

Agile Scrum: A case study in organisational culture and emergent leadership in two Christian faith-based schools

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Abstract

This case study examined the impact on the evolving leadership cultures in two schools following their participation in the Smarter Schools National Partnerships Program (SSNPP) an initiative of the former Federal Labor Government (2007–2013).

The focus was on the co-developed interventions and strategies designed to meet the aims and objectives of the SSNPP, with a particular focus on the implementation of an adapted version of an inclusive participatory approach titled the *Agile Scrum Method*.

Of the fifteen schools supported by the researcher through the SSNPP, two were selected for further engagement as both schools had demonstrated a keen intent to participate in the SSNP program. The principals of these two schools were also supportive in co-developing additional initiatives and investigations in order to enhance their respective school cultures and leadership approaches. As Principal Advisor and Cluster Leader, I have the dual role of author and researcher. This dual role is further explored below.

This case study was underpinned by an ethnographic approach that focused on the social interactions, behaviours and perspectives that occurred within groups, teams, organisations and communities (Reeves, Kuper & Hodges, 2008). The conceptual framework of this research was underpinned by Bolman and Deal's Frames (2008, 2017) research in investigating organisational cultures. Qualitative data was drawn from several sources, including semi-structured Interviews, documents such as newsletters, minutes of meetings, school websites and notes from the researcher's journal.

The results highlighted the importance of principal leadership in the creation of highly collaborative and distributive leadership cultures in both schools. Faith and religion played a major role in influencing a predominant servant leadership style. The Agile Scrum process supported the creation of conditions of collaborative cultures and distributed leadership in both schools.

This study concluded with practical recommendations for school principals, teachers, and policy makers interested in the development of principal and teacher leadership and collaborative school cultures.

Student Declaration

“I, Massimiliano Caruso, declare that the Doctor of Education thesis entitled ‘Agile Scrum: A case study in organisational culture and emergent leadership in two Christian faith-based schools’, is no more than 60,000 words including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work”. “I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University’s Higher Degree by Research Policy.

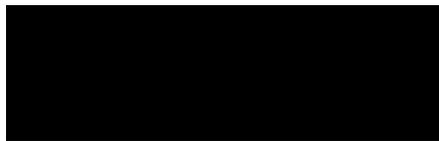
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Signature:



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Declaration regarding Ethics Approval

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When I first started this journey, it began as an aside. Working with Bill Eckersley on a common project, I made a comment that all this work, all this research would easily amount to a Doctoral thesis! Bill agreed!

I knew that the thesis writing would be long, laborious, challenging and very lonely. Therefore, I can never, ever, be more grateful to Bill Eckersley, my supervisor, my colleague, my friend. Your great support and encouragement, your kindness, your patience and understanding through the years and the countries that I have worked in, through this terrible pandemic ... I will remember and be forever grateful.

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To paraphrase a famous Confucian phrase: *In a group of three, one will be my teacher ...*

I have been blessed to have known you all ... all of you, my teachers.

Statement of Editorial Assistance

Thanks to Ms Carole Lander (Checkword: Freelance editing and writing services) for her advice and assistance with professional editing and proofreading on my final draft.

Dedication

In the year 1968, in Rome, the city of my birth, my parents made a momentous, courageous, and yes, an outrageous decision. They decided to emigrate to Australia. This was a life-altering decision for this very young family of five. In March 1969, in Melbourne we arrived ... with hope and ambition in our hearts. Therefore, I firstly dedicate this work to my parents, Giuliano and Adriana Caruso. Your love knew no bounds, your many sacrifices are untold.

Adriana Caruso, my blessed mother, to you I especially dedicate this work. You passed away too soon. My heart aches for you every day. I know that you would be so proud that your youngest child could achieve such a milestone in his life.

To my dearest Yuan Ying, my darling wife Ying, I travelled a lifetime to find you ... a journey that began in Rome brought me eventually to you, here, in our home, Shanghai. You are all that is good in this world, a pure heart and a beautiful soul. You are my love and my forever soulmate.

You ... you are the one that encouraged me to continue, when I despaired so many times, lost hope, lost confidence and lost heart. My darling, you held my hand and caressed my brow, kissed my cheek and simply, gently, lovingly, encouraged me to go on ...

This journey then is ours ... my love, thank you.

Acronym Glossary

ACP	Applied Curriculum Project
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
ISV	Independent Schools Victoria
IT	Information Technology
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
PISA	Program of International Student Assessment
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PLT	Professional Learning Team
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SSNPP	Smarter Schools National Partnerships Program

Agile Scrum: A case study in organisational culture and emergent leadership in two Christian faith-based schools

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the research

The purpose of the research was to examine cultural transformation and development in two low socio-economic faith-based Christian schools within the context of emergent teacher leadership and agency (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). This transformation and development is discussed through the lenses of Bolman and Deal's Frames (2008, 2017).

Central question:

Having participated in the Agile Scrum process, what does culture and leadership look like in two faith-based Christian schools?

A set of sub-questions for the research in the schools, are as follows:

1. What are the conditions existing or emerging that support cultural transformation and evolution in the case study schools?
2. Do faith and religion influence the development of leadership? If so, how and in what ways?
3. In what ways, if any, has the Agile Scrum process influenced cultural transformation and encouraged teacher leadership?

1.2 International and national contexts

As expectations of what schools should achieve have changed dramatically over recent years, countries need to develop new forms of school leadership better suited to respond to current and future educational environments. (Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008, p. 31)

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG, 2008) identified that major changes in the world place new demands and achievement expectations on Australians. It officially recognised the growing influence of greater global integration and internet mobility, raising significant issues and, conversely, providing untold opportunities.

Emerging out of that reality was the fact that student outcomes and performance in Australia had declined (Barber & Moushed, 2007). It was also clear that Australia's position on the global stage influences domestic educational policy developments (Melbourne Declaration on Education, 2008; Asian Century White Paper, 2012). Australia's geographical location within the Southeast Asian Region, where a burgeoning middle class in nations are accessing educational opportunities at unprecedented levels, (Shimelse & Dudush, 2012), poses potential problems for access and competition in a global market, should our own educational systems not be delivering excellent outcomes.

Further compounding these concerns, was the fact that the educational systems which were performing at the top according to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (2012) results, apart from the ubiquitous Finland, were to be found in our immediate geographical region. While Australia has slipped down international rankings, according to

these measures, systems such as those in Shanghai, Hong Kong and South Korea had climbed to the top (Jensen, 2012). Jensen, while acknowledging that all systems are unique and irrespective of their current success should not be used as a template for strategic planning interventions, does recognise that commonalities between these high performing countries, success criteria do exist.

These are:

1. The right people are encouraged to become teachers.
2. Outcomes are improved by improving pedagogy through strategic and targeted professional learning.
3. The best teachers are placed in the most difficult schools.

It is no surprise that the teacher is the focus of this discussion. In his seminal work, Hattie (2003, 2009) conducted a meta-analysis of studies worldwide to examine what actually influences student learning and achievement. He identified six factors of student variance and ascribed a percentage to each, as can be seen below. They are:

- Home
- Peers
- School
- Principal.

The above four factors sum to 25 per cent as:

- Teacher: 25 per cent

- Student: 50 per cent

The most important influence on student learning and achievement is, in fact, the student and, as crucial as that is, as Hattie points out that most schools, “... *have to take what the neighbourhood produces*” (p. 13).

Responding to these trends, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting in 2008 delivered a strategy within the context of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, December 2008*. Among these goals, two major ones placed young people at the centre of thinking and action (p. 7). They are:

Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence.

Goal 2: All young Australians become

- Successful learners
- Confident and creative individuals
- Active and informed citizens

Eight goals were agreed to with the Melbourne Declaration also stating that the learning areas of English and Mathematics were fundamentally important in all years of schooling. This led to the creation of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) suite of testing, with the first NAPLAN tests being administered in 2008, conducted by the then Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

The purpose of NAPLAN is to, as standardised assessment, serve a diagnostic tool for schools, thus, it may enable identification of problems over time, for the schools and the systems.

The Melbourne Declaration, with its mandated expectations and policy spin offs, had directly impacted on schools. While the publishing of PISA results may not have affected schools directly, the debate, conversation and criticism that schools and school systems were subject to certainly did. The publishing of NAPLAN results, with many news outlets using them to create 'League Tables' and identifying 'best' performing and 'worst' performing schools created great tension.

A result of the Melbourne Declaration and a response to the issues outlined was the creation of the *Smarter Schools National Partnerships Program*, a federal government initiative that, at its core, had a mission to improve the quality of Australian schooling and thus, student educational outcomes (DEECD, 2012).

1.3 Partnership Development: Smarter Schools National Partnership and Independent Schools Victoria

Commencing in 2010, I worked as a Principal Advisor with a cluster of 15 low Socio-Economic Status (SES) schools that were participating in the Smarter Schools National Partnerships Program (SSNPP). This federal initiative, a 'child' of the Melbourne Declaration 2008, was rolled out in each Australian state and territory in 2009. It focused on addressing the issues of imposed change as well as, among many other initiatives, supporting schools to develop local policy strategies that are mindful of both federal and state expectations.

The SSNPP had been rolled out to independent schools through the centralised Independent Schools Victoria (ISV). As an organisation of members, ISV is a not-for-profit organisation that is

dedicated to supporting independent education. This association provides professional services rather than being an authority that manages its members. Member schools are diverse in size, location, religious association and educational philosophies. ISV is purely an advisory body for its independent school members. The schools that were invited to participate in the SSNPP were identified by their Low SES status or below-benchmark NAPLAN Literacy and Numeracy results.

1.4 Principal Advisor

As a Principal Advisor, I had no direct authority to manage or direct schools. The Principal Advisor was not a 'superintendent of schools'. The implied authority to act was bestowed upon the Principal Advisor through the development of a strong partnership that was bound in a trusting relationship. All programs and interventions were co-planned and co-constructed with consensus as a mainstay. The final word on the way resources and finances were deployed in driving the program, however, did rest with me.

Part of my Principal Advisor's role was to work closely with a school's principal and leadership/executive team to manage the expectations of the SSNPP as well as to advise on whole-school improvement measures. As the researcher and as Principal Advisor and Cluster Leader on behalf of Independent Schools Victoria, I worked very closely with Principals and Leadership Teams to achieve this mission, as well as the broader aims of the partnership.

A major reform aim identified within the SSNPP was the need to build leadership capacity within schools. The aim had, as its focus, the Principal and Leadership Team as well as teaching staff. As the researcher, I worked with Principals and Leadership Teams as co-constructors of

strategic thinking, intent, planning, as well as being a mentor, critical friend and coach. This work included initiating school review processes, data gathering and interpretation, teacher practice and observations, and the development of school-wide professional learning.

1.5 The case study schools

The case study school (Alpha School) is situated in the western region of Melbourne and is a Christian co-educational F–12-day school with an enrolment at the time of over 700 students, roughly evenly split between boys and girls. The school caters for a large number of different cultural and language backgrounds with more than 60 per cent of students registered as speaking a language other than English. It is situated on a large property and is owned by the Christian affiliation to which it belongs. The school employs more than 60 teachers and a further 30 support and/or administrative staff.

Case study school (Beta School) is a regional Christian co-educational F–12 day school (its first Year 12 cohort commenced in January 2014). The College had an enrolment of 300 students at the time, with 60 per cent of that population being boys. There were 23 teaching staff and 11 support/administration staff. The College is owned by the Christian affiliation to which it belongs (a different Christian tradition to the Alpha School) and has moved to its new site, which is within a 2 km range of the original site that it occupied for 40 years yet is still within the bounds of the regional city it serves. With this change, a new strategic and pedagogic direction was initiated, including the expansion of the school to include Years 11 and 12 (Victorian Certificate of Education) in 2013.

1.6 Alignment with the research: Agile Scrum

Within the context of my work as Principal Advisor, I determined that the traditional hierarchical leadership structures that I encountered in the schools for which I was responsible, did not allow for leadership and empowerment to emerge. Hence, I explored a process to identify and develop leadership capacity within the schools through the concepts of shared leadership, distributed leadership (Spillane, 2005; Duignan & Cannon, 2011; Pilkington & Lock, 2013), underpinned by leadership that is authentic (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Duignan, 2010) and servant (Greenleaf, 1977; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). This process was Agile Scrum. Several coincidental yet mutually beneficial events provided me with the potential to initiate the Agile process that could:

1. Provide schools with a process to deliver major project (or minor ones, for that matter), as schools are often required to do.
2. Enable schools to recognise, foster and develop leadership capacity and agency.

A chance encounter and discussion with a friend and colleague, working at the time with the Australian Telecom giant Telstra as a Solution Architect, introduced me to the concept and methodology of Agile Scrum. I was, at that time, employed by Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) as a Principal Advisor and Cluster Leader, to deliver on the educational improvement federal government initiative, the Smarter Schools National Partnerships Program, (SSNPP). I was intrigued and excited by this conversation and immediately began to research Agile Scrum and how it might be applicable within the context of school improvement programs.

This moment of encounter, this fortuitous conversation was to influence a redefinition, to some degree, of my understanding and my thinking in regard to leadership concepts pertaining to transformation, authenticity, collaboration and service. However, this thinking and realignment evolved over time as I began to implement and initially, 'do' Agile within schools. I adapted it from its original solution architecture development intention and nomenclature.

The following Literature Review Chapter will explore literature pertaining to the leadership concepts outlined as well as the development of Agile as an initial software solution concept.

Chapter 2 Literature review

... as a matter of personal choice rooted in their own personalities and value systems, teachers crave neither the limelight of public attention nor the responsibilities and headaches of leadership of any kind outside their classroom fiefs (IEL, 2001, p. 8).

Some teachers recognise that their best influence occurs in the classroom, the staff room, in teams. Many have also reached an understanding that administrative leadership is not an aspiration they wish to pursue (Danielson, 2007; Hattie, 2003). Indeed, in an era where command and control, top-down hierarchical structures, traditionally created in industrial era organisations and thinking, are increasingly at odds with the needs of the 21st century (Duignan & Cannon, 2011; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). This recognition by teachers and increasingly, by school leaders, is timely.

The 'game' of leadership (Gunter & Forrester, 2010), is entering a new phase, particularly as leaders have moved, and are enticed to move towards, a chief executive style of leadership of schools and away from pedagogic leadership (Duignan, 2010; Gunter & Forrester, 2010).

2.1 Agile Scrum

In 2001, a group of like-minded Information Technology (IT) professionals came together in Utah (USA). They represented several companies, each with the binding notion that there existed a need to simplify their project management, solution architecture world. At this meeting of minds, the Agile Manifesto was created with the requisite guidelines and principles that today underpin Agile methodologies (Ocamb, 2013).

In essence, this notion of simplicity emerged from the increasing complexity that had developed in solution software architecture. Processes had become very detailed and the tools to deliver the solutions to customers became very sophisticated. Often, the solution did not match the customers' needs. Thus, focus shifted *away* from people and *towards* the tools and processes (O'camb, 2013) solution architects who, by their very nature engage in intricate and isolated, isolating work patterns, became even more isolated and removed from colleagues, often working on aligned systems solutions and importantly failing to adequately deliver to the very stakeholders they were serving, the customer. The traditional *Waterfall*, project planning and delivery methodology, a traditional project management approach where tasks are completed in an ordered sequence with work flowing in a linear direction, simply failed to deliver (Cohn, 2010).

The Agile Methodology, using *Scrum* techniques, (hence, Agile Scrum) utilises an empirical process of control; projects are deconstructed, using a similar process to 'backwards by design' (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011), into succinct iterations known as sprints, with each sprint lasting one to three weeks in duration. The Agile process has embedded within it regular 'stand ups', where team members meet and lead discussion, if not daily, then weekly, to review process, look for and find solutions to issues and to plan ahead.

2.2 Why Agile Scrum?

Apart from the clear capacity to deliver projects in a cohesive and timely manner, Agile clearly works towards the creation of conditions where leadership agency is recognised and allowed to

emerge. These leadership qualities are underpinned by the notion of service (Agile Project Management, 2012). The Agile process also creates the conditions that mirror a growing positive trend in education; that is, recreating schools in the image of a Professional Learning Community, (PLC), (DuFour et al, 2009).

Paraphrasing DuFour, teachers and leaders seek and share learning in their schools and act on what they have learned. They also form Professional Learning Teams, whose main foci are the three Big Ideas of the Professional Learning Community, namely, learning, collaboration and results, to deliver on strategic school goals (DuFour et al, 2009).

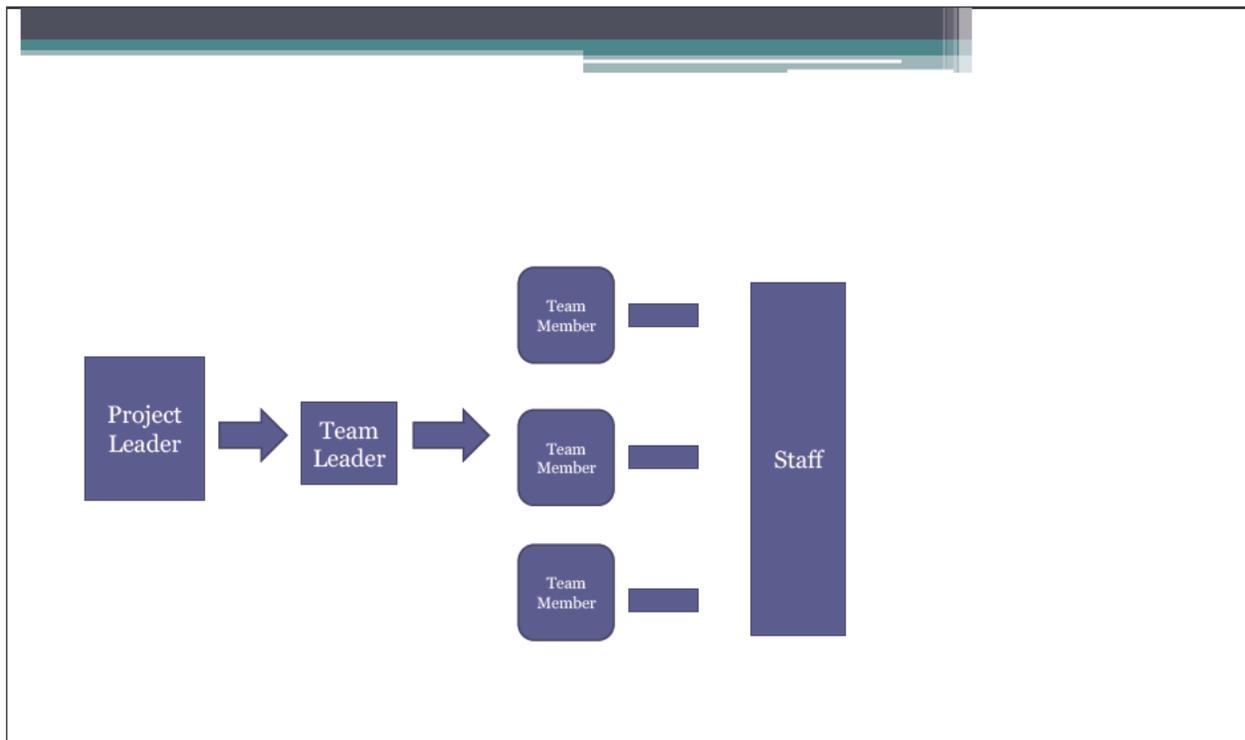
The Agile process is highly flexible, interactive and requires the formation of ad hoc teams (ad hoc in the sense that teams are formed, disbanded and reformed according to need), comprised of empowered individuals. Hence, the Agile process is used as a vehicle that delivers projects in a strategic manner and has embedded within it practices that focus on peer-to-peer learning (Boud, 1999), professional development by doing, co-leading, sharing, collaborating and co-constructing. It generates protected time within agreed timelines and caters for the distribution of tasks and actions, thus ... moving away from staff professional learning that is predominantly short-burst, quick-fix, one-day events, towards a shared responsibility construct. In essence, Agile is the ability to create and respond to change. It is a way of dealing with and ultimately succeeding in an ever changing and constantly turbulent environment. Therefore, Agile provides the means to react through agile thinking and planning allowing therefore a better grasp of what is occurring in the present environment (Simplilearn, 2021). Further, an understanding of the Agile process may also, according to Madan, (2022) elicit the following

benefits. Adapting an Agile process into practice may allow the participant and leader to speed up response times and therefore adapt quickly to external changes; agile processes are people centred with a strong focus on collaboration; as a leader in a distributed leadership collaborative setting, one becomes a conduit for collaboration.

2.3 Agile Team Membership

Agile team membership is important and is made up of a project leader, the team leader and team members. Each member is sourced according to the skills and knowledge they bring to the team and to the position. Often, staff members who are not in an administrative leadership role are ideal because they are highly effective classroom practitioners and also highly respected by their peers and their colleagues. Some, should they agree to the roles of project leader or team leader, may be paired with a staff member who has experience and can provide mentoring through the process of leading. This form of parallel leadership is similar to the distributed leadership model, as both are grounded in mutual trust and direction, allowing for individual expression (Crowther et al, 2002). Agile is an iterative process where ideas are brainstormed, prioritised and then categorised into short manageable 'sprints' or actions that are closely monitored and reviewed. Figure 1 below illustrates the flow of Agile leadership distribution.

Figure 1: Agile Flow of Leadership Distribution



(Caruso, 2012)

2.4 Leadership: Agile

The Agile process potentially allows for leadership in teachers to be recognised and distributed in the way Spillane (2005) defines 'distributed leadership' where it exists within the interactions between people and their situation. In this instance, the situation is the team environment.

