WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES, SKILLS AND LEADERSHIP
STYLES ADOPTED BY A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
IN A SUCCESSFUL VICTORIAN SPECIALIST SCHOOL?

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Education in the Faculty of Education at The University of Melbourne

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Bachelor of Arts, Graduate Diploma in Education,
Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Administration.

2005
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>contenido</th>
<th>página</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONTENTS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter 1  INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Purpose and Contribution of Study  | 8
1.2 The Research                      | 9
1.3 Research Question                 | 9
1.4 Background of Case Study School   | 10

**Chapter 2  METHODOLOGY**

2.1 Research Goals                    | 14
2.2 Case Study Method                 | 15
2.3 Multiple Perspective Case Study   | 16
2.4 Choosing a Case Study School      | 18
2.5 Data Collection                   | 20
2.6 Interviews                        | 21
2.7 Data Analysis                     | 27
2.8 Ethical Considerations            | 31
2.9 Limitations                       | 33
2.10 Delimitations                   | 33
2.11 Conclusion                       | 34
Chapter 5  DISCUSSION  123
5.1 Introduction  123
5.2 Successful Schools  123
5.3 Leadership  129
5.4 Styles of Leadership  129
5.5 Successful Principal Leadership Qualities  133
5.6 Vision  139
5.7 Commitment to Organisation  141
5.8 Conclusion  142
5.9 Future Research  145

REFERENCES  147

APPENDICES  154

APPENDIX 1: Principal Interview Questions  154
APPENDIX 2: Teacher/Senior Administration Council President/Parent Questions  156

APPENDIX 3: List of Tables  158
APPENDIX 4: List of Figures  159
Declaration of Originality

This thesis does not contain material which has been accepted for any other degree in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference is given on the text.

Signature: __________________________
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my supervisors David Gurr and Lawrie Drysdale for their encouragement, guidance, support and friendship throughout the course of my studies.

I wish to thank my friend Richard Hardy for his support and assistance. I would also like to particularly thank my husband Sam for his continual support and encouragement throughout my studies and especially during the completion of this thesis. To my parents, thank you for instilling in me a love of learning and a passion for education.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my son Jordan. As he embarks on his journey of learning may he encounter school leaders who will endeavour to aspire to the qualities and skills of successful school teachers and leaders in the hope of ensuring that he will experience the success and rewards they hold high. For it is in the commitment and dedication of our educators, that future generations will be able to experience success within educational settings and achieve their very personal best.
Abstract

As schools become more and more competitive for a share in the educational marketplace, what attracts parents and students to attend them is their success within the community. The overall success of a school is greatly determined by the leadership provided to them by the school principal and the senior administration team. Over the years many researchers have focused on the leadership of principals and what qualities and skills they need in order to be successful. Whilst this research has done the same, it has differentiated in part by extending its research and interviewing not only principals, but other school personnel and parents. This study also forms part of the International Successful School Leadership Project whereby, a total of 33 schools will be closely analysed in order to ascertain what skills and qualities are employed, and need to be employed, by successful principals leading successful schools. It is envisaged that at the end of the project, principals and aspiring principals will be able to focus on such findings in order to better their school and themselves. This research follows closely the research carried out by Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley and Beresford (2000) where they focused on the leadership and success of 12 schools in the United Kingdom. In order to conduct this research a single case study was employed with qualitative research skills engaged to analyse data. Data was obtained via a series of interviews and documentation pertinent to the school in question. The findings of this research clearly indicated that the school in question did emulate the key qualities of a successful school. Such qualities are:

- The academic and social progress made by students individually.
- Staff engagement and regular discussions on curriculum.
- Schools forming positive links with the wider community.
- Schools able to provide support to students, parents and staff.
➢ Strong leadership that is also flexible, adaptable, focused and committed to the over-arching vision and philosophy of the school.

➢ An environment conducive to teaching and learning.

➢ Quality teaching with staff committed and competent in their role as educators.

➢ Appropriate resources needed to deliver the curriculum.

In addition, the principal practised many of the leadership styles needed of a successful principal including: strong commitment to the school and education in general, support of staff, strong and well articulated vision for the school and the ability to adapt leadership styles. The findings further highlighted areas of improvement for the principal in question and indicated further direction of studies related to this theme.
CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION

1.1  Purpose and Contribution of Study

This research forms part of an international research project titled: International Successful School Leadership Project (ISSLP), which is a four year multiple perspective research project aiming at identifying the qualities, characteristics and competencies of successful school leadership in primary and secondary schools in different socio – economic circumstances across several countries. (Gurr, Drysdale, Di Natale, Ford, Hardy and Swann 2003:18). The antecedent of this research work was the study by Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley, and Beresford (2000), where the leadership of 12 primary, secondary and special school head teachers within the United Kingdom was examined. As part of this major research project, the researcher's role was to join the research team and be responsible for one of the Australian case studies that will contribute to the overall project. As stated in the Australian projects proposal, the researchers wrote (Caldwell, Mulford, Silins, Gurr, Drysdale and Swann 2002):

The primary aim of the research is to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of contemporary leadership exercised by principals.

The position of principal is the key leadership and management role in Australian schools ... Better understanding of the features of a successful principal and how these can be developed in new and current principals is clearly an important element in the improvement of our schools.
50 are seen as Special Developmental School students. The school essentially caters for students who have a range of complex and interacting impairments that will affect learning. The school does not limit its student intake to a particular zone; students travel from all over Melbourne to attend, however a free bus service is offered to those who live within the school's zone. Currently 30 percent of students come from out of zone (Drysdale 2003).

Staff Profile

At the time of study, there were 16 qualified teaching staff with most of these holding Teaching and Special Education qualifications. 15 staff are female and one male, and two staff work in a part time capacity. There are 13 Teacher Assistants and eight Specialist teaching staff. The Specialist teaching staff fill the following positions: Art and Drama, Music, Homecrafts, Reading Recovery and Early Years, Information Technology, Transition Programs, Swimming, Physical Education.

In addition, there are five Paramedical Staff occupying the positions of Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist and Speech Therapist. There is also a Social Worker and a Director of Integrated Services.

School Profile

The school's Mission statement states that Special School:

Believes that all students have the right to an education that enhances self-esteem, provides confidence and a sense of dignity. The School is committed to providing an environment that offers support, understanding and information to parents, families, caregivers and the wider community.
Their educational services go beyond the daily classroom instruction. Special School not only educates the child but it also endeavours to educate parents, families and care-givers on how best to meet the social, medical, paramedical and educational needs of the students, and how to live with and best care for a special needs child. The notion of a community centre with the school at its core, whereby students, their parents/families/care-givers and the wider community can access the facilities provided exemplifies a school working with and for the community. The Principal's welcome on the school's web site states:

*Our community has already made a substantial contribution towards creating an outstanding and unique specialist school, and clearly the commitment is to maintain this growth and development.... Every sector of our community justifiably shares in the pride of our accomplishment.*

Special School was recognised as a Fully Serviced School in November 2000 (Drysdale 2003). The school has adopted an 'Integrated Service' towards its students, this means that educational, medical, paramedical and mental health services operate simultaneously in the one environment. Their interest lies in each student achieving the best outcomes they possibly can, together with receiving the correct medical and paramedical support required. In addition to offering support to students the school ensures that parents, families and care-givers are also assisted in their role. Various forums and opportunities are made available to parents to assist them in developing their skills and knowledge as parents of students with special needs. It also provides legal and financial information forums for parents wanting to plan for the future of their children. Essentially it provides a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach in offering the above services. Such a unique approach towards education has allowed Special School to become an internationally
recognised educational provider modelling best practice for schooling children with special needs.

In addition, the school has also adopted the concept of a Fully Integrated Model of Service Delivery. Such a model ensures that all staff are responsible for setting appropriate goals for their students and ways in which students can achieve these goals. Staff also share in the commitment of empowering each other and collaborating on teaching practices which can maximise student achievement. Staff focus more on students achieving the set goals and outcomes that have been individually prepared for them rather than the traditional 'teaching territorial boundaries'.

*Principal Profile*

The principal has been in this role for 14 years. She is qualified with a Master of Education, a Graduate Diploma in Student Welfare, a Graduate Diploma in Curriculum, a Graduate Diploma in Educational Administration. Throughout her career she has gained the reputation as being an innovative teacher, excellent counsellor and an outstanding educator. In 2004, she was awarded an Order of Australia for services to education. She has also been recognised for her outstanding contribution to education and has received numerous awards from entities such as Churchill Fellow, Rotary International and Queens Trust.
CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Goals

The antecedent of this research work was the study by Day et al. (2000), in which the leadership of 12 primary, secondary and special headteachers in the United Kingdom was examined. These headteachers were considered to be not only effective leaders, but their schools had also demonstrated clear improvements in student achievements. Through the study, it became apparent that the headteachers were instrumental in creating such improvements and in the overall success of the school. To date a study of such nature has not been carried out in Australia, nor has there been an international study conducted. This research forms part of an Australian contribution to an international research project based upon the Day et al. study (2000). As per the focus of the Day et al. study (2000:25), the larger project aims to:

- Provide an understanding of the relationship between principal leadership and student outcomes.
- Study carefully the leadership behaviour and characteristics of a principal who is leading a successful school.
- Identify the knowledge, skills and dispositions that successful school principals use for implementing leadership practices.
- Contribute to existing literature on the relationship between school leadership and school effectiveness.
- Provide knowledge of what are the perceived components of successful leadership in a successful school.
- Contribute to the wider educational debate on the relationship between leadership and school effectiveness and improvement.
2.2 Case Study Method

The case study method was used to purposely reflect and mirror the methods employed by Day et al. (2000). As the overall aim of this project is to provide an international comparative study, it was vital that the methodology and research instruments used be of similar, if not identical nature to previous research. Below are statements reflecting the benefits of qualitative case study research.

Qualitative research seeks to probe deeply into the research setting in order to obtain understandings about the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in the context perceive them. (Gay & Airasian 2000:16)

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. (Merriam 1998:27)

A case study ... provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000:181)

Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument. Qualitative researchers go to the particular setting under study because they are concerned with context. They feel that action can be best understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs. (Bogdan & Bilken 1992:29-30)
In analysing the above quotes one can appreciate the reasoning for adopting a qualitative case study method for this research. Qualitative research allows the researcher to gain a greater understanding about the way things are and how the participants perceive them. The researcher is able to probe the situation they are investigating. Should the need arise for further questioning or, the nature of responses leads to a different set of questioning, this form of study allows for it. Furthermore, the ability to study the issue within its own environment gives a greater understanding of the issue itself. A further advantage of the qualitative case study approach is that, the issue under investigation is a contemporary one with a real life context; it is an issue where the situation and the people involved are real.

Hence, in choosing a qualitative case study method, the researcher has been able to enter the field of study and work within its boundaries. This has allowed for a greater insight into the school studied and a greater understanding of the characteristics and leadership styles of the principal in question, and how these have led to the development of a successful school.

2.3 Multiple Perspective Case Study

In the past, research carried out aimed at identifying the personal and professional attributes of successful principals has relied heavily on the principal's perspective alone. According to Ribbons and Sherratt (1992, as cited in Day et al. 2000:29) the majority of studies carried out on principal leadership have consisted of:

- Surveys which 'seek to say something about the views of heads and draw upon direct quotations from interviews' which the researcher has conducted with headteachers; and
Case studies written by headteachers which draw heavily upon their own experience, and as such are essentially 'autobiographical' in the perspective they provide on leadership in schools.

Day et al. (2000) further point out that past research, has ignored the many voices able to provide researchers with the knowledge and information needed to conduct studies on successful schools and successful leadership. The 'many voices' refer to those people who form the school community.

When researchers do turn their attention to alternative perspectives they prove to be rich sources of data ... by failing to draw upon the different 'perspectives' provided by students, teachers and others, previous research has ignored a plethora of evidence about both the 'production' and the 'consumption' of leadership in schools. (Day et al. 2000:29)

Day et al. (2000:30) succinctly state:

No single observer, not even the most perceptive of headteachers, can possibly see or hear everything ... the opinions of any individual, therefore, are inherently 'biased' by the position from which they have observed events. (Day et al. 2000:30)

The research on which this report is based, therefore, was designed to capture the 'silent voices' of authentic sources of data about leadership in the case study schools on the assumption that new insights would inevitably arise if all too familiar situations were viewed afresh from 'new angles'.

The ability to speak to a variety of people who work or are directly involved with the school, allowed the researcher to hear the multitude of 'silent voices', thus enabling a
rich collection of information to be gathered. In collecting responses from various school and school-related personnel and other documentary sources, the researcher was able to adopt the method of triangulation when checking validity and reliability of data. Within a group of people interviewed there are always those individuals who have a greater understanding and knowledge of the subject being studied. This may be due to a variety of factors such as: the length of time spent at the place in question, position held or general rapport with people within the organisation. Fraenkel and Wallen (2000:510) aptly name such individuals as "Key Individuals".

Some people in any group are more informed about the culture and history of their group, as well as more articulate, than others. Such individuals, traditionally called key informants, are especially useful sources of information.

Key actors are especially knowledgeable individuals and thus often excellent sources of information. They can often provide detailed information about a group's past and about contemporary happenings and relationships as well as the everyday nuances – the ordinary details – that others might miss.

In using a 'multiple perspectives' approach the researcher was able to gain a better insight into the personal qualities and attributes that contributed to the principal's successful leadership and the overall success of the school.

2.4 Choosing a Case Study School

With the nature of this study and its connection to the International Comparative Study of Successful School Leadership: Successful School Leadership in Australia, it rendered it imperative that the same criteria used by Day et al. (2000) be used when selecting a school for this case study. The criteria employed stated:
Schools are to be limited to the main school system in each country, in which Australia means only government schools will be involved. Samples of schools in each country will be selected which provide a wide range of contexts and leadership challenges. This will be done by means of a matrix that has been constructed around four dimensions which allow for theory-generating case studies to be chosen on the basis of representing extreme cases or maximum variation sampling. These dimensions are:

- Schools of different sizes operating within different phases of education;
- Schools located within a range of economic and socio-cultural settings;
- Schools in which principals who are widely acknowledged as being 'successful' leaders had spent different amounts of time;
- A range of male and female principals.

The research will define what is meant by 'successful' as referring to the richness of student and teacher learning experiences and the levels of school and student attainment, with three sources of information used:

- Schools which have received a 'positive' inspection report or equivalent, particularly with regard to the leadership provided by the principal.
- Schools which, on the basis of state-wide test and examination results, can be shown to be improving their performance over time at an exceptional rate.
- Schools in which their principals are widely acknowledged by their professional peers as being 'successful' leaders, (Caldwell et al. 2002).
It is with such criteria in mind that the researcher, in collaboration with the principal research team, chose to focus this case study on the Principal of a Specialist School in Melbourne, Victoria Australia. The school in question meets many of the dimensions and criteria outlined above. The school covers students from the ages of 2.5 to 18 and embraces students from various economic and socio-cultural settings. It is a school that has transformed itself and its curriculum under the leadership of the principal. In addition, the school has seen a significant growth in terms of student numbers and community participation and the Principal has been widely acknowledged for her leadership skills and ability to improve the school as a whole.

2.5 Data Collection

Prior to the commencement of interviews the researcher carefully examined the questions drafted for the ISSLP 2001. Questions were analysed and adapted to suit the context of the school under study. The researcher ensured that the same or similar questions were asked in order to enhance the close connection between this study and the larger research project. Interviews were taped and notes taken by an assistant interviewer. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and their ability to withdraw from the study at any point. Storage of information and data collected followed The University of Melbourne guidelines.

The main method of data collection used were one-to-one and group interviews with school and school community personnel. The principal was presented with an outline of staff the researcher wished to interview, however the choice of teaching staff, school board member and parent representative was based purely on availability at the time the researcher would be at the school. In hindsight this proved to be most beneficial as the selection of staff and parent representatives was random, offering
an account of the school that was not unduly influenced by the selection of interviewees.

In addition to interviews, other documentation was obtained which was further analysed and findings compared to those from the interviews. Documents obtained were: Principal’s Curriculum Vitae, School Annual Report 2001, Triennial School Review 2000, School’s Charter 2000-2002, Triennial School Review Self Assessment 2000 - 2002, Review Report 2003, School Magazine 2001, Principal’s supporting documents for the Telstra Businesswoman's Award 2001. In this manner, the data collected from interviews and other sources of information were cross-checked for validity and reliability.

2.6 Interviews

Given the project’s commitment to collecting new empirical data from a multiplicity of perspectives from within school organizations, and in so doing seeking to capture the ‘authentic voices’ of headteachers and other stakeholders, it was inevitable that the field research would centre around some form of interviewing. (Day et al. 2000:32)

Due to the similarity of study it was necessary to formulate interview questions based on the model used by Day et al. (2000) with necessary changes to fit the context of schools within Victoria, Australia. The researcher was further drawn to the idea of conducting interviews rather than questionnaires due to the greater depth of response that interviews generate.

Interviews have a higher response rate than questionnaires because respondents become more involved and, hence more motivated; they enable more to be said about the research than is usually mentioned in a covering letter to a questionnaire,
and they are better than questionnaires for handling more difficult and open-ended
questions. (Cohen et al. 2000:269-270)

For the purpose of this research it was decided to use open-ended questions as
these allowed participants to respond in detail to questions about which they were
knowledgeable. Furthermore, a semi-structured approach of interviewing allows for:

Greater flexibility … permits a more valid response from the informant’s perception of
reality … without fixed wording or fixed ordering of questions, a direction is given to
the interview so that the content focuses on the crucial issues of the study. (Burns
2000:421)

Cohen et al. (2000:275), further state a number of advantages associated with open-
ended interviews:

They allow the interviewer to probe so that she may go into more depth if she
chooses, or to clear up any misunderstandings; they enable the interviewer to test
the limits of the respondent’s knowledge; they encourage co-operation and help
establish rapport; and they allow the interviewer to make a truer assessment of what
the respondent really believes.

A copy of the interview questions is attached in the Appendix section of this research
paper. The interview questions cover most of the six basic types of questions as
outlined by Patton 2000:512-513 (cited in Fraenkel and Wallen). These types of
questions are:

1. Background or demographic questions are routine sorts of questions about the
background characteristics of the respondents.
2. **Knowledge** questions ... find out what factual information respondents possess.

3. **Experience or behaviour** questions ... questions ... to find out what a respondent is currently doing or has done in the past.

4. **Opinions or values** questions ... find out what people think about some topic or issue.

5. **Feelings** questions ... to find out how respondents feel about things.

6. **Sensory questions** ... find out what a respondent has seen, heard, tasted, smelled, or touched.

