

**Enhancing Positive Relationships for
Effective Leadership in Maltese Schools**

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for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in The School of Education**

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Statement of Authenticity

I, the undersigned, do hereby declare that this thesis entitled ‘Enhancing Positive Relationships for Effective Leadership in Maltese Schools’ is my original work and I am the sole author. I do further confirm that this work has not been submitted in part or full for the award of any other degree of this or any other university.

David DEBONO

Abstract

This thesis has investigated how positive relationships between school leaders, teachers, and students can enhance school leadership. Adopting a case-study approach the study used semi-structured interviews with eight Heads of School and five members of the teaching staff: two assistant heads, a Head of Department, and two teachers, a questionnaire to all the teaching staff, and eight focus groups with students from different schools in one state college in Malta. The findings presented in this thesis offer practical insights for educational leaders in Malta in order to enhance school leadership through positive relationships.

The major outcome of this study is the conceptual framework presented in a cyclical model, showing clearly that communication, trust, motivation, sense of community, and the fact that people matter, all result from positive relationships. The emerging themes of communication, trust, motivation, sense of community, and ‘people matter’ which emerged from the data, all contribute towards enhancing school leadership, and the thesis invites consideration of the term ‘Leadership that Loves’, to describe a focus on leadership in schools which features care, respect, and love. Findings indicate that the link between positive relationships and the emerging themes is highly dependent on how a school leader goes about nurturing all of these qualities.

Currently, Malta is facing a crisis in education and whilst major reforms have been implemented, it is necessary to address the role of positive relationships of school leaders in order to better support every teacher and student, whilst aiming for effective school leadership in Malta. The way forward for school leadership in Malta is highlighted in the light of the findings emanating from this research study. Recommendations for policy and practice are also given.

Dedication

To HER who loves me,
MARISIANNE,

and to HIM who tolerated my absence
in his first months,
GIOSUE.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to all those who supported me throughout this long, yet very enriching, PhD journey!

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I owe my deepest gratitude to my wife Marisianne who supported me throughout this honeymoon project, especially during the last year for tolerating my absence from our son Giosue. To them I dedicate this thesis. I love you both!

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List of Abbreviations

BERA	The British Educational Research Association
COH	Council of Heads
CP	College Principal
ELC	Educational Leadership Council
EO	Educational Officer
DES	Directorate for Educational Services
DG	Director General
DQSE	Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education
FTS	Foundation for Tomorrow Schools
HOD	Head of Department
HoS	Head of School
INCO	Inclusion Co-ordinator
LOF	Learning Outcomes Framework
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
LSE	Learning Support Educator
LtL	Leadership that Loves
MEDE	Ministry for Education and Employment
MUT	The Malta Union of Teachers
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NMC	National Minimum Curriculum
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDS	Professional Development Session
PLC	Professional Learning Community
SDP	School Development Plan
SEC	Secondary Education Certificate
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SMT	Senior Management Team

Glossary of Terms

The following glossary of terms is intended to provide a general understanding of the key terms associated with this study. These definitions will also ensure that this research study can be understood and replicated.

Head of School (HoS), Headteacher, or the school leader is the person who is in charge of an individual primary or secondary school. A HoS is responsible “to promote and further the holistic education of each student in the school” whilst providing professional leadership and ensuring “the implementation and development of the National Curriculum Framework” (Ministry of Education, Youth, and Employment, 2007, p. 35).

Parents refer to all those adults “who have children in a specific school. These adults may be either the biological parents, guardians, or caretakers of these children” (Heystek, 1999, p. 100). These adults are responsible for the upbringing and care of the child, whilst form part of the school community.

School Community refers to the Senior Leadership Team, members of the staff who work in the school, the students who attend the school, and their parents, local residents, and organisations that have a stake in the school’s success (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014, p. 6).