Further, this process supports the notion of Communities of Practice, where groups of people who share crafts or professions collaborate, share and learn from each other in order to develop themselves and/or their organisations, thus creating the environment where staff can authentically engage in a process of collaborative learning and leading (Wenger, 2006). Hattie (2003) reflects that it is what teachers know, do and care about that impacts on student

learning and outcomes; therefore, it is important to ensure that the teacher's influence on student learning is optimised and a good first step is when teachers recognise their leadership roles in and out of the classroom. Indeed, as Scherer (2007) observes, while teachers may be invited to assist in the development of learning in the classrooms, they need not be removed from the classroom for this to occur; rather, their influence will simply be extended.

The Agile team environment and Agile Principles, (Agile Manifesto) encourage authentic leadership. This form of leadership emerged as a perceived ethical demise and malaise in leadership and began to manifest itself in the form of corporate failures or in unethical corporate behaviours. Hence, the need for a form of leadership that was authentic (real) and positive (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; George, 2003). Agile aims to provide an environment for leadership agency to manifest itself, allowing leaders and followers of authentic leaders to connect with their authentic selves, leading to meaningful, authentic leadership relationships with colleagues (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Ricoeur (1992) describes the self as a 'narrative project', whereby individuals interpret actions, drama and events around them, constructing a 'unifying story of self'. Authentic leaders within teams allow for and encourage this self-expression and growth of self to develop with each interaction, leading to cohesive and highly collaborative teams. This authentic relationship between authentic leaders and between 'followers' of authentic leaders, allows for the notion of parallel/shared leadership to further emerge and potentially cement itself as a cultural reality within the organisation or, in this case, the school.

In general, and especially for the context of this study, shared leadership is a concept and a practice that includes all those who are involved in the organisation, and grows out of the sharing of vision, beliefs and efforts of a group of teachers (Crowther et al, 2002). They create and enable new learning communities to be embraced, and have the potential to solve uncertainty and paradox, in this instance with the aid of Agile thinking. Such forms of leadership are often referred and aspired to, yet evidence suggests that beyond lip service, they are difficult to implement (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006).

2.5 Servant leadership

Leadership in Agile methodologies is underpinned by the notion of servant leadership; that is, the idea that one serves first as opposed to leading. This notion, one that Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) describe as an 'oxymoron', is best summed up in Herman Hesse's *Journey to the East* (Greenleaf, 1977; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Servant leadership espouses the idea that leaders put other people first, deliberately choosing to serve others and as already stated, serve first. This form of leadership provides congruence with leaders who choose to immerse themselves as authentic leaders, willing to engage in distributed/shared leadership. Further, authentic, distributed/shared and servant leadership alludes to and sits well with the notion of stewardship (Block, 1993). In this context, the leader acts as a trustee, committing to and being willing to be accountable for, the wellbeing of the learning community they immediately serve and the greater school community to which they belong.

Agile servant leaders are expected to: listen, be aware, persuade, empathise, and heal. For some this may appear to be very Christ-like ... indeed, the Christian tradition and the example

of Christ as servant to his followers underpins servant leadership philosophy (Greenleaf, 1977). Team collaboration, cohesion, effectiveness, and success rely on leaders to at least attempt to understand and authentically express these values. In the Agile solution architecture world, it is about delivering the best possible product to the most important person, the client, and depending on the product, the end user, or the consumer. In education circles (our schools and colleges), it is about delivering the best possible outcomes to the most important person ... the student.

2.6 Leaders as Relational People

Servant leadership is espoused and sought, indeed aspired to, however, as Branson, Marra & Buchanan (2019) note, servant leadership is indeed an attractive and appealing form of leadership, as the leader, the Christian leader in particular, models their leadership to the witness and example of Jesus as Christ. Herein, perhaps, lies the issue. Punnachet, (2009), cited in Branson, et al, (2019), refers to research that clearly points to the difficulties that occur if one emulates Christ as servant leader. Such a high Standard is not possible to achieve, basing any action, let alone servant leadership, on the actions of the '*Son of God*'... 'is therefore beyond a human capacity to achieve' (Branson, et al, 2019, p. 5).

If servant leadership is the logical extension of transformational leadership, (Branson, et al, 2019), this concept posited by Burns, (1978) continues to have as a major focus, the leader her/himself. That is, the leader attempting to initiate change through transformation, (Branson & Marra, 2019). Branson and Marra posit that leadership in essence, whether servant or transformational, should be more about the quality of relationships that are created between

the leaders and those whom they lead. Burns, (1978), argues that ... *'the most powerful influences consist of deeply human relationships in which two or more persons engage with one another', (p.15).*

Focussing on relationships and this concept 'trans relationality', (Branson & Marra, 2019), the goal of achieving to some degree the concept of servant leadership perhaps edges closer to the mark. Branson and Marra argue that Jesus Christ was a trans relational leader. The transforming, servant, agile leader, then, may take heed of the following, *'... leadership is best understood as a trans relational phenomenon as its essence is to move the other...'* (p.49).

2.7 Leaders as Agile Thinkers

Agile as manifesto, or Agile linked to Scrum as a sequence to deliver technical applications, underpins changes in leadership and Agile thinking (Dutra, 2012). *"Agile Leaders make sense out of patterns of uncertainty, and they make sense for those that they work with and around them"* (Dutra, 2012, p. 1).

Therefore, as the Agile leader attempts to make sense of the environment, this concept of Agility adds itself to the idea of Agile thinking. In other words, the Agile thinker has the 'agility' coupled with a creative mindset to respond to change when the need arises, as opposed to strictly following 'the plan' (Dutra, 2012). Therefore, the Agile thinker is, as a leader, flexible in their approach, whereas the traditional strategic thinker typically adheres to a plan that is rigid and fixed. The leader as an Agile thinker has greater capacity to address those unexpected events.

In adopting the concept of Agile thinking, leading will be and feel different (Agile Business Consortium, 2021), thus expanding capacities and extending capabilities. The Agile thinker seeks and values high quality creative thinking, and indeed will embrace the ‘maverick’ in the group as much as the on-board colleague (DeSmut et al, 2018). Leaders as Agile thinkers, to paraphrase Ghandi, are the change they want to be (DeSmut et al, 2018).

Leaders who adopt this mindset discover that, in time, Agile thinking permeates through the organisation and allows for and encourages leadership at all levels. While the leadership structure tends to flatten, there is increased support of the set-up conditions for leadership opportunities to emerge and this enables others to lead ... further encouraging engagement, enablement and tapping into those energised with passion.

As previously discussed, when leading as an Agile thinker, Agile transformative practices encourage *“servant leaders to develop substantially new mindsets in themselves and in others”* (DeSmut et al, 2018, p. 45).

2.8 The Agile organisation

Moving any organisation towards an Agile mindset is a complex and time-consuming task. The traditional organisational model evolved from known stable environments where the organisation as a ‘machine’ (Bolman & Deal, 2017) is static, siloed and encumbered with structural hierarchy that follows a linear planning model with rigid control mechanisms. Thus, transforming towards Agility involves rethinking and disruption in thinking ... away from the rigid machine-based metaphor to that of a living and breathing organism where the Agile

thinker and the Agile leader thrive on rapid change and unpredictability. In other words, moving towards environments that are *both static and dynamic*.

Alluding to a distributed model of leadership, DeSmut et al (2018) suggest that such organisations need be open, inclusive and develop a hierarchical model of leadership that embraces uncertainty and ambiguity. Thus, while leaders shape culture in both positive and negative ways, there are three determinants that leaders as Agile thinkers need to consider:

1. Transform self
2. Transform team
3. Transform the organisation in order to inbuild agility thinking (DeSmut et al, 2018).

Shifting a stuck and linear mindset to an open and creative mindset, where creative self-authoring leads to an internal guidance, helps to create a personal reality that taps into the authentic self (Duignan & Cannon, 2011; DeSmut et al, 2018).

Paraphrasing Madan, (2022), the Agile Leader attempts to provide directional leadership to teams and drives various strategic initiatives. Indeed, according to Agile Business (2022), Agile leaders and thinkers may adopt the following principles to achieve that end:

1. Agile leadership is about driving change and in being a change agent.
2. Agile thinking improves the quality of the thinking process and therefore Agile leaders view problems from different angles.
3. Agile leaders, courageously elicit meaningful, useful and timely feedback from their colleagues in order create positive change.

4. Agile leaders focus on creating strong common understanding and purpose.
5. Agile leaders inspire others by bringing their best selves to work.
6. Agile leaders tap into leadership agency by understanding and encouraging distributed leadership.
7. Agile leaders devolve power and therefore enable, engage and energise others
8. Agile leaders build communities of trust, respect and relationships.

Agile work and leadership came about, in part as stated above, due the realization that not only top-down management was working poorly, middle leadership was potentially holding people back. Agile leadership is a style of leadership that strives to remove roadblocks to success, (BetterWorks, 2021), and therefore Agile leaders are inherently adaptable to change, are curious in nature are open to innovation and highly efficient communicators. Agile leaders create strong teams as they understand their strength of individual members leveraging off this knowledge. They avoid playing the individual above the group (Madan, 2022).

Further according to BetterWorks, (2021) Agile leaders use three very powerful techniques. They communicate openly and transparently; always listen and observe and observe external forces.

Finally, according to the Center for Agile Leadership, (2022), the Agile leader and thinker is inclusive, democratic, exhibits great openness, has a passion for learning and a focus on developing people, as well as the capacity to communicate a desired vision and is an agent of positive change.

2.9 Organisational and school culture

The concept and understanding of culture and its role in organisations, whether the organisation be a school or not, is often contested (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Stoll, 1998). In this context Bolman and Deal (2017) posit the question as to whether organisations have or are cultures. Their discourse argues that in this sense cultures in organisations are both a product and a process: a product in that culture embodies wisdom that is accumulated from experience, and a process in that it is renewed and recreated. New people who join the organisation learn 'the way it is' and in turn over time, having been immersed in the organisation's culture, become proponents and teachers of the 'way it is' themselves.

Contested concepts or not, scholars (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Schein, 1985; Nehez & Blossing, 2020) have formed the view that, while culture may indeed be intangible and somewhat difficult to define, none the less the existence or belief in its existence impacts a view of the organisation as being critical to its life, operation, continued development and very existence.

Schein (1985, p. 6) defines culture as:

... the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation, that operate unconsciously and that define in a basic 'taken for granted' fashion, an organisational view of itself and of its environment.

Culture defines a sense of being and thus an organisation's reality. A reality that as Beare, Caldwell and Millikin (1989) postulate, is situationally unique. It can be interpreted that school cultures, while no doubt exhibiting elements that may have some elements of similarity, will

have an imbued contextual localised development of this concept of culture. Their situational realities define who they are. Indeed, as will be discussed further, while the two case study schools were immersed in a Christian faith, both exhibited vastly different cultures and ongoing cultural formation over time.

Stoll (1998) argues that schools work through various developmental processes that are defined as early years, mid-life, and maturity. At each of the various stages, culture and values are subject to periods of existence within a continuum of influence. These, paraphrasing Stoll (1998), can range from the original values of founding school organisations that underpin cultural development in the early years to the focus on further growth in schools that have reached a maturity in years that may lead to complacency and stagnation.

Bolman and Deal (2017) advance the question as to whether leaders shape culture or are shaped by it. They ask: does specific cultural development produce results? In time, an organisation develops a “*distinctive set of beliefs, values and actions*” (p. 258). Leaders may shape and change behaviour within the organisation if this change “*aligns with the marketplace*” (p. 258).

Nehez and Blossing (2020) argue that cultures can be transformed via the interactions that exist between leaders and their staff ... interactions that invariably involve power sharing, vision sharing and creation, goals and ideas ... with principals ... building and carrying school cultures and leading cultural change. Deal and Peterson (2016) also suggest that school leaders can help to move toxic school environments towards positive school cultures. However, while cultures may be difficult to transform, existing school cultures may impede transformational change

(Leithwood et al, 2019). Indeed, this was the case with the two case study schools, both having faced at different stages of development, existential threats to their very existence.

Culture exists everywhere ... nations, clubs, organisations, homes and schools (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Deal & Peterson, 2016). In turn, collaborative cultures have been shown to provide the foundation for change and for growth (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Sutton & Shouse, 2016). As Sutton and Shouse expound... *“Collaboration builds teacher trust and expertise, calling on schools to implement changes in instruction with great ease and comfort”* (2016, p. 69).

The structure of a school day may create barriers to collaboration, often potentially creating conditions that can lead to isolation and/or cliques forming, and these may not always be beneficial to or ascribe to a school’s mission and vision (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). However, developing the mechanism for at least an emerging collaborative culture may lead to authentic and relevant problem solving. A key to creating collaborative cultures is seen in the extent to which teachers are empowered to be true and active participants in decision making, thus leading to their being an integral part of the school improvement architecture. Principals who work closely with teachers to create vision and mission for school improvement can progress the concept of re-imagination.

Indeed, aspects of collaboration, such as encouraging teacher-led professional learning strategies that align with vision and mission, allow for school-based, targeted and deliberate foci that are relevant and in tune with teacher needs, thereby creating a collaborative culture that may be less contrived (Cochrane-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Cook & Simonds, 2011). Schools that capture the essence of collaboration embark on a journey of re-culturing and embrace the

essence of the critical role that collaboration plays in the school's change and improvement process (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010).

Fullan and Hargreaves (2012) argue that a re-culturing process creates outcomes that underpin new forms of professional discourse, conduct and interaction that are linked to the aforementioned activities, such as problem solving, data informed practice and sharing, as well as a path to co-constructed decision making, and flatter leadership realities. Fullan (2007, p. 65) states: *"Schools with collaborative cultures have increased the need for leadership, not only from the principal, but from other school professionals."*

Agile and Agile Thinking link to and underpin the concept of collaboration that is real (Dutra, 2012; Agile Business Consortium, 2021); hence, collegial relationships depend on collaboration that exists between teachers, staff and support staff. This form of collaboration among colleagues within the various aspects of a school's operation assist all in various endeavours sought. Therefore, authentic collaboration was a profound and collective purpose which contributed to achieving the organisation's stated and bought into vision of change and shared goals (Aleccia, 2011; Troen & Boles, 2012). Further, when teacher practice shifts to the frontline with teachers leading the change, a potential positive emerges, where teachers themselves dive deeper into learning (Hattie, 2009).

2.10 Viewing organisations through the lenses and frames developed by Bolman and Deal (2008, 2017)

Lee Bolman and Terence Deal, building on their collaboration and work that began in 1984, have developed a four-frame model that views organisations as *factories, families, jungles* and

temples. They posit that leaders need to make sense of organisations because the world within and without is 'chaotic' and 'complex'. Schools as organisations are no different (Duignan, 2010).

The four frames are: (a) the Structural Frame (Factory) focuses on the architecture of the organisation, the design of units, subunits, rules, roles, goals and policies that shape and channel decisions and activities; (b) the Human Resource Frame (Family), emphasises an understanding of people, with their strengths and weaknesses, reason and emotion, desires and fears; (c) the Political Frame (Jungle), views organisations as competitive arenas characterized by limited resources, competing interests and struggle for power and advantage; (d) the Symbolic Frame (Temple), focuses on issues relating to meaning and faith, placing ritual, ceremony, story, play and culture at the heart of organisational life.

Each frame provides leaders with a particular view of the world. Most leaders will naturally align with one frame, narrowing their 'view' of the world. Bolman and Deal argue that for leaders to understand organisations and their unique cultures, they must have the knowledge inherent within each frame in order to 'reframe' their world view.

Therefore, frames provide multiple learning experiences. In describing the frames, the authors deliberately mix their metaphors, describing frames as windows and lenses, stating that the frames are 'maps' that allow for 'navigation', "*providing tools for problem solving and getting things done*" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 16). Frames are windows that bring the world into focus; they filter out some things while allowing others in, they help to order experience and assist in

determining the correct action to take. In essence, using and understanding frames helps leaders to determine a best way forward.

2.10.1 The Frames

Leaders who reframe or re-think, subsequently may develop the capacity to view situations that arise through the many different perspectives that the four frames allow to be viewed and experienced. The Agile leader who reframes, can add perspective to their leadership that will allow their 'agility' to sit within a reframing context. In this way aspects of leadership that can be ingrained, such as the concept of service, or the notion of what collaboration could look like, or adopt a different perspective. Holmes and Scull, (2019, p.2) in support state; *"it is important for leaders not to stand within one frame but to work within all Four- Frames in a cohesive manner giving themselves a broader mindset by which to reframe their views"*.

The Agile leader who reframes and therefore rethinks their leadership actions may view aspects such as, bargaining, training, success, creativity, and risk taking in a new light. By understanding the frame of reference that one defaults to may also open up the idea that such defaults may be limiting (Davies, 2016; Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Agile leaders may emerge organically to overcome the top-down leadership structures that had manifested themselves over time, leading to a form of leadership that was 'approved' or seen to be the norm due to the successes of some of the well-known organisations overtime.

(Bolman & Deal, 2017). Thus, organisations that had developed in a world where linear thinking and actions were the mainstay. However, Bolman and Deal, 2017, clearly espouse that such continued leadership modes and actions in a world that is ever more complex leads to

'cluelessness Agile leadership, creates the conditions for leadership to emerge in teams that are highly efficient and collaborative, where relationships are a key factor in the success of the teams' intents and goals (Room, 2016).

Bolman and Deal's seminal work research has been reviewed and applied to various situations and scenarios over the years such as, reframing to motivate language, Frame preferences in Principals, applying the Frames to Librarianship, (Stadtler, 2007; Haar, 2010; Nicholson, 2013; Davies, 2016; Mannix, Mondoux & Strong, 2019). Stadtlander, 2007 opines that, paraphrasing, Bolman and Deal's research continues to be of influence.

Mannix et al, 2019, supported in part by Davies, 2016, espouse the following thoughts. At the time of writing and with six editions of Bolman and Deals work, while again acknowledging the importance of their theories, there, to date, has not been any major advances in their theories or thoughts. While the examples have been modernised and other chapters included and 'old' chapters refreshed, there has not been any actual advance or indeed additions to their theories and applications. The windows and lenses, the Frames, continue to hark from the same research base that spawned the original and unchanging metaphors referred to above.

In their own words, Bolman and Deal state

It is time again for an update and we're gratified to be back by popular demand... The four-frame model with its view of organisations as factories, families, jungle and temples, remain the books conceptual heart. But we have incorporated new research and revised our case examples extensively to keep up with the latest developments (2017, p.IX).

Further, they argue correctly that there is a limitation to the ability to choose a frame when reframing. The authors don't really provide a blueprint as it were in selecting a frame by which one's own reference point may be added to, with the correct reframed viewpoint resulting in a greater focus and a potential solution to the issue.

Davie according to Yamk (2017), the language used by the researcher, their demeanour and their actions are crucial factors in creating and maintaining openness and trust. s, 2016 opines and demonstrates what occurs when a leader, stuck within their own Frame thinking, (understanding however, that said leader is blissfully unaware if this), demonstrates the results that are achieved when the 'lie of the land' is not understood and thus reframing has not occurred... leading to rather dire consequences. This point accentuates the reasoning behind Mannix et al, 2019, critique. Leaders may not be aware of their own Frame thinking or biases. If they do, they may not be able to necessarily comprehend their way forward. Nonetheless, Mannix et al, do also agree that, despite this potential flaw, being able to apply the concept of reframing does allow the leader to address concerns of different groups in a manner that may resonate with them at a potentially individual level.

Bolman and Deal do not provide a blue print per se' as Mannix et al would argue, however they strongly encourage the leader to be "*versatile and flexible*" (2017, p. X). They posit the capacity for the leader to understand their own context and then take on the challenge to reframe. "*The idea of reframing continues to be the central theme... we show how the same situation can be viewed in at least four unique ways*"(2017, p. XII).

Hence, perhaps this is the blueprint. Bolman and Deal (2017), suggest that the leader takes time to review the situation through the four various contexts provided by the frames and then reframe a response accordingly.

