range of information about a variety of different sections of the organisation in their attempt to assess its overall health and to assist them as they make strategic decisions about its future. To assist in this process the school principal will need to supply information about the school's performance in public examinations, how the strategic plan is being implemented, and what outcomes other than academic the students are achieving as well as those stories one may find difficult to tell. The stories which are often difficult to tell often surround matters of underperformance, inappropriate actions and ones where the reputation of the school may well be challenged. It is important that school councils hear these stories as well.

a.   Public Examination Results

Chairs of council expected that the school council would receive information from the principal that would help them assess how the student's within their school community had performed in public examinations. As Chair 5 reflected: *'we certainly are looking for as much evidence of how the school is achieving its base mission of educating children'*. It was expressed that student performance in external tests did provide an indication as to teacher quality and practice. As part of the analysis of external test results, school councils expected the principal to provide information regarding how they intended to lift performance in areas of concern: *'We want to see the N.A.P.L.A.N. results. We want to see what weaknesses it exposes. We want to know what plans he/she's got for moving on'* (Chair 4).

In keeping the school council informed about student performance in public examinations, chairs of council and principals noted that the broader expertise of their senior staff was also used to keep the school council informed about student performance. Examples of senior staff include Heads of Senior or Junior Schools and Directors of Curriculum. The chairs of school council also believed this was an appropriate and positive way for senior staff to interact with the council.

b.   Strategic Plan

Another sub theme was the creation and subsequent implementation of a school strategic plan. Nearly all chairs of school council and principals believed the creation of the strategic plan was a shared responsibility; it was not the sole domain of either the school principal or the chair of council. However, it was clearly expressed that it was the role of the school principal to implement the

strategic plan and the role of the school council was to actively monitor its implementation, *'the school council [must have] confidence that the Head and the executive team are implementing the strategic plans'* (Chair 2).

c.   Outcomes

Chairs of school council expected that they would access information that would help them assess whether the school was achieving outcomes (other than academic) that they desired for their students. Outcomes that could be achieved may be pastoral, co-curricular or spiritual. School councils also expected to know what strategies were being used to achieve the various outcomes set.

d.   The Good and the Bad

Principals also reflected that they needed to make sure that they supplied all necessary information to the school council and this included information that was not just good news stories. As Principal 2 noted: *'the other role of the Head is to inform the council with what's going on whether [that] be good or bad'*. This point was also made in comments from the chairs such as Chair 5 who reflected: *'if you're looking at your results and your results are perfectly satisfactory, well you don't really need to go there, but if the school is not achieving some of the key benchmarks, you've got to be asking why and what's going on'*.

The supplying of bad information is not necessarily easy for school principals to do or for school councils to receive, but in order to make informed strategic decisions it is essential that all necessary information is received, even if it is not what some would like to hear.

> *'In general terms how I was going to improve the quality of the teaching. I always informed them obviously of my [staff] appointments, and I inform them if I'm concerned about a teacher and likely to take industrial action in relation to that teacher'* (Principal 3)

> *'But if enrolments are going south because a teacher has done a particular thing to a particular group of people, and a catastrophic event is emerging, then I'd want to be into that conversation with the council Chairman, keeping him up to date because he would be concerned about risk'* (Principal 5)

> *'I have to provide them with information about enrolments, so I provide them with information about every student that leaves and arrives, without identifying them, why they've left, why they've come. I report on professional development of staff and how that contributes to strategic direction. I also report on workplace health and safety and any other items'* (Principal 8)

Theme 2: Alignment

For the governance structure within the school to effectively intersect with management and achieve desired outcomes, there needs to be a strong alignment across the organisation. This alignment will

be based on a united purpose, an understanding that the governors are the custodians of the vision and appointing school principals who are aligned to this purpose and vision. Further to this, there needs to be an aligned understanding by the governors and the school principal as to the context of the school as this will help them as they seek to recruit the right people to their school council. Finally, for the alignment to be completed, the chair of school council and the school principal need to be aligned in their desires for the school: *'…everyone going down the same direction - chair, principal, school council, senior staff of the organization. You can't achieve anything without the sharing the same goals' (Chair 2)*

The School Council united in purpose

All chairs of school council and school principals acknowledged the openly faith-based position of their schools and as such they openly stated the need to appoint members of council who actively shared a similar faith-based position. This requirement for a common faith based position is stated within the Anglican Diocese of Sydney's Ordinance (2013) which governs the Anglican Schools Corporation.

> *'You've got to be united in the vision, if you're not united and you don't have a common mind and a common spirit then the thing will not work. I mean unity is everything in this. If you don't have it it's going to fall apart' (Chair 4)*

Implicit in these statements is not just the reference to the strategic plan and the goals that it seeks to achieve, but the spine of that plan is the openly faith-based orientation of the school and its alignment to the ASC. What is also apparent in these comments is a firmly held belief that nothing of any real merit will be achieved unless the alignment, starting with a shared faith, exists.

School Council as custodians of the vision

Chairs and principals all believed that the school council must own and endorse the vision of the school. The breadth of involvement in the creation of the school's vision will most likely be determined by the development phase in which the school community finds itself in. For those school communities where the school is well established consultation may be aligned and guided by the school principal and the school executive. For newly established schools, a broader involvement may be sought as a way of unifying the community around its vision.

There was no shortage of illustrative quotes from the chairs of council and the principals in support of this sub theme:

> *'The school council is to set overall policy [and] direction it is to fire the vision for the place' (Chair 4)*

> *'I think the school council has to own the vision for the school, but it isn't its own document, it's developed with the Principal, with the executive' (Chair 4)*

'[the vision] must be owned by the council and the principal and senior staff and arguably all staff and parents at the end of the day' (Chair 6)

'They [School Council] are part of the vision' (Principal 2)

'But if the Principal is hit by a Mack truck, I think the council is the one who keeps the vision going' (Principal 5)

'I think ultimately I'm happiest when they [are] the bankers of the vision' (Principal 5)

'The school council is to provide direction to the school, to maintain a treasury of values if you like, and to ensure that the school direction adheres to its values' (Principal 6)

In the case of the last quote from Principal 6, the reference to values is seen as being interchangeable with the concept of vision.

School Principal appointment

Data obtained from the interviews supported the literature regarding school governance and school leadership in affirming that the appointment of the school principal was the most important decision the school council would make, *'so governance is really important, but the most important thing is who you choose as your [Principal]'* (Principal 3). In relation to this sub-theme the appointment of the school principal needed to be aligned to the vision of the school community – there needed to be the right fit.

'… the school council would and should appoint someone whose vision they broadly see as being appropriate to the school'. (Principal 3)

'I think in this case the person was the right fit for the job' (Chair 6)

However, within this alignment there was the need for flexibility. It was observed that the needs and the vision of the school may change over time and hence leaders may need to change to fit these needs and vision. This was acknowledged by Chair 6 who said;

'It's all about fit for the circumstance and I can understand, I think, whereas just as in the outside or corporate world or not-for-profit world generally, is that fit will change over time, so you will have a principal who may be doing a perfectly good job and the circumstances around the school or facing the school have changed and the fit may not be right, one of the biggest challenges for a council members and particularly in our structure, the board, is appropriate succession planning, and to also have the principal understand, and that's where the trust element come so critical; that the principals themselves understand. It is a question of fit, and they themselves may not be able to evolve to new circumstances, or may not be the appropriate person for new circumstances. I think you only get this when you have good and open communications between the chair and the principal'.

However, where the alignment of vision between the school council and the school principal was weak or even non-existent this normally had dire consequences for the school and its broader community.

'...the vision of the place has to be understood by that chairman and the council, where they're looking for the next leader. If they're not connecting, man 'o man they'll go under in a year, and they do'. (Principal 5)

'So if the school is known as a school that does pastoral care well, don't pick somebody who's come from a selective academic school who's made the director of studies, who wouldn't know pastoral care if it kneecapped them. Pick somebody who's come through a heritage that's the right fit. Bring new things undoubtedly, but pick someone who's the right fit'. (Principal 8)

School context

Both chairs of council and school principals acknowledged the need to share a common understanding of the context in which their schools operated. Failure to understand this would often lead to issues within the chair/principal relationship, which naturally spread into the operations of the school. The following quotes illustrate this point well:

'I think that relationship is the key relationship and it seems you've got to share an understanding of the context of the school, and then you've got to share a vision of what you want to do, uh, and it's got to be, it's helpful if that's a common understanding of the context and the common vision you've got that sees you through all the ups and downs' (Chair 1)

'...but from a local context we need to make sure we're engaging with the community' (Chair 2)

'...the programs that are offered are consistent with the needs and requirements of the community' (Chair 2)

'...taken into account in framing the local ... community... and also within the corporation as a whole' (Chair 2)

'...good community links and connections, people who understand the area' (Chair 4)

'It's a local orientation' (Chair 4)

'what's a realistic expectation for [my school] in terms of where you're at and in terms of where the corporation wants us to be and how do we get there and how do we measure progress along the way' (Principal 2)

'...alternative to [another Independent School] or [another Independent School] for them, at a tenth of the cost, and I had to deal with this issue of a low fee school' (Principal 3)

'...the school council and the context of the school and its stage of development, and so our council here I don't think created a vision for the new phase of the school's life' (Principal 4)

'Interviewee: And they expect the same of [of your school] as they do with all those other schools.

Interviewer: And without charging the same price in what sense.

Interviewee: We're $12,000 a year and [another local Independent School] is charging $22,000 a year.' (Principal 7)

Recruitment and induction of members of school council

The recruitment and subsequent induction of members of school council is important to the ongoing development of the school and the working out of its vision. The process of recruitment and then induction should be aligned with the vision of the school. From the perspective of the majority of school chairs and principals only one school seemed to possess a formal recruitment and subsequent induction process. However, once probed for more information regarding the issue of recruitment and induction through a series of secondary questions, the following common informal process of recruitment was used by the majority of school councils, chairs or council and principals.

a.   Recruitment

First, any member or ex-officio member of school council had the right to nominate someone they thought might be suitable to join the school council. One school council required this nomination to sit on the agenda for at least a month so that the person could be researched before further discussion was held on that nomination.

Secondly, once the person was formally nominated, their suitability was discussed by the school council. Thirdly, if it was believed they might be suitable further exploration of the person's background was done by the chair of council and this normally took place in an informal interview. At this interview the chair clearly explained what the requirements of a member of council were, how the council worked, where the school was in its development and its future plans. If the chair and the applicant were satisfied that they had something to offer the school council a further meeting with the principal occurred.

Fourthly, at this part of the recruitment process, all chairs of council acknowledged that the principal would have some input into the suitability of the applicant. If the principal felt the applicant was suitable then they would be invited as an observer to a council meeting.

Fifthly, if after interview and attendance at meetings, the nominated person and the council believed the nomination should be endorsed the applicant would then formally apply to become a member of the school council by the agreed process set by the Board of the ASC. Finally, throughout this whole process the nominee could withdraw at any time; there was no compulsion to join.

Nearly all chairs and principals spoke of the need to actively look for replacement members of school council, and it was noted by both regional and metropolitan based schools that finding suitable candidates was often difficult. One principal identified that they had never filled their school council.

> *'I think it's really hard to get quality people who will volunteer. We're pulling our hair out.' (Principal 7)*

Recruitment of the chair of school council

In stark contrast to the recruitment of members of school council was the appointment of chairs of school council. From the interviews with chairs of council, the most common approach to their appointment was by direct invitation. In fact, five out of the six chairs of council were asked to become the chair of school council because it was felt that they had the necessary skills to lead the school council.

> *'I had a connection with ...' (Chair 2)*

> *'I could add some value in terms of the Christian message through the school system' (Chair 2)*

> *'...approached by... and approached by' (Chair 3)*

> *'...completely out of the blue. I had a phone call from the Chairman of the Corporation' (Chair 4)*

> *'...the C.E.O. of [the SASC] said to me well why don't you become the chairman of...' (Chair 5)*

> *'...I joined at the request of the board' (Chair 6)*

> *'...the Chairman of the Board gave me a call' (Chair 6)*

The six chairs who were interviewed actually had oversight of ten schools, out of a possible nineteen owned by the ASC. Four of the chairs of council had responsibility for two schools each and two of the chairs of councils were foundation chairs.

The School Chair and the School Principal

Finally, as has been stated previously, the school principal and the school council must be aligned in their vision for the school. If they are not in alignment this could have negative consequences for the operations of the school council and the broader school community.

> *'...that council and Principal in my view needs to work as a team '(Chair 3)*

Theme 3: Leadership

Through the analysis of the responses of the chairs of council and the school principals the dominant theme of leadership emerged. The importance of leadership was not just attributed to the school principal, but also to the school chair as well. The successful interaction between the school council and the management of the school needed to be overseen by an effective chair who was perceived as leading this interaction. This section covers the attributes of the chair as leader, the school principal as leader and the role of the chair within the organisation.

Attributes of the School Chair

In identifying the attributes of a chair of school council, it was observed that the following should be considered. Firstly, the background of the prospective chair and the skill set or personal experiences they possessed which would assist them in fulfilling this role. Secondly, it should be identified that the prospective chair of school council met the reasons for their appointment. Finally, the chair must be able to set the right tone for the school council to operate. These attributes are elaborated on below.

*a.	Background*

There was no common professional background for the six chairs of council involved in the second phase of research. Two out of the six chairs of council had a background in educational leadership, whilst three possessed an accountancy/business background and one was a minister of religion. Three out of the six had previous school council experience before their appointment to their respective school councils and their role as chair.

*b.	Reason for Appointment*

Each chair of council was appointed for different reasons. One chair was appointed because it was believed that this person would work well with the current principal. Another was appointed because it was a newly purchased school and there was a need to have an experienced chair to a council that was in its first phase of development under a new owner. One chair of school council was appointed because they were connected through their parish ministry in the area the school served. Another chair of school council was appointed because a newly created council which had oversight of two schools needed an experienced chair of council in charge. Therefore, a lot of time was given by those who made the decision so that the right appointment was made for the school and the context in which it existed.

*c.	Setting the Tone*

Another sub-theme was the belief that the chair of school council was responsible for the overall good governance of the council. They were there to make sure the council met all of their responsibilities whether they be community, educational, fiduciary or spiritual. For this to occur, the chair of council needed to facilitate contributions from all members of council. It was the belief of

those interviewed that the chairs of council were there to manage the council and that effective management came as a result of a detailed knowledge of the school and how it was operating.

> *'I think the Chair is responsible for a lot of that and his/her leadership and his/her tone and his/her expectations will shape the culture of trust' (Principal 7)*

> *'...for somebody who's never been a Chair of Council before, he/she's worked very hard at building stability and valuing people's opinion' (Principal 8)*

> *'...he/she's very thorough in how things are run and I think people trust his/her expertise in running a board as well' (Principal 9)*

Leadership of the School Principal

The school principal was also expected to be a leader within the organisation. The school principal led through their day-to-day management of the school, the implementation of the strategic plan through their ability to effectively relate to the school council. They also played an important role in igniting within each member of school council a passion for the school that they serve.

a.   Day to Day Management

All principals interviewed acknowledged one of the main ways they led their respective schools was by being responsible for the day-to-day management of the school. It was their role to appoint staff, to deal with parental complaints, staffing issues, curriculum development and all the various operational matters that occurred each day. As part of their daily management they may, if so desired, consult with various members of council.

> *'The role of the Principal is to make all the major operational decision of the school and to consult with the board about finances, building plans, major changes of direction' (Principal 3)*

> *'At the operational level, my job is to run the school day to day; something big happens I consult council, particularly our Chairman' (Principal 5)*

> *'My responsibility is the running of the school day to day and that's not the responsibility of the school council' (Principal 8)*

b.   Strategic Plan Implementation

The implementation of the school's strategic plan was seen by those interviewed as the responsibility of the principal. Principals may delegate some of the implementation to senior staff but it was their role to ensure that the strategic plan was being implemented within the parameters set by the school council. This may also require the reporting back to school council as to how the implementation of the strategic plan was going.

'... to me, [they] seem to be there more of an oversight and to oversee what's going on, whereas I'm the one that has to develop the strategy of what they want me to do so as to reach the corporation goals. I'm the one that has to develop the strategy, manage the school and run the school, implement what our vision is and make sure it happens' (Principal 9)

c.   Effectively relate to School Council

The school principal needed to be able to effectively relate to the school council. As stated earlier, it was clear that both the chairs of council and the school principals saw the role of leading the school council as being the domain of the school chair but the school principal also had a role in igniting a passion for the school in each of the members of the school council.

'I think my role is to go into each council meeting thinking like governance, but understanding in the end that's not my role; my role as to the best way to advise them is to think like them' (Principal 2)

'My job is to make these volunteers, who are sitting around there in the evening, having done a hard day's work, say hey, that's worth it, we are building something here, this is exciting, look at the stuff we're achieving here together, and my job is to feed that fire and together create the vision' (Principal 2)

Role of the School Chair in relation to the School Principal

The relationship between the chair of school council and the school principal is a sub theme that will be covered in more detail under the dominant theme of **trust**, but two sub themes here are relevant to this section. Firstly, that the chair of school council can be a confidant to the principal and secondly, that the chair can be the chief supporter of the principal.

a.   Confidant

All chairs interviewed acknowledged the complex job of a school principal and observed that there was often the need for someone for them to confide in or to share ideas with. The chairs of council interviewed acknowledged that this was one of their important roles.

'...sounding board' (Chair 1)

'Principal to balance off ideas with the Chair on inner confidential information which we may or may not share with other members of the council' (Chair 3)

'...he/she's got a subject to confide in' (Chair 4)

'...those type of tricky issues that [the principal] has somebody to talk to and a common mind' (Chair 5)

b. Chief Supporter

Chairs of council and school principals acknowledged that another role of the chair of council was to act as chief supporter for the principal. This did not mean that the chair of council did not act from time to time as the principal's critical friend but to enable the school principal to successfully complete their role, they needed the active and public support of the chair of council.

'I think one aspect of the Chair of council's role is to be a support and encouragement for the Principal. It can make a Principal's role really so much more challenging and even untenable if they're not getting that support from the Chair' (Principal 4)

'I think that is the job of a chair, to make the head look good' (Chair 1)

Theme 4: Strategy and Implementation

As governors, school councils are charged with the general strategic oversight of the school's development. To assist them in this process they will appoint, when necessary, school principals who will have the capacity to implement these strategic plans. However, when strategy and implementation meet it was often the point at which tension was created between the school council and the school principal. Therefore, it was important that clear guidelines were established so that these tensions were minimised. Finally, if these tensions can be managed effectively and a long standing relationship can be created, the stability that this offers the organisation can be quite beneficial. It was also important to recognise in this process the potential conflicts of interest that may subsequently arise and require management.

School Council as strategic thinkers

All chairs of school council acknowledged the belief that the school council played a significant role in the strategic thinking required to govern the school. As part of this strategic thinking was the creation of a strategic plan, and whilst this was something they were actively involved in, it also required input from the school executive and principal. As Chair 1 pointed out *'...predominantly a school council ought to think strategically and not be worrying about the colour of lockers'*.

What also emerged from the interviews was the belief that, whilst the school council may wish to spend their time discussing the strategic development of their schools, the greatest percentage of their time was spent on mundane discussions relating to matters of compliance. For many of the chairs of council it was felt that they would spend a significant amount of their time on administrative and functional information and that not enough time was allowed for strategic thought and development. This was summed up by Chair 1 – *'the impression I've got with many councils, is that its 90% mundane and 10% big picture'*.

To overcome this issue of lack of time for strategic thinking and discussion a few school councils stipulated time for this to occur. For example, one school council conducted four meetings a year,

for one hour each, to discuss one strategic topic at a time, whilst another school council had commenced using planning days to foster strategic thinking.

When the principals were asked to describe the role of the school council they regularly used words such as policy, governance and framework. This was in stark contrast to their own roles; whilst they acknowledged strategic thinking they saw their main focus as being on the implementation of the strategic plans and policy. This was not the domain of school council. As Chair 4 reflected: *'sometimes we have to remind ourselves around the table that we don't run the show'*.

Principals implement strategic thinking

All principals believed that it was their role to implement the strategic plan as well as the policies that the school council created. Therefore, in a practical sense, the school principal was in charge of the day-to-day operations and management of the school. Eight of the nine principals referred to the role of the school council as having general oversight, whilst the day-to-day management of the school was left to the principal. Words such as management, implementation and run operations were all used by these eight principals in reference to the role of the principal. Specifically, this implementation involved the setting and meeting of budgets, appointing staff and formal reporting to the school council

a.   Budget Outcomes

What was acknowledged by the majority of the principals was the need to make sure that the budget framework as set by the school council was adhered to. There was a consistent message that this was a core expectation that school councils had of their principals.

b.   Reporting

Chairs of school council felt that whilst the principal was in charge of implementing the strategic plan they would also expect the school principal to regularly report back to the school council regarding the implementation of the plan. This may be in the form of an annual presentation or as part of the monthly report to school council.

When strategy and implementation meet

Chairs of school council and school principals shared the opinion that, where strategy and implementation met, this was where most tension was felt. This very point was reflected in these comments:

> *'In simple terms, policy direction versus operational day to day management…I think the lines between some aspects of management and some aspects of governments have been blurred or moving closer together...it makes it harder for council members to sometimes distinguish the difference.' (Chair 3)*

'…you have to constantly be alert to not be stepping through the grey areas'. (Chair 6)

Identified areas where tensions could occur were the appointment of general staff; the appointment of key staff, the creation of the strategic plan, the need for the principal to report on the implementation of the strategic plan and an effective meeting structure that would facilitate effective governance decisions. To avoid tensions in these areas specific parameters were placed around them for the school council and the school principal to follow.

a.   Appointment of Staff

In most cases, the principal was given parameters in which they were to work regarding the appointment of staff. They all noted that the staff appointed should enable the strategic goals to be met. It was also noted that when staff were appointed the school council should be informed as to who had been appointed with reference to their educational qualifications, backgrounds and their faith position. By informing the school council it provided them, if necessary, with the opportunity to ask questions as to the quality of the staff.

If the principal needed to appoint staff from outside of the parameters, a process was in place for them to follow. Firstly, two school principals would consult the chair of the council if they needed to work outside the parameters set by council, especially if it related to matters of faith. This was particularly relevant when appointing staff in difficult to appoint areas, such as a specific subject or regional setting.

Another point of difference was that for one school the quality of teaching was seen as more important than the faith position of the successful applicant. There was a clear feeling in this school that appointing weak teachers, who though aligned to the faith position of the college, would actually work against the overall faith position of the college as a result of their inability to teach. Finally, in another school, some members of the school council were brought into the discussion of staff appointments under specific circumstances.

b.   Appointment of Key Staff

As an extension of the previous point, there were circumstances under which some council members may be involved in the appointment of staff. This was mainly when senior members of staff were to be appointed such as the School Chaplain, Deputy Principal or Head of Junior School. These positions were seen as executive in nature and therefore needed some input from members of school council.

c.   Creation of a Strategic Plan

Another sub-theme was the creation of a strategic plan, reflected upon by eight of the nine principals. Firstly there was some apparent confusion as to who had the role for developing strategy. Some

thought this was the domain of the school council, some saw it as the sole role for the principal and others saw this as a combined process for both the school council and the school principal.

d.   Implementation of the Strategic Plan

Whilst all respondents agreed that the school council had a role in the creation of the strategic plan and must endorse it, the implementation of the strategic plan was the role of the school principal to regularly report to the school council as to how the strategic plan was being implemented.

e.   Meeting Agendas

Virtually all councils followed a common meeting format that enabled them to access information from which important governance decisions could be made. The meeting agendas generally followed the following format:

- devotions (were a common part)

- attendance and apologies

- declaration of responsible persons

- acceptance of minutes from previous meetings (matters arising)

- presentation of reports – (principal's and financial were two central ones)

- presentations from other senior staff on areas of importance (depending on what was going to be discussed in the meeting)

Having these items as part of their regular meetings enabled the school council to access the important information they believed they needed to assess the school's performance. Written reports such as the principal's report were required and this enabled further questioning of the school principal by members of the school council.

Meeting times and places were relatively consistent across the schools. Meetings were held monthly during school terms, so on average 10 meetings a year, with most meetings going for about two and a half hours. However, each school held their meetings at different times of the day and week. Some were in the morning, some were in the afternoon and some were in the late afternoon and evening. Whatever the time it was regular and it was normally held on the same day of the week, at the same time each month. This consistency of approach avoided an important issue, *'making poor decision late into the night'* (Chair 2).

Finally, one principal, a foundation principal, reflected on how the council meetings had improved significantly during their time at the school. The meetings in the first few months and years of the school's existence were often very long with too much management detail discussed. At a conference

the principal attended, an expert on governance spoke. The principal was very interested in what was said and bought the accompanying book. After reading the book, he was challenged to improve the quality of the school council meetings and gave the book to the chair of council to read. This led to more copies of the text being bought and then read by other members of the school council, resulting in meetings becoming far more purposeful and meaningful, with big issues being discussed. Their meetings became far more structured and this has benefited not only the council but the school as well.

Stability

Stability, in the context of this research, referred to the tenure of school principals, chairs of school council and council members. Of the nine principals that were interviewed, two were foundation principals still serving their community after 10 or more years of service. Another principal was in their seventh year of tenure but prior to this had served a previous school for ten years as principal. The bringing of a great deal of previous experience to the role enabled stability to continue. Another principal was in their third role as school principal and, though only newly appointed (less than two years at time of interview), their combined leadership experience was over twenty years. Two other principals had served their respective schools as deputy principals and hence retained a great deal of institutionalised knowledge as they entered their new role.

Of the six chairs of council interviewed, two were foundation chairs of council and had served their communities in this role for over fifteen years each. Two other schools were onto their second chair of council within a twelve year period and both had served these councils as council members prior to their appointment as chair. The final two chairs of council had been appointed at the direct request of the ASC due to the experience these candidates would bring to these councils.

The combination of stable principal leadership with stable leadership from school councils facilitated a consistent approach to the creation and implementation of a school vision and the subsequent implementation of any strategic plans which aimed to turn the vision into a reality. What was created were effective and sustainable schools. That is not to say that these school councils did not have any turnover of council members, chairs of council or principals. Clearly they did but the longevity of tenure seemed to bring real and tangible benefits. Benefits included the institutionalising of a strategic vision, contextual information, financial capacity and consistency of support. These observations are illustrated by the following quotes:

> *'We've actually been a stable council for a number of years' (Chair 4)*

> *'We haven't had a lot of turnover, which has both advantages and disadvantages, I mean the advantage is we know each other's mind on things and together we've got a lot of experience over the years' (Chair 4)*

> *'We have a tremendous longevity. Our longest serving member has been there for 11 years, so they're coming up to the end of their tenure which is 12 years, so you've got varying periods of tenure for 11 years now down to about 4'* (Principal 2)

> *'...so it's been a very stable board'* (Principal 3)

However, just as stability brought benefits, so instability brought difficulties to a school. As one principal (Principal 3) noted, *'new schools are notorious for changing their Heads, more than should be the case'*. The implication here is that with constant change over relatively small periods of time the instability created can often lead to the opposite benefits that stability brings, that is, the loss of consistent vision, continual changing of strategic planning, loss of institutionalised memory and so on. The consistency of approach and experiences that a long serving board shares clearly strengthens them but at the same time strategically recruited new members to either the school council or the role of the school principal enabled both consistency and renewal to occur. Both are needed. Both ends of the spectrum are to be avoided: the stagnant board where no one new joins and the revolving door where no one stays: or the principal who stays too long or not long enough. What is required is to find the medium.

Finally, at one school, a decision was made to bring in a new school chair experienced in leading school councils within the organisation as a means of facilitating an effective transition to the new ownership structure. However, as part of this process it was also decided, *'... to retain some of the tradition and knowledge of the school from the previous council'* (Principal 6) by including previous council members on the newly formed school council. This included the previous chair.

School council and conflicts of interest

Two main issues relating to school council and conflicts of interest emerged, namely parents on school councils and appointing current or former paid employees to the school council.

a.   Parents on School Councils

The potential conflict of interest when parents of the school were appointed to the school council was raised, mainly by the principals *'I don't want parents'* (Principal 3). Issues raised by principals in having parents on the school council ranged from making sure that parents did not bring their own grievances into the school council, as noted by Principal 7, *'I have a parent that the previous principal brought on to school council who's got a whole lot of personal issues and she had spent the past year really not minding her own business with a couple of grievance matters'* and Chair 4, *'sometimes we have to remind them that council is not an arena for airing their gripes and complaints'*. For some parents it was observed that there was an inability to bring the right perspective needed to school council, as reflected by Chair 6, *'We've tried to avoid heavy emphasis on parents but we have some parents on the council. It's always a challenge for a parent on the council which I've been once in my previous experience; to balance what your children are*

experiencing, with what you've got to do in a governance responsibility on the council for oversight of things. I think they're usually willing but they often also come with a particular focus. They don't want to take a broader picture sometimes with what's needed at a council level'.

It was almost felt that by nature, especially in regional areas where finding a cross section of potential members of school council was quite challenging, there would be the need for several parents to be appointed on a school council. Whilst some principals did not see this as a problem in itself, some were concerned with the number of parents on a school council and could create an imbalance of perspective on the school council. This was noted by Principal 8: *'at one point nearly every member of council is a parent, that's changed in recent times... they need to [be] conscious of which hat they're wearing'* and (Principal 3, '[had]) *to work hard at a good board, because there were too many parents on the first board'*.

> *'...whether in fact you put parents on the school board' (Chair 5)*

b.   Competitors on School Councils

Another sub-theme that emerged was how to handle a situation where a potential council member or chair of council was previously employed in a competitor school. This was a point that Principal 2 was willing to make, *'given that his school is now a competitor in the area, is there a conflict of interest'*. This was a reality for two chairs of council who had previously been employed in competitor schools.

In both cases, the respective chairs of council thought through the issue themselves, as well as consulting others and in one case consulted their then current employer as to whether they should join the council. In the case of the one who asked his existing employer the employer saw no potential conflict of interest; in their opinion, both schools served two different geographical areas as well as two different clientele bases.

Theme 5: Trust

The dominant theme of trust emerged in relation to how effectively the management of the school intersects with the school council in the overall governance of the school. In particular, two sub-themes were explored in the interviews. Firstly, the trust that exists between the chair of council and the school principal and secondly how trust is built in the broader relationships within the school council itself.

Chair/Principal relationships

The first sub-theme is the unique relationship the chair of council has with the school principal and the centrality of this relationship to the overall success of the school itself. This came through in almost every interview with every chair of council and principal. What follows is a sample of quotes obtained from the interviews which reflect this:

'...he was really quite convinced that we would work well together' (Chair 1)

'...if you want to talk about effectiveness in schools, if that relationship isn't right, you've not got a lot of hope' (Chair 1)

'...being the CEO of a school or principal of a school, is one of the most difficult challenges to take on' (Chair 2)

'A shared Christian vision, a desire to work together for the benefit of the whole school' (Chair 2)

'...it's the strength of those relationships [Chair and Principal that] can make considerable difference' (Chair 2)

'I always endeavour to make it more than a formal relationship; I'm not saying we've got to be mates exactly but we've got to know each other well, and know about each other' (Chair 4)

'...because he must feel that the Chairman is as committed to the prosperity of the college as he is' (Chair 4)

'...80% of the problems come from when the chairman and the head are out of sync, and 20% of the problems are when the head and the chairman are too much in sync' (Chair 5)

'There's a good relationship of trust, between any Chair and Principal. That relationship of trust is crucial of course, but where a Chairman is outside the district, I think the Chairman relies on the Principal a bit extra. [The Chair] and I trust each other. We work well together and so there's no problem. I find if I need to consult [the Chair] he's always readily available and supportive so the relationship is working quite well' (Principal 6)

'By contrast, I watched the Chair of Council at [another school] who blew in and out of the school's life, who would often meet with the [Principal] prior to a council meeting and it was disaster, there was tension and poor communication. I'm sure there were phone calls but the reality is it was pretty toxic relationship at times and I think there were faults both sides there' (Principal 8)

These quotes, from a variety of respondents, highlight the centrality of this relationship to the overall development of the school. From this core relationship a series of points were made ranging from the need for the chair and the principal to share a common vision, to possessing a common understanding of the context in which the school operated and to the need to have a relationship which is not just merely professional but one based on trust. There was a belief that if there was divergence in these perspectives, then it would be detrimental to the performance of the school.

All chairs acknowledged the importance of this relationship and that one of the main functions of their role was for them to develop an effective relationship with their principal. How this would be

achieved varied with the personalities involved but it was universally accepted that to get the best out of the school you needed to get the best out of the principal and to get the best out of the principal you needed to develop a highly effective working relationship. As previously stated, the way each relationship was developed would depend specifically on the people involved. However, within the responses, a series of common approaches were raised, these being access, communication, trust and respect, restriction, boundaries and time. Each of these is elaborated in the sections which follow.

a.   Access

Almost all chairs acknowledged that they needed to make sure that they were accessible to the principal and that the principal had the confidence to contact the chair at any time. By fostering this level of accessibility and openness, the chairs felt that they would be able to obtain all the information they needed from the principal to fulfil their role as chair and that it would greatly assist in building a level of trust between the two.

Secondly, a means of gaining easy access was as simple as sharing each other's mobile phone numbers. Nearly all principals noted that as they developed their relationship with their chair of council, they became more willing to speak to the chair at any time and over any matter. For some, like one principal, whose chair lived outside of the district, phone access was crucial as they often could not meet on a weekly basis in situ.

> *'In my circumstances meeting with my Chairman is a bit different than others. [The Chair] lives outside the district, so we spend a fair bit of time on the phone if something comes up, and that's always on a needs basis, I respect that he's a busy person and he respects the same about me, so if I have something I want to run past him I'll give him a ring and vice versa' (Principal 6)*

b.   Communication

The corollary of access is communication and this emerged as the next sub-theme and one that all principals and chairs of council saw as important in developing a chair and principal relationship of trust and respect between both. The level of communication varied from relationship to relationship. Some would like to meet weekly or speak weekly, whereas others were more comfortable meeting fortnightly or even monthly as was the case for Chair 1; *'it seems that in talking to some chairs, they're in the school every second day; they're meeting with the [Principal] once a week, I've gone to the other extreme, I meet with [the Principal] once a month, we're flicking emails to each other if there's something coming up that is difficult'*. For one chair, they quickly realised that the first principal they worked with liked to communicate through the written word and their relationship was developed accordingly, whilst the second principal they worked with liked to discuss things verbally, and so they adjusted their relationship style accordingly, thereby enabling an effective relationship to be built in both circumstances.

For those whose personal meetings were less frequent, they did note that they would speak in between. Whatever the structure, the principle remained the same. They communicated regularly and often and this helped develop the relationship between the chair and the principal. Specifically this communication would often help the principal to provide information when needed or to talk through difficult situations they were facing with the chair of council. Again they saw the chair as a confidant and someone they could get support from. It also enabled the principal to make sure they felt that they were not alone on this journey: *'we talk about anything and everything, from personal to professional'* (Principal 8).