Effective School or **Successful School**, used interchangeably in this thesis, refer to both the academic and non-academic domain of learning. Acknowledging that “measurable outcomes such as student progress and achievement are key indicator of effectiveness”, (Day and Sammons, 2016, p. 9) “schools are to develop an environment that ensures that all students have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills, attitudes and values to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society” (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014, p. 7).

Education Directors refer to those in the top tier within the Ministry for Education and Employment in Malta, previously referred to as the Education Division, such as Director Generals, Directors, and Assistant Directors.

Positive Relationship is the connection between individuals based on positive regard and interest. Through the positive day-to-day interactions and open communication in a school context, this positive relationship is further developed through care and respect.

Trust is defined “as the extent to which one engages in a relationship and is willing to be vulnerable to others, (i.e. assume risk) on the basis of interaction and on the confidence that the latter party will possess benevolence, competence, integrity, openness, reliableness and respect” (Daly, 2009, p. 175).

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 The structure of this thesis

This thesis is organised in the following seven chapters: Chapter 1: Introduction; Chapter 2: Literature Review; Chapter 3: Research Methodology; Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion I – What does school leadership look like?; Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion II – How are relationships between school leaders, teachers, and students currently played out in schools?; Chapter 6: Findings and Discussion III – What changes might be made to improve upon positive relationships in order to enhance school leadership?; and Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusions.

In this first chapter, a brief overview of educational leadership is given, also in view of the Maltese context. The main aim of this research is also debated in the introduction chapter, together with the theoretical framework that structured the research question and the three subsidiary research questions.

Chapter 2 gives a critical overview of the literature starting with a brief discussion about leadership and an outline of the skills and characteristics required by school leaders to enhance leadership. A discussion on positive relationships in schools follows, together with a debate on the importance of trust in order to sustain positive relationships. ‘Servant leadership’ is also discussed with the term ‘Leadership that Loves’, developed for this thesis as it felt necessary that in this day and age, the strategy of including love into leadership needs to be implemented.

Chapter 3 justifies the research methods and methodology adopted to carry out this research in order to establish how the positive relationships of the school leader with teachers and students can enhance school leadership. This third chapter also highlights ethical considerations and the process of thematic analysis that was adopted for this thesis.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present the findings and discussion of this research according to the three subsidiary research questions and grouped into eight themes that emerged throughout the data analysis phase.

Summary of the main findings and conclusions are given in Chapter 7. This final chapter also highlights the conceptual framework and the contribution to knowledge whilst presenting a number of limitations encountered. It also includes suggestions for further research.

1.2 Introduction to the Study

This study focusses on how positive relationships between school leaders and teachers and students can enhance school leadership. Through a case-study adopting mixed methods in one of the state colleges in Malta, this research aimed to develop a deeper understanding of effective leadership through positive relationships. After providing an overview of the structure of this thesis, this introductory chapter gives an insight into educational leadership and positive relationships, whilst introducing the reader to the context of Malta. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the theoretical framework that structured this research and justifies the need for such a research question. An outline of the methodology adopted in this thesis is also given.

1.3 Educational Leadership and Positive Relationships

There is no widely acknowledged definition of school leadership (Stewart, 2006; Bush, 2011) but, recently, its importance has been extensively acknowledged (Houchens and Keedy, 2009; Bush, 2011; Day and Sammons, 2016) and “is now an education policy priority around the world” (OECD, 2008, p. 3). Hallinger (2003) and Stewart (2006) observe that for these last three decades, substantial emphasis on school leadership was made by governments and authorities in order to explore the “link between leadership and school effectiveness” (Stewart, 2006, p. 7). Meanwhile, Cherry (2016) believes that it was in the last hundred years that an interest in leadership emerged to try to come at an understanding of the how

and why individuals develop into effective leaders. Lee and Pang (2011, p. 333) also determine that due to globalisation, a shift in educational leadership was necessary and this affected “efficiency, accountability, and planning.” At the present time school leadership does not seem to be an attractive profession as Bush (2015a, p. 855) argues that “teachers are not anxious to secure promotion” due to increasing challenges for school leaders such as heavy workloads, long hours, unattractive salaries, excessive stress, and bureaucracy, amongst other factors (Sala, 2003; Bush, 2011; Bezzina, 2013) as “governments expect more of teachers and leaders” (Bush, 2015a, p. 855). Stewart (2013, p. 54) urges governments to offer their backing “through funding to support a modern approach to leadership that focuses on recruitment, training, and development as well as ongoing support and feedback”.