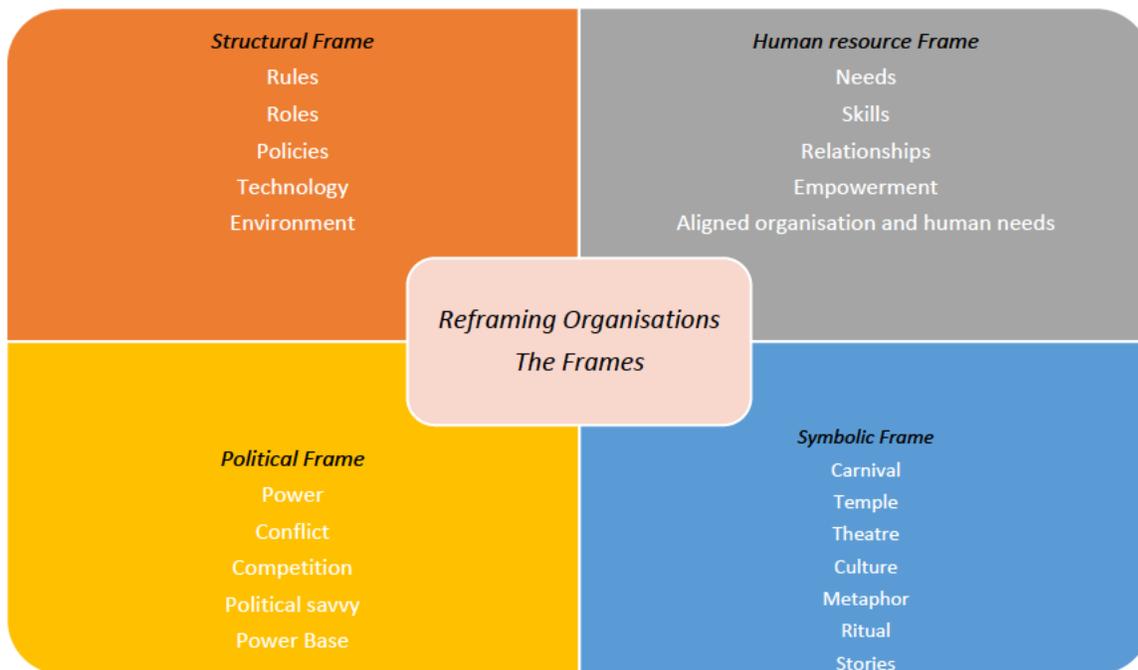
Bolman and Deal, (1983), wrote the following text, preceding and laying the foundation of their work, *Modern Approaches to Understanding and Managing Organizations*. Since this original the authors have learned a great deal and have indeed progressed their work as they acknowledge below:

... we have gained more confidence in our framework. Thousands of readers and students throughout the world have told us how much our ideas helped them master the leadership changes they faced (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 419)

Further, they propose that, combining research with their own rich experiences have confirmed their view that the frames help leaders to expand their ability to do and see more. This concept of reframing allows leaders to see and understand only “... *if, they are able to apply the different logics that accompany diverse ways of thinking*” (p. 421).

Figure’s 2 and 3, below demonstrate 1, organisational culture as it may look when overlaid with Bolmand and Deal’s Four Frames and in Figure 3, what organisational culture may look like were Agile Scrum added.

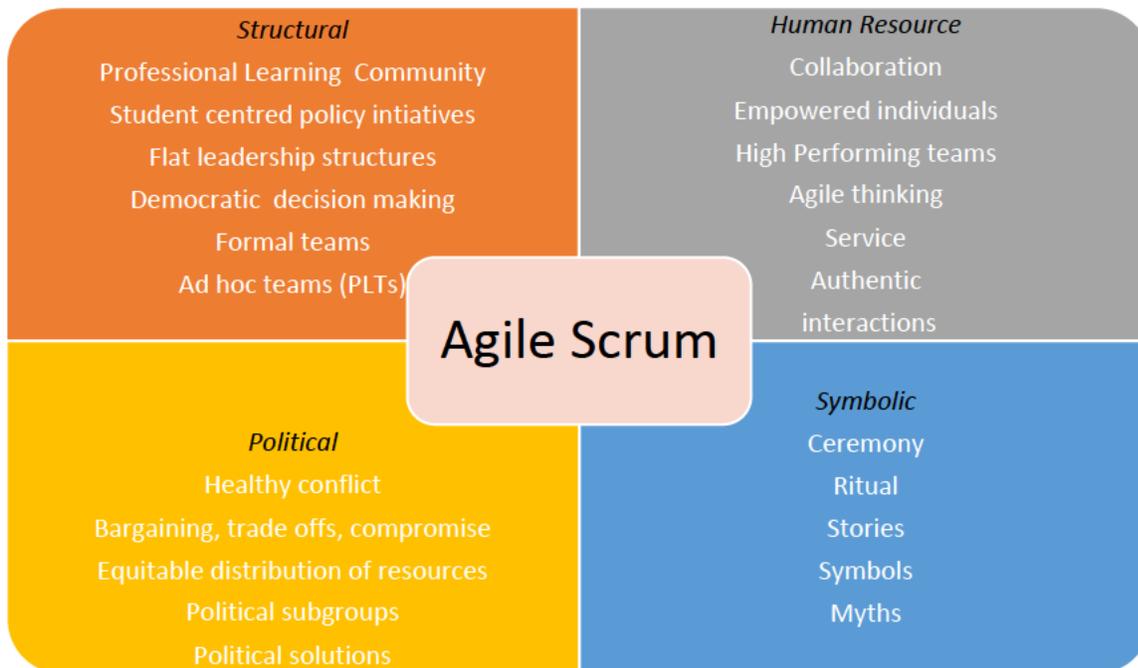
Figure 2: The Four Frames



Adapted from Bolman and Deal (2008, p. 18)

In a perfect world, organisational culture, with Agile Scrum as embedded practice may lay the foundations to allow flow when change occurs. Leadership that is authentic, shared and servant may be more prevalent, recognised and encouraged.

Figure 3: The Four Frames overlaid by Agile Scrum



Adapted from Bolman and Deal (2008, p. 18)

The overlay above posits suggested changes ... in a 'perfect world', when organisations are seen through the lenses and frames above, overlaid with Agile Scrum, they may exhibit the features that are potentially the most positive aspects of reframing (Agile Business Consortium, 2021). The personal narratives of experience in the upcoming chapters will shed light on the potential cultural shift experienced by the case study schools.

2.10.2 Enhancing knowledge

The literature and academic papers that relate to distributed, shared, authentic and servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Crowther et al, 2002; Spillane, 2005; Duignan, 2010) discuss how

to potentially achieve such leadership traits, how to utilise them in organisations, and how such leadership may help to transform, move and re-culture organisations in order to achieve the success for which they were created.

This case study is unique in that, to the knowledge of the researcher, at this stage of the research, Agile Scrum, while certainly applied in educational settings, particularly in the work of Steven Peha through his consultancy, *Teaching Makes Sense* (www.ttms.org), little or no research has been conducted to determine to what extent an Agile Method, as applied in the circumstances of this case study, can provide conditions for teacher leadership to manifest itself. Further, I believe that this case study can add to the knowledge and understanding of the educational needs and directions that schools may require when contemplating major interventions, such as a government-mandated overhaul of curriculum, as well as the extent to which specific conditions may be created in order to potentially enact positive transformations and sustainable practices in schools.

To this end, I investigated the conditions that the Agile Scrum method creates that can support and foster teacher leadership, and the notion of transference and relationship-building that can lead to increasing capacity.

The case study further proposes to add to the knowledge base in regard to the applicability of Bolman and Deal's Frames in order to better understand education organisational culture, particularly within a re-culturing context where a transformative factor in the success of the organisation is required. As schools and school leaders attempt to move away from the 'chief executive' model (Duignan & Cannon, 2011) and embrace a shared leadership with a flatter

organisational structure, this case study in its application of Agile may add to the knowledge base regarding potential sustainable practices that may encourage teacher leadership and agency to emerge.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Methodology and conceptual framework

This study is informed through a constructivist epistemology underpinned by an ethnographic perspective and methodology. Constructivism holds that there is no objective truth, thus meaning is constructed through engagement with life experiences and situations (Crotty, 1998). It is the expression that ideas are actively constructed by one's own mind through the experiences lived and shared. Meaning is constructed, not discovered, therefore participants in this case study will have constructed meaning in different ways, despite the fact that each will have participated in a similar experience of being involved in the Agile process; that is, the same phenomenon (Crotty, 1998; Gray, 2009).

3.2 An ethnographic approach

Ethnography provides rich, holistic insights into peoples' views and actions. According to Hammersley (1992) in Reeves, Kuper and Hodges (2008) "*The task ... is to document the culture, the perspectives and practices ... The aim is to 'get inside' the way each group of people sees the world*" (p. 512). In this context, the 'world' is the school.

Brewer (2004, p. 10) defines ethnography as:

... the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' ... [capturing] their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating, directly in the setting if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systemic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally.

According to Glesse (2011) in Eriçiyes (2020), ethnography is derived from the terms Ethnos and Graphic. Ethnos is a Greek term that refers to ethnic groups and Graphic refers to the capacity to describe something clearly. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), in social science literature, ethnography began as a methodology by anthropologists. In Western sociology at the beginning of the 20th Century, it mainly focussed on community study movements.

Neuman (2007), views ethnography as a common approach method in social science and is seen to explain and define the perspective of a society or an individual group. Malinowski (2005), supports this view and likens ethnography as the capacity to grasp the perspectives and living approaches of native peoples, reflecting the way that they see and perceive the world. Yamk (2017), describes ethnography as an effective research model in “... *understanding culture*” (p. 113). Recognising that it does not have a fixed and tested technical method “... *it involves dynamic method that changes according to context*” (p. 114).

However, ethnography has also suffered experienced critique... where ethnographers have felt that, according to Brewer (1994), they needed to enter a defence and justification of their methods and in data collection. Therefore, ethnographers began to critique ethnography. This critique according to Brewer (1994) did not in the end, deconstruct ethnography, rather gave cause to in fact, reconstruct it. Hence, Brewer (1994) refers to the following guidelines:

- Firm the grounds upon which generalisations are made
- Ensure relevance and value of the research questions
- Identify the theoretical framework
- Establish fieldworker’s integrity

- Ensure the integrity of the discussion

Further, Brewer (1994) details that some readers, despite the newly foundational nature of reflexivity in ethnographic research, the reader, or some readers, may still dispute the veracity of the data and the conclusions reached. Brewer further suggests that these objections may not be satisfied due to their epistemic rather than their technical differences, hence, no set of guidelines may ever be sufficient to rule out other explanations. Brewer argues that, at best... *“the ethnographer can only persuade the reader to agree that the explanation is a plausible one, but not the only plausible one”* (p. 243).

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), acknowledge that in the 21st Century, ethnography has been influenced by various theoretical approaches including the following: anthropological and sociological functionalism; philosophical pragmatism; phenomenology and hermeneutics. Currently, ethnographers typically prefer the use of participant observation in concert with other methods including interviews, focus groups, group discussions and surveys in support of ethnographic examination. Ethnography is still in essence about direct and sustained contact and observation. Indeed, experiencing and watching what happens (Erciyes, 2020).

Hence, this methodology is useful because ethnographers tend to immerse themselves in a setting, thereby generating a rich understanding of the social context. I, in using an ethnographic approach, engaged with the principals, staff and communities of both schools, in order to develop an understanding of the organisations’ ethos, philosophy and cultures. As indicated earlier, in my Principal Advisor role I have had the opportunity of spending time within each school, working with the leadership team and, at times, staff. According to Yamk

(2017), the language used by the researcher, their demeanour and their actions are crucial factors in creating and maintaining openness and trust. As a Participant Observer, I tried to understand the social contexts and meanings of the participants in their setting and, by the very nature of my work, working very closely with them and determining to try and “*tell it like it is from the inside*” (Brewer 2004, p. 17).

3.3 A case study

In this study I have utilised a case study design. A case study examines contemporary phenomena within a real live context, (Merriam, 1999; Yin, 2003). Phenomena can be an individual, a group or a program. In this study, the phenomenon is the ‘program’, with a specific focus on the team and its members, their insights, observations and experiences.

Stake (2008) opines that case studies can prove to be invaluable in adding understanding and extending experience regarding a subject. Campbell (1975) in Flyvbjerg (2011) expresses that ‘man’ is a competent knower ... any observations made are bound to be less objective and potentially biased, nonetheless, it is still the lived experience of the subject and therefore his or her reality. Hence, in Campbell’s (cited in Flyvbjerg, 2011) words, the route to knowledge is messy. Indeed, the case study methodology has been in and out of favour since its development in Europe, particularly in France, in early 1900 (Tellis, 1998). The sociology movement, out of fear due to problems discovered and expressed by researchers in other fields, attempted to make the case study more scientific.

Criticism, which persists, refers to the inability of a case study to form generalisations, replication or transferability of findings. In rebutting this concept, Flyvbjerg (2011, p. 305) argues that:

One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas 'the force of example' and transferability are underestimated.

As the researcher, I do not intend to generalise from the findings generated from the data gathered. While it may be possible to extend this research and potential findings to other school arenas, the context of the schools, their level of complexity, readiness and a myriad of other factors would need to be considered. Any conclusions arrived at can certainly be made exemplar, one way or another. Administrators and leaders would need to reflect upon the potential use of such a process in relation to their particular needs and contexts.

3.4 The case study schools – reasoning in choice

As discussed in an earlier section, educational issues led to the creation of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships Program, a federal government initiative that, at its core had a mission to improve the quality of Australian schooling and thus, student educational outcomes (DEECD, 2012).

As the researcher and as Principal Advisor and Cluster Leader, Independent Schools Victoria (of 15 schools, out of the original 42 that were invited to participate), I have worked very closely

with Principals and Leadership Teams to achieve the mission as well as the broader aims of the partnership program. A major reform (aim) identified within this program was the need to build leadership capacity within schools. The aim had, as its focus, the Principal and Leadership Team as well as staff/teaching in general. As the researcher, I have worked closely with the Principals and Leadership Teams as a co-constructor of strategic thinking, intents and plans, as well as being a mentor, critical friend and coach.

3.5 School selection

In January 2012, the teams for Australian Curriculum development were created in the two case study schools. In both schools, the consensus was that the role of Project Leader would be taken by each principal, given that ultimately school principals would bear overall responsibility for the scope of the project. The Team Leader role was assigned to the Director of Teaching and Learning in both schools, again by consensus, and the team was made up of key teachers and some department heads. As the project unfolded, a team member led their team of staff along Australian Curriculum subject lines, namely: Mathematics, English, Science and History. These were the first four subjects to be rolled out, with full application in 2013. Subsequent subjects were still in development and were to be rolled out the following year according to the timelines of the Federal and Victorian State Government.

I, as the researcher, but mainly in my role as Principal Advisor, was an ex-officio member of both the Alpha and Beta Schools' Australian Curriculum Development teams, providing guidance to the process, advice on the implementation of the curriculum and acting as mentor

to the Director of Teaching and Learning, while engaging in pre-meeting and debriefing coaching discussions.

The two case study schools were chosen due to their principals' support of the introduction of the Agile Scrum process and their ongoing commitment to school improvement, professional development and having an open mind to changes potentially required to initiate progress. As Principal Advisor and Cluster Leader, I was responsible for the roll-out of the National Partnerships Program according to Independent School Victoria and Federal Government guidelines (see Chapter 1, Introduction).

Having discovered the Agile Scrum process through work-related reading and research, I was intrigued by the process, attended seminars and began to theorise as to how it could be applicable to my work and how it could assist schools in particular. I came to the conclusion that this process, despite the fact that it is mainly a software development process (see Chapters 1 and 2), could be of potential benefit in helping schools roll out large-scale projects. In further studying the process, it became clear that its major tenets require and insist on highly collaborative actions, flat leadership structures underpinned by shared leadership. Therefore, I also theorised that it could be a potential model to help elicit leadership agency, teacher capacity and development (see Chapter 2).

As per my discussion in Chapter 1, by happenstance the federal government had initiated the first phase of the new Australian Curriculum roll-out in 2013 for 2014 implementation, with a focus on English, Mathematics, Science and History. Hence, there was potential to introduce

and implement this Agile Scrum process in order to deliver on the implementation of the first four subjects of the Australian Curriculum.

As schools were considering this major innovation, I organised meetings with all Principals and their Executive/Leadership teams in order to discuss their plans for implementation and to offer my assistance as their Principal Advisor, as well as to introduce the Agile Process via a brief PowerPoint presentation. During the discussions, principals explained their process for implementation, which in general consisted of a group of selected staff who would initiate the changes to the curriculum. Once this task was completed, the new documentation and processes would be passed onto the other staff during their staff meetings with instructions to implement the changes.

In other schools within the group, I was informed that the Director of Curriculum or the Curriculum Coordinator would be assigned the task of mapping the relevant changes, with staff then being asked to alter courses and curriculum plans to suit. Therefore, following my presentation, we (Principals and Leadership Teams) discussed the various methods of project roll-out and whether the Agile Process might be of benefit.

Of the fifteen schools, five decided to adopt the process with my guidance and out of the five schools, two (the Case Study Schools) agreed to participate in this research. Hence, these two schools were chosen as the case study schools.

3.6 Participant selection

The participants in this study were selected, in part, due to their role and expertise and were encouraged to self-select according to their interests, skills, expertise as well as the needs of the team. In order to choose teachers to participate in the project, I met with the principals of both the schools to discuss the matter in detail with reference to the process, expectations, ethics and confidentiality. I asked the principals to suggest relevant staff, two to begin with, who were involved with the delivery of the project, experiencing the Agile Scrum Process and were able to provide rich experiences and vignettes related to their experiences as well as a rich description of their school's cultures. It was my intention to then seek from those staff recommendations for other staff, who had relevant experience and thus could potentially contribute to this research, using a process known as snowballing (Goodman, 1961; Heckathorn, 1997). Snowballing allowed me to identify those individuals recommended by their colleagues, recruiting future subjects from those with whom they were connected. In this instance, it was those who had actively participated in the roll-out of the Australian Curriculum and had experienced the Agile Scrum process. In this way, I would set up a number of visits in order to conduct my research.

The Alpha School had nominated the names of ten potential participants and the Beta School, seven. In the spirit of the research being voluntary, I was able to confirm eight members from the Alpha School who agreed to participate and six from the Beta school. Subsequently, two members from the Alpha school withdrew, leaving me with six, and two from the Beta school;

therefore I had a total of ten participants. During my interviews I did attempt to find other potential recommendations for further interviews; however, in the end this was not possible.

All participant information is de-identified.

Table 1: Alpha School Participant Information

Pseudonym	Age Range (years)	Qualifications	Years' Experience	Role
AlphaSchoolPrin	50–59	B.Arts; Diploma - Teaching; B.Ed; M.Ed (Honours); PhD Candidate	30 years	Principal
AlphaSchoolSan	60–69	B.Ed	39 years	Learning and Teaching Coordinator
AlphaSchoolMar	50–59	B.Teach (Primary)	15 years	Deputy Head Primary
AlphaSchoolNan	50–59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B.Sci (Psych) • Dip Teach 		Head of Physical Education and Sport
AlphaSchoolVPRae	30–39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B.Ed (Primary) • M.Admin (Leadership) 	15 years	Head of Primary
AlphaSchoolBron	60–69	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B.Ed (Primary) • M.Admin (Leadership) 	28 years	Head of Secondary

Table 2: Beta School Participant Information

Pseudonym	Age Range (years)	Qualifications	Years' Experience	Role
BetaSchoolPrin	50–59	B.Ed	30 years	Principal
BetaSchoolVPK	40–49	B.Teaching	21 years	Deputy Principal Primary
BetaSchoolVPC	30–39	B.Ed (PE)	16 years	Deputy Principal Whole School
BetaSchoolCoord	30–39	B.Ed	7 Years	Years 9 and 10 Coordinator

3.7 Data collection method

My primary source of data collection occurred through individual, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured Interviews provide flexibility for the researcher, allowing the researcher to probe for responses that are more detailed. This provides the opportunity for the respondent to clarify and add to responses when asked, potentially providing deeper, richer data (Gray, 2009).

An additional source of data were school documents. These documents, available in the public domain, included schools' websites, year books, newsletters, and staff handbooks. Other documents, such as minutes of meetings, were not in the public domain and permission was

sought to access these. Each source provided valuable insights into the evolving nature of culture and, to some extent, enculturation.

3.7.1 School documents

At my request and as a member of the Alpha and Beta Schools' Australian Curriculum Development teams, I had access to relevant documents including meeting agendas, minutes of meetings and discussion papers/proposals as they related to the projects. These data were crucial records of development that provided confirmation of the progress of the project, also records of discourse, debates and collaboration that occurred. They also provided a record of the use of Agile Scrum as a method and helped in confirming discussions that ensued during the Interview process.

Access to each school's website provided another forum where the marketed school ethos, mission and vision could potentially be confirmed through my own observations in my role as Principal Advisor and member of the team.

3.7.2 Direct observation

In the twelve months I worked with the case study schools as a member of the Australian Curriculum Development teams, I was initially able to visit the schools on a fortnightly basis; later, meeting on a monthly basis as the Teams reached greater autonomy and comfort with the Agile Process. Being present allowed me to informally conduct 'pulse checks' and meet with people upon request or in an ad hoc manner. As Principal Advisor I maintained a professional diary reflecting events that occurred, discussions held, along with further planning and/or

follow up required on my part as I continued to support the schools. These data provided an additional perspective regarding the organisational culture of the schools.

3.7.3 Individual semi-structured interviews

Interviews occur through the words of an individual's constructed reality (Fontana & Fey, 2000).

While this method is costly in time and travel, there are benefits regarding the rich responses potentially gathered, coupled with focus group Interviews, providing participants the ability to express their own view of their constructed reality and narrative, thus providing the researcher with the means to check for understanding and authenticity in responses.