Below are tables displaying the questions asked of all groups and how they fall into such categories:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY OF QUESTIONS</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
<th>PRINCIPAL QUESTIONS</th>
<th>OTHER STAFF/SUPPORT PERSONNEL QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Background/ demographic | Background characteristics of the respondents | 1. On average, how many hours per week do you work during term time? | 1. Outline your career to date.  
2. Why do you choose to work in this school? |
| Knowledge | Factual information possessed | 1. Describe the ethos of the school.  
2. To what extent has the school become more or less challenging?  
3. Can you describe what makes this school successful? | 1. What are the main challenges at this school?  
2. To what extent has the school become more or less challenging?  
3. Describe the ethos of this school.  
4. Who has supported you/how have you been supported in meeting the challenges? |
| Experience | What respondent is currently doing or has done in past | 1. What are you planning over the next few years?  
2. Can you describe a situation, a complex issue or challenge you handled well? Can you describe a difficult challenge or issue you would have liked to have handled differently?  
3. What non-professional sources of support and encouragement do you use in doing your job? | 1. When did you arrive at this school and what is your position now? |
| Opinions | What people think about some topic | 1. What is your personal vision for the school?  
2. What are your priorities as a principal for this school?  
3. Identify the challenges facing the school and your principalship.  
4. What leadership strategies have worked well and which ones do you think are less effective? | 1. Have there been any failures? (What/Why?)  
2. How do you account for the school’s success?  
3. What has been the principal’s contribution to the success of the school?  
4. How would you describe the principal’s leadership style?  
5. Can you describe what makes this school successful? In what specific ways is it successful? What criteria do you use to measure its success?  
6. How do you account for the school’s success?  
7. Have there been any failures? (What/Why?) |
<p>| Feelings | How respondents feel about things | 1. How do you know you are doing a good job? | 1. How do you think the principal judges how well |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY OF QUESTIONS</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
<th>PARENT QUESTIONS</th>
<th>SCHOOL COUNCIL QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Background/ demographic| Background characteristics of the respondents                             | 1. Describe your involvement with the school, why and when did you decide to become involved? | 1. How many years have you served on council?  
2. Why did you join the school’s council? |
| Knowledge              | Factual information possessed                                              | 1. Describe the pupil population in this school.  
2. In what ways might the pupil population be described as "challenging"?  
3. Which are the most challenging aspects of the pupil population. Why?  
4. Describe the school. | 1. Describe the pupil population in this school.  
2. Describe the community from which the pupils are drawn.  
3. In what ways might the pupil population be described as "challenging"?  
4. Which are the most challenging aspects of the pupil population. Why?  
5. Have you been into the school during the working day?  
6. How does the principal |  

Table 2.2 Basic Types of Questions (other school personnel)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Experience</strong></th>
<th><strong>Opinions</strong></th>
<th><strong>Feelings</strong></th>
<th><strong>Sensory</strong></th>
<th><strong>deal/cope with the challenges of this school?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What respondent is currently doing or has done in past | What people think about some topic | How respondents feel about things | What has been seen, heard etc | 1. In what ways is this a successful school?  
2. How do you account for the successes of the school?  
3. How would you describe the principal's leadership style? | 1. Has the school become more or less challenging over the last three years?  
2. In what ways is this a successful school?  
3. How do you account for the successes of the school?  
4. What has been the principal's most important success in this school during the last three years?  
5. Are there any things you wished the principal did differently? | 1. How much of the success of this school is down to the principal? Why do you say so? | 1. Describe the ethos of this school.  
2. How do you think the principal judges how good or bad a job they are doing?  
3. How well do you think the principal is able to cope with the challenges faced?  
4. How do you think the principal judges how good or bad a job she's doing? | 1. What is the principal's vision for the school?  
2. What has been the principal's contribution to this success? Why/how?  
3. What has been the principal's contribution to this success? Why/how?  
4. What has been the principal's most important success in the school over the past three years? How was it achieved?  
5. As far as you can tell, why are the principal's professional relationships with others so good? | 1. What is the principal's vision for the school?  
2. What are the plans for the school over the next few years? Are they achievable?  
3. What has been the principal's contribution to this success? Why/how?  
4. What has been the principal's most important success in the school over the past 3 years? How was it achieved?  
5. The principal has relationships with numerous groups. What are the differences, if any, in relating with these groups? |
The interviews took place over 10 days and consisted of participants with an interviewer and assistant. The primary role of the interviewer was to establish a rapport with the respondents and engage in a friendly dialogue ensuring that the prepared questions were answered. The interviewer also allowed for diversions in the discussions, which provided extra information and data. The assistant ensured that the tape recording of the interview was conducted. Notes were also taken to act as back up should there be mechanical problems with the equipment. The personnel interviewed followed the guidelines as set out at the initial meeting on the International Research. Interviews ran for approximately 45-60 minutes. Persons interviewed were:

- Principal
- Assistant Principal One
- Assistant Principal Two
- Director of Integrated Services
- Teachers (four)
- Bursar/Registrar
- School Council President
- Parents (four)

Teachers and parents were randomly selected according to availability and willingness to participate in study. Due to the educational and academic abilities of the students it was decided that they should not be interviewed.

### 2.7 Data analysis

The number of interviews held led to the collection of a large amount of information to be analysed and commented upon within a minor thesis. It was however, necessary
to hear the viewpoints and opinions of various school personnel in order to fully conduct a multiple perspective case study. The data collected from the interviews was analysed upon receipt rather than at the end of the study. This allowed the researcher to have a clear understanding and recollection of the information given by the people interviewed. In analysing the data a semi-fixed grid was used, as not all personnel were able to respond to all questions asked. In addition, pertinent quotes were recorded for future use in the study. Upon completion of the grid, the researcher was able to code responses in order to group them according to categories. The categories were decided upon from the nature of the questions asked. Upon analysis of the various categories, major themes emerged.

Below are the grids used to record data obtained from the interviews.

**Figure 2.1 Principal interviews:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ethos/philosophy</th>
<th>Personal vision</th>
<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Challenges of school</th>
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**Challenges of leadership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges of leadership</th>
<th>Become more challenging</th>
<th>Become less challenging</th>
<th>How is school successful</th>
<th>Criteria used to measure success</th>
<th>Doing good job</th>
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**Role as leader**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role as leader</th>
<th>Effective leadership strategies</th>
<th>Ineffective leadership strategies</th>
<th>Situation well handled</th>
<th>Situation not well handled</th>
<th>Relations with others</th>
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**Non professional support**

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<tr>
<th>Non professional support</th>
<th>Hours worked a week</th>
<th>Relaxation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

**Figure 2.2 School Administration team and teacher interviews:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Educational Background</th>
<th>Year arrival</th>
<th>Original position</th>
<th>Current position</th>
<th>Why still there?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

**Main challenges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main challenges</th>
<th>Become more challenging</th>
<th>Become less challenging</th>
<th>Equipped to deal with challenges</th>
<th>Ethos of school</th>
<th>Principal's vision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Future plans**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future plans</th>
<th>Why school successful</th>
<th>Criteria used to measure success</th>
<th>Account for success</th>
<th>Principal's contribution to success</th>
<th>Most important success in last three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>
In organising the data in such a manner, the researcher was able to identify those personal and professional characteristics of the Principal that the various school personnel highlighted as being the driving forces behind the school's success and the success of the Principal. It also provided an opportunity to see how the Principal viewed herself in terms of professional success and the success of the school.

After analysis of the data collected during interviews, the researcher structured the Results section of the research into four main categories being; Leadership, Successes and Failures, Challenges and Direction. These areas also contain within them various sub categories. Below is a table displaying the four main areas and sub categories together with the questions asked pertaining to each category.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEADERSHIP</th>
<th>PRINCIPAL</th>
<th>TEACHERS</th>
<th>BOARD</th>
<th>PARENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>How do you know that you are doing a good job?</td>
<td>How do you think the principal judges how good or bad a job she is doing?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do you lead the teachers in dealing with these challenges?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
<td>What non-professional sources of support and encouragement in doing your job do you draw on?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with others</td>
<td>How would you typify your relationships / interactions with DE&amp;T school reviewers, DE&amp;T central and regional personnel, principal colleagues, teachers in this school, school councillors, parents, pupils?</td>
<td>As far as you can tell how would you typify the principal's professional relationships/interactions with DE&amp;T school reviewers, DE&amp;T central and regional personnel, principal colleagues, teachers in this school, school councillors, parents, pupils?</td>
<td>As far as you can tell why are the principal's professional relationships with teachers in this school, school council members, parents, pupils, so good?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>What is your vision for the school?</td>
<td>What do you think is the principal's vision for the school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUCCESS</td>
<td>Despite the challenges, would you say that this school is &quot;successful&quot;?</td>
<td>In what ways is this a successful school?</td>
<td>In what ways is this a successful school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In what specific ways is it successful?</td>
<td>How do you account for the successes of the school?</td>
<td>How do you account for the successes of the school?</td>
<td>What has been the principal's most important success in this school during the last three years?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do you account for the successes of the school?</td>
<td>What has been the principal's most important success in this school during the last three years?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to success</td>
<td>What has been your contribution to this success?</td>
<td>What is/has been the principal's contribution to this success?</td>
<td>What is/has been the principal's contribution to this success?</td>
<td>How much of the success of this school is down to the principal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failures</td>
<td>Has the principal had any failures during the last two years?</td>
<td>Which are the main challenging aspects of the pupil population?</td>
<td>Which are the main challenging aspects of the pupil population?</td>
<td>Do you think the school has become more or less difficult for the principal and teachers over the last few years? How/why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHALLENGES</td>
<td>What particular challenges do the pupils here present? Has the school become more or less challenging over the last three years?</td>
<td>Which are the main challenging aspects of the pupil population? Has the school become more or less challenging over the last three years?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipped to deal with challenges</td>
<td>How do you deal/cope with the challenges in this school? Who helps you both inside and outside school to meet these challenges?</td>
<td>How do you deal/cope with the challenges in this school? Who helps you to meet these challenges?</td>
<td>How does the principal deal/cope with the challenges in this school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTION</td>
<td>What changes have you planned to occur in the school over the next two years?</td>
<td>What changes has the principal planned to occur in the school over the next two years?</td>
<td>What changes has the principal planned to occur in the school over the next two years?</td>
<td>What do you think the principal is trying to do with this school? Do you know of any changes that the principal has planned to occur in the school over the next two years?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Describe the ethos of this school.</td>
<td>Describe the ethos of this school.</td>
<td></td>
<td>How would you describe the school (what is it 'about' and how does it 'feel' on a day-to-day basis)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.8 Ethical considerations

As with all modes of research there is clearly a guide of ethical behaviour that needs to be followed and adhered to. At the forefront of the researcher’s mind there needs to be the reminder that ultimately:

Research should support ... not harm human flourishing. (Bibby 1997:115)
Bibby (1997:116) outlines the basic principles which underline all educational research and which the researcher should endeavour to uphold, as being:

1. The consequences of a piece of research, including the effects on the participants and the social consequences of its publication ... must enhance the general welfare.
2. Educational research ... should be the development of human good.
3. No risk of significant harm to an individual is permissible ... public benefit is insufficient justification.
4. Respect for the dignity and worth of persons ... shall take precedence over self-interest of researchers.

It is essential that the researcher communicates openly and honestly with the people they are interviewing or whose documents they are analysing. Burns (2000:18) states that:

*(Informed consent) this is the most fundamental ethical principle involved. Participants must understand the nature and purpose of the research and must consent to participate without coercion.*

He further states that privacy and confidentiality are also of extreme importance. During this research the researcher aimed to uphold all the above-mentioned principles. The researcher clearly and openly discussed with all participants the nature of the study and their assistance with it. Furthermore, participants were given the opportunity to withdraw their participation and responses during the course of the study should they request it. At the conclusion of the study, the material collated and analysis of such was made available to the school's Principal and its staff.
2.9 Limitations

In a single qualitative multiple perspective case study there are some concerns about the validity and reliability of answers received. Whilst participants may initially approach their involvement with eagerness, their responses may not reflect a true and clear indication of their perspective and understanding of the issue at hand. This can be caused due to a number of factors. For example, as participants are aware that their responses will be read by the Principal and others, they may be hesitant to discuss their true perspectives and opinions even though anonymity is partly assured. Further, the presence of interviewer, assistant interviewer and tape recorder may create a climate where participants are not fully comfortable and open.

Additional limitations of such a study are that, in adopting a case study research method, the findings gathered pertain only to the school in question. However, when combined with other case studies in the ISSLP, general findings may result.

2.10 Delimitations

Via this research the researcher aims to provide a format of what qualities, skills and leadership styles are adopted by a successful school principal, in a successful Victorian school. Unfortunately though, this research is unable to fully and comprehensively answer such questions as it focuses only on one school. The delimitation of such a study is that it is only a single case study. This causes the parameters of the study to be very narrow and almost clearly defined. The answers derived at from this study are to be placed within a larger context and that is, the larger international study in order to arrive at comprehensive and thorough responses to the initial research question.
2.11 Conclusion

Despite the restriction a single case study poses, there are various benefits in analysing one school in-depth to help gauge a better understanding of its success and that of its Principal. The next chapter reviews relevant literature.
CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this research project was to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of contemporary school leadership. In Australian schools, it is the principal who has the greatest opportunity of ensuring school improvement, including improvement in learning outcomes for students. Consequently, it is imperative that research is undertaken to elicit and identify those factors that contribute to principals leading schools successfully. In order to achieve this it is necessary to analyse past literature and research findings.

In the literature review that follows, five main concepts are examined together with various other components that assist in the understanding of successful school leadership. The five main concepts are: successful schools; the path to becoming successful; leadership; styles of leadership and successful principal qualities. A brief overview is also provided on the study of successful head teachers carried out by Day et al. (2000) which is the antecedent of this study. For the purpose of this research paper the terms 'successful' and 'effective' are used interchangeably. Schools which are capable of improving student learning outcomes, whose overall curriculum is comprehensive and inclusive of all students and whose principals were regarded as being instrumental in such success, are perceived as being both successful and effective.
3.2 Successful Schools

Previous studies of successful schools do not confine their views of success based purely on standardised test results. Rather, successful schools are seen by many researchers in the field, as schools able to increase the overall achievements of their students in both curriculum and non-curriculum facets of education.

In judging a school’s success Walsh (1999:16-17) states:

*The progress made by pupils is a true record of a school’s success. There are many ways to measure a child’s progress. Some, such as reading tests or National Curriculum assessments, measure against clear national criteria for age. The most valuable and accurate strategies used by schools include a combination of these and a consideration of progress evidenced through analysis of work over time.*

However, in his study on successful schools, Reilly (1995:104) expanded on such views to incorporate the learnings and achievements exhibited by students in social skill development and problem solving. What emerged was a belief that found success is not dependent upon high student achievement alone. There is also the need for students to develop a sense of values acceptable within their society, together with skills enabling them to solve various problems or issues.

*A successful school is one that develops within all it’s students cognitive processing skills that allow them to reason effectively on their own about a myriad of problem areas. A successful school is also one that inculcates within its students a knowledge of their own value systems; a sense of values appropriate and necessary to improve their society; and a behavioral code that reflects these values.*
Silins and Murray-Harvey (1999:330) support Reilly by arguing that schools are complex organisations and as such require a careful balance of all factors that attribute to their success.

The curriculum is only one ingredient in providing the community with quality schooling. Schools are complex organisations that achieve desired outcomes through the interaction of the curriculum, the learning culture, leadership practices, teaching practices and organisational processes associated with effective schools. The quality of the interaction between these factors determine, in part, the quality of the desired outcomes.

Hopkins (2001:97) extends this argument by stating that school success is also attributed to factors outside the classroom. The partnership with the wider community is seen as also being integral to a school's success.

Success is associated with a sense of identification and involvement that extends beyond the teaching staff. This involves the pupils, parents and, indeed, other members of the local community. It does seem that those schools that are able to create positive relationships with their wider community can create a supportive climate for learning.

Brighouse and Woods (1999) point out that successful schools are those whereby teachers have experienced the high points of their careers, where they assisted students far beyond the minimum and where celebratory occasions are attended by all. They further highlight ten features “which, if adopted, would help to improve all schools”. The ten features can be clustered into three categories as outlined in the following table:
### Table 3.1 Features of Successful Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHING AND LEARNING</th>
<th>RESOURCES</th>
<th>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An agreed policy on the practice of leadership.</td>
<td>There is an effective use of available resources.</td>
<td>Encouragement for all staff to extend their skills, knowledge and expertise via formal and informal learning channels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and learning culture where discussions relating to teaching and learning are frank, knowledgeable and enlightening.</td>
<td>There are strong links and connections with the community of which schools are a part.</td>
<td>Action research is regularly undertaken so practices are constantly improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative teaching, planning and assessment take place.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reviewing teaching and learning so strengths and weaknesses are exposed and an agenda set for their improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff and students celebrate teaching and learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrichment and extension is provided to high achieving students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are relationships between the features. For instance, when celebrating teaching and learning, staff can achieve this best when they are committed to constantly improving and advancing their own personal knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning. Another example rests with staff holding discussions where the curriculum, student pedagogy and classroom delivery are discussed and modes of improving them are outlined, developed and implemented. Thus, whilst there are three separate categories, their functions constantly interrelate with one another.

Schools don’t exist in a vacuum hermetically sealed from the outside … to succeed in their hope of enhancing the teaching and learning process, schools must find new allies and build new sorts of connections to the community of which they are a part. (Brighouse & Woods 1999:99)

Thus, in looking at the qualities of successful schools the literature discussed points to a variety of factors. The individual progress made by students, both academically and socially, attribute to a school’s success, together with national test results. School’s that are able to further develop the already innate value system of students, and impart a behavioural code acceptable to society, can also be classified as successful. Success however, is also viewed from outside the classroom and playground. Schools able to form positive links and strengthen their relationship with the wider community are able to provide students, staff and parents with a wider array of support personnel. A final component of successful schools is the willingness on behalf of the school to allow staff to engage in discussion regarding curriculum.

After such discussions, schools supporting changes to curriculum, willing to try new programs, investing in resources and encouraging and celebrating the professional development and achievements of staff, are embarking on their development of a successful school. When all these facets are continually occurring, schools are working towards their success as an educational body.
3.3 Overview of Study of Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley and Beresford (2000)

As this research is based on that carried out by Day et al. (2000), the researcher has provided a brief overview of their work. In their study on successful school leadership, Day et al. (2000:xi-xii), focused on the leadership of 12 different types of schools in the United Kingdom that had raised student achievement. They chose the United Kingdom as they believed:

*The United Kingdom is a fertile context for research on school leadership.*

As the educational policy of the Labour government shifted from a 'market' phase to an 'excellence' phase, the government implemented a variety of programmes to increase student standards and consequently improve teacher performance (Bell 1999). Stemming from this has been the pivotal role of the Headteacher (referred to as Principal in Australian schools) seen as the critical force behind such successes within schools. Day et al. (2000), researched 12 effective headteachers through interviews not just with the headteachers and their staff, as is often done in school leadership research but also, with parents, governors, deputy heads, support staff and students. Parents and students were included in the study because the researchers felt that:

*We cannot know what it means to offer effective leadership to these critical stakeholders unless we include them as sources of data in our research. This study achieves what has rarely previously been attempted.* (Day et al. 2000:xiii)

They focused on the qualities, style and characteristics of the headteachers and how these features accounted for the success of the schools. Day et al. (2000:1), define their choice of successful schools studied, as schools which:
Had in common not only a reputation for effectiveness among their constituencies but also the fact that they had been adjudged effective through a range of independent indicators including external inspection reports. All had consistently raised student achievement levels - in this sense they were 'improving' schools - and all the headteachers were recognized as being instrumental in this and in the overall success of the schools.

At the end of their study they concluded that:

Effective leadership is defined and driven by individual value systems, rather than instrumental managerial concerns. Management and leadership were essential components of these headteacher's roles and heads were able to do both successfully. They engaged in people-centred leadership, constantly creating, maintaining, reviewing and renewing the learning and achievement cultures for students, staff and the close communities of parents and governors whom they served. (Day C., Harris A. & Hadfield M. 2001:26)

3.4 Qualities of Successful/Effective Schools

A study looking at the effectiveness of 12 schools spanning a period of five years by Gray, Hopkins, Reynolds, Wilcox, Farrell and Jesson (1999), found that in order to improve, the schools had focused on developing three areas:

- The first one looked at tactics whereby student performance was monitored, staff's commitment was sustained over a lengthy period of time and support was given to staff and students.
The second area focused on strategic thinking whereby, areas of weakness within the school were addressed and collaborative working relations amongst staff were fostered and encouraged.

The third looked at organisational restructuring where ways on becoming specific on how student learning was to improve occurred.

Furthermore, schools need to develop a culture of learning and teaching excellence not only amongst students but also amongst staff. Schools should encourage discussions on current teaching methodologies and critically evaluate them. The strengths and weaknesses of these should be highlighted, and change invited. Teaching staff should be encouraged to continuously undertake professional development either via formal or informal channels in order to better their understanding of new and innovative teaching and learning strategies. Students whose teachers are engaging in learning do benefit, as they are the recipients of new strategies, styles and content. The leadership of a school needs to foster the professional growth of its staff and support the changes or demands such a growth may bring. When there is a total culture of learning and a desire for the betterment of student and staff education, school programs do experience success.