“Headteacher leadership remains the major driving force and underpins the school’s increased or sustained effectiveness and improvements” (Day and Sammons, 2016, p. 39). School leaders are “those persons who provide direction and exert influence in order to achieve the school goals” (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, p. 9). Bush and Glover (2014, p. 555) outline that “leaders are expected to ground their actions in clear personal and professional values” as they have

A key role to play in setting direction and creating a positive school culture including the proactive school mindset, and supporting and enhancing staff motivation and commitment needed to foster improvement and promote success for schools in challenging circumstances (Day and Sammons, 2016, p. 7).

Whilst effective school leaders can make a difference in the students’ achievement and performance, (Kelley et al., 2005; OECD, 2008) “the school with a welfarist culture is weak by academic criteria, with poor learning outcomes, but staff would assert their achievement in terms of expressive outcomes, which might include low rates of delinquency” (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 38). Whilst “leadership is most successful when it is focused on teaching and learning” (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, p. 7), “the idea that schools can impact positively on student outcomes is a crucial driver in the rise of interest in school improvement research and practice” (Day and Sammons, 2016, p. 5).

Weymes (2003, p. 325) demonstrates that “the terms leadership and relationship are connected, since one cannot occur without the other”. Barth (2006, p. 12) also agrees with Weymes (2003), pointing out that “leadership has been delightfully defined as the ability to foster consequential relationships”. Hence relationships can be seen as prerequisite for good learning outcomes in order to have successful schools, and at the same time ‘turning around’ less successful schools by being there for all students, especially those at “risk of failing or dropping out” (Champeau, 2011, p. 38). This was the task of Scott Andrews, who “turned the school around” by focusing on “building trust and forging relationships” (Andrews, 2011, p. 20). Whilst the importance of positive relationships is highlighted for effective school leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004; Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Saphier and D’Auria, 2006; Day and Sammons, 2016), there is a gap in knowledge as “little research examines the role of developing relationships within and beyond the school” (Stone-Johnson, 2014, p. 669). Leadership matters, and as Leithwood and Riehl (2003) highlight there is much that yet still needs to be understood in effective educational leadership. Noting that the school leader is “a critical determinant in the quality of the psychological, physical and social environments and conditions in which teaching and learning take place,” (Day and Sammons, 2016, p. 25) the study reported in this thesis seeks to increase knowledge and understanding of positive relationships for effective school leadership.

1.4 The Maltese Context

Education in Malta is compulsory through age sixteen and there are three types of educational institutions: state, church and independent. State education is free of charge and schools are grouped into ten colleges, nine in Malta and the tenth in the sister island of Gozo. Each college is composed of a number of primary and secondary schools and is led by a College Principal. Malta embarked on “four broad goals in line with European and world benchmarks” (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2013) that make up Malta’s Educational Strategy 2014-2024:

- (a) Reduce the gaps in educational outcomes, decrease the number of low achievers, raise the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence;
- (b) Support educational achievement of children at risk of poverty and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school leavers;
- (c) Increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning;
- (d) Raise levels of student retainment and attainment in further, vocational, and tertiary education and training (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2013).