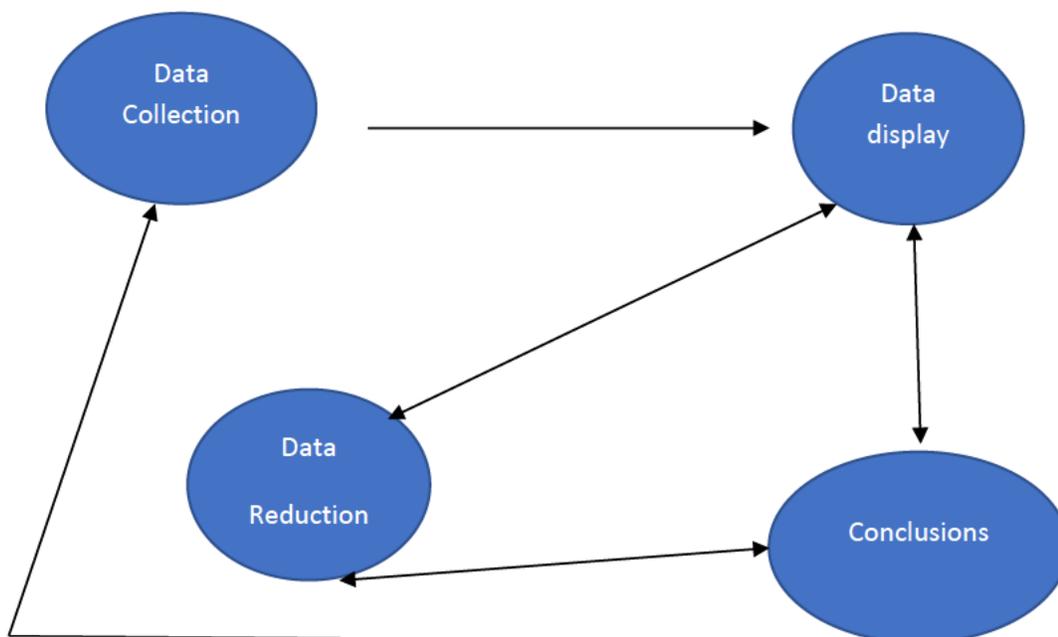
These ethnographic interviews were the main data gathering method I used. Indeed, interviews attempt to capture in-depth and rich data according to the lived experience of the participant, (Wood & Smith, 2016). In this semi-structured interview format, I had prepared a set of questions that I wanted to ask each participant. However, each question was a starting point for a wider discussion, allowing for follow-up questions to be posed and improvised according to the conversation that ensued; hence, "*that wider view, perspective and in-depth insights potentially captured*" (Wood & Smith, 2016, p. 96).

The data were collected at the school during a mutually beneficial time. Interviews were held to determine the participants' perspectives regarding their initial experiences as team members engaged in the Agile scrum process. Interview questions were provided to participants one week prior to interviews. Sixty minutes were allocated to the individual interviews. However, I as the researcher exercised some discretion here regarding the time allocation "*as rich conversations ensued*" (Wood & Smith, 2016, p. 96).

3.8 Data analysis

Data was analysed according to an ethnographic context. That is, emphasis was placed on the idiosyncratic meaning derived from individuals, entering that person's perspectives and experience (Moustakas, 1994). The interviews were transcribed, and data was reduced in accordance with the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (1994).

Figure 4: Data Analysis Interactive Model



Adapted from Miles and Huberman: Data analysis interactive model (1994)

Data reduction from interview transcripts sought to simplify data into manageable components. The coded data (Tesch, 1990) provided a solid base for concepts, categories, themes and sub-themes to be identified. The data was then connected across narratives and

accounts to build individual story lines and experiences, which were viewed through the lenses of Bolman and Deal's Frames.

3.9 Identifying main themes and sub-themes

Participant interviews were recorded, with permission and a reminder that information gathered is confidential. These original recordings were converted to transcripts. To ensure accuracy, clarity and familiarity, I listened to and fully read over the transcripts concurrently twice. This allowed me to not only refresh my memory of the interviews, it also allowed me to listen to the voice tones, pauses and implied intents that cannot be interpreted by simply reading the transcripts. Often, as I analysed the data, if I felt unsure or uncertain in regard to statements, comments or meaning, I would return to the relevant section of the interview and again listen and check for clarity and understanding. In this way I could ensure to the best of my ability that the true voice and intent of the participant was identified.

Therefore, I manually identified, coded and categorised the main themes and sub-themes.

While the task was very laborious and time consuming, it was a positive way to derive meaning.

In using the Collaborative Practitioner Model (Cherednichenko & Davies, 2001) I was able to

locate each participant's personal accounts within a template, an example of which is below.

Table 3: Themes and Sub-themes

Theme	Teacher voice and interpretations	Bolman and Deal Frame
<p>Emergent Leadership Agency</p>	<p>BetaSchoolVPC</p> <p><i>My voice</i></p> <p>Teacher Voice</p> <p><i>On a more personal level, BSVPC describes the influence of a friend and fellow Church goer ... as a slightly older person ... he was an influence ...</i></p> <p>I had a really good teacher in Year 9, he was someone I had grown up with ... because I had been in Church all my life.</p> <p><i>Emergent Leadership Agency ... initially, I had this notion that it should only refer to non-leaders ... however, it is clear that in both schools, capacity building has occurred with existing leaders ... with BSVPC as an example ...</i></p> <p>... when BSPrin, we did a total re structure here ... we bring in a Deputy Principal, we're probably big enough ...</p> <p>... I said to her at the time, 'What does that actually mean?' and she said, 'I have no idea, we're going to make it up as we go!'</p>	<p>Symbolic Frame: here BSVPC describes a person of significant influence on his formation as young man of faith, this influence of significant person and Church.</p> <p>Structural Frame: Rules, roles, policies and environment. As an observer, I found this quote surprising ... this not having an idea ...</p>

	<p>... stepping in because BSPrin out a bit ...</p>	<p>Perhaps, given the growth of the school, this concept of 'no idea', from BSPrin falls into the category, <i>Finding a satisfactory system of roles and relationships is an ongoing universal struggle.</i>' (B&D, 73, 2008)</p> <p>Therefore ... her, 'no idea', was an early indication of co-construction within a framework that was evolving, hence the, Human Resource frame comes into play as well ... Capacity Building</p>
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Further, having conducted the interviews with each participant, I followed the process to elicit a coherent analysis of each account through:

- Sketching
- Threading
- Theorising.

Through sketching I focused on each personal account and identified key words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs. By highlighting these sections, I was able to create a sketch of each person's thinking. Through further focus on the highlighted sections, I was able to sketch and thread the intentions and ideas for each participant. From this information, I theorised and wrote down statements of understanding learning.

Within the table above I provide an example of the exploration of the themes through the voices, stories and vignettes as experienced by the participants, while applying my interpretation through the frames/lenses provided by the work of Bolman and Deal. This was in order to further ascertain cultural transformation and to determine to what extent the Agile Scrum method may have played a part in this transformation.

3.10 Ethics

As a researcher, I understand that ethical considerations are interwoven within all aspects of the research process; therefore, as an ethical educational researcher I accept that at all stages of the research process, participants are treated with unconditional respect and care, and that their rights and welfare are paramount. I have committed to honesty and integrity in my research and have and will continue to protect the participants from any harm. Goddard and Melville (2007) identify those ethical considerations as crucial when conducting research that involves the participation of humans.

3.11 Approval

As the researcher and Principal Advisor to the schools, I gained approval for the case study schools to be involved in the research. Approval was also sought from Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) prior to the commencement of the case study. While I was no longer an employee of the organisation, approval was sought because the application of the intervention occurred within the context of the Smarter Schools National Partnership Program. The Human Research Ethics Committee at Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia approved the research.

Application ID: HRE16123
Date accepted by Ethics Secretary: 19/05/2016
Date Approved: 26/07/2016

3.12 Informed consent of participants

I elicited informed consent from all participants to contribute to the research. The participants were aware of the purpose of the research and how they were to be involved, how the data was to be generated, cited and stored. To the best of my ability, I ensured confidentiality by using pseudonyms for the participants. I also provided pseudonyms for the schools and gave very broad and basic school locations to further diminish the potential for recognition. All participants were made aware of their right to withdraw at any time, with data and information gathered to that point being destroyed.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) suggest that the following grounds for consent are required.

A letter was circulated via email. This letter provided all relevant information regarding the research including:

- The purpose of the research
- Disclosure of any potential risks in participating
- Disclosure of a process allowing participants to withdraw at any stage of the research

- Participants were given time to consider participation including discussions with their principals. As the researcher, I responded to any questions that potential participants had about their participation.

There was no expectation that participants should be a part of the research phase. Indeed, of the initial 20 participants involved in the Agile project, 10 decided to continue to the research phase. Participants signed a consent form agreeing to be involved in the research.

3.13 Safety

No physical risks were involved in the research; however, there existed a very low probability of psychological risk, in the sense that participants might have experienced some anxiety when responding to Interview questions. The questions were open-ended but did involve some discussion pertaining to leadership structures, policies and culture. I was acutely aware of this and was at pains to ensure that participants should be comfortable in answering any questions. They were advised of their right to not answer a question with which they were uncomfortable. I also reassured the participants of the confidentiality of the process.

3.14 The notion of beneficence

As the researcher, I aimed to ensure that participants would experience no harm during their engagement in the research. I also attempted to ensure that participants and their schools would benefit from the experience and gain valuable insights from any findings that emerged from the research (Flick, 2009).

The interviews were conducted in a professional and ethical manner. Protocols for debriefing were established in case the participants wished to discuss professional issues that arose.

(None took up this option.)

Further, I ensured there was:

- Generality and wide open, free discussion
- Autonomous evaluation, participants were free to introduce and challenge assertions
- Transparency, with openly declared goals and intentions.

By participating in the study, the schools, through their Principals and Leadership Teams were exposed to a way of thinking that was new as well as a way of leading project delivery. The Agile Method, as explained in Chapter 2, is essentially a program delivery solution methodology that uses highly effective teams to ensure as best as possible accurate and on time delivery of projects. This process was initially accepted by the principals and leadership teams as they were able understand and recognise the potential benefits once implemented.

3.15 Bias

Goddard and Melville (2007) define bias as a systematic distortion of responses by the researcher. In this case study, I as the researcher have 'shown my hand', making clear my involvement in the research as I executed my role of Principal Advisor, understanding that there may be some ... unwitting manipulation of events (Gray, 2009). I initiated protocols to ensure that bias was minimised. Participants were provided with the opportunity to review transcripts

of interviews and conversations to ascertain that the intention and meaning ascribed to the participants was true and accurate.

This provided for an interesting set of potential ethical questions as they related to the challenges of the participant observer. Gray (2009) points to benefits and potential pitfalls of being a participant observer; for example, having a working knowledge of the organisation and, in my case, a developing understanding of the culture, processes as well as political affiliations that may exist.

As the Principal Advisor and Cluster Leader (as outlined above), it was my role to deliver the program in consultation with the principals. It was important that I recognised that tension might exist between myself as the researcher, the professional (Principal Advisor) and my place within those situational contexts. My access to the two schools was due to the positive relationship that had developed as a result of my previous work in each school. Both the principals (as gatekeepers) expressed great interest in supporting this research.

An intriguing juxtaposition existed within the various roles I enacted so that I developed reflexivity regarding the spaces within which I operated.

Chapter 4 Analysis

This chapter provides an analysis of the frames, themes and sub-themes that represented the participants' lived experiences and voices about the prevailing cultures in each case study school.

As discussed in Chapter 3, I identified the themes and sub-themes through a process of investigation and analysis. The table below outlines the result of this process, linking the themes and sub-themes to Bolman and Deal's Frames.

Table 4: Research Frames, Themes and Sub-themes

Frame	Theme	Sub	Theme
Human	Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation • Inclusiveness • Distributed Leadership • Teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Learning • Trust • Trauma
Resource	Servant Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith • Trust • Service Mentorship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic Self • Growth • Capacity Building
Structural	Agile Scrum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Team • Leadership Agency and Capacity • Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Capital • Personal Growth • Agile Thinking
Symbolic	Religion and Faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calling • Service • Gift • Evangelisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devotion and Worship • Followership (Discipleship) • Justice
Political	Existing and Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balkanisation • Divisive Political Climate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toxic Environment • Political Skill • Acumen

In researching and examining the cultural transformation and development of the two case study schools, themes and sub-themes emerged from the data that provided insights into the lived experiences of the respondents within their respective and collective journeys and experiences.

The main themes of Servant Leadership, Collaboration, Agile Scrum and Faith and Religion are potential signposts of emergent change. The sub-themes identified were inexorably linked and

helped to coalesce the fabric of the organisational culture, both developed and developing over time, permeating across barriers that are clearly and rightly porous.

By overlaying the conceptual construct attributed to Bolman and Deal's Frames (2017), I have been able to identify the frame, theme and sub-theme attributed. However, within the themes identified, *sub-themes are not exclusive to each theme; indeed, as the theme is not exclusive to the frame* (my emphasis). Bolman and Deal's Frames (2017) were never designed to be linear, isolated non-restrictive constructs. To view this work in such a manner would run counter to Bolman and Deal's seminal work and, indeed, the intent of the Agile Scrum process and journey within the experience of the two case study schools. Therefore, I have deliberately interwoven the themes and sub-themes through the fabric of this analysis, a non-linear analysis that scaffolds and constructs through the stories of the participants.

In applying the frames or lenses over the research, the following statement by Bolman and Deal (2017, p. x) comes to mind as a relevant reminder:

We need versatile and flexible leaders who are artists as well as analysts, who can reframe experience to discover new issues and possibilities. In this instance, the research, reframes experiences, using this same power of reframing, through the use of multiple lenses to create a clearer view and understanding.

4.1 Multi-framing themes and sub-themes

Explored through the multi-lens frames, the themes of Servant Leadership and Collaboration both appear in the Human Resource Frame. The Human Resource Frame is underpinned by psychology; it places people and relationships at the centre, viewing organisations as community and as extended families, catering for individuals, their needs, their feelings, recognising their prejudices, skills, gifts and limitations (Bolman & Deal, 2008, 2017). Hence, Collaboration and Leadership, in this instance Servant Leadership, provide for a humanistic interpretation of the themes, through the various frames.

Agile Scrum as a theme, on the other hand, is a process, a methodology that provides nimble ways to develop software (you will recall in Chapters 1 and 2, that I adapted this process to roll out specific projects pertaining to the two case study schools). Therefore, as a 'structured process', I have placed it within the context of the Structural Frame, where this frame draws from and deals with the rational world; that is, where organisational structure and architecture have as a focus, planning strategy, goals and metrics ... all crucial aspects of Agile Scrum.

However, viewing this theme specifically through this frame or lens would only provide a very narrow view. Indeed, one of the main reasons for the existence of Agile through the process of Scrum (see Chapters 1 and 2) is to enhance collaboration, distribute leadership and provide service. Hence, the sub-themes can be relevant to multiple themes and frames, depending upon the context.

Themes and sub-themes merge across many aspects of the Political frame. The Political Frame is about power and views organisations as jungles, arenas where conflict and contests are the

norm, where the actors compete for power, scarce resources, where coalitions are formed, and coercion, bargaining and compromise are endemic. This all sounds very dramatic and negative and indeed, it is when organisations have lost their way and are dysfunctional.

The Alpha and Beta schools had experienced their own forms of dysfunction, infighting and toxicity. Yet, by reframing, each principal succeeded in moving their school away from such difficult cultures, by utilising their strengths within their preferred contextual *frame*. The Alpha School Principal, for example, relied on the Structural Frame where he created order and structure. The Beta School Principal, with her strength through the Human Resource Frame, placed people, individuals and their needs first. Both principals navigated their various contexts with political skill and acumen (Political Frame), underpinned by their strong faith within their religion and their guidance through their understanding of the will of God.

Politics also played a major role. Both principals appraised the various contexts within which they began their service, where dysfunction and toxicity existed, and both navigated through this reality. Indeed, as Bolman and Deal (2017, p. 183) observe: *“Managers can ... learn to acknowledge, understand, and manage political dynamics ...”*

Faith was a powerful driver of action and understanding within the religious Christian contexts of both schools, which I will explore further later in this chapter. Faith and Religion as a theme has typically been allocated to the Symbolic Frame where organisations are viewed as temples, with culture, symbols and spirit playing a major and crucial role.

4.2 Theme: collaboration

The respective principals, in their own contexts, set about initiating change while tackling many challenges head on. Woven through this text, sub-themes emerge that are inexorably linked with the concept of collaboration; sub-themes such as teams, working together and professional learning will be highlighted below. Collaboration is an idea that is striven for, yet not always necessarily achieved, whether actual/authentic or contrived.

The Alpha and Beta schools strived to attain the 'idea' of collaboration and to some extent aimed to attain authentic collaboration, and an authentic collaborative culture (Arnig, 2015). The sub-themes, such as teamwork, relationship building as well as inclusion and inclusive practices, emerged implicitly, or explicitly within the Interviews conducted. Underpinned within the contexts of both schools is also the sub-theme of authentic trust. As will be shown below, authentic (my interpretation) is meant in the sense that collaboration was developed within the relationship that emerges between leaders and teachers ... leading to trust.

Principals and leaders, all participants in this study, recognised the role that they played in their continuing efforts to build trust across the school community (Arnig, 2015). This concept of collaboration within the reconstructed cultural landscape of each school shifted the drive for improvement away from the schools' designated leaders, and towards ... a school's frontline, the teachers.

The journey of development in each school evolved through their respective timelines of change. Both principals initiated their own versions of school improvement based on their own past and emerging realities, prior to and during the SSNPP. Particular focus in both schools was

on public perceptions of their schools, challenges related to student population growth, issues of trust and toxic cultures. The discussion below explores this journey that continued, from survival to renewal and to dedicated school improvement.

As a strengthening culture of collaboration within the two case study schools emerged, each located this strengthening within their own histories and lived experiences. 'Trauma' or 'traumatic experiences' played a part as powerful respective and formative early developments along their journeys. At different times, both schools faced either closure or near catastrophic drops in student numbers, creating financial conditions that led to the questioning of ongoing viability.

The principal of the Alpha School (AlphaSchoolPrin) described the enormity of his task upon his appointment to the school, 21 years previously. He quickly became aware of the dire situation he faced, and the initial animosity of staff who accused him of planning to close their school.

They thought that I was there to wind the place up! Certainly, when I took over the school was six months away from closing ... the teaching quality was poor, and the place had a bad reputation ... so bad we couldn't even book the local pools (AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview 2016).

From the start of his appointment as principal, strategic development plans began to emerge and the Alpha School initially worked to repair its reputation with the parents and the broader community. Priority was given to enhancing student wellbeing, student discipline, pedagogy, and improving classroom learning and teaching practices. The Beta School similarly focused on school culture and community trust. In this instance, a school culture that focused on its reality as a Christian school, repairing trust with its immediate school community ... in acknowledging

this foundational truth, that had been partially cancelled by a previous administrator, as explained below.

Bolman and Deal discuss cultures within organisations as either *being* culture or *having* culture (2008, 2017). Fullan (1996, 2007) describes collaboration as a process that is developed in schools through what he terms *re-culturing*, while defining school culture as:

... guiding beliefs and expectations evident in the way that the school operates. [The outcomes focus on the] ... new forms of interaction and professionalism that occur surrounding activities such as problem solving, data sharing and shared decision making ... (Fullan, 2007, p. 59).

Engaging in such collaborative activities embedded in this re-cultured state, leads to higher levels of trust and respect among colleagues.

Clearly, the impact of a principal in any given school is paramount in the development of trust, collegiality and collaborative cultures (Fullan, 2007; Troen & Boles, 2012; Arnig, 2015).

However, successfully developing collaborative cultures occurs best when principals empower others – leaders and teachers and indeed all staff alike. Schools should “*acquire a state-of-the-art pedagogical knowledge, focus collaborative energies ... spend time on collaboration in daily school life ... collaborate with colleagues within and across schools*” (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 11).

AlphaSchoolPrin recognised this need over many years, with his school being particularly isolated, deliberately taking on a self-imposed isolation within its own system of schools and certainly from the outside. He stated: “*... we didn’t want contaminating ideas to be brought into the school*” (AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview, 2016).

AlphaSchoolSan explains further that, in part, the journey to opening, the “*leap of faith*” as she described the move to joining and accessing the services of Independent Schools Victoria, was the first step in breaking down what I am identifying as the ‘religious and doctrinal wall’ that this school and the sister schools in the system, had been hiding behind for years.

AlphaSchoolSan commented:

The school had been somewhat insular even within the sisterhood of schools, more so, our system was insulated from lots of outside influence The shift, yeah, it’s a big shift, yeah, and when we look at it, it probably started around 2007, 2008 ... so we have come to where we are now (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016).

Therefore, as a direct result of the religious doctrinal thought, this school and system of schools had deliberately chosen to stay cocooned, closing out the outside world and the general education community in a desire to maintain the ‘purity’ of the faith, the consequences of which became more pertinent once that ‘leap of faith’ was taken (AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview, 2016).

As the Alpha and Beta schools moved towards a culture of collaboration, the interview participants continued to provide valuable insights. The principals of both schools were initially the main drivers of change, and in doing so they created strong coalitions (Bolman & Deal, 2017), working with, in both cases, leaders that were mostly “*inherited ... developing a strong sense of relationship*” (Duignan & Cannon, 2011; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) and laying the foundations for a collaborative culture.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) state that in schools that are moving, progressing, there is a belief that “*... improvement in teaching is a collective effort rather than an individual enterprise*”, (p.

112). Hence, AlphaSchoolSan acknowledged the understanding that improvement is indeed a *'collective effort'* when she observed that the teachers *"... have broken down the barriers of the closed classrooms ... they now say I used to do my own planning ... now we plan together"* (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016).

AlphaSchoolSan's school had moved away from the outmoded model of teachers as lone wolves and classrooms as silos, to classroom walls being rendered metaphorically invisible and the warming of relations that occurred when collaboration was embedded within the day-to-day workings of a school. She gave credit to AlphaSchoolPrin: *"I don't think anyone can surpass him as an executive leader ... developing civil community and culture..."* (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016).