Whilst principals may develop and support a school’s overall success, it is the teachers who are able to bring about success within the classroom. Walsh (1999:75) points out:

The heart of every successful school is the quality of its teaching.

When schools fail, it is because teachers are not addressing the childrens’ needs appropriately; because they are not sufficiently knowledgeable about what it is the children know and should learn next; or because they do not offer appropriate
models of commitment, fairness and integrity to children in their formative years.
(Walsh 1999:23)

In their study on successful schools, Leithwood and Riehl (2003:25) clearly state the same:

One of the strongest in-school influences on student learning appears to be teachers' expectations that students can and will succeed. Teacher expectations help to determine the academic press of a school and its classrooms, the curriculum to which students are exposed, and the efforts teachers will make to help students achieve at high levels.

Whilst classroom teaching can be a solitary activity separated from other adults, there needs to be a whole school approach to curriculum mapping and planning. Walsh (1999) comments that in order to engage students in their work and teach in an effective and successful manner, teachers need to work in an environment where there is a whole school approach to planning the curriculum. Teachers need to plan their day-to-day teaching in order to clarify their own thinking and identify what they are teaching.

In analysing effective schools, Reid, Hopkins and Holly (1987), discussed a number of qualities that need to be present within the school and within its organizational structure. These include: good management, a favourable school ethos, an orderly school environment, strong and efficient staff, an achievable curriculum to all students, quality teaching and learning, high expectations by all and, student leadership within the school. Nearly ten years later, Reilly (1995:104-105) devised a list of seven characteristics pertinent to successful schools. They are:
1. Governance and control of the schools are shared on the part of parents and teachers.

2. The school is a safe and secure environment for students, teachers, and parents.

3. The mission priorities of the school are clearly defined.

4. The knowledge base and teaching skills of the teachers are adequate to successfully achieve the mission priorities.

5. Resource allocations are determined by program priority.

6. The principle of Equifinality is followed and encouraged.

7. Evaluation of success is process oriented and based on both cognitive and personal-social factors.

...if a school is to be successful it will seek to implement and work towards achieving these characteristics. One, or even three, of them will not be enough; they must be perceived as a total package. (Reilly 1995:134)

It needs to be noted that a successful school needs to have in place, or be in the process of implementing, all of the above points. A school cannot merely rely on implementing only two or three aspects. The success of a school is dependent on the total presence of all points raised. In summary, successful schools need to have a clear understanding and commitment to their mission and values. The physical environment needs to be not only safe and secure, but also pleasant to look at and work in. Teaching staff need to have a thorough understanding of pedagogy and cognitive skill development relevant to the students they teach. A focused and committed leader and senior management team are also necessary. They need to provide the tools but also give teachers the creativity and independence in curriculum delivery. In conclusion, there needs to be a strong rapport and collaborative working partnership between the school, the students and the parent body. All need to be working together for the betterment of their children.
Sammons (1999:195) proposed eleven factors for the achievement of effective and successful schools. The factors are:

1. A firm and purposeful participative approach by the leadership team.
2. Shared vision and goals where there is unity of purpose, consistency of practice, collegiality and collaboration amongst staff.
3. A learning environment where the school is an attractive working environment and an orderly atmosphere.
4. A concentration on teaching and learning where there’s maximisation of learning time and an academic emphasis.
5. Purposeful teaching where lessons are structured, there is clarity of purpose and efficient organization.
6. High expectations all round whereby expectations are clearly communicated and they provide an intellectual challenge for all involved.
7. Positive reinforcement with clear and fair discipline and feedback.
8. The monitoring of student progress and evaluating the school’s performance.
9. Highlighting pupil’s rights and responsibilities and raising their self esteem and distributing responsibility amongst staff.
10. Creating a home-school partnership with parental involvement in childrens’ learning.
11. Creating a learning organization for staff, providing school-based staff development.

Whilst many factors were similar to those presented by Reilly (1995) and Reid et al. (1987) new ones were also proposed. Sammons (2001) discussed the need for the provision of school based staff development to ensure teachers were up to date with current and new trends in teaching and learning. The notion of shared responsibility
amongst staff, whereby positions of responsibility are created, was also raised. This reinforces the concept of "shared leadership" (which will be discussed later in this chapter). As schools become more complex there is the need to have and nurture "the energy, commitment and contributions of all who work there" (Duignan & Marks 2003:20). In regards to student development Sammons (2001) points out the need to have a clear and fair discipline approach that also assists in raising the self-esteem of students. The final two issues raised relate to creating a strong parental involvement and constantly monitoring and evaluating the performance of students and the school in order to ensure that improvement is achievable in these areas.

One of the common threads in the literature of successful schools is that, in order to achieve and maintain a successful school, there needs to be strong leadership on the part of the principal of the school. The leadership needs to be flexible and adaptable to the situation at hand. In addition, the leadership needs to remain focused and committed to the over-arching vision and philosophy of the school. In order to render the school truly successful, its vision and philosophy need to be clearly and constantly communicated to the school community. Furthermore, all those involved with the school need to hold as their primary focus, the educational, social and emotional growth and achievements of the students. There needs to be a common goal and a collaborative commitment on behalf of all those involved with the school to ensure that such objectives are met. Silins and Murray-Harvey. (1999:341) discuss the need to have committed and dedicated teachers whose focus is on teaching and learning. Teachers need to be equipped with the right resources to deliver their programs and students need to be supported in grasping the concepts taught.

*Schools in which the students were most successful were organised and managed in ways that supported rather than distracted teachers from what they saw as their main role – helping their students succeed at school. In this study, a good school is clearly*
one where the leadership supports the teaching and where the teaching supports the students – in their own way all working towards a common goal; successful achievement outcomes.

Reid et al. (1987:32) further add:

Effective schools require strong leadership by the principal and other staff. Teachers should aim as high as possible for their students at all times. They should formulate a clear set of academic goals for students and place an emphasis upon learning within the school.

Such qualities as interpreted by Reid et al. (1987) clearly identify the need for all personnel within the school to undertake professional development, experience personal achievements and personal recognition. There is a strong need for principals to direct and lead their schools however; they also need to allow staff to implement and experiment with new programs and ideas. This in itself requires a great deal of trust within the staff and an ongoing commitment by the school to adopt new teaching and learning methods and technologies. A point raised by these researchers is that, students too, expect to have competent and dedicated teachers.

It is when teachers are competent and dedicated to the teaching and learning of their students, that students experience success. A successful school can be seen as one where there are open channels of communication amongst all interested parties. In addition, there are expectations placed upon everyone and there is freedom of experimentation, tolerance and acceptance of failure should programs not achieve their desired results. Essentially there is a climate of trust, openness and vigour.

Focusing on the literature studied to date, successful schools are those schools that not only achieve high results in national and state tests but more so, are schools
which develop and deliver a curriculum, which is able to see all students achieve and progress. School programs and classroom delivery play a large role in meeting individual needs, catering for individual differences and allowing students to achieve success according to their personal levels. The teaching staff of such schools also greatly attribute to the school's success. They work in a collaborative manner and constantly develop a curriculum, which meets the needs of the governing authorities but mostly, meets the educational, social and emotional needs of the students. Students need to be engaged in their learning and they need to see a connection between the classroom and the society in which they live. When learning in schools is meaningful and understandable to students, then students will focus, achieve and excel. In order to achieve this, teachers need to keep abreast of current teaching and learning trends and they also need to embrace new techniques in the dissemination of knowledge. It is the individualisation of content to meet the needs of its recipients that invites students to work beyond the minimum and excel. There also needs to be a focus on developing students socially, emotionally and physically so that upon leaving school they are empowered and able to meet the demands society places upon them in a positive manner.

3.5 The Path to Becoming Successful

Whilst the previous section gave an insight into the qualities of successful schools, this following section looks at qualities needed by schools to enable them to develop into successful schools. Walsh (1999) discusses the key elements needed to ensure that schools become and remain successful. He argues that schools need to embrace their strengths and weaknesses and develop strategies on how to overcome or enhance them as a collective body. Such planning for improvement needs to be embraced by all staff.
Schools should know their priorities and have a clear idea of how they are developing. This development should be supported through good financial planning and through judicious use of target setting for whole-school improvement. Knowing your own strengths and weaknesses and working on them together is the essential element in building a successful school. (Walsh 1999:203)

Sammons (1995) and Reynolds (1996) also identified a range of factors associated with effective schools. In summary, their findings stated that to achieve a successful school, schools needed to display:

- Leadership that is professional and encourages staff to take on leadership positions within the school itself.
- Teaching staff which are committed to the teaching and learning of their students.
- Teachers who are dedicated and willing to continuously undertake professional development in their specialist areas.
- An environment which is conducive to the teaching and learning of its students and they are nurtured in achieving their optimum in educational, social and emotional spheres.
- A school which provides the resources needed to deliver its programs.
- An overarching degree of high expectations amongst all members of the school community whereby the leadership team places expectations on teachers to deliver programs thoroughly and accurately, teachers who expect students to work to their full potential and, students who expect to have committed and competent teachers.

In analysing the above, schools wanting to become successful or wanting to maintain their current high level of success need to focus on a number of core aspects. Whilst the findings presented are by no means exhaustive of the available literature there
are commonalities that need to be highlighted. Schools wanting to become successful need to enforce and adopt a shared leadership approach, whereby teachers skilled and or experienced in certain fields are given the opportunity to lead faculties or special programs. Further analysis of this concept occurs later on in this chapter. The role of the principal cannot however, be under-estimated. They need to possess strong leadership qualities and clearly define the vision and mission of the school and how it is to be achieved. Further aspects in becoming successful are those associated with the teaching programs and staff delivering such. Teachers need to be committed in their role and highly skilled in their subject matter. In order to ensure that their pedagogical and cognitive knowledge and skills remain at the forefront of current educational practices, schools need to be committed in offering staff continual professional development. When schools introduce new programs or enhance those within the current curriculum, they need to be committed to providing all the necessary resources both to students and staff in order for students and such programs to succeed. The total school environment also needs to be conducive to student learning and staff working. Schools need to be safe, secure and attractive places to learn and work in. The final two factors required for schools to develop into successful schools are student leadership and parental and community involvement. As schools are an integral component of the community in which they are in, it is of most relevance that students, parents and the wider community be given the opportunity to take part in the various forums where decisions pertaining to educational programs, building works, extra curricula programs and linking education and employment are made. In his article "Moral Authority, Community and Diversity", Sergiovanni as quoted in Wong and Evers (2001:3), discusses the concept of the "high performance theory" where teachers and parents are involved together in making decisions regarding the school. He states:
If we really want high performance schools, then we will have to have the right connections and the way to get the right connections is by emphasizing, bonding and binding. Parents, teachers, students and their families need to be bonded together into a ‘we’. They need to be transformed ... to a collectivity with shared interests.

Working in such a collaborative manner, and focusing on the qualities raised above, schools are ensuring that decisions and discussion have the input of various people with skills, knowledge and personal perspectives from various fields. Encompassing the above allows for schools to continually develop positively and work towards their overall success.

3.6 Leadership

As mentioned previously, a key aspect of a school becoming and remaining successful is the leadership provided to it by the principal. Whilst there are many facets to creating a successful school, the importance of the principal’s leadership cannot be overlooked. The leadership provided to a school by its principal is crucial in determining the direction of the school and the extent to which policies; procedures and programs are implemented and fulfilled. For schools to achieve success, the commitment from all stakeholders (staff, students, parents and governing bodies) is required to implement and enforce all policies, procedures and programs. However, the principal still has a very strong and crucial role in assisting all stakeholders to maintain, strengthen and at times develop such commitment.

In order to clarify the term leadership, the researcher has chosen a few definitions provided over time. Sarros and Butchatsky (1996:3) stated:
Leadership is defined as the purposeful behaviour of influencing others to contribute to a commonly agreed goal for the benefit of individuals as well as the organisation or common good.

To lead an organisation is to instil in the people a belief in the mission of the organisation, to encourage them to believe in the leader’s vision and to strive for its accomplishment. Leaders are aware that at times they will be met with discontent and non co-operative staff or colleagues however, they do not fail to lose the focus they have and they continue to strive for the achievement of their vision. They have the ability to communicate their ideas clearly and give clarity to the aims they wish to achieve. They set realistic goals for the organisation and are willing to accept criticism or ideas from staff.

Leaders work consciously to help others learn new things, and to assist the organisation in adapting to changing social and economic conditions. (Sarros and Butchatsky 1996:3)

Bennis and Nanus (1985:2-3) wrote:

Leadership is the pivotal force behind successful organizations and that to create viable organizations, leadership is necessary to … develop a new vision of what they can be, then mobilize the organizational change toward the new vision.

In their article, Leithwood and Riehl (2003:9) wrote about school leaders as being:

Those persons, occupying various roles in the school who work with others to provide direction and who exert influence on persons and things in order to achieve the school’s goals.
In providing a definition of leadership, Leithwood and Riehl (2003:8) point out that leadership has two functions. Firstly, it provides a direction for the group to follow or aspire to and, secondly, it exercises influence over the group. They further qualify these two functions by stating:

*Leadership involves purpose and direction. Leaders know the ends toward which they are striving. They pursue goals with clarity and tenacity, and are accountable for their accomplishment.*

*Leadership is an influence process ... influencing the thoughts and actions of other persons and establishing the conditions that enable others to be effective.*

In consolidating the definitions given to the term 'leadership' a number of recurring themes emerge. They imply that fundamentally, leadership is the ability of a person to influence others, with the aim of fulfilling the goals of the organisation and the personal vision of the leader. Leaders help others acquire new knowledge in order to change the organisation and meet the social and economic conditions of the time in order to become successful. Leaders also assist in the implementation of changes in order to realize the vision of the organisation and their own personal vision.

Part of these skills and qualities include the bringing together of those within the organisation with a passion and desire to achieve the vision of the organisation. It also relates to the skills required in balancing various authorities and their demands ensuring that their requirements are met without encroaching on the needs of staff and the organisation as a whole. From an educational perspective, despite the logical notion that effective and successful schools depend on the dedication and commitment of the staff, the reality is that the school's success very much depends
on the leader. Whilst it is difficult, almost impossible to define the need and importance of leadership within a school, it is of value to look at some of the qualities and characteristics associated with it. Dunford, Fawcett and Bennett (2000:2) state the following:

_Leadership is the ability to move the school forward, whilst management is concerned with the procedures necessary to keep the school running ... Leadership is concerned with the procedures necessary to keep the school running. Leadership is concerned with the long term and the strategic, management with the immediate and short term ... aspects of leadership can also be delegated, but primarily it must ultimately remain the responsibility of the head teacher._

Hence, leadership and in particular school leadership focuses on the ability of the principal to steer all stakeholders in realizing the school’s vision. Leadership looks at the ability to influence those around you to work collaboratively with the aim of achieving the vision of the organisation. Whilst doing this, it is also hoped that those working with the leader develop a belief in the vision so that a total commitment is had by all.

### 3.7 Styles of Leadership

Having briefly defined the term leadership, it is also important that a succinct overview of leadership styles be provided. For the purpose of this study the researcher has chosen to focus on the six styles of educational leadership as identified by Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999:18-19). Below is a concise summary of these six styles including who exerts such influence, what and whom they influence and the outcome of such influence.
### Table 3.2 Styles of Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style of leadership</th>
<th>Who exerts influence</th>
<th>Purpose for influence</th>
<th>Outcome of influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>Typically those in formal leadership roles especially principals.</td>
<td>Enhance the effectiveness of teachers' classroom practice.</td>
<td>Increased student growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Typically those in informal leadership roles, but not restricted to such persons.</td>
<td>Greater effort and productivity.</td>
<td>Increased capacity of organization to continuously improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>Those in formal administrative roles.</td>
<td>Increase sensitivity to the rightness of decisions. Increase participation in decisions.</td>
<td>Morally justified courses of action. Democratic schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participative</td>
<td>The group including non-administrative organization members.</td>
<td>Increase participation in decisions.</td>
<td>Increased capacity of organization to respond productively to internal and external demands for change. More democratic organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>Those in formal administrative roles.</td>
<td>Ensure efficient completion of specified tasks by organization members</td>
<td>Achieve formal goals of the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent</td>
<td>Typically those in formal leadership roles.</td>
<td>Better meet the needs of organization members. More effective responses to organization's challenges.</td>
<td>Achieve formal goals of the organization. Increased capacity of organization to respond productively to internal and external demands for change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading through such styles, it is evident that they are applicable to the various situations encountered by leaders. Whilst there are many leadership styles, the categorisation of Leithwood et al. (1999) described the styles most used by school principals and other school personnel in leadership positions. Leithwood et al. (1999:8-15) describe the styles as follows:
Instructional: allocates authority and influence to formal administrative roles (usually the principal). It assumes that the critical focus for attention by leaders is the behaviours of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students.

Transformational: assumes that the central focus of leadership ought to be the commitments and capacities of organizational members. Higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals and greater capacities for accomplishing those goals are assumed to result in extra effort and greater productivity.

Moral: values are a central part of all leadership and administrative practice. It assumes that the critical focus of leadership ought to be on the values and ethics of leaders themselves.

Participative: assumes that the decision making process of the group ought to be the central focus for leaders … form(s) of leadership that are more consultative, open and democratic, involving teachers and parents much more in school decision making.

Managerial: assumes that the focus of leaders ought to be on functions, tasks, or behaviours and that if these functions are carried out competently the work of others in the organization will be facilitated.

Contingent: assumes that what is important is how leaders respond to the unique organizational circumstances or problems that they face as a consequence.

They further state:
The long term purposes or intended outcomes of the six leadership models vary in breadth and in their acknowledgement of future challenges for change likely to be encountered by the organization. ... these six overlapping approaches to school leadership are among the most obvious starting points for addressing the leadership needs of schools as they respond to the challenges of today and tomorrow. (Leithwood et al. 1999:20)

In summary, whilst leaders may exhibit a stronger affiliation towards a particular leadership style, to meet the demands of their role in a successful manner, they need to be conversant in all styles. Successful principals are able to read into situations and adopt the style of leadership most suited to the situation and those it involves. As many researchers have stated, an emergency evacuation calls for the managerial almost authoritarian style of leadership as the situation requires immediate action. Whereas, changes to curriculum delivery and structure, may require participative, contingent and moral leadership styles. Principals need to be aware and learned in regards to the various facets of leadership styles and understand when and where such styles are best suited. Goleman (2000) reinforces this by saying:

The more styles a leader exhibits, the better. Leaders who have mastered four or more ... have the very best climate and business performance. And the most effective leaders switch flexibly among the leadership style as needed. ... Such leaders don't mechanically match their style to fit a checklist of situations – they are far more fluid. They are exquisitely sensitive to the impact they are having on others and seamlessly adjust their style to get the best results.
Northouse (1997:53) discusses the ability to integrate the various leadership styles as a 'situational approach'. Essentially this refers to leaders being aware, able and willing to alter their style according to the situation at hand.

*The basic premise of the theory is that different situations demand different kinds of leadership ... to be an effective leader requires that an individual adapt his or her style to the demands of different situations.*

### 3.8 Successful Principal Qualities

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) completed a review of research titled "What Do We Already Know About Successful School Leadership?" whereby they discussed a number of factors which contribute to the development of successful principals and successful schools. Below is a brief review of their study.

In their paper the authors pointed out the various bodies influencing principals to ensure that their schools and students are high achievers. They also found a growing amount of demand for schools to be held accountable for their outcomes. Hence, successful principals are faced with the task of ensuring that schools and students are constantly performing at higher levels whilst maintaining accountability for the process in which they set out to achieve such performance.

*Educational leaders are being held accountable not only for the structures and processes they establish but also for the performance of those under their charge.*

(Leithwood & Riehl 2003:4A)

They further state:
Pressure is being placed on actors at all levels from students themselves to teachers, principals, and district leaders, to produce documented evidence of successful performance.

In focusing on such pressures faced by principals of successful schools, the authors then identified six claims about successful school leadership.