An important part of communication was supplying the chair of council with both the good and bad stories. Indeed, the stronger the relationship the more likely the principal was to share both what was going right in the school as well as those things which were not. Principal 9 reflected upon this very point when they said, *'you've got to let your Chair know about issues before they become too big so if I've got an issue brewing or about to brew I'll ring and tell him hey this is happening'*. If the relationship has developed that important element of trust then being able to openly share issues of real significance led to more positive outcomes being achieved within the organisation.

c.   Trust and respect

Trust and respect emerged as another important sub-theme. An important implication coming from this sub-theme was once trust was broken from either side it would be very hard to maintain a functional relationship. As stated previously this would pose difficulties in the way the school conducted its business. This sub-theme of trust and respect clearly underpinned an effective working relationship between the chair and the principal. If the relationship had developed to a position where each respected the capacity of the other person to fulfil their task, this enabled more open and transparent dialogue and therefore led to even greater trust being developed. This positive relationship builds upon itself, with potentially very strong outcomes, therefore suggesting that this is something that should be aspired to.

These points are illustrated in the following quotes taken from a variety of chairs and principals:

> *'...the [Principal] can risk saying I didn't handle this well and not feel it's not going to be held against them. There needs to be a freedom'* (Chair 1)

> *'I suppose underneath they don't trust you and they won't give you the wriggle room; if they trust you they give you the wriggle room'* (Chair 1)

> *'I have great confidence in him/her'* (Chair 5)

> *'I think trust is built'* (Chair 6)

> *'I don't need to know everything that is happening you know when it's time to ring me'* (Principal 2)

'There's an implicit trust there because we're Christian people and this is God's work, but there's a safety net, there can be, there's not a naïve trust' (Principal 2)

'He/she said it needs to be one of trust, trust will be there at the start, it can be lost, and it needs to be worked on and it needs to be underpinned by communication and that sense of working together' (Principal 2)

Finally, for two chairs of council, prior knowledge of the principal defined how quickly the relationship could be built. Employing an experienced principal who already had a strong reputation assisted these chairs of council in developing a relationship relatively quickly, something these chairs saw as advantageous.

d.   Restriction

Whilst virtually all people involved in the first phase of research felt they had a functional relationship with either their chair of council or their school principal, one person did openly note that they did not have a good working relationship with their first chair. This was not because of the competency of the person fulfilling the role as chair, rather, it was as a result of a very busy professional life which restricted this person's time to commit to this role. The only time this person could meet their principal was just before council meetings. In between these meetings little communication occurred and, from the perspective of the principal, this led to tense situations which could have, in retrospect, been handled better.

'My first Chair was highly capable, very intelligent, very supportive of me, but very busy in his professional work, so he was available for a quick two minute chat once a month and he would arrive at school council meetings on the dot and say we have to be finished within an hour and a half and he would be out the door in one and a half hours or two hours and it was hard to pin him down' (Principal 7)

The second restriction in this relationship was the fact that the chair and the principal were very familiar with each other's own personal lives. This was something that again, from the perspective of this principal, placed another restriction on developing their professional relationship.

'…he knew too much about my personal life and vice versa, so I think we both…I certainly consciously kept myself at arm's length' (Principal 7)

e.   Boundaries

From the interviews it became clear that, in fostering a positive working relationship between the chair and the principal, boundaries in how the chair accessed information from other staff, mainly senior staff, needed to be put in place. In terms of accessing the executive staff, all chairs expressed the belief that executive staff should only be contacted if they had prior approval from the principal.

As was clearly stated by Chair 4: *'well the link is through the Principal and it must be through the Principal. If you do it other than through the Principal, it's going to cause trouble'*.

Several chairs and principals expressed the opinion that open and unguarded conversations with executive staff was not good practice and would lead to difficulties within the organisation if left unchecked. To overcome this several principals noted that they would often take school executive staff to council meetings to make presentations on their area of responsibility within the school. This provided the members of the school council as well as the chair of council appropriate, direct, formal and structured access to the executive staff. The other way, as outlined by Chair 1, who was a former principal was: *'I had one chair that was, I felt in the background, almost talking with deputies, talking with classroom teachers, questioning them about what was happening in the school in order to have ammunition to fire at me at a council meeting, and so they were actively undermining me in some case'*. This did not build a cohesive relationship.

For one chair of school council, the fact that principals who he had worked with enabled and even encouraged executive staff to make presentations to the school council was a sign he could trust this principal to fulfil their role. For them it enabled the school council to access information that would help them make strategic improvements to the school as well as establishing proper protocols.

f.   Time

From the interviews it was clear that the chair spent far more time with the principal than any other member of the school council. For this relationship to work it was clear that they needed to spend time together to know each other both personally and professionally, to do as Principal 4 said, *'[develop] rapport building'*. Practically, this meant that spending time together could involve sharing a meal, speaking to one another, socializing and praying together. The reality was whatever worked for the relationship it should be done. However, on the theme of time, Principal (8) summed it quite well when they reflected that it was *'quality time versus quantity time'*.

Trust as the backbone of relationships on the School Council

The capacity of both the chair of the school council and the school principal to fulfil their roles was needed if trust was to become the backbone of the relationships which existed on school council. This capacity centered on the faith position of all those involved in the governance and management of the school. There also needed to be processes in place to verify what was occurring and to deal with situations when trust was broken. Finally, it was noted that it takes time to build trust.

a.   The capacity of the Chair and the capacity of the School Principal

Trust in the quality of the principal and the chair of school council emerged as a second sub-theme. Firstly, if the school council trusted the principal to be able to do their job, then this facilitated more open and honest discussions within the school council. Trust within school council in the overall performance of the principal also meant that the principal was able to make mistakes and not fret

over minor things. This level of trust was created over time and as a result of consistently high levels of performance by the principal.

Secondly, there also needed to be trust in the capacity of the chair of council. If the chair was someone the members of school council trusted to do their job then this also facilitated more open discussion on important strategic issues.

b.   When trust can turn sour

If trust within the performance of the chair of school council or the school principal was unquestioned this could work against the ability of the school council and the principal to effectively work together. Therefore, it was healthy to question the leadership capacity of the chair or the principal from time to time so as to ensure that the trust remains warranted.

c.   Faith as basis for trust

It was generally felt that if there was a common faith position amongst the members of council and if they all believed in the shared vision for the school, they were more likely to trust each other with the task of governance. It was noted that this trust took time to build and if there was stability in the membership of council then this also assisted in the development of trust.

d.   How trust is built

All of the principals interviewed believed that a culture of trust within school council was essential for the school council to fulfil its role. Whilst each school council approached the issue of developing trust differently there were still common points in the process. These were identified as follows:

- development of a willingness to listen to alternate points of view so that all ideas could openly be debated.

- the sharing of a common faith position was something that bound together rather than divide.

- a strong and effective chair of school council helped the process of developing trust.

- a culture of openness and the capacity to ask the important question was central to the development of trust.

- creation of sub-committees enabled all council members to have responsibility and a voice in the development of the school.

- respecting a culture of confidentiality.

- creating a culture of performance.

Theme 6: Value Add

A final dominant theme from the respondents was that of appointing people to the school council who as Chair 2 put it, *'[were] going to add value',* or another way of looking at it, *'[they] can contribute'* (Chair 4). The general feeling from the respondents was that there was little point in appointing people who could make only a minimal contribution to the business of the school council. In actual fact, if the school council was dominated by people who were not adding value, then this would be to the detriment of the council. As Chair 3 stated: *'we're not just interested in filling up the ten places for the sake of having ten places filled.'* This idea of having poor contributors was further explored by some principals, in particular Principal 7, who noted that they had regrettably just reappointed an underperforming member of school council.

In the end, the school council worked best when a group of people were appointed together to work as a team and were willing to make a contribution. In the eyes of Chair 4, *'it's really good when you see council members grasping better how they can contribute'.* In terms of how members can add value, two sub-themes emerged: the skill set of the school council and appointing people who would challenge.

School Council skill set

The first sub-theme noted by all chairs of council was the need to make sure that the membership of their council was balanced by an appropriate skill set. This balance would be maintained if a variety of skills could be found on the school council such as legal, building, finance, business, educational or theological. Therefore, when a vacancy occurred on school council, chairs of school councils looked at what specific skills were lacking and sought to fill the role with someone with those specific skills.

In nominating a person for selection, the interest in their specific skill set was also balanced with their capacity to understand the operations of the school. As noted by Chair 1, *'the person can be skilled in finances but know nothing much about running a school and school finances.'* Not only were they looking for people with a particular skill set they also wanted to know, as Chair 4 stated, *'what can they bring to the school council'.*

People who will challenge

A second sub-theme in how council members can add value was by appointing people who had the capacity to appropriately challenge the discussions and decisions being made within the school council. There was a need, pointed out by some principals and chairs, to appoint people who had the capacity to ask the right questions and were critical thinkers.

'I think the primary role of the [governors] is [to] challenge; it's not to do the job that you hired staff or management to do, but to provide constructive challenge for those people' (Chair 6)

'...their asking the right questions about how the teaching and learning's going at school' (Principal 4)

'I think it's good to have a council member that's a pebble in your shoe' (Principal 2)

But when appointing people who have the capacity to question and to challenge it was also important to ensure that their line of inquiry was not going to distract the school council or the school principal from completing their tasks appropriately. This was clearly noted:

'Now if someone came along and was obviously was going to ask a lot of awkward questions and the Principal wasn't happy about that, well that's too bad, because I think the council needs to keep the Principal on the ball, don't they? However, I don't want to appoint someone who's going to be a thorn in the side, for you know, scurrilous reasons, that's not a good word, you know. I don't want them here making life difficult for the Principal because that's useful for the school and I've always felt that the Principal is comfortable with the people who are on the school council, they know they can work with them, and it's [got to] be a partnership' (Chair 3)

'What you look for is a person who is passionate about the gospel, passionate about the school, is willing to say no, ask questions, challenge what's happening but not overdo it. You don't want a tin pot general' (Principal 2)

Summary

The overall focus of the research study was to discover good governance practices, in particular those that related to how school councils interact with the school leadership team as they seek to develop the schools that they serve. From the research conducted in Phase 2 of the study, which involved interviewing nine school principals, and six chairs of school council, a series of themes were identified.

If the intersection of the school council and the school leadership team was going to be effective then they needed to be aligned in all aspects. Within the sociocultural context of this study, which is in the Anglican Schools Corporation, there needed to be an alignment of faith. From this came an aligned vision for the school within an aligned understanding of the school's context. If this alignment was achieved, then healthy debate and discussion would occur within the governance structure enabling points of difference being respectfully dealt with and resolved.

If there was a break in alignment, especially in the relationship between the chair of the school council and the school principal, it was clear that this needed to be effectively dealt with as soon as possible. If this was not done, it could lead to an ineffectual interaction between the two core

participants in the governance structure, leading potentially to poor outcomes in the performance of the school.

Another dominant theme that emerged from the research was that of strategy and implementation. It was essential for members of school council to understand they were governors not managers. The reverse could also be said of school principals, they needed to realise that they were the manager within the organisation whilst also having a role in the governance of the school. The capacity of all members in the overall governance of the school to understand the concept of separation of powers was particularly important when it came to grey areas where governance and management intersected. It was at these points of intersection that misunderstanding between the role of the governor and the role of the school principal could very easily occur and undesirable outcomes would result if not managed properly.

Not only did the intersection of governance and management need alignment and definition, it also needed to be surrounded by trust. Trust emerged as an important theme. If neither party, school chair nor school principal, trusted their counterpart then this clearly led to a breakdown in this core relationship on the school council. The benefits of building trust within the governance structure were many. It enabled:

- effective discussion at school council meetings as people openly reflected on their ideas;
- the ability of chairs of school council and the school principals to make mistakes and to learn from them; and
- school councils to work through difficult issues

Clearly trust cannot be blind. Trust was something built over time within the governance structure and was based on the premise of performance and verification of it. The greater the developed leadership capacity of the school principal and the chair of school council, the greater the sense of trust within the organisation was created, thus enabling greater capacity to make important decisions. However, it was also noted that these people were not infallible and so it was just as important for the governance structure to make sure they kept the school principal and the chair of school council to account at appropriate times. Complacency in this area was seen as potentially dangerous.

If the governance structure can obtain alignment, definition and trust they should then be aiming for stability. Stability in tenure of those who lead the organisation brought many benefits to the school. Length of tenure provided consistency of approach, retained institutional memory and the capacity to complete assigned tasks. However, two important issues would enable stability to remain positive. Firstly, one needed to ensure that stability did not lead to stagnation. Stagnation was counter-productive to the continued development of the school council. They need to make sure that they were continuing to progress the school and not just seeing it being maintained. Secondly, stability enabled appropriate succession planning to occur which was essential to the continued development of the school.

It was noted by some of those interviewed that several newly created schools can quickly fall into the trap of rapid appointments in either of the role of school principal or school chair. Schools which fell into the trap of short-term appointments in either of these roles would often find themselves struggling to survive and this was because they were not reaping the benefits of a consistent approach. For this to be avoided, strong stable school councils noted the need for appropriate renewal strategies in terms of school council appointments to exist and that succession planning processes were in place when it came to appointing the next school principal. If these issues of succession planning and stagnation were handled effectively it was believed then the stability created would remain a force for the continued development of the school. Finally, schools needed to appoint chairs of school council and school principals who add value, failure to do so will not produce the outcomes they desire.

This chapter analysed the data and discussed the results from Phase 2 of the research, the qualitative component, and the interviews with school principals and chairs of school council about school governance. Phase 3 of the study, detailed in Chapter 6 which follows, provided a further opportunity to develop the conceptual framework, extending it to encompass the relationship between school councils and school leadership teams.

Chapter 6
Phase Three – Quantitative Research: Survey of school councils and leadership teams

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Chapter 6 analyses the data and discusses the results from Phase 3 of the research, the quantitative component, which was gathered from surveying members from the various school councils and executive staff from within the Anglican Schools Corporation, thus developing the conceptual framework created in the first phase of the study and explored further in the second phase

As described in Chapter 5, Phase 2 of the research involved a series of interviews with principals and chairs of school councils from the Anglican Schools Corporation. In total, nine principals and six chairs of school council were interviewed on their views on processes relating to school governance. These interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed through a process of reflection and review. From these transcripts, six dominant themes were incorporated into a good school governance framework which was further explored and developed in Phase 3 of the research.

Phase 3 of the research was quantitative in nature and involved the creation of an on-line survey, centered on the emerging good school governance framework. The survey is attached as Appendix 7. The on-line Google survey was confidential and completed purely voluntarily by various members of eighteen school councils from within the Anglican Schools Corporation. The on-line questionnaire required each participant to respond to a series of statements related to each of the six dominant themes: alignment, leadership, strategy and implementation, trust and value add. The responses were two fold. Firstly, respondents were required to rate their views on each statement using a Likert scale and secondly, they were offered the opportunity to clarify their response by making further comment. The only school governance structure that was excluded from the invitation to participate in this phase of research was the school of the researcher, thus removing a conflict of interest.

Once the Ethics Committee of Macquarie University approved the questionnaire, the researcher wrote to the Chair of the Anglican Schools Corporation Board seeking his permission to invite school principals, chairs of school council and the members of school council of eighteen schools within the Anglican Schools Corporation to participate. Once this request was acknowledged and approved in writing from the Chair of the Board, the researcher contacted each potential participant via an email request with an invitation to voluntarily participate in the survey. This request outlined the process involved, provided the necessary approval form for completion, and emphasised the voluntary nature of the research.

If a school principal from within the Anglican Schools Corporation responded positively to completing the survey that school principal was contacted, via email, by the researcher to seek their permission to contact the executive staff members from within that school with an invitation to also participate in the research. Contact with the executive staff members was also in line with way the researcher contacted other participant's that is, via email invitation and with all necessary details about the research to be undertaken.

This process of invitation commenced in late June 2016 and finished in late September 2016. Throughout these three months, the researcher sent follow up emails, via blind copy, approximately every three weeks, providing an update as to how many people had agreed to complete the survey and inviting further participation. Due to the nature of the organisation and the relationship the researcher had with the invited participants, it was not perceived as being an email of annoyance or demand, rather an email of sharing updates and reminding participants when the survey would close.

Once the deadline was reached the on-line survey was closed and the information was downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet, which is one of the main reasons Google Documents was used to conduct the research. There was only one version of the survey but each survey was classified by an identification number. That identification number correlated to the school that the governance member was from. This enabled the data to not only be analysed collectively, but by school, if required. Only the researcher kept the master file on which the identification number for each school was kept. It was not possible for the participants to determine the identification number, thus maintaining confidentiality and anonymity in the research.

There were several advantages for being able to identify the school in the research, if necessary. The first advantage was that because each survey was the same, collective data about each response to each question could be obtained. The second advantage was because each school could be identified, not only could a collective view of the data be obtained, the researcher could also collect data about each school individually, which in turn, could be compared against the collective data. Also, in the background information section of the survey, every respondent was required to identify the specific role they fulfilled within the governance model. This enabled horizontal analysis to occur, identifying specific themes or trends from within particular membership definitions.

The data collected was analysed, as applicable, in three ways;

1. Holistically
2. School-based level
3. Governance role

School Participants

In total approximately 145 participants were invited to be involved in the research over the three month period. In total, 55 participants responded and sent in their signed copies of consent. From

these 55 possible participants, 51 actually completed the survey. This represented a completion total of 35.2% of the 145 invited participants.

The breakdown of participants is outlined in Table 5.1 below, which presents participation data by school:

School	Number of Participants
16.02	1
16.03	6
16.04	3
16.05	3
16.06	4
16.07	5
16.08	7
16.09	3
16.10	0
16.11	1
16.12	5
16.13	6
16.14	0
16.15	7
Total	**51**

Table 6.1 Participation data by school

There was a wide range of participation. For example, schools 16.10 and 16.14 had no members of school council willing to participate. However, for schools 16.02 and 16.11 only one person was willing to be involved. Schools 16.08 and 16.15, had seven members of their school governance structures participate.

Roles within the Governance Structure

Within this study four main roles were defined within the governance structure that the participants could identify with. These were member of school council, member of school executive, school principal or chair of school council. The 51 participants were grouped as follows:

Member of School Council	Member of School Executive	School Principal	Chair of School Council	Total
19	13	12	6	50
37.3%	25.5%	23.5%	11.8%	98.1%

Table 6.2 Participation data by role

Only one participant failed to answer this question on the survey, hence that is why there is only 50 in the total column and the percentage value does not add up to 100%. However, that one participant did answer the rest of the survey and their results were included in the overall data collection. As they were the only person who failed to identify which role they fulfilled in the governance structure, it was felt that their responses would not skew the overall results that were obtained.

There was a very good break down of participants with all four groups being represented. No one group dominated the data collection process. Thirteen executive members participated. This area of research was of particular interest as it captured pre-principal views on school governance.

Length of Service

The table below outlines the number of years' service of 50 out of 51 of those who participated in the survey served in their respective governance structure. It also identified the number of members across each year of service. Where a participant identified a half a year's service, this number was rounded up, making the data slightly easier to analyse without having a skewing effect on the result. Therefore, in relation to two participants who served less than one year, they had in effect, at the time of completing the survey, served less than six months.

Number of Years' Service	Number of Participants
Less than 1 year	2
1 Year	7
2 Years	3
3 Years	9
4 Years	3
5 Years	2
6 Years	4
7 Years	4
8 Years	1
9 Years	2
10 Years	2
13 Years	4
15 Years	2
18 Years	1
20 Years	2
28 Years	1
No Years Recorded	1
Total	**50**

Table 6.3 – Number of years' of service by member

The minimum number of years' service recorded by the participants was 4 weeks and the longest recorded number of years was 28. The most frequently sited number of years of service was 3 years and this was recorded by 9 participants. The average number of years' service was 6.8 years. It was interesting to note that 2 participants served less than one year and 1 participant failed to complete this section of the survey. If these three participants are taken out of the data, the average number of years' service increases to 7.0 years.

This data can also be analysed based on participants roles in the governance structure. Table 6.4 provides data in relation to members of school councils. Table 6.5 provides data in relation to members of school executive. Table 6.6 refers to school principals and Table 6.7 refers to chairs of school council.

Number of Years' Service	Number of Participants
Less than one year	1
1 year	2
2 years	2
3 years	2
4 years	1
5 years	1
6 years	2
7 years	2
9 years	1
10 years	2
15 years	1
20 years	1
28 years	1
Total	19

Table 6.4 – Member of school council to years of service

The range for the members of school council is less than one years' service to 28 years' service with an average of 7.3 years' service.

Number of Years' Service	Number of Participants
Less than one year	1
1 year	2
3 years	4
4 years	2
6 years	1
7 years	1
8 years	1
13 years	1
Total	13

Table 6.5 – Member of school executive to years of service

The range for the members of the school executive is less than one years' service to 13 years' service with an average of 4.3 years' service.

Number of Years' Service	Number of Participants
1 year	1
2 years	1
3 years	1
6 years	1
7 years	1
9 years	1
13 years	3
15 years	1
20 years	1
Total	12

Table 6.6 – School principals to years of service

The range for the school principals was 1 years' service through to 20 years' service with an average of 8.5 years' service.

Number of Years' Service	Number of Participants
1 year	2
3 years	2
5 years	1
18 years	1
Total	6

Table 6.7 – Chairs of School Council to years of service

The range for the chairs of school council was 1 years' service through to 18 years' service with an average of 5.1 years' service. With such a small sample size, the longest serving chair of council at 18 years does act as an outlier and this did have a significant impact on the average.

Theme 6.1: Accountability

6.1.1 - School Council accountability to the school community

One of the main themes which emerged from Phase 2 of research was accountability and its role in the good governance framework. The question poised to the participants in the third phase related to their perceptions as to whether they felt it was important that they held themselves accountable to the school community that they served. All 51 participants answered this question and the results were as follows:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
29.5%	54.9%	7.8%	7.8%	0%	100%

Table 6.8 – School council accountability to the school community

84.3% of the participants either strongly agreed or agreed that they held themselves accountable to the school communities that they served. This was a very high perception and indicated that they believed strongly that this was one of the roles that they must fulfil as governors of the school.

However, after each participant answered this question they were provided with the opportunity to make a comment of clarification. In total, 25 participants took the opportunity to respond and an analysis of their comments provided further insights into their perceptions as to what accountability looked like and how this related to their school community. Their perceptions defined accountability in the following ways.

1. Faith: As an openly faith-based organisation, three comments specifically related to holding themselves accountable to God in their actions as governors.

'A large number of our School Community would not identify as evangelical Christians. So as a result, our accountability to them comes second to our accountability to God and the Gospel.' Member of the School Executive 16.03

'I think they see themselves as needing to be accountable to SASC and God.' Member of the School Executive 16.03

'We are also accountable to the Corporation and to the greatest extent to the Lord.' Chair of School Council 16.07

2. Ownership: The case study for this research was conducted within the Anglican Schools Corporation and, as such, five comments clearly reflected the belief that each school governance structure should hold itself accountable to the Board of the Anglican Schools Corporation.

   'Given the constitutional framework of the school the Council is primarily responsible to the owner, in effect its principal stakeholder' Chair of School Council 16.06

   'As a Corporation school we are strongly accountable to owners of the school, the Sydney Anglican Diocese through the Corporation.' Chair of School Council 16.15

3. School Community: Seven comments centered on the need of the governance structure to hold itself accountable to the school community.

   'The council seeks to serve the 'community' and I have heard members talk about being accountable. They are focused on what is best for the community however I don't feel they often communicate with the 'community' as a council regarding what they are doing. This might lead to stronger accountability.' Member of the School Executive of School 16.15

   'The members of the School Council have a strong sense of wanting to achieve the best for the School Community and knows that it's decisions will be scrutinised by the School Community.' Member of School Council of School 16.08

4. Principal: Three comments specifically identified that the way their school council held itself accountable was through holding the school principal accountable for their performance in the role.

   'This is generally done through the Principal' Member of School Council 16.06

   'My feeling is that the School Council would see their accountability through the position of the Principal rather than themselves personally' School Principal 16.11

Not all comments reflected the belief that they held themselves accountable. Two respondents clearly stated that they did not believe they held themselves accountable, whilst two, who did agree with the statement that they held themselves accountable questioned the level of accountability that occurred.

Five respondents were neutral as to whether they held themselves accountable or not. The following comments reflect the aforementioned points.

'The School Council rarely asks the school community for input into the decision making process.' Member of School Executive 16.08

'The Council have limited ability to address issues raised with them by members of the school community.' Member of School Council 16.07

In summary, accountability was multi-layered and not defined by one single determinant. This was expressed well in a comment made by the Chair of School Council 16.05: '*School community includes all stakeholders including ASC, parents, teacher and students as well as broader community around us. We endeavour to consider potential impact of our decisions and recommendations on both individuals and groups who may be affected. There is a limited degree of formal reporting to the general public, and somewhat more reporting from principal and council to ASC board, as well as data shared between ASC GO and the school through common databases like the finance and payroll systems*'.

6.1.2 - School Council Agenda

One of the practical ways a school council held itself accountable was to ensure that the processes by which they govern the school are defined, regular and sound. One such way was to ensure that when the school council met there was an agreed format and structure to the meeting and that this was consistently followed. Again all 51 participants responded to this question and their responses were as follows:

Always	Mostly	Neutral	Total
64.7%	25.5%	9.8%	100%

Table 6.9 – School council agenda

Of the 51 respondents, 64.7% believed that they always followed an agreed meeting agenda and format whilst a further 25.5% believed that they mostly followed an agreed meeting agenda and format. It would be fair to say that within the schools surveyed there was a belief that they followed a consistent meeting process.

To seek clarification to the responses to this question, two further probing questions were asked. Firstly, whether the participant wished to clarify their response and secondly, whether they could outline the items that were consistently covered in the meetings. In response to the first clarifying question, 27 participants responded and in regards to the second question 42 participants responded.

Clarification Question 1 – Please comment on your choice as necessary

An analysis of the responses to the first question of clarification provided insights into respondents' perceptions and thoughts in relation to meeting agendas. Firstly, the six participants who answered

neutral to the original question all took the time to clarify why they responded that way. In all cases, these participants identified themselves as being a part of the school executive and as such they all believed they were not actively involved in this aspect of the governance process as they were not totally sure what occurred in the meeting. There was a general feeling that they knew what was occurring but because they were not privy to either the creation of the agenda or the meeting itself, they felt that they could not affirm either way. The following comments are indicative of their responses.

> *'I am not sure as I don't go to School Council meetings, I would imagine they follow a standard format which I have seen twice but this is an assumption.'* Member of School Executive 16.03

> *'I have not been made aware of the Agenda for Council Meetings.'* Member of School Executive 16.05

> *'No direct involvement with council to state if there is a constant format/agenda for each meeting.'* Member of School Executive 16.08

Whilst the vast majority of respondents, some 90.2%, felt that there was a consistent agenda and process to the council meetings, four sub-themes did emerge out of the clarifying comments. Firstly, several participants commented on the role of the chair of council in ensuring the agenda was followed and that the meeting was conducted smoothly. For example, member of school council 16.08 noted that *'The Chairman ensures that an Agenda is forwarded beforehand and always followed.'* This idea is also reflected in a comment from the school principal 16.06*, 'My chair is highly experienced in this area.'*

A second sub-theme to emerge from the comments related to the occurrence, from time to time, of specific presentations. Presentations could occur in a variety of areas, including: strategy, compliance matters and school performance. These matters would need to have time assigned within the meeting to occur. For example, member of school executive 16.03 reflected, *'about 90% of the time. Some variations due to specific projects e.g. strategic plan.'* This sub-theme is also noted in a clarifying comment from the chair of school council 16.06, '*While the agenda is consistent from meeting to meeting, key strategic issues will often dominate specific meetings, including an annual planning day between Council & the Executive & annual budget preparation.'* So whilst there was an overall perception of consistency, there was also an element of flexibility so that important maters could be discussed, presented and decided upon.

A third sub-theme emerged from three respondents, all of whom questioned the rigidity of format as a possible area of concern. The concern was one of whether the rigidity of consistency acted as a deterrent to creativity and innovation. It was reflected in this comment from member of school council 6.09, '*this can be a problem because it does not allow for much innovative thinking or new issues to emerge.'* This observation was also reflected in a comment from a member of school council

16.07, '*Spending more time focused on issues that need addressing would be more helpful than going through the motions of the same agenda again and again.*' Finally, one comment from the school principal of school 16.12 noted that a change of chair of council coupled with changes to school council membership could test the 'resolve' of the school council to stay on the task of a focused agenda.

Clarification Question 2 – Please give an indication to the items that are consistently covered

As previously stated, 42 respondents took the opportunity to elaborate their thoughts on this question. Of the 42 respondents, two groups emerged from the comments made. The first group belonged to those respondents who believed they always or mostly followed a consistent agenda. The respondents who made up this group were school principals, members of school council and chairs of school council. Virtually all of this group commented that the meetings consistently discussed the following: a time of prayer and devotion, acknowledgement of conflict of interest and responsible person's declaration, apologies, reports relating to finance, buildings, compliance, WHS and strategic development, as well as a principal's report relating to matters of school operation.

The second group were a smaller group and these respondents typically answered neutral to the original question and were all members of school executive teams. In short, they were not able to elaborate on the agenda for meetings as they had very little to do with this aspect of the governance process. Examples of these were, '*not aware of standing agenda items but I am aware that Executive are asked to provide a report to the Headmaster for inclusion in his report to the Council each month*' (school executive16.05) and '*unsure (see comment on previous question)*' (school executive 16.13). There are already some important issues emerging from the data collected from the members of school executive teams and these relate to professional development, preparation for becoming a school principal and how to work within a governance framework. One of the building blocks of working within a governance framework is also one of how to prepare for, work within and conduct the business of the monthly school council meeting.

6.1.3 - Each member of the school council is required to annually reflect on their performance as a member of the school council

For good governance to occur, each member of the governance structure should reflect on their performance annually, noting the contributions they believe they have made to the organisation over the preceding twelve months. This sub-theme fitted under the main theme of accountability and, in total, 49 out of the 51 respondents answered this question. The results of the responses to this question were as follows:

Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Neutral	Never	No Response	Total
9.8%	15.7%	13.7%	35.2%	21.7%	3.9%	100%

Table 6.10 – School council reflection

Out of 51 respondents, less than five of these members of the governance structure actually reviewed their performance each year, eight would mostly review their performance each year and seven would sometimes review their performance annually. Less than 50% of people involved in the governance structure engaged in some form of annual review. 29 respondents identified themselves as either having no position on this question or they did not engage in an annual review.

Participants were provided with an opportunity to briefly clarify the reasons for their response. 40 respondents took this opportunity and as a result of an analysis of their comments, three broad sub-themes emerged: those that do have a process of reflection, those that do not reflect on their performance, and those who are unsure as to whether a review or period of self-reflection occurs.

Those council members that do reflect on their performance

Approximately 11 out of the 40 responses, or just over 25% responses felt that they did have a process of performance review in place for council members. These responses were further broken down into four secondary sub-themes: self-reflection, chair led discussion, reappointment and "we are on the journey of creating a reflection tool".

Three respondents clearly saw it as their own responsibility to assess their performance. For example, '*there is not a formal review, but we are encouraged to reflect on our performance*', (member of school council 16.08) and '*if I didn't feel I was [making a contribution] I would resign*' (member of school council 16.04). In regards to the last quote, the idea of self-reflection is clearly implied. They saw it as important that they continue to make a contribution to the council and if they do not, then they fail to see why they would stay on. For such a decision to be made they would need to engage in some form of self-reflection.

For others the process of review was led by the chair of council, either as part of a formal review process or as part of process of reappointment, which in the current governance structure occurs every three years. This idea was very well reflected by the comment from school principal 16.06 when he/she stated, '*Performance reviews have been part of the reappointment of several Council members, while for new appointments, and in effect this has been part of the appointment process.*' Whilst for the chair of council 16.05 the issue was, '*I have informally met with individual members of council when it is time to consider their re-election. Have not yet implemented an annual review of either individual or (more importantly I think) whole-council performance but I intend to do that early in 2017 and subsequently.*'

The statement from the chair of council 16.05 was indicative of other such comments. Council members saw the need for self-reflection and some of the school councils have commenced the process of establishing review processes.

Those council members that don't reflect on their performance

Just under one quarter of the respondents who made comment identified that they did not have a process of review. Again, this group could be divided into two sub-groups: those that have never been involved in such a process and those that think it would be a good process and should be adopted. *'I have never been asked to do this'* (member of school council 16.05) and *'We are not asked to do this. We are not asked to meet up with anyone to discuss this'* (member of school council 16.02) are comments that are indicative of the feelings of those who were not involved in a review process. There was a perception that if council members did not engage in a process of annual review it could potentially culminate in a culture of underperformance within school council, as member of school council 16.07 indicated, *'It has never been raised, there are members of the Council who have said nothing all year and nothing gets done to encourage them to participate more or replace them.'*

Whilst on the other hand, there were comments from other members of school council who felt that the idea of implementing a process of review would be a good idea. For example, member of school council 16.09 stated *'I don't recall this ever being required or requested. Great idea'*. This indicated that for some members of council where this was not occurring, they would be open to it.

Those that were unsure

The final group in this section, which was by far the largest, 20 or 50% of those respondents who made comment, reflected that they were unsure as to whether a process of review occurred. Within this group there were sub-groups, including those who felt that their involvement in the governance structure had been too brief to make comment and those that believed that this would be a good idea and something they needed to pursue. The following comments were indicative of those who were unsure.

'I am not aware that this has occurred.' School Principal 16.06

'Unsure of this.' Member of School Executive 16.08

'I have not experienced this.' Member of School Council 16.09

Some believed that their time within the governance structure was too brief for them to either make adequate comment or assessment as to whether a review structure existed. Comments such as these were indicative of those who felt their tenure was too brief.

'I haven't seen it but I am only 18 months in.' School Principal, 16.04

'Haven't been on the board long enough for this yet.' Member of School Council, 16.06

'I have not seen out a full year of service and have yet to determine a more accurate response.' School Principal, 16.08

'As I have only recently joined the School Council I cannot comment with any authority on this.' Member of School Council, 16.12

The final sub-group within the neutral sphere were those that were unaware of this occurring but believed it was a good idea or that the council was thinking about it. As a member of school council 16.07 stated, *'this is an area where I believe we could improve'*. This was then built upon by comments such as '*We are starting this in 2016'* from a member of school council 16.06.

6.1.4 - The school council has an effective strategic plan

As part of the theme of accountability was the need for the governance structure to have a strategic plan. Those who participated in the survey were asked if they believed the school council had an effective strategic plan. The responses to this question were as follows:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
39.2%	43.1%	11.8%	2%	3.9%	100%

Table 6.11 – The school council has an effective strategic plan

The overwhelming number of participants believed that their school council had an effective strategic plan in place with 82.3% of the respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. Less than 6% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the belief that their school council had an effective strategic plan.

In an attempt to see if any other patterns emerged from this data, each of the neutral, disagree and strongly disagree statements were assessed individually to identify the school they represented, the position they held within that school and their years of service. The school identification number was used to see if there was a school or a series of schools that stood out numerically within members of the governance structure who might have thought there were issues with the strategic plan. Their role within the governance structure was also assessed to see if one particular viewpoint dominated over another. Finally, the years of service was also chosen to see if this was linked to perceptions as to the effectiveness of the strategic plan. Out of a total of nine possible options the following data was obtained:

School Identification Number	16.05	16.07	16.08	16.08	16.09	16.13
Role	School Executive	Member of School Council	School Executive	Member of School Council	Member of School Council	School Executive
Years of Service	4 weeks	20	4	3	9	3

Table 6.12 – Neutral comment to years of service

School Identification Number	16.09
Role	Member of School Council
Years of Service	3

Table 6.13 – Disagree comment to years of service

School Identification Number	16.07	16.08
Role	Member of School Council	School Principal
Years of Service	4	1

Table 6.14 – Strongly disagree comment to years of service

In terms of schools, not one particular school stood out from the rest, school 16.08 had a combined total of three mentions across the three tables and schools 16.07 and 16.09 had two mentions. In terms of roles it was worth noting that out of the nine options, five were members of school councils, three were school executive and only one was a school principal. It should also be noted that the school principal had only been in the role for one year and this may explain why their perception of the current strategic plan was poor.