These beliefs were echoed by observing that AlphaSchoolPrin had grown the school from the almost catastrophic low base of 110 student enrolments: *"He established and got the school going ..."* (AlphaSchoolBron, Interview, 2016). AlphaSchoolBron elaborated further based on her observations:

The change over time that occurred with teachers who were working in isolation, that as their preferred way, [moved] to collaboration and wanting to become a part of the learning growing environment (AlphaSchoolBron, Interview, 2016).

With an emerging culture of collaboration and indeed, a unification of purpose, isolation decreases, and inclusiveness and trust begin to emerge and become part of the norm rather than the exception.

BetaSchoolVPC reflected on one of the greatest strengths to have emerged from that earlier period of staff infighting and toxicity when he reflected on the school's transition: *"Their culture*

of inclusiveness and creating that collaborative base out of that toxic time” (BetaSchoolVPC, Interview, 2016). Similarly, during the interview with BetaSchoolPrin, in a moment of some silence as she thought back to those times, she commented:

I needed to trust my staff, I had to show them by example that by working together it would be the only way that we would survive ... I spent many, many hours just listening ... and trying to heal (BetaSchoolPrin, Interview, 2016).

Within this lived experience, inclusiveness was built upon the foundation of an authentic trust ... trust that was destroyed by events that preceded this study and the Beta School built upon their focus on inclusion. A strong culture of inclusion, with Leadership being very much a part of the concept of service and inclusion: *“Recognising the skills, attributes and talents that all bring ... and everything ... the sanctity that is the individual”* (BetaSchoolPrin, Interview, 2016).

BetaSchoolPrin made it her mission to ensure that all staff, teachers and non-academic staff, were included in the development and sharing of the vision of the school, moving forward.

Relationship building was considered a priority with collaboration being in the guise of all being a family within what BetaSchoolVPC described as a *“... community of purpose”* (Interview, 2016).

The Alpha School began to move away from an autocratic style of leadership where dictates and directives were given, and became one where delegation of responsibilities, actions and tasks signified the gradual embrace of a collaborative culture and distributed leadership. Hence, the desire to nurture teachers, developing cultures of learning (AlphaSchoolVPRae), building quality relationships (AlphaSchoolSan, AlphaSchoolMar) became the foci. *“I guess we began to really embrace the leadership across ... the ... leadership distributed across ... allowing people to*

grow [AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview, 2016] ... and really looking at cultures of learning ... good relationships between our leaders” (AlphaSchoolVPRae, Interview, 2016).

While there were structures in place “... *nothing really happened*” (AlphaSchoolVPRae, Interview, 2016), a fact acknowledged by AlphaSchoolSan who described early attempts at collaboration, prior to the inception of the SSNPP, as being ad hoc: “*Meetings were not always scheduled, often we would simply see each other and have a chat ... we’d simply sit down and have a meeting on the spot*” (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016).

While moving away from isolation certainly began with the participation in ISV professional development and the SSNPP, through the adoption of the Agile Process, a more cohesive collaborative culture began to assert itself and emerge. It married well with the early work of AlphaSchoolVPRae, who began to initiate the PLC model with her primary colleagues, and to a lesser extent with those in the secondary sector of the school. There was a greater degree of sharing of ideas, co-reading, discussions of articles, sharing learning and creating this “*learning thinking culture*”, (AlphaSchoolVPRae, Interview, 2016). She explained:

What now usually happens at these meetings, or what do you think about this, here’s an idea ... have a read of this article, what are your thoughts? Where is our staff at? What is our data saying? Further, ... our culture of learning, is a real strength ... balanced with this is the staff relationship aspect, I think that the quality of relationships which actually helps to develop that quality practice as well.

Collaboration also manifested itself with purposeful and dedicated classroom observations followed up with intentional discussions.

I started to notice that I was leading a lot of staff ... but where is the connection in the classroom? So, we initiated changes and systems ... such as peer coaching and teacher observations based ... things are being weaved into the fabric of stuff

(AlphaSchoolVPRae, Interview, 2016).

“Collaboration just isn’t, we do PD every week in the staff meeting, it’s more of a way of being”

was a comment that AlphaSchoolVPRae made in her interview, and it was echoed by AlphaSchoolSan. Staff meetings were no longer tedious vehicles of information giving ... emails and briefings began to serve that purpose, and, in their stead, professional learning based around the emergence of professional learning teams began to emerge ... articles shared, read and discussed, smart goals set, explored developed and renewed (AlphaSchoolSan and AlphaSchoolVPRae, Interview, 2016).

The Alpha school experienced change. During the time of this case study in 2013, the school acquired and opened a new campus. This change led to a significant influx of teachers who were new to the school requiring mentoring and inculturation within the Alpha school culture. This was underpinned by their religious understandings of Christian faith and how this influenced classroom practice as well as staff relationships (AlphaSchoolSan and AlphaSchoolMar, Interviews, 2016).

During our Interview, AlphaSchoolBron conceded that there was still work to be done, particularly in the secondary area of the school where she acknowledged that time constraints

manifested in timetable structure and teachers who were mainly specialists posed their own issues of isolation.

The interesting thing is that we are working in teams across the whole school and that's what I like ... we're starting to see we are [sic] this is happening there, or this is happening here ... In secondary, we're just going to have to get better in the secondary in promoting that (AlphaSchoolBron, Interview, 2016).

Nonetheless, AlphaSchoolBron's leaders team felt that they had overcome the 'tyranny of time', the ever-present enemy of the teacher, always looking to find time to meet, plan and importantly co-plan together, coupled with the greater 'tyranny of the timetable'... timetables that can be restrictive and rigid. *"We overcame these issues by being able to protect time to meet and to plan, however with the drawback of needing to meet at times, when some still had classes"* (AlphaSchoolBron, Interview, 2016). However, on a more positive note, they had been creative in rostering meetings at different times (defeating the tyranny of the timetable) and in creating a pool of local and dedicated relief teachers allocated to classes where they were involved in co-planning and were thus engaged in a seamless continuation of the learning and teaching process.

AlphaSchoolBron, AlphaSchoolMar and AlphaSchoolSan praised the Agile process and attributed to it the increased collaborative processes and culture that had emerged.

AlphaSchoolNan (Interview, 2016) commented: *"The Agile Process was a great way for the whole school to cooperate ... we were working in teams, in teams across the whole school ... I like that people would say 'wow, they're doing this!'"* Therefore, collaboration looks like high

level teams, with many people sharing ideas and *“also the load”*, (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016). This stronger sense of team has grown out of *“... though we don’t call it Agile, we still use it”* (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016).

AlphaSchoolMar saw this shift away from the earlier isolation and felt more empowered: *“A greater deal of positive change has happened ... we collaborate more”* (AlphaSchoolMar, Interview, 2016). Nonetheless, as the school grew, this concept of true collaboration needed to become further embedded, in particular within the new campus which, to some of those who participated in the interviews, felt that it was still remote and a little alien, despite their regular visitations. It had moved to a very different and more affluent suburb with a more homogenous student body demographic, Christian in essence but more secular in practice. In a final word, AlphaSchoolSan acknowledged that actions that had arisen out of the Agile Process and the team experience of Agile helped to create the conditions for greater collaboration *“...within and through year levels in the school”* (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016).

AlphaSchoolSan acknowledged that actions that had arisen out of the Agile Process and the team experience of Agile, helped to create the conditions for greater collaboration *“...within and through year levels in the school”* (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016). Teachers had become exposed to each other’s ideas and thoughts ... in what AlphaSchoolSan had initially described as mainly ‘ad hoc’, which is perfectly legitimate. This had now been underpinned by a more directed and deliberately formal collaborative model of professional learning team meetings, (one notices the difference in language away from professional development to professional

learning ...), shifting away from meetings as information sessions to a nexus of ‘... *collaboration and agile thinking*, (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016).

Further complications and indeed barriers to collaborative cultures were exacerbated along the schools’ respective journeys by the religious context and Christian affiliation to which they both belong; that is, the doctrines and dogmas that need to be upheld.

4.3 Theme: Agile thinking and actions

Aligned to the school improvement strategies of the two case study schools, the embedding of Agile Scrum practice, in part, was an attempt to further sustain or to develop collaborative school cultures. Agile methodologies espoused collaboration and indeed, aimed to ‘break down’ the ‘top down’ leadership hierarchy in organizations and empower a formidable team approach that has less to do with formal roles and more to do with teams that at the very heart encouraged synergy and equality (Ocamb, 2013). This was highlighted clearly in the Agile Manifesto: “*People... must work together daily... Build projects around motivated individuals. Give them the environment and support they need and trust them to get the job done*” (Agile Manifesto, 2001).

In reference to questions around sustainability and impact, leadership agency, Agile Scrum was a focal point in participant Interviews in both schools. Agile, by nature, was a process of development and a way of initiating sustainable change and move organizations towards the concept of Agile thinking (Agile Transformation, 2021).

The analysis below highlights the sub-themes that emerged from the interview data that pertained to this theme of *Agile thinking* and the *Agile Scrum process*. Participants either

alluded to or specifically referred to the development of team, revealing and building leadership agency and capacity, developing professional capital (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2012), project development, personal growth and indeed, agile thinking.

AlphaSchoolSan, through her own experiences recognized the importance of creating opportunities for professional capacity (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2012), to be developed. She also recognized the work of ISV in helping to move the school towards more targeted professional learning:

Going to some of the professional learning from ISV... then we got into National Partnerships, so all of this has been the basis of moving forward and all the reading we have done around that and all the things, really...it was how we all, as a school, began to interact (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016).

Continuing to reflect further on aspects of her work, she highlighted her experiences with the Agile process, Agile Scrum, and the development of agile thinking and practice...

I've been reflecting on this... we don't talk about it being the Agile Process anymore, but it is there... we are particularly strong in primary school and working that way in small teams... and, I believe, that we are not only building capacity, we're developing leadership capacity by allowing staff to step into smaller roles and allowing them to be leaders of the future (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016).

As a process, Agile provided for a very strategic and targeted methodology for planning.

AlphaSchoolBron acknowledged this when she stated:

The influence on our planning well... the Agile Scrum Process has been very effective, and it's been a way, I suppose of putting down on paper what happens in my head... so the Agile Scrum, working with all of us, as a team, we've seen the importance
(AlphaSchoolBron, Interview, 2016).

The acknowledgement of team and the inference of collaboration, which is a major aspect of the Agile Process, also led to a supporting statement made by AlphaSchoolSan as well as here by AlphaSchoolBron, to the capacity building aspect of this experience.

We looked at people that we had seen qualities of leadership and asked them if they wanted to participate and in doing that, we were able to teach another aspect of leadership... to share with people (AlphaSchoolBron, Interview, 2016).

Hence, not only seeking to create leadership capacity, indeed, seeking permission to do so.

AlphaSchoolVPRae acknowledged the learning journey that occurred.

We used everything we have learned, inside and out. [She acknowledged the transition to Agile Thinking as she continued...] with Agile, the Agile process, we do it to such a point now that I do it without thinking about it (AlphaSchoolVPRae, Interview, 2016).

Embedded in practice, AlphaSchoolVPRae recounted a personal and organizational Agile journey in thinking and growth.

I have used it as a change process... it has helped me grow in my leadership capacity and I have used it as a vehicle for me to develop my own personal goals ... In respect to colleagues... I used it ... by choosing a theme, an area of development such as say,

differentiation... forming a team, strategically choosing people... forming a team ... getting them to lead their teams (AlphaSchoolVPRae, Interview, 2016).

In so doing, AlphaSchoolVPRae, recognised her role in building leadership capacity and using Agile as one of the vehicles for this to occur.

*As a leader, as leaders we should be growing others ... you know ... I want you to lead this team, lead this team and then **I want you to grow** [emphasis her own] ... get out of their way and let them do it ... so ... it's based on the Agile Scrum ... even though we don't use the terminology anymore (AlphaSchoolVPRae, Interview, 2016).*

AlphaSchoolMar referred to professional learning ...

It helped to put it into place so that teachers could plan together the whole Agile Scrum... that professional learning so with the development of that ... teams ... getting representation from different parts of the school if you like, so people have a voice, and it helped us... we've learnt the importance of introducing change (AlphaSchoolMar, Interview, 2016).

Building capacity across the school, giving voice, and constructing while recognizing the importance of the change process ... providing an opportunity for staff " ... to all have buy in ..." (AlphaSchoolMar, Interview, 2016).

AlphaSchoolMar emphasised this further:

Introducing and rolling that out and getting buy in from staff ... meeting, you know, so that idea of having the different levels of leadership ... and having teams working together has helped ... yeah, it's been great (AlphaSchoolMar, Interview, 2016).

In part, supporting AlphaSchoolVPRAe's notion of personal experience within the Agile process, AlphaSchoolSan pointed to her own emergent Agile Thinking that she developed during her own growth journey...

I use the Agile Scrum ... I sort of, you know, just do it. [Citing an example, she continued] ... well doing the e-smart project journey ... there are several hundreds of tasks ... so, thinking Agile, I broke it down into small, really, units ... so we did it thoroughly (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016).

BetaSchoolVPK referred to the building of teams, the inclusive nature of the process as well as the capacity to recognize leadership agency in others:

I think that was big for us it created a new layer of team, different teams under the school community, and new layers of leadership ... a common vision for the school ... setting up the Agile Process ... it created a great framework for us to move ... it created change (BetaSchoolVPK, Interview, 2016).

She also specifically recognized the capacity of staff to have a voice, with the underlying implication of 'buy in' to the vision:

Throughout the process, there's now people stepping up to have a voice ... suddenly we are hearing from people in staff meetings, who you wouldn't normally hear from and they are representative groups (BetaSchoolVPK, Interview, 2016).

BetaSchoolVPC supported his colleague, BetaSchoolVPKaren, when he stated quite emphatically: *"The Agile Process was one of the most significant programs we implemented, working through that process to develop our strategic plan..."* (BetaSchoolVPChris, Interview, 2016).

Indeed, BetaSchoolCoord went on:

We've been able to have a fair amount ... everyone in our group had a pretty good input... we've been able to implement quite a lot, quite a few things ... lift the level of ... well, lift the level of engagement, and develop leaders. [He continued to further acknowledge the effect that this form of participation, planning and action has had on the organisation]. I think that people feel they're placed in a position ... that makes them feel valued, yeah, valued ... as a teacher, as a part of a group, so it has developed leadership on them [sic] (BetaSchoolCoord, Interview, 2016).

Summing up this section, AlphaSchoolPrin stated: *"I think that the Agile Process ... it gave us another vehicle to empower our people."* (AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview, 2016).

4.4 Servant leadership

Servant leadership, as a theme, concept and as an aspect of leadership, has been in existence for millennia (refer to Literature review). The analysis that follows is that of the understanding,

the lived experiences of this theme of servant leadership by the participants within the context of their schools and within the context of their own faith and religion. Sub-themes relating to service, a clear underpinning concept of servant leadership, the authentic and reflective self, trust, the growth of others, faith ... are all intricately weaved through their personal involvement and understandings.

The concept of Servant Leadership may appear to be 'oxymoronic' and perplexing. How do you lead and serve? A very far cry of the 'Taylorist' (Caramela, 2018) concept of leadership that, among others, has defined leadership in both corporate and educational settings. Paraphrasing, it is a far cry indeed from the Leader Hero, all powerful charismatic, unbending ... Caesars and Czars, Emperors, Kings and Queens (Caramela, 2018). Yet, this concept of Servant Leadership, this idea as previously stated, has been in existence for millennia ... and, without re-examining that which has already been discussed in previous chapters, philosophers, Eastern Philosophers directly alluded to this idea (Confucius, 551–479BC, Lao Tzu, 500BC, in Bruya, 2005).

Lao Tzu, for example, argued: *"If you want to lead them, you must place yourself behind them"* (Bruya, 2005, p. 49). Confucius: *"...travelling within a group of three, one will be my teacher"* (Lui et al, 2016, p. 69). Lao Tzu again: *"Be gentle and you can be bold; be frugal and you can be liberal; avoid putting yourself before others and you can become a leader among men"* (Bruya, 2005, p. 45).

Herman Hess (1956) arguably expounded the first modern concept of Servant Leadership when he exposed the servant Leo, in his famous treatise *The Journey to the East*, as the mystical, all-powerful Leo.

I recognized his movements, and finally, I recognized his face. It was Leo ... I was no less deeply moved and amazed that it was Leo, the former porter and servant, who now stood at the head of the whole league. (Hess, 1956, p. 98).

Oxymoronic perhaps ... how does one lead and serve ... how does one exercise power if power is seemingly diminished in service? This idea, further crystalized by Greenleaf (1977), serves as a flip to the notion of how organisations are led and managed.

While the idea of Servant Leadership may be underpinned by Eastern philosophy as expressed above, as a concept it sits well within the sphere of leadership within a Christian school setting, and thus it was not surprising that many participants directly or indirectly identified themselves as Servant Leaders. In doing so, they referred to the Biblical concept of servant leadership (Newton, 2016) and biblical affiliated traits that reference Jesus Christ as the epitome of the servant leader. Often, this understanding was underpinned, not only by the actions of Jesus during his ministry but was perhaps best witnessed by this account of 'the last supper' as expressed by the Disciple, John.

12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13 "You call me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am". 14 "Now that I your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also wash one another's feet." 15 "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done to you". 16 Very truly I tell you. No servant is greater than his Master, nor a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them (John 13: 12-17).

With Jesus Christ as exemplar, the leader is servant, and the servant is leader ... a tome taken up by himself (Greenleaf, 1977). Jesus as leader and servant provided this very real example, and in so doing showed the way for his disciples to follow ... and indeed, in the Alpha and Beta schools, it is paramount that the principal leads and serves by example.

In all aspects of school life, it is clear that the principal leads by example (Day & Sammons, 2013; Duignan & Cannon, 2011) and sets the tone ... this is the case in both schools.

AlphaSchoolPrin alluded to the concept of servant leadership early in our Interview when we were discussing what had inspired him to enter education and the teaching profession. He stated:

It's the buzz generated from helping. [He paused and thought for a moment and then continued]. We offer servant leadership in our organisation and that's one of the things ... teaching ... in this environment has got a multi-layer element to it ... another purpose in addition to education (AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview, 2016).

Indeed, AlphaSchoolPrin articulated here a belief in a service within the profession and within the organisation that transcends the secular, articulating a sentiment that is common to both schools.

Faith and Religion, while a theme, permeates all themes and underscores much thinking and action; therefore, references to such will permeate through the discussion. When asked to define leadership, AlphaSchoolMar paused and simply enunciated one word, 'service'.

Encouraged further, AlphaSchoolMar continued: "You're a team ... is only as good as their

leaders and the leaders need to be there serving with the team ... so yeah, leaders are there to serve” (AlphaSchoolMar, Interview, 2016).

AlphaSchoolPrin provided an interesting example of his concept of service. On the one hand, he articulated a very structured concept of leadership when he referred to *“serving the troops”*, with troops referring to his staff ... stating: *“Leadership has a certain responsibility that comes with it as well, but good leaders, I think will always be able to identify that the troops have much to contribute ...”* (AlphaSchoolPrin Interview, 2016). He then went on to describe a vignette, an example of his concept of service and his ongoing immersion in the life of the school beyond his role as principal. Encountering a child looking sad he said: *“I couldn’t help myself ... so to this little tyke, I said, ‘What’s the matter matey? Little lunchbox gone? Let’s go find it!’”* (AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview, 2016). He articulated here, not only his need to serve, but to also stay involved and immersed.

The idea of ‘rolling up your sleeves and getting stuck in’, the idea that there is no job or task too menial, is again exemplified by AlphaSchoolMar. As an Assistant Elementary Principal, she described the many acts of service she performed ... beautifully extolled when she observed:

You’re on the one hand mentoring a teacher, conducting a class obs [sic], then the next thing you know you are digging things out of the toilet, then finding yourself going out and doing duty for someone else (AlphaSchoolMar, Interview 2016).

AlphaSchoolSan, when reflecting on this same discussion, provided an introspective and poignant description that was underscored by her deep faith. *“Service is also about trust and **in** service, with and for others”* (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016). Note her emphasis on **in**

service ... indeed, she has taken the concept of servant leadership to a higher level, that higher order of understanding, that meta-cognition of what a servant leader is, to be and act. *“So, you see, [she continued] leadership in my heart is servanthood, it is! I think, if I am not going to serve those who I might lead, then how can I lead them?”* (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016).

Pausing, and thinking deeply for a moment, AlphaSchoolSan then reached deeply into her faith, and with some emotion she stated...

I have a model in my life and my talking about Christianity ... my mentor has always been, Philippians 4:13, ‘I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me’ ... he provided me, with that servant leadership as well ... he provides strength for me to be a servant leader (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016).

For AlphaSchoolSan, leadership, leading, servant leadership was a lived, authentic faith experience.

Greenleaf (1977) posits the idea that, to test the authenticity of servant leadership, those whom servant leaders serve should experience growth as persons, healthier outlooks, gains in wisdom, experience greater autonomy and be more likely themselves to become servants. All Alpha School participants certainly alluded to these outcomes, to the concept that as servant leaders they worked to ensure that those whom they served experienced the capacity to grow.

AlphaSchoolPrin (Interview, 2016) referred to *“... knowing that you are a positive force.”*

AlphaSchoolSan identified the importance of building trust relationships with teachers who do not see their leaders as *“a threat”*. AlphaSchoolVPRae had a focus on growth and capacity when

she observed: *“It’s about upscaling others ... leaders should be growing others”* (Interview, 2016).