A few months after assuming his office in 2013, Malta's Hon. Minister for Education Evarist Bartolo stated that 85% of the unemployed in Malta have not reached the SEC (Secondary Education Certificate) level standard of education and have left school at the age of sixteen or earlier. Schools cannot be considered as effective in the face of such data (Bartolo, 2013). In 2017, Malta had the highest rate of persons (54.8%) with "less than upper secondary education" in the European Union (The Bertelsmann Stifting, 2018, p. 33). Moreover, whilst steady progress is reported towards the Europe 2020 target of 10% early school leavers in the European Union, because the rate of early school leavers has dropped from 17.0% in 2002 to 10.7% in 2016, (European Commission, 2017) the same cannot be said in the case of Malta where almost a fifth of the students are early school leavers. Malta has the highest percentage of early school leavers in the European Union and Malta has registered little progress since 2013, from 20.5% to 19.6% in 2017 (European Commission, 2017; The Bertelsmann Stifting, 2018, p. 32). These figures contrast with the fact that Malta was one of the top five countries in the EU with an above-average expenditure on education (Bartolo, 2017b).

In this current context of Malta, the educational sector is in crisis. This situation exists despite the building of new schools, refurbishment of existing schools, the latest technology being enforced and many reforms being implemented. The Education Ministry positioned itself "to provide present and future generations with the necessary skills and talents for employability and citizenship in the 21st century" (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2013, p. 2) through "values-

based education” (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014, p. 10). New agreement negotiations focusing on the schools’ life and vision and the education grades between the Maltese Government and the Malta Union of Teachers was signed in December 2017 with the aim of a “more humane educational system” (Demarco, 2017). Described as “a new sectoral agreement without precedent” (Bartolo, 2017a):

Educators [were] incensed after details of the agreement signed between the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) and the Government on 21 December show them receiving pay increases far inferior to those they were promised (Sansone, 2017).

The MUT was said to have faced “the wrath of its members” (Sansone, 2017) and discussions and negotiations between the Maltese Government and the MUT were still underway in 2018 so that the Learning Outcomes Framework (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012) could be implemented, whilst another reform in assessment was set to be introduced by means of which mid-year examinations will be abolished. The ‘myjourney’ reform (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2016b) planned to be implemented as from the scholastic year 2019-2020 has the aim to introduce a vast range of option subjects in secondary schools that offer students a vocational path besides the current traditional academic one.

1.5 Theoretical Framework for this Study

This study begins from a position that recognises the two theories that serve as a foundation from which all knowledge presented in this thesis is constructed, together with the epistemological and ontological standpoints as discussed in further depth in Chapter 3 of this thesis. The two theories that serve as a basis for this thesis are Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs and positive psychology, particularly the PERMA model by Martin Seligman (2011) which are discussed in the next two sub-sections.

1.5.1 Maslow's Hierarachy of Needs

The first theory that served as a basis for this thesis is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, named after Abraham H. Maslow (1908-1970) who, in his paper, 'A theory of human motivation' (Maslow 1943), describes five levels of needs, often represented in a hierarchy pyramid with five levels. The physiological needs are the basic needs of each human being that include air, food, and water amongst others. The first tier of most basic needs is followed by the second, encapsulating a need for safety, security, and social stability. The third level acknowledges the need for belonging that includes love, friendship and intimacy. The fourth level honours the need for esteem that includes respect, status, and recognition. These four levels are considered psychological needs whilst the fifth and final level, which sits at the top of the pyramid, is considered a self-fulfilment need, involving the achievement of one's individual potential. Whilst Maslow (1943, p. 383) outlines that "the specific form that these needs will take will of course vary greatly from person to person", the lower needs, that is the first four levels, need to be satisfied first before reaching the final level. Figure 1.1 below depicts Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory.