In terms of length of service, seven respondents had served for four or less years, making them relatively new to the governance structure they served. This may mean they were still coming to terms with the school and their function or they may have brought in a fresh perspective that was challenging the status quo. Overall, there was no one deciding factor in the reading of those who might have been negative towards the strategic plan. Therefore, the data remained one which was very supportive and positive of the strategic plans from the schools represented in the survey.

6.1.5 - It is the role of the school principal to implement the strategic plan

This question was included in the survey to ascertain people's perception between strategic thinking and implementation. It required those surveyed to make a judgement as to the role of members of school councils:

- were they a member of a group which oversaw strategic direction,
- were they also charged with the implementation of the strategic plan,
- or, as others state the management of the school.

The responses to this question were as follows:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
60.8%	37.2%	2%	-	-	100%

Table 6.15 – It is the role of the school principal to implement the strategic plan

Some 98% of those surveyed believed it was the role of the school principal to enact the strategic plan. Therefore, the respondents clearly believed that there was a clear delineation between the role of members of school council as strategic thinkers and those who are charged to carry out the implementation of the strategic plan, the school principal and the school executive. This did not mean that the school principal and the members of the school executive did not have a role in developing the strategic plan. They most obviously do, but it was not the role of the school council to become involved in its implementation.

To further explore the data from this question, participants were invited to clarify their answers. In total, 26 respondents took that opportunity, representing just over one half of those involved. From these responses, four sub-themes emerged: the role of the school council to provide guidance and feedback, the role of the school principal and the school executive to implement the strategic plan, the creation of a strategic plan through a collaborative process between the school council, school principal and school executive and finally, a series on one off comments which raised pertinent points.

It was expected that the school principal would provide regular feedback to the school council regarding the progress of the implementation of the strategic plan and, at these points, the school council would be able to provide guidance in relation to how well it was being implemented. Two comments which were indicative of these ideas were '*we give guidance and feedback but deliberately stay out of the way of implementation*' (member of school council 16.02) and '*my report is against the items on the Strategic Plan that have been identified for the year*' (school principal 16.13).

The second sub-theme that emerged from the comments was that the implementation of the strategic plan was the responsibility of the school principal and the school executive. The following four comments were indicative of the other comments that supported this point.

'*With help and assistance of exec and staff*' (Member of the Governing Body 16.03)

'*The School Principal along with the School Executive, Heads of Department, Teachers and other school staff.*' (Member of the School Executive, 16.03)

'*The Principal is primarily responsible for implementing the Strategic Plan, but the school's executive plays a role in supporting the Principal, and the School Council should hold the Principal accountable for implementing the Strategic Plan.*' (Member of School Council 16.08)

'*The Council will hold the Principal to account for the implementation of the plan, but it is management that needs to actually deliver it.*' (Member of School Council 16.12), in this case management is referring to school executive

The third sub-theme from the comments was that the strategic plan was created through collaboration. This was supported by the following quotes:

'*The strategic plan is formulated in collaboration with the school executive team. We agree it should be implemented by the principal.*' (Member of School Council 16.05)

'*We are preparing a new strategic plan for implementation in 2017. It is my job as Principal to prepare this with my staff and they bring this to council for their input.*' (School Principal 16.06)

The final sub-theme from the comments consisted of a series of one-off comments which did not generally fit together but had interesting points to make about the strategic plan, the ownership of

the plan, its implementation and how the council held the school principal to account. Indicative examples of these quotes were:

> *'The Principal does what he feels like doing. It is very hard through the Council to keep him accountable.'* (Member of School Council, 16.07)

> *'Don't feel the plan is strongly owned by the Council - it is owned by the Principal and he is trusted (implicitly) to implement it however his/her actions and achievement are not easy to identify objectively. This is not the fault of the Principal.'* (Member of School Council, 16.09)

These two comments were hard to assess and analyse as they may just be personal statements or they may be hinting towards something more significant. The other data from the same schools did not necessarily support these claims so they could be treated as outliers, or perhaps the opinions of slightly disaffected members of school council.

Key Findings Theme 6.1 - Accountability

At the end of this section, participants were provided with the opportunity to make any final comments in relation to the theme of accountability. In total thirteen participants took that opportunity. The overall tenor of these comments acknowledged the importance of accountability; that this was something they needed to address and was strongly linked to the roles of the school principal and the chair of school council. The following comments were indicative of this:

> *'The only person who could change the status quo is the chairman of the Council. But if the chairman is not inclined to do so, it will not happen, and the person who is chairman has never changed since the school began.'* (Member of School Council 16.07)

> *'The school has a very good and strong leader in the Principal, at times that strength can appear to dominate meetings - this is something for the Council to work out and is does not reflect unfavourably upon the Principal.'* (Member of School Council 16.09)

> *'The council relies on the Head. In determining future expansion they did not go further than talking to the Head. This may not always be the wisest thing.'* (Member of School Council 16.15)

> *'Accountability is always being discussed for the right outcome.'* (Member of School Council 16.15)

The first three quotes (members of school council 16.07, 16.09 and 16.15) all acknowledge the important role the school principal and the chair of school council have in determining the culture and nature of accountability that occurs within the governance structure but they also allude to a possible downside to this. Implied in their response was the idea that whilst a dominant chair of school council or school principal can be positive, especially if things are going well, it can also be potentially detrimental to the workings of the school council as they may end up relying too heavily on the capacity of these people at the expense of the others within the governance structure. In short,

the rest of school council were in danger of absolving themselves of their responsibility and developing their own governance skill set.

Another sub-theme that emerged related to the composition of the school council and its voluntary nature. Two such quotes which expand on this were:

'I think voluntary Boards/Councils need more input into understanding Governance and the accountability that goes with governing a school. I get particularly dismayed at some of our clergy. They sometimes struggle with the size of the money involved and get caught up in details. They also need to understand boundaries and their duty of loyalty to the Board/Council.' (Member of School Council 16.07)

'While it can't be made too difficult as members of the council are voluntary, I would like to see some public accountability (perhaps more so in other schools that are not as strong in terms of leadership, finance and culture).' (Member of School Executive 16.13)

In the context of this study, membership of school councils was purely voluntary and was not remunerated as members of publicly listed companies are. The size of the schools which they govern often involved budget and financial positions much larger and more significant than their own day-to-day experience. This can be challenging for them. Therefore, there was a clear need to provide training and development in this area so that all members of school council know what was expected of them. This was reinforced by the two quotes above as they both see the need for the governing body to fully understand the level of accountability required.

The final sub-theme which emerged from the comments was that of transparency and spread of accountability across the organisation. Two such quotes which explore this were:

'It is important that accountability cascades down through the management and staff. I think it is also the responsibility of the Principal to manage and work 'on the business' and not always 'in the business.' (Member of School Council 16.06)

'Transparency in process is important to ensure that the different sections of the school community understand that all stakeholders are accountable in some way and reflecting on their practice and impact in others.' (Member of School Executive 16.08)

Both points highlight the positive nature that accountability can have in an organisation if it was clear, transparent and became a part of the culture of the school. Firstly, members of the school executive, teaching staff, administration staff will also embrace a culture of accountability if it is being effectively modelled for them. Secondly, if there was open and transparent accountability it would not only be the internal level of accountability that improved but the external accountability would also increase. It will brought external stakeholders into the governance model and strengthened it.

Theme 6.2 – School Vision

From the review of the literature the theme of school vision was central to a good school governance framework. This was also supported in the qualitative component of the study through the interviews with school principals and chairs of school council. Therefore, in the construction of the survey, the second theme to be explored in the quantitative component was school vision.

In particular, questions focused on exploring whether:

- the school had a clearly articulated vision statement;
- school council saw it is as their responsibility to be custodians of the vision;
- the school council saw it as important to appoint a school principal aligned to the school vision;
- it was important to recruit people to the school council who shared the same vision; there was a process of induction for new members of school council; and finally
- the opportunity to make any further comment in this area.

6.2.1 - The school has a clearly articulated vision statement

All 51 participants responded to this question and their responses are outlined in the following table.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
66.7%	21.5%	5.9%	5.9%	-	100%

Table 6.16 – The school has a clearly articulated vision statement

The overwhelming perception of the participants was that they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that the school had a clearly articulated vision statement. Indeed, 88.2% of the respondents were in this category. Of the 45 respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with the statements a further 15 of these were willing to elaborate with a comment to explain their response. From these 15 comments a further three sub-themes emerged: the vision statement should be reviewed and linked to the strategic plan, that it was important to have a vision statement and the importance of having the vision statement available to the general school community.

Comments indicative of these sub-themes were:

'It is on the website, around the school, on letterheads, and articulated in various way each week in the newsletter.' (Member of School Council 16.02)

'We have just completed a new strategic plan and therefore we believe it is very clear.' (School Principal 16.04)

'We have recently reviewed our vision statement. Input by the council and Executive help in formulating the vision statement.' (Member of School Council 16.05)

'In preparing the new strategic plan we commenced with the vision mission and values statements. Council members have had significant input into this process. I see them as the gatekeepers.' (School Principal 16.06)

'This is so important for the College's Executive and staff generally.' (Chair of School Council 16.07)

'Vision Statement should be tested regularly (at least annually) to ensure alignment with a developed Strategic Plan.' (Chair of School Council 16.08)

Of the six respondents who were neutral to or disagreed with the statement, only three took the opportunity to make comment. Two of these three comments appeared to be relatively insignificant, just stating that they felt that it needed to be more openly received and reviewed. One comment though was fairly outspoken, *'when the suggestions of the council members do not match what the Principal wants to do, they just get ignored'* (council member 16.07). To ascertain the validity of this statement it was reviewed in light of other responses from the same school and it clearly stood as an outlier as all other comments reflected that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the opinion that the school had a clearly articulated vision statement.

6.2.2 - The school council saw it is as their responsibility to be custodians of the vision

All 51 respondents answered this question and their responses are outlined in the following table:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
35.2%	43.2%	17.7%	3.9%	-	100%

Table 6.17 – The school council as custodians of the vision

The responses to this statement were clearly in the strongly agree and agree category with 78.4% of the responses. It was interesting to note, that the majority of the responses were in the agree section with 43.2% of the respondents. This may indicate that for some of the responses, whilst they were clearly leaning to this position that they were custodians, it might be something they needed to develop further within the culture of their school council. It was also interesting to note that there was a higher level of neutral responses to this statement with 17.7% of the respondents. Only 3.9% or two respondents disagreed with the statement.

Of the 40 respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, eleven took the opportunity to further clarify their response. From these comments three sub-themes emerged, the first being the selection of and performance of the school principal in turning the vision into a reality. The second was the need for the vision to be linked to the strategic plan and to be also owned and supported by the school executive. The third sub-theme to emerge was that vision determined the various decision making processes within the school council.

Comments indicative of these sub-themes were:

> *'We select the Principal who has a role in shaping the vision and of implementation.'* (Member of School Council 16.03)

> *'They have been very involved with the forming of the new strategic plan and much debate has taken place from the meeting that all the School Executive attended when this was being finalised.'* (Member of School Executive 16.03)

> *'As the school council we need to focus on the vision statement as this is what drives the decisions of the school.'* (Member of School Council 16.05)

> *'School management is regularly challenged about how initiatives will better meet the vision by council members as part of our discussions.'* (Chair of School Council 16.05)

> *'They do, but this is delegated / entrusted to the school via the Principal.'* (Member of School Council 16.13)

For the eleven people who were either neutral or disagreed with this statement, eight took the opportunity to make further clarification. Again, from these eight comments, three sub-themes emerged from the data. Firstly, the majority of comments reflected that they were unsure as to whether they owned the vision and, therefore, were they custodians of it or whether this was the domain of the principal and their team. A second sub-theme was the need for a more clearly articulated vision for their school. The final sub-theme, which dominated the two respondents who disagreed with the statement, was a belief that it was not clear and there was no discussion of it.

Comments indicative of these sub-themes were:

> *'I'm not sure that we are the custodians. This would take it away from the Principal and all staff. We are supporters of the vision once agreed on.'* (Member of School Council 16.06)

> *'An agreed, clearly articulated vision would be needed first, for the Council members to be able to feel a sense of ownership.'* (Member of School Council 16.07)

> *'The vision has not been raised or clearly articulated by the council.'* (School Principal 16.08)

> *'I don't think so because it's not often discussed.'* (Member of School Council 16.09)

> *'I am not sure who has set/revisits the vision whether it is the school Council or the Principal, or both working in consultation with one another.'* (Member of School Executive 16.13)

It was interesting to note that no one particular school dominated the neutral or negative comments, it was broadly spread across a range of schools.

6.2.3 - The school council saw it as important to appoint a school principal who is aligned to the school vision

All 51 participants in the survey responded to this question and their responses are outlined in the table below:

Very Important	Important	Neutral	Total
76.4%	17.7%	5.9%	100%

Table 6.18 – School principal appointment

In total, 94% of the respondents believed it was either important or very important to appoint a school principal aligned with the vision of the school. The data from across all four sections of the governance structure, members of school council, members of school executive, school principals and chairs of school council were all aligned with this position.

Of the 51 respondents, 19 took the opportunity to make comment as a means of further clarification. An analysis of these 19 comments provided three sub-themes: that alignment to school vision be a part of the selection criteria for the new school principal; that when a new school principal is appointed there was an appropriate process of handing over the vision and finally; that the school principal, and even more so a newly appointed school principal, be provided the opportunity to have input into the vision, especially if the vision needed to adapt or change as a result of changing circumstances for the school.

Comments which support the first sub-theme, alignment to school vision being a part of the selection criteria, were:

'This is part of the selection criteria.' (Member of School Council 16.05)

'If the School Council is to ensure that the School's vision forms the basis of everything that happens in the school, then the Principal must be aligned with it.' (Member of School Council 16.08)

'Recent appointment is testament to this.' (Chair of School Council 16.08)

'If this is out of alignment then the Council has not done its job properly.' (Member of School Council 16.12)

'It goes to the heart of our "Culture". If we don't it will negatively impact the Culture we (Council but primarily Head of Council) have worked too hard to establish.' (Chair of School Council 16.12)

Comments which support the second sub-theme, that when a new school principal is appointed there is an appropriate process of handing over the vision, were:

'While the principal drives the strategic plan and has important input into it, we would hope that there is a passing on and development of the vision and purpose of the school as principal succeeds principal, and that our school executives are sufficiently part of the process that such

a handover does occur in a smooth manner. This is truer for the older school than the newer ones...' (Chair of School Council 16.05)

'I think the school vision has been supported by each Principal.' (Member of School Executive 16.13)

Finally, comments which support the third sub-theme, that the school principal, and especially a newly appointed school principal, be provided the opportunity to have input into the vision, especially if the vision needs to adapt to a changing set of circumstances for the school, were:

'The vision may change slightly with a new principal. I think the principal needs to have input and probably design the vision, so it will change with new principals.' (Member of School Council 16.02)

'A new principal will in due course be expected to contribute to its fine tuning.' (Chair of School Council 16.07)

'I think the Principal and the Board work together to determine the vision. I think the Board are interested in and incorporate the Principal's vision within their own, in order to achieve unity.' (Member of School Executive 16.13)

'However, there is an expectation that he will contribute to the ongoing development of the vision as circumstances change and new opportunities present themselves.' (Chair of School Council 16.15)

Whilst a vision statement should be clearly articulated and owned by the governance structure of the school, it should remain a living document, maintaining relevance, adapting and changing over time. This process of development was also going to be best achieved when there was a culture of collaboration within the governance structure, involving all relevant parties.

There were no negative responses to this statement, only three neutral responses were recorded. Only one of these neutral responses chose to explain their response. This was, *'the same Head has been here since the beginning of the school, the council has changed so I cannot really comment on what they see as important in appointing a Head',* (member of school executive 16.15). This comment made sense because there was a clear acknowledgement that due to two factors, one being that the principal of this school was a foundation principal and secondly, due to the length of tenure of this appointment, it was hard for this person to make a judgement either way. In summary, it was clear that the respondents overwhelmingly believed it was essential that the appointment of a school principal be aligned with the vision of the school.

6.2.4 - It is important to recruit people to the school council who also share the same vision

All 51 respondents answered this question and their responses are outlined in the table below:

Very Important	Important	Neutral	Slightly Important	Total
68.6%	25.5%	2%	3.9%	100%

Table 6.19 – School council recruitment

The data from the responses to this statement was very clear 68.6% believed that it was very important to recruit people to the school council who also shared the same vision. A further 25.5% believed it was important. Therefore, 94.1% of respondents were in favour of the statement. This was a very clear endorsement of the need to recruit people to the school council aligned to the school's vision. Of the three people who were either neutral or saw it as slightly important, two of them were willing to clarify their response. An analysis of these two responses revealed that whilst they responded neutral in one case and slightly important in the other, neither of their responses were actually challenging the belief that they were against the thought of recruiting people to the school council who were not aligned with the school's vision.

The neutral comment from the member of school council 16.12 was:

> *'They need to understand and be supportive of the schools vision but not necessarily personally aligned with it. Having Council members who are free to express their opinions based on relevant experience is important for progressive governance.'*

The ideas contained within this comment are that the members of school council should be supportive and understand the school's vision but at the same time have the capacity to 'express their opinions' based on 'experience' so that the governance of the school can move forward. The implication of this suggests personal alignment with the vision may in some way restrict a council member's capacity to critically think or question issues relating to the governance of the school. This idea was also expressed by other respondents and it is addressed in the paragraphs that follow. In effect, whilst this respondent provided a neutral answer, they were actually not out of alignment with other sub-themes that emerged.

The comment that was classified as slightly important from table 5.19, was also from school 16.12 and was:

> *'Personally I think it is important but as a Council we don't really focus on that during recruitment. We are more skills driven as long as they are Christian.'*

Again, a close analysis of this response led to a conclusion that this respondent was not actually out of alignment with the other 94.1% of respondents to this question. Rather, it was how they interpreted the statement and their response to it. Firstly, they said it was 'important' and they link it to 'skills' and the 'Christian' position of the candidate. All of these three points were consistently raised in the other comments which are explored in the following paragraphs. The point of difference in this statement, and why they have placed it in the slightly important ranking, was through the use of the term 'recruitment'. In effect, what this response actually said was, in the recruitment process for new

members of school council, in this particular school, they did not focus on aligning the vision in the selection.

Of the 48 respondents who either saw this as very important or as important, 15 provided further clarification. From an analysis of their comments the following sub-themes emerged: faith alignment, capacity, experience and value adding as being essential in the decision to appoint, the ability to challenge and finally, the recruitment process.

The Anglican Schools Corporation is an openly faith-based organisation and through the governance documents which govern the schools they operate, it is clear that those who join their school councils must have an active faith aligned to the faith basis of the organisation. This was acknowledged by some of those who took the opportunity to clarify their response in writing:

> *'This is particularly the case in terms of Christian commitment so that they can support this aspect of the vision.'* (School Principal 16.03)

> *'Endeavour to explore their interest in joining Council and their understanding of the vision. Most important that their Christian faith ...'* (Chair of School Council 16.05)

> *'... as long as they are Christian..'* (Chair of School Council 16.12)

For others it was not just their faith position that was important, it was also that they possessed the necessary capacity and experience to thereby add value to the governance structure. The following comments were indicative of this point:

> *'..and capacity/experience are able to add to the capacity of Council to maintain values and continue the school's development.'* (Chair of School Council 16.05)

> *'While I think it is important I also believe that diversity in background and skill set is also very important.'* (Member of School Council 16.06)

> *'Having Council members who are free to express their opinions based on relevant experience is important for progressive governance.'* (Member of School Council 16.12)

Another sub-theme was the need to appoint people who had the capacity to critically think and who may question the current situation as a means of getting to the right outcome. For some it was not a good idea to appoint people who would not have the capacity to challenge when it was appropriate to do so. The following comments were reflective of this:

> *'You do need people to challenge when necessary so everyone being a clone of each other is not really healthy.'* Member of School Council, 16.09

> *'I think it is good to have different ideas so people who can come in with perhaps ideas to change vision are ok as long as they can still align with the vision determined on.'* School Executive, 16.15

'While alignment to the vision is important it is also important that Council members continue to think critically and carefully evaluate proposed actions. i.e. They shouldn't be unthinking "yes" men and women.' (Chair of School Council 16.15)

Finally, through an analysis of the comments, the issue of recruitment also emerged as a sub-theme. Issues which came from this sub-theme was the difficulty of recruiting the right people to join a school council, the process of recruitment and what this process specifically looked like. In support of this, the following comments were made:

'But finding it very difficult in sourcing the right people with complementing skill sets. I'm finding this a real challenge as we have recently lost and are about to lose long serving members.' (Chair of School Council 16.12)

'Personally I think it is important but as a Council we don't really focus on that during recruitment. We are more skills driven as long as they are Christian.' (Member of School Council 16.12)

Whilst it was clear from the responses to this statement that there was openly strong support for recruiting people to school councils aligned to the vision of the school, it was not necessarily an easy or straightforward process. The fact that it was a prerequisite to have an active faith alignment to the schools within the Anglican Schools Corporation poses one important restriction but other issues also need to be taken into consideration before the appointment was made. These include a capacity to think critically, possessing the necessary experience and being able to value add to the organisation, all emerged as important sub-themes from the data gathered.

6.2.5 - The School Council has a process of induction for new council members

49 out of a possible 51 responded to this statement as outlined in Table 5.20:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Nil	Total
15.7%	43.2%	27.4%	9.8%	-	3.9%	100%

Table 6.20 – School council induction

The data from this response was evenly spread. 58.9% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, whilst 27.4% were neutral in their response to this question and a further 9.8% disagreed with the statement. Two people did not respond. The majority believed that induction programs did occur within the governance structure but a significant minority were neutral to the idea or believed they did not possess one.

Of the 49 respondents who answered this question, 30 were willing to write a clarifying comment. This was one of the highest rates of clarification conducted across the survey. An analysis of these 30 responses enabled further exploration of the data to occur. Firstly, 15 of those who wrote comments either identified themselves as neutral or disagreed with the statement. 13 of the comments

identified that they agreed with the statement and two responses did not make a judgement in the first instance.

An analysis of the 15 written responses, which identified themselves as neutral or disagreed with the statement, provided three sub-themes. A group of respondents did not know or were unsure as to whether the school council had an induction process for new council members. Another group implied that an informal process might occur, namely a conversation with the chair of council, but that no formal process of induction was in place. The last group believed that this was something that should become mandatory for their school council and something they could improve in. The following comments were made by some of the respondents:

> *'I am not aware but I assume there would be a process based on policy.'* (Member of School Executive 16.05)

> *'Not sure.'* (Member of School Executive 16.13)

> *'I do not know.'* (Member of School Executive 16.13)

> *'It's more a chat with the Chair.'* (Member of School Council 16.12)

> *'Informal mentoring may occur between Chair and Council member…'* (Member of School Council 16.09)

> *'There are brief discussions but no particular formal induction process here on the ground.'* (School Principal 16.04)

> *'Needs to be stronger.'* (Member of School Council 16.06)

> *'It doesn't happen. But it should happen. It is not on the radar of the chairman.'* (Member of School Council 16.07)

> *'I believe this is an area we need to work on as well. Mind you, we have had very little turnover, so induction of new Board members is not high on the priority of our board.'* (Member of School Council 16.07)

Before moving onto those who affirmed the statement and believed they did have a process of induction in place, it was interesting to note that out of the thirteen members of school executive who participated in the survey, nine placed a neutral response against their understanding of whether an induction process occurred or not. Several made comment, like those noted above. This was interesting and there could be several reasons for this. Firstly, they were not actively involved in the process and procedures of the school council, secondly, they were not made aware of the actions of school council and lastly, they were not involved in the process of recruiting members of school council. The concern was that the next set of school principals would most likely come from within the school executive and, if they were not fully aware of how the school council conducted its

business, including the recruitment and induction of new council members, this may impact their ability to fulfil their role as a member of the governance structure. In the early stages, they may well not be being adequately prepared.

Analysis of the 13 respondents who affirmed the belief that there was a process of induction for newly appointed council members, revealed the following process of appointment: an invitation to join, then attending a few council meetings as observers and lastly, accepting the appointment and becoming part of the school council. Others noted that part of the induction process involved vetting potential candidates by the chair of the school council and the school principal. One group identified that informal and formal processes of induction occurred for newly-appointed council members, including the use of external courses and those provided by the Anglican Schools Corporation. Finally a small group identified that a process of recruitment occurred but once recruited there was minimal development in the way of an induction process.

The following comments support the sub-themes raised:

> *'Yes. The school corporation runs a training day.'* (Member of School Council 16.02)

> *'As our school is an SASC school, The SASC runs induction seminars for all new council members.'* (Member of School Council 16.05)

> *'Fairly informal. Chair takes them through the main policies that outline their role and encourages their participation in ASC new council member training as well as conferences and other governance training.'* (Chair of School Council 16.05)

> *'A number of strategies - Chairman induction, annual planning day, external governance PD.'* (School Principal 16.07)

> *'Usually the process of induction involves attendance at several Council Meetings as an observer.'* (School Principal 16.09)

> *'Prospective new council members are suggested and vetted to some extent by the chair and the principal before being invited to take part in one or two council meetings as observers. Both the individual as well as council members need to feel a degree of comfort before a final decision is made. This process in itself is a "non-formal" induction as the invitee will have absorbed at least the culture of the council in that time.'* (Member of School Council 16.15)

Of the 3 nil responses, two made comment and both of these related to being unsure as to whether a process of induction occurred or not. In reality, they were supporting the neutral or disagree respondents, adding weight to that position.

One comment of particular interest, which agreed with the position that they did possess an induction process, was from school principal, 16.12, *'I'm not convinced that it addresses all the challenges. I've recently had to inform the Chair that a new appointment to the Council (a close friend) is*

unsuited to the role. As I reflect on that I wonder whether sufficient time was invested to induction.' Whilst the content of the comment was sensitive, it does highlight the important point of how one may deal with a possible appointment that does not actually meet the expectations required of a council member. Is it possible to create an induction process that prevents this?

Key Findings – Theme 6.2 School Vision

In relation to school vision, only two respondents took the opportunity to express any final opinions. However, whilst there may have been only two, both of their opinions provided a good summary of the ideas contained in this section.

Firstly, they emphasised the importance of the strategic plan being owned by the school council. Member of school council 16.04 stated, *'I think it is imperative to have a strategic plan that is owned by the whole school.'* Implied in this statement were the issues raised earlier in this section, that for the vision to turn from concept into reality it must be owned by all parties within the governance structure.

Secondly, the importance of having both unity and diversity on the school council. Member of school council 16.09 stated, *'School Councils need a variety of perspectives and backgrounds in their councilors but general agreement on the purpose of the school is fundamental.'* In the context of this research, there was a unity of purpose and this was found within the faith basis of the organisation. It was not some tacit component but clearly fundamental to the organisation's existence and the existence of each of its schools. However, from this unified base, it was also important to have members of school council who were able to bring different skills, experiences and perspectives to the school council so that the school council had the capacity to effectively deal with the many and varied issues it faced.

Theme 6.3: Leadership within the school community

From the review of the literature in the area of governance, the theme of leadership within the school community emerged as important in the area of good school governance. This theme was supported by the data obtained through Phase 2 of the study through the interviews with school principals and chairs of school council. In constructing the survey the third theme to be explored in the quantitative component was the theme of leadership in the school community.

The particular questions in this section focused on exploring whether:

- the chair of the school council was a leader within the school community;
- school council was involved in the day-to-day management of the school;
- school council should have the freedom to ask the difficult or tough questions as required in school council meetings;
- school principals should have the freedom to ask the difficult or tough questions as required in school council meetings;

- the chair of the school council acts as a critical friend to the school principal, and finally
- the opportunity was afforded the participants to make further comment as necessary.

6.3.1 - Chair of council as a leader within the school community

All 51 participants responded to this question and their responses are outlined in the Table 5.2.1:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
27.4%	43.2%	13.7%	11.8%	3.9%	100%

Table 6.21 – Chair of council as leader

A majority of responses to this statement believed that the chair of council should be seen as a leader within the school community. Indeed, 70.6% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the need for the chair of council to offer leadership to the school community. 13.7% were neutral to the idea. However, 15.7% of respondents disagreed with this statement. Some 29.4% of the respondents either remained neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement and whilst this was a minority, it was sufficiently large enough to require further analysis. To achieve this, the respondents, neutral or negative, were analysed to see if there were any emerging patterns. Did one particular group (members of school council, members of school executive, school principals or chairs of school council) disagree with the statement? The second stage process involved an analysis of the 27 clarifying comments that were made, of which 17 wrote comments in support of the statement and 10 were either neutral or spoke against the statement.

Of the 7 respondents who were neutral in their opinion to this statement, five were either the school principal or the chair of school council. This was interesting, as both held the key roles of leadership in the governance structure. A closer analysis of their clarifying comments which follows provides further insight into this position. Of the 8 respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, one was a school principal, one was a chair of school council and three were members of the school executive. The addition of the school principal and the chair of school council to the neutral respondents took the total to seven out of fifteen, or almost half of the respondents in this section, thus adding weight to the need to analyse their clarifying comments to see if any sub-themes emerge. In relation to the school executive, their three comments were also worth analysing as they provided some important insights into how each viewed leadership.

From the ten comments which were either neutral or disagreed with the statement, a series of sub-themes emerged: there was a need to clearly define the two roles in the school community and the school principal was the leader of the school. There was also a need to identify what was meant by the term leadership. The first sub-theme of the need to closely define the two roles was closely linked to the sub-theme identified by those who supported the statement. Examples of this were:

'The Principal is the leader of the School Community. The Chair's role is to support the Principal.' (Member of School Council 16.08)

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'He is a leader and strongly influences the Headmaster - but it is important that the Headmaster and delegated representatives in key operational areas are the obvious people up front.' (School Principal 16.15)

'It is important that there is a clear understanding of the leadership roles of the Chair of Council and Head of School. Both exercise important leadership but it is dangerous, when for example, the Chair acts as if he/she is Head of School.' (Chair of School Council 16.15)

The second sub-theme from these comments was the view that some people saw it as the principal's role to be seen as the sole leader of the school, that this was their domain. This prevented any confusion from within the school community from occurring. Comments which support this were:

'I think this place should be reserved for the principal.' (School Executive 16.04)

'The Headmaster is the leader of the School and should be seen as such in the community. There is only room for one leader so there is no confusion and the message to the community is consistent.' (Chair of School Council 16.08)

'It is important that the Principal be seen as a leader - I think the Chair has less importance within the eyes of the school community.' (Member of School Executive 16.13)

The final sub-theme focused on clarifying what was meant by the term leadership and how it applied to the two roles, the chair of school council and school principal. This was something, upon reflection, that might need to be adjusted in the survey to avoid confusion in the future. However, in relation to this sub-theme the following comments highlight this discussion:

'Not necessarily, if what you mean by that is that the chair is a current parent who 'does a lot'. If you mean the chair is acknowledged as a very capable leader in his or her own field by the community - yes, sure.' (Member of School Council 16.06)

'It is important they are known but not sure if by being a leader you mean visible.' (School Principal 16.13)

An analysis of the seventeen comments that were in support of the statement provided the following sub-themes:

- the need to differentiate the leadership roles of the chair of council and the school principal
- the leadership role of the chair of council is to support the school principal
- depending on the context of the school the chair of council should have a visible presence, and finally
- the chair of school council should have the capacity to lead the school council.

In differentiating the roles of the chair of school council and the school principal, the chair should be seen as the leader of the school council, not necessarily the leader of the school. This was the role of

the school principal. The school principal should be seen as the public leader of the school and the leadership of the chair of school council will be noticed through their ability to lead the workings of the governing body. In essence, chairs of school council govern and the school principals manage – the two needed to be identified for the model to work well. Therefore, the two leaders have different roles but they have a common purpose, to develop the school to its fullest capacity.

For some schools, the chair of school council as leader was quite important and this was noted from those who came from a more rural or regional setting where the involvement of the chair of school council in the broader community was seen as an important part of their role. Indicative comments made by the respondents supportive of these points were:

'The Chair of the School Council should be seen as supporting the Head in their role as the leader of the school.' (School Principal 16.04)

'... the chair of the council needs to be an integral part of the school community.' (Member of School Council 16.05)

'Yes, but the Principal provides the leadership of the school with the Chair's role one of governance.' (Chair of School Council 16.06)

'The Principal is the leader of the School Community. The Chair's role is to support the Principal.' (Member of School Council 16.08)

'I feel this is important, particularly in a rural school. However, our school community would not know who the Chair of our School Council was, nor would they feel comfortable approaching him.' (Member of School Executive 16.08)

'They don't interact on a daily basis, but can't be faceless either. Need to be seen as the "boss" of the group to who the Principal answers.' (Member of School Council 16.12)

6.3.2 - It is the role of the school council to be involved in the day to day management of the school.

All 51 respondents answered this question and their response are outlined in the following table:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
-	-	2%	29.4%	68.6%	100%

Table 6.22 – The school council and the day to day management of the school

98% of responses disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. The largest percentage was in the strongly disagree category with 68.6% of the responses. It was very clear that those involved in the survey felt that it was not the role of the school council to be involved in the day to day management of the school. This was the domain of the school principal and their executive team.

To explore this further, an analysis of the 27 clarifying responses was conducted from which four sub-themes emerged. Firstly, respondents saw the difference between governance and management. The school council was there to govern, not to get involved in the day to day operations of the school. They were there to delegate, to create policy and even when there might be a possible conflict of interest (such as being a governor and a parent of the school), know that their role was governor. The vast majority of comments reflected this theme and the following comments were indicative of this:

> *'The day to day management is up to the Principal and the School Executive.'* (Member of School Executive 16.03)

> *'Our role is governance not management.'* (Member of School Council 16.04)

> *'Our role is to delegate and then effectively oversight. We do that through policy development, reviewing reports from school management and testing matters against the strategic plan.'* (Chair of School Council 16.05)

> *'Our role is governance, not operation. It would be most improper to be involved in any operational matter.'* (Member of School Council 16.07)

> *'The Principal and Executive are responsible for the day-today running of the school, and should be able to do so without the interference of the School Council. As a School Council member who is also a parent of children at the school, I find it helpful to be able to draw that line, if other parents confront me about day-to-day operational issues.'* (Member of School Council 16.08)

The second sub-theme was the school council was not based on possessing members who had educational expertise. Rather, their skill set was broader and therefore they employed an expert, the school principal, to lead the educational institution. If the school council were to get involved in educational matters, they would actually be moving out of their area of competence and expertise. As a member of school council 16.05 stated, *'... not all council members come from an educational background, the day to day running of the school should be left up to persons of greater knowledge.'* This was also reflected in this comment from chair of school council 16.07, *'we employ a Principal to do this. We do ask questions however and want to be kept informed if it is required.'*

The third sub-theme identified that whatever the involvement of school council in the day-to-day management of the school would undermine the authority and position of the school principal. This point was made by a member of school council 16.06, *'this will undermine the role of the Principal.'* A member of school council 16.12 took this observation even further when they stated, *'this is an untenable arrangement as it effectively erodes the leadership of the Principal and other executive staff.'*

A final sub-theme was the school council should only become involved in the day to day operations of the school when things started to unravel and go wrong, especially if this related to the performance of the school principal. This point was best made by the following comment from a member of school council 16.12, '*the School Council should only get involved in the day to day management of the school when Management has significantly failed to perform properly. Otherwise, the standard levers of control are accountability of the Head of College through clear policies and KPIs.*

6.3.3 - It is important for the school council to have the freedom to ask the difficult or tough questions as required in school council meetings.