These are claims concerning the contribution of school leadership to student learning, the prominence of principals and teachers as sources of school leadership, the wider distribution of leadership to others in and out of the school, the “basics” of successful leadership practice in all contexts, and additional practices required for success in particular but prominent school contexts. (Leithwood & Riehl 2003:9A)

**Six Claims on Successful School Leadership**

The first claim states that in order to do well at school, students primarily need a well developed and planned curriculum accompanied by high quality teaching. Following such, they benefit mostly from the positive effects of strong school leadership.

*Leaders influence student learning by helping to promote vision and goals, and by ensuring that resources and processes are in place to enable teachers to teach well.*

(Leithwood & Riehl 2003 B)

The second claim discusses the notion that whilst principals and teacher leaders provide most of the school’s leadership, schools do have other sources of leadership within them.
Research suggests that teacher leaders can help other teachers to embrace goals, to understand the changes that are needed to strengthen teaching and learning, and to work together towards improvement. (Leithwood & Riehl 2003 B)

Schools need to broaden the sphere of leadership and include parents and students as possible leadership sources. Such a notion is in direct correlation with the third claim which discusses the need to distribute leadership to people other than principals and teachers who are part of the school. Schools are "multi layered" hence, it's rather logical to spread the various leadership functions throughout the school in order to gain a wider perspective of the needs of stakeholders and how to best meet them.

The fourth claim argues that some leadership practices are useful in almost all organizational circumstances (Leithwood & Riehl 2003:16A). The authors have further categorised such practices into three areas using Leithwood's (1996) category labels. However, each category has various points within it, which have been clarified by the researcher as follows:

**Table 3.3 Leadership Practices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Setting Directions</th>
<th>This dimension of leadership practice includes actions aimed at developing goals for schooling and inspiring others with a vision for the future. (Leithwood &amp; Riehl 2003 B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Identifying and articulating a vision</td>
<td>School leaders assist with the identification and formation of a vision that serves to inspire staff to work to their full potential and reach their goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Creating shared meanings</td>
<td>When members of the school community share a clear understanding about the students, the educational programs offered and the educational system; the community is better equipped to support the school's vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Creating high performance expectations</td>
<td>Effective leaders are able to clarify to their staff what the shared vision is and what the reality is and hence, work better at bridging the gap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Fostering the acceptance of group goals</td>
<td>Effective leaders are able to foster cooperation amongst others and enable them to work towards the achievement of common goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Monitoring organizational performance</td>
<td>When leaders develop and review the goals of the school, they do so after carefully examining how well the school is performing. The two roles exist in tandem so that the best outcome is achieved for students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Communicating</td>
<td>Leaders clearly and convincingly convey the school’s vision and invite stakeholders to comment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Developing People</td>
<td>This area concerns itself with a leader’s ability in devoting personal attention … to an employee and the use of the employee’s capacities increases levels of enthusiasm and optimism, reduces frustration, transmits a sense of mission and indirectly increases performance. (Leithwood &amp; Riehl 2003:19 A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Offering intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>Leaders are able to pose questions to their staff which challenge them re-visit their current curriculum offerings, teaching techniques and investigate possible changes of such.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Providing individualised support</td>
<td>Leaders acknowledge and support staff as they encounter both personal and professional difficulties when implementing new programs, they further provide incentives and structures to promote change. (Leithwood &amp; Riehl 2003 B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Providing an appropriate model</td>
<td>Effective leaders ensure that they model the desired dispositions and actions (Leithwood &amp; Riehl 2003 B) that are in accordance with the values of the school. Staff seeing such behaviour further increase their belief in their own capacity as educators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Redesigning the Organization</td>
<td>Effective school leaders are those who are able to develop their school into learning organizations that support and sustain the overall performance of staff and students. In order to achieve such an outcome, leaders should follow what are considered to be the three basic skills of leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Strengthening school cultures</td>
<td>Leaders help develop school cultures that embody shared norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes and that promote mutual caring and trust among all members. (Leithwood &amp; Riehl 2003 B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Modifying organizational structures</td>
<td>Effective leaders are able to redesign tasks, procedures and deploy resources in order to accomplish the school’s goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Building collaborative processes</td>
<td>In allowing staff to discuss and make decisions regarding school issues which directly affect them and which they are knowledgeable about, staff believe that they are able to shape the organizational context to meet their own needs to goal accomplishment. (Leithwood &amp; Riehl 2003:21 A)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fifth claim discusses the way in which successful leaders are able to effectively run a school whilst balancing a myriad of departmental policies which aim at holding
their school accountable. The four steps followed to ensure schools meet such accountability mechanisms are:

1. **Market approaches** – where leaders create and sustain competitive schools.
2. **Decentralization approaches** – where leaders are able to empower others within the organization to make decisions.
3. **Professional approaches** – where leaders create favourable conditions for the professional growth of their staff and they, themselves are able to keep abreast of best practice.
4. **Management approaches** – when leaders develop and then follow strategic plans where current performance and ways of improving such are discussed and actioned.

The final claim focuses on the ways effective leaders are best able to allow students from diverse populations who traditionally don’t experience success, to achieve their full potential within an educational setting. In the context of their study, Leithwood and Riehl (2003:25 A) identified “diverse populations” as students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students with physical handicaps, students from marginalised ethnic or racial groups and recent immigrants. The ways in which effective leaders can best assist such students in experiencing educational success are:

1. **Building powerful forms of teaching and learning;** this requires leaders to identify and then implement teaching and learning methods that are appropriate and effective for the students within the school.
2. Creating strong communities in schools – leaders of effective schools are able to develop within their school two smaller communities, one which focuses on parent/teacher/student/school relationships. For many, the school community is the only stable community they belong to; it is one that provides not only a sense of belonging but also an identity and commitment. The second community relates to the smaller professional learning group of teachers.

3. When schools are able to hold the 'social capital' as a valuable framework and expand upon it through the imparting of academic knowledge they can regard themselves as successful. The social capital of students consists of the knowledge, value system, preferences, behavioural traits and disposition towards education students have already acquired through their interactions with family and community members.

School leaders also need to offer support and resources to families together with strengthening family educational cultures. Whilst Leithwood and Riehl (2003 A) conclude their article by stating that there are many gaps in the knowledge base about effective educational leadership they do clearly state that:

*Leadership is most successful when it is focused on goals related to teaching and learning.* (Leithwood & Riehl 2003:36 A)

In fact, throughout their six claims about successful school leadership it is clearly evident that teaching and learning is at the core of each claim and set of practices. The strength of a leader in advocating, promoting and resourcing a teaching and learning program that is abreast of current trends, values individuality, allows
teachers to shape its form and promotes the learning of the entire school community, allows for the foundations of a successful school to be laid.

Leadership on the part of principals requires a multitude of skills and qualities. Successful school leaders have the ability to foresee the school in years to come as an educational institution where the latest educational teachings and learning occur. The outcome for both staff and students is one of positive recognition by peers and educational authorities and a successful outcome at the end of each year. Successful school leaders also have the ability to articulate and implement their vision regardless of risks they may face in the process. They are also able to deliver their vision in such a way that their staff are in agreement with such. Successful principals are the driving force behind the staff however, they are also able to stand back and let others experiment. Successful leaders are not intimidated by outside governing bodies and they are resilient and accept criticism when initiatives do not achieve desired results. At all times, successful principals do not lose sight of their vision, and they ensure that staff re-visit this shared vision regularly. A further aspect of the successful leader is that of total commitment to the organization and the people within it. Gardner (1997) states that these qualities are found in exemplary leaders. Succinctly, MacBeath and Myers (1999:3-4) write these qualities as:

- A readiness to confront authority
- Risk taking
- Resilience in the face of failure
- Confidence in one's own instinct and intuition
- The ability to see and keep in mind the big picture
- Being driven by a moral commitment
- A sense of timing, allowing one to stand back, reflect and learn from experience.
In their study of Successful School Principalship of five Tasmanian State Government Schools, Mulford and Johns (2004) identified a range of common traits. They stated that educational leaders need to be able to understand, engage and mediate the social, political, economic and complex technological forces that impinge on schools. In addition, principals also need to keep at the forefront of their decision-making issues of equity and social justice. Principals need to be able to choose what tasks need to be adhered to and prioritise them; they need to lead their schools but also manage them thus, achieving an equal balance between the two. In addition, there's the need to ensure that bridges are built amongst all stakeholders, that there is ownership of decisions made and shared understandings are reached. However, of most importance is the ability to learn.

*Learning involves an ability to critique, assess and be accountable and, if necessary, constantly change.* (Mulford and Johns 2004:52)

In summarising their findings Mulford and Johns (2004:73) stated:

*Successful School Principalship is an interactive reciprocal and evolving process involving many players, which is influenced by and, in turn, influences, the context in which it occurs.*

They also spoke of principals promoting innovation and risk taking without putting blame onto school community members if new ideas or programs did not achieve their desired outcome. The researchers also found that successful schools were lead by principals who embraced and practiced shared decision making knowing that it would motivate and empower those involved. The practice of distributed leadership
and professional development were also discussed in their findings. These latter two concepts will be discussed further in this review.

Day and Naylor (2004 as cited in Mulford and Johns 2004:49) found that the twelve United Kingdom principals originally studied in the Day et al. (2000) project were identified as successful because they:

*Developed a focus upon setting and sustaining directions, developing people through informal and formal support and modelling … redesigning the organisational structures so that staff participation, collaboration and sense of individual and collective belonging and ownership of the organisational vision and strategies were fostered.*

Sergiovanni (2000:30) states that leadership is an art and a *challenge*, both requiring different and special skills. It is when both are successfully met that the task of creating a learning environment promoting education and achievement can commence.

*The art of leadership is balancing the four competing sources of authority in such a way that moral and professional authority flourish without neglecting bureaucratic and personal authority.*

*The challenge of leadership is to make peace with two competing imperatives, the managerial one and the moral … schools must be run effectively and efficiently if they are to survive. Policies must be in place. Budgets must be set. Teachers must be assigned … Reports must be completed … Classrooms must be orderly. These are essential tasks that guarantee the survival of the school as an organization. Yet,
for the school to transform itself into an institution, a learning community must emerge.

For example, apart from the staff, students, parent and local community, there are also state and national governing bodies that principals are accountable to. Principals need to perfect their skills in adhering to the various government and bureaucratic bodies that provide guidelines and instructions on how programs are to run in schools. Once principals have understood the implications and necessary steps needed to follow such guidelines, they need to cleverly appeal to their staff and elicit their support. Staff need to feel and believe that what they are working towards is for the true betterment of education and needs of students. The only way in which they will believe this is when principals appeal to their sense of duty and their moral and professional obligations as educators.

As mentioned in the introduction of this Literature Review, there are five main concepts in understanding successful school leadership. In this section on Successful Principals, the researcher has further highlighted five sub-qualities found to be necessary in the development and maintenance of a successful principal. Each quality is discussed below.

3.8.1 Interpersonal relationships

As the previous section focused on the various styles of leadership principals and other senior school personnel should posses in order to lead successfully, this following section looks at the qualities that have been, to date, identified in existing successful principals. In essence, this section has attempted to merge the theory knowledge base with what has actually been found by researchers focussing on interpersonal relationships. Dunford, Fawcett and Bennett (2000:17) state:
For principals to be successful as leaders, they must be prepared to take risks. The risks are less if the vision is sound and if there is a capacity to generate confidence in that vision. Leadership risks can be minimized when people who will be affected by change are listened to and minds are kept open to the views of others.

Principals should lead their schools by walking around them regularly. They should move around with the calm confidence of someone in total control. Their eyes and ears will be open and they will spend a lot of time listening, praising, encouraging and acknowledging.

Principals need to empathise with the work carried out by their staff and students in order to fully understand and grasp the complexity of their roles. It also allows principals to see first hand the success of new and current educational programs and observe where weaknesses lie. Staff tend to be more responsive to changes within their practice when they see the principal regularly interacting with them in all aspects of school life, formal and informal. Principals who maintain a solid interpersonal relationship with all stakeholders are able to clearly acknowledge where strengths and weaknesses lay. In discussions with stakeholders they are able to further see where solutions can be accessed from. Successful school principals need to engage in constant dialogue with all members of the school community, however most importantly, they also need to be able to respond to requests made and act upon suggestions offered. MacBeath and Myers (1999:142) propose five definitions of leadership, one of which summarizes in part the above statements.

Good leaders are in the thick of things, working alongside their colleagues, sharing power, demonstrating a capacity to learn as well as to lead by example, encouraging the leadership of others.
Leaders who take a keen interest in the lives of their staff and who also take an interest in the personal and professional needs of their staff will receive support and respect from their staff.

Scott (2003:26) clearly summarised the importance of developing strong interpersonal skills with the following words:

*Interpersonal relationships can make or break the principal's effectiveness in a school. Without excellent interpersonal skills, and an understanding of one's own strengths and weaknesses, it is very difficult to achieve excellent outcomes for kids.*

*What matters most for competence and excellence ... is based on effective inter and intra personal skills in forming productive relationships. We need leaders to have the skills of resilience, initiative, optimism, adaptability ... empathy, patience, understanding and listening: [these] are all part of the tool kit.*

Hence, in order to fulfil the vision of the staff and endeavour to increase and improve opportunities available to students, principals need to ensure that they maintain open channels of communication with staff, students, parents and the wider school community so as to be aware of what is occurring and what people would like to occur. When principals are able to engage with members of the school community in a range of settings and discuss various issues, concerns or ideas, they are seen by others as personal, trusting, possessing true caring qualities and above all approachable.
3.8.2 Developing Staff

One of the key components of achieving and maintaining a successful and effective school is the investment on behalf of schools and their senior administration team, in developing all staff in their professional growth. Leithwood and Riehl (2003:29) discuss the concept of creating “professional learning sub communities”, whereby there exist in schools the strong notion of teachers developing their professional knowledge and skills which “promotes instructional program coherence across the school” Leithwood and Riehl (2003:29) believe that participation in regular professional development:

*Stimulates growth in teachers’ instructional skills, enhances teachers’ sense of mastery and control over student learning, and builds teachers’ sense of responsibility for student learning.*

They further state that those schools whose leadership is supportive of developing the professional community create a culture of:

*Collegiality, shared purpose, continuous improvement, accountability, and responsibility for performance and structural change.*

Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004:24) mention three practices which form the basic core of successful leadership. One of these is ‘developing people’. They state that success in this area is partly dependent on the leader’s knowledge of what is required to improve the overall teaching and learning program. They also mention definite approaches leaders are able to implement:
More specific leadership approaches ... include offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support and providing an appropriate model.

Sergiovanni (1995) also offers a similar point of view when discussing the concept of developing staff within schools. He points out that in order to provide staff with the necessary opportunities to develop as teaching professionals, schools need to provide tailored individual training in order to provide staff with the necessary skills to deliver their particular teaching programs. Day, Harris and Hadfield (1999) also pointed out that principals who continuously invest in the development of their staff are clearly recognizing staff as their most important asset. Many researchers see the professional development of staff as a key component in developing and maintaining a successful school. When teachers are kept abreast of educational change and when new initiatives in pedagogy are taught, teachers are able to develop, implement and deliver educational and non-educational programs which meet the varied needs of students and allow students to develop their cognitive, academic and social skills.

At the conclusion of their study Day et al. (2000:178), noted that one of the points aspiring, new and experienced heads of schools need to focus on is the “promotion of people-centred continuing professional development as a means of maintaining and raising levels of commitment and morale”.

Brighouse and Woods (1999:94) also articulated this view:

*Improving schools are learning organizations in which everybody is engaged in the understanding and development of effective practice ... it is the personal and professional growth of teachers that will have the most impact on pupil development.*

In their study, Mulford and Johns (2004:18) also wrote about the importance of developing staff:
Professional development opportunities in all schools were linked to the school vision/mission, and facilitated school wide professional learning which was central to the change process. Such opportunities were designed to increase teacher commitment to change, and to encourage them to become leaders and participate actively in the professional learning of themselves and others.

When school leadership teams actively and consistently offer their staff the resources and support needed for their individualised professional development, schools will in effect develop and create a culture of teaching and learning that goes beyond the realms of the classroom. Teachers will rethink their teaching styles, they will develop teaching styles and techniques that are in tune with the age groups and learning styles of their students, and as educators they will be up to date with current educational thought and practices. In achieving the above, schools are almost guaranteeing to their student cohort that they are delivering a curriculum which is constantly changing and meeting the demands of society and its trends. The notion of developing people consists of leaders questioning and challenging staff to revisit how they work and perhaps alter their style. It also focuses on supporting staff at an individual level with both professional and personal issues. Developing people concerns itself with principals modelling behaviour that is consistent with the values of the school. (Leithwood and Riehl 2003 A)

In developing staff, principals are not only acknowledging and meeting the professional needs of their staff; they are also developing and fostering the staff’s leadership skills and attributes. The ultimate beneficiaries of teachers undertaking professional development are the students as they are the direct recipients of new ideas, new teaching techniques and a renewed passion towards teaching. Staff are also able to further their knowledge and skills which may allow the principal in
sharing or even distributing leadership in various areas. In their study Mulford and Johns (2004:61) summarised the notion of developing staff and distributing leadership by stating:

All Principals articulated a firm belief in shared decision making, distributed leadership and collaborative work practices, the provision of individual professional development to increase the capacity of individuals to work collaboratively, and facilitation of school-wide professional learning.

Below follows discussion and research findings on the concept of distributed leadership and its overall effect on successful school leadership.

3.8.3 Distributing leadership

As the role of the principal becomes increasingly demanding they alone cannot achieve all the desirable outcomes for the establishment of a successful school. What is strongly emerging in the successful leadership of schools today, is the need to have various management teams within the school whose role is to specifically focus on a particular area of the school. In creating harmonious working teams within the school, the principal is able to adopt a more hands-on approach in the running of the school. Researchers refer to this style as 'distributive leadership'. Whilst it reflects the traits of shared, collaborative, democratic and participative leadership; it holds its own characteristics. It has been referred to as a style of leadership that is:

Enacted by people at all levels rather than a set of personal characteristics and attributes located in people at the top. (Fletcher J.K. & Kaufer K. (2003) as cited in Leithwood et al. 2004:28)
In their study Day et al. (2000:140) stated:

*Decision making within an organization is no longer the exclusive preserve of the headteacher. Indeed, leadership theory has advocated a move from transactional forms of leadership to more transformational modes where decision making is shared and developed. The practical reality of this situation means that heads have to decide how far the boundaries of autocracy and democracy coincide. On the one hand they have ultimate authority to make decision because of their positional and referential power. On the other hand, the research evidence concerning successful schools indicates that a collaborative leadership style reaps huge benefits for the organization.*

In having various leaders within schools focussing on various aspects of the school structure, open discussion forums are created allowing all staff to take an interested role in the direction of the school. It allows for various people to assume leadership roles and hence develop a greater understanding and appreciation of what such roles entail. In addition to that, various viewpoints and trains of thought are able to emerge, providing for richer and more in depth discussions. Principals still need to ensure that the correct people have been appointed to such positions of responsibility. Furthermore, they also need to know that the school has the necessary procedures to cope with all possible situations.

*Governors have a responsibility to know that their school is well managed, and part of that responsibility is knowing that basic procedures are in place. They need to know that these procedures are understood and used consistently by all staff whether they cover lateness, deal with incorrect spelling in pupils’ work, or guide staff in responding to bullying. (Day et al. 2000:31)*
Duignan and Marks (2003:19) discuss the notion of shared leadership. They argue that leadership within schools is not the sole responsibility of the one individual but rather:

(It) grows out of the shared vision, beliefs and efforts of a committed group of teachers who have a sense of belonging, a sense of being valued members of their organization and a deep commitment to collective action for whole-school success.

As schools are complex and busy organizations; the need to distribute leadership amongst staff is becoming paramount to the success of the school. Logistically, shared leadership also facilitates the daily running of the school and allows personnel with experience and a keen interest in that area to take responsibility for the issue at hand. Duignan and Marks (2003:20) describe this as:

Shared leadership is a product of the ongoing processes of interaction and negotiation amongst all school members as they go about the construction and reconstruction of the reality of living productively yet compassionately together each day. Leadership, therefore, can be viewed as a shared communal phenomenon derived from the interactions and relationships of groups.