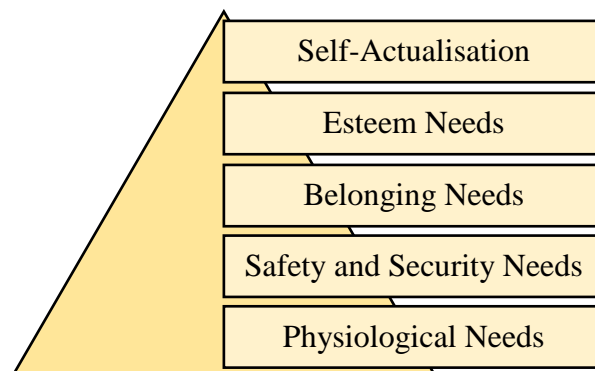


Figure 1.1 - Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Interpreting Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory in the context of educational leadership requires that teachers and students firstly fulfil their basic physiological needs. This requires that school leaders pay attention to those students without the basic needs such as food and water whilst that through Leadership that Loves, (LtL) school leaders will make sure that students will be

given basic food and water when not provided with these basic needs from their parents. Through LtL, necessary administrative funds can help to deal with hunger at school, make good for the school uniforms, necessary photocopies and outing charges that some students may not afford, unlike the majority of students in Malta.

The second level in the pyramid of needs requires that school leaders will make sure that teachers and students are provided with the safety and security needs, thus a safe workplace and an environment of care for all the school community. From the school leaders' view, it is necessary that teachers and students are provided with the basic needs that also include a safe school environment before finding a sense of belonging and be motivated at school. Security and safety needs at school come before embarking on the teaching and learning and through LtL, the school leader ensures the community that s/he is there for all their needs. Whilst avoiding any physical harm and maximising safety is a necessity in schools, a sense of security and safety through LtL also require that school leaders integrate any new teachers or students and all migrant students within the school community. Teachers and students within the school community need to belong and thus interact through positive relationships, which is Maslow's third level. It is through positive relationships whilst ensuring care and love, that LtL can be achieved. This thesis focuses on positive relationships of school leaders with teachers and students where, according to Maslow's framework, each teacher and student's needs must be satisfied before moving up to the next level of the hierarchy. Through LtL, a school leader ensures positive relationships and trust within the school community so that teachers and students can proceed to the next levels of Maslow's pyramid.

Whilst school leaders are not responsible for improving teachers' salaries that can enhance their physiological needs, school leaders can show their appreciation towards the work carried out by teachers and it is only then that school leaders can boost teachers' esteem to reach their full potential. Recognising that every person is unique whilst treating everyone with respect and respect for diversity are all characteristics of LtL that resonate with Maslow's fourth criteria – esteem

needs. Through LtL, the self-actualization on top of Maslow's theory is achieved by having school leaders with the vision that every person has a fundamental right to grow holistically and develop his/her potential to the full. Moreover through LtL, a school leader has optimistic thoughts about everyone within the school community.

Church (2017a) insists that Maslow's theory is imperative in leadership for, if leaders do not understand peoples' needs, leaders do not understand people. Thus through any effort within the LtL concept in any of the five stages of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the school leader will be making a great difference in the lives of the teachers and the students within the school community. The LtL concept through each layer of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is also illustrated in Table 1.1 below.

Level 5	Self-Actualisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Optimistic thoughts about everyone within the school community. - Every person has a fundamental right to grow holistically and develop his/her potential to the full.
Level 4	Esteem Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognising that every person is unique. - Treating everyone with respect. - Respect for diversity.
Level 3	Belonging Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring positive relationships. - Trust within the school community.
Level 2	Safety and Security Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring a safe environment. - Wellbeing and care. - Maximising safety in schools. - Assuring teachers and students that the leader is there for them. - Integrating new teachers/students and migrant students in the school community.
Level 1	Physiological Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing basic needs such as food and water, school uniform/s to students in need.