All 51 respondents answered the question associated with this statement and their responses are found in the following table:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
80.3%	19.7%	-	-	-	100%

Table 6.23 – School council has the freedom to ask the difficult or tough questions

Of all the statements the respondents were asked to assess, this statement received the strongest endorsement with 80.3% strongly agreeing with the statement that the school council should have the freedom to ask the difficult or tough question as required in school council meetings. The remaining 19.7% of respondents agreed with this position, therefore there were no neutral, disagree or strongly disagree positions. The question, then was, do they use this freedom?

Of the 51 respondents, 24 chose to clarify their answer. An analysis of these comments produced five sub-themes. The first centered on the belief that it was their right to ask the difficult or tough questions, as reflected upon by a member of school council 16.02, '*I feel we have this right.*' Or as member of school council 16.07 stated, '*this is our role as well.*' From this right or role that they are required to fulfil, there was a belief that they did ask the difficult or tough questions, or as the member of school council stated, '*One could also say that we need to ask the dumb questions as well.*' In acknowledging that they have the right to ask the difficult, tough or even "dumb question" they also believed that this might make, at times, the meeting or people within the meeting feel uncomfortable. As member of school council 16.07 stated, '*it is important that tough questions get asked, but they are clearly not welcomed, and often get taken offense to.*' This idea that asking the difficult or tough question can lead to tensions is acknowledged in a slightly different way by member of school council 16.09 when they stated that asking the difficult or tough question '*…is hard to do. Very hard at times. There's a temptation to rubber stamp and accept everything you are told.*' Why? Asking the difficult or tough question may lead to discussions that are essential but may not be pleasant.

A second sub-theme emerged from this point, which was how these difficult or tough questions ought to be poised. This relates to the process of the meeting. For some, like member of school council

16.04, '*these should go through the chair.*' For others, such as chair of school council 16.05 the process is, '*... to ensure that each member of council puts a view on a matter or is given the opportunity to question the principal on matters of governance (not individual management decisions). Also important for elected council members to meet in absence of management preferably as part of each meeting to provide opportunity for confidential reflection on matters before discussing them (or not) with the principal.*' This idea was further expanded by member of school executive 16.13 when they argued that '*...while I agree in principle, I actually think that such meetings could become times of unhelpful questions. My preference would be for Council members to have the ear of the Principal outside the official meeting times and ask the Principal to address these questions as part of his or her report.*' At times it will be essential that questions without notice were given but where the opportunity arose questions with notice may be far more effectively answered and reflected upon, thus enabling deeper discussions and responses to occur. What needed to be avoided, as stated by school principal 16.15 was '*... that they flag questions that are likely to humiliate or embarrass the Head, Chair or other Council members beforehand as a courtesy.*'

The importance of due process in a meeting helped identify the third sub-theme, which was, when there was good process, council members had the confidence to ask the difficult or tough question knowing that it was safe to do so and that it was important for healthy governance. Member of school council 16.12 summarised this sentiment in their comment, '*it is vital that the Council meeting is "safe" territory for the Council members. Difficult/tough questions are essential to healthy governance.*' This point was further reinforced by member of school council 16.07 when they stated '*We are not experts in every field so having the courage to ask difficult, tough or dumb questions is the sign of a healthy Council.*' A by-product of this 'safe' and 'healthy' governance structure is the creation of an open governance structure, as stated by member of school council 16.15, '*Yes this gives openness to the management of the College.*' Finally, it was the opinion of member of school council 16.15, that this level of discussion, which was healthy for good governance to occur, will only appear when, '*... there is an atmosphere of deep trust between principal and council.*' This deep level of trust was built over time and over a consistent level of performance, from all involved.

The fourth sub-theme related to defining the difference between management and governance. Some of the respondents believed that the difficult or tough question should be asked but only when it related to issues of governance, not management. Management was the domain of the CEO. This point was reflected in a statement from member of school executive 16.05, '*agree in relation to Governance but not the daily management of the school.*' This point was further supported by the comment made by the chair of school council 16.05 when they wrote, '*Endeavour to ensure that each member of council puts a view on a matter or is given the opportunity to question the principal on matters of governance (not individual management decisions).*' Lastly, this point was also supported by the comment made by chair of school council 16.12, '*But only in relation to Governance not Management....*'

The final sub-theme related to the importance of being able to ask the difficult or tough questions, as failure to do so could lead to poor outcomes for all involved within the school community. This was put succinctly by member of school council 16.08, *'If the School Council does not feel that it can ask difficult questions, then it is too easy for the Principal to cover up wrongdoing and mismanagement. This can be disastrous for students and the school.'* This did not imply that all school principals were attempting to hide their mistakes from the school council. What it did imply though was that when there were questions that need to be asked, as a result of data or information that had been brought to school council which may have a significant negative impact on the school, then the school council must have the capacity and culture to ask the necessary questions to verify the situation. Failure to do so, as pointed out by member of school council 16.08 can lead to *'disastrous'* outcomes.

In summary, whilst it may be awkward and uncomfortable to ask the difficult or tough question, the evidence from the responses clearly indicated that it must be done. If it is done, a healthy governance culture can be created, keeping everyone accountable. As a member of school council 16.12 wrote, *'the best council members are the ones who can ask the right question at the right time.'*

6.3.4 - It is important for the school principal to have the freedom to ask the difficult or tough questions as required in school council meetings.

All 51 respondents answered the question relating to this statement and their responses are outlined in Table 6.24.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
80.3%	15.7%	2%	2%	-	100%

Table 6.24 – School principal has the freedom to ask the difficult or tough questions

Like the previous statement, which asked the respondents to make a judgement as to whether it was important for the school council to ask the difficult or tough question as required in school council meetings, the respondents to this statement matched the same level of endorsement with 80.3% strongly agreeing. A further 15.7% agreed with the statement, whilst only 4% were either neutral or disagreed with the statement.

In total, 20 clarifying comments were written for the responses to this statement, slightly less than for the previous statement which had 24. However, once these 20 comments were analysed, 4 out of the 5 sub-themes from the previous question matched, that was, it was a council members right to ask the difficult or tough question, it was important these questions be asked within an established process of the meeting, that asking the difficult or tough question was a sign of a healthy school council and finally, there was a difference between management and governance.

In relation to the first sub-theme, that it was their right to do so, comments which supported this theme identified that the school principal should ask the difficult or tough question as they were leaders in the school and that it was their responsibility to do so. Indeed, there should be more of it and that if the school principal were to ask questions it may lead to a more open governance structure. Comments which support these points were:

'I would go further and say that they should not only have the freedom too it is imperative that they do.' (School Principal 16.04)

'The principal is the ultimate leader of the school, all their questions need to be considered and answered.' (Member of School Council 16.05)

'Possibly not done often enough.' (Member of School Council 16.06)

'Absolutely vital for both parties to be open and not defensive.' (Member of School Council 16.09)

The second sub-theme, asking the difficult or tough questions within the context of an appropriate process, was also raised through the comments. Ideas such as raising concerns through the chair of council first, as well as being addressed outside of school council meetings so that the issues could be explored more fully before the meeting, were mooted. In support of this the following comments were noted: *'Again, I would hope that such questions are broached outside the meeting times informally, but that the responses to such questions are provided to the Council'* (member of school executive 16.13) and *'Sometimes the Principal should raise these matters with the Chair first'* (chair of school council 16.07). Also, *'Controversy should be run through the Chair as a courtesy. If not, then it is an unwise Head who asks questions that put others on the spot without courtesy or notice. Rather terminal I suspect'* stated school principal 16.15.

The third sub-theme, that the freedom to ask the difficult or tough question by the school principal helped create a healthy governance structure, was also explored in the comments made by the respondents. In relation to these comments they noted that if the principal sought advice from the governors of the school then this helped develop a culture of confidence and trust within the governance structure. This advice would often be in relation to difficult or tricky situations the principal was facing and the acknowledgement that this was the case was seen positively, especially as school councils acknowledged the complexity of the role of the school principal. Dealing with these difficult decisions or situations together increased the level of trust within the governance structure and this, in turn, further enhanced the willingness of all members, including the school principal to be more open and transparent when needed. The following comments support this position.

> *'Honesty and transparency are vital. The Principal needs to be able to feel "safe" to ask anything of the Council, as this clear communication is essential to good governance.'* (Member of School Council 16.12)

> *'And also to be assured that they have the continued confidence of the council and the chair when facing difficult decisions where there are no 'right answers' or the consequence of a decision will be unpopular or divisive of the school community yet necessary to achieve the objectives of the strategic plan.'* (Chair of School Council 16.05)

> *'Headmasters/Principals should seek direction or assist the Council in understanding the ramifications of strategy implementation without fear or favour.'* (Chair of School Council 16.08)

> *'The relationship needs to be 2 way and built on trust.'* (Member of School Council 16.12)

> *'If the freedom and safety to ask the tough questions doesn't exist, the trust relationship doesn't exist. It also takes away the accountability, because no one is going to ask the tough questions.'* (Member of School Executive 16.13)

Finally, the last sub-theme defining the difference between management and governance emerged from the comments. Whilst the respondents acknowledged that the school principal should ask the difficult or tough questions, they also pointed out that the ultimate decision, in relation to matters of governance, rested in the school council itself. Implying that the school principal had to be respectful of the final decision that the school council made, regardless of whether they agreed with that decision or not. The following comment, which interestingly was recorded as a neutral comment, was indicative of this position:

> *'Principal should be free and able to raise any issue of concern. But Council is the governor.'* (Member of School Council 16.03)

One response disagreed with the statement. This response wrote a comment of clarification, which was *'Yes again this gives open management'* (member of school council 16.15). An analysis of this statement actually led to a belief that there was an apparent contradiction between the response of disagreeing with the statement and the clarification comment. It actually supported the statement and the sub-theme that questioning by the school principal built a more open culture within the governance structure. Therefore, the researcher viewed this response as a possible outlier and one that might actually have been answered incorrectly.

6.3.5 - The chair of the school council needs to be able to act as a critical friend to the school principal.

All 51 respondents answered this question and their responses are outlined in Table 6.25.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
52.9%	43.1%	2%	2%	-	100%

Table 6.25 – Chair of school council acts as a critical friend

52.9% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that they believed the chair of school council needed to act as a critical friend to the school principal and a further 43.1% agreed with this statement. Therefore, 96% of the respondents believed that the chair of school council was to act as a critical friend to the school principal.

Of the 51 respondents, 22 provided a further comment clarifying the answer they provided. 21 of those comments clarified why they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement and only one response clarified why they disagreed with the statement. The clarifying comment that disagreed with the statement was; *'Not as a friend as this may bias decisions or impact in the willingness of the Council Chair to bring up difficult issues. Friendship may eventuate but the governance role must come first'* (member of school council 16.12). In a close reading of the comment, the issue for this respondent was the term 'friend' and the implications that this possessed. For them they potentially did not reflect on the term critical alongside the term friend. The term friend indicates a closeness of working relationship, which may become personal, but critical does imply that they will be able to challenge when appropriate. However, the sentiment expressed in the comment from member of school council 16.12, was one where the respondent believed that the chair of council was able to challenge the school principal where appropriate.

Analysis of the other 21 comments, two central sub-themes emerged. Firstly, the term friend in this statement, whilst useful, also needed strong clarification and definition and secondly, seeing this relationship, the one between the chair of school council and the school principal, as crucial to the effective operations of the school. For several respondents they noted that the relationship between the chair of school council and the school principal was closer and more unique than any other within the governance structure. Therefore, this relationship needed to be one built on frankness, openness and trust, like a friendship, but that the relationship cannot cross the boundaries into a deep friendship as this might end up clouding important judgements. However, if the word critical is used in conjunction with the term friendship then this provided an accurate picture of what should occur for good governance to happen. After all, the chair of school council is the 'boss' of the school principal. The following comments are indicative of these points:

'Friend may be too strong. The chair is in some ways the boss of the principal.' (Member of School Council 16.02)

'I would prefer the word 'confidant' rather than 'friend' but the chair needs to be someone the principal can use as a sounding board ...' (Chair of School Council 16.05)

'The Chair is in a unique position to be a confidant and mentor to the Principal. The Chair also can offer friendship to the Principal, in a way that other members of the Council and school community cannot. However, the Chair is also not the Principal's friend. The School Council has the ability to remove the Principal, and judges the Principal's performance. The Chair needs to ensure that his or her judgement is not clouded by friendship.' (Member of School Council 16.08)

'Friend is perhaps a little too close. Mutually supportive yes, but a little distance is healthy for both to be effective.' (School Principal 16.08)

'Not as a friend as this may bias decisions or impact in the willingness of the Council Chair to bring up difficult issues. Friendship may eventuate but the governance role must come first.' (Member of School Council 16.12)

The second sub-theme identified the relationship between the chair of school council and the school principal as being crucial to the overall development and success of the school. In short, a break down in this relationship could easily lead to a break down in the functionality of the school. Comments from the respondents which supported this notion were:

'The relationship between the chair and the principal is paramount to a successful school.' (Member of School Council 16.05)

'This is crucial for the smooth inner working of the College.' (Chair of School Council 16.07)

'The Chair/Principal relationship is the most important. If this is dysfunctional the Council is dysfunctional.' (Member of School Council 16.07)

'In a positive way to manage the College.' (Member of School Council 16.15)

Key Findings Theme 6.3 – Leadership

Those who completed the survey were provided with the opportunity to provide any final comments in relation to the theme of leadership at the end of this section. In total only five respondents took that opportunity. The points that these five comments made were reflective of points made through the responses to the five statements contained in this section. These points were:

- the importance of the school principal and chair of school council relationship to the broader operations of the school;
- the need for the school principal to use the chair of school council as a sounding board for ideas, members of school council should be present at school based events as a sign that they are supportive of the school principal and the direction of the school, the relationship between the chair of school council and the school principal should be supportive but also one that holds the school principal to account; and finally
- that the governance structure must be able to work together for the betterment of the school.

Theme 6.4: Strategy and Implementation

From the review of the literature in the area of governance the theme of strategy and implementation was identified as important in the area of good school governance. This theme was also supported by the research obtained through Phase 2 of the study, through interviews with school principals and chairs of school council. In constructing the survey, the fourth theme to be explored in Phase 3 of the study was the theme of strategy and implementation. The particular questions in this section focused on exploring whether:

- the school council thinks strategically about the development of the school;
- a long serving school principal is important to the continued development of the school;
- it is important to have a long serving chair of council to the continued development of the school;
- it is important to have long serving members of school council to the continued development of the school;
- the effective performance of the school is based on the combination of stable appointments of the school principal, chair of school council and members of school council;
- the school council has appropriate processes in place for the identification, reporting, investigation and management of any conflicts of interest, and
- further comment as necessary.

6.4.1 - Your school council thinks strategically about the development of the school.

50 out of the 51 respondents answered the question above. Only 1 participant did not answer this question. Their responses are presented in the following table:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response	Total
58.9%	33.3%	3.9%	-	2%	1.9%	100%

Table 6.26 – The school council thinks strategically

Overall, the respondents believed that their school council did think strategically about the development of the school. 58.9% strongly agreed with the statement and a further 33.3% agreed with it, therefore, 92.2% of the respondents had a positive view of the statement. Only 5.9% of the respondents, or three participants, held a neutral of negative position to this statement.

Respondents were provided the opportunity to clarify their response. Of the 50 respondents who answered this question, sixteen took that opportunity. In analysing these comments the following two sub-themes emerged. Firstly, they all thought strategically about their particular school in their particular context, both for now and into the future. Each school council thought strategically about the issues their particular school council faced, such as, the need to increase enrolment growth, the need to plan for a feeder primary school, the need to monitor building projects, the implementation

of their current strategic plan and dealing with current challenges and difficulties. The following comments support the points raised:

> *'The two councils are different (as noted earlier) but each addresses how proposals fit into or extend the strategic plan that has been set for the school.'* (Chair of School Council 16.05)

> *'The school has faced a number of significant challenges over the past few years which has required the Council & Principal to consider strategic options for its future development.'* (Chair of School Council 16.06)

> *'The Principal and School Council are actively considering how to develop the school, to encourage enrolment growth.'* (Member of School Council 16.08)

> *'To date most strategy has been with regard to the physical development (buildings) of the school.'* (Member of School Council 16.09)

> *'We work hand in hand with the Principal and staff for the right outcomes for the present and future.'* (Member of School Council 16.15)

The second sub-theme related to the process of how the school council conducted its strategic thinking. Some school councils delegated this process to the school principal who then in turn advised the school council. Others structured time within meetings or held planning days to facilitate the strategic thinking of the school council, whilst for others there was a need to balance monitoring the operations of the school in the present whilst at the same time preparing for its future development. Comments from the respondents which support these observations were:

> *'Indeed we have an annual planning day to analyse progress and enhance the goals and plans.'* (School Principal 16.07)

> *'This is driven a fair bit by the Principal, but this appears to have been delegated by the Council.'* (Member of School Council 16.12)

> *'Obviously there needs to be a balance between long term strategic thinking and regular monitoring of areas such as compliance fiscal responsibility.'* (Chair of School Council 16.15)

Whilst the clear majority of respondents answered positively to this statement, a small minority were either neutral or disagreed with the statement. In total, two respondents were neutral and only one respondent strongly disagreed. Of the two respondents who were neutral, both believed that this was something the school council participated in but not enough strategic thinking occurred. *'I don't think we do enough...'* (chair of school council 16.12) and *'probably not often enough!'* (member of school council 16.07). One respondent believed that this was *'... a real weakness in our school council'* (member of school council 16.09).

6.4.2 - A long serving school principal is important to the continued development of the school.

All 51 respondents answered the question posed with this statement and their responses are outlined in Table 6.27.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
23.5%	35.3%	31.4%	9.8%	-	100%

Table 6.27 – Long-serving school principals are important to continued school development

There was a much broader spread of responses to this statement. Whilst a majority of respondents strongly agreed (23.5%) or agreed (35.3%), almost a third of the respondents (31.4%) were neutral to the statement and a further 9.8% disagreed with the statement.

The respondents were provided with the opportunity to clarify their response and 34 or 66.7% of the respondents took that opportunity. This was a very high rate for comment in comparison to other questions within the survey. From an analysis of these 34 comments, whether they be for neutral or against the statement, the following sub-themes emerged:

- school principals must continue to develop themselves and remain engaged if their school was going to continue to develop and grow;
- school councils have a responsibility to keep the school principal engaged, if they do not then problems will arise;
- that there are times when short-term appointments may well be useful for the school's development;
- strategic planning and thinking may well need the support of a long-term school principal, and that rapid short term appointments can be destabilising for a school community.

The responses all agreed that a long-term school principal who remained engaged in their role and who sought to continue to develop themselves and the school community was not a problem for the school. However, the greatest fear was when the school principal became disengaged, stale or stagnant, then issues would occur. The following comments were indicative of those who saw the importance of the school principal remaining engaged professionally, both for their own personal development and that of the schools:

'It is the quality of decision making not so much the longevity that is important.' (Member of School Executive 16.03)

'The length of service is not the measure, it is the quality of service but clearly experience is important.' (School Principal 16.04)

'If they are not effective, a long-term principal can cause major issues.' (Member of School Executive 16.05)

'The effectiveness of the Principal is more significant than the length of tenure.' (Member of School Council 16.07)

'There is no correct answer to this statement. It depends on the person. How good are they? Is the fire still in the belly? Some people stay too long. Others not long enough.' (Member of School Council 16.07)

'Quality, leadership, skills, vision etc. are also important, and tenure can be a problem if these are lacking.' (Member of School Council 16.09)

Keeping the high performing and potentially long-serving school principal engaged and committed to the development of the school was the responsibility of the school council and in particular the chair of the school council. This was directly reflected upon by chair of school council 16.12, *'long serving principals provide stability and development of the School's Culture, provided he continues to serve the school community and doesn't become complacent. It is then the role of the Chair and Council to keep him on track.'* Highlighted in the comment from chair of school council 16.12 was the benefit that the school council saw in the long term high performing school principal. They 'provide stability and development of the school's culture' and this comment was also reflected upon by other respondents as well.

'The length of appointment has an effect on the ability to implement sustainable change and embed change into the school culture. Short term appointments can create a cycle of reviewing what is current consistently, nothing changes everything is just revisited.' (Member of School Executive 16.08)

'This depends on the individual involved, the state of the school and the attitude of staff to the Principal. A school with an effective and well respected long term Principal is the ideal but not always realistic.' (Member of School Council 16.12)

'It depends a bit on the stage of the school. Generally, a series of short-tenure Principals is harmful. In a newer school (under 20 years) then some shorter tenures could be useful to allow dynamic changes to suit the growing circumstances. In an older school, longer tenure is important in maintaining a sense of stability.' (Member of School Council 16.12)

'I believe that my Council sees this as they are frequently asking how they can ensure my longevity.' (School Principal 16.13)

This sub-theme also linked to the idea that a long serving school principal had the capacity to implement a series of strategic plans that were important to the overall development of the school. Without this process, strategic development can falter, lack coherence and hinder the development of the school. Two comments which articulated this point came from member of school executive 16.03 and member of school council 16.06;

'There are perhaps some difficult issues with continuing short appointments in terms of long term strategy, property development etc...'

'It helps, otherwise the whole process of strategy and progress slows'.

Finally, there was a place to appoint a school principal on a short term contract. The main argument here was that a short-term appointment could be made if a specific task needed to be completed in the life cycle of the school. A significant change or set of decisions may need to be made and this may be easier for someone on a short term contract to complete. This appointment may facilitate a longer one so the new appointee can build on the previous decisions made. This very point was made by chair of school council 16.07, *'the only exception to this is if the school is urgently in need of some short sharp remedial treatment that is best delivered in the short term. Then a long term appointment to bed down the changes.'* However the counter argument is a series of short-term appointments can be detrimental to the development of the school. This point was made by member of school council 16.08 *'our school has had 3 principals in 4 years, and this has been incredibly disruptive and unsettling in the school community, and makes it harder to convince the wider community of the school's prospects.'* This was further supported by this comment from member of school council 16.12 *'It depends a bit on the stage of the school. Generally, a series of short-tenure Principals is harmful.'*

In summary, respondents to this section believed that as long as the school principal was performing in their role, being held to account by the school council and the chair of the school council and they were not going stale, then a long tenure brought many benefits to the development and establishment of school culture. This was especially so if this stability was being built around a stable set of staff within the school, both at executive level and more broadly. The benefits of appointing such a school principal were clearly articulated by a member of school council 16.15 *'There may be times when "new blood" is called for, but certainly in my opinion a Principal with much wisdom born of tough and "long" experience is a very important asset to the successful development of any school.'* The only concern, which was quite significant was when a school council did nothing about the underperforming long-serving school principal, as reflected upon by chair of school council 16.15 *'competent long servicing Heads of schools can contribute significantly to the development of a school. Councils that tolerate ongoing incompetence from a Head obviously place in jeopardy long term development.'*

6.4.3 - It is important to have a long serving chair of council to the continued development of the school.

All 51 respondents answered the question associated with this statement and their responses are outlined in Table 6.28.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
13.7%	31.4%	41.1%	11.8%	2%	100%

Table 6.28 – Long serving chair of school councils are important to continued school development

The responses to this statement produced interesting results. The most dominant response to this statement was neutral with 41.1%. Some 13.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement whilst 45.1% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Of the 51 respondents to this statement 31, (or 60.8%) provided a clarifying comment. This was slightly less than the 34 (or 66.7%) received for the previous statement. However, the clarification responses were quite high.

Overall, the clarifying comments, whether they agreed, disagreed or were neutral to the statement, reflected the sub-themes that emerged from the previous statement regarding the length of tenure of school principals. Clear sub-themes supporting the benefits to a long serving chair or council were:

- a long serving chair of council brought stability and this helped trust to be created in the governance structure;
- a long serving chair of council enabled a consistent strategic plan to be developed and implemented;
- a long serving chair of council normally helped a positive working relationship with the school principal to be created and this brought benefits to the organisation.

However, underpinning these sub-themes, was the belief that the chair of school council had to remain competent, engaged and productive in their role. If they were no longer displaying these qualities then it was clearly time for a change. Comments from the following respondents are indicative of the aforementioned points:

'The length of service is not the measure, it is the quality of service but clearly experience is important.' (School Principal 16.04)

'This depends importantly on what is meant by "long serving". While it is critically important to avoid too frequent changes in the Principal who is the primary leader of the school, an important issue in considering the appropriate term of the Council Chair is the need for an ongoing 'productive' relationship between the Principal & Chair - a Chair should be able to both support & encourage the Principal as new challenges emerge, and not necessarily simply stay in the role for the appearance of 'stability'.' (Chair of School Council 16.06)

'The effectiveness of the Chair is more significant that the length of tenure.' (Member of School Council 16.07)

'It is good to have stability here as it helps to build the trust that is necessary for the Principal to be really open about all the challenges.' (School Principal 16.13)

'Continuity and the relationship between the Principal and Chair has to be given time to develop. Too many changes in this role, make that relationship less strong and is not as effective.' (Member of School Executive 16.13)

From an analysis of the comments it can also be noted that the respondents saw the need to change chairs of school councils at appropriate times, thereby facilitating the renewal of the school council which implied that a renewal of the school would also occur. Chairs of school council who stayed too long in the role could also became counter-productive to the development of the school, especially if this coincided with a long standing relationship with the school principal. Their capacity to challenge and act as a critical friend to the school principal may well be brought into question. Comments from the following respondents were indicative of the aforementioned points:

'No, you definitely DON'T want school council chairs who stay around too long. I think the situation at the level of the Corporation board is different (and so are the governance issues) but I imagine you need regular change of chair to ensure the principal has a confidant who does not become too close to them and so becomes ineffective at challenging and critiquing.' (Chair of School Council 16.05)

'This depends importantly on what is meant by "long serving". While it is critically important to avoid too frequent changes in the Principal who is the primary leader of the school, an important issue in considering the appropriate term of the Council Chair is the need for an ongoing 'productive' relationship between the Principal and Chair - a Chair should be able to both support and encourage the Principal as new challenges emerge, and not necessarily simply stay in the role for the appearance of 'stability'.' (Chair of School Council 16.06)

'While a long serving Chair of Council can provide stability, particularly with the relationship between Principal and Chair, it is perfectly good and appropriate to have some change of role from time to time, which may bring a fresh strategic perspective and can help to invigorate the Principal who is longer serving.' (School Principal 16.11)

Finally, the last sub-theme that can be substantiated by the comments was the process of appointing the new chair of school council. This stemmed from a combination of the previous sub-themes. Whilst a long standing chair of school council can bring stability, build relationships especially with the school principal and lead to increased levels of trust within the governance structure, there was also the need to create a process whereby an effective transition from the previous chair of school council to the new chair of school council could occur, thus maintaining momentum within the organisation. From the comments made, the best way of transitioning from one chair of school council to the next was by appointing the new chair of school council from within the current membership of the school council. This appointment would have had the opportunity to be mentored by the previous chair of school council, possess a deep knowledge of the school and they may have already built up trust from within the school council to fulfil the role. In short, the school council was

not just focused on the present they are also focused on the future and this required effective succession planning to occur and not just at the level of school principal. The following comments were indicative of the points made:

'Stability of process at Council level is very helpful. However the dynamic and relevance and fit is still most important.' (School Principal 16.07)

'Depends what you mean by long-serving. 5 years is a good rule of thumb. It helps if the chair is a long serving council member and can mentor the new chair, and hold the history of the council etc. If there's a regular turnover of chairs people won't get precious about giving up the role.' (Member of School Council 16.05)

'I don't think the Chair necessarily needs to be long serving but the Council needs to have a number of long serving Members.' (Chair of School Council 16.12)

'Again, as above. Though I feel it is critical that the Chair of a Council has been immersed in the school system him/herself before.' (Member of School Council 16.15)

In summary, the data from this question clearly suggested that it was important that chairs of school council have a sufficient length of tenure that enabled them to fulfil their roles and continue the effective development of the school. How long that was needed definition but fits within the context of the school, its development, the appointment of a school principal and whether the chair of the school council was continuing to lead the school council in their role as governors. As part of this process, all governors should be developed in their role, so that when the time is right, an appropriate succession plan can be put in place, whereby a current member of the school council who possesses an appropriate understanding of the school and its development could be appointed as the new chair.

6.4.4 - It is important to have long-serving members of school council to the continued development of the school.

All 51 respondents took the opportunity to answer this question. Responses to this question can be found in Table 6.29.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
11.8%	50.9%	31.4%	5.9%	-	100%

Table 6.29 – Long serving members of school council are important to continued school development

It is interesting to note that 50.9% of the respondents agreed with the statement that it was important to have long serving members of school council for the continued development of the school. A further 11.8% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement. Therefore, 62.7% were positive in their belief about the length of tenure for members of school council. However, it was also interesting to note that 31.4% of the respondents were neutral in their position whilst only 5.9% disagreed with the statement. Of the 51 respondents, 29 took the opportunity to clarify their response.

Whilst an analysis of these comments led to some similar sub-themes, as per the previous two statements, there was also an interesting new sub-theme and that was the belief that the school council should maintain a level of balance of the old and the new within it. It was important to retain a number of long term members of school council so that institutional memory was maintained, as well as the maintenance and understanding of school culture. But it was also essential that for the school development that new members of school council were appointed so that the school council could be renewed and fresh perspectives be brought to the fore. It was also pointed out, that for some new members of council, it took time for them to make a contribution, to voice their questions and share their ideas. It was best served to mentor new members of school council, as this assisted them in building their confidence to contribute and it also enabled them to one day become mentors to newly appointed members of school council. The following comments were indicative of the points made:

'I think a balance is needed. New times need new eyes....' (Member of School Executive 16.03)

'There should be a mix. People who have a corporate memory and new ideas.' (School Principal 16.04)

'It is helpful to have some long-serving council members who have some recollection of the history of school while also ensuring there are plenty of new faces around the council table who can challenge the status quo and some of whom will become the long serving members of the future!' (Chair of School Council 16.05)

'Likewise this is dependent on the people. On one hand a Council needs corporate history and content knowledge. On the other hand a Council needs renewal...' (Member of School Council 16.07)

'It is important to have continuity in the School Council, but also renewal in membership to promote freshness and new ideas.' (Member of School Council 16.08)

'I think within the framework of quality of leadership in the Principal and chair, tenure for most Council members is positive and it takes some time to contribute fully.' (Member of School Council 16.09)

'There is a fine balance but the current limit of tenure is not a bad idea either. In most cases there will be a bulk of "long-standing" members with one or two new councillors from time to time - important in my view that the culture be maintained.' (Member of School Council 16.05)

Two other sub-themes emerged from an analysis of the comments. Firstly, that as long as a member of a school council continued to add value, made a contribution and was effective, then that member of school council should stay regardless of the length of tenure. The reverse then also applied. A non-performing member of school council or chair of school council could become a liability and therefore needed to be removed from the school council. This point was alluded to in some of the aforementioned comments but others also made this point. Member of school executive 16.05 stated

'depends on their effectiveness'. Member of school council 16.07 concurred *'It is the role of the Chair to monitor contribution and ability. When a member is not providing the service required the Chair needs to tap them on the shoulder and gently tell them it is time to leave'*. The next sub-theme was that regular turnover of members of school council could also be destabilising to the organisation and this too should be avoided. This point was clearly made by member of school council 16.12 *'Regular turnover unhelpful, but 20 years warming a chair is hopeless. Again 10-12 years is ideal.'*

In summary, the respondents believed that the best way for the school governance structure to remain effective was through the combination of the old and the new. The long standing member of school council who retained corporate memory and culture balanced with new members who brought fresh perspectives. In conclusion, it was important that all members of school council contributed and added value and that the rapid turnover of members was to be avoided. If these two matters were not addressed, instability could ensue.

6.4.5 - The effective performance of the school is based on the combination of stable appointments of the School Principal, Chair of School Council and Member of School Council.

All 51 respondents answered the question in relation to this statement and their responses are outlined in the following table:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
37.2%	51%	7.9%	3.9%	-	100%

Table 6.30 – Combination of stable appointments of the school principal, chair of school council and members of school council

The clear majority of responses to this statement agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the effective performance of the school was based on the combination of stable appointments of the school principal, chair of school council and members of school council. This not only reinforced the responses for the statements relating to length of tenure of school principals and chairs of school councils but it also extended the responses to the statement of the length of tenure for members of school council. Importantly, it was the belief that it was the combination of stable appointments to three of the four areas of school governance that enabled an effective performance of a school to occur. Only 11.8% of the respondents were neutral or disagreed with the statement. In fact, only 3.9% or 2 respondents disagreed with the statement.

Of the 51 respondents, only 21 took the opportunity to clarify their response. However an analysis of these comments did reveal sub-themes that required discussion. Firstly, from the 88.2% who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement was the belief that the combination of all three working together for the betterment of the school was an ideal outcome and would most likely lead to the operation of an effective school. As noted by school principal 16.11, *'these appointments working*

together well will certainly assist in the effective performance of a school'. However, chair of school council 16.07 asked whether this was realistic *'this is best but not always possible'*.

For others, another sub-theme was the idea that stability and leadership in two out of the three areas would still produce the effectiveness required to govern the school, however only for a set period of time. This idea was succinctly put by member of school council 16.07, *'Ideally all 3, Principal, Chair and Council are working well, but where they are not, 2 out of 3 can keep stability for short periods.'* This idea was also expanded upon to take on the reputation of the school as a factor that can keep an effective school going but, yet again, only for a period of time. This was reflected upon by member of school council 16.12, *'To some extent yes - but a school can perform effectively at least in the short term without this if it has a long standing good reputation. However without a stable Principal, Chair and Council the schools performance will inevitably be impacted.'* Therefore, both of these sub-themes support the statement that if all three areas were not stable, working together and functional, then issues relating to school effectiveness would ensue.

For those who disagreed or were neutral to the statement, two defining sub-themes emerged from their comments. Firstly, that leadership overrode the need for stable appointments in the three identified areas and secondly, that it was the appointment of good teaching staff that really made the school effective. Indicative of these points were the following comments made by those who posted a neutral or negative response:

> *'I think this can work both ways. An effective and inspiring leader at any level, with the appropriate authority to act, will make the difference in School performance, regardless of their tenure.'* (Member of School Executive 16.03)

> *'Despite being important factors, I think teaching staff still hold the most influence on performance.'* (Member of School Executive 16.04)

> *'Perception of stability within a school comes more from the principal than the School Council which is at a greater remove from the daily operations.'* (Member of School Executive 16.08)

It was interesting to note that four out of the seven respondents who answered the question in relation to the statement as either, neutral or disagreed were members of the school executive. All responses that strongly disagreed with the statement were members of the school executive. However, the points made about leadership and staff appointments correlate directly to appointments made by the school council, such as the school principal and the employment of staff related to the employment policy that the school council endorsed. Therefore, whilst they may be neutral or disagree with the statement, they in effect may not be fully aware of the influence that the combination of the school principal, the chair of school council and the school council can have on the effectiveness of the school's operation.