In their case studies Mulford and Johns (2004:61) found that in distributing leadership, principals are promoting a culture of trust which, in turn encourages staff enthusiasm and a stronger commitment towards their work. They commented:

Success within each school is related to the extent to which leadership opportunities are distributed throughout the school community, utilising the skills and experience of school staff, students, parents and other community members in a variety of ways.
Mulford and Johns (2004) further found that many school councils adopted the concept of distributed leadership, hence allowing parents, staff, students and the broader community to have input as to the school's direction. When principals allow staff members to take on a new project they are also acknowledging, encouraging and nurturing their staff. They provide within staff a sense of worth and esteem for their skills, passion and experience. What emerges is a school culture encouraging diverse thought and participation by all stakeholders. Principals appoint experienced and enthusiastic personnel to various leadership roles, thus facilitating their overall leadership role whilst at the same time developing the skills and expertise of their staff. As stated before, schools are becoming increasingly complex in their nature and structure. The demands placed on teaching professionals increases each year and it is unrealistic to expect that principals are abreast of all changes, all avenues of change and improvement in the many educational and non educational opportunities. Sharing leadership amongst staff increases not only staff commitment to the school and the education of the students but it also ensures that leadership is not confined to the one person or a select group of staff, but rather, it is open to all allowing for broader discussions and greater opportunity for those involved. It can even be argued that sharing leadership is a form of professional development for those embarking on positions of responsibility for the first time. It allows such persons to develop their own vision for the area they are leading and also develop their own style of leadership and interpersonal skills. In sharing leadership not only is the burden on principals alleviated but it also:

_Empowers all in the school to take responsibility for contributing to the leadership of their school community._ Duignan and Marks (2003:18).

Duignan and Marks (2003:18) further discuss the need for school principals to develop and foster shared leadership within school communities. School
communities need to encourage all to learn together, share and create conditions which foster learning and growing as an educational community. In doing so all stakeholders and community members who have a keen interest in the school are able to take part in the discussions and decision-making process. It further promotes the school as being an important entity within the community whom educates its youth. School communities who take on an active role within the school’s operations are able to benefit from the knowledge learnt by the students once they cease their education there.

In Leithwood et al. (2004) a section was devoted to the discussion of distributed leadership and its effect on student learning. Whilst the authors commented on the need for further research in this area so as to have clearer understanding on how it impacts on schools and students, they did comment on the value of such a style. They spoke of its ability to increase motivation and commitment from members of the organisation and its ability to foster and enhance leadership skills in people. Like other researchers, Leithwood et al. acknowledge the enormity of the task of a school principal and the need to rely on the leadership skills and abilities of others within the school to help them achieve the success they envisage for the school community.

*Highly successful leaders develop and count on leadership contributions from many others in their organizations. Principals typically count on key teachers for such leadership.* (Leithwood et al. 2004:27)

In regards to distributive leadership, they wrote:

*Distributed leadership provides greater opportunities for members to learn from one another. Through increased participation in decision making, greater commitment to organizational goals and strategies may develop. Distributed leadership has the*
potential to increase on-the-job leadership development experiences, and the increased self-determination arising from distributed leadership may improve members' experience of work. Such leadership allows members to better anticipate and respond to the demands of the organization's environment. (Leithwood et al. 2004:29)

Sergiovanni cited in MacBeath & Meyers (1999) has called this style of leadership pedagogical leadership, whereby principals invest and build their staff's professional and intellectual capacity. In doing this, schools allow themselves to enhance the social and academic capital of their students. Goleman (2000) on the other hand refers to this as coaching leadership. He argues that such a style is seldomly used as many leaders see it as time consuming and are not willing to invest the time or capital it takes to develop staff. However, such a style allows employees to take on broad challenging projects, enact development plans and agree on their role and responsibilities. He concludes his argument of this style by stating that leaders who take on this form of leadership ultimately create and have the best climate within their organization.

Although this section focuses on the notion of distributing leadership amongst various people within the school, the concept of inviting participation from all staff should also be looked at. When all staff are given an active voice in the decision making process of the school, decisions made are essentially owned by all staff. The staff further own implementation of such decisions and, the consequences such implementations bring. When staff have the opportunity to participate in such discussions without fear and prejudice they are assisting the school into shaping and moulding its vision and culture. Burns as cited in Owens (2001:249) states that when staff are invited to participate in the school’s overall decision-making process:
They acquire greater personal ownership, and thus a greater sense of personal commitment to the values for which the school stands and that shapes its vision for the future.

By their active personal engagement in the 'process, and by being personally committed to its outcomes, teachers are stimulated to increase their awareness of both the larger mission of the school and the connection of their daily mundane work to the achievement of that mission.

A further quality successful leadership requires is that of vision. Vision provides leaders with the drive needed to continue their role and see their goals and those of the school achieved. Below is a brief discussion on vision and its role in the development of successful schools.

3.8.4 Vision

Successful principals place student learning and achievement at the core of all that is done, from securing specialised personnel to improving facilities and resources. They create a culture of learning for all within the school community, however, perhaps of most importance is their vision. Successful principals begin their role with a vision of what they wish the school to achieve in all aspects. At times the achievement of this vision is met by various obstacle however, principals never let go of it. They ensure that the vision is embraced by members of the school community and, in particular, by their own staff. Effective principals also actively engage in dialogue with their staff and school community. They accept criticism, suggestions and new ideas whilst being able to reprimand staff and challenge the status quo. It could be argued that perhaps, the strongest quality needed by a successful principal is that of vision. A principal can have all the other qualities in place, however, without a vision of what
the school could be and what it could achieve, there is little purpose for those involved. In an article “Vision Building Among School Leaders”, Cheng as cited in Wong and Evers (2001:54), states:

*Vision is what one aspires to. In the case of a school, it is an imagination of what the school could become. It is the picture of the school when it is successful.*

*Vision has to be translated into missions. While vision is a dream and a future of the school that we aspires to, mission is what should be achieved in order to fulfil the dream. In other words, a vision is not a vision if the leader does not understand the implications of the vision.*

At the conclusion of their study Mulford and Johns (2004:63) found that:

*Evidence from the case studies indicates that school success derives from the development of a shared or collective vision for the school ... evidence ... indicates that each school’s mission and vision is articulated and reinforced on a regular basis to ensure a cohesive and holistic school focus.*

Vision however, not only belongs to the principal it also belongs to the staff. Although principals have an initial vision of what the school is to achieve and how it could achieve such aims, the vision needs to be accepted and shared amongst all school community members. Mulford and Johns (2004:63) further breakdown the concept of vision into four areas. They argue:

*That school success derives from the development of a shared or collective vision for the school.*
They then describe the four areas as:

- A focus on the individual student
- A safe and caring and positive environment
- Behavioural expectations of students, staff and parents
- Lifelong learning termed as 'social capital'

From the literature above it is clear that the principal plays a pivotal role in driving the school forward and beyond the expectations of the school community. Principals also need to engage in regular discussion with all stakeholders of the school to ensure that they are aware of the school's vision and the vision of the principal. In such open channels of communication the principal also needs to listen to the needs of the school community and endeavour to meet them. In their article Day et al. (1999:19) focused on the successful leadership project that this research is based upon and stated:

_The heads … were effective because they held and communicated clearly visions and values. They empowered staff by developing climates of collaboration, by applying high standards to themselves and others, by seeking the support of various influential groups within the school community and by keeping ‘ahead of the game’._

In articulating a school's vision into reality Cheng, as cited in Wong and Evers (2001:65), discusses the need to have a four-stage process.

- Initially there needs to be a structured sequence of changes which need to take place, the order of such changes needs to be accurate as the wrong sequence may cause fatal consequences.
- Secondly, changes need to be ordered in list of urgency.
- There then needs to be an emphasis on how much resource, both human and financial, are to be invested in each change.
Lastly there needs to be a priority list on what should be done and what should be dropped.

In essence, school leaders who have a clearly visual and articulated vision of where they want the school to head, and are able to secure their staff in developing and realising such a vision, are able to move their school forward and build on its strengths in the desire to create and maintain a successful school. Cheng cited in Wong and Evers (2001:54), summarizes this viewpoint as follows:

Vision is what one aspires to. In the case of a school, it is an imagination of what the school could become. It is the picture of the school when it is successful. In other words, vision is a dream. The school is perceived as successful when this dream comes true.

Thus, when the school community is able to accept the vision of the principal and, when the principal is able to accept the vision of the community, the school is able to commence articulating such a vision into reality. When the vision of a school is accepted by all those involved, school communities are able to commence their journey in developing a school ready and equipped to face the needs and challenges of its community and hence, commence creating a successful school.

3.8.5 Commitment to organization

Undoubtedly, in order to achieve a successful school principals need to not only have a committed staff, but they too need to be committed to the school they work in and more-so, committed to the students within the school. Andersen’s report “The Principal, Keystone of a High Achieving School” for the New Jersey Legislature’s Joint Committee on Public Schools (2000) stated:
The one attribute of all the high-performing schools ... is a dedicated and dynamic principal ... committed beyond the normal call of duty and feel a personal responsibility to ensure their students' success ... The principals at these successful schools assume responsibility for the education their students received and do not entertain excuses why students cannot learn ... In order to obtain results, they collaborate with other stakeholders to develop initiatives that promote high academic achievement for all students.

Sergiovanni (2000:37) also comments that prior to demanding strong and loyal followership, principals must demonstrate their own conviction to meeting the vision and mission of the school they lead.

One of the great secrets of leadership is that before one can command the respect and followership of others, she or he must demonstrate devotion to the organization's purposes and commitment to those in the organization who work day-by-day to the ordinary tasks that are necessary for those purposes to be realized.

It stands to reason that principals, who expect commitment and devotion to the school from their staff, need to demonstrate their own personal commitment and devotion to the school they lead. Whilst having a solid grasp of the leading styles best suited to situations and having highly developed interpersonal skills, principals also need to believe in their role and be committed to the students within their care. Such qualities together with, those of vision and the development of staff and distributing leadership amongst them does empower principals to commence leading a school that will become successful, provided all staff demonstrate the commitment and tenacity they do.
3.9 Summary

In summarising the qualities needed by successful principals, the researcher focused on six broad areas. As schools are complex organizations, principals find themselves dealing with a myriad of people throughout the course of the day. It is essential that they therefore have a solid grasp and a level of expertise in the knowledge of various leadership styles and situations that call for such styles. Although leaders may exhibit a tendency towards a particular style of leadership it is imperative to the smooth functioning and development of their school, that they are conversant in the various styles and are able to use them accordingly. In addition to this, principals further need to have highly developed interpersonal skills allowing them to understand the issues faced by members of their school community. They need to be adaptable, flexible and approachable. Whilst they are leading educational organizations they need to keep in mind that the members of their organisation have personal needs and that at times may need their assistance. Needs of staff may also comprise of staff wanting to improve their professional development. Whilst principals should endeavour to do as such, they also should endeavour to improve the educational practices of all their teaching staff. As schools are centres of teaching and learning, principals need to bear in mind that learning does not only rest with students. Teachers too, need to undertake constant professional development in their subject areas, general teaching techniques and current trends in pedagogy. As teachers develop their professional skills, principals need to also focus on those staff who have an interest in, or exhibit, leadership qualities. As schools are comprised of many smaller sections, distributing leadership to aspiring leaders is essential for the betterment of the school's operation, the assistance given to the principal in their leadership role and for the professional development of the staff member. The final two qualities outlined by the researcher focus on principal vision and commitment to the organization. Whilst it is necessary to have committed staff, principals need to
develop with their staff a clear vision of where they want the school to move and what they want to achieve for the students. In order to articulate and achieve such complex visions, principals need to be highly committed to the organization. They need to be committed to the students, their parents, the staff with whom they work and most of all, they need to be committed to the education of youth. In their concluding comments Mulford and Johns (2004:71) reinforced such notions when they wrote:

Successful Principals also displayed a core set of basic leadership skills regardless of school context, including developing a shared vision, individual capacity building and organizational redesign ... all Principals ... promoted equity and social justice through the creation of strong school communities ... and by focusing on the development/reinforcement of a strong learning culture within the school community.

Whilst many of the findings relating to successful schools and successful principals as outlined above, relate to American and British schools, this study aims at focusing on the qualities evident in Australian school principals focusing in particular on one principal of a Victorian Specialist School. The study has been designed to model that carried out by Day et al. (2000) and endeavours to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of contemporary leadership exercised by principals in both primary and secondary schools.

Throughout this literature review, successful schools have been characterised as schools which not only achieve good results at the end of each school year but rather, schools which are able to meet the social, educational, emotional and physical needs of the students within their care. They are willing to extend their role outside the traditional instructional classroom. Brighouse and Woods (1999:36) concisely stated:
Successful schools ... go beyond the timetabled 15 per cent of time the pupils spend awake and in lessons and invade the 85 per cent which strictly speaking they do not need to occupy.

To achieve such, schools need to implement a variety of structures both within the classroom and within their organisational framework. In addition successful schools are also those who acknowledge their flaws and are able to implement processes in order to rectify them and develop themselves into a successful school. Schools wanting to become successful are constantly seeking ways to improve their teaching and learning programs, with teachers at the forefront of curriculum development and current trends in the delivery of content. Successful schools are also willing to invest both financial and non-financial resources, in establishing and delivering new teaching programs for the betterment of the education of their students. Principals also need to implement and foster a climate of collaborative decision-making and encourage staff to participate in discussions affecting their role and the performance of their students.

Schools that aim to meet the needs of their students, whilst at the same time providing new and innovative programs which are at the forefront of education, need to have principals able to change current programs, structures and policies. Principals together with the school community need to have clear focused goals and be willing to change current practices and procedures so as to meet such goals. In addition to developing clearly articulated goals and implementing ways in which to achieve such goals, successful school principals also need to be conversant in displaying a myriad of leadership styles, each best suited to the situation they are currently facing. They also need to be able to clearly articulate to themselves and to
their staff, which issues require immediate attention or action and which can be postponed.

Successful schools can be categorised as schools displaying the following characteristics:

➢ Strong principal leadership that is able to motivate and encourage all involved with the school to work towards the achievement of the school’s vision and philosophy.
➢ A flexible and adaptable style of leadership that fits in with the needs of the moment.
➢ Schools whose entire community is aware and understands the school’s vision and philosophy.
➢ Schools where the educational, social and emotional achievements of students are the primary focus of all members of the school community.
➢ Teachers who keep abreast of current teaching and learning trends and are willing to embrace new teaching styles and techniques.
➢ Schools that readily accept and implement shared leadership.

Successful school principals need to also be able to let go of issues and lose some “control” of their school by distributing leadership amongst staff willing and capable of holding positions of responsibilities. It is impossible for school principals to keep abreast of all areas of the educational sphere and endeavour to fulfil them successfully. Hence, in distributing leadership amongst staff, principals not only acknowledge the importance of various committees, learning faculties and special interest groups, but they are able to better meet the needs and requests as outlined by such groups and personnel. In distributing leadership, principals are also acknowledging the career-driven needs of their staff and are encouraging them to
develop as leaders and professionals. Successful school principals are able to tap into the talent of their staff, harness such talent and offer avenues of betterment or improvement. In doing so, staff develop a stronger belief in themselves, are more willing to accept the challenges of the school and become more committed to the education of the students, their professional development and meeting the vision of the school.

There are times however, when principals need to move away from a collaborative style of leadership due to the circumstance at the current point in time. Successful schools have principals that are able to adopt various leadership styles best suited to the situation at hand. Ultimately principals are leaders of schools and with that role comes the expectation that they are willing and able to move their organization forward. As leaders they are able to formulate with their staff a vision of where they want the school to be and are able to implement the necessary steps to achieve such a vision. Lastly, successful principals need to be able to develop and articulate the vision of the school they wish to develop. In articulating such a vision they need to elicit the support of their staff and they need to demonstrate a total commitment to not only its achievement but also to the overall running of the school.

There are many facets to the development and maintenance of successful schools and whilst principals are at the forefront of such developments they also need to be able to ensure that they have the support and commitment of their staff in order to achieve the vision of a successful school.

Having analysed literature pertinent to this study the researcher has identified a range of qualities necessary to successful principalship. A consistent finding is that successful schools have principals who are:
➢ Able to clearly articulate and motivate the wider school community into accepting and following the schools vision and philosophy.
➢ Willing to adopt distributive leadership within the school.
➢ Able to set clear directions for the school.
➢ Willing to invest in developing their staff.
➢ Able to redesign the organization by strengthening the culture and altering the course of direction to best suit current needs.
➢ In possession of strong interpersonal skills.

Mulford and Johns (2004:73) succinctly summarised the points as raised above by the researcher by saying:

Successful Principalship is underpinned by the core values and beliefs of the Principal. These values and beliefs inform the Principal’s decisions and actions regarding the provision of individual support and capacity building … including school culture and structure. The Principal’s core values and beliefs, together with the values and capacities of other members of the school community, feed directly into the development of a shared school vision, which shapes the teaching and learning, student and social capital outcomes of schooling.

What now follows is an analysis of the data collected at Special School to ascertain which of the skills and qualities highlighted in the literature review are reflected within the school and its principalship.
CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the findings obtained from interviews and documentation pertaining to Special School and the leadership provided to it by its Principal. Key elements of the school profile and context are outlined. The case study findings are reported under each of the following themes that were derived from the data.

1. School achievements and success
2. Challenges facing the school
3. Future challenges of the school
4. The leadership style of the Principal
5. Principal’s contribution to success

Various sub themes emerged from these and will be discussed throughout the chapter.

In order to assist in formulating a clear picture of why and how the Principal of Special School is deemed to be a successful leader within their school community, a number of school personnel were interviewed. The participants are listed in the following table.

In addition, documents pertaining to the school and the Principal, such as the Triennial School Review Verification Report, Special School Annual Report, Special School, School Charter and Special School, School Self Assessment Triennial School Review were also analysed. What emerged was a clear picture of the Principal's leadership style and personal qualities used in the everyday running of the
school that enabled her to be successful. Before embarking on a discussion of findings, the researcher thought it necessary to incorporate some background information on the school, its personnel and student cohort.

Table 4.1 List of Participants

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<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
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<td>Principal</td>
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<td>Assistant Principal</td>
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<td>Senior Administrator</td>
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<td>Council President</td>
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<td>Parent Group</td>
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4.2 Profile of Special School

School background

Special School began as a Special Developmental School for students with multiple disabilities in 1986. The school operated out of a converted residential home. By the early 1990s, the school’s population exceeded the space offered and in 1996, the school was relocated onto a new site. The new site was a former primary school that
closed in 1992 due to the amalgamation with a nearby school. The school's new site was in need of repairs and redevelopment to cater for its special needs students. The refurbishment of the school took place during the years 1997 to 2000. At the time of this study the school had the facilities of an indoor hydrotherapy pool and spa, home-crafts room, sensory integration room, a multi-purpose hall, computer resource centre, art room, therapy resource centre, multi-purpose function rooms, serviced offices, a transition house, bridge connecting the main building to the gymnasium and a newly furbished gymnasium. Dental Services Victoria also operates from the school. At the time of the study, the playground was "under construction to improve the opportunities for appropriate play and more effective utilisation by the various groups". (Special School, School Self-Assessment 2000 – 2002 Triennial School Review 2002:5)

School Philosophy

The school's Mission statement states that Special School:

*Believes that all students have the right to an education that enhances self-esteem, provides confidence and a sense of dignity. The School is committed to providing an environment that offers support, understanding and information to parents, families, caregivers and the wider community.*

Their educational services go beyond the daily classroom instruction. Special School not only educates the child but also endeavours to educate parents, families and care-givers on how best to meet the social, medical, paramedical and educational needs of the students. The notion is of a community centre with the school at its core, whereby students, their parents/families/care-givers and the wider community can
access facilities needed to provide optimum care for its students. The Principal's welcome on the school's web site states:

_Our community has already made a substantial contribution towards creating an outstanding and unique specialist school, and clearly the commitment is to maintain this growth and development.... Every sector of our community justifiably shares in the pride of our accomplishment._

Special School was recognised as a Fully Serviced School in November 2000. The school has adopted an 'Integrated Service Model'. This model means that educational, medical, paramedical and mental health services operate simultaneously within the one environment. Their interest lies in each student achieving the best outcomes they possibly can together with receiving the correct medical and paramedical required support. In addition to offering support to students the school ensures that parents, families and caregivers are also supported in their role. Various forums and opportunities are made available to parents to assist them in developing their skills and knowledge as parents of students with special needs. It also provides legal and financial information forums for parents wanting to plan for the future of their children. Essentially the school provides a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to providing the above services. Such a unique approach towards education has allowed Special School to become an internationally recognised educational provider modelling best practice for schooling children with special needs.