Table 1.1 – How LtL influence each layer of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

1.5.2 Positive Psychology – the PERMA model.

The second framework that served as a basis for this thesis is positive psychology in education, particularly the PERMA model by Martin Seligman. Seligman (2011, p. 16) uses five measurable elements that make up well-being: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. *Positive Emotion* is the first element of the well-being theory that includes happiness and life satisfaction through optimistic thoughts. *Engagement* means having activities in life that serve the individual and grow one's personal happiness. *Relationships* suggests developing positive relationships. *Meaning* requires having a sense of belonging whilst *Accomplishment* refers to the pursuit of success and achievement. Noting that Seligman (2011, p. 16) claims that “each element contributes to well-being” whilst “each element is defined and measured independently of the other elements”, undoubtedly, applying the third element of the PERMA model—*Relationships*—as a framework in this thesis means that positive relationships are considered as a basis leading towards the well-being and happiness of the teachers and students. This well-being and happiness is what positive education is about: “An approach to education that blends academic learning with character and well-being” (Kern and White, 2017, p. 4). As teachers and students spend on average of thirty hours a week in schools and Malta's philosophy is based on values in line with The Respect for All Framework (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014) the application of the PERMA model as the second theoretical framework for this study offered a way of helping teachers and students reach their full potential. From a school leadership context, each of the five elements of the PERMA model “can help individuals find lives of happiness, fulfillment, and meaning” (Slavin et al., 2012, p. 1481) in schools.

1.6 Purpose and Statement of the Research Question

Berg (1977, p. 213) outlines that various difficulties in education can be solved by money, but money “would not solve them all and probably would not do much to create leadership in schools”. This is the main reason why I have chosen to research relationships in schools, and in particular, positive relationships and

effective leadership. School leaders are facing “growing demands” (Day and Sammons, 2016, p. 61) because expectations of the educational systems in many countries have increased and thus leadership needs to be taken seriously. Although it can be argued that meetings and conferences are being held, and documents and resources provided, it is possible that there is a “hidden power: relationships” (Finnigan and Daly, 2014) that is not working well and hindering effective leadership in the Maltese state schools. Taking action and making a small difference in the lives of teachers and students, justifies the need for the following research question to be asked and reflected on. In my experience as a teacher, one-to-one conversations between Heads of School and teachers seem to be increasingly replaced with e-mails. This similarly applies to keeping regular contact with students. This, in turn, can make students feel less comfortable to discuss their concerns and difficulties face to face, during crucial stages in childhood and adolescence. Whilst it is true that technology has become central in teaching and learning in our schools, the OECD (2015) reported that countries which have invested heavily in technology “have seen no noticeable improvement” in students’ performance. Also, whilst during the last years, Malta has invested heavily in technology, as stated earlier in Section 1.3, Malta’s Ministry for Education and Employment stated clearly that “nothing can replace the relationship between the educator and the learner” (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2015). Analysing how positive relationships between school leaders, teachers and students are currently played out in schools helped to identify the necessary changes that are needed to be made in order to enhance school leadership in Malta. This framed the main research question followed by the three subsidiary research questions:

How can positive relationships between the school leader, teachers and students enhance school leadership?

(a) What does school leadership look like?

(b) How are relationships between school leaders, teachers and students currently played out in schools?

(c) What changes might be made to improve upon positive relationships in order to enhance school leadership?

1.7 The Approach to the Study

This research took a case-study approach where, through mixed methods, positive relationships of school leaders with teachers and students were investigated. The research process involved four stages and took place in one of the ten state colleges across Malta and Gozo, which for the purpose of anonymity would be referred to by the pseudonym St David's College and which is made up of nine (primary or secondary) schools, with a total of 431 teachers and more than 4,000 students. Stage A involved semi-structured interviews with eight Heads of School. Stage B concerned the dissemination of a questionnaire to all the Senior Leadership Teams (SLTs) (except Heads of School) and teachers within St David's College. In Stage C, five semi-structured interviews with members of the teaching staff were held: two assistant heads, a Head of Department, and two teachers. During Stage D a focus group of between six to ten students in eight different schools within St David's College were conducted. All the four stages of this research were held during the same period of the data collection process, thus adopting the convergent parallel design. Thematic analysis was chosen to analyse the data and, through an inductive approach, similarities, differences and repeated codes helped to identify sub-themes. During the data analysis process, these sub-themes emerged into the eight themes through which the findings and discussion chapters are organised. Ethical issues were addressed thoroughly, including data safety and anonymity.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Whilst that the theoretical framework that binds this research was outlined in the introductory chapter, in this literature review chapter, various leadership theories and models that serve as foundation for this research are discussed. The relevant literature is drawn upon in order to address the research question and aims of this study. An insight into the Maltese educational system also helps to understand the context in which this research was carried out.