The sub-themes of growth and capacity building permeated their interviews, and in their efforts with those whom they, as servant leaders served, the lived experience of growth, capacity, wisdom and the desire also to serve are best expressed by Beta School participants. In her Interview, BetaSchoolPrin reflected on her role as servant and on service without necessarily literally expressing servant leadership. BetaSchoolVPKaren and BetaSchoolVPChris however clearly referred to the concept and highlighted examples of her actions in this regard.

In contemplating this general concept of leadership, with most participants having made reference to servant leadership, it is BetaSchoolPrin whose leadership, actions and words are often cited. In any other context, perhaps this may be viewed as perhaps overly controlling and yet, as Jesus Christ is considered to have born witness to service through the paradigm of washing his disciples’ feet, (John 13: 1- 17),... BetaSchoolPrin is often referenced by her own examples of service in leadership as ... a servant leader in name and action, having a profound effect on the leadership culture of the school. All referred to her capacity to allow them to create their own autonomous zones within their respective leadership portfolios. They referenced the great trust that she bestowed upon them and the respect that she accorded her leaders and her staff ... indeed, the whole school community. BetaSchoolPrin exhibited an authenticity herself that was clear and genuine, inviting others to do the same.

BetaSchoolVPChris (Interview, 2016) provided a snapshot of this when he described the following:

BetaSchoolPrin attends all our events ... she is simply always there, always in support ... she doesn't necessarily speak, but you know, she'll do things like well, help set up a room! Things like that!"

BetaSchoolVPKaren adds to this picture:

Recently, during a parent information session she turned up, made no fuss, greeted and chatted to a few parents then sat down and started working the PowerPoint ... I mean ... who does that? She sits there smiling, warmly acknowledging the presentation. [She goes on to muse]: You know, leadership is easy here, because we've already got this established common goal ... we all agree and love our culture (BetaSchoolVPKaren, Interview, 2016).

This culture was created through the vision lived, shared and grown through BetaSchoolPrin, where according to BetaSchoolVPC: *"She sets the ultimate example and I love her style. It's about wisdom and imparting that wisdom, which fits with what we are trying to do here"* (Interview, 2016).

On a more personal note, BetaSchoolVPK described her own leadership as *"... being a servant leader... it's about helping others, providing that backstop for staff, enabling them to be their best, working alongside them, they're having a chance to grown (sic) themselves"* (BetaSchoolVPK, Interview, 2016). She espoused concepts within this dialogue that clearly referenced or implied service, growth, mentorship and support – all elements of the servant leader practitioner.

I have learned so much ... she (BetaSchoolPrin) is keen to develop people. She's looking at our gifts and strengths, recognising this, so for me, personally, to recognise that there are gifts and talents out there and giving people the opportunities to grow
(BetaSchoolVPC, Interview, 2016).

BetaSchoolVPC, commented on the discernable and lasting impact of BetaSchoolPrin and the impact she had on his own growth and journey in leadership. *"I am very much a servant leader ... [he says, continuing] is probably where I sit [sic]. I don't want to be that person who just tells everyone what to do ... I'll, you know, get involved, help to get the job done ..."* (BetaSchoolVPC, Interview, 2016).

Faith is never far away from thought and action, with Christ as the exemplar through his life and his teachings.

I guess that is my Christian upbringing, that's what Christ was, he was a servant leader, that's what I have based my life on ... [Pausing for thought, he then adds] I try and put myself in the shoes of other people, it's not just about you! (BetaSchoolVPC, Interview, 2016).

Reflecting further, BetaSchoolVPC acknowledged the trust that the BetaSchoolPrin had in him, literally telling him upon his promotion to Vice Principal of the school, when he was discussing the nature of his role: *"I have no idea ... I guess the role, we'll make it up as we go*
[BetaSchoolVPCChris continued]: *I've grown into that (role) ... knowing, and I feel that BetaSchoolPrincipal has got full confidence in me and in what I do ..."* (BetaSchoolVPC, Interview, 2016).

Paraphrasing Greenleaf (1977), a servant leader will serve first, and in so doing will create the conditions and the environment through their own example and authentic selves, to allow others to also become servant leaders, this through service, trust, growth and autonomy. Leaders in each of these schools expressed their understanding through their lived experience of servant leadership, underpinned and informed by their deep Christian faith with Jesus Christ as an ongoing mentor and guide. This aspect of Religion and Faith will be further explored next.

4.5 Religion and faith

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths” (Proverbs 3: 5–6).

Devout Christians will ask of themselves: *What is it that God calls me to do with my life? And, how best can I serve Him?* Within such questions lie mystery, personal reflection, doubt and ... hope.

These sub-themes of ‘calling’, ‘faith’ and ‘gift’ are woven through the tapestry of the lives exhibited by the participants, all people of deep faith. Their calling is similar yet laced with distinctive poignancy, shaped by the experience of their individual lives lived. Service continues to be a theme embedded in their collective lived experience and indeed, it was explored through the concept of Servant Leadership. Here, within this concept of ‘faith’, service, takes on a greater, deeper meaning that is connected to the ‘Will of God’, and each in their own way, submitted to this will, knowingly, gladly, fully, allowing their understanding of God’s path for them to be revealed. As the disciple Peter informs us...

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's Grace in its various forms. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength that God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 4:10–11).

Teaching is a calling, not only to educate children within a secular context but in the case of our participants and their schools, to educate children about God, Jesus Christ and the 'Good News'. Therefore, evangelisation is at the core of a Christian education.

AlphaSchoolSan responded to a question in regard to religion and faith and the influence of her faith on her leadership ... deeply in thought, and with a serene smile forming on her lips she responded:

As I mentioned earlier ... Christ is my model... [Profoundly, she goes on] ... What brought me to teaching was God's plan ... God had a plan for me... but even so, I had no plan for leadership ... I believe that was His plan too (Interview, 2016).

AlphaSchoolSan articulated well, through powerful statements about a belief in faith and a destiny of a life of a present and future that is linked to the will of God, His plan for her. She continued:

I am speaking from a Christian point of view, perhaps someone else would speak from their own spiritual view ... but for me my faith supports me so much, I talked about a model, Christ as a model leader, he was a model teacher ... you can talk to Him, so for me, it's about a personal relationship, I don't know how I could survive leadership ... I've

tried to listen to the voice of my faith relationship to Him to know ... What do you want me to be? Where is my place now? What purpose do I have here? (Interview, 2016).

Musing on this thought she continued:

... so who would have thought that the day I stepped into that Church, that I would ever be in leadership. It was nothing I ever aspired to ... so it was His plan for me. [Faith] ... enhances my relationship and enhances rather than hinders my leadership (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview, 2016).

This concept of *bond*, of a personal relationship, this ongoing intimate conversation with God, listening to his voice, is movingly explored further through the lived experience of AlphaSchoolBron, who, as she recounted to me, had lived a difficult life where faith was lost at a particular point, and in moving forward to what she referred to as her salvation, it was found again.

There is a legacy to what you do ... I actually, and as a Christian, well, as a person, I left my roots. Ended up in quite a messy divorce, but before that I felt the need to find my roots again, particularly my Christian values ... my Christian roots. After separation and divorce, I felt this voice saying, 'I want you to see a pastor' (AlphaSchoolBron, Interview, 2016).

Here we see AlphaSchoolBron's understanding and commitment to the 'Voice of God' and His will:

In speaking to him (the pastor), 'I don't know why I am here, I don't know what skills I have, this is what I have done'. [She continued] ... But I feel as though this is what God is wanting me to do, and this is how I returned to teaching. [Pausing, with a fleeting painful look in her eyes, downcast, AlphaSchoolBron, gathers herself] ... I love it here; I have never questioned that this is where God wants me to be (AlphaSchoolBron, Interview, 2016).

AlphaSchoolNan also pointed to this relationship with God, this 'voice' and personal confidante that not only knows your deepest thoughts, but understands them, and in doing so *shows you the way*. She observed:

The ability to have a Lord to look up to, gives you the ability to have faith in your own abilities, because He's given you them [sic], it's your responsibility to use them ... if you pray, you find a way ... somehow, it clarifies (AlphaSchoolNan, Interview, 2016).

Solace through adversity, loneliness and the burden of leadership, the sacrifice that one bears is a theme prevalent throughout the interviews, at times explicitly expressed, at others implied. Solace, through one's faith is very strong within this cohort of leaders.

AlphaSchoolMar explained her faith journey in leadership where faith transcended the human:

I would not have been able to cope and do what I have been able to do if I didn't have faith in God ... it's very much a part, just as you have the same support system from people ... that's invaluable ... that connection with God and having faith is what helps (AlphaSchoolMar, Interview, 2016).

AlphaSchoolPrin, while supporting the thoughts and feelings expressed thus far, took me on a slightly different journey in faith and in his own thinking. Interestingly and pragmatically, he acknowledged:

I know that religion can be guilty of a number of things, but I am not sure that in the context of what we are talking about here that faith and religion hinders in any way, our work and leadership in particular ... it (faith and religion) helps to sustain one physically as well as emotionally, calm and relief (AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview, 2016).

AlphaSchoolPrin, spoke about often looking forward to Friday evenings where, in the Christian tradition to which he belongs, Friday evening begins the celebration of the Sabbath (Saturday, unlike most Christian traditions where the day of worship and rest is Sunday). He pointed to the relief that this brought in his *'laying down my burdens'* of office and giving oneself over to worship and to God. Hence, the *'rest'* was both physical and spiritual ... a reset for the rigours of the week to come. In this way, his belief in the sustenance that faith provides him is both psychological, spiritual and physical; literally helping AlphaSchoolPrin to recover and prepare for the ongoing work that he has called his *'ministry'*.

He further explored other aspects of faith and values that are attributed to the life, times and teachings of Jesus.

Faith and religion ... would make one more compassionate ... I simply believe that a person who has an understanding of, or a world view that incorporates the transcendent or the divine, that they will then look at other people who come into the sphere of influence as other travelers (AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview, 2016).

AlphaSchoolVPRae supported her colleague's thoughts "... *Realising that you're here as a pure purpose for our God and I think that is a positive thing. A Christian component helps you to love people, the way that God loves you*" (AlphaSchoolVPRae, Interview, 2016). Through this concept of faith as espoused by AlphaSchoolVPRae, she projected for herself an aspect of tolerance through Christian love, that she accepted. However, in her own words she found this state of being ... "*frustrating*". In her work she felt that the very Christian values espoused and lived of compassion and love can be, at times, a detriment. She explained:

When you question and you value people, and you believe in restorative practices, forgiveness ... [you can] confuse loving a person and believing in forgiveness, also forgetting that there are accountabilities and responsibilities ... [Further, she confided] ... so I think that the Christian component really helps you love people like God loves you ... it's really hard, this is a struggle ... you look at your own staff ... [pausing, then continuing, choosing her words] ... I believe in a creative God that loves them as much as He loves me and if ... if ... I've got to treat them ... as a result, even though that some of them annoy me to death! (AlphaSchoolVPRae, Interview, 2016).

The exploration of this point is underpinned by the fact that AlphaSchoolVPRae placed the child at the center at the exclusion of all actions, no matter how difficult they were. As has been discussed earlier, this thinking is in part due to her own lived school experience as a child ... where she felt invisible and abandoned ... expressing her hate for teachers and for school itself. She further explained that this concept of love and restorative practices indeed had what she referred to as a: "*detrimental flipside ... where such thinking can sometimes cloud decisions*

made in regard to conduct and potential dismissal of staff issues ... but I think that as a Christian, you have the responsibility to do what is right.” (AlphaSchoolVPRae, Interview, 2016).

Not surprisingly, Beta School participants expressed very similar views and sentiments ... faith in God, faith in His plans, Jesus as the “*way and the light*” (BetaSchoolPrin). BetaSchoolVPKaren acknowledged faith in using the gifts and talents with which “*God has endowed us all*”, to use them as God desires and, to not do so would be tantamount to sin. She continued: “*Our faith tells us that everyone has a unique set of gifts and talents, we all have our own path in it ... we should all be striving to develop our gifts and talents as much as possible*” (Interview, 2016).

While certainly referring to her own thoughts on this matter, BetaSchoolVPC (Interview, 2016) also felt that:

As leaders, as Christian leaders, it is up to us all to recognise that there are gifts and giving people the opportunity to grow them ... so my faith doesn't hinder in any way, except ... no ... no ... it doesn't hinder, because it's for good reason that finding staff who are open to their own faith journey ...

This is an important observation because it points to the concept of evangelisation ... for the whole community.

BetaSchoolVPC expressed his love of his faith in God and in the pathway that Christianity and faith in Christ provide. He spoke of a blueprint:

I think that having a Christian worldview, it helps, because it, you've got ... well ... you've got this blueprint ... you've got like, Jesus there and you can actually follow through with

what He did and it kind of gives you, like, well ... there are absolute values to live by ... the way that you develop as a whole person (BetaSchoolVPC, Interview, 2016).

The final word on this theme is attributed to BetaSchoolPrin, who, in pondering this whole question of leadership, faith and religion within this Christian setting, referred back to some of her comments in relation to servant leadership, and in adding to this discussion, in her own way, she quoted from memory the following passage from Proverbs: *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths”* (Proverbs 3: 5–6).

With that, she smiled, and left me with the thought that faith is deeply personal and those who have such deep faith exhibit a contentment that others may find difficult to emulate.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of the research was to examine cultural transformation and development in two low socio-economic, faith-based Christian schools within the context of emergent teacher leadership and agency (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). This transformation and development was discussed through the lenses of Bolman and Deal's Frames (2008, 2017). The key findings that are discussed in this chapter relate specifically to the following central research question and three sub-questions.

Central research question:

- Having participated in the Agile Scrum process, what does culture and leadership look like in two faith-based Christian schools?

A set of sub-questions for the research in the schools, were as follows:

1. What are the conditions existing or emerging that support cultural transformation and evolution in the case study schools?
2. Do faith and religion influence the development of leadership? If so, how and in what ways?
3. In what ways, if any, has the Agile Scrum process influenced cultural transformation and encouraged teacher leadership?

It is my intention to discuss my findings through the central question and sub-questions posed. I will discuss the sub-questions first, in the order presented which, I feel naturally leads to unveiling the story within the central question itself.

5.2 Sub-question 1: What are the conditions emerging or existing that support cultural transformation and evolution in the case study schools?

In this section, it is my intention to discuss the following factors that existed, emerged and contributed to cultural transformation and evolution in both schools, namely:

- Principal Leadership
- Independent Schools Victoria and The Smarter Schools National Partnerships Program
- Emerging culture of collaboration.

Factors designated as existing are historical in nature. Emerging factors refer to the potential impact of National Partnership programs implemented, such as Agile Scrum. It is impossible for these factors to remain exclusively within the purview of this section; indeed, they will be referred to again in various forms during the discussion of the remaining questions.

In my previous discussion, I referred to Bolman and Deal's (2017) view of organisations, either 'being culture' or 'having culture'. Schein (1990) views organisational cultures as comprising factors that refer to shared patterns of basic assumptions that are developed and acquired by members over time. Hoogervorst, Flier and Koopman (2004) refer to shared values as meanings as well as the creation of a social integration and patterns of values, suggesting that they provide guidance in behaviour that reduces distance between that which is personal and an organisation's mission.

Therefore, referencing Bolman and Deal (2017) above, organisations 'have' and 'are' cultures. In my view, this is an important point for this research. Bolman and Deal use their Frames to view the world, they advocate reframing to broaden that view providing a much wider perspective of the field; hence, an organisation must be viewed to be and have its own culture. If this is not the case, then the potential for change becomes very difficult. Indeed, entrenched cultures become very difficult to shift. Both the Alpha and Beta schools in many ways faced their own entrenched cultures that had become toxic and had threatened their very existence.

Within the context of this discussion, it is well worth noting Jerald's (2006, p. 1) comment:

Sociologists recognised the importance of school culture as early as the 1930s ... it wasn't until the late 1970s that educational research began to draw direct links between quality of a school's climate and its educational outcomes.

The concept of culture or in this instance, school culture is, in many ways intangible. There is an old saying "*fish would be the last creatures to discover water*" (Klackholn, 1949 cited in Finnan, 2000, p. 25). Water is ubiquitous to the fish just as culture may be for us; it is all around us yet it is intangible. School culture surrounds our schools, enveloping teachers, staff and students, influencing behaviours and attitudes.

It is fair to suggest that both the Alpha and Beta schools, like fish in water, lived in a cultural bubble that influenced decisions, values and attitudes. Certainly, and initially, through the lived experiences of the participants, this was the case.

5.2.1 Principal leadership

Both schools at various times within their journeys had experienced existential threats to their very existence (both for very different reasons as explained in Chapter 1 and in Analysis Chapters). One of the driving factors of change was the perceived necessity to retreat from imminent closure of the schools. The appointment of the current two principals drew a line in the sand. Each provided a vision and a leadership style that led to a galvanisation of their schools. They also developed and co-developed with their communities' visions of their schools that were enduring.

5.2.1a Alpha School Principal

Caldwell and Spinks (2013, p. 13) describes self-transforming schools as having the “... *capacity to achieve significant and sustained change*”. When the Alpha Principal was appointed, he was not aware of the significant issues and potential imminent closure of the school. Indeed, unbeknown to the Principal, the School Board was under the impression that he had been appointed to wind the business down and close the school. In reference to my journal notes (10 March 2013), I distinctly remember the pain on his face as he recounted this period of great difficulty. Paraphrasing the conversation from my notes, he recounted the challenges he was experiencing. He referred to the sacrifices he and his wife and small children had made in accepting this role. He and his family had relocated from another Australian state and given up “*a beautiful home and a great job ... only to come to what was then the ‘boondocks of Melbourne’, a hell hole ...*” (AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview 2016). He also described a conversation he had with his wife at the time in which she was horrified that he had decided to accept the

challenge of the new role. He, however, sincerely felt that this next step was a calling from God and it was His will for him to be there. “... and God was right, look at how far we have come, waiting lists and two campuses” (AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview, 2016).

Having accepted the role, AlphaSchoolPrin set about the task of rebuilding; hence, creating the merging factors leading to cultural transformation. During our interview he reminded me that he was the fifth principal of the school. He commented:

There was one for a year. The second was for three years, the third was for three years, and the fourth was another one year and then myself, this is 21 (that is, his 21st year as Principal of the school) (AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview, 2016).

As he discussed the changes that occurred and his input, he was quite modest, speaking in general of the team of people he had developed over time and the changes that he had noticed. In so doing he did not strictly articulate a vision for change, it was in his words, “*an organic evolution ... I just knew that things had to change.* [He continued] “... *when I started, the school had a total of six teachers and now we have a staff of 102 and are a dual campus school*” (AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview 2016).

AlphaSchoolPrin referred to the societal and parent attitudes that had changed, which had led to, in his view, an abdication of parental duty. His observation was that the diminished parental responsibility was now placing this aspect of a child’s life firmly and solely in the hands of the school. He partly attributed this to the changing nature of the workplaces and the changing nature in the concept of family.

The fragmentation of society that has occurred with no longer the family unit as held with quite the same level of respect as used to be ... [He continued] ... so I don't think that people are aware that the dismantling of the fundamental basis of all societies has been the family and the dismantling of that will perhaps have some unforeseen, unexpected impacts (AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview 2016).

AlphaSchoolPrin saw this as a condition that was initially entrenched with the culture of the school that he inherited, an existing condition that initially was a block to cultural change and evolution of the school. Therefore, in this sense, one of the greatest challenges was to build wellbeing structures that reflected the needs of the school community and were in line with the Christian mission and vision of the school. AlphaSchoolPrin (Interview, 2016) explained:

So, we see more and more now, students with social, emotional needs ... where no longer it's just the 3 R's ... now it's about teaching students respect, resilience and responsibility and too often that's because they haven't learned it in the first school, that is, the school of home.

This aspect of his change agenda was crucial. He wanted his students to feel safe and be known and loved “... otherwise, how can they learn?” (AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview, 2016).

Therefore, his agenda had concurrent aspects with a focus on building student wellbeing structures and programs on the one hand while building teacher capacity and pedagogy on the other. The school continued to grow, developing structures, processes and policies to match, including leadership structures and agendas to meet the ever-growing needs of the growth of the school. An emerging and current factor of the transformation and change was a stable and

dedicated Principal (Nehez & Blossing, 2020) committed to the development of his school and honouring the “*social contract I signed with the community*” (AlphaSchoolPrin, Interview 2016).

5.2.1b *Beta School Principal*

The Alpha Principal referred to the ‘social contract’ that he metaphorically signed with his school community. There are many implications to this concept; that is, implications and aspects that refer to honesty, integrity and trust. Once these aspects of the ‘social contract’ are broken or damaged, it can be most difficult to repair. The BetaSchoolPrin entered her stage, where the actors had not played their parts (Bolman & Deal, 2017), and toxic divisive politics prevailed. The social contract that Alpha Principal referred to needed deep repair within the context of Beta School.

In discussing this ‘entrance’ BetaSchoolPrin recalled:

I remember so well. I spoke to the staff and I asked them to voice, to list to brainstorm their concerns ... what needed to be changed. Initially, there was nothing but deafening silence. This was my starting point, trust was so hard to come by ... (BetaSchoolPrin Interview, 2016).

Despite BetaSchoolPrin’s concerns, over time she was able to earn their trust through her inclusive leadership style, quickly grasping the issues at hand, as well as taking risks.