In addition to the above, the school has also adopted the concept of a Fully Integrated Model of Service Delivery. Such a model ensures that all staff are responsible for setting and achieving appropriate goals for their students. Staff also share in the commitment of empowering each other and collaborating on teaching
practices that can maximise individual student achievement. This is done via the implementation of individual work plans for each student. Such plans are also closely monitored and revised if necessary.

**Student Profile**

Special School is a full service government specialist school catering for students with special needs. At the time of study the school's population was 127 students. Their age ranged from 2.5 to 18 years of age. Of these 73 were males and 54 were female. All students in the school have an intellectual disability that is determined as an IQ below 70. Students at the school fall into two categories; those whose IQ is below 70 are considered to be Special School Students and those whose IQ is below 50 are seen as Special Developmental School students. The school essentially caters for students who have a range of complex and interacting impairments that will affect learning. Student intake is not limited to a particular zone; students travel from all over Melbourne to attend; however a free bus service is offered to those who live within the school's zone. At the time of research, 30 percent of students came from out of zone. (Drysdale 2003)

**Staff Profile**

At the time of study, there were 16 qualified teaching staff with most of these holding Teaching and Special Education qualifications. 15 staff were female and one male, and two staff worked in a part time capacity. There were 13 Teacher Assistants and eight Specialist teaching staff. The Specialist teaching staff fill the following positions: Art and Drama, Music, Home crafts, Reading Recovery and Early Years, Information Technology, Transition programs, Swimming, Physical Education.
In addition, there were four Paramedical Staff occupying the positions of Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist and Speech Therapist. There were also a Social Worker and a Director of Integrated Services.

Principal Profile

The Principal has been in this role for 14 years. She is qualified with a Master of Education, Graduate Diploma in Student Welfare, Graduate Diploma in Curriculum, Graduate Diploma in Educational Administration. Throughout her career she has gained the reputation of being an innovative teacher, excellent counsellor and an outstanding educator. In 1989 she was appointed Principal of Special School. Through her leadership the school has gained the reputation as being one of Australia's leading schools catering for students with special needs.

4.3 School Achievements and Success

Emerging from interviews was the belief that Special School was a successful school. It had a sound reputation and was recognised as a leading edge school. Various participants measured success in different ways, but there were key achievements that were identified as evidence of the school's success. The major achievements can be categorised into three areas: physical success, teaching and learning success and community success.

Physical success

Numerous physical successes were identified. Many staff and parents stated that the development of buildings and the refurbishment of rooms within the school had been
an important success for the school and its journey towards the fulfilment of its vision. Typical of the responses was this comment:

*Really, the re-development of the school. We were given a million dollars to refurbish the junior hall and this building down stairs. She's been the high flier and made sure that's all happened, but it was the development upstairs with the dental clinic, the links with Melbourne University.* (AP2)

**Teaching and learning success**

The second area of success related to the teaching and learning programs. Most educational institutions pride themselves on their curriculum and extra curriculum offerings and how these benefit and assist students achieving their best personal outcomes. This area took into consideration developments, advancements and new projects implemented in the area of curriculum offerings and student services. A statement written by the Principal in her application for the Telstra Business Women's award 2001 succinctly summarised this:

*The Fully Serviced School represents a new paradigm in educational service provision for students, families and the school community. It presents a new and integrated approach for structuring educational, medical, paramedical, and mental health services to maximize the available resources and outcomes for students.*

**Community success**

The third aspect of success is "community success". This area focused on the achievements made by the school and their impact on the community at large. It focused on the school's ability to interact with educational and non-educational
agencies both for the achievement of its aims and the fulfilment of its vision. Whilst schools service a community, not many are able to elicit the support financially and or in-kind from community members. One of the greatest achievements of Special School has been its ability to receive donations from corporations and individuals. Such donations have enabled the school to develop its grounds, refurbish classrooms and offices and constantly meet the demands of updating curriculum and related resources. Concisely reflecting the views of many is a statement made by the Reviewing Panel of June 2000:

One of the major achievements of (Special School) is that it has managed, through collaborative arrangements with schools, health care providers, human services agencies and tertiary institutions, to bring these services together in a coordinated fashion. ... The simplicity and rationality of the concept of the Fully Serviced School belies the practical difficulties inherent in bringing such a concept to fruition. Issues such as funding, accommodation, departmental boundaries, protocols and lines of authority were all potential barriers to its implementation.

When participants were asked the question "Can you describe what makes this school successful? In what specific ways is it successful?" they highlighted the following:
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Participants identified two major areas that have contributed in making the school successful. The first aspect highlighted by the majority of participants was the commitment displayed by all staff in the teaching and learning program of the school. Special School is a specialist school requiring staff whom are knowledgeable and conversant with specialist program delivery and classroom management skills. To effectively teach and skill children with special needs so that they are able to function as independently as conceivably possible in society, staff need to be highly committed to their role and their profession. The high level of personal and professional commitment towards the teaching of students with such diverse special needs was seen by many participants as the cornerstone of the school's success and achievements. In their responses participants almost inferred that the staff of the school view their job as a vocation, a service to the community of special needs students.

To offer the students ... every possible opportunity not only in the academic field but also outside that like health and welfare. (B)

The second major aspect highlighted by participants as contributing towards the school's success were the links the school had developed and was continuing to develop within the community. Schools are an integral part of the communities they serve. Many principals and school boards look for community involvement in the programs offered together with the running and administering of school related services. A leading academic in the field of education summarised the sentiments of many by stating:

(Special School) is a remarkable instance of full-service in action in several respects ... because of the way it exemplifies the new view of 'public education' as 'education for the public good', with high levels of volunteerism and third sector service, tapping

99
the expertise and material support of a host of individuals and organizations from the private sector. It draws on and contributes to the development of civil society in this city. (Extract from "The Contribution of Full Service Schools to a New View of Education for the Public Good" Caldwell August 1998)

With the limited finances granted to schools there is little scope for specialist schools to broaden their services beyond classroom teaching programs. With the ability to access funds from non-government sectors and to access services from both government and non-government fields, Special School has been able to develop, implement and deliver an array of services to its students and their care givers beyond the ability of many other similar schools. The ability to access dental and specialist medical support such as physiotherapy within the confines of school grounds attests the notion of bringing all required services for special needs children to the one central location. This allows students to access these services within school hours minimising loss of class time and disruptions to parents'/caregivers' work or personal schedules. It affirms the school's policy of being a Fully Serviced School. In addition to these benefits lies the benefit to the general teaching staff. Should classroom teachers require the assistance of the physiotherapist or speech therapist, these personnel are within the school grounds and are able to assist both students and staff virtually immediately. As Teacher A stated:

*If I have trouble teaching ... I can get the physio to come and see if it's physically impossible for this child to acquire this task.*

This has allowed the school to not only offer best educational practices to its students but also allow it to be at the forefront of educational initiatives amongst specialist schools within the nation.
Allied with these was the availability of the Independent Living Unit Program whereby a building company constructed a small unit complete with sleeping and living quarters so students are able to partake in the Independent Living Program. Such a program allows students to enhance and further develop their skills in taking care of a home and themselves. They are able to exercise their skills in cooking and cleaning and personal care so as to endeavour to live independently (if possible) of carers or parents, once adults.

Other factors seen as contributing to the success of the school were: the Principal’s vision and commitment towards the school, the staff’s determination in achieving the best possible outcomes for the school, the special programs available to students such as VET (Vocational Education and Training) and the transition program, the accessibility of staff and Principal at all times, and the support given to staff from the senior administration group of the school both professionally and personally.

4.4 Challenges facing the school

Participants were further asked to focus on the present and future challenges of the school and whether the school was equipped to meet such challenges. When asked the question “What are the main challenges at this school?”, they highlighted the following factors:

Participants provided an array of responses for this question ranging from the complexity of government bureaucracy, which affects all government based and public service organisations, to staff being fully informed of the needs, physical, emotional and educational, of students within their classroom. Of the many challenges spoken about, participants highlighted several.
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The main challenge was the needs of students which encompassed their overall needs and also the special needs of physically disabled students. Staff face the challenge of developing a curriculum that not only equips students with the essential skills to allow them to function within society but, they also need to bear in mind the psychological and educational development needs of such students and endeavour to develop individual programs to meet them.

_The big challenge we face is being a Specialist School, as distinct to a Special School. With having the lower functioning kids and working alongside that, still special kids and then you've got somewhere in the middle the autistic kids as well. So you've got these three, at least three, groups and trying to develop an age appropriate viable curriculum and also make it an exciting learning environment._ (AP1)

Whilst the words above are from an educationalist's point of view whereby, the needs of the total cohort of students are kept in mind when trying to formulate a viable and realistic curriculum, parents too articulated similar sentiments.

_You've got behaviour, you've got speech, you've got developmental problems ... you've also got the children that are in wheelchairs so you've got access ... problems._ (PG)

The statement quoted above provides a clear and detailed explanation of the various challenges facing Special School. Whilst many of the mentioned challenges are typical of nearly all schools; (such as: behavioural issues and mixed ability classes); many are particular to Special School due to the nature of its student body. With the constant demands on schools to focus on developing students in all possible facets
of life, Special School further faces pressures in endeavouring to meet all these demands with specialist school students. As the work force draws more and more time from people’s personal lives, schools are being faced with the task of parenting and harnessing the development of social skills. Whilst many schools cope and exceed with such challenges, specialist schools do find this an enormous task due to the nature of their student cohort.

Other challenges faced by the school are also found in many other educational settings such as government policies and funding. Participants spoke of the challenge of providing a strong curriculum and integrating services in the classroom. These two challenges have also become apparent in mainstream classrooms where the emphasis is on catering for mixed ability classes whilst addressing individual learning needs. A further two major challenges also applicable to other schools were those of increased enrolments and the management of a large school. Many schools with a positive community image face such challenges. Of interest to the researcher was the challenge and point of concern raised by interviewees regarding the hiring practices displayed by the Principal. Whilst many leaders of educational institutions adopt a rather rigid and formal approach when hiring staff for their organisations, at times this has not been the case at Special School. Rather, hiring at times has occurred in an ad-hoc manner or via word of mouth and personal recommendations, thus causing vacancies to not be filled by the best qualified and experienced candidates. In retrospect this has caused difficulties. Typical of comments made was the following by a senior administrator.

A weakness might be some of the hiring practices of the school and that’s something that’s got to change gradually. To get people who are maybe a little more tuned-in or a little more experienced in education of children with special needs.
Some of the selection procedures ... is done by word of mouth rather than being as thorough and as questioning ... as she might.

Other challenges outlined by participants can be seen as consequences of the challenges already highlighted. For example, the growth of the school has and will continue to pose the challenge of having less space within the school. Staff size will need to increase and so too will the availability of specialist personnel as student numbers rise. This may cause difficulties with dissemination of information, as important notices may need to be communicated electronically or in writing as opposed to a discussion format.

Other identified challenges included the increasing community awareness of special needs students and parental assistance within the school. Some participants felt that the Principal's knowledge of curriculum was not as up-to-date and that the Principal also needs to let go of certain areas and not control all that occurs as it is becoming too large a task.

A sub-theme identified when discussing challenges faced by the school was support for people. When asked how equipped participants felt in meeting such challenges, the most common response was the readily available support provided by the leadership team of the school. Participants, both from senior administration and general teaching staff commented on the accessibility of all school personnel at all times and the Principal's support in professional development of all staff either individually or collectively. This sub theme of assisting all persons within the school so as to allow them to fulfil their goals and maximise their potential is mentioned later on in the chapter.
4.5 Future challenges of the school

When asked about future challenges facing the school, participants highlighted the following:

**Table 4.4 Future challenges facing the school**

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In analysing such responses it became evident that the school’s constant growth is the major challenge facing the school in the future. Many of the other future challenges can be linked to the growth of the school. A larger student cohort will undoubtedly carry with it students with greater and more varied needs coupled with the need to have more physical space both in the building area and recreational grounds. Larger student numbers also carried with it the need to provide more supervision in recreational grounds with the possibility of increasing staff workloads. As student’s needs became more acute, the pressure placed on the integrated services and specialist personnel within the school also had the potential to increase. Special School has also seen a trend in increasing enrolments of autistic students. Hence, the need to develop stronger programs for autistic students and further develop the professional skills of staff in this area. This puts pressure on the school to acquire the services of highly trained and skilled personnel in such specialist areas and for students to have access to current curriculum provision that reflects national guidelines. A key aspect of the curriculum at Special School is the individual student program structure. As highlighted by the Senior Administration participant, higher enrolments will mean more individual student programs to develop and monitor.

The school’s Triennial School Review Self Assessment 2000-2002 and the Department of Education and Training Report 2003 commented on a variety of future challenges facing the school. The researcher has summarised them as follows:

1. Fully maintain and further develop state-of-the-art programs and practice for students with autism.
2. Enhance organisational health where staff morale and well-being are key factors together with the development of leadership opportunities and succession training.
3. Review and enhance the Science curriculum.
4. Review and increase the range of experiences offered to students in The Arts including increase of resources and facilities.

5. Increase the standards and overall provision of literacy.

6. Implement the Early Years Numeracy program.

7. Increase staff knowledge in the area of computer maintenance, educational software, its use and validity, and the continual need to maintain and upgrade related resources.

While many future challenges were highlighted by participants, when closely analysed many of them were allied to the main challenge of increasing student numbers. Non-related challenges were the need to employ more leading teachers, the current overall structure of the school with its various sub schools and, the need to have a stronger administration structure, with other personnel invited other than the Principal, the two Assistant Principals and the Senior Administrator.

4.6 Leadership Style of the Principal

The question of which leadership style was adopted by the Principal was put forward to participants. When asked the question "What leadership strategies have worked well and which ones do you think are less effective?", the Principal found it difficult to respond. She stated that the best respondents for such a question would be those whom she works with on a daily basis. She did however give some indication of what she believed to be effective strategies, and these are reported below. Of interest is a statement written by the Principal in her application for the Telstra Business Women’s Award 2001:

*I believe that my leadership is focused on helping the group move forward, be encouraging to the efforts of individuals who complement and enhance each other's
skills. My leadership style is to lead by example, and to engage in inclusive collaborative decision making. I have put my energies ... into setting up leadership structures within the school and developing responsibility through the leadership team.

In her responses, the Principal was very detailed and specific about the style of leadership adopted. This reflected not only a thorough understanding of the various forms of leadership adopted by people in positions of authority but more-so, it demonstrated an awareness on the part of the Principal as to the various styles of leadership and how to best use the qualities of such styles to ensure the best outcome is achieved for the given situation. The Principal also saw her own style as one of empowering others. A style that encompasses many styles of leadership ranging from the transformational to the relationship centred.

To me the critical part of leadership is really people management and how you get on with your staff ... I empower people and trust them to do their job as professionals.(P)

Her statement above however, also highlights the styles of shared and distributive leadership practices.

When participants of the research were asked, "How would you describe the Principal's leadership style?" they responded as follows:
Table 4.5 Principal’s leadership style

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<td>Able to make tough call</td>
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<th>Decision Maker</th>
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<td>Does not accept no</td>
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<td>Accepts criticism</td>
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<td>Accepts outsiders</td>
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<td>Hands on leader</td>
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<td>Being in tune with people</td>
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<td>Good admin support</td>
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<td>Develop strong team</td>
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<td>One-to-one approach</td>
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<td>Outlines boundaries</td>
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<td>Supportive of staff</td>
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<td>Consultative style</td>
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<td>Strong leader</td>
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What clearly emerged as the main leadership attribute from participants was the Principal’s ability to give staff the autonomy and the freedom to investigate, implement and evaluate new teaching and learning programs. This “freedom” is however “controlled” by the fact that although the Principal has allowed this to occur she also wants to know what is happening at the school at all times. Hence, there is still an element of control and at times a final say. Articulating these thoughts were the comments expressed by the Senior Administrator.

*First of all, the biggest thing that I think of in capital letters is CONTROL. That’s where her base is, she prefers to be in control. She wants to know everything that’s going on in the school and I think that’s fair enough. As a leader she’s entitled to know everything, but at some point you’ve got to let go. She is beginning to let go, she does delegate … but she has a tendency to want to pull things back if she’s a bit uneasy so, you have to keep reassuring her.*
The participant further stated:

_If she believes you’re competent she gives you the responsibility and lets you run with it as long as you keep her informed. If she’s a bit uncomfortable with you she will constantly ask and ask for details and then gradually wrestles the control back._

The Principal however did not she herself in this manner, rather she pointed out her ability to completely trust people and allow them to complete their tasks.

_Empowering other people ... I empower people and trust them to do their job as professionals._

The second aspect of the Principal’s leadership style, highlighted by many participants, was her approachability. Rather than sit behind closed doors, participants commented on her willingness to avail herself to staff, parents and the wider community at all times. The notions of the open door policy, open to suggestions and open to discussion were commented upon by a number of participants and can be grouped together under the umbrella of “approachability”.

In availing herself at all times to staff, parents and the wider community, the Principal is seen as being truly committed and dedicated not only to the school but also to all those whom are in contact with it. She is able to develop personal bonds with people and undertake corporate business dealings at the same time. She will assist individuals in need but will also reprimand them if the need arises. It’s the ability to be personal and professional, to help at all costs and to also make the tough call by saying ‘no’ that have earned her such respect and skill in her interpersonal qualities.
A further aspect seen as a major leadership quality was, the Principal’s ability to develop the skills of the staff. Should she feel that they are in need of developing their knowledge of pedagogy or simply need to develop skills in their interpersonal skills, she will assist them in any way. Allied with the above is also the want to achieve the aims of the school, having a clear vision of where the school is heading and taking the risks to achieve such a vision coupled with trusting those around you to work in a collaborative manner. On a more personal level, participants spoke of the Principal’s ability to listen to concerns and offer avenues of assistance. One parent discussed her child’s placement in both this school (outside her zone) and another closer to home; when it became apparent that her child was not happy at the school closest to home she discussed the concern with the Principal and he was allowed enrolment at Special School despite living outside of the school’s zone.

*My son’s happiness ... he’s had a dual placement and we’ve actually ceased that dual placement and sent him back here full time, because he’s happier.*

One of the Assistant Principals neatly summarised her leadership style as ranging from the task master, to the entrepreneur, to the business woman to the pastoral worker.

*She’s got great skill and ability to be able to be the right person in the right situation and to be able to talk at that fundraising level or offer a sympathetic ear to a parent in need and have that time to listen ... she can read the situation very quickly, she can be the hard business woman when its called for. She’s a very compassionate person. If there’s an issue to deal with, the health and wellbeing of a staff member she will work tirelessly to make sure that that situation is resolved. She works extremely well with families that are having difficulties and she will go to the ends of the earth to fix and solve those problems. And that’s connecting those parents with maybe doctors,*
psychologists ... the caring nature is just fantastic ... she will bend over backwards to assist. (AP2)

In trying to elicit the major sub themes emerging from the leadership style of the Principal, they can be grouped into three broad areas.

1) People management

A key skill in successful leadership is to possess highly developed interpersonal skills. Leaders represent their organisations at all times; they spend copious amounts of time liaising with people both within and outside the organisation they are leading. The need to have highly developed interpersonal skills is paramount to their ability to lead successfully. The Principal mentioned on many occasions the need to develop and foster a sense of teamwork and the upmost important quality of positive people management. She viewed her relationship with her staff as a key element in being a successful leader.