A review of the literature concerning school leaders' positive relationships and how these impact school leadership led to the identification of the following five sub-themes which are discussed in this order in this second chapter of this thesis: effective school leadership; school leadership in Malta; positive relationships and trust; benefits of positive relationships in schools; and Leadership that Loves.

2.2 Effective School Leadership

2.2.1 Conceptualising Leadership and Leadership that Loves.

After considering the theoretical framework in the introductory chapter of this thesis, this review of the literature begins with a conceptualisation and grounding of school leadership and Leadership that Loves (LtL) as referred to in this thesis.

2.2.1.1 School Leadership.

School leadership entails hard work (Bezzina, 2014) and is not necessarily an attractive profession (Bush, 2015a) but its importance has been widely acknowledged (Houchens and Keedy, 2009; Bush, 2011; Day and Sammons, 2016). School leadership “remains the major driving force and underpins the school’s increased or sustained effectiveness and improvements” (Day and Sammons, 2016, p. 39). In this thesis, an effective school refers to both the

academic and non-academic domain of learning. Acknowledging that “measurable outcomes such as student progress and achievement are key indicator of effectiveness”, (Day and Sammons, 2016, p. 9) “schools are to develop an environment that ensures that all students have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills, attitudes and values to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society” (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014, p. 7).

Whilst “leadership is most successful when it is focused on teaching and learning,” (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, p. 7) school leadership is only second to classroom teaching as an influence on student learning (Leithwood et al., 2006). School leadership demands vision and thus school leaders “provide direction and exert influence in order to achieve the school goals” (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, p. 9) whilst enhance staff motivation (Day and Sammons, 2016, p. 7). School leaders “know what is going on in their classrooms” (Day and Sammons, 2016, p. 13).

Noting that a shift in educational leadership was necessary even due to globalisation, (Lee and Pang, 2011) school leaders “are expected to ground their actions in clear personal and professional values” (Bush and Glover, 2014, p. 555). Leadership is not so much concerned with the number of people that report to the leader (Sinek, 2009) and since “the terms leadership and relationship are connected,” (Weymes, 2003, p. 325) “the model of leadership that will make a difference in the 21st century is one that focuses on character, on formation, on connections” (Bezzina 2009, p. 17). This will bring us to consider the concept of Leadership that Loves (LtL) as conceptualised in the next section.

2.2.1.2 Leadership that Loves (LtL).

Page (2011) and Wood (2013) refer to love as not easily discussed nowadays due to the need to avoid the risk of the headline-seeking media of entirely inappropriate and unprofessional behaviour. However, Malta’s Respect for All Framework (Ministry for Education, 2014) does use the word ‘love’ and Malta’s

Minister for Education also uses the word ‘love’ and emphasises that the educational experience is above all a human experience and to excel it needs to be built on love (Bartolo, 2015). Love as a professional concept is not the same love as for a life partner, or a child. It can mean putting other individuals first, not only by caring and ensuring their wellbeing, but by helping each person within the school community to achieve their potential to the full and thus achieving his/her best, through optimistic thoughts.