BetaSchoolPrin’s colleagues were very complimentary and constantly praised her leadership, her openness and her willingness to listen and to have the courage to make appropriate changes. In reference to her faith she stated, “*I am called by Jesus to be all these things*”

(Interview, 2016). Beta School participants referred to her concept of servant leadership as a way to lead, either their own or that of others (refer to Introduction and Analysis Chapters). This proved to be a significant emerging factor in the development of cultural change in the school. BetaSchoolVPC (Interview, 2016) stated that his principal was the best example of what a servant leader was like “... *leadership is easy here, she has such vision, wisdom and is always so humble.*” This is very much in line with Greenleaf’s (1977) concept that leaders should be servants first.

Cultural change certainly did not occur overnight and it was made more difficult, according to the participants, by previous administrations. BetaSchoolVPC described the “... *rotating door ... of Principals over those years before BetaSchoolPrin arrived*” (Interview, 2016). In his view, there was initially a lack of leadership experience and expertise. He commented that the former Principal, and religious school leader, was very reluctant to engage with parents. He indicated that the Principal insisted on not attending the school one day per week, preferring to “... *do administrative work at home ...*” (Interview, 2016). Hence, BetaSchoolVPC, believed his school was lacking specific leadership in this area of responsibility with regard to guiding and setting a vision and values. Deal and Peterson (2016) highlight the importance of principal leadership in setting the vision, determining values and strengthening school culture.

I observed through the many meetings I attended with BetaSchoolPrin that she exuded a warm and empathic nature, which was also underpinned by her ability to listen actively, reflect and enact decisions based on the discussions and observations. This was not so much democratic leadership as inclusive leadership. BetaSchoolPrin conveyed to her staff and others who met

her that she was a person who valued you; that is, when engaged in conversation, “*one felt valued,*” (BetaSchoolCoord, Interview, 2016). BetaSchoolPrin enacted and created positive cultural change, initially with seismic shifts in school populations, parents, students and staff. The re-aligning of the school to its foundational purpose as a Christian school offered a secular curriculum underpinned by the religious values of the Christian denomination it belonged to. The school’s website cited its religious affiliation that referred specifically to love, hope, compassion and leadership ... with specific references to developing personal relationships with God (Beta School Website, 2021).

AlphaSchoolPrin and BetaSchoolPrin dealt with inherited conditions in their schools upon appointment and within the context of their leadership. They changed the pre-existing conditions and began a new history, which potentially allowed for emerging factors that later influenced emerging cultural transformation and evolution. This cultural shift in thinking and attitude opened the door for such programs as discussed below to have traction and be successfully implemented.

5.2.2 Independent Schools Victoria and the Smarter Schools National Partnerships Programs

The nature of Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) and its purpose and services have been described at length earlier (Introduction Chapter), as has the Smarter Schools National Partnerships Program (SSNPP). It is clear, through personal observation and through my work at the time as a Principal Advisor (SSNPP), that both the ISV programs and services, including the SSNPP, had a significant effect on the cultural transformation of the case study schools, both emerging and existing. This view was supported by the participants as they related to the

relationship that existed with ISV, which deepened further during the years of the SSNPP. The initial relationships that existed between each case study school and ISV was that of membership and service provision, a client relationship where the schools as members were served as clients.

AlphaSchoolPrin alluded to the evolution of the 'professionalisation' of their professional development journey during the years when the school was growing and emerging from the danger of closure.

We went through a number of stages over the years where we were upping the ante ... ISV, initially through their PDPs [professional development programs], and through the consultants they gave us access to, working with us to consolidate and improve upon the work that we had already begun, and helped us to establish some very fertile ground. It was incredibly fortuitous that these timelines coincided with the SSNPP Program in which they did (Interview, 2016).

Without listing all the programs, certainly in the time of the SSNPP, both schools were able to access and engage in programs such as:

- Ansty and Bull's Multi Literacy Program (AlphaSchool)
- Consultants (AlphaSchool and BetaSchool)
- Professional Learning Communities at Work (Alpha and Beta)
- Cognitive Coaching (AlphaSchool and BetaSchool)
- APQC (AlphaSchool and BetaSchool)
- The Agile Scrum Process (AlphaSchool and BetaSchool)

- Various PDPs (AlphaSchool and BetaSchool)

This list, based on my observations and work as well as participant feedback, over time facilitated the building of professional capacity of both leaders and teachers within the school. These educators opened up learnings that, prior to the SSNPP, were not available; they set up the important structures that led to greater collaboration and a development of professional learning agendas and strategies, now based on the understood needs of the school.

AlphaSchoolSan referred to the initiation of real and sustained contact with ISV by the then newly appointed AlphaSchoolVPRae, who had had experience in working with ISV in a previous member school. This was a revelation (see Analysis Chapter) because the school was deliberately isolated from the broader educational community as well as to a lesser extent, its own sister schools, with cultural-religious reasons being at the core of this isolation. Therefore, exposure to ISV and later, SSNPP in particular, opened the school to contemporary educational thought, best practice and next practice, through their professional learning programs. This had a profound influence on the learning culture of the school, in the 'staff room', which then translated to pedagogic cultural shifts in the classroom. As a result, introverted, inward looking and 'stuck' (Rosenholtz, 1989) practices within this school began to recede, giving way to a movement leading to a more inclusive culture of learning. This shift in thinking, according to AlphaSchoolSan began early in 2008 and has continued and further developed since. Troen and Boles (2012) refer to the impact that ongoing professional learning has on the development of a culture that reinforces cooperation among colleagues, leading to the development of authentic collaboration.

As a participant observer, I would concur with this shift and in fact, I witnessed first-hand some of the changes that AlphaSchoolSan highlighted. Not only had a culture of learning become embedded, a culture of research and scholarship also emerged. The willingness of the Alpha Senior Leadership team, for example, with the support of staff, maintained and expanded on the implementation of the Ansty and Bull Multiliteracies program.

In many respects the Beta School also benefitted from the involvement of the ISV programs including the SSNPP. However, their outlook was not as cloistered as that of the Alpha School. Religious affiliation was not a barrier to participation in ‘outside’ programs. Far from it, and from that perspective, the Beta School was quite progressive. Indeed, in the case of both schools, their involvement and deepening involvement with ISV, particularly through the SSNPP, brought the potential to participate in professional learning programs. Indeed, it strengthened the school’s capacity to access funding opportunities and capital grants for school improvement and infrastructure development via ISV in partnership with both state and federal governments. The SSNPP alone enabled the release of funds to support staff in attending professional learning locally, nationally and internationally, creating teams of researchers, coaches and teacher leaders “... so that this concept of lifelong learners became a reality here “ (BetaSchoolPrin, Interview, 2016).

5.2.3 Emerging culture of collaboration

It is instructive that both case study schools agreed to sign up to the SSNPP, upon invitation from ISV, a testament to their desire to continue along the path of school improvement. As discussed in the Introductory Chapter, these schools were identified within the ‘Literacy-

Numeracy' Program. Effectively, they were identified and subsequently invited to be a part of this program because their NAPLAN scores fell within a certain threshold, a trigger for invitation. Of course, this fact was not made explicit and indeed, the promise of ongoing funding and support over the life of the program was also a very strong influence on their decision to accept this invitation. To be clear, at the time of joining, these *were not failing schools*. In fact, both schools were experiencing student population growth at this time.

There needed to be a willingness by the principals of the schools and their Senior Leadership Teams, to not only cooperate and embrace the program, but to also face perhaps some inconvenient truths. As the Principal Advisor to the allocated schools in the program, introductions and conversations were always fascinating. As Principal Advisor, working with schools that had accepted the invitation to join the program (42 in all), I focused introductions on explaining the nature of the program, building relationships and demystifying the idea of a 'blank cheque'.

From my perspective, there were principals who, in the early stages of the program were focused on the funds available. In contrast, there were those who had bought into the idea of further developing their school improvement action plans. These latter schools (including both the Alpha and Beta schools) had access to potential boosts in funding, and thus increased access to the SSNPP program. It was clear from discussions and experience in working with Principals and SLTs of the Alpha and Beta Schools that great progress had been made to this point (joining the SSNPP). However, there still existed a form of *teacher balkanisation* that was blocking progress and stifling collaboration.

Balkanisation as a term was derived from the fall of the Ottoman Empire where regions under the former empire were subdivided into States by the victorious World War One powers. It refers to this fragmentation of a larger region into smaller states, often due to cultural, religious and political factors, where states are either hostile to each other or at least unfriendly and uncooperative. Where schools are concerned, this concept of balkanisation of school cultures refers to negative effects when teachers are disconnected from each other, working in silos, deliberately isolating themselves from their peers and/or where teachers are isolated and are unable or unwilling to work at a whole-school level (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Given the histories of the case study schools, it is not surprising that, certainly at the beginning of the SSNPP, some balkanisation existed and continued to exist, albeit to a lesser degree. The Alpha School, over the 21 years of the current principal's tenure, had grown to be a multi-campus school. Most of the school's growth occurred in the five years leading up to and including the SNNPP. For example, in the Alpha secondary school, balkanisation was evident, where teachers were individual subject leads with their own specialisations. This fact was acknowledged by AlphaSchoolSan (documented in Chapter 4).

Balkanisation was also evident in the Beta School prior to and into the tenure of the current Principal where animosity as well as politico-religious lines were evident, divisive and destructive. The failure of the current Principal's predecessor to market the school's true underpinning nature and philosophy has been documented. BetaSchoolVPChris recalled that the former Principal was promoting the school as non-denominational when, in fact it was bound to the Church that helped found the school. However, the perpetuation of the idea that

the school was non-denominational was not valid. The school was never such an entity. It was always a Christian school that espoused a Christian ethos.

Both schools invested in the creation of collaborative structures that were designed to bring the school staff together, in effect 'de-balkanising'. They also focused on supporting cultural transformation using collaborative practices to enhance student learning, curriculum development and continuous pedagogic improvement.

5.2.4 Summary

In examining the conditions existing or emerging that may have supported cultural transformation and evolution in the case study schools, it is worth noting that the principals and leaders of the case study schools understood their roles in building trust in the community and creating structures and events in the schools that helped either to heal (BetaSchool) or bring together (Alpha School). The principals empowered others with their trust and support and fostered a sense of inclusiveness.

The Smarter Schools National Partnerships Program provided funding and resources in the guise of Senior Advisors and coaches as well as programs to help facilitate collaborative school practices and cultures. The SSNPP created the conditions for a re-culturing experience, that enabled teachers to develop an understanding of the power of distributing leadership and authority beyond those in recognised leadership roles. This experience also presented the positive effects of "*breaking down the barriers of the closed classroom*" (AlphaSchoolASS, Interview, 2016) and, in doing so, recognised the importance and influential power of the

teacher-leader. The influence and power of the Agile Process was in the developing concept of Agile Thinking, and in creating highly efficient and collaborative teams.

5.3 Sub-question 2: Do faith and religion influence the development of leadership? If so, how and in what ways?

AlphaSchoolSan and BetaSchoolVPK firmly indicated their unswerving belief in a 'creator God' and fully accepted their beliefs in the 'Will of God'. Thus, developing a personal and trusting relationship with Him, recognising 'God given' gifts in self and others. They felt a duty to develop and use these gifts in self and others. These sentiments were very strong throughout all discussions, perhaps not surprisingly. Therefore, the idea of influence has certainly been established and further discussion will explore the extent to which this influence of faith impacted on the development of teacher leadership and the participants' personal leadership development.

In describing the Symbolic Frame, Bolman and Deal (2017, p. 242) state: "*Symbols carry powerful intellectual and emotional messages, they speak to the heart and soul ... myth and symbols help humans make sense of the chaotic, ambiguous world they live in. Meaning is not given to us, we create it.*" These are powerful tools for us all to use to make sense of our world; however, for a devout believer in Judaism, Islam or, in this context, Christianity, it is about a fervent belief so great that it literally charts courses and life's actions

5.3.1 Faith and religion

A very clear finding of the research was the evident and profound influence that religion and faith had, and continues to have, on guiding the participants' thinking and actions (both

teachers and the principals). They all literally placed their lives and their futures in a deep unquestioning faith, in their Christian God incarnate through the human embodiment of God, Jesus Christ. Indeed, St. Augustine would describe this lived experience and connection with God through the Holy Spirit; that is, the 'Holy Trinity' (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit), as the great mystery of faith.

To further understand this in the context of the two case study schools, and the beliefs held by the participants, St. Augustine wrote this famous poetic prayer to the Holy Spirit:

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, That my thoughts may be holy,

Act on me, O Holy Spirit, That my work may be holy ...

This prayer first appears in Augustine's famous autobiography, *Confessions*, where he tells his story of his personal struggle to find God. He describes the actions of man (humankind) as being 'God Breathed', through the action of the Holy Spirit, breathed by the Breath of God ... hence, the line in the poem ... *Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit ...*

So profound is this belief in devout Christians, such as the participants (see previous discourse in Chapter 4), that possibly the episode below bridges a gap between explanation and understanding, the fervent belief in God's Will, and acting on this God's Will by all of the participants in this case study and in my view poignantly explained by AlphaSchoolSan and AlphaSchoolBron in particular.

Paraphrasing Knox (2016), he describes a profound event in the life of Augustine that is said to have changed his life, a life that was, reportedly, hedonistic, full of anger and pagan. As he

struggles with his faith and as told in his works, *Confessions*, he describes a profound metaphysical event. In a villa garden near his home, he is said to have heard the voice of a child telling him to ... *Tolle lege, tolle lege* ... meaning, take up and read, take up and read. In heeding the voice, Augustine takes up a bible that so happens to be nearby, randomly opens it and comes across a passage from the *Epistles of the Romans*, stating: “*Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provisions for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof*” (Romans 13:3). This event, this apparent metaphysical event, is purported to have changed Augustine’s life, as he accepted this not only as the voice of God, speaking to him by and through the Holy Spirit, but as a clear command from God to submit to his will and to His Truth.

With St Augustine’s epiphany in mind, let us briefly revisit AlphaSchoolSan: “*What brought me to teaching was God’s plan ... God had a plan for me ... but even so, I had no plan for leadership ... I believe that was His plan too*” Further, she states: “*I’ve tried to listen to the voice of in my faith relationship to Him to know ... ‘What do you want me to be? Where is my place now? What purpose do I have here?’*” (Interview, 2016).

AlphaSchoolBron also commented: “*After separation and divorce, I felt this voice (GOD) ... In speaking to him (the pastor), ‘I don’t know why I am here, I don’t know what skills I have, this is what I have done’.* [She continued] ... *But I feel as though this is what God is wanting me to do, and this is how I returned to teaching*” (Interview, 2016).

Powerful! Specific, felt, *believed*, God breathed and ... actioned. Like St Augustine, the participants expressed their belief in the profound influence on them of Faith and Religion.

Indeed, some of the participants clearly stated that they were called to be leaders, (AlphaSchoolSan and AlphaSchoolBron), interview 2016), and due to their belief in faith, God's will and calling, they answered. It would be tempting to interpret this response as being unquestioned; yet, through prayer and the relationship developed (AlphaSchoolSan, AlphaSchoolVPRae, BetaSchoolVPC and BetaSchoolVPK), many would resolve any questions, uncertainties and fears through this 'personal conversation with God' (AlphaSchoolSan, Interview 2016).

AlphaSchoolVPRae commented: *"... you're here as a pure purpose of God ... I think that's a positive thing,"* In a moment of further reflection and expression of doubts in regard to the 'forgiving' nature of her faith, she continued: *"... the Christian component helps ... it helps you to love people like God loves you ... to love and care for people ... to such depths to even their annoyances."* (Interview, 2016).

"In Christ, a leader, a mentor, a model of 'perfection' exists" (BetaSchoolPrin). The concepts of love, gift and service underpin the discussions with the participants. Christ as a model influences the type of leader they all aspire to be. A leader that is compassionate (AlphaSchoolPrin), a leader that is inclusive of all (AlphaSchoolNan), a leader that believes in redemption of others (AlphaSchoolVPRae) and a leader that believes in the concept of servant leadership.

Lavery (2012) cites Sergiovanni (1993) where he expresses cynicism when he opines that, paraphrasing, an understanding does not exist in regard to what is the distinction between an effective and a non-effective leader. Lavery (2012) explains that Sergiovanni felt that there

existed an over emphasis on “*bureaucratic, psychological and technical-rational authority*” (p. 36). Further, Lavery argues that to mitigate against this, leadership should be viewed through *the ... lenses of service and spirituality* (p. 36).

Implicit in the discussion and articulated by BetaSchoolVPChris and BetaSchoolCoord is the concept of discipleship. BetaSchoolVPChris specifically refers to this as he describes Christ’s three-and-a-half-year ministry, which of course culminated in his crucifixion and, according to Christian belief, resurrection and eventual ascension to heaven. Paraphrasing BetaSchoolVPChris, He (Jesus), gathered twelve ordinary men around him, disciples and commanded them to love and to serve ...

Well, look at what Jesus did with his disciples, so the three and a half years they got to spend with him ... you’re going to go out to do greater things ... I see that as part of my role actually, develop people (BetaSchoolVPC, Interview 2016).

This notion is also supported by BetaSchoolCoord: “*From a Biblical perspective ... He (Jesus), came to help people, He came to serve people, He didn’t come to be served by people ... this example to us, also helps to bring out potential in other teachers*” (Interview, 2016).

These concepts are beautifully summed up by AlphaSchoolPrin: “*By the fruit you shall know them, and I would like to think that our leadership is one that is perhaps, just a little more complex, refined and has the extra element to it that is perhaps recognised and appreciated by those also in it*” (Interview, 2016).

Influence in the context of Faith and Religion may also have negative connotations. If it is 'God's Will' then 'Gifts and Talents' *must* be used as this is the command, and then there may be a lack of flexibility and open-mindedness. It was also a concept that emerged with the participants. AlphaSchool ASS discussed the initial closed nature of the (Christian Church affiliated) system. Opening was a real revelation and happened gradually and with some degree of anxiety. Further, this potentially closed mindset may manifest itself and influence decision making, undercutting potential differing points of view.

In a recollection from my journal (2015), paraphrasing a conversation I had with the AlphaSchoolVPRae and others during a planning meeting, concern was raised regarding the potential extra work required and expected of teachers due to the growing number of innovations and programs initiated through the SSNPP. Before I could provide a reassuring statement, AlphaSchoolVPRae was unequivocal in her response. It was difficult to contradict her, and her statement managed to fully shut down any further discussion. She stated, paraphrasing, that the SSNPP program was a gift from God and that staff were to *fully accept this gift and accept that it was God's will. A commandment from God, (my emphasis)*. There was really nothing more to be said (Interview, 2016).

Other ways in which religious dogma may have an influence as a potential blocker to leadership and indeed, to leaders, was clearly expressed by AlphaSchoolMar.

Because we are a (Christian-aligned) school system, I think, to have a titled position, you have to be a member of the Church ... sometimes you see people who are wonderful practising Christians ... would be perfect for the role, but simply as they are

not acknowledged members of the Church, they won't get the role ... like DP or Head
(Interview, 2016).

This type of thinking and form of discrimination certainly limits the talent pool, diminishes open-mindedness and eventually undermines the system and the school. On the other hand, Beta School, while also belonging to a particular Christian Association and Church, has a more open mind. While they *"prefer Christians ... practising Christians even better"* (BetaSchoolPrin, Interview, 2016), as long as staff understand and support the Christian ethos and Mission of the school, they will be welcome. *"However, we find that some self-select ... they either leave or simply don't apply for jobs with us as we make it very clear who we are, we learned that mistake and won't again repeat it"* (BetaSchoolVPChris, Interview, 2016).

5.3.2 Summary

The above discourse demonstrates that Faith and Religion had a profound effect on leadership, leadership style and leadership development in both the case study schools. Most participants agreed that this influence is mainly positive, God inspired, if not given, and a source of strength and solace as they all attempt to perform their roles to the best of their abilities. Some do, however, also recognise the potential negative influences that such strict adherence to faith and belief may create. Nonetheless, they accept this as a reality of life, both professional and personal.

Leadership is bound to the concept of service; hence, the recognition that participants see themselves as servant leaders in the image of Christ. Allied to this concept, leadership is

distributed faith and religion, encouraging leaders to see the gifts and talents that their peers possess and providing opportunities for such gifts and talents to come to the fore.

5.4 Sub-question 3: In what ways, if any, has the Agile Scrum process influenced cultural transformation and encouraged teacher leadership?

5.4.1 Agile Scrum

The Agile Scrum process was described in detail in previous chapters (Introduction, Literature Review, Analysis Chapter). The Agile process was primarily developed to provide software developers with a method for on-time and accurate delivery of projects and products.

The process was also developed to ensure that collaboration was key and that a flat collaborative structure was developed, as opposed to the usual hierarchical structures that typically existed or indeed exist. Hence, collaboration, communication and understanding became key features of Agile Scrum-specific teams. Thus, while Agile as a process sits well within the Structural Frame, it also sits within the Human, Political and Symbolic frames.

Essentially, Agile was created for people to humanise the workplace, giving power of development and decision-making to the people who were at the heart of the development.

The introduction of Agile to the case study schools was a part of the many suites of programs and initiatives introduced during the time that the schools participated in the SSNPP. Indeed, originally (see Introduction), it was introduced to help plan for and deliver the new, at the time, Australian Curriculum. It focused on the structural delivery process, that emphasised maximum participation by relevant teachers (refer to Introduction for detailed description).