In summary, the clear majority of responses to this statement believed that for an effective school to be created then the three governance areas of the school need to be working in combination with one another, these being the school principal, the chair of school council and the members of school council themselves. Through this combination the leadership culture of the school would be determined as well as the quality of its teaching staff.

6.4.6 - The school council has appropriate processes in place for the identification, reporting, investigation and management of any conflicts of interest.

50 out of the 51 participants who were involved in the survey answered the question in relation to this particular statement. Their responses are outlined in the following table.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response	Total
39.2%	41.2%	13.7%	3.9%	-	2%	100%

Table 6.31 – School council has the appropriate processes in place to identify conflicts of interest

80.4% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, which supported the idea that the school council did have in place appropriate processes for the identification, reporting, investigation and management of any conflicts of interest. 13.7% of respondents were neutral in their answer and only two respondents (or 3.9%) disagreed and believed that their school council did not have appropriate processes in place. One respondent chose not to answer this question.

Of the 50 respondents who did answer this question, 18 took the opportunity to clarify their answer and write a comment. A close analysis of these eighteen responses revealed that nine of the written responses either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, eight written comments were neutral to the comment and one comment explained why they disagreed with the statement. Due to the even nature of the spread of comments, each group was analysed to see if any sub-themes emerged from the nine comments that agreed or strongly agreed with the statement; and to see if any sub-themes emerged from the eight neutral comments; and if there was anything of note in the one comment that disagreed with the statement.

Of the 9 comments that agreed or strongly agreed with the statement the following sub-theme emerged: it was part of our meeting agenda to identify and report any possible areas of conflict of interest. Of the nine comments analysed, 7 clearly identified that the only process of identifying any potential conflicts of interest was a declaration at the commencement of their meetings. The following comments were indicative of the seven responses:

'Space for declaration occurs at the start of the meeting.' (Member of School Council 16.02)

'It is an agenda item at each meeting.' (Member of School Council 16.08)

'Part of standard meeting process of accountability.' (Chair of School Council 16.08)

Of the 8 comments that were neutral to the statement, 4 comments stated that they did not know whether a process existed (member of school executive 16.15, member of school executive 16.13, member of school executive 16.13 and member of school executive 16.04). What was very interesting to note was that all four of these responses came from members of school executive teams. This posed some important questions. Are they aware of the need to declare conflicts of interest? Are they aware of how school council meeting are structured, how they function and why things occur? And, should they know?

Of the remaining four comments that were neutral to the statement, another one was from member of school executive 16.05 who assumed this would occur as this was their experience at other councils. Of the remaining three, all were members of school council, and all acknowledged the requirement within the meeting process to declare conflicts of interest but observed also that this process could be improved in some way. One comment acknowledged that it was a process of self-regulation whilst another thought the creation of a register would be helpful and the third identified the issue of defining a conflict of interest was important. For the one comment that disagreed with the statement, they believed that based on their experience there was not a process of identifying a conflict of interest in their governance structure (member of school council 16.07).

In summary, it was very clear that the vast majority of respondents believed that there was a process in place within their school council for the identification, reporting, investigation and management of any conflicts of interest. This process was identified as being an aspect of their meeting agenda where members of school council were required to self – identify potential conflicts of interest. It was also interesting to note that the largest portion of the respondents who were unsure as to whether these processes existed came from members of the school executive. Areas for improvement in these processes were identified, namely through the creation of registers and definition but only a few participants suggested this.

Key Findings Theme 6.4 – Strategy and Implementation

This theme explored the importance of the successful implementation of strategic thinking from within the governance structure of the school and how this was linked to effective outcomes for the school. Intertwined with this was the belief that this was best served through a series of stable appoints to the role of school principal, chair of school council and the general membership of the school council itself. The ability of these three areas of the governance structure to relate and work with each other had an important impact on the outcomes achieved by the school that they served.

The data collected from the survey not merely reflected this but also expanded upon it. If clarified these points by suggesting that it was not just the implementation of strategic thinking that was important, nor was it just having long serving and stable appointments, but that each member of the governance structure must continue to perform in their role. They must continue to be developing, growing and seeking to make a contribution to the life and performance of the school. Failure to do

so could easily lead to negative outcomes being achieved by the school, regardless of the level of experience the members of the governance structure possessed.

The final question in this section allowed the respondents to make any final comments in relation to the theme of strategy and implementation. It was purely voluntary. In this case, only three of the 50 respondents chose to make comment. However, all three of these comments were worth noting, because each explored and highlighted the aforementioned points.

The first comment came from member of school council 16.09 stating that they did not '…*think our council actually understands the concept of strategic planning or what a good plan would look like. For example, ours lacks measures that are actually measurable. It is a professional skill to develop a comprehensive plan that includes practical measures.*' Whilst the comment was in the negative it highlighted the points made above, that good strategic thinking actually led to definable and measurable outcomes and it was essential that school councils, chairs of school councils and school principals all develop strategic plans with this in mind. It provided greater focus and progress for their schools.

The second comment came from member of school council 16.06 who stated, '*I believe it is critical to have a Principal, Chair and council that offer stability. This is generally a time based thing however it can also be a capability issue and I have witnessed both and from both long serving people with poor capability and shorter serving people with strong capability.*' This comment highlighted the previous discussion very well. Long serving appointments offer stability and this was critical to the sustained development of the school but the caveat was only if they continue to have the capability to add value to the organisation. If they do not, it does not matter how long they have served, their service will be of little value.

Finally, the last comment came from member of school council 16.12 who stated, '*schools are very long term. A single customer has a 13 year life at the school so having long term governors and Principals is good. That said, it can be too long and they can become an institution inside the institution.*' Whilst this member of school council clearly supported the notion that long serving and stable appointments were important to the development of a school, because schools have the big picture or long term in mind, the reality was the long term and stable appointment can stay too long. The pertinent question then was how does one define how long is too long? This question does not seem to have a definitive answer but through the data provided, some points suggest when too long is too long were identified. These include the ability to consistently perform and add value, continued interest in what they are doing and placing their role within the current context in which the school found itself in.

Theme 6.5 – Trust

From the review of the literature in the area of governance, the theme of trust emerged as important in the area of good school governance. This theme was supported by the data obtained through Phase

2 of the study. Therefore, in constructing the survey, the fifth theme to be explored in this component was the theme of trust. The particular questions in this section focused on exploring:

- whether the relationship between the school principal and the chair of school council is the most important one that exists on the school council;
- procedures are in place regarding the way the school council accesses information about the school from other staff members, including the school leadership team;
- a common faith alignment as being important in building a culture of trust within the school governance structure;
- trust placed in the school principal to fulfil her/his role;
- trust in the chair of school council to fulfil their role;
- trust in the members of the school council to fulfil their roles; and
- confidentiality in building a culture of trust within the school council:

An opportunity was afforded to participants to make further comment as necessary.

6.5.1 - The relationship between the school principal and the chair of council is the most important one that exists on the school council.

All 51 participants responded to the question that related to this statement. The responses to this statement are outlined in the following table:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
66.7%	23.5%	5.9%	3.9%	-	100%

Table 6.32 – The school principal and chair of school council relationship

Overwhelmingly the respondents believed that the relationship between the school principal and the chair of school council was the most important within school council, with a total of 90.2% strongly agreeing or agreeing with it. Three responses were neutral (or 5.9%) and only two respondents (or 3.9%) disagreed with it.

Of the 51 respondents who answered 19 chose to provide a clarifying comment. Of these 19, 15 spoke in favour of the statement, three comments related to their neutrality and only one of the respondents who chose to disagree with the statement made comment.

An analysis of the fifteen comments in favour of the statement provided the following sub-themes. Firstly that the relationship between the school principal and the chair of school council was the most important in the school council and secondly, the nature of this relationship determined its success. The first sub-theme clearly stated this was the most important relationship on school council. For some respondents this relationship *'sets the tone'* (member of school council 16.07) for the rest of the school council. For others this relationship was a means by which the vision for the school and processes by which this vision will be reached came into creation. Chair of school council 16.15

stated, *'it is essential they share the same vision but in an ideal world can differ on how that vision may be achieved.'* This was also supported by the opinion member of school executive 16.03*'this is extremely important, but is somewhat impacted by time constraints. They need regular time to meet, to share vision and develop combined support strategies for both Council and Management.'* Whilst for others this relationship provided the *'... link between Council and Principal'* (chair of school council 16.12)

The second sub-theme that emerged focused on the nature of the relationship between the school principal and the chair of council. This relationship was to be built around *'mutual respect, trust and discretion'* as stated by member of school council 16.09. This was also reinforced by a member of school council 16.15 when they stated *'there must be trust of a high level.'* If the relationship between the school principal and the chair of school council was built around these core values then this helped increase the capacity of the chair of school council to continue to drive the performance of the school principal, which in turn continued to drive the performance of the school. Linked to this point was its direct opposite, the existence of tension in the relationship, as a member of school council commented, *'it would be challenging if there were persistent tensions in that relationship.'* Implied in this statement was the reality that if tensions existed in this relationship then this brought challenges to the capacity of the school council to conduct its business.

From 3 comments of those who responded neutrally, one sub-theme did emerge. Whilst they all acknowledged in some way that this relationship was important, it was also important to have a positive relationship with all members of school council. The three neutral comments for this question were:

> *'It is important ... not sure whether the qualifying 'most' is accurate.'* Participant School Council 16.03

> *'All council members should have a strong relationship with the principal.'* (Member of School Council 16.05)

> *'I think this statement overstates the case. A good relationship is a definite aid to a principal.'* (Member of School Council 16.09)

The one comment which disagreed with the statement was, *'the relationship with the executive staff and heads of departments is equally important'* (member of school council 16.12). This was a really interesting comment because nowhere else was this idea supported, either from the literature in the area of governance and school governance investigated for this thesis. It would be of interest to explore with this respondent why they thought this was important.

In summary, the data from this question strongly supported the notion that the relationship between the school principal and the chair of school council was the most important one that existed on the school council. For the school council to function properly, this relationship needed to be built on

mutual respect, trust and discretion. Tension between these two roles was to be avoided where possible.

6.5.2 - There are procedures in place regarding the way the school council accesses information about the school from other staff members, including the school leadership team.

All 51 respondents answered the question in relation to this statement. The responses are provided in the following table.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
19.6%	35.3%	25.5%	13.7%	5.9%	100%

Table 6.33 – The way school council accesses information

The responses to this question varied across all five possible options. 19.6% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 35.3% agreed with it, 25.5% were neutral, 13.7% disagreed with the statement and even 3 responses, or 5.9% strongly disagreed with the statement. There was a far more even spread of responses to this question in comparison to the previous questions asked. In essence, just over half of the respondents (54.9%) believed there were procedures in place regarding the way the school council accessed information about the school from other staff members, including the school leadership team. However, almost half (45.1%) were either neutral or disagreed with the statement. Therefore, neither the positive nor the negative perception to this statement dominated the data collected.

Thirty respondents were prepared to clarify their response by providing an additional comment. Interestingly sixteen respondents who were either neutral to the statement or negative chose to write a clarifying comment. On the other hand fourteen respondents who either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement took the time to write a comment of clarification. In analysing both sets of comments, interesting sub-themes emerged.

In relation to those that disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement the following sub-themes emerged. Firstly, a significant number of the respondents were not aware if any such procedures existed in their school. For example, *'no, I don't think we have any procedures in place. We do talk with them obviously but no procedures'* (chair of school council 16.07); *'unsure if this exists'* (member of school executive 16.08) and *'I am not aware there are formal processes in place...'* (member of school council 16.09). These three comments were indicative of other comments written by the respondents to this statement.

A second sub-theme was the lack of formal processes in place to gain information but that such a process might be useful to gauge how the school is going from a different perspective. However, the caveat to this that the formal process in place should not seek to undermine the role of the school principal. If this were not the case, then it would not be appropriate. This idea was expanded upon

by member of school council, 16.09, *'A definite weakness for us. I have been worried about this for some time. We are now getting some reports from the School Executive to Council but that is not the same as satisfying ourselves that all is well, or identifying issues that have not bubbled up through the Principal, or that he/she may be unaware of. One way of achieving this would be an annual staff/Council planning day.'* For this council member, obtaining a better overview of the health of the school would involve engaging in a proper process of discussion with other members of staff at an annual planning day, not unfettered access to staff. This was also a concern for school principal 16.15 *'Council are not invited to create channels of communication to undermine the Head. Staff guests are invited to Council meetings by the Head to address Council. There is trust established. Unfettered access by Council to canvas second opinions on subjects from senior staff is an invitation to disaster and a sign of a comically governed school. I have been aware of such a well-intentioned farcical tragedy in action elsewhere.'* Here, this school principal warned of the dangers if no structure was in place for members of school council to access staff and the results that this creates. However, in this comment, this school principal established that their school did have in place formal structures by which members of school council accessed information from a variety of staff members from within their school.

Fourteen comments were written from respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Two main sub-themes emerged from these comments. Firstly, several of the respondents believed that they did have a process in place and this process involved accessing the staff only with the permission of the school principal, access to staff without the school principal's permission was not supported. The following comments were indicative of this point *'need permission from principal'* (member of school council 16.02), *'This information must be sought through the Principal'* (school principal 16.11), *'Should only [be] through the Headmaster'* (member of school council 16.15) and *'This is not formally documented in our case, but it would be considered indefensible not to approach anyone on the school staff without going through the Principal'* (member of school council 16.15).

The second sub-theme related to the other avenues school council had to access information. For some, like school principal 16.03, the school council accessed information from executive staff as a result of the annual 360 degree review the school principal undertook. This enabled the school council to receive information about the performance of their school principal from the current school executive staff. Other avenues involved those members of school council who were also parents. They accessed informal information from conversations with other parents through their general parental involvement in the school. However, access to this information, as noted by chair of school council 16.05 need to be treated carefully, *'The general rule is that such information comes to Council via the principal, although individual council members (especially those who are parents at the school) may become aware of some information through being approached at other school functions or conversations. It is my expectation as chair that if any council member becomes aware*

of something which is of concern to them, they will share it in the first instance with me and then with council'.

In summary, the reality was both those who were neutral or disagreed with the statement and those who agreed and strongly agreed with the statement believed that if information was going to be accessed from the general teaching staff or other areas of the school about the school's performance, then there should be an established process in place. The point of difference resided with what that looked like, whether that should be a planning day, presentations to school council or a conversation (with the school principal's permission). However, the point was that information should be accessed when necessary and it was important to have established procedures or protocols in place. Failure to do so had the potential to create problems within the organisation.

6.5.3 - A common faith alignment is important to building a culture of trust within the school governance structure.

All 51 respondents answered the question in relation to this statement and their responses are outlined in the following table.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
76.4%	19.7%	3.9%	-	-	100%

Table 6.34 – Faith alignment and trust

Overall, there was resounding support for this statement 76.4% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement and a further 19.7% agreed with it, therefore 96.1% of respondents answered positively towards this statement. It had one of the strongest support rates of any of the statements the respondents were asked to access within the six themes. From the 51 respondents, 13 chose to write a comment of clarification.

From these thirteen comments, only one of the two neutral comments wrote a clarification response. This clarification comment from the neutral response was, '*belief in the school vision and direction is important'* (member of school executive 16.08). Whilst it was not a clear endorsement of the faith-based alignment, this member of school executive still acknowledged the importance of members of school council possessing a belief in the vision and direction of the school. In the case of schools within the Anglican Schools Corporation this meant a willingness to openly support the faith basis for the school.

From the other 12 responses, one sub-theme clearly emerged, that being, faith was the cornerstone on which the schools within the Anglican Schools Corporation were built. This point was best reflected by the comment from member of school council 16.15 '*In my view this is the cornerstone of it all. Without a solid and common faith in the gospel of our Lord Jesus and how that pertains to all matters regarding the school, the school council serves no real purpose and cannot itself operate*

on a basis of mutual trust.' All points made from the other respondents were linked to this sub-theme. That it was critical or essential for a common faith based alignment, that it underpinned all that they did and defined who they we. Comments indicative of these thoughts were:

'I believe this goes without saying.' (Member of School Council 16.06)

'This underpins the common task we share.' (Chair of School Council 16.07)

'I strongly believe that there needs to be a common understanding of how, why and who we are as a School. Such an understanding is drawn from our faith perspective.' (Member of School Executive 16.13)

In summary, the majority of respondents strongly agreed with this statement. Failure to align the school council with aligned faith-based members was, as the chair of school council 16.05 stated, *'Critical. Even one governor with a significantly different faith alignment could disrupt the Board.'*

6.5.4 - It is important to be able to trust the school principal to fulfil her/his role.

All 51 respondents answered the question which was related to this statement. Their responses are outlined in the following table:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
88.2%	11.8%	-	-	-	100%

Table 6.35 – Trusting the school principal

The data from this question provided the strongest set of support for a statement across all questions 88.2% strongly agreed with the statement that it was important to be able to trust the school principal to fulfil her/his role. The remaining 11.8% of respondents also agreed with this statement. Of the 51 respondents, eleven chose to write a clarifying comment.

In an analysis of these 11 comments, three sub-themes emerged from the data. Firstly, it was essential to have trust in the school principal. For two of the respondents they provided one word answers in support of this theme: *'imperative'* (school principal 16.04) and *'absolutely'* (chair of school council 16.07). For a third, they wrote a little more: *'Must have full confidence in the Principal'* (member of school council 16.15). The second sub-theme was that trust was needed for the school principal to perform their role, for it is the school principal who sets the development of the school culture into motion. This sub-theme was supported by the following comments:

'Without trust the principal cannot perform their role.' (Member of School Council 16.05)

'This is critical, as the Principal is ultimately responsible for the culture and development of the school.' (Member of School Council 16.08)

'This is essential to good management and governance. The school cannot operate without it.' (Member of School Council 16.09)

Finally, the last sub-theme to emerge from the comments was the belief that once trust was broken then the functionality of the organisation would become a significant issue. As one comment put it *'Without trust find a new Principal or Chair or both'* (chair of school council 16.08). The following two comments clearly elaborate on this point:

'Where trust is low, the organisation will be in trouble.' (Member of School Council 16.12)

'Otherwise, as described earlier, the council would constantly be tempted to intervene in operational matters which (1) it has no business doing, in terms of the Corporation mandate for Councils (2) it usually has no real expertise in, in any case.' (Member of School Council 16.15)

In summary, the data was unequivocal. Trust in the capacity of the school principal to fulfil their role was essential for the ongoing positive development of the school. Once that trust no longer existed, then, as one respondent stated, *'find a new principal'*.

6.5.5 - It is important to be able to trust the chair of school council to fulfil their role.

All 51 respondents answered the question in relation to this statement and their responses are presented in the following table:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
80.3%	19.7%	-	-	-	100%

Table 6.36 – Trusting the chair of school council

The data from this question provided exceptionally strong support for the statement 80.3% strongly agreed with the statement that it was important to be able to trust the chair of council to fulfil their role. The remaining 19.7% of respondents also agreed with this statement. Of the 51 respondents, only eight chose to write a clarifying comment.

From an analysis of these eight comments, one sub-theme clearly emerged. It was essential to be able to trust the chair of council to fulfil their role. The reasons for this, as outlined in the comments, were:

- all organisations need leadership if they are to be effective, school councils are no different;
- the chair of the school council sets the tone by which the school council and the senior management conduct their business;
- their role was just as important as the school principal, therefore we need to be able to trust them to complete it;
- if trust was broken, then this would lead to a dysfunctional governance structure, finally
- the trust which exists cannot be blind trust, if it was it will lead to the previous point of a dysfunctional council.

The following comments from the respondents to this section support the points raised.

'All leadership roles require the trust of those that are being lead, without that there would be a dysfunctional council.' (Member of School Council 16.05)

'He/she sets the tone to all the senior staff for their work.' (Chair of School Council 16.07)

'Trust yes but blind trust no.' (Member of School Council 16.09)

'The lack of trust between the Head and Chair of Council is one of the key indicators of dysfunctional schools.' (Chair of School Council 16.15)

In summary, for the school to be effective there needs to be trust in the chair of school council to fulfil their role. Once this was broken it might be time to appoint a new chair.

6.5.6 - It is important to be able to trust the members of the school council to fulfil their roles.

All 51 respondents answered the question related to this statement and their responses have been placed into the table below.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
56.8%	39.2%	2%	2%	-	100%

Table 6.37 – Trusting other members of school council

The data analysed from this question provided strong support for the statement 56.8% strongly agreed with the statement that it was important to be able to trust the members of the school council to fulfil their roles. A further 39.2% of respondents also agreed with this statement and a combined total of 2 respondents, or 4%, were either neutral or disagreed with the statement. Of the 51 respondents, only nine chose to write a clarifying comment. Eight comments wrote in favour of the statement and only one wrote a comment to clarify why they disagreed with the statement.

In relation to the eight comments which agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, two sub-themes emerged from the data. Firstly, a united school council enabled the school to go in one direction. Unity of purpose and trusting that this was the case for all council members emerged here. Secondly, if that trust was broken within school council, then council members who could no longer be trusted should no longer be involved in the governance of the school. In support of these points the following indicative comments are quoted.

'If the council doesn't trust each other they shouldn't be the council.' (Member of School Council 16.05)

'We have to be united, and mutually respectful to lead together.' (Chair of School Council 16.07)

'Trust is essential in good governance, Council members must be asked to leave if they are not trusted.' (Member of School Council 16.09)

'Work together well, and all be heading in the one direction.' (Member of School Council 16.15)

In summary, whilst it was not as important as trusting the school principal and the chair of school council to fulfil their roles, it was still seen as essential that the remaining members of school council be trusted to complete their duties. If they were not capable of completing their duties then, perhaps they no longer should be a member of the school council.

6.5.7 - Confidentiality is important in building a culture of trust within the school council.

All 51 respondents answered the question in relation to this statement and their responses are outlined in the following table.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
80.3%	19.7%	-	-	-	100%

Table 6.38 – Confidentiality and trust

The data assessed from this question provided very strong support for the statement, 80.3% strongly agreed that confidentiality was important in building a culture of trust within the school council. The remaining 19.7% of respondents also agreed with this statement. Of the 51 respondents 10 chose to write a clarifying comment.

An analysis of these ten comments produced the one sub-theme that it was essential for confidentiality to be maintained if trust was going to be effectively built within the school council. This sub-theme was developed from the examples in the comments where respondents identified confidentiality was not maintained. It highlighted how the workings of school council started to erode when confidentiality was broken. It prevented discussion on important issues, it broke down relationships within the school council and it had a ripple effect throughout the organisation. The following comments from the respondents support the points made.

'I have been on a council where confidentiality was not maintained by paid diocesan staff and this affected trust and faith in decisions made.' (Member of School Council 16.04)

'Without trust there would be no confidentiality.' (Member of School Council 16.05)

'Crucial. Without it we fail as a Council.' (Chair of School Council 16.07)

'To enable full and frank discussion of matters - confidentiality is essential.' (Chair of School Council 16.08)

'Essential to be able to appropriately discuss, consider and decide on matters.' (Member of School Council 16.09)

'Suspicion, fear and rumour stem from council members who do not maintain confidentiality and build alliances with staff. A breach of trust is detrimental to the culture and harmony in the school.' (Member of School Executive 16.13)

Key Findings Theme 6.5 - Trust

Trust, as a theme within the context of good school governance, emerged as very important, maybe the most important theme. It was clear from the data that, for the school governance structure to work effectively, there must be trust in the school principal, chair of school council and to a lesser extent trust within the broader membership of school council to fulfil their roles. If trust was broken at any of these three levels then it was time to look for a different school principal, chair of council or even a council member. Once trust was broken in relationships formed, then dysfunctionality would occur and this would be to the detriment to the governance structure and the school that this structure serves. Finally, surrounding this theme of trust, was the need for confidentiality. Confidentiality within the various combinations of relationships that occurred within the governance structure was essential for trust to be created. The higher the level of confidentiality, the higher the level of trust and therefore the greater the capacity for the governance structure to actually discuss the issues that need to be discussed and dealt with.

Theme 6.6: Value Adding

From the review of the literature in the area of governance, the theme of value adding emerged as important in the area of good school governance. This theme was supported by the research obtained through Phase 2 of the study through the interviews with school principals and chairs of school council. In constructing the survey, the sixth theme to be explored in the quantitative component was the theme of value adding. The particular questions in this section focused on exploring whether:

- members of a particular school council add value to the school council;
- the school council works as a team;
- the school council represents a balanced skill set across areas such as legal, accounting/financial, education, architecture/building or faith qualification and finally
- the opportunity was afforded the participants to make further comment as necessary.

6.6.1 - Members of this school council add value to the school council.

All 51 respondents answered the question that was attached to this statement and their responses are outlined in Table 6.39.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
39.2%	52.9%	7.9%	-	-	100%

Table 6.39 – Members of School council add value

39.2% of the respondents strongly agreed and a further 52.9% agreed with the statement that members of this school council add value to the school council. This was strong data in support of the statement as the total who strongly agreed and agreed with the statement was 92.1%. Only 7.9%

(or four respondents) were neutral in their opinion. No responses disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Of the 51 respondents, 18 took the opportunity to write a clarifying comment.

An analysis of these eighteen comments revealed that only one of the neutral responses chose to clarify their comment. When this comment was analysed it actually supported one of the sub-themes which was the need for a broad skill set on school council. The neutral comment was *'each person has significant and distinct gifts, both in practical as well as spiritual terms and this epitomises the Romans 12 concept of many diverse members needed to make one body'* (member of school council 16.15). In terms of this sub-theme, several comments referred to the need to have people of different backgrounds, perspectives and skills to make the school council function properly. The following comments were indicative of those that supported this sub-theme.

> *'But some do so in greater measure than others, somewhat relating to their outside School experience. In terms of balance, the School has a wealth of knowledge already in terms of Education. What we need at a Council level is solid corporate knowledge, informed by a strong Christian commitment, e.g. legal, town planning, risk, HR etc.'* (Member of School Executive 16.03)

> *'This is why diversity of skill set is important.'* (Member of School Council 16.06)

> *'Both individually by contributing from their skills and as a Council with their corporate wisdom.'* (Chair of School Council 16.07)

> *'The different backgrounds and walks of life of Council Members provide enhanced insight to our community.'* (Chair of School Council 16.08)

The second sub-theme to emerge from the comments was the belief that some add value more than others. This also related to the length of service a member had on school council. The longer they were involved and the better they understand the environment in which the school operated, the greater the capacity of that council member to add value over time. This point could also be broadened to include whole school councils. A new school council may need time to develop its skill set and understanding of the role they had been called to serve in and, as they grow into it, the better they will become at adding value to the governance structure. The question that then emerged was how the reluctant or non-participant council member could be encouraged to become more involved in the life of the school council. The following comments support the sub-theme:

> *'There has been one weaker one on one of the councils who is retiring at the end of this year. All the others on both councils bring different perspectives and are prepared to share their viewpoints when given the encouragement to do so.'* (Chair of School Council 16.05)

> *'Yes, but as a relatively new Council this is still developing.'* (Chair of School Council 16.06)

'Some do, and some clearly do not add anything. It primarily comes down to those who participate in discussions or not.' (Member of School Council 16.07)

'Some add great value, give input and make great suggestions. Some do little or nothing.' (Member of School Council 16.09)

'I serve on more than one Council. The one I have based my answers on functions well and all members add value. That is not the case on another Council on which I serve.' (Member of School Council 16.12)

In summary, members of school council need to add value if the governance structure is to remain engaging and vibrant. This will most likely occur if there was a balance within the skill set and personal backgrounds of the council members combined with a willingness to contribute. The challenge was what to do with the council member who was not fully engaged or involved in the school council meetings.

6.6.2 - This school council works as a team.

All 51 respondents answered this question and their responses are outlined in the Table 6.40.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
31.3%	56.9%	9.8%	2%	-	100%

Table 6.40 – The school council works as a team

Again, there was very strong support for this statement. 31.3% of the respondents strongly agreed with it and a further 56.9% agreed with the statement. Only 9.8% remained neutral and only one respondent, or 2%, disagreed with it. Overall, 88.2% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, hence, the clear majority of opinions was that their school council worked as a team. Of the 51 respondents who answered this question, 16 respondents provided a written comment of clarification.

Of these 16 responses, 13 of the comments related to those who strongly agreed and agreed with the statement. From these comments, two sub-themes were identified. Firstly, sharing a common vision for the school helped the school council work as a team. This common vision was based around their common faith alignment and their capacity to work with the school principal. This was even the case for a new school council; as they shared their common vision their capacity to work as a team increased. The following comments support this sub-theme:

'There is alignment with a common direction. We keep improving.' (Chair of School Council 16.08)

'We don't spend enough time together to feel a 'team', although when we're meeting we feel unified.' (Member of School Council 16.12)

'Everyone gets on and works for the good of the College in an unpaid position and to a Christian awareness to the whole College.' (Member of School Council 16.15)

'The Council I am part of works well as a team because they share the same vision for the school and are prepared to work with the Head to achieve it.' (Chair of School Council 16.15)

The second sub-theme to come out of the comments that agreed or strongly agreed with the statement suggested that their school councils seemed to work together as a team. This was a more qualified response. There were clearly aspects of their behaviour as a school council that enabled them to be defined as working as a team but there were also evident behaviours that challenged this position. Sometimes it was because one member of the school council was not fully aligned with the vision and direction of the school, another member might have a particular issue they wished to pursue or there could be a potential division between the old and new members. Whatever the case, the school council was moving in the direction of functioning as a team but something was preventing it from becoming the norm. The following two comments highlight these points.

'…Only one member of the school council has a 'single issue' focus. Where this occurs it can disrupt the team approach.' (School Principal 16.03)

'I sometimes feel there is a division between older school council members and newer school council members.' (Member of School Council 16.08)

Three comments were made which expanded upon the neutral response. An analysis of the three comments enabled one sub-theme to emerge, that is, they all questioned whether their school council did work as a team. Member of school council 16.07 stated *'some do, some do not.'* Member of school council 16.09 raised the question *'What would it look like to "work as a team"?* Now this might be a genuine question but seeing these responses were neutral it was not unreasonable to think they were alluding to the fact that they believed their current school council may not be working as well as it could be, hence, they were actually questioning whether they were working as a team. The final neutral comment in this section came from member of school council 16.09 as well and they stated *'I don't sense a great team environment. Chair of Council doesn't promote this by leadership nor do members seek it.'* This statement supported the opinion of the previous comment and, when both placed together, would suggest that there may be an issue with team work in this council. It may even stem from an issue of leadership from the chair of council themselves.

In summary, it was clear that the vast majority of respondents believed that their school council worked as a team and that central to this belief was a shared common vision, faith alignment and capacity to work with the school principal in turning the vision into a reality. For those who were less inclined to believe that they worked as a team, issues such as leadership of the school council, or a rogue member within school council could cause division and hinder their capacity to work as a team.

6.6.3 - This school council represents a balanced skill set across areas such as; legal, accounting/financial, education, architecture/building or faith qualifications.

All 51 respondents answered the question in relation to the statement and their responses are in the following table.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
17.6%	54.9%	11.8%	13.7%	2%	100%

Table 6.41 – A balanced skill set on school council

17.6% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement, whilst 54.9% agreed with it. Therefore the clear majority believed that their school council did possess a balanced skill set across a variety of areas, such as legal, accounting/finance, education, architecture/building or faith qualifications. 11.8% were neutral in their response and 15.7% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. This was one of the most significant negative positions across all of the questions asked within the survey.

Of the 51 respondents, 28 were prepared to make a clarifying comment. An analysis of these comments, regardless of their position with the statement, led to four sub-themes. Firstly, whilst a balanced skill set was desirable for the school council to possess and was sought after by the chairs of school council, it was not always able to be achieved. Not one profession or skill base stood out. Each school council seemed to be lacking some set of skills, whether that be legal expertise, accountancy or finance, architecture or building maintenance. Very few, if any, of the school councils reported that they possessed the complete skill set. The following comments reflect this sub-theme:

'It could have some stronger representation in architecture, building, town planning or finance. Very well represented in other areas.' (Member of School Executive 16.03)

'My Chair is continually making sure that we have the right skill sets and gender balance within the school council.' (School Principal 16.06)

'Our chair has a skills matrix table that he used in the appointing of new members.' (Member of School Council 16.06)

'We need a legal person and a building person.' (Member of School Council 16.07)

'After recent retirements we don't currently have a balanced skill set.' (School Principal 16.12)

The second sub-theme related to the issue of recruitment. A number of comments identified the difficulty to recruit the right people to fill the vacancies that existed within a school council. These difficulties included the geographical context that the school was situated in, access to attracting people of a particular skill set and the need to also attract people with a faith alignment to the school. The following comments were indicative of this point:

'We are a relatively new school council, and have had difficulty recruiting members who have the required skills plus the necessary faith background.' (Member of School Council 16.08)

'This is mostly correct, although the Council is currently in need of several more members and it has been difficult over the years to attract suitable people to volunteer to serve in this capacity within this geographical area.' (School Principal 16.09)

'As indicated previously, we need to broaden our Council's skill set but we have found it very difficult to recruit the right people.' (Chair of School Council 16.12)

The third sub-theme that emerged was the belief that whilst a school council may well lack a particular skill set, the void of this skill set could be filled by employees from within the Anglican Schools Corporation itself. For example, if a school council lacked legal advice, it could call on the legal advice offered from within the employees of the Anglican Schools Corporation. If the school council lacked a skill set relating to architectural design or building maintenance, then this skill set could be accessed within the Anglican Schools Corporation and could be called on if necessary. This point was supported by the following two comments:

'We don't have legal or architecture/building expertise on our Council. We tend to get legal advice as and when required since it is usually specific advice that is needed. The College has its own architects, again because school design is a specialised area. The ASC has good building and contract specialties. We have our own Property Manager. So we have these areas covered but not on the Council at this time.' (Chair of School Council 16.07)

'In Corporation schools many of the skills mentioned are available through Head Office, however, it is helpful to have a cross section of these skills represented on Council.' (Chair of School Council 16.15)

The final sub-theme from this section was a belief that whilst a skill set was important, it was also important to appoint people with an alignment of faith, character and vision to the school council. Some respondents challenged the notion that one just looked at a skill that was required as the sole factor for recruitment. Rather, a holistic picture needed to be created of a potential member of school council before that appointment was to be made. They may well bring a skill that was needed, but will they bring the benefits of strong personal character as well? This point was reflected in the following two comments:

'Skill set is far less important than emotional quotient / buy in / sense of mission and purpose. There is enough skill set capacity in the Corporation. We do not have a building or legal expert and both are completely unnecessary so selection by skill set is a simple box ticking, feel good pretence with no positive benefit. Selection of people by character, faith, passion, vision means an untrained non-expert adds far more to the Council that a self-important go-to-expert where

none is needed. Of course, a finance person is helpful and a faith person is helpful. Council are the financial and moral/spiritual gatekeepers of the school.' (School Principal 16.15)

'Completely unnecessary. Accounting is important and faith qualifications. The rest are peripheral - kind of helpful but mostly incidental at best. Don't look to the world - search for other qualifications such as personality, integrity, vision, passion, godliness, intelligence.... Filling positions by peripheral occupations is a huge mistake and an impediment as the intentional recruit looks for purpose and meaning aligned to a role rather than a faith / EQ / personality.' (School Principal 16.15)

In summary, there was support for a mixed skill set to be created within the membership of the school council and this skill set would complement each member, thus adding value to the school council. A mixed skill set by itself did not necessarily mean the school council would effectively work together. However, surrounding this skill set was a strong desire for an alignment of faith around a common vision and willingness to contribute to the life of the school council. Finally, for some school councils, it was difficult to both attract and retain the right skill set to their school council because of the context they were situated in.