To me the critical part of leadership is really people management and how you get on with your staff, you can make the tough decisions when you need to and maintain that balance between the task and the personal. (P)

2) Developing trust

Further to people management, staff also commented on the Principal's ability to develop trust. Once positive relationships are created and then maintained the Principal is able to nurture the trust of those within the school. Once a connection is made and staff begin to work as a team with common goals and aims, then the Principal is able to empower staff and give them the opportunity to embark on new
projects. Staff too saw the Principal as an approachable person who accepts their opinions and takes on board suggestions and criticisms.

*She will open herself, she will lay herself bare for the criticism as long as its done in her office or face-to-face, as long as it's not a personal attack and I think that's good.*

(SA)

3) Relationships with others

Relationships with others was also identified as a key leadership quality. The Principal displayed the ability to act in a situational manner by changing style, manner of speech and approachability depending on the context. This was clearly articulated by Teacher D.

*(Principal) is like any good communicator ... and is able to adapt herself quite well as far as adapting herself to who ever she is speaking to, so she is able to relate better, on a similar level, to the person she is dealing with.*

4.7 Principal's contribution to success

Participants of the study were further asked to reflect and comment on the Principal's contribution to the success of the school.

The question posed was: "What has been the Principal's contribution to this success? How? Why?" They responded:
Table 4.6 Principal's contribution to success

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<td>Always available</td>
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<td>Marketing skills</td>
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<td>Gets all to follow vision</td>
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<td>Able to pool resources/work together</td>
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<td>Hiring practices</td>
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<td>Leader and driver</td>
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<td>Clear direction in mind</td>
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<td>Shares her vision</td>
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<td>Call in experts when needed</td>
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<td>Takes new initiatives</td>
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<td>Very good facilitator</td>
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Emerging from these responses were two key qualities that assist in accounting for the success of the Principal. The first quality was her accessibility to staff, parents, students and the wider community. This quality has emerged previously and has
been discussed as a key concept in previous results. In having an 'open door policy' and availing oneself at all times, the Principal has also allowed persons associated with the school to talk freely about new ideas they may have. After such discussions, the Principal was able to take on board new ideas and suggestions thus creating new initiatives for the school. This was the case when a staff member, with the appropriate skills and expertise, suggested to the Principal to write and produce a promotional video of the school using students in the acting and production of such. A second major quality was that of vision. Participants saw her vision and clear direction as key contributors to her success as a Principal and invariably the success of the school.

A school's vision is based upon the desire to offer a full range of services and realistically provide the best academic and non-academic curriculum for its students. Special School has an overall ideal of how it would like to look physically and what its curriculum offerings could be. It's programs and policies are designed in such a way so as to achieve this vision. Throughout the interviews, participants clearly stated that the school's vision was to be the best educational provider in the southern hemisphere for students with disabilities. They clearly outlined this as being not only the school's overall vision but also, the Principal's personal vision. Whilst the Principal was not asked the same question as other participants, when discussing her personal vision for the school she responded:

*My personal vision is that it's got to be the best it can be ... it's a shared vision, everyone's been part of the vision, they've agreed to it.*

*If I can keep my staff happy and moving in the same direction with me then it helps me achieve the vision, because to be the best that you can be, I need my staff to go out and feel comfortable about being here and happy about being here.*
In explaining how and why the school was successful, the Principal never alluded to her style of leadership and ability to work with a variety of people. Rather, the attribution of success was always given to the entire school community and in particular the staff of the school, their ability to share and agree upon the visions of the school and move towards its fulfilment. The Principal clarified these thoughts as follows:

The team we’ve built around it (the school), the community ... we’ve always had a vision and we’ve always moved towards that vision, never moved away from it. That comes about from a strong community, staff who are very happy to take it on and work with it, good parent support and just being able to bring other people into where we’re going.

In their comments on the Principal’s vision as a significant contributor to the school’s success, participants highlighted the Principal’s ability to clearly and constantly communicate to all involved with the school that her aim was to offer the very best educational and medical support to students with special needs. She was very strong at communicating her ideal and able to draw support from the staff and the greater community. Once she has firmed up her ideas she then ‘sells’ her vision to the community and this has enabled the school to develop a standing within the community and elicit support from many private sectors thus, enabling it to purchase resources, carry out building works, supplement learning programs or host fundraising events. The Senior Administrator succinctly summarized such abilities as follows:

I’d say 90% has been her ability to get out there and make good arguments, logical, but some of them hit the heartstrings. She’s a bloody politician, she can sell you
anything, but she has a good way to do that. She's got kids with specialist needs, so
going to the right places you can get money to do things and she's done that
exceedingly well and that includes the extra staff ... the excellent resources. (SA)

Other factors participants saw as contributing to the Principal's success were her
abilities to interact with people, listen to them, take their ideas and concerns on board
and then access the right people to bring such ideas to fruition. A further contribution
to her success was the Principal's willingness to admit weakness and lack of
complete knowledge in all educational facets for students with specialist needs.
Whilst having a very solid grasp on educational practices and knowledge in regards
to special needs, the Principal has on occasions been unable to answer all
questions. Rather than dismiss the issue of concern the Principal did not hesitate to
call in expert specialist assistance to help with the issue. Further attributes included
her ability to create a positive environment, her strong political skills, her incessant
passion and her drive

4.8 Summary of findings

School achievements and success

When analysing the successes and achievements of Special School, participants
identified a number of achievements that were divided into physical, teaching and
learning and community successes. The main success of the school was the
commitment of all staff in their day-to-day teaching and learning program. A further
success and achievement of the school was its ability to develop strong links with
educational and non-educational groups within society. The school's links with
various tertiary educational institutions and other organizations were regarded as
very high achievements. Further successes included: specialist programs for
students, accessibility of all staff including senior administrators at all times and the Principal’s commitment towards the school.

Challenges facing the school

Participants identified a number of challenges, however of most importance was the nature of the students and the ability to cater for their needs academically, physically and developmentally. Participants further pointed out the challenge of designing and delivering a curriculum aimed at addressing the needs of students. Coupled with this was the need of integrating student services into the classroom. Other challenges were the hiring practices of the Principal and the need to fill vacancies with the best qualified and experienced staff and not to rely too heavily on people’s recommendations. Despite the array of challenges faced by participants, they unanimously commented on the school’s strong administration and its constant support in assisting them to overcome their challenges.

Future challenges of the school

The main challenge for Special School is the growth of the school in terms of student numbers. This future challenge brings with it a wide variety of allied challenges such as, demands for more teaching staff both specialist and non-specialist; the pressure on space for recreational grounds and its adequate supervision. There is also an increase in autism enrolments thus creating a need for more specialised teaching and learning programs in this area. With higher student numbers, the development and monitoring of individualised learning programs will create further demands on staff thereby increasing an already overloaded work load. Challenges were also mentioned in the area of school and administration structures with particular emphasis on the success of the current model.
Leadership style of the Principal

There were many varied responses to the style of leadership displayed by the Principal. The Principal herself saw her style as one of people leadership, which is encouraging all to achieve their personal best and inviting all staff to work together with open communication channels. The Principal believed in empowering staff and giving them the ability to take control of certain aspects of school life. Other participants however, did not fully agree with this. Whilst they acknowledged her people-centred approach and open communication channels, they also mentioned the desire of the Principal to be in control at all times. Despite the fact that much is delegated, there is still her want to know what is occurring and to want to have the final say in many matters. Further leadership qualities highlighted were, the Principal's willingness to promote and encourage professional development for individuals and the staff as a whole, and her willingness to assist all staff, parents and students overcome personal or professional challenges.

Principal's contribution to success

Almost all participants commented on the Principal's willingness and ability to be available for discussions and meetings with all members of the school community. Her eagerness and willingness to discuss school and personal related issues with people was seen as the most significant contributor to her success as Principal. In addition to this, participants also spoke of the Principal's vision and her ability to align all school members to the vision and then endeavour to achieve the goals set. Further qualities were her marketing and fundraising abilities and also the willingness to seek expert advice when necessary.
4.9 Conclusion

Having discussed the data obtained through interviews and relevant documentation pertaining to Special School and its Principal, the researcher will, in the following chapter, discuss the similarities and differences between the case study findings and the literature renamed as the research question:

*What are the qualities, skills and leadership styles adopted by a successful school principal in a successful Victorian Specialist School?*
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The literature review provided an overview of research associated with successful schools and the leaders of these schools. What follows in this discussion is a comparison of both the literature findings and data obtained via interviews. It will be shown that whilst the Principal of Special School does display the skills and attributes of successful school principals, there are some important contrasts that contribute to our understanding of these principals. The researcher has attempted to highlight both similarities and differences between the data and literature in order to determine the skills and qualities of the Principal of Special School. Reference is also made to possible further studies, which may be able to provide deeper knowledge in the area of successful principalship.

5.2 Successful Schools

For the purpose of this section the researcher has elicited six main factors raised in the literature review that discuss the qualities and attributes of successful schools. In turn the findings of Special School have been compared to these.

One of the main features of successful schools is the ability to ensure that students experience success in both academic and non-academic spheres of education. Success at school is not only dependant on final year results and grades obtained by students at the end of each semester. Rather, success is measured when students are able to achieve their personal best in the academic and/or the non-academic offerings of the school. A successful school is essentially one that is able to encourage and develop students whilst allowing them to develop skills and
knowledge to their highest ability. Hence, success is measured on a personal, not collective level, looking at each student as an individual entity and not as part of the overall cohort. When students in schools are able to achieve levels of personal success then it can be argued that the school is successful.

The very nature of Special School does prevent the Principal from looking at success of students from a whole school perspective. The very essence of the school, as stated in the school’s mission statement, is to cater for the individual needs of each student and ensure that they are able to meet the goals that are set for them at the start of the year. The daily operations of the school are a clear reflection of the mission statement and the school ensures that the statement is followed, and if necessary, changed to suit the needs of the students of the time. Special School’s mission statement further states that the school believes in providing an education that educates academically, but also enhances the self esteem, confidence and sense of dignity of each student. As each student has an individual and closely monitored program designed at the start of the year and modified if necessary, achievement of one’s personal best is an obtainable goal. Students at Special School are also exposed to a variety of co-curricular activities such as camps and music and choir groups that further enhance their development and allow them to demonstrate talents outside the confines of the classroom. Hence, it is clear that Special School places greater emphasis on success of the individual as opposed to success of the student cohort as a whole.

Another quality of successful schools, as commented upon by Walsh (1999) and Brighouse and Woods (1999), is the practice of collaborative teaching and assessment practices, and the mapping out of the school curriculum as a whole. With the structure of Special School and its adoption of the “Fully Integrated Model of Service Delivery”, the curriculum offered to each student is set at the beginning of
each school year. Those responsible for the program design are the teachers of the student, the Director of Integrated Studies and the parents. As the year progresses teachers further consult and seek assistance from specialist staff, such as the physiotherapist and or speech therapist, to see how they can better help the student achieve his or her set goals. If they find that the goals set have been too difficult or too easy for the student, they are altered accordingly. Such close monitoring endeavours to allow students to achieve their very personal best. It challenges them on a continual level whilst acknowledging their successes along the way. In adopting such a collaborative approach to the curriculum and assessment program of each student, and tailoring the program to meet the needs and extend the skills of the individual, Special School does model and practice the quality of collaborative teaching and assessment.

In looking at the literature presented on successful schools, researchers such as Reynolds (1996) and Sammons (2001) have also highlighted the necessity for teachers to be abreast of current trends in teaching and learning and to undertake regular professional development in their subject areas and teaching in general. In keeping up to date with what is occurring on a global perspective, teachers and their school are able to offer their students new methodologies of learning and are able to develop a curriculum that allows students to embrace the challenges of their changing society. It further provides the school with staff who are at the forefront of curriculum and pedagogy development and who are learned in putting new techniques into practice. A school that encourages continual professional development amongst its personnel is further highlighting their belief in developing and maintaining a total learning school community. Researchers such as Walsh (1999) and Mulford and Johns (2004) have commented that schools are ‘learning communities’ where all involved benefit from enhancing their skills and knowledge.
When listening to the responses of the participants of this study, the researcher found that the staff and administration of Special School have a high level of both personal and professional commitment towards the teaching and learning program of the school. Indeed, it seems, that the cornerstone of the school's success lies in the fact that staff are highly committed to professional and personal development. On a number of occasions, the Principal has invested time and resources into running professional development programs for the entire staff and, she has also encouraged and supported individual pursuits. When unsure of issues, the Principal has also willingly sought assistance from outside bodies. Parents too, are invited to attend seminars tailored to their concerns and needs in raising children with special needs. Hence, there permeates a culture of continual learning and betterment of self amongst the staff and the parent body that ultimately benefits the students.

Whilst many successful schools have a strong and innovative curriculum, dynamic teachers, a forward-thinking administrative body and an excellent relationship between school personnel and students, to enhance their success it is desirable that they also have a strong relationship with parents and the wider community of which they are a part. Researchers such as Hopkins (2001) have stated that the success of schools is also attributed to the positive links the school has formed with the wider community. Schools preferably should not be viewed as single entities within the community whose purpose is solely that of educating its students, rather they should be seen as the focal point of the community whose services of education ultimately benefit all. Communities and parents should take an active role in the provision of education for the school whether through sponsorship or volunteer run programs. In doing so they develop a stronger understanding of the educational programs and facilities provided to their children and they are able to provide broader opportunities for the students such as part-time work or other on the job training programs.
One of the key features that has enabled Special School to develop into a successful school has been its ability to elicit from both parents and the wider community, support both financial and in-kind. With the adoption of an "Integrated Service Model" whereby, educational, medical, paramedical and mental health services operate within the school grounds, Special School has been able to work with outside organisations to strengthen the services it offers students. The mere fact that the dental clinic operates in conjunction with the Dental Hospital of Victoria is testimony of the wider community assisting the school whilst at the same time assisting itself. Special School has also been able to run parent information forums where legal and financial advice have been provided by prominent agencies within the area. Such information sessions have been able to provide parents with clear directions and future planning for their children, whilst at the same time publicising their services. Further examples of community involvement within the school have been the construction of a unit by a prominent local building company to allow the school to run its Independent Living Skills Program for its senior students. This company was able to construct a three-bedroom unit with all facilities so that senior students could learn and develop the necessary living skills for future independent living. There have also been examples of large companies donating material goods for the resourcing of specialist classrooms and the building of new wings. Moving away from community organisations and larger corporations, Special School has also received financial assistance from prominent individuals that has allowed the school to refurbish or resource certain sections of the school. An example of this was funds and in-kind support received to help with the construction of the swimming pool. In addition to donations from large corporations or prominent individuals, there have also been numbers of parents who have volunteered their services to assist teachers within the school on a weekly basis or for special events. What the administration does so successfully is then acknowledge the donations and assistance given by members of the wider community. Special School ensures that those who walk within the school
are well aware of who has assisted the school. The ability to recognize and publicly thank sponsors has demonstrated not only excellent public relations skills on behalf of the Principal, but, it has encouraged others to follow suit as they are emotionally enriched by the good of others and needs of the students. Participants mentioned that the extent of community links was a major factor that makes Special School very successful.

In the literature review the researcher referred to Sammons' (1999) 11 factors for the achievement of effective and successful schools. In their responses to the questions asked, the participant's of the study confirmed that these factors existed in Special School. The school is determined to be the best possible educational provider for students with special needs in the nation and the world. In order to achieve this aim, the school and the staff ensure that they work together in providing a teaching and learning program where students are challenged, experience success and develop a heightened level of self-esteem. Whilst achieving these goals, the staff of Special School ensure that they are abreast of new and current trends within their field of education and they further ensure that assistance is sought when they are uncertain. The school's administration further supports the professional development of its staff by providing both in-house and external training. In planning each student's learning program, teachers and the Director of Integrated Services work together in designing a program that is challenging yet achievable for each student. Lastly, Special School has over the years, developed a very strong rapport with the parents of students and the wider community. This has allowed the school to resource and facilitate programs that otherwise would not run due to the constraints and limitations of government funding. Thus, when focussing on qualities inherent within successful schools, Special School clearly demonstrates not only an awareness of such qualities but also, a clear and developed practice of them.
5.3 Leadership

Whilst many definitions are provided on leadership and what it entails, fundamentally leaders are those who are able to influence others with the aim of fulfilling the organisation's aims and their personal vision. Leaders assist others in gaining and developing new knowledge in order to change the organisation and realise its vision. In focusing on the leadership provided by the Principal of Special School, she clearly stated that she views her role as that of helping the group of staff move forward and consequently move the school closer to the achievement of its vision and mission. She spoke about leading by example and engaging in inclusive collaborative decision making. She sees her leadership style as one of empowerment, which ranges from the transformational to relationship centred. When analysing the responses from the participants there was ambivalence. Whilst many agreed with her personal view, they were quick to point out that at times her style of leadership has been authoritarian and that of wanting total control. Many participants however, saw her as being instrumental in helping the school achieve its vision and mission and in providing the best possible opportunities for students, staff and parents. Participants also spoke of a change in leadership style. Over the years the Principal has altered her style from autocratic to distributive in order to best fit the environment the school is now in. The ability of changing styles to best fit the situation has been stated by many researchers as being a key quality of a successful principal.

5.4 Styles of Leadership

In terms of Leithwood et al. (1999) six styles of leadership, the principal of Special School demonstrated a working knowledge and practice of all styles. Although when asked, she could not clearly define the styles she is more inclined to adopt, she spoke of using the most suitable style for a given situation. What follows is an
explanation of the styles and how the Principal of Special School demonstrates aspects of each style.

**Instructional leadership:**

◊ Allocating authority and influence to formal administrative roles.

The Principal has developed and implemented a new leadership structure within the school whereby there are two Assistant Principals, a senior Administrative person in the role of Director of Integrated Services, and sub school leaders. Each person has a clearly defined role and function within the school, however they ensure that all staff are consulted, and listened to when decisions are made. The senior administrative team works in collaboration with not only each other, but also with staff and parents in ensuring that the school's aims and the individual learning goals of each student are achieved.

**Transformational leadership:**

◊ Central focuses of leadership are the commitments and capacities of the members of the organization.

Focusing on a Transformational style of leadership, it is evident that this style is perhaps the strongest and most developed in the Principal. The Principal has always led the school with the aim to better the educational opportunities provided to its students. She has always strived to implement new programs and has been at the cutting edge of special needs education. In having such a deep commitment, her staff have slowly developed a similar personal commitment to their role as educators within that school setting. Hence, not only has she developed a very clear and
focused vision and mission for the school, she has also been able to secure the commitment of those who work with her. The Principal has been able to secure such commitment from the staff by including them in the development of the school's vision and mission. She has given all staff a voice and has willingly accepted their opinions. In turn, this has created a committed staff as they too, believe in and embrace the school's direction. Staff have however, mentioned the Principal's reluctance in "letting go" and hence, still wanting to maintain a sense of control at all times. Thus, whilst she displays the qualities of a transformational leader, there is still some development that needs to take place in terms of allowing appointed staff to take complete ownership and leadership of the teams and projects they are leading.

Moral leadership:

◊ Values form the core of all leadership and administrative practices.

One of the consequences of developing a larger administrative team and distributing leadership amongst the teaching staff has been the further development of moral leadership. With many involved in the decision making process of the school, there is a greater scope for collaborative decision making and listening to the views of others. Special School endeavours to hold the student's individual needs at the forefront of decisions made. Their welfare is of concern to all. Special School's mission statement states: "all students have the right to an education that enhances self-esteem, provides confidence and a sense of dignity."

In her leadership the Principal of Special School clearly demonstrates unconditional respect for the staff, students and wider school community. It is through such respect that individual differences are catered for and members of the school community supported in their endeavours. The school's vision is "to provide every student with a
secure, caring and happy environment within which each child can learn and reach his or her potential". The Principal of Special School further applies this vision to the staff and other school community personnel. She firmly believes in respecting, challenging and supporting those with whom she works. Hence, in terms of decisions made regarding the academic and non-academic direction of the school, the Principal exemplifies the words of the vision statement and encourages others to follow suit.