Most participants (as explored in Chapter 4) in this case study referred to the Agile process and discussed its influence and indeed, its sustainability. In many cases, their understanding was now embedded within the context of planning either personal or team projects and processes, and therefore had influenced cultural change. AlphaSchoolSan recognised that Agile's foundational structure enabled 'regular' teachers to step up into leadership roles according to their expertise within a team or project.

In this sense, Agile thinking had been embedded into the culture of both schools.

AlphaSchoolSan referred to the fact that "*We don't call it Agile*" (Interview, 2016). Regularly, participants referred to Agile thinking and actions that highlighted the collaborative nature of the process and its capacity to enable teacher-leaders to emerge and become critical components of the process and decision-making. Therefore, while Agile Scrum was not regularly identified by name in the participant interviews as a process or as thinking per se, participant reflections revealed that an embedded form of Agile thinking and influence led to the strengthening of both schools' collaborative structures and practices. This evolving collaboration led to teachers being given the opportunity to often lead.

AlphaSchoolSan referred to this aspect of Agile when she asserted that "*while we don't say, let's plan the next sprint, what we do are little sprints and then reflect*. [Further she continued] *... they've done a lot over the last 12 months ... so that really is the Agile process*" (Interview, 2016).

In contrast, BetaSchoolVPC was more specific in the use of the process when he described "*The Agile Process during the strategic planning, and what we did ... broke it all down into*

manageable chunks and made our goals easier to achieve” (Interview, 2016). AlphaSchoolBron referred to the use of the process for her own personal planning: “I think the Agile Scrum, putting it all down on paper what happens in my head ... I am very analytical and in program management you had to be analytical” (Interview, 2016).

Therefore, as a process, Agile has been confirmed by participants as a vehicle to further develop leadership capacity and agency. BetaSchoolVPRae supported this when she referred to growing teachers as professionals: *“I want them to grow,”* [she stated, as she clearly articulated the Agile process as the vehicle] ... *“based on Agile Scrum”* (Interview, 2016).

Building leadership capacity, distributing leadership and strengthening collaboration through the creation of highly effective teams, created: ‘layers of leadership’. This further enhanced the capacity of teachers to participate in the planning and decision-making processes and increased the value of ‘teacher voice’ (BetaSchoolVPC, Interview, 2016). Strongly agreeing, BetaSchoolVPC opines: *“Agile process ... was one of the most significant programs we implemented”* (Interview, 2016).

The Agile Process (Agile Business Consortium, 2021) created the opportunities for distributed leadership through its highly collaborative processes (as discussed in Chapter 2). Supporting this interpretation, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) refer to the concept of Professional Capital, where the ‘investment’ is in Human and Social Capital. Indeed, to create Human Capital, they commented: *“Capital has to be circulated and shared. Groups, teams, and communities are far more powerful than individuals when it comes to developing human capital”* (p. 3). Similarly,

Agile also initiates Social Capital (Lyons et al, 2017) as it relies on teams created with a focus on collaboration and leadership underpinned by service.

AlphaSchoolBron recalled that teams were created across the school, thus providing that depth of experience and capacity for “... *others to step up ... with our guidance*” (Interview, 2016).

AlphaSchoolMar delved a little deeper as she described the make-up of teams that included: “... *student representatives, parent representatives, staff, primary and secondary and admin*”

(Interview, 2016). This was a cross-section of the whole school community, all stakeholders: thus, diffusing collaboration across the school. “*We are still doing this as we continue to write curriculum and other whole school projects*” (Interview, 2016).

In summary and to quote from AlphaSchoolPrin who, in a moment of reflection acknowledged and articulated the following:

You will notice that I did not take a lead role. [Pausing, then] ... I also learned that, as did many of my leaders, if you feel comfortable in your space and place, you are not threatened by other people having leadership. [Further, he goes on] In Fact, it is actually a good thing, so here, we have opportunities for other people ... I think that was the most significant thing that we have put into place here (Interview, 2016).

The Agile Scrum process was instrumental in engaging with the existing conditions that led to the development of a strong collaborative culture. The very nature of Agile is its design to flatten leadership and allow for it to be distributed and, importantly, shared with teacher leaders, who within the process were recognised as such; this feature was exploited by the leaders of both Alpha and Beta school. Importantly, these teachers also began to accept this

concept of teacher as leader. Teacher leaders, distributed leadership, shared leadership, and collaboration are all key aspects of servant leadership. Teachers in these roles *served first*, (Greenfield, 1977). They engaged in extra duties, not for any form of gain, simply to serve; hence, this form of leadership is not transactional, it is *authentic* (Duignan & Cannon, 2011).

5.5 Central question: Having participated in the Agile Scrum process, what does culture and leadership look like in two faith-based Christian schools?

The exploration of the sub-questions has inexorably led to the defining central question and conclusions inherent within it. The Agile Scrum Process was one of several programs that were initiated through the SSNPP. However, its scope and direction over time (over twelve months as the Australian Curriculum was rolled out), embedded several practices within other areas of project delivery and evaluation of programs. These practices helped to complement collaborative practices, recognition of teachers as leaders and as contributing participants.

While a collaborative culture certainly emerged over time, particularly with the leadership of Alpha and Beta Principals, the Agile Scrum process provided a framework to support initiatives already in place, such as the professional learning communities. The Alpha and Beta Schools have undergone transformation that has created school cultures that are clearly faith based, inclusive and collaborative as well as cultures where trust in executive leadership has been strengthened. Further, and certainly in the case of Alpha School, this trust has been extended to the wider educational community to whom, by choice, Alpha school had initially remained isolated and closed. This new openness has created many opportunities for growth of the school, the staff and importantly, the principal's executive leadership.

Beta School has also re-established trust, moving away from a toxic and balkanised environment, partly created from an initial 'religious cancel culture'. The current Principal's openness and acceptance of the school's historic origins and religious heritage had initially created a 'turbulence' of its own. Indeed, those who were not accepting of this 'new normal', including families and staff, self-selected and left. This paved the way for like-minded families and staff who supported the ethos and religious culture of the school to join and participate in its life as a community.

Leadership within both schools is still hierarchical in nature; however, in the present it is far more collaborative in nature. Both schools demonstrated that leadership is not simply borne by those appointed and is, in fact, shared and distributed in nature, with 'middle level leadership' resembling a flatter and broadened base, with connectedness and collaboration, trust and voice evident. Indeed, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) opine: "*Collaborative cultures don't railroad other people's agendas ... [have] underlying trust, respect*" (p. 113).

Indeed, trust, voice and influence (Kanold, 2011) have shifted to those who are more intimately involved with those within the community who matter most – the students, thus being able to pass on viewpoints and be involved in decision making that immediately impacts on their practices. This redistribution of power has created a more purposeful and powerful base that, in fact, further empowers *the executive leaders*, who have the trust and support of their teacher colleagues and their constituent communities.

Leadership is also clearly faith-based with many references and examples to the concept of service. Servant Leadership is attributed to God, in the guise of His Son, Jesus Christ, who

through His ministry on earth provided the 'human' example of service and witness to what a servant leader is like.

Leadership is divine. Many of the participants spoke to a 'calling', to prayer and to listening to the will of God to maximise this calling and to take full advantage of the 'gifts and talents' that God has bestowed upon them. Importantly, they also recognise the same in others and provide them with the opportunities to also serve (through God), the school community and the community at large.

Connected to all these factors, the Agile Scrum Method has by its introduction affected a shift in strategic thinking; that is, a shift to Agile thinking. While the process of Agile may not be strictly applied in the present circumstances, its essence in thought and actions has been embedded within the corporate psyche of the two schools. It is a part of the thinking culture. This has been supported by the strengthening of collaborative processes such as the further development of professional learning communities. In these communities, teacher-leader cohorts are playing a critically important role in leading and actively contributing to the delivery of each school's respective improvement plans.

I plan to present in the following final chapter, Recommendations and Future Research, a set of recommendations for teachers, principals and policymakers to consider regarding policy and process design related to embedding a culture of leadership in schools. I will also explore strengths of the study as well as its limitations, noting that while the study itself and the conclusions determined may simply be pointers for students of Educational Leadership to ponder, and perhaps, further explore within the reality of their own contexts.

Chapter 6 Recommendations, limitations, and future research

This research is, in part, born out of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships Program (SSNPP: 2007–2013), and initially aimed at determining the influence of a particular intervention, the Agile Process. The process, by its highly collaborative nature, iterative progressions and flat leadership structure had promise, through implementation, to potentially lay the foundations for teacher leadership development and collaborative cultural transformation.

Reflecting upon the analysis and the discussion chapters, it has become clear that the Agile Process did influence cultural transformation, teacher leadership and collaboration. However, the important realisation, and the first basis for recommendation, is that the ‘process’ or ‘a process’ is less important than the thinking that emerged and indeed, developed. As both case study schools developed stronger collaborative cultures, principals and senior leadership personnel developed greater understanding and appreciation of the links between collaboration and leadership opportunity development. Therefore, based on these conclusions, practitioners should consider the following recommendations.

6.1 Recommendations: Principals

Developing stronger collaborative school cultures in the two schools led to greater teacher and staff participation and voice, therefore adding to the collective corporate knowledge of each school as well as creating and developing professional capital. Principals should strive to initiate strategic implementation plans with a strong focus on developing or strengthening collaborative cultures within their schools that align with their school’s mission, vision and guiding statements.

While intent is admirable, a strategic process to enact the intent is paramount. Therefore, principals should consider a process such as Agile Scrum, which has been demonstrated to be a vehicle for the on-time delivery of projects, both large and small. Its iterative nature and built-in quality control also ensure accurate delivery outcomes. To this end, this study cited the example of curriculum development and alignment in both schools to new federal government standards. In addition, based on the premise that the process of Agile is underpinned by a highly collaborative framework, highly effective teams, a flat leadership structure and a leadership philosophy that is underscored by service, it is recommended that Principals should consider the benefits of the Agile Process as it pertains to its natural alignment to Professional Learning Communities ... the one complements the other.

An outcome of the study, aligned to the Agile Process, was the concept of an embedded Agile thinking culture. Several participants directly connected this link or alluded to it. It is recommended that Principals and policy makers should consider this concept of Agile thinking as it underpins a leader's capacity to have vision and envision, develop mission and imbue 'agility' within the development of 'living' strategic plans. Agile thinking enacts strategic thought.

6.1.1 Principals in religious settings

The principals of both case study schools demonstrated an understanding of the importance of faith and religion within the context of their respective school's mission, vision and guiding statements and the manner in which daily interactions are conducted. It is recommended that principals in faith-based schools should consider the impact of faith on daily operations and in

particular within the sphere of leadership development. Faith and religious belief played a major role in the lives of the two schools; yet, while aligning to the concept of servant leadership and in articulating and identifying as servant leaders, no formal induction or development of leaders within the context of servant leadership existed. While many examples were provided of servant leadership in action, a unified sense of what this may look like in the context of the respective schools was lacking. It is recommended that principals should consider developing professional leadership development plans for all staff concerning immersion in faith and spirituality and ultimately the development of a common mindset and approach.

6.2 Recommendations: teachers: collaboration

Teachers and leaders of both case study schools discussed the deepening collaboration opportunities that had emerged as a consequence of being a part of the SSNPP and, in particular, through the Agile Scrum Process. Increased influence, greater voice and capacity to develop as professionals were all aspects that became more prevalent in the two schools. Therefore, teachers in schools should seek ways to develop and strengthen collaboration and, where appropriate, de-balkanise practice; that is, allow for conditions to be created where isolated groups, with common interests not necessarily aligned to the school's mission and vision, will be discouraged. It is also recommended that teachers actively seek opportunities with school administrators and leaders to develop protected time for them to meet, review, plan, research and evaluate curriculum, assessment and pedagogic practice.

6.2.1 Teachers: leadership

By providing greater opportunity for collaboration and the opportunity to lead, whether explicitly or as a part of a team, teachers were able to recognise their own leadership potential and capacity. While not all teachers would necessarily aspire to middle-level or executive leadership, their contribution as teacher-leaders, scholars, researchers and exemplars is a vital aspect of a school's culture of learning and development. Teachers, in recognising and acknowledging their own gifts and talents as well as their professional growth, should not only seek opportunities to lead, but should also consolidate this aspect of their professional persona in their daily interactions with each other and all members of a school's community.

6.3 Limitations of the research

6.3.1 Number of schools

To ensure the viability of the research it had been my initial intention to involve five of the schools who had not only participated in the SSNPP but had also embraced the Agile Scrum process when it was first introduced. Of the fifteen schools within my cluster, five had decided to adopt the Agile Scrum process with my guidance. Having negotiated with these schools to participate in the research, two schools, the Case Study Schools, agreed to participate. In this sense, a limitation of the research is its scope and an ability to infer a wide range of potential applications of any findings.

6.3.2 Christian-based schools

All the original schools (the five) were faith-based. It is the nature of Independent Schools Victoria membership that this is the case, with the exception of Catholic Schools as they have their own systems, according to regions (see Chapter 1). Non-denominational schools are also members; however, it happened to be the case that all my fifteen schools were faith-based.

The faith composition of the schools was Christian, Jewish and Islamic. Having a multi-faith dimension as opposed to the mono-Christian faith that eventuated would certainly have had an interesting bearing on the Faith and Religion aspect of the study. The potential questions and comparisons (for example, of a cohort of multi-faith schools that may have arisen in regard to the implementation of Agile), the concept of teacher leadership, leadership distribution and the idea of servant leadership could have broadened this research. Nonetheless, despite this limitation, within the Christian faith there were differences in interpretation. Indeed, both the case study schools belong to two very different Christian philosophies and their differences were highlighted in the analysis and discussion of this research.

6.3.3 Number of participants

This aspect of the research is discussed in part within the Methods Chapter. Of the original twenty, ten decided to participate in the research study. Of the ten, the majority were in leadership roles with one new to leadership and three promoted into executive roles post the research phase; and one, stepping down from her executive role and accepting a transitional/mentor role for the two people who replaced her. Thus, the 'on the ground' perspectives of classroom teachers and their views were limited. Conversely, the participants

were able to view first-hand the positive outcomes of increased collaboration, in part due to the Agile Scrum process, and view the growing collaborative culture and the influence this had on their own roles and leadership capacity.

6.4 Future research

Studies have been conducted over the years that have focused on aspects of leadership, culture and collaboration in schools (refer to Chapter 2: Literature Review). However, this research is unique in that few if any have had as a central focus, the Agile Process as adapted and presented here. The Agile Scrum process was initially developed to streamline product development and software system architecture (refer to Chapters 1 and 2). The concept for potential condition development (Dutra, 2012) to enhance collaborative culture and therefore promote leadership, as far as I am aware, is unique.

Servant leadership, flat leadership, distributed leadership and highly collaborative teams underpin the philosophy of Agile Scrum. This research determined that conditions were created that enabled cultural transformation, leadership development and collaboration to emerge in the two Christian Schools, where the concept of service is bound through faith and belief. It would be of benefit to undertake further research using the Agile Scrum method and thought within the contexts of other faith-based schools and secular, non-denominational settings, to determine any comparability of research findings.

6.5 Final reflection

This research has the potential to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of educational needs and directions of schools that require or indeed, are contemplating similar interventions. The experiences and learning of the two case study schools in this research will hopefully inform others about educational cultural transformation and sustainability. As schools and school leaders attempt to move away from 'command and control' models (Duignan & Cannon, 2011) and embrace a shared leadership and a flatter organisational structure, further research into Agile Scrum may add to the knowledge base regarding potential sustainable practices that encourage teacher leadership and agency to emerge.

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Appendix 1

Participant Profile

1. Male ___ Female ___
2. Age range: 20–29
 30–39
 40–49
 50–59
 60+

Qualifications: (please include institution)

Profession/s prior to teaching, if any.

Number of years in the teaching profession

Have you taught in any other schools?

If yes, where and when?

How long have you been at this school?

Have you held leadership or positions of responsibility in the past?

If yes please list.

Do you have a current leadership role?

Appendix 2

Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about yourself, e.g. what brought you to teaching?
2. I see you are a (e.g. year level coordinator), tell me about your role?
3. In your view what are the strengths of the school?
4. How would you define leadership?
5. How is leadership expressed by those in the school with official titles and roles? How does this resonate with your view of leadership?
6. In the time you have been at the school, what changes have you observed? How did they come about? Who was responsible for the changes and, in what ways were staff involved?
7. What are the conditions emerging or existing that support cultural transformation as it may relate to leadership within the context of this school?
8. How does faith and religion influence, that is, support or hinder, the development of teacher leadership? Would you please explain how, and in what ways?
9. During the National Partnerships program, many processes were introduced to the school. Can you comment on any and can you suggest how they may have influenced cultural transformation and encouraged teacher leadership?
10. You may remember we discussed the construction of an organigram? Let me explain again how it works ... perhaps you can construct one as it may assist to provide further understanding in regards to leadership positions, actual and perceived, that may exist in the school.

Finally: Any concluding comments?

Appendix 3

CONSENT FORM

FOR PARTICIPANTS

INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a research project that examines the impact on the evolving leadership cultures in two Christian schools having participated in the Smarter Schools National Partnerships Program, with a particular focus on the Agile Scrum Method implemented in the schools as apart of the SSNP program.

Participation in this study will involve participating in one Interview session. The Interviews will take approximately 60 minutes. You will be invited to complete a brief demographic survey concerning your qualifications, years of service and roles and responsibilities (8 minutes)

All collected data will be kept and stored securely by the researchers and treated in a strictly confidential manner. Data from this study will be used in a student thesis, and may be presented at professional conferences, and/or published in professional journals. Individuals will not be identified in any of these presentations.

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I,

(name)

of

(address)

certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study 'Agile Scrum: A Case Study in organisational culture and emergent leadership in two Christian faith based schools', being conducted at Victoria University by Max Caruso. (Ed. D candidate) under the supervision of Associate Professor Bill Eckersley and Dr Mark Selkrig.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Max Caruso and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

- Semi – Structured Interviews
- Demographic survey

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that, my anonymity will be maintained, I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher

Principal Investigator

Student Researcher

Associate Professor Bill Eckersley

Max Caruso

bill.eckersley@vu.edu.au

Phone No: 9919 4959

massimiliano.caruso@live.vu.edu.au

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics & Biosafety Coordinator, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 phone (03) 9919 4148.

Appendix 4

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

You are invited to participate

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled 'Agile Scrum: A case study in organisational culture and emergent leadership in two Christian faith based schools'.

This project is being conducted by a student researcher Massimiliano (Max) Caruso as a part of the Doctor of Education Program at Victoria University under the supervision of Associate Professor Bill Eckersley and Dr Mark Selkrig from the School of Education

Project explanation

This proposed case study will examine the impact on the evolving leadership cultures in two schools following their participation in the Smarter Schools National Partnerships Program (SSNPP) an initiative of the former Federal Labor Government (2007-2013). The focus will be on the co-developed interventions and strategies designed to meet the aims and objectives of the SSNPP, with a particular focus on the implementation of an adapted version of an inclusive participatory approach titled the *Agile Scrum Method*. I am using an ethnographic approach to the study

attempting to look at social interactions, behaviours and perspectives that may occur in groups, teams and organisations

What will I be asked to do?

If you volunteer to participate in the study you will be asked to participate in an individual Interview. The Interview will be scheduled at a time that best suits you and will nominally last for 60 minutes.

In the Interview I would like to hear about your perspectives and experiences about practices that may or may not have enhanced leadership development and agency at your school.

You will also be asked to complete an organigram, a type of 'mind map' to assist in guiding thinking and providing understanding in regards to positions that exist within the organisation, how they are grouped, formed and how authority may flow within the organisation.

You will also be provided with the opportunity to review transcripts of Interviews in order to ascertain that your thoughts and discussions are truly reflected in the transcripts.

What will I gain from participating?

By participating, there is the potential that you may gain a deeper understanding of leadership, leadership structures and processes within your respective schools and an opportunity to further consider your own leadership journey. Further, your participation may result in a better understanding of the on-going development of organisational culture within your school .

How will the information I give be used?

Information you provide me in the Interviews may appear in my thesis, supporting or not, points and ideas that may have been raised in this research. I may also present aspects of my study at professional conferences and/or published in professional journals. Remember, the data you provide will remain confidential.

What are the potential risks of participating in this project?

The risks to you by associated with the research project are minimal. However, while the risks may be low level, you may experience some anxiety when responding to questions. Should your participation cause you any distress you can refuse to answer any questions that cause you anxiety, you can withdraw from the study, and / or if necessary contact: Dr Carolyn Deans (Clinical Psychologist) Carolyn.Deans@vu.edu.au

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without the need for explanation.

How will this project be conducted?

If you elect to participate in this study you will be given the opportunity to choose a time that is most suited to your schedule for the Interview to occur. Prior to the Interview you will be asked to complete an informed consent form. You will be asked to complete a brief survey related to individual demographic data.

After the Interview I will contact you again to provide you with a copy of the transcript of the Interview in order to ensure you are comfortable that the transcript is a true and accurate reflection of what transpired.

Who is conducting the study?

Principal Investigator	Associate Investigator	Student Researcher
Associate Professor Bill Eckersley	Dr Mark Selkrig	Max Caruso
College of Education Victoria University	College of Education Victoria University	College of Education Victoria University
Phone No: 9919 4959 bill.eckersley@vu.edu.au	Phone No: 9919 2979 mark.selkrig@vu.edu.au	massimiliano.caruso@live.vu.edu.au

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Principal Researcher listed above.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics and Biosafety Coordinator, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 phone (03) 9919 4148.