Key Findings Theme 6.6 – Value Add

Being a member of a school council and merely going through the motion of membership was of little use or value to the operations of a school council. Membership brought with it responsibility and that responsibility required a member of school council to add value to the governance structure. This may be as a result of a particular skill they bring to the school council such as financial or legal expertise, but the possession of this skill will be of no real value unless the member of school council is connected to the vision of the school and the school council's desire to turn that vision into a reality. Underpinning this value add within the context of the Anglican Schools Corporation was their strong faith alignment. It may well be better to have a smaller number of members, all of whom contribute than a large membership where some do not seek to value add. However, finding members who were both able and willing to contribute to a school council in such a way was not always easy to find. For some schools, depending on their context and geographic setting, it was quite difficult to find appropriate members of school council.

Summary

This chapter has analysed the data and discussed the results from Phase 3 of the research, the quantitative component, which was gathered from surveying members from the various school councils and executive staff from within the Anglican Schools Corporation. This further developed the conceptual framework created in the first phase of the study. Chapter 7 which follows provides a

detailed discussion of the findings from all three phases of the research and makes a series of recommendations.

Chapter 7:
Summary of research findings and recommendations

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the findings from all three phases of the research in response to the question of whether or not it is possible to develop a good school governance framework informed by the literature and professional practice. It makes a series of recommendations in this regard..

Research Process

It will be recalled from previous chapters that a mixed methods approach centered on three research phases was established to answer this question. Phase 1 of the study involved an analysis and exploration of the governance literature pertaining to corporate entities and not-for-profit organisations; local governance of schools in England and Australia and charter schools in the United States. This analysis and exploration enabled the creation of a provisional framework for good school governance. Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the research sought to develop, explore and test this provisional framework within a case study of philosophically aligned schools, each serving different educational contexts. By exploring these governance structures, governance processes were identified, especially those involving the intersection between leadership and management. These processes became the components of a preliminary framework for school governance.

Phase 2 of the research assessed, challenged and explored in greater detail the preliminary framework using the qualitative methodology of one-on-one interviews with school principals and chairs of school council. In total, nine school principals and six chairs of school council volunteered to be interviewed. Two sets of interview questions were used, one set for school principals and a second set for chairs of school council. The responses from school principals and chairs of school councils to these questions were analysed and this further refined the provisional framework.

Phase 3 of the research invited school principals, chairs of school council, members of school council and school executive staff, from within the same group of schools as Phase 2, to participate in an on-line survey to further test the validity of the school governance framework. The responses from this phase were analysed, thus enabling the final school governance framework to be developed as an outcome of a review of the literature and analysis of contemporary practice. A more detailed outline of the evolution of the three phases follows.

Phase 1 sought to answer the question: *How, and in what ways, can the processes of school councils positively intersect with the leadership and management operations of the schools they govern?*

As an outcome of an analysis of the literature on governance and school leadership (Chapter 2), the following processes that enabled school councils to positively intersect with the leadership and development of their school were identified. These processes, when viewed together, formed the basis of a tentative theoretical framework for the governance of schools to be further investigated in the later phases of this study.

Thus, as gleaned from the analysis, components integral to any emerging framework were:

- school values and vision
- school context
- school council recruitment
- role of the chair or the school council
- school council conduct
- the school council's relationship with the principal

School values and vision

The analysis indicated that the values and vision of the school must be clearly articulated. Good practice suggested that it was the responsibility of the school council to actively oversee the implementation of the values and vision. Therefore, the members of the school council became custodians and guarantors, passing the values and vision on from one generation to the next (Carver, 1997; Brounton, 2004; Walkley, 2011; McConville et al, 2006; Beavis, 1997; Kefford, 1993; McKeown, 1993; Mills, 2005). It followed that it was the values and vision of the school that determined the strategic decisions the school council pursues, thus turning the school's values and vision into tangible, definable and measurable realities.

School context

The analysis suggested that in order to achieve desired outcomes, good school councils must understand the community they serve. There was little point in attempting to create a high quality education if it did not meet the educational needs of the community. The school council must constantly remain familiar with and understand their community. Lack of an understanding of the environment in which a school council operates can threaten not only effective governance but also the continued operation of the school it governs.

School council recruitment

Recruiting the right people to the school council was essential for good school governance. Analysis of the literature in Phase 1 suggested that the right people might be defined as those who could add value to the operations of the school council. Adding value also meant that they had the capacity to think critically and, where appropriate, challenge and question the decisions made by the school council. However, the available literature suggested that this might not be easy to do. Low socio-

economic regional areas can often have difficulty in attracting the right people to join school councils (Dean, Dyson, Gallannayl, Howes & Raffo, 2007; House of Commons Education Committee, 2013).

The literature suggested that when appointing members of school council, several questions need to be addressed. Two important ones were:

- do prospective members of school council embody the school's values and vision?
- will the prospective members of school council add value to the existing council composition?

Vacancies on school councils do provide opportunities for new skills to be added and thereby, theoretically, increase their governance capacity. Good school councils actively recruit the right people to join their school council and this involved recruitment policies and strategies, and succession planning (McGore et al, 2001).

Role of the chair of the school council

The literature highlighted that for good school governance there must be an effective chair of the school council (McKeown, 1993; Mills, 2005). To be effective the chair of school council was able to:

- keep the school council focused on implementing the values and vision of the school;
- keep school council meetings focused, on task and outcome driven;
- build an effective relationship with the principal, based on trust, openness and mutual respect;
- build the governance capacity of the other members of the school council and
- enable the school council to be unified in its purpose.

School council conduct

An analysis of the literature identified that good school councils were focused on the development of strategy, leaving operational matters of leading a school to the principal (Bear, 1993; Kefford, 1993; Mills, 2005; McKeown, 1993). For this to occur, school councils possess policies and procedures which kept their discussions, decisions and meetings on developing strategy. Two ways this was achieved were:

- annually reviewing their own performance, either externally or internally. It was essential a review was undertaken, and that data gleaned from the review was used to improve the performance of the governors.
- annually reviewing the performance of the principal, either throughout the course of the year or at an agreed time. Once a formal review of the principal's performance was undertaken it was important to acknowledge achievements. Underachievement must also be dealt with by the governors, failure to do so was a failure in their governance responsibilities.

The conduct of a school council should be outlined by a clearly defined set of roles and responsibilities (Balarin et al, 2008; Hill & Lock, 2006). Confusion in roles and responsibilities often led to confusion within the school council.

The school council's relationship with the principal

The reviewed literature identified that good school councils should possess positive working relationships with their principal (Carver, 1997; Walkley, 2011). The following were three examples of how this was achieved:

- develop clearly articulated lines of communication between the principal and the chair of council

- create a relationship with the principal based on openness and trust. This enabled candid discussions to occur which was of significant benefit to the overall performance of the organisation and principal, and

- an environment of openness and trust also facilitated the important discussion of succession planning. This was very important and is essential so a mature discussion occurred as it placed the organisation ahead of the individual.

Summary

Phase 1 of the study resulted in a preliminary school governance framework of:

- school values and vision,
- school council recruitment,
- the role of the chair of school council,
- school council conduct, and
- the school council relationship with the principal

The preliminary school governance framework emerged from an analysis of the literature on corporate entities, not-for-profit organisations, local governance of schools in England and Australia, and charter schools in the United States. The second and third phases of research, the one on one interviews with school principals and chairs of school council and the on-line survey completed by school principals, chairs of school council, members of school council and school executive staff further developed this preliminary framework.

Phases Two and Three

An analysis of the data collected from Phases 2 and 3 enabled the development, exploration and identification of the following areas of the school governance framework.

- school council recruitment
- the relationship between school chair and school principal

- how school councils act as a critical friend of the school principal
- school councils as a unified team
- development of school council capacity
- the accountability culture on the school council

Identified recruitment practices used by school councils.

An analysis of the data collected from Phases 2 and Phase 3 identified that school councils in this study possessed an informal process of recruitment[6], however, when appointing chairs of school council the preferred method was by direct appointment from the Board of the Anglican Schools Corporation. Whilst the process of recruitment was informal, the participants also identified a common set of attributes for new members. This included the ability to identify conflicts of interest, the capacity to add value, accountability and alignment to the school vision.

School councils in this study used informal recruitment methods. No policy or procedural document outlining the process by which school councils sought to recruit members existed. The research identified a common informal process relying heavily on appointment recommendations from within the current members of school council[7]. Therefore, by default, the school council became a self-appointing body[8]. However, the potential for the school principal to veto the appointment[9] was noteworthy. Two implications clearly emerged from this decision:

- the independence of appointments, and
- the potential to have a school council owing their appointment to the school principal, which may hinder their capacity to act as a critical friend and/or independently.

In contrast, the research identified a different appointment process for the chair of school council[10]. Five out of the six chairs of council were appointed directly by the Board of the Anglican Schools Corporation. Three of these six appointments were foundational and no data from the third phase of research suggested that the school council were not satisfied with the performance of their chairs of school council.

Recruiting parents as members of school council emerged as an important issue from the second and third research phases. A variety of conflicts of interest associated with parents as members of school council were raised. Typically, these members would bring to school council their own personal grievances as well as the grievances of their friends. This may impede their capacity to remain independent in their thinking, an important attribute for a member of school council. The issue of

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[6] This is outlined in Chapter 5 – under the theme of Alignment. The responses from the interviews only identified one school which possessed a formal recruitment process.

[7] Again, this is clearly articulated in the second phase of research, under the area of Alignment in Chapter 5.

[8] Within this study, the final appointment process involved approval from the board of the Anglican Schools Corporation. However, it did not seem that the board of the Anglican Schools Corporation rejected any nominations.

[9] This was inferred through the responses of principals and chairs of school council interviewed in Phase 2.

[10] This was identified in the second phase of research in the questions dealing with alignment.

parents on school councils was magnified in regional areas where there was often limited choice for school council membership.

The capacity to add value was seen as an important attribute for potential members of school council. The research in Phases 2 and 3 supported the idea that there was little to no value in appointing school council members who were not adding value or had the capacity to add value to the school council. Within this context, adding value was associated with members of school councils who were critical thinkers and had the capacity to, where appropriate, challenge and question decisions being made.

Accountability emerged from the research data of Phase 2 and 3 as an essential attribute for members of school council. Accountability referred to their capacity and willingness to self-reflect on their performance and assess their contributions to the workings of the school council. This process of self-reflection highlighted how well individual members added value to the school council.

Finally, the research from Phase 2 and Phase 3 highlighted the need for a personal alignment to the vision of the school for new members of school councils. Council members must have the capacity to be custodians of the vision and understand the context in which the school operates. 94% of respondents from 6.2.4 of the research stated that it was important or very important that members of school councils be aligned to the vision of the school. A detailed analysis of these responses identified that the common alignment to vision, for the context of this study, referred to capacity, faith position and experience of the candidate. However, the challenge was recruiting these types of people to school council and this could be quite significant depending on the context of the school[11].

Identified processes that chairs of school council used to develop their working relationship with the school principal.

From Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the research, two main processes used by the chair of school council in developing a working relationship with the school principal were identified. The first process was the development of mutual respect and trust between the chair of school council and the school principal. The second process was more utilitarian in nature and identified practical ways their relationship could be developed.

The effective working relationship between the chair of school council and school principal must be based on mutual respect and trust in each other's capacity to fulfil their role[12]. Mutual respect and trust is linked to the competency and performance of both the chair of school council and the school principal. Their competency and performance will be tested over time as each manages a series of challenges. The more effectively they manage these challenges and difficulties the greater the development of respect and trust will be.

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[11] This also emerged from the data collected in 6.2.4
[12] This was explored in the second phase of research under the theme of Trust.

Whilst the research clearly supported the notion that it was essential that this relationship be built on mutual respect and trust, a series of utilitarian ways the relationship could be developed also emerged from the data[13]. Firstly, the chair of school council and school principal must be accessible to each other. The chair of school council and the school principal need to meet or talk with each other. If accessibility issues exist it will restrict the flow of information and slow down decision making processes which in turn may result in detrimental decisions. Accessibility led to the second practical way that they develop their relationship, that was, through effective communication. The research to date has identified that for effective communication to occur, both parties need to be able to talk with each other on any matter, regardless of the level of sensitivity. Whilst essential that both parties are able to access and communicate with each other, it was also important to establish boundaries to the relationship. These boundaries govern when and how information may be shared, when personal time starts and finishes and what protocols each use in their discussions. Finally, another practical way the relationship could be developed was through time[14]. Making time to meet both formally and informally developed a better understanding of each other and consequently fostered a more positive working relationship.

The research in the second phase also identified that restrictions may exist which hinder the development of an effective working relationship. Restrictions that were identified included the work commitments of the chair of school council, geographic impediments or conflicts of interest. For any of these restrictions to be overcome, they had to be identified, recognised and solutions found.

Finally, the importance of building an effective working relationship between the chair of school council and the school principal to the continued effective development of the school cannot be underestimated. The research undertaken in Phase 2 and Phase 3, but particularly in 6.5.1, clearly identified the centrality of this relationship to the overall success of the school that they lead. The research (6.5.1) also identified that when this relationship failed to have mutual respect and trust, negative outcomes may result within the school and if this occurs then immediate action must be taken.

School council members as critical friends to the school principal.

Research from Phase 1 identified that it was essential that members of school councils do not abrogate their responsibility to act as a critical friend to the school principal. To enable this the following three points were identified in the second and third research phases as ways of ensuring that the school council acted as a critical friend to the school principal. Firstly, an established culture of trust and transparency within school council must be created. Secondly, established processes by which the school council acted as a critical friend should exist and finally, the chair of school council was to lead the school council in fulfilling this responsibility.

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[13] Collected in the second phase of research under the theme of Trust
[14] As identified in the second phase of research

The research in Phases 2 and Phase 3 identified trust and transparency as essential cultural elements that need to exist within a school council if they were to act as a critical friend to the school principal. The school council should appoint a school principal aligned to the school vision and who has the capacity to fulfil his or her responsibilities. If the school principal consistently performs well in their role, the school council will be more likely to question, when appropriate, decisions or actions taken by the school principal. Within this context of trust and transparency, the questions will often not be accusational. Rather, they will seek clarification, or probe for an alternative response that may be more beneficial. Therefore, it was essential to appoint members of school councils who possess the capacity to think critically and appropriately question.

The research also identified that it was important to have clearly articulated processes by which the school council can act as a critical friend. In section 6.3.3 of the research, 100% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the school council should have the freedom to ask the difficult or tough question as required in school council meetings. However, the method employed in asking such questions and the regularity of which such questions were asked is crucial. Nonetheless, to facilitate good discussions it was essential to establish good processes within school council that enable and encourage members of school council to ask the difficult or tough questions. Failure to do so would be to the detriment of all involved.

Finally, the research highlighted that the chair of school council, through their leadership can create a culture of trust, transparency and establish appropriate processes for members of school council to act as a critical friend to the school principal. The research from phase 6.3.5 identified that 96% of respondents believed that the chair of school council needed to have the capacity to act as a critical friend to the school principal. Whilst the research demonstrated that the chair of school council must act as a confidant and chief supporter for the school principal, it also concluded that they must know how and when to challenge. If the school council witnessed the chair of the school council fulfilling this very important role, they will take their lead and act accordingly.

Identified practices that a school council used to become unified team

Research from Phase 2 and Phase 3 identified that when a school council possesses a strong alignment to the vision of the school, was effectively led by the chair of school council, shared a common faith-based position, was aware of conflicts of interest and had access to essential information it increased its capacity to be a unified team.

The research in Phase 2 under the theme of alignment identified that the first process a school council must possess to become unified will be their alignment to a common and shared vision for the school. The stronger the link to the vision of the school, the stronger their desire will be to work together as a team to see the vision turned into a reality. The research obtained in 6.3 identified that the quality of the chair of school council was vital for the governance structure to work as a team, united in aspirations and goals.

The research in Phase 2 and Phase 3 identified that the faith alignment of all members of the school governance structure was essential for them to work as a unified team. Their common faith basis enabled them to overcome differences, whether that be their skill set, professional background, tenure or experience. The importance of faith alignment was endorsed in the third phase of research 6.5.3 where 96% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the importance in building a culture of trust within the school governance structure. This was further reinforced by the findings from 6.2.4, which also identified that unity for the members of school councils within this case study was their faith based position. However, within the context of this research, this result was not surprising as the faith basis of the Anglican Schools Corporation is the very reason for its existence[15]. Therefore, it would be interesting to research what the unifying aspect or belief structure would be in a set of secular schools where there was no faith basis and where school councils exist.

Unified school councils need to effectively deal with conflicts of interest. The research gained from Phase 2 and Phase 3, but in particular from findings in section 6.4.6, highlighted the importance of identifying conflicts of interest in building a unified team. Conflicts of interest, by themselves, were not necessarily problematic. However, what was problematic was if they were not identified nor appropriately dealt with. When this occurred, divisions within the school council structure emerged. The research concluded that the most common way conflicts of interests were identified was through self-regulation that being, the requirement of members of school council to identify conflicts of interest themselves, normally at the commencement of each of their formal meetings.

Phase 2 and Phase 3 identified the need for appropriate procedures to exist for the gaining and sharing of essential information to the school council. School council must have access to all necessary information if they were to conduct their business appropriately and in unity. The data collected from 6.5.2 supported the notion that appropriate channels of accessing information must exist that will provide the required information for the school council to make strategic decisions. Therefore, working outside these boundaries was problematic and could lead to division, which in turn caused issues in other areas of the governance structure.

Finally, the research (6.6.2) identified that the majority of those surveyed believed that their school council did work as a unified team. 56.9% agreed and a further 31.3% strongly agreed with the statement. The open ended comments did enable further clarity on their position to be obtained, whilst the majority believed they did work as a team the data also suggested that this was not always the case nor was it always the case for every individual within the governance structure.

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[15] It is clearly stated in the ordinance which governs the Anglican Schools Corporation, that all council members must be actively aligned to the faith position of the Anglican Schools Corporation. They sign a Statement of Faith as part of their process of application.

Ways school councils developed their capacity.

From the research conducted in Phase 2 and Phase 3, effective school councils used a variety of methods to develop their capacity, collectively and individually. Some of the methods identified in the research were:

- their ability to recruit suitable members of school council,
- ability to self-reflect on their performance,
- ability to think strategically about the development of the school,
- ability to create a process of succession planning and finally
- an ability to renew school council membership at appropriate times.

At its most simplistic level, the research identified that the school council built capacity by recruiting suitable members of school council. To assist in this process, the research concluded that school councils should maintain a current skills matrix of their members to assist in identifying gaps[16]. The capacity of the council was shared amongst all members, as all members contribute in different ways to the operations of the governance structure.

The research also identified that school councils built their capacity through self-reflection, both collectively and individually. What was interesting to note was the responses found in Phase 2 of the research identified that this was something members of school council did not do as often as they believed they should. This point was further supported by the data from the third phase of research. Some 50% of those involved in the governance of the schools in the case study believed they reflected on their performance annually but with no prescribed process. Another 25% believed they did self-reflect but this was informal. So whilst there was a belief that self-reflection helped build capacity and raised performance, there was little concrete evidence as to how this was achieved within the governance structures of this case study.

Another way the research identified that school councils developed their capacity was in their ability to think strategically, collectively and individually, about the schools they governed. For this to occur they needed to understand their school context, the school vision, the core relationships within the school and how they would measure strategic thinking. Research data from 6.4.1 identified that over 90% of those involved in the survey believed their school councils had the ability to think strategically about the schools they governed. One way that these school councils ensured that their strategic thinking was being implemented was by holding the school principal to account for the implementation of the strategic and operational plans.

Succession planning was identified in the research as another way the school council sought to develop the capacity of their members. When school councils changed their chair of school council

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[16] These skills could be in construction, education, finance, legal, management or theological. This skills matrix was largely based on the work of John Carver (1997) who argued for a balance of skills be available on boards.

it was desirable to choose from within their current membership. Internal appointments normally retain institutional knowledge, comprehended the context in which the school operated, understood the current strategic path and most likely possess the support and respect of the current members. All of this aided them as they took on the leadership role within the school council. However, one weakness organisations may possess was their inability to effectively develop succession planning processes. For this to be overcome they must seek to develop the capacity of those currently involved in the governance structure.

Finally, the research identified building capacity was through school council renewal[17]. Stable leadership brought benefits to a school, whether that be in the role of school principal, chair of school council or member of school executive. However, stability cannot be confused with stagnation as the research undertaken in 6.4.4 identified. Rather, renewal of school councils at appropriate times facilitated new ideas and perspectives. Planned membership changes are best, rather than an ad hoc approach, it brought the development of capacity.

The impact of school context on the performance of the school council.

Phase 2 of the research indicated that for effective strategic thinking to occur within a school council there was the need to acknowledge a common understanding of the context in which the school operated. This shared understanding was required from all members of the governance structure: school principal, chair of school council, members of school council and members of school executive. Failure to share a common understanding can lead to significant issues within the various school council relationships, which in turn could affect the operations of the school council and ultimately, affects the operation of the school. These points were supported by the research in 6.4.5 – where long established understandings of the school aided its development.

However, as the research in Phase 2 under Alignment showed, the context of the school can also affect the capacity of the school council to attract and retain quality individuals to their governance structure. Therefore, context has the capacity to potentially weaken the overall ability of the governance structure from completing their role which in turn can have a negative impact on the performance of the school in general.

Did the research highlight any areas not previously identified that enabled good school governance?

The research undertaken in the second and third phases identified trust as an important aspect of good school governance which had not been previously identified. However, the findings also further expanded our knowledge of succession planning and volunteerism, two essential aspects of school governance.

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[17] Renewal of members of school council is clearly linked to recruitment and succession planning.

From the research undertaken in Phases 2 and 3, trust emerged as the essential factor that underpinned and intertwined all aspects of the governance framework. In this context, trust was built through the common faith alignment of those involved and the capacity of all members within the governance structure to fulfil their roles. Trust was built on high levels of performance, time and relationships. Long-tenured school principals and chairs of school council brought stability and this helped assist the development of trust throughout the organisation. When trust was broken, it had to be effectively dealt with; failure to do so undermined the capacity of the school governance structure to effectively work together.

From the research, in 6.4.2 and 6.4.3 consistently high levels of performance in either the role of the chair of school council or the school principal brought real benefits to the school community[18]. Once identified as high performing there was a strong desire from all members from within the governance structure to retain these people. This brought stability and this enabled a consistent implementation and understanding of the school vision. However, it was essential to link stability with performance. The research identified that high performing schools generally retained their school council membership, but members of school council can stay too long and it can be a challenge to effectively deal with an underperforming, long-term member of school council.

The research undertaken in Phase 3 identified that the average length of school principals within the Anglican Schools Corporation was 8.5 years. The average length of service for a member of school council was 7.3 and school executive was 4.3. Several of the schools involved in the survey can be identified as high performing[19] and one of the reasons was because of the longevity of those involved in the governance of these schools. Data from 6.4.2 also supported the notion that stable long-term school principals brought benefits to the schools that they served. The detailed analysis of the data identified that this was only the case if they continued to develop, remain effective and were engaged. A long term school principal who failed to remain engaged in their role could be detrimental to the development of the school. The responsibility of remaining engaged was not just linked to the school principals but to the school council and, in particular, the chair of school council as well. They must also seek to maintain the school principal's level of engagement.

The research in 6.4.2 also identified the issues associated with instability. High turnover of school council members, school principals or chairs of school council often led to schools struggling to maintain a consistent implementation of the school's vision. The research from both phases also identified why long term stable appointments may not occur, this being, context of the school, the size of the school and levels of disadvantage.

Nonetheless, the research in 6.4.2 also identified why short term appointments could be useful in the development of the school. Whilst long term stable appointments brought many benefits, short term

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[18] Growth was one of the real benefits strong long term performers in a governance role brought to the organisation.
[19] High performance in this case related to academic, cultural, financial and physical outcomes.

appointments for a specific purpose could be beneficial. In general, regular short term appointments were not to be sought after for they achieved the opposite of what long term appointments provided, consistency and coherence.

Another process identified in the research that impacted upon the governance of schools was the voluntary nature of school council membership. One of the limiting factors within school governance was membership of school councils are completely voluntary in nature; they are not paid positions. The research in Phase 2 and Phase 3 identified three resulting issues:

1. How accountable can a volunteer be?

2. Can this limit the choice of potential school council members?

3. How do you attract appropriate council members in more challenging geographic regions?

Some of these issues were regulated, such as in the state of New South Wales, Australia, where members of school council are regulated through a variety of legal obligations as set out by the Education Act[20]. This requires them to fulfil their roles appropriately, as if they were the member of paid corporation board, however, they remain volunteers.

Another potential restriction[21] within the school governance structure, was the requirement of members of the governing bodies to be actively aligned to the faith basis of the Anglican Schools Corporation. This is the case for many faith based organisations so the Anglican Schools Corporation is not an isolated example. The requirement though to allow only actively faith based members to join school councils placed a possible restrictive element on the quality they can attract. Paradoxically, whilst this criteria may be seen as restrictive in nature, it was also definitive in nature as it aligns and emphasised the philosophical underpinnings of each of the member schools; it's distinctive feature. However, in discussing good school governance, it is important to acknowledge any restriction and be aware of its implications.

Finally, the research in 6.2.3 also identified that when succession planning moved from concept to reality, it was the time when something positive or negative can occur. Whilst stability of appointment in the roles of the chair of school council and school principal were highly desirable, the reality was change would occur and it needed to be effectively planned for. The point at which change occurs was the most transparent time when the effectiveness of the governance structure will be assessed by the broader school community. The handling of change in either of these roles needed careful consideration, planning and subsequent implementation. It was a time when the governance structure can display effective leadership through the process, clear understanding of the vision for the school and their ability to align the strategy of the school to the appointment of the school

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[20] In NSW, members of school council must meet professional development requirements, must declare conflicts of interest, and must be able to maintain a definition of responsible person and more, to maintain their membership of a school council.

[21] Identified in 6.2.4

principal or chair of school council. Ineffective succession planning can bring negative consequences for the schools in which this occurs. Therefore, the importance of effective succession planning cannot be under emphasised.

Is it possible, therefore, to develop a school governance framework that is informed by literature and practice?

From the three phases of research undertaken it was possible to create a framework for good school governance. This framework centered on five processes that involve all areas within the governance structure: the school principal, the chair of school council, the members of school council and the school executive staff. The five processes identified were:

1. School vision
2. Culture of accountability
3. Leadership
4. Strategy and implementation, and
5. Trust.

School Values and Vision

The governance structure must have a vision for the school that outlines a set of underlying aims, principles and values the school seeks to achieve for its school community. This vision must be context rich, meeting the aspirations, desires and needs of the community that the school served. This vision must be clearly articulated and referenced throughout the whole school organisation. It must form the basis on which all strategic decisions are made.

All appointments within the school, including the governance structure, must be made on the basis that they are aligned to the values and vision of the school and that they have the capacity to turn the vision into a reality, or more simply, add value to the school. At a minimum, it is essential that those appointed to all positions within the governance structure, were appointed in alignment with the values and vision of the school. It was these appointments who made the rest of the appointments in the school. Therefore, if you do not have alignment at the start it would be very unlikely that following aligned appointments would be made.

Culture of Accountability

The governance structure worked at its best when a culture of accountability was created. Accountability did not solely reside with the school council holding the school principal to account for their performance. Accountability also resided within the school council itself and the need to take time to reflect on their performance over the course of a year. A culture of accountability enabled all members of the governance structure to reflect on how they added value to the school they served. A poor culture of accountability will reflect in poor governance performance.

Leadership

The leadership of the school did not just rest with the school principal; it was essential that the school was led by the chair of school council. Whilst the visual leader of the school should be the school principal, a school principal must also be led by the school council and this school council should be led by an effective chair of school council. The focal point of the leadership dynamic for all involved in the leadership structure should be the school vision. The combined energy of all those in the governance structure should be the desire to turn the school vision into a definable and measurable reality.

Strategy and Implementation

The school council should be about creating strategy, leaving the implementation of the strategy to the school principal and the school executive staff. Naturally, the developed strategy should be aligned to the vision of the school. The chair of school council and the members of school council had the responsibility of holding the school principal and the school executive staff accountable for the implementation of the strategy.

Trust

Vision, alignment, leadership and strategy were best served when a high level of trust was created within the governance structure. Consistently high levels of performance from all members of the governance structure needed to occur if high levels of trust was to be created. The greatest benefit trust brought to the other four processes was the ability for any issue, no matter how challenging or confronting to be discussed openly, thus increasing the capacity of the governance structure to effectively deal with it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of an analysis of all three phases of research the following recommendations are made. The good school governance framework incorporating accountability, school vision, leadership, strategy and implementation, and trust was used as a means of structuring these recommendations.

Accountability

There are five recommendations under the theme of accountability. These include a self-reflection tool for member of school council, school principal appraisal, school principal preparation, school council protocols and school council training.

Recommendation 1 – Members of school council have access to a self -reflection tool

The data[22] identified that the vast majority of school councils and members of school council were not completing or involved in a process of self-reflection. The data identified that this was something members of school councils saw value in and should complete.

To facilitate this, a self-reflection tool should be created. This self-reflection tool must acknowledge the volunteer nature of school council membership. It must be both challenging for the member of school council to complete, yet at the same time be seen as non-threatening. The content of this reflection tool must cover:

- how they have viewed their level of accountability to the council,
- how they believe they have added value to the school council,
- how they believe they have held the school principal accountable in their role, and
- how they believe they have assisted the school council in turning the vision of the school into a reality.

Recommendation 2 – School principals undergo an annual appraisal

The information gleaned from the second phase of research, especially that pertaining to 5.1.3 identified that for good school governance to occur school principals should be involved in an effective annual appraisal process conducted by the school council. The focus of this appraisal should be on how well the school principal led the development and implementation of the current school strategic plan.

Recommendation 3 – School principal preparation courses include a unit on school governance

The data from sections 6.1.2 and 6.2.5 of the third phase of research clearly highlighted that many members of school executive teams were not fully aware of what constitutes school governance and what was required of a school principal within school governance structures. It will be the members of school executive teams who will most likely become the next generation of school principals. They must be aware of issues relating to school governance prior to their appointment if they are going to be able to effectively handle the transition from being a member of the school executive to school principal.

Recommendation 4 – A clearly articulated set of guidelines and protocols for school council members be created and made available to all school council members

The data obtained from the second phase of research, under section 6.1.4, identified that for good school governance to occur school council members benefited from possessing a clearly articulated set of guidelines and protocols. This document sets out expectations, roles, responsibilities and

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[22] From the final two phases of research, especially section 5.1.2 of the Phase 2 and 6.1.3 from Phase 3.

protocols expected of school council members and must be aligned with the values and vision of the organisation itself and should not work independently of it.

Recommendation 5 – Training programs for school council members

Data from the research, especially in relation to 6.1.5, supports this recommendation. Already a variety of organisations from within the education sector offer professional development in the area of school governance. This may be as a result of decisions like those stipulated by the NSW Department of Education that every member of school council should engage in professional development in the area of school governance.[23]

School Vision

Six recommendations under the dominant theme of school vision have been made. These include a clearly articulated vision for each school, the appointment of the school principal, school council recruitment, school council induction, the development of cluster school councils and an understanding of the context in which the school operates.

Recommendation 6 – Each school possess a clearly articulated school vision

This recommendation was supported by the findings from the third phase of research in 6.2.1. This vision will underscore all core decisions made by the school council such as the appointment of a school principal and the creation of a strategic plan.

Recommendation 7 – The appointment of a school principal must align with the vision of the school

The findings of 5.2.3 from Phase 2 of research and the data from 6.2.3 from the third phase of research supported this recommendation. The selection criteria, in relation to the appointment of the school principal, must clearly articulate the context in which the school operates, the attributes the new school principal must possess to enable the next stage of development to occur and most importantly what aspects of the vision the new school principal must align with.

Recommendation 8 – The school council has a clearly defined process of recruitment for new members

Recommendation 9 – The school council has a clearly defined process of induction of new members of school council

Research from Phase 3 of the study in 6.2.4 indicated that there was a weakness in the recruitment and induction of members of school council from within the Anglican Schools Corporation. For good school governance to occur the right people need to be recruited to the school council and they need to be successfully inducted into this role. Included in this recruitment and induction process, as

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[23] As a result of amendments to the NSW Education Act in 2014, the registration process for independent schools requires member of school councils to complete 12 hours of professional development in the area of school governance, every three years. Failure to complete this prevents a member of school council remaining on council.

discovered in the second phase of research from 5.2.2, is the need to make new members of school councils aware that they are custodians of the vision. This will help the members of the school council understand the role they fulfil in the historical development of the school and the responsibility they now possess.

Recommendation 10 – Cluster school councils be created in areas where it is challenging to find suitable people to join school councils

Finally, the data obtained from 5.2.5 of Phase 2 of the research identified that for some geographic areas it was becoming difficult to attract, develop and retain suitable people to school councils. The recommendation was for organisations who found it challenging to recruit suitable people to join their school council was to look at a cluster school model where two or more schools are served by the one school council. This model is currently in use within the Anglican Schools Corporation and in some areas of the English schooling system. This model may also facilitate the expansion of schools to occur. Schools can be created and developed knowing that they do not need to find a specific school council for that particular school.

Recommendation 11 – Each school council possess a written statement that defines the context in which the school operates

The information from section 5.2.4 of Phase 2 of the research identified that for good school governance to occur, each school council must acknowledge its own unique context in which it operates. Whilst each school council can adhere to a general set of governance principles which elicit good practice, it must also be acknowledged that this good practice occurs within the individual context in which each school operates. This statement would then enable each school to be analysed individually so that specific governance challenges for that particular school can be recognised and responded to.

Leadership

No specific recommendations have been made in this area given the implications for leadership in a number of other recommendations.

Strategy and Implementation

Six recommendations under the theme of strategy and implementation have been made. These include the possession of a current strategic plan, staff appointments, the ability of the school council to think strategically, the length of tenure of school council members, and succession planning.

Recommendation 12 – School councils must possess a current strategic plan

As a result of the data collected from Phase 2 of the research under section 6.4, it is recommended that for good school governance to occur each school should possess a current strategic plan that stems from the vision of the school and seeks to turn the vision of the school into a definable reality.

Recommendation 13 – The school principal should report to the school council, at least annually, if not more often, on the implementation of the strategic plan

To maintain accountability, the principal should provide an annual report on the implementation of the strategic plan. This holds the principal to account as well as the school council.