**Participative leadership:**

◊ The group's decision making is the central focus point for the leader.

As mentioned in the section on Moral Leadership, all members of the school community are invited to offer their input on decisions affecting the welfare of the school community. The Principal has allowed this process to develop and establish itself so that the best possible discussion and decisions are reached. Allowing others to contribute to the decision-making process has also allowed her to better balance the demands of her role from both within and outside the school. There is however, further development needed in this area as at times the Principal has wrestled the control back from staff in charge of particular projects.

**Managerial leadership:**

◊ Ensures that members of the organization complete tasks in an efficient manner.

As the school has grown in size the Principal has had to delegate work to others in order to ensure that all deadlines are met and that the daily administrative work and wider educational thought are being completed. In recent years there has been a
restructuring of the senior administration team to help alleviate the many tasks that were once the responsibility of the Principal. The Principal does however, wish to maintain an overall grasp on all that is occurring so that she is fully informed and aware of the school's progress. Whilst some participants viewed this as 'controlling', the Principal saw it as her duty to know what is occurring at the school as, ultimately, she is accountable to government educational bodies.

**Contingent leadership:**

◊ An effective response to the challenges facing the organisation and its members hence, better meeting their needs.

Leading a school requires interaction with a multitude of people, governing bodies and various agencies. Through the daily operations of the school, the Principal of Special School comes into contact with a myriad of people whose needs differ. She is however, able to communicate with all concerned at the level appropriate to the issues at hand. Essentially, the Principal is able to alter her leadership style to best suit the situation and the personnel at hand. Her ability to move from one style to the next and her knowledge of which style best suits the situation at hand has enabled her to effectively respond to the question and hence, lead the school in a positive manner.

**5.5 Successful Principal Leadership Qualities**

In the literature review six defendable claims about successful school leadership offered by Leithwood and Riehl (2003 A) were described. In relation to Special School, the six claims and how well they are implemented and acted out at Special School are as follows:
Claim 1.

- Well-developed and planned curriculum; high quality teaching together with strong leadership.

Special School has endeavoured to implement the above three components within its teaching and learning program. Staff are in constant consultation with each other and the Director of Integrated Services on how to best structure and deliver specialised and individualised curriculum programs for students. The staff of Special School are highly skilled in their teaching abilities and are constantly updating their knowledge of best teaching practice. Leading such an example is the Principal herself; she too ensures that she is abreast of current trends in the teaching and learning of special students. When there is doubt or uncertainty in how to best deliver a program, or what other steps could be taken to achieve set goals, the senior administration team is not reluctant to call upon specialised help. This was evidenced when the school appointed the Director of Integrated Services whose area of expertise was education of special needs students. This clearly demonstrated the school's commitment to wanting to provide the best possible teaching and learning for its students.

Claim 2.

- There are other sources of leadership within the school; they do not lie only within the leadership team.

Over the years the Principal of Special School has endeavoured to distribute the leadership of the school and its various programs to staff within the school. As the school has grown in size there has been a restructuring of the leadership team with the appointment of two Assistant Principals, a Director of Integrated Services and
sub-school leaders. There are however, some teaching staff that feel that it could be improved. Some staff feel that she still maintains control over them and if a project is not running the way she intended it to run, she will slowly wrestle the control away.

Claim 3.

◊ Distribute leadership.

With the redesigning of the school, the Principal of Special School has begun to form smaller leadership teams within the school. Whilst once reluctant to do so, but now compelled due to the school's size, the Principal has realised that she is able to trust the staff and that giving them such opportunities does benefit the entire school community. There is still however, the desire to ultimately know what is occurring within each team and committee. The staff of Special School have mentioned through their interviews that whilst they are now more involved in the consultation and decision making process, they still don't feel totally empowered in this area. Staff did however state that the notion of distributing leadership is developing and will continue to do so. It needs to be remembered however, that this has occurred only as a direct consequence of the growth of the school. It has been a "needs based" style of leadership rather than a preferred style of leadership on behalf of the principal.
Claim 4.

◊ Ability to use different leadership practices, set directions, develop people and re-design the organization.

The components of this claim have, and are being met to varying degrees. The Principal is aware of which styles of leadership best fit the situation at hand and is generally able to interchange them as best needed. In being able to exercise such flexibility the Principal ensures that the best outcome is reached for the given situation. The directions of the school are made clear to staff and the school community at all times; the school community is very aware of where the school is heading and embraces these goals. As discussed earlier in this research, the Principal encourages her staff to further develop their professional and personal knowledge in order to be able to deliver programs that are at the forefront of specialist education. Testimony to this was the Principal's comments about the need for whole staff training and learning in the area of autism. As the number of autistic students attending Special School has increased, the Senior Administration team, at the time of the study, highlighted the need for increased awareness, management and education of students with autism. Lastly, it has been discussed throughout this research that due to the growth of the school, its overall organisation has been re-structured so that the needs of the students and the staff are best met. The development of sub-schools and the creation of the positions of Director of Integrated Studies and Assistant Principals have assisted in this process.

In their study, Day and Naylor (2004:43) concluded their research by stating that the principal's of the 12 chosen schools in the United Kingdom demonstrated "strong moral and ethical commitments to ensuring pupils' holistic development". These
principals together with the Principal of Special School have, set and sustained
direction, they have assisted both formally and informally in developing people, they
have modelled desired behaviour and they have re-designed the structure of the
organization so that a sense of collaboration, belonging and ownership can be
fostered.

Claim 5.

◇ Balancing internal and external demands.

The Principal of Special School has always been very adept at balancing the
demands of her role and meeting the requirements of the school from both internal
and external bodies. With the re-structuring of the senior administration team over
the years, the Principal has been able to better this balance as others now complete
many tasks. Not only does this allow for greater efficiency within the school but it also
gives the Principal time to focus on her role of leadership and better achieve the
vision of the school.

Claim 6.

◇ Allowing all students to experience success.

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) state that in order to achieve success as a principal and
as a school, all students within the school need to experience a level of success.
Schools cannot merely rely on a few students to achieve high scores. As Walsh
(1999) stated, it is the individual progress made by each student that is the true
record of a school's success. The very structure of Special School enables each
student to achieve individual success. This is due to the individualised learning
program that is designed and implemented for each student and monitored throughout the course of the year.

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) further discuss other factors pertinent to school success such as, the importance of offering support and resources to families. At Special School, information sessions are held on a regular basis enabling parents to receive information on a range of issues and concerns relevant to their needs as parents of special needs students. In addition to information sessions, Special School also allows students and members of the school community access to its medical and paramedical resources. In doing this, the ties between school and community are strengthened and students are ensured the best possible care as all needed facilities are located within the one area. In their study, Kilpatrick, Johns, Mulford and Falk (2002), as cited in Mulford and Johns, (2004) focused on the relationship between schools and their broader community. Kilpatrick et al. (2002) concluded that the partnership developed between school and broader community allows the two bodies to develop and work towards the achievement of a shared vision. There is present a leadership structure where school and community leaders work together at both an individual and collective level. Special School has been able to successfully achieve support from the school and wider community in assisting it to achieve its goals and vision.

Mulford and Johns (2004) point out that there is a need for principals to be skilled in managing social, political, economic and complex technological forces. Principals need to be able to prioritise tasks, allow staff to 'own' the decisions made and thus keep all stakeholders content. The Principal of Special School is able to do this due to the leadership structure within the school, the trust she has in the team around her and her personal philosophy, I empower people and trust them to do their job as professionals, (Principal 2002). In giving staff a voice in decisions made, but more-
so, in trusting them to work at a professional level, the Principal has undoubtedly raised their confidence and esteem. Having done this she has elevated their commitment to their role of professional educators and members of the school community. With such a heightened level of dedication the Principal is better able to manage the various forces associated with leading a school.

In summarising the findings from these claims, the researcher found that the Principal of Special School does in fact display all the factors Leithwood and Riehl (2003) describe as necessary for successful school leadership. The researcher further noted that out of the six claims there were only two the Principal was still to fully develop. These claims were those relating to looking beyond the leadership team for leadership and distributing leadership to others within the school. As both claims are similar it can be argued that the Principal of Special School needs to develop within herself and her leadership style a sense of trust and of true empowerment of others. As Special School continues to grow and take on board more programs and initiatives, the Principal will need to allow others to take leadership of such programs and initiatives so that the best can be achieved. To maintain complete control over all that occurs at the school is far too complex and large a role.

5.6 Vision

A clearly articulated vision is required by all leaders, so that the organisation they are leading has a distinct and clear focus of what it wishes to achieve in years to come. The same applies to school principals. Successful principals hold a clear vision of what the school is to ‘look like’ and achieve. “It is an imagination of what the school could become. It is the picture of the school when it is successful” (Cheng cited in Wong and Evers 2001:54). Researchers such as Cheng have argued that ‘vision’ is
one of the strongest qualities needed by principals as it provides a sense of purpose for those involved. In addition to having a personal vision for the school, principals need to be able to clearly communicate their vision to the staff and it needs to be accepted by them. Hence, there is a need for principals to engage in dialogue with staff about the school's vision and alter it if need be. When the school community agrees with the overall vision then the task of realizing it can commence.

Throughout her years as principal of Special School, the Principal has clearly articulated her vision for the school; she has stated to staff that the overall vision is:

◊ To be best it can be.
◊ To engage community support.
◊ To develop new programs.

In their interview responses, participants clearly articulated these same views but, more importantly, they also indicated that a significant contribution to the school's success is the Principal's ability to clearly and constantly communicate this vision to the school community. The Principal also acknowledged the staff's contribution in helping to develop this vision; she spoke of it as a "shared vision". When all members of the organisation agree upon and share the same vision, the school can commence putting into practice the programs and or initiatives that will ultimately assist in achieving the vision (Mulford and Johns 2004). In addition, the Principal also stated that she needs her staff to be happy and move in the same direction as herself in order to achieve the vision. In her interviews, she specifically stated that in order to be the best that she can be as a principal and for the school to be the best it can be, she needs the full support of her staff. Over the years, she has been successful in articulating her vision for the school and in gaining the support from her staff, hence, the school team has moved in a positive direction, towards the fulfilment its vision.
5.7 Commitment to Organisation

In order to reach their full potential and that of the organisation they are leading, leaders such as school principals need to possess a very high level of commitment to their role and to the organisation they are working within. In 2000 a New Jersey report found that one contributing factor in high performing schools was a dedicated and committed principal; a principal that goes beyond the normal call of duty and feels within themself a personal responsibility to ensuring that each student within their care achieves his or her maximum potential in all spheres of education (Goleman 2000). Principals cannot merely ‘feel’ a high level of commitment and dedication; they need to demonstrate this by leading via example. As mentioned before in this research, when members of an organisation see their leader embracing the challenges and working towards the betterment of the organisation for all involved, then they too are likely to demonstrate such commitment and passion.

In all interviews held it was very clear that the Principal of Special School was highly committed to her role as the leader of the school. She possessed a very high level of self-motivation and strong ambition in ensuring that the school is at the forefront of education of students with special needs. This personal commitment to the school and its student body has transpired in the leadership and the overall commitment she has towards the school, its staff, students, parents and wider community. All decisions made are done so with the best intentions of the school and students. Furthermore, the Principal strives to uphold the school’s vision and mission at all times. On a number of occasions participants spoke of the school’s vision and mission as the underlying factor considered prior to making decisions.
5.8 Conclusion

Special School is an example of a successful school that has embraced its many challenges and has put into place structures and procedures that allow it to meet future challenges. From beginnings as a small Special Development School it has developed into the first Fully Serviced Specialist School catering for students with high special and specialist needs. It has developed an array of programs to meet the educational, medical and physical needs of its students whilst also, meeting the needs of the parent and teaching community. The Principal of the school has endeavoured to support and develop the staff as required, together with assisting parents in their role as primary caregivers to children with special needs and disabilities. The open door policy of the Principal has allowed open channels of communication to develop where staff and parents are able to offer suggestions, make recommendations and even criticise current practices. The Principal has also clearly articulated to all school community members the vision for the school and via her strong association with various community groups and influential individuals and organisations she has been able to realise the school’s vision. It is the incessant passion and inner drive to achieve the very best for the students that has seen this Principal and school develop into a successful school for students with special and specialist needs. The Principal has played a pivotal role in contributing to the success of the school and in being able to actively encourage and implement changes to current structures.

For a school leader to emulate all the claims concerning successful principals of successful schools and to be strong and thoroughly conversant in both knowledge and practice of all leadership styles pertinent to their role, is a rather difficult task. In this case study, the principal of Special School has clearly demonstrated that she is a
successful principal of a successful school. Over the years, she has enhanced the educational opportunities available to students and staff and has worked very closely with prominent community members in engaging their support, both financial and non-financial, in order to develop state of the art facilities. In the face of government changes and bureaucratic changes within the area of special education she has continued to seek better ways of teaching and developing both students and staff. Her dedication to the school and its community are widely known and acknowledged. In little over 10 years the principal has been able to take a school described as “an ant-infested old house with twenty students with moderate to severe disabilities;” (Caldwell 2004) to a new school which is “an outstanding model of a full service school, of any kind now.”

Current and aspiring principals need to develop a deeper understanding of the qualities needed to develop oneself into a successful principal. Successful principals are categorised by having a set of core basic leadership skills comprising of; a vision that can be communicated and shared with others; the ability to foster the professional and personal growth of their staff; the ability to be professional and personal at the same time; a willingness to change or alter the structure of the organisation if needed; an ability to let go of old and embrace new ideas, concepts and ways of doing things; modelling their leadership style whilst also accepting the styles of others and an ability to distribute leadership to staff yet maintain accountability at the same time.

What has been understood in regards to principal leadership on the whole and is also evident in the Principal of Special School is that principal’s impact on student outcomes by working with and through others. They are able to successfully balance the teaching and learning program of the school together with using a range of interventions at an individual level and at the wider school capacity building level. In
reading the case study conducted by Mulford and Johns (2004:71-73), the researcher found the following statement to be valid for the Principal of Special School. They wrote of the concept of “deep democracy”, describing it as:

*Respect for the worth and dignity of individuals and their cultural traditions, reverence for and proactive facilitation of free and open inquiry and critique, recognition of interdependence in working for the common good, the responsibility of individuals to participate in free and open inquiry, and the importance of collective choices and actions in the interest of the common good.*

Throughout this research, the researcher has found that many of the qualities necessary for the fostering and development of successful leadership are very much related to the individual personality and characteristics of the leader. Whilst this may be true, it also needs to be noted that many of the qualities outlined in this research can be learned, nurtured and developed. In having focused on the qualities deemed necessary for a leader to be successful it is apparent that perhaps the best method of learning such qualities is to work alongside a successful leader and carefully study their behaviour and interactions from a variety of angles within the organisation. Teachers aspiring to leadership positions are likely to already have within themselves an innate passion for teaching and learning within the school context. As they develop into talented and successful classroom teachers they may be likely to assume various leadership positions within the organisation. In doing so they are joining a group of people in whom leadership has been distributed by the senior leadership team to facilitate the running of the school. Whilst in this position it is of importance that these “middle managers” find a mentor within the organisation who will not only assist them with their role but, who will also advise them, critique them, commend them and challenge them to continuously strive for their best. It is through such modelling that many skills and attributes pertaining to successful leadership can
be learnt, fostered and displayed. Alongside this style of learning, it is also advisable that aspiring leaders undertake professional development via seminars or higher education in the areas of leadership within the school context. Further studies will enable them to enhance their knowledge in the field of educational leadership and other issues pertaining to the running of a school, such as curriculum. Essentially, in engaging in such continuous learning and betterment of self, aspiring educational leaders are able to better develop their own value system, vision and philosophy of education. They have gained experience in the leading of small teams and have widened their knowledge on current educational thought and direction. Their “hands on” experience coupled with further academic studies should allow them to develop the skills, attributes and qualities deemed necessary for successful principals who wish to lead successful schools.

5.9 Future Research

In this study the researcher aimed at adding to the body of knowledge that forms the International Successful School Leadership Project focusing in particular on the findings of a Victorian Specialist School. Once the case studies have been completed the project will focus on country surveys and then observational case studies. It is envisaged that at the end of the project researchers will be able to collate all findings and provide some responses as to what constitutes successful leadership of successful schools. Whilst this research was very focused and its findings added to an already existing body of knowledge, there have emerged a number of questions and/or areas that require future research in order to give educators a clearer insight into what constitutes successful leadership and general educational leadership directions. Some further research topics are as follows:
• What is the impact of distributive leadership on the overall successful leadership of schools? How far should principals distribute leadership and how can accountability be maintained?

• How successful is the empowerment of others in achieving school success?

• To what extent have schools gone to obtaining community support for the achievement of their goals and vision. How successful has this been for the school in the long term and why is assistance being sought from outside the conventional bodies?

These three areas stem from the findings of this research and a greater understanding of them will allow aspiring and current leaders an opportunity to reflect on their current practices and perhaps alter them so as to fit the society in which we currently live and hence, improve their personal leadership style and the overall success of the school.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

A) Principal Interview Questions

1. Describe the ethos or philosophy of the school. (What direction is it heading in?)

2. What is your personal vision for the school?

3. What are your priorities as a principal for this school?

4. What are you planning over the next few years?

5. Identify the challenges facing the school and your principalship. (How do you lead the teachers-school community-in dealing with these challenges?)

6. To what extent has the school become more or less challenging?

7. Can you describe what makes this school successful? In what specific ways is it successful? What criteria do you use to measure its success?

8. How do you know you are doing a good job?

9. How do you see your role as leader in this school?
10. What leadership strategies have worked well and which ones do you think are less effective?

11. Can you describe a situation, a complex issue or challenge you handled well? Can you describe a difficult challenge or issue you would have liked to have handled differently?

12. As a principal you will have relationships with numerous groups - community, colleagues, staff, council, parents, and students. What are the differences, if any, in relating with these groups?

13. What non-professional sources of support and encouragement do you use in doing your job?

14. On average, how many hours per week do you work during term time? How do you relax or 'get away from it all'? How often? Does this help? In what ways?
APPENDIX 2

B) Teacher/Admin staff/School Council President Interview Questions

1. Outline your career to date. When did you arrive at the school and what is your position now?

2. Why do you choose to work in this school?

3. What are the main challenges at this school?

4. To what extent has the school become more or less challenging?

5. How well equipped do you feel in dealing with the challenges of this school?

6. Who has supported you/how have you been supported in meeting the challenges?

7. Can you describe the ethos or philosophy of the school? (What direction is it heading?)

8. What is the principal’s vision for the school?

9. What are the plans for the school over the next few years? Are they achievable?
10. Can you describe what makes this school successful? In what specific ways is it successful? What criteria do you use to measure its success?

11. How do you account for the school's success?

12. What has been the principal's contribution to this success? (Why? How?)

13. What has been the principal's most important success in the school over the past three years? How was it achieved?

14. Have there been any failures? (What/Why?)

15. How do you think the principal judges how well she is doing the job? Are there things you wish she did differently?

16. How would you describe the principal's leadership style?

17. The principal has relationships with numerous groups- community, colleagues, staff, council, parents, and students. What are the differences, if any, in relating with these groups?

18. Do you ever think "I am pleased with the way the principal handled that matter?" Give an example of a thorny matter that the principal handled well.
# APPENDIX 3

## List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Basic Types of Questions (Principal)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Basic Types of Questions (School Personnel)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Questions from categories and sub categories of findings</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Features of Successful Schools</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Styles of Leadership</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Leadership Practices</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>List of participants</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Reasons for school’s success</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Challenges facing the school</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Future challenges facing the school</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Principal’s leadership style</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Principal’s contribution to success</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX 4

### List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 2.1</th>
<th>Principal Interviews</th>
<th>page 28</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.2</td>
<td>School Administration Team and Teacher Interviews</td>
<td>page 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.3</td>
<td>School Council Member Interviews</td>
<td>page 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.4</td>
<td>School Parent Interview</td>
<td>page 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>