Recommendation 14 – Staff appointments are reported to the school council

The data from section 5.4.2 of Phase 2 of research recommended that staff appointments be reported to the school council as a means of practising good school governance. One of the core drivers in the successful implementation of the strategic plan was the right appointment of staff.   This recommendation does not endorse school councils becoming a part of the appointment process rather it sought to provide a mechanism by which the school council ensures that the staff appointed meet the requirements set in the governance policies.

Recommendation 15 - School councils have the opportunity and time to think strategically.

As the data from 6.4.1 from Phase 3 of the research highlighted, school councils can become focused on matters of compliance. Whilst this is essential, it can be at the expense of thinking about the strategic development of the school.

Recommendation 16 – School councils keep an inventory of length of service of each of their members

Data collected from Phase 3 of the research in 6.4.3 supported this recommendation. Good school councils will possess a balance of experienced and new school council members. This enabled collective knowledge to be retained whilst at the same time bringing fresh approaches, ideas and perspectives, thus leading to a regular process of renewal. For an organisation, such as the Anglican Schools Corporation, an inventory of all of their school councils would potentially be of very high use as it will enable them to identify areas of imbalance.

Recommendation 17 –School councils possess a succession planning policy in relation to the appointment of the chair of school council

The data collected from Phase 3 of the research under 6.4.4 supported this recommendation. Good school councils normally possess the next chair of school council from within their own current membership. It is essential that school councils maintain the quality of their membership, thereby ensuring that they have the capacity to move to a new chair of school council when appropriate.

Trust

Two main recommendations under the theme of trust have been made. These include the chair of school council and school principal relationship and school performance.

Recommendation 18 – Protocols are in place that encourage the development of an appropriate chair of school council and school principal relationship

The findings from 5.5.1 of Phase 2 of the research from this study made it very clear that one of the core drivers for good school governance is the development of trust within the relationship between the chair of school council and the school principal. Therefore, it is essential that protocols exist for the development of this core relationship.

Recommendation 19 – School council use an agreed external mechanism by which to assess the overall performance of the school

This recommendation was based on the research findings in 6.5.2 of Phase 3 of the research. One of the core components of developing trust within the governance structure would be performance. If performance is high, as defined by measurable outcomes, then this will continue to drive trust within the governance structure.

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the findings from the three phases of research and made a series of recommendation. Chapter 8 which follows now considers these recommendations for practice within the context of current literature in this field.

Chapter 8:
Discussion of Findings and
Areas of Further Research

This chapter takes the findings from the research and identifies implications for further research in the area of school governance. It explores the initial conceptual framework of good school governance within the context of recent literature and research in the area of governance and school governance. Secondly, it identifies potential areas of research that, if undertaken, would deepen the understanding and practice of school governance.

Before moving to the exploration of the proposed good school governance framework within current literature and research, two important questions need to be addressed:

1. *What is the aim of school governance?*

Based on the literature analysed, school governance aims to improve student outcomes (whether they be academic, creative, cultural, physical, relational or spiritual), to create financial sustainability, to prepare the school to meet not only its current needs but also its future needs and to fulfil its charter or its vision. As Gurr (2015, p. 140) states *above all they are driven by the desire to provide the best educational environment they can for all students. Even in the most challenging contexts, they view challenges as obstacles to overcome rather than problems that are insurmountable, and so they are always looking to improve the learning environment.* Adding to this, Kay and Goldspink (2015) explain, *it is more than just risk management. It involved accepting, dealing with and capturing value from uncertainty* or, as Walkley (2017, p. 42) suggests *the outcomes of school governing processes provide decision that will enhance student learning and consequently will raise standards of student achievement.*

2. *In what environment does school governance occur?*

In attempting to fulfil all the aforementioned aims, school councils work in a dynamic environment. It would be impossible to suggest that school governance occurs in a static environment. Schools, whether they be government, catholic systemic or independent operate in environments which face ever changing compliance regulations, curriculum changes and developments, demographic movements, leadership changes, political pressure, registration requirements and so on. None of these create a static environment.

> *"In today's dynamic social, political and economic environments, leaders are expected to become strategy experts and strategic leadership is increasingly important to organisational performance and survival." Sarros (et a,. 2016, p. 451)*

However, paradoxically, the ideal environment school governance structures would like to operate in are areas where *'there is environmental stability."* Kay & Goldspink (2015, p. 15)

The complexity of school governance is ever increasing, so whatever the findings and recommendations made by this research, they need to be able to occur within a school governance structure that has the capacity to change, be dynamic and grow. Therefore, the suggested framework, must be adaptable and flexible enough to cope with this environment. Failure to do so will render it too rigid and static to be of any use.

Recent literature and research in the area of school governance

The good school governance framework was developed initially from the literature available at the commencement of this study, Phase 1 and then investigated and further developed in Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the research. It is now further examined in relation to recent developments in literature during the course of this study.

School Vision

Good school governance required each school council to create a vision for the school. This vision should be context rich and owned by the various stakeholders within the school community. It should be actively pursued through the appointment of aligned and stable members of the school governance structure. It must be a vision that can be turned into a reality, a reality which might push the boundaries of the school. As Gurr (2015, p. 140) stated *Successful school leadership is context sensitive, but it is not context driven. Using a range of common leadership practices that seem to promote success in most contexts, successful school leaders fine tune their responses to the context and culture in which they lead to optimise school success.*

For the school vision to have currency and value it must be owned by all key stakeholders in the organisation. Again, this point was supported by Sarros (et al, 2016, p. 461) …that *for strategy to be executed successfully, it first needs to be fully understood and agreed to by all parties responsible for its articulation and execution.* These key stakeholders would commence with the operating or owning body, in the case of this research the Anglican Schools Corporation; then the school council itself, then the key appointments of executive staff, of which the school principal is at the centre followed by general administrative and teaching staff. However, the school community must also own the school vision for if they do not, they will not support the school and will choose a school that does offer a vision they want for their children. Whilst this has always been the domain of the independent sector, where school choice and school individuality has been at the fore, it is also emerging in government schools governed by local school councils. Within the context of Australia, both Victoria and Western Australia have created school council models for local government schools in an attempt to provide these schools with greater autonomy and individuality and thus better meeting the needs of the communities they serve (Gray et al, 2013).

Turning school vision into a reality requires aligned appointments to the governance structure, including the chair of school council, the school principal, members of school council and members of the school executive team. This point was supported by Sarros (et al, 2016, p. 453), *this view is consistent with the notion proposed by Davies and Davies (2004, p. 32) who identify the strategic leader's capacity to align people and the school to future organisational state or position by encouraging commitment through shared values and the creation of meaning.* Therefore, alignment should go beyond the appointments made within the governance structure, they should occur in the other appointments made within the school. The greater the level of alignment across the organisation the greater the level of capacity to turn the school vision into a reality.

In relation to the aforementioned point, the current research (Sarros et al, 2016) identified that stable appointments of key positions increased the likelihood of the school vision becoming a reality. The longer someone stayed in the position, as long as they added value, the stronger the connection to the vision became and the greater the desire to see that vision turned into a reality (Sarros et al, 2016). Stability of appointments enabled the vision to be retained, the values upheld and the strategy to be continually implemented. This did not mean that every position needed long and stable tenure. Indeed, refreshment and renewal were necessary but this must be approached in a balanced and systematic way as Kay and Goldspink (2015, p. 29) suggest *board renewal, and the need to balance skills and experience to achieve the best team remained the most important thing.*

In conclusion, the school vision should not remain static but be dynamic and develop. The core tenants of the school's existence may stay the same but they may need to adapt for it to retain currency with the community that they serve. Contexts that schools work in change from time to time and it is beholden upon school councils to be able identify these changing contexts and adapt and amend the school vision accordingly.

Accountability

Good school governance required each school council to hold itself accountable. This accountability normally occurred by holding the school principal to account for their performance through a process of school council appraisal or reflection and external mechanisms that assesses the performance of the school. Current research (Kay & Goldspink, 2015) clearly supported this processes of accountability; however, one significant obstacle for accountability was the potential conflicts of interest that exist within a governance structure. Independent schools have developed processes[24], as required, to identify conflicts of interest. In current research emerging from an analysis of school councils from the Independent Public Schools model in Western Australia issues related to conflicts of interest as a result of school council composition have emerged (Gray, Campbell-Evans & Legett, 2013).

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[24] For example non-government schools in NSW, Australia are registered by the Education Act to acknowledge and identify conflicts of interest.

School councils from independent schools were normally composed of representatives of the owners of the school, qualified theological members (if a faith basis exists) former student representatives and elected members by the school council to fill any perceived skill deficiencies[25]. The overriding principle was based on the Carver model of governance (Carver, 1997) which creates a governance structure possessing diversity of capacity, experience and skills, thereby providing the capacity to govern. The idea of diversity on school councils was not only supported but further developed by the research of Kay and Goldspink (2015, p. 27), *the combination of diversity of skill and experience, and a willingness to engage in robust debate (task conflict) were only seen as an asset if the quality of the relationships established were such that they avoided interpersonal conflict.* Naturally, conflicts of interest arise from time to time and these conflicts of interest, as acknowledged in the research undertaken, need to be appropriately identified and dealt with. However, the relationship of the school council needs to be strong enough to oversee these conflicts of interests. The strength of these relationships is outlined in trust[26] another element of the created framework.

In comparison, the composition of school councils in the IPS movement[27] in Western Australia and in the school council model adopted by Victorian government schools was seemingly different to that of independent or non-government schools. Whilst the desire remained to create a school council along the Carver model (Gray et al, 2013) of diversity of capacity, experience and skills, there was often a requirement that local representation of parents and teachers be appointed to the school council. This further facilitated the likelihood of conflicts of interest, though there were some circumstances that, whilst not totally nullifying the risk, did in some way mitigate the potential conflict of interest. The first factor is that the authority and powers of an IPS school council are not as far reaching as those of an independent or non-government school. The best example of this was that IPS school councils did not have the right to employ or terminate the employment of the school principal, nor do they have the right to set the employment conditions (Gray et al, 2013; Clarke, 2017). These responsibilities still resided in the government department overseeing government schools. Secondly, the powers that these school councils possess were clearly articulated by the legislation that govern these schools and this restricts their control over budget, resource allocation and professional development. Therefore, the changes to the workings of IPS schools have moved only part of the way to a more independent or non-government school model of school governance.

Furthermore, the appointment of parents and teachers to school councils governing IPS schools did hinder the independence of these councils and raise the issue of conflict of interest. This point was clearly identified by *…one board member [who] questioned the capacity of parents to understand and contribute fully to agenda settings and discussions at board meetings* (Gray, Campbell-Evans & Leggett, 2013, p. 79). For example, IPS school councils may wish to make strategic decisions to

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[25] A detailed analysis of the composition of school councils from the schools listed in the bibliography provided the capacity to make this judgement.
[26] As outlined by Walkley, 2017
[27] Independent public schools

change subject choices to better reflect a changing demographic in the area and this, in turn, may mean the reallocation of teaching staff from their current place of employ to another. Teacher representatives on the school council may find these decisions challenging or difficult as it requires them to place employment judgements on their peers. The same could be said of parent representatives.

Also stemming from this issue of possessing parent and teacher representatives on school councils in the IPS movement is the ability of these volunteers to self-reflect on their contribution to the workings of the school council. As already identified, self-reflection and self-appraisal were important duties a member of school council should complete on a regular basis. This was but one way they held themselves to account for their performance. It raised the question, however, of how well can a paid teacher, who also serves on their own school council, complete this? How independent can they truly be? By nature self-appraisal will be challenging for any school council whether they be an IPS or an independent school council, as they are all volunteers, the addition though of being a paid member of staff and a council member adds a further level of complexity.

Accountability therefore remains an important factor in the development of good school governance practice. However, as the research in the area of Independent Public Schools in Western Australia highlighted, accountability is not always easily obtained.

Leadership

Good school governance required effective leadership across all areas of the governance structure. Walkley (2017, p. 44) states *It is the Institute's view that those involved in the governance structure of the school are absolutely engaged in, and contributing to, the leadership of the school.* In particular, the importance of the leadership offered by the chair of school council and the school principal was a dominant theme within the research. In turn these two leaders may need to change the nature of their leadership to suit the changing nature of the school. According to Gurr (2015), effective school leaders

- set direction,
- develop people,
- lead change and improve teaching and learning,
- strategise to solve problems,
- are values based,
- build trust,
- are visible in the school,
- build safe and secure environments,
- build collaboration, and
- promote equity, care and achievement.

These strong leadership practices need to occur across all leadership areas within the governance structure, not just with the school principal or the chair of school council. Within the context of the current literature the aim should be for chairs of school council and school principals to offer a combination of both distributive and instructional leadership (Gurr, 2015). This developed the capacity within the school council and create sustainable leadership models.

Gurr (2015) proposed that effective leadership occurred when both distributive and instructional qualities were displayed. Distributive qualities referred to the capacity of leaders to share leadership across the organisation, empowering others with the capacity to lead *…capacity building emphasis…successful school leader's focus much of their energy on developing people…* (2015, p. 144). They show initiative, make decisions and progress the teams they lead whilst under the guidance of their leader, yet at the same time work independently of them. A real benefit that distributive leadership brought to an organisation was sustainability. Empowering other people to lead facilitated further growth in the organisation, removing pressure on central leaders to always have the answer. Therefore it was imperative that chairs of school councils and school principals empower the other leaders they work with, whether they be members of school council or school executive teams as it unlocked their capacity and enabled further growth to occur.

Conversely, there were clearly times when the central leaders within the school, the chair of school council and the school principal, display instructional leadership qualities. Schools and school councils need, from time to time, boundaries to be set, direction to be given and modelling to occur. A new school may need a strong instructional leader as school principal and chair of school council to set appropriate cultures, expectations and processes within a school. This could also be said of more well - established schools who lose sight of their context, vision and their community. Therefore, it was important that the appropriate leadership style offered matches the context in which the school conducts its business (Gurr, 2015).

In summary, for good school governance to occur, strong leadership was required across all sectors of the school governance structure. This strong leadership should understand the importance of context, offer strategy and vision as well as display distributive and instructional leadership qualities.

Strategy and Implementation

Good school governance required school councils to be strategic thinkers and have the capacity to implement their strategic goals. Strategy and implementation needed to be governed by two aspects of context. Firstly, it must be governed by its current context and secondly, its future context. For strategy and implementation to occur, school councils must create an environment in which strategic thinking can occur. This environment will be, in part, dictated by school council composition, their capacity to think independently, their openness to alternatives and the building of trust.

Recent research undertaken by Kay and Goldspink (2015) provided an overview of the Holling Cycle and the challenges that this poses to governors and their capacity to think strategically and how they

implement it. Increasingly, schools are finding themselves involved in traditional business cycles. Enrolment demand can be affected by a range of factors including demographics, leadership, performance and reputation just to name three. These factors are no different to those facing any business. Therefore, school councils need to become aware of business cycles and their position in the cycle. Thus, the analysis of the Holling Cycle and its impact on school governance was highly pertinent to the research undertaken in this study.

Briefly, the Holling Cycle identified four stages within a business cycle. Each stage required the preceding stage to occur for it to progress to the next stage of the cycle. The researchers, Kay and Goldspink (2015), argued that for good governance to occur in the Holling Cycle, the governors need to be able to accurately identify the stage of the Holling Cycle they are in, then identify and plan to effectively meet the issues within this stage and then effectively plan for the movement into the next stage of the cycle.

> *The question in terms of what constitutes 'good' governance is whether the decision making body of the organisation has the capacity to effectively manage the different challenges inherent in each of the phases, such that organisation performance across the whole cycle is improved,* (Kay & Goldspink, 2015, p. 17)

This required the governors to be adaptable, dynamic, perceptive and strategic in their thinking. As school councils handle the stage of the Holling Cycle they found themselves in, they needed to display the same level of dexterity that governors of companies do.

Kay and Goldspink (2015) identified that if governors were going to effectively handle the various stages of the Holling Cycle, then these governors needed to be recruited carefully for their capacity to possess a diversity of opinion and experience, an independence of mind, an openness to alternatives and an ability to build trust. Surrounding this skill set was their capacity to work as a team, a team which also included the CEO and executive staff of the organisation. This was further supported by the work of Walkley (2017).

The requirements listed here are no different to the research findings of this study, rather, they enhance the findings as they either directly affirm the findings or complement them. School councils need to be able to work as a team, the capacity to engage in robust discussion and the ability to develop strategy (Kay & Goldspink, 2015; Clarke, 2017). The challenge though, is the difficulty in recruiting appropriate people to school councils. Pertinent to this point was one recent example, of a large inner city independent school, who advertised in a national paper for a chair of the school board. This school used a nationally recognised recruitment firm to assist in attracting a suitably qualified and experienced chair of school council to serve in a purely voluntary capacity. There could be

several reasons why the school council chose to take this course of action, but one reason would be the belief that there was no suitably trained replacement currently on the school council.[28]

The capacity of the school council to think strategically was vitally important in creating a sustainable school, however, there were several issues which can hinder their capacity to think strategically and then implement the outcomes. Recent research undertaken by Leggett, Campbell-Evans and Gray (2016) identified issues and challenges of school governance in ten low fee Anglican schools from Western Australia and Victoria. Their study paralleled the research undertaken in this study and therefore was highly relevant for inclusion. Firstly, the context of their research occurred within a model of schools very similar to those used in this study. The Anglican Schools Commission is very similar to the Anglican Schools Corporation. Both organisations oversee the development of several low fee schools, have a strong faith basis to their philosophical underpinning, are Anglican in nature, are governed by a central board which then devolves responsibility of the day to day operations of their schools to locally formed school councils, and support their schools through a centralised set of functions such as payroll, building development and compliance support. The main point of difference between the two organisations is the geographic locations of their respective schools.

In their research, Leggett (et al, 2016), discovered five main issues which impede the strategic development of the schools within the Anglican Schools Commission. These five issues were:

1. The dependence of the schools within the Anglican Schools Commission for support from the commission,
2. Strategic thinking was dominated by building programs,
3. The capacity of the school board to think strategically,
4. The principal-chair relationship and the participation of board members,
5. The newness of the schools.

Schools involved in the research ranged from 3 years of membership through to 28. New schools can often be dominated by building programs or focused on the development of new council members and new school principals. This in turn created a principal / chair of council relationship in a stage of infancy. To overcome these potential impediments, the councils of these schools would be advised to look at and attempt to identify the stage they are in in the Holling Cycle and act accordingly. The more effectively they do this, the quicker they move to a healthy process of strategic thinking and implementation.

In summary, school councils must develop strategic leadership Sarros et al (2016) stated *Strategic leadership is defined as how the top management team influence the strategic direction of the organisation; that is, how top management teams create meaning and purpose for the organisation.*

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[28] The International Grammar School, located in Sydney, NSW, Australia, advertised in the Sydney Morning Herald on October 22-23 2016 for a Chair of the Board. They used the recruitment agency Fish & Nankivell to assist with this process.

This will assist with working through any potential impediments that may stop the progress of the school.

Trust

Good school governance required trust. The research undertaken in this study clearly identified that trust in the organisation emanated down from the trust built within the relationship between the chair of school council and the school principal, which was the central relationship within the governance structure and the school itself. The trust built within this relationship must be based on integrity and transparency.

One of the outcomes of the research was to move the discussion on good school governance from focusing on the utilitarian yet essential and important components of board composition, compliance regulations, meeting agendas and committee structures to a discussion on those processes which surround these utilitarian components that elicit good school governance. Within this study, good school governance therefore required the active relationship of the utilitarian components with the processes discovered in this study: accountability, school vision, leadership, strategy and implementation and trust. The active relationship would occur as a result of an aligned understanding of the core values of the school, the capacity of the people involved in the governance structure to work together as a team and the trust built with one another. As Kay and Goldspink (2015, p. 33) noted *Trust, then, appears to be the unlikely secret ingredient to addressing the problems that arise from reflexivity and collective misconstrue of the environment. It therefore goes to the heart of what constitutes 'good' governance.*

To help build the trust between the school principal and chair of school council, Browning (2014) suggested the following three components. Firstly, they actively developed their relationship and this required time. Secondly, trust occurred when they were open and transparent with one another. This point was also referenced by the research conducted by Kay and Goldspink (2016, p. 32), *CEOs are more likely to disclose information and not seek to misrepresent situations in a context of trust rather than one of high stakes accountability.* Thirdly, they needed to meet regularly, though this may be challenging as school principals and chairs of school council are by nature busy people, the reality was they must make the time for regular conversations which would, in turn, facilitate the sharing of information and the building of the relationship.

Stemming from the trust built in this relationship was the trust the school principal built across the rest of the school community. Browning (2014, p. 407) suggested that, *…it is therefore important that school leaders intentionally develop behaviours and practices that engender, build and sustain trust rather than hoping that they will become more trusted as time goes by.* In his research, Browning went on to define what these behaviours and practices were by creating a list of ten strategies:

1. Openly admit mistakes
2. Offers trust to staff

3. Actively listens

4. Provides affirmation

5. Makes informed/consultative decisions

6. Is visible around the school

7. Remains calm and level headed

8. Mentors and coaches staff

9. Cares for staff

10. Keeps confidences

These ten strategies for building trust from the actions of the school principal have more generic uses and could be used by any member of the governance structure. The implementation of these ten strategies by other members within the governance structure, namely the members of school council and the school executive would assist in building trust across the rest of the organisation. Trust in the school vision, trust in the strategy, trust in the leadership team and trust in an overarching level of accountability in the organisation would be created. Kay and Goldspink (2015) reiterated this point about the importance of trust when they observed that *Trust has been shown to have quite tangible effects on the quality of decision-making (p. 32).*

Summary

The research findings that have emerged from the current literature clearly support the various individual findings of this study, which in turn added weight to the proposed framework of good school governance. However, what the current research does not do, and this is where the research of this study adds new research in the area of school governance, is a school governance framework designed to facilitate effective interaction between the three governance components of school council, school principal and school executive.

The framework created as a result of this research was not designed to be static. Rather, it was a framework which combined flexibility and strength, so that a dynamic practice of school governance can exist. A strength, supported by the literature, was in the way that it moved the discussion on school governance from just a purely utilitarian view which focused on the practical nature of school governance practices (such as school council composition, processes and procedures, meeting agendas and so on) to a discussion on the processes involved within good school governance practices. These processes were built around the proposed framework of accountability, creation of school vision, leadership offered, implementation of strategy and the building of trust. The utilitarian components fit within these processes. For good governance to occur, both components, the utilitarian and the relational, must exist and the combination of both is when the framework is at its most dynamic. The process will guide the utilitarian and the utilitarian will be the component that then turns the outcomes of good school governance into a reality. As Kay and Goldspink (2015, p. 42) state, *It is also clear that governance is a quintessentially human activity and subject to all the*

imperfections and frailties that engenders. 'Good' governance then provides a pathway to dealing with these limitations.

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH BASED ON FINDINGS

The purpose of this research was to create greater definition around the processes and relationships that constitute good school governance. The research findings established a framework based on five themes: accountability, school vision, leadership, strategy and implementation and trust. Attached to this framework were a series of practical recommendations (Chapter 7) that, if implemented, would assist in developing good governance practices.

The research read and undertaken within the study also identified a series of areas where further research would add value to the literature in the area of school governance. For convenience, recommendations for further research are grouped according to the above framework.

Accountability

Three areas of further research were identified under the theme of accountability. They include the ability to be able to define school council accountability, school principal preparation, and school council creative and strategic thought.

Defining school council accountability?

From the literature reviewed and from Phase 3 of the research under 6.1.1, the area of school council accountability was identified as important. Not one study seemed to take this topic as a specific area of focus. It would be worthwhile to provide further definition around what constitutes good school council accountability.

School principal preparation

In the research on school principal preparation, there were few courses that prepared aspiring and potential school principals to develop knowledge and a skill set to manage and work with a school based governance structure. This point was supported by current research (Walkley, 2017). The majority of school principal preparation courses in Australia are preparing school principals for the government sector where the vast majority do not need to work with a localised governance structure. However, as noted in this study, this is changing as there is growth in school councils for government schools in Victoria and in Western Australia via the development of the independent public schools model. Internationally, growth continues to occur in school councils in the English education system, and in the U.S.A with the movement towards Charter Schools governed by school councils. Therefore, with the move towards the use of school councils more broadly across the education system in Australia and internationally, concurrent movement towards preparing future school principals with the capacity to effectively work with these governance structures must also occur. From the research undertaken in this study, in particular from the third phase under 6.1.2 and 6.2.5,

and from the information gleaned from the literature review, it is evident that there is emerging support for preparing school principals to deal with governance structures, but further research in this area is needed (Walkley, 2017). In particular, what might effective school principal preparation, within an Australian context, in the area of school governance look like?

School council creative and strategic thought

From the findings of all phases of research, and in particular 6.1.2 from Phase 3, it would be worthwhile conducting further research into the nature of creative and strategic thinking and in particular what enables or inhibits it occurring within school councils.

School Vision

Two areas of further research were identified under the theme of school vision. First, how do schools align the selection of their members of school council if they do not have a faith basis? Secondly, would a school cluster model of school governance work for schools who find it difficult to recruit council members?

Non Faith Based Alignment

From the research undertaken in this study, especially from Phase 2 at 5.2.1, it was very clear that the faith basis of the Anglican Schools Corporation underpinned everything it sought to achieve. The appointment of school council members was aligned to the faith basis of the organisation as was the appointment of school principals and chairs of school council. The faith basis of the organisation also dictated the manner in which the school council managed their business. This is not the case in most secular education systems. Therefore, research in the area of what the aligned basis for selection of school council members in secular schools would be of value.

School Clusters

With the ever growing education sector, whether that be private or public, there will be an ever increasing demand on people to join school councils[29]. The reality is the majority of school councils are never able to fill all available vacancies. This was highlighted in the research undertaken in the literature review. There are several reasons for this including the geographic location of the school (Clarke, 2017), the performance of the school and the faith basis to the school. Whatever the difficulty, if current school councils cannot be filled how then, will future school councils fill their positions when demand may be even greater? Already within the independent and government sectors, school clusters exist where one school council oversees two or more schools. As a result of the research undertaken in Phase 2 of the study in 5.2.6, further research in the effectiveness and sustainability of this model would add value to the school governance literature. It may even point to a solution to the current challenges school governance structures currently face.

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[29] Walkley estimates that there were 75,000 people on school councils in Australia in 2017.

Leadership

Three areas of further research were identified under the theme of leadership. They included the following. First, what attributes does an effective school chair possess? Secondly, how does a chair of school council act as a confidant or critical friend to the school principal, and lastly, how does a school council ask the tough questions?

What attributes does an effective school chair possess?

From the research undertaken in this study, especially in phase 2 of research 5.3.1, and from the findings of the literature review, it was clear that for good school governance to occur there needed to be an effective chair of school council. Whilst this was established in the research, there did not seem to be a specific study in the area of what attributes an effective chair of school council possessed. Research in this area would clearly add value.

How does a chair of school council act as confidant and critical friend?

From the research undertaken in this study, especially that related to phase 2 of research 5.3.3, and from the research literature especially that pertaining to the English education system, there was a requirement for the chairs of school council to act as a confidant and critical friend to the school principal. This proposition was supported by the research in this study, particularly from phase 3 in 6.3.5 and 6.4.2. It was acknowledged in this research and research undertaken elsewhere that this was often something difficult to achieve. Therefore, it would be beneficial if further research was undertaken in how the chair of school council acts as a confidant and critical friend to the school principal.

How does a school council ask the tough questions?

Asking the tough questions when required was one of the roles of a member of school council. This was central to maintaining levels of accountability within the governance structure as well as maintaining a level of control over the direction the school. From the research undertaken in this study, namely the phase 3 in 6.3.3, it was sometimes difficult to ask the tough questions. Research that specifically related to how members of school councils ask the tough questions in a way that maintains and builds effective relationships would be of benefit to those involved in governing schools.

Strategy and Implementation

Two areas of further research were identified under the theme of strategy and implementation. These include tenures of school principals, chairs of school council and members of school council, and the specific characteristics of successful school principals who serve for a sustained period of time.

School Principal, Chair of School Council and Member of School Council Tenure

One of the main reasons someone should stay involved in the governance structure, whether they be the school principal, the chair of school council or a member of school council, was because they continued to add value to the governance structure. However, the length of tenure of governor is now being questioned and it would be worthwhile doing further research in this area. Some specific questions that may be investigated include: Is there an optimum level of tenure? Does stability of these key appointments actually lead to better outcomes? Data gleaned from these questions would add a great deal to the current thinking and practice in the area of governance and school governance. There is also a compelling link here for research which investigates the links between tenure and any improvements in student learning over time.

Successful school principals who serve for a sustained period of time

This was an area of research which has been partially covered. There is, however, an important set of differences to this question. The first is through the use of the phrase 'sustained period' and secondly through the adjective 'successful'. Both would require greater clarity and definition, but both identify the point of difference from the previous recommended area of research. They create a tighter definition for possible future research and if it were undertaken there would be a great deal of benefit to come from the findings. The research findings from phase 2 in 5.4.4 and from phase 3, specifically in relation to 6.4.2 supported this area as one that required further study.

Trust

Two areas of further research were identified under the theme of trust. First, trust in the school principal and, second, trust in the chair of school council.

Trust in the school principal

From the research undertaken in both the literature review and the study there was a strong belief that good school governance occurred when the school council was able to build up trust in the capacity of the school principal to fulfil their role. This was specifically supported by the findings from phase 3 of research in 6.5.4. What it did not do was an in depth study of exactly how a school council built their trust in the capacity of the school principal. Research in this area would be very beneficial to the research that currently exists in the area of good school governance.

Trust in the chair of school council

As per the previous recommendation for further research, there was strong support from the research undertaken in this study, specifically from 6.5.5, that good school governance occurred when the school council built trust in the capacity of the chair of school council to fulfil their role. However, the research did not articulate a deep understanding of how school councils built their trust in the

capacity of a chair of school council. I believe if research were undertaken in this area it would add value to the research already existing in school governance. As Fink (2016) observed, trust is taken for granted when present by blatantly obvious where not. Indicators of high trust relationships underpinned by verification appropriate to circumstances are both worthy of further investigation.

This chapter took the findings from the research and identified implications for further research in the area of school governance. Chapter 9 which follows, provides a summary of the overall conceptual framework that evolved through the study.

Chapter 9:
Summary

Chapter 9 provides a summary of the good school governance framework and implications this has for further research in the area of school governance, educational policy and practice.

As stated at the genesis of this thesis; whilst research in the area of governance is quite significant, little research has been undertaken internationally, and in Australia, on the processes that lead to good school governance. In particular research which relates to the relationships that exist between the chair of school council, school principal, members of school council and the school executive. This thesis undertook a reflexive study, using a mixed methods research approach, as well as methodologies associated with the creation of grounded theory, to analyse the process of good school governance within 18 schools of the Anglican Schools Corporation in NSW Australia. The intention, therefore of this study, was to investigate and, if possible, create a good school governance framework.

For this to occur the first phase of research involved the development of a conceptual framework derived from the available corporate, organisation and educational literature. The second phase of research was qualitative in nature and involved one-to-one interviews with six chairs of school council and nine school principals to further develop the conceptual framework created at the end of the first phase. A final phase used quantitative research methods to survey chairs of school council, school principals, members of school council and school executive teams about their opinions of the emerging framework.

What follows is a summary of the good school governance framework, the implications this framework has on further research in the area of school governance, and the implications that the framework has on educational policy and practice.

The Good School Governance Framework

The good school governance framework created from the research undertaken in this thesis was built around five pillars: school vision, accountability, leadership, strategy and implementation and trust. This framework is useful to those schools within the Anglican Schools Corporation as well as those who sit outside it. The framework was based on the capacity of all five pillars to be able to function together, requiring the various interconnected relationships and processes between all five pillars to

work in unison so that they can successfully navigate the dynamic world of school governance. What follows is a brief overview of the good school governance framework.[30]

School Vision

Good school governance required a school vision. Vision provided direction and purpose. It was essential that this vision was relevant for the school, meeting its current needs and flexible enough to adapt if the school's context and circumstances changed.

Accountability

Good school governance required a culture of accountability that occurred at a variety of levels. Members of school council were accountable to each other, the organisation they represented and the key stakeholders within their school community. Two essential members who helped create a culture of accountability were the chair of school council and the school principal. The chair of school council led the process of accountability and this was achieved by keeping the school principal accountable for their actions and performance.

Leadership

Good school governance required strong leadership from both the chair of school council and the school principal. The chair of school council needed to clearly understand their role in the governance structure and align themselves with and own the vision of the school. They must understand that they are to lead the governance structure, and while their leadership may be less visible than that of the school principal, their leadership was no less important.

Similarly, the school principal must understand their role in the governance structure. They must ensure they lead the school community by successfully sharing with them the collectively owned vision for the school. They should ignite a passion for the school in the governance structure and ensure that they were willing to be held accountable for their performance. For this to effectively occur, the chair of school council and the school principal must be able to work together. This was by far the most important relationship within the governance structure.

Strategy and Implementation

Good school governance required strategic thinking and the capacity for its effective implementation. This was best served through a series of stable appointments to the role of school principal, chair of school council and the school council itself. The ability of these three areas of the governance structure to perform, relate and work with each other can have a positive impact on the educational outcomes achieved.

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[30] For a more detailed overview of the good school governance framework refer to Chapter 9 of the thesis.

Trust

Good school governance required trust and this must be embedded in the culture of the governance structure. Indeed it was the glue that kept the other four pillars together. Each of the various relationships within the governance structure must be built on trust whether that was the relationship between the chair of school council and school principal; the school principal and the school council; the school council and the chair of school council or the school council and the school executive staff. Trust was based on openness, performance and transparency.

The following diagram provides a visual representation of the good school governance framework. Vision is at the centre of the diagram as all other pillars of the framework emanate from it. Accountability is the next circle as all members within the school governance framework, school council members, school principal and school executive staff, should hold themselves to account for turning the vision into a reality. Leadership is the next circle as it takes leadership from both the chair of school council and the school principal to turn the vision into a reality. This is then followed by strategy, the next circle, as there must be a clear plan as to how the vision will be turned into a reality. The final circle is the circle of trust, which in terms of the research undertaken, was identified as the pillar which held the other four pillars in place. Much has been written and studied on in the areas of vision, accountability, leadership and strategy, however the area of trust has been an area not previously yet fully identified. Therefore, it becomes very symbolic that the circle of trust envelopes the other four, emphasizing the contribution that this research has made to the area of school governance.

Diagram 1: Good School Governance Framework

The second diagram is a visual representation of the good school governance framework and the inter-relationships between school council, school principal and school executive. This diagram is important as it highlights another contribution the research makes to the literature on school governance; the focus on the relationships and inter-connected nature of these key pillars to ensure and improve the quality of the governance offered.
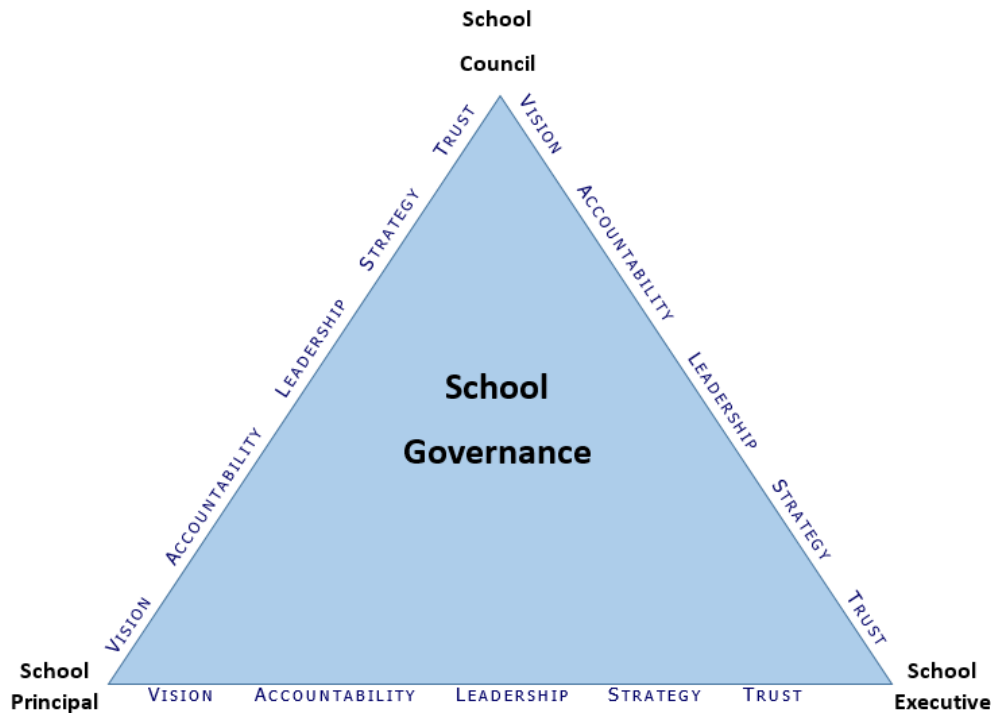

Diagram 2: Good School Governance and the inter-relationship between School Council, School Principal and School Executive

Implications for further research

The purpose of the research undertaken in this thesis was to create greater definition around the processes and relationships that constitute good school governance, thus leading to the creation of a good school governance framework. The research findings established a framework based on five themes: accountability, school vision, leadership, strategy and implementation and trust. The research read and undertaken within the study also identified a series of areas where further research would add value to the literature in the area of school governance. For convenience, recommendations for further research are grouped according to the above framework.[31]

Accountability

Three areas of further research were identified under the pillar of accountability: investigate the ability to be able to define school council accountability; improve school principal preparation in the area of school governance; and develop school council creative and strategic thought.

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[31] Refer to Chapter 8 of the thesis for a more detailed account of the areas for further research.

School Vision

Two areas of further research were identified under the pillar of school vision: define how schools align the selection of school council members if they do not have a faith basis and providing definition around how a school cluster model of school governance works for schools who find it difficult to recruit council members.

Leadership

Three areas of further research were identified under the pillar of leadership: identify the attributes of an effective chair of school council; identify how a chair of school council acts as a confidant or critical friend to the school principal, and lastly, identify how a school council asks the tough questions.

Strategy and Implementation

Two areas of further research were identified under the pillar of strategy and implementation. These related to the tenures of school principals, chairs of school council and members of school council, and identifying the specific characteristics of successful school principals who serve for a sustained period of time.

Trust

Two areas of further research were identified under the pillar of trust. First, how trust in the school principal is developed and, secondly, how trust in the chair of school council is developed.

Recommendations for educational policy and practice

As a result of the created good school governance framework the following recommendations for educational policy and practice are made; the good school governance framework of school vision, accountability, leadership, strategy and implementation and trust have once again been used to structure these recommendations.[32]

School Vision

Six recommendations under the pillar of school vision were made. These included the need for a clearly articulated vision for each school; the appointment of a school principal in alignment with that vision; the active recruitment of school council members in line with the school vision; the successful induction of school council members; the development of cluster school councils where required; and, finally, the need to understand the context in which the school operates.

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[32] Chapter 7 provides a detailed account of each recommendation, with each recommendation clearly linked to the findings of the research undertaken in the thesis.

Accountability

Five recommendations under the pillar of accountability were made. These included the development of a self-reflection tool for members of school council to use; the development of an effective school principal appraisal tool; greater coverage of governance related matters in school principal preparation; the development of school council protocols and increased levels of school council training.

Leadership

No specific recommendations were made in this area given the implications for leadership in a number of other recommendations.

Strategy and Implementation

In relation to the pillar of strategy and implementation six recommendations have been made. These were the need to possess a current strategic plan; the need for the school principal to inform the school council of the strategic plans implementation; the need to clearly inform the school council of staff appointments; develop the ability of the school council to think strategically; maintain an inventory of the length of tenure of school council members; and develop a process of effective succession planning.

Trust

Two main recommendations in relation to the pillar of trust were made. These were, the need for the chair of school council and school principal to develop an effective working relationship and the need for the school council to create a measurement tool which assesses school performance.

In summary the good school governance framework generated by this study can be seen to be contributing areas for further research and theory development in the field of educational leadership, education policy and school practice. Chapter 10 which follows provides a conclusion to the thesis.

Chapter 10:
Conclusion

Investment in education, whether through government education systems or privately through independent educational providers, is not insignificant. 2013 OECD data on public spending on education as a percentage of GDP and of total public spending clearly highlighted this point. Australia contributed 10% of public spending on education up to the tertiary sector whilst the United Kingdom contributed 9% and the United States of America contributes 8.2% respectively. (OECD, 2016). Over the last fifty years or so, there has been a growing movement both nationally and internationally towards more autonomous powers for schools to better meet the needs of the communities that they serve. Coupled with this is the growing movement towards the neo-liberal idea of school choice, providing parents with an increased ability to choose a school best suited to the needs of their children. As a result, we are now witnessing a more de-centralised model of education in England, growth in charter schools in the United States and an increased number of independent schools in Australia, especially low fee schools who attract government subsidy. We are also witnessing governance growth in state education in Victoria (Australia) and Western Australia. Therefore, the need for good school governance is not diminishing. In actual fact, it is increasing and it is only right and proper that these governance structures are developed effectively, not just to ensure that monies spent on education are appropriately allocated but so that the students who attend these schools receive the best education possible.

The research undertaken in this study began in personal experiences and reflections on school governance. This motivated a thorough interrogation of the relevant literature and this interactive case study involving first if all, principals and chairs of school council and then expanding this to school council members and school leaderships teams created a framework built around five pillars: school vision, accountability, leadership, strategy and implementation and trust. This framework was seen to be useful to those schools within the Anglican Schools Corporation as well as those who sit outside it. The framework was based on the capacity of all five pillars to be able to function together. This required the various interconnected relationships and processes between all five pillars to work in unison so that they can successfully navigate the dynamic world of school governance. From the study a number of compelling responses emerged summarised below in each of the pillars within the framework.

School Vision

Good school governance required a school vision. Vision provided direction and purpose. It was essential that this vision was relevant for the school, meeting its current needs and flexible enough to adapt if the school's context and circumstances changed.

Core to the successful implementation of this vision were two important concepts, alignment and ownership. All appointments to the organisation were to be aligned to the vision of the school if the vision was going to be turned into a reality. Naturally, some appointments were more important than others such as the chair of school council, members of school council, the school principal and school executive staff. But, if the vision was going to be turned into a deep reality then other appointments within the organisation needed to be aligned to the school's vision. A core aspect of this alignment, within this case study, was the faith basis of the Anglican Schools Corporation. The common shared understanding of this faith basis helped members of the school governance structure overcome natural points of difference in their deliberations.

The second concept of ownership was just as important. Key stakeholders, and not just those involved in the governance of the schools, must own the vision. They needed to be actively engaged with it and the various connecting documents associated with it, such as the school's strategic plan. If the vision was not owned then it would not be implemented.

Accountability

Good school governance required a culture of accountability. Accountability occurred at a variety of levels. Members of school council were not to merely be accountable to each other but to the organisation they represent and the key stakeholders within the school community they serve. Two key members who helped create a culture of accountability were the chair of school council and the school principal. The chair of school council led the process of accountability and one way this was achieved was keeping the school principal accountable for their actions and performance.

Whilst essential that a culture of accountability was created it must also be acknowledged that school councils were not professional boards and were not paid for their services; they were voluntary by nature. This potentially brought a level of complexity in building a culture of accountability to the operations of the school they govern as it often involved budget and financial positions much larger and more significant than their own day to day experience. Therefore, it was essential that training and development in what was required of members of school council be provided.

Finally, if a culture of accountability was created within the governance structure it could then spread into the other areas of operation within the school. Members of the school executive team, teaching staff and administration staff could also embrace a culture of accountability. Open and transparent accountability assisted in developing both internal and external levels of accountability. It also brought the external stakeholders into the governance model and strengthened it.

Leadership

Good school governance requires strong leadership from both the chair of school council and the school principal. The chair of school council needed to clearly understand their role in the governance structure and align themselves with and own the vision of the school. They must understand that

they are to lead the governance structure, and while their leadership may be less visible than that of the school principal, their leadership was no less important.

Similarly, the school principal must understand their role in the governance structure. They must ensure they were leading the school community by successfully sharing with them the collectively owned vision for the school. They should also ignite a passion for the school in the governance structure and ensure that they were willing to be held accountable for their performance. For this to effectively occur, the chair of school council and the school principal must be able to work together. This was by far the most important relationship within the governance structure.

This specific relationship should not to be personal, but rather professional if good school governance was to occur. The chair of school council must act as a critical friend to the school principal as well as holding the school principal to account for their performance. Conversely, the school principal must ensure they develop a strong working relationship with the chair of school council so that they can confide in the chair of school council when required. If the chair of school council and the school principal can both offer strong leadership to the school council it will assist them as they work together for the betterment of the school.

Strategy and Implementation

Good school governance required strategic thinking and the capacity to effectively implement it. This was best served through a series of stable appointments to the role of school principal, chair of school council and the school council itself. The ability of these three areas of the governance structure to perform, relate and work with each other can have a positive impact on the educational outcomes achieved.

It was not just the implementation of strategic thinking that was important, nor was it just having long serving and stable appointments but each member of the governance structure must continue to perform in their role. They must continue to develop, grow and seek to make a contribution to the life and performance of the school. As soon as the performance of a member of the school governance structure fails it becomes necessary to review that person's position.

Trust

Good school governance required trust and trust must be embedded in the culture of the governance structure. Indeed it was the glue that kept the other four pillars together. Each of the various relationships within the governance structure must be built on trust whether that was the relationship between the chair of school council and school principal; the school principal and the school council; the school council and the chair of school council or the school council and the school executive staff.

Trust was based on openness, performance and transparency. As trust grew within the governance structure so did their capacity to handle the varied situations they dealt with. Furthermore, greater

levels of trust facilitated more confidential, open and transparent dialogue to occur which was vital if the governance structure was going to handle the really delicate issues.

However, once trust was broken, relationships become dysfunctional and this would be to the detriment of the governance structure and the school they served. Therefore, it was essential that once identified, broken trust was fixed.

Concluding Comment

School governance matters, for schools are charged with the wonderful, yet at times daunting responsibility of educating children. As more and more schools and educational systems move towards the neo-liberal position of choice and the belief that autonomy leads to better educational outcomes, so will the demand increase for more school councils. But more will also be expected of those who join them. The research in this study sought to create a framework for good school governance, a framework which currently does not exist in this form in the current literature. The current literature provided material in the area of school governance, especially in the utilitarian areas of school council composition, school council meetings, the role of the chair of school council, the role of a member of school council, the role of the school principal and the responsibilities a school council must fulfil. This study sought to add value to this body of work through the creation of a good school governance framework exploring both the processes and relationships on which trust and performance are built. What the current literature did not provide was insights into a detailed framework in which the utilitarian functions work within and this was what the good school governance framework sought to achieve. It was found that, for good practice to occur, all five processes of school vision, accountability, leadership, strategy and implementation, and trust need to work together. Why? For the betterment of the students that the governance structure serves. It is towards these ends that it is hoped the study has made a useful contribution.

Appendices

Appendix 1:
Letter of Request to Chair of Anglican Schools Corporation – Phase 2

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

Department of the School of Education

Faculty of Human Sciences

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109

10 July 2014

Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation
Chairman - Mr Tony Wills
PO Box 465
HURSTVILLE BC NSW 1481

Dear Mr Willis,

Doctoral Research into Effective School Governance – Gareth Leechman

My name is Gareth Leechman and I am a postgraduate student at Macquarie University, studying for a Doctor of Philosophy. I am writing to you regarding the research project on School Governance, School Leadership and School Effectiveness which is being conducted to meet the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy under the supervision of Dr Norman McCulla, norman.mcculla@mq.edu.au of the School of Education. My purpose in writing to you about this project is to seek your support to access the various school council members and school principals which make up the Sydney Anglican School's Corporation.

Aims of the Research

The aims of the research are, to:

a. Identify characteristics of effective practice of School Boards/Councils in School Governance

b. Critically assess how these practices are being effectively carried out by School Boards/Councils in respect to their governance responsibilities and in relation to the socio-economic and cultural context in which the school is set

c. Identify the various issues that School Boards/Councils face in their interface with the school leadership of the Principal and overall school effectiveness

d. Determine implications for policies, school practices and further research

Research Plan and Method

A two stage design is envisaged. The first stage will consist of one-to-one interviews with at least five Chairs of Council and their respective Principals to further develop the theoretical framework derived from the research literature. This is a precursory step to a wider survey of the council members of Anglican Schools found within the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation.

This study therefore will centre its research on a mixed methods approach by using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Once an enhanced theoretical framework of school governance has been established, a more detailed and specific questionnaire will be created as an online survey for subsequent Principals, Chairs of Councils and other School Council members from the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation who wish to be involved in the study. This phase of the research will be reflective of quantitative methods as the data collected from the questionnaire will be appropriately analysed and used to further assess the validity of the emerging theoretical model that has been created in relation to effective school governance. Principals, Chairs of Council and participating schools will not be identified in any way in the course of the study.
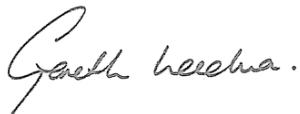
School Involvement

Once I have received your support to conduct this research project within the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation, I will:

- provide you or your representative with information and consent forms that I will be disseminating amongst the Principal's and School Council members within the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation,
- arrange a time and venue with each of the five Principal's and Chairs of Council for the initial one on one interviews to take place, and
- arrange for an on-line questionnaire to be disseminated to the other School Council members for the second phase of the research project

Initial contact between the researcher and participants willing to participate in this project will be made by me.

Please contact me if you have any further questions about this research project. I look forward to hearing whether you are willing to consent to this project being conducted within the Sydney Anglican School's Corporation.
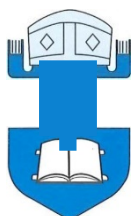
Yours sincerely,

Mr. Gareth Leechman

Appendix 2:
Chair of Anglican Schools Corporation Response to Phase 2 request

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SYDNEY ANGLICAN SCHOOLS CORPORATION

ABN 63 544 529 806

Suite 104, 9 Gloucester Road, Hurstville NSW 2220 I PO Box 465, Hurstville BC NSW 1481

Tel: 02 8567 4000 I Fax: 02 9570 2220 I Web: www.sasc.nsw.edu.au

23 July 2014

Mr Gareth Leechman
Department of the School of Education
Faculty of Human Sciences
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY   NSW 2109
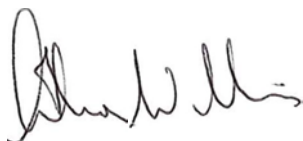
Dear Gareth,

Thank you for your letter regarding your doctoral research into effective school governance.

I am very happy to support your approach to School Councils and Principals from the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation to aid in your research. Although any school may decline to take part I would certainly encourage their involvement.

I trust that we might have access to relevant results as would be appropriate.

Yours sincerely

Tony Willis
Chairman
Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation

Serving Christ by equipping students for His world

Appendix 3:
Letter of Request to Chair of Anglican Schools Corporation – Phase 3

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

Department of the School of Education

Faculty of Human Sciences

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109

24 May 2016

Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation
Att: Mr T Willis
PO Box 465
HURSTVILL E BC 1495

Dear Mr Willis,

Doctoral Research into Effective School Governance - Gareth Leechman

You will recall that I wrote to you in July 2014 seeking your support for a research project focused on School Governance, School Leadership and School Effectiveness. You kindly gave your support for that initiative. Since that time I have completed the first phase of research which involved a series of one on one interviews with nine School Principals and six Chairs of School Council from within the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation. Those interviews were transcribed, summarised and analysed by myself and this led to the creation of a governance framework. I am more than willing to share this framework with you if you so desire.

I am now writing to seek your further support for Phase 2 of the project, as foreshadowed in my original letter. This phase involves the completion of an on-line questionnaire which seeks to explore in more detail people's perceptions on the governance framework created from the first phase of the research. I will be inviting all Principals, Chairs of Councils, School Council members and School Executive from within the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation to complete an on-line questionnaire. This phase of the research will be reflective of quantitative methods as the data collected from the questionnaire will be appropriately analysed and used to further assess the validity of the emerging theoretical framework that has been created in relation to effective school governance. Principals, Chairs of Council, members of School Councils and School Executive staff from the participating schools will not be identified in any way in the course of the study.
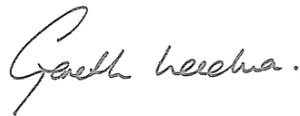
School Involvement

Once I have received your support to conduct this research project within the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation, I will:

- provide you or your representative with information and consent forms that I will be disseminating amongst the Principals, Chairs of School Council, School Council members and School Executive within the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation.

- arrange for an on-line questionnaire to be disseminated to the Principals, Chairs of School Council, School Council members and School Executive for the second phase of the research project

Initial contact between the researcher and participants willing to participate in this project will be made by me.

Please contact me if you have any further questions about this research project. I look forward to hearing whether you are willing to consent to this project being conducted within the Sydney Anglican School's Corporation.
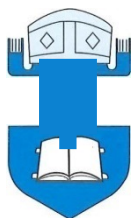
Yours sincerely,

Mr. Gareth Leechman

Appendix 4:
Chair of Anglican Schools Corporation Response to Phase 3 request

SYDNEY ANGLICAN SCHOOLS CORPORATION

ABN 63 544 529

Suite 104, 9 Gloucester Road, Hurstville NSW 2220 I PO Box 465, Hurstville BC NSW 1481

Tel: 02 8567 4000 I Fax: 02 9570 2220 I Web: www.sasc.nsw.edu.au

01 June 2016

Mr Gareth Leechman
Department of the School of Education
Faculty of Human Sciences
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109
By email

Dear Gareth,

Thank you for your letter regarding your doctoral research into effective school governance and the request for support for Phase 2.

I am very happy to support your approach to Principals, Chairs of Councils, School Council members and School Executive from the Anglican Schools Corporation to further aid your research. Although any school may decline to take part I would certainly encourage their involvement.

It would be good at an opportune time to share your initial findings with the ASC Governance Committee. I have cc'd Greg Catto as Chair of this Committee.

Could you please forward copies of the information and consent forms to the Corporate Secretary, Mr Max Caddy. I have cc'd Max and also Jack Chalmers as Acting CEO.

Yours sincerely

Tony Willis
Chairman
Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation

Serving Christ by equipping students for His world

Appendix 5:
Qualitative Research Question Set
Chairs of School Council

1.   Would you like to begin by telling me how you became a member of your school council?

2.   Could you tell me the circumstances which led you to becoming the chair of council?

3.   How do you see your role as chair differing to other members of council?

4.   When recruiting new members to the school council, how do you define what the 'right type of person' is to join your council?

        (Possible probes:

                ▪ Could you describe your recruitment process for potential council members?

                ▪ What process of induction do you have, if any, for new school council members?)

5.   What do you see as the key roles of the school council and the principal?

                ▪ How does your college/school council build a culture of trust within itself?

6.   What role, if any, do you see the school council playing in determining teacher quality and improving student outcomes?

7.   What do you see as being important factors in developing an effective chair/principal relationship?

                ▪ How many principals have you worked with? Are there any differences?

                ▪ How do you specifically develop your relationship with the head teacher/principal?

                ▪ Could you tell me what checks and balances do you see as being important in monitoring effective relationships between the school council and school executive?

8.   How does your school council hold itself accountable to its constituents?

                ▪ How does your school council assess its influence on the performance of the college/school?

■ What processes, if any, do you have in place to keep the college/school principal to account?

9. What does your college/school council spend its time discussing at school council meetings?

10. What role does the school council have in creating a vision for the school?

■ How does this relate to the appointment of the principal and school council members?

11. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 6:
Qualitative Research Question Set
School Principal

1. Would you like to begin by telling me how you became principal of this school?

2. How and in what ways, if at all, does your role as principal differ to other members of the school council?

3. When recruiting new members to the school council, how do you define what the 'right type of person' is to join your council?
   - Could you describe your recruitment process for potential council members?
   - What process of induction do you have, if any, for new school council members?
   - What role, if any, do you have as principal in recruiting potential members to join your school council?

4. What do you see as the key roles of the school council and the principal?
   - How does your college council build a culture of trust within itself?

5. What role, if any, do you see the school council playing in determining teacher quality and improving student outcomes?

6. What do you see as being important factors in developing an effective chair/principal relationship?
   - How many chairs of council have you worked with? Are there any differences?
   - How do you specifically develop your relationship with the chair of council?
   - Could you tell me what checks and balances do you see as being important in monitoring effective relationships between the school council and executive?

7. How does your school council hold itself accountable to its constituents?
   - How does your school council assess its influence on the performance of the college/school?

- What processes, if any, does your school council have in place to keep you to account in your role as principal?

8. What does your college/school council spend its time discussing at school council meetings?

9. In your opinion, what role does the school council have in creating a vision for the school?

- In your opinion how does this relate to the appointment of the principal and school council members?

10. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 7:
Research Survey

The following questionnaire is designed to explore, in some detail, the relationship of and between, School Council and School Leadership teams in the governance and leadership of Schools, with the aim of enhancing that relationship.

This questionnaire builds on a number of interviews undertaken in 2014 and 2015 with Anglican Schools Corporation Council Chairs and Principals in conjunction with a review of researched literature in this field.

Respondent Information

Please indicate your role within the governance structure
- Member of school council
- Chair of school council
- School principal
- Member of school executive

Please indicate in years, your length of service in your current role.

Theme One – Accountability

The following questions and statements relate to your observations as to whether and how your school council holds itself and the school principal accountable in their roles.

Your school council holds itself accountable to the school?
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice.

Your school council follows a consistent agenda at each of its meetings?

- Always

- Mostly

- Neutral

- Sometimes

- Never

Please comment as necessary for your choice.

Please give an indication as to the items that are consistently covered.

Each member of school council is required to annually reflect on their performance as a member of the school council?

- Always

- Mostly

- Neutral

- Sometimes

- Never

Briefly outline your reasons for your choice.

The school council has an effective strategic plan?

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Neutral

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

It is the role of the school principal to implement the strategic plan?

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Neutral

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

Please provide any additional comments and / or thoughts you would like to include in relation to theme one – accountability.

Theme Two –Alignment to school's vision

The following questions and statements relate to your perceptions as to the alignment of the school council to the school's vision.

The school has a clearly articulated vision statement?
This vision would be incidental to the schools strategic plan, that is it clearly outlines the values of the school.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

Your school council members see, as a part of their role, the responsibility of being the custodians of the vision.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

Your schools council sees it as important to appoint a school principal who is aligned to the vision of the school?

- Very Important
- Important
- Neutral
- Slightly Important
- Not Important

Please comment as necessary for your choice.

How important is it to recruit people, to join the school council, who are aligned to the school's vision?

- Very Important

- Important
- Neutral
- Slightly Important
- Not Important

Please comment as necessary for your choice.

Your school council has a process of induction for the new members of school council?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

Please provide any additional comments and / or thoughts you would like to include in relation to theme two – alignment to schools vision.

Theme Three - Leadership within the school community

The following questions and statements relate to your perceptions of the leadership offered to the school community.

It is important that the chair of the school council be seen as a leader within the school community?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

It is the role of the school council to be involved in the day to day management of the school?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

It is important for the school council to have the freedom to ask the difficult or tough questions as required in school council meetings?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

It is important for the school principal to have the freedom to ask the difficult or tough questions as required in school council meetings?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

The chair of the school council needs to be able to act as a critical friend to the school principal?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

Please provide any additional comments and / or thoughts you would to include in relation to theme three – leadership within the school community.

Theme Four – Strategy and Implementation

The following statements relate to your perceptions of how strategy is developed and implemented within the school council.

Your school council thinks strategically about the development of the school?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

A long serving school principal is important to the continued development of the school?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

It is important to have a long serving chair of council to the continued development of the school?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

It is important to have long serving members of the school council to the continued development of the school?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

The effective performance of the school is based on the combination of stable appointments of the school principal, chair of school council and school council members?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

The school council has appropriate processes in place for the identification, reporting, investigation and management of any conflicts of interest?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

Please provide any additional comments and / or thoughts you would like to include in relation to theme four – strategy and implementation.

Theme Five - Trust

The following questions and statements relate to your opinion as to how a strong culture of trust exists in school council and its relationship with the schools leadership team.

The relationship between the school principal and the chair of school council is the most important one that exists on the school council?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

There are procedures in place regarding the way the school council accesses information about the school from other staff members, including the school leadership team?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

A common faith alignment is important to building a culture of trust within the school governance structure?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

It is important to be able to trust the school principal to fulfil his/her role?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

It is important to be able to trust the chair of school council to fulfil their role?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

It is important to be able to trust the members of the school council to fulfil their roles?

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Neutral

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

Confidentiality is important in building a culture of trust within the school council?

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Neutral

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

Please provide any additional comments and / or thoughts you would like to include in relation to theme five – trust.

Theme Six – Value Add

The following statements relate to your opinions as to how the members of school council value add to the operations of the school council and the school more broadly.

Member of this school council add value to the school council?

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Neutral

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

The school council works as a team?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

This school council represents a balanced skill set across areas such as; legal, accounting/financial, education?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please comment as necessary for your choice

Please provide any additional comments and / or thoughts you would like to include in relation to theme six – value add.

Appendix 8:
Exemplar Transcript – Coded Interview with Chair of School Council
(This is not the full transcript)

Title of the thesis

The full name of the author

INTERVIEW WITH CHAIR 3

• Strong Chair of the SASC.

• Also — the current council banked at this and requested that structures stayed the same.

have to say in that era the ==then Chair was probably I'd have to say an autocrat and could make his position ?????6.30== but that's not what it is today which is good, so, so, because the ==council were keen to have me== they ==thought very hard== to ensure that's what happened because they thought that was in the best interest of the school and so did the then Principal.

Interviewer: Excellent. How do you see your role as Chair different to other members of council?

Control meetings   *listen to all*

Interviewee: Well I have to be the ==controller of the meetings== in that I have to ==listen to all points of view==, I ==can't be someone who forces my particular opinion==, if I was an ordinary member of council I might be taking it fairly one sided of some issues which would be natural. I can't do that, I have to listen to all sides of the conversation and *guide* ==guide people in a direction to listen to others too==, to make sure that whatever they vote for is a balanced view and is taking other people's opinion into account. I have to

close connection to Principal.
Confidant for Principal.

==work more closely with the Principal==, obviously because I have a lot more contact with the Principal, and one of the most important roles I think is for the ==Principal to balance== *the chair as a sounding board.* ==off ideas with the Chair on inner confidential information== which we may or may not share with other members of the council. I don't think other members of council have, how can I put this, I don't want to say a right to know, there role doesn't mean that they are automatically involved in knowing everything of the school and there may be times when ==some things are in fact left between the Principal and the Chair and never goes beyond that for whatever reason.== → *Share of confidential information between Chair and Principal.*

Interviewer: Anything else?

— understanding school context.

Interviewee: Also as a Chair, you need to be ==far more knowledgeable about the school and its tone==, and you probably, as a Chair, end up being at ==far more functions==, that's one of the roles, and when you expect to be the face of the school council and council

Define responsibilities.

4

can't get to everything, the Chairs need to ensure at every major school function, as far as that is possible, on order to get a better idea of how the school is operating, you need to have a more detailed knowledge than most of the school council members.

Interviewer: So more detailed operational... *(a more detailed knowledge, operationally)*

Interviewee: I think so only because it helps you with your conversations with the Principal when he wants to discuss something with you, and I have a closer working relationship with the Principal too, we go off campus once a term, and I take him to lunch somewhere where we can chew the fat over lots of things, um... · *Social support,* · *time to get to know the Principal.*

Interviewer: Good, so then this leads to the next one...when recruiting new members to the council, how do you define what the right type of person is to join your school council?

guidelines set by the organisation itself.

Interviewee: There are obviously qualifications set out by the corporation in terms of Christian commitment, that's very clear, we try to look for the kinds of skills we need *skill set* on the council and aim to appoint those kids of people not just to fill up places, [we're not just interested in filling up the ten places for the sake of having ten places filled.] *— not filling for the sake of filling.* We're looking for the skills required to assist the council and the Principal operate efficiently. We're not particularly looking for an age group. Our particular council is probably more weighted towards older people but with the last 2 most recent recruits *...2 new younger recruits.* it's lowered our average age which is probably a good thing, but again we're not into well, we think the council is too old so we must appoint younger people, it's the skill of the person is paramount, after the Christian commitment. What we try to do, what I *Balance on Council* try to do, is bearing all of that in mind, keeping agenda balance, I think that's *↳ gender* important, particularly in a co-ed school, but again, you know, I'm not going to appoint a man or a women just because they're a man or a woman – we don't set quotas. *No quota's on* What we have said is we don't want a situation where a particular church has too *Council.*

Good quote, because what is the talent message? value-add.

no age bounds .

not purely church affiliated – denomination connection but not Church based.

but fully aware of their co-ed status.

Appendix 9:
Exemplar Transcript – Coded Interview with School Principal

Title of the thesis

The full name of the author

INTERVIEW WITH PRINCIPAL 5

Interviewer: Can you begin by telling me how you became Principal of this school?

[handwritten: Interview process.]

Interviewee: Well I applied for an advertisement and came to a process of interviews and was offered the position. In terms of governance angle, I was interviewed by the Chairman of the college but a group of other members of the panel consisting of I think a Principal from another school, I think a representative from Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation and one or two council members from here. So a recommendation went forward to the board of the corporation and there had to be a presentation given both to the members of the college council and the representatives of the corporation council board, so it was quite an interesting process, that's how it came. Took a while too, took about 3 months by the time you started and finished it.

Interviewer: How and in what ways if at all does your role as school Principal differ to other members of the school council?

[handwritten: management of the strategic plan — does this mean by you influence custodian of it?]

[handwritten: No voting right.]

Interviewee: Well it's the reporting of the management of the strategic plan really, I don't vote. Even if I had the right to vote, I wouldn't vote at a school council meeting. It seems to me that I'm the executive officer of that school council, I bring the report of the operations, and the implementation of the council plan, and so it's quite different from the other roles of the college council.

[handwritten: implementation.]

[handwritten: the idea that I am the Executive Officer of the S.C.]

[handwritten: operational.]

Interviewer: When recruiting new members to the school council, how do you define what the right type of person is to join your council?

[handwritten: Not my decision to say who in an School Council.]

Interviewee: It's not really my decision at the end of the day, so it's really up to the council, I'm of that view, it's their role so I'm not influencing that, I'd have my preference though, my preference would be broad range, they'd be Christian because of the ethos and the direction of all of our flow, you know it's within the context of a Christian work, so they'd be Christian, so they'd be relevant, you'd probably have a range of different talents and

[handwritten: broad skill set.]

[handwritten: Faith position because of the openly Faith position of the school owning body.]

2

3 areas identified as needing to be on the School Council:
① education
② Christian M.
③ finance

expertise, not overlaid with education, not overlaid with Christian ministry, not overlaid ③ finance

with, you know not too many with finance but a range of them.

Interviewer: Could you describe your recruitment process for potential council members?

Interviewee: What, the council's recruitment process?

Interviewer: Yes, from membership of the council.

Interviewee: So, you know, again with those other words that's the role of the Chairman

primarily, but we tend, so the question is criteria?

One of the key roles of the Chair of Council is to determine who is on Council.

Interviewer: Recruitment process.

Network is an important idea who is known to recommend others referred.

Interviewee: Recruitment process is that the expertise that is lacking on the council is

Choice are — what skills etc are we missing?

identified. The network is sought and that might be an informal network of the council Chair

or the deputy Chair, but some advice is sought by the corporation board, some advice is

→ Advice areas: SIASC Board local Anglican Network from Council.

sought from the local Anglican network and that might be in this case, they don't have a

Bishop, but about to appoint one, this case generally among the churches, there will be a

network that comes from within our council and they might have people from broader, so

that's...then I think the Chairman and the deputy Chairman and one other, will narrow

down who they perceive, they might have 2 or 3, then they'll interview and propose,

Interview, propose and recommend.

recommend after that. Look it's not as tight a process as perhaps if you were employing

somebody, they are volunteer positions, there's no remuneration, but there is a structured

process.

So we need to remember they are volunteers, no pay, so a structured but relaxed process.

Why do people volunteer? Small committee of selection: communication chair / deputy chair

Interviewer: Do you play any role in that process?

Interviewee: No, if the college needs to be the mailing or clearing house we'll do that but I

won't get involved in...

↳ No role in selection?

Appendix 10:

Ethics Committee Approval

Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor
(Research)

Research Office
Research Hub, Building C5C East
Macquarie University
NSW 2109 Australia
T: +61 (2) 9850 4459
http://www.research.mq.edu.au/
ABN 90 952 801 237

MACQUARIE
University
SYDNEY·AUSTRALIA

6 June 2016

Dear Dr. McCulla

Reference No: 5201600275

Title: *An investigation of the relationship between school governance, school leadership and school effectiveness*

Thank you for submitting the above application for ethical and scientific review. Your application was considered by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC (Human Sciences & Humanities)).

I am pleased to advise that <u>ethical and scientific approval</u> has been granted for this project to be conducted by:

- Macquarie University

This research meets the requirements set out in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007 – Updated May 2015) (the *National Statement*).

Standard Conditions of Approval:

1. Continuing compliance with the requirements of the *National Statement*, which is available at the following website:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research

2. This approval is valid for five (5) years, subject to the submission of annual reports. Please submit your reports on the anniversary of the approval for this protocol.

3. All adverse events, including events which might affect the continued ethical and scientific acceptability of the project, must be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.

4. Proposed changes to the protocol and associated documents must be submitted to the Committee for approval before implementation.

It is the responsibility of the Chief investigator to retain a copy of all documentation related to this project and to forward a copy of this approval letter to all personnel listed on the project.

Should you have any queries regarding your project, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on 9850 4194 or by email ethics.secretariat@mq.edu.au

The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures are available from the Research Office website at:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics

The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely

[signature]

Dr Karolyn White
Director, Research Ethics & Integrity,
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee (Human Sciences and Humanities)

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) and the *CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.*

Details of this approval are as follows:

Approval Date: 24 May 2016

The following documentation has been reviewed and approved by the HREC (Human Sciences & Humanities):

Documents reviewed	Version no.	Date
Macquarie University Ethics Application Form		Received 7/04/2016
Response addressing the issues raised by the HREC		Received 23/05/2016
Participant Information and Consent Form	1	23/05/2016
Participant Questionnaire	1	07/04/2016
Letter to Mr. Willis, Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation	1	07/04/2016

*If the document has no version date listed one will be created for you. Please ensure the footer of these documents are updated to include this version date to ensure ongoing version control.

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