We are living in a constantly changing turbulent world, and so school leaders are faced with an environment that includes issues of migration, fragmented families, injustices, and acts of terrorism, extreme politics and divisions to name but some of the current salient issues. It is in this context that the need of the concept of Leadership that Loves (LtL) can be seen as a way forward. Noting that every person has their own personal ‘baggage’, taking action and making a small difference in the lives of teachers and students, justifies the need for LtL. In the local context of this thesis, in Malta, where travelling distances between one place and another are quite short and most families enjoy a good standard of living together with free education and health, stress, anxiety and depression are nevertheless, on the high side, and thus through school leadership, a difference can be instilled through LtL, if having school leaders who are not shy of doing the right things at the right time.

Thus, LtL refers to the school leader who, with respect to diversity, recognises that every person within the school community is unique and has a fundamental right to grow holistically and develop his/her potential to the full. The loving school leader treats every person with respect and care, ensuring their safety and wellbeing whilst having optimistic thoughts about everyone within the school community.

2.2.2 Introduction to School Leadership.

Bush (2011) distinguishes clearly between educational leadership and educational management where influencing people is more associated with leadership, whilst

papers and routine tasks are described as management tasks. Day (2003, p. 167) also outlines that leadership is about setting a “vision, culture and interpersonal relationships”, whilst management involves “the coordination, support and monitoring of organisational activities”. Bush (2011), Day (2003), and Dimmock (1999), are of the same mind; they argue that leadership is more associated with the tasks that are designed to influence the staff. Bush (2011), Day and Sammons (2016, p. 11), and Dimmock (1999) all make a distinction between leading and managing, since they outline that these concepts overlap each other but are different when factors such as time and context are taken into consideration. Both leadership and management are vital if the schools want to succeed in accomplishing the goals set (Bush, 2011). As Day (2003, p. 167) suggests, “careful balancing” of leadership and management is necessary for effective leadership.

School aims and objectives can easily be classified under the term ‘teaching and learning’ and it has already been established that leadership is only second to classroom teaching (Dimmock and Tan, 2013; Jacobson and Bezzina, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2006). School leadership defines “five to seven per cent of the difference in pupil learning and achievement” (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 4) thus affecting between twelve and twenty per cent of the total differences in schools (Leithwood et al., 2006). Moreover, teaching and learning are also emphasised by Stewart (2013, p. 49) who points out that “leadership with purpose is central to raising student achievement”. Throughout the last years, a “shift in emphasis from administration to management, and now to leadership” (Green, 2002, p. 1) has been necessary to support the teaching and learning in schools. Stewart (2013, p. 52) agrees with the latter’s point of view by arguing that nowadays the leader’s tasks have altered from “bells, buildings and buses to a focus on instructional leadership”.

2.2.3 Distributed and Middle Leadership.

“Working alone is no longer an option” (Sood et al., 2018, p. 72). School leaders are supported by a number of senior and middle members of staff, according to

the particular school populations, but despite that distributed leadership and middle management are a necessity in our schools, the role of the school leader “remains paramount” (Bush, 2015a, p. 855). Arar et al. (2016) point out that the importance of distributed leadership has recently been highlighted whilst distributed leadership is mentioned in two out of the “seven strong claims” about effective school leadership where it is concluded that “school leadership has a greater influence on schools when it is widely distributed” and that “some patterns of distribution are more effective than others” (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 12).

Distributed leadership “means allocating responsibilities and authority for the guidance and direction of instruction to others” (Harris, 2003a, p. 21). Green (2002) suggests that it is a crucial responsibility that some of the school leaders’ activities will be taken over by other individuals to find quality-time for strategic work and whole-school leadership. Described as the most “preferred leadership model” (Bush and Glover, 2014, p. 559-560) nowadays, distributed leadership, through collaboration, “implies a different power relationship... it has implications for the division of labour” and all the staff will be given the opportunity of “becoming leaders at various times” (Harris, 2003b, p. 77).

Today, schools are encouraged to grow their own leaders through in-house staff development as well as spotting and building talent through nurturing, coaching and mentoring and giving staff whole-school challenges to lead and manage. (Sood et al., 2018, p. 106).

Therefore, distributed leadership also helps to “prepare the next generation of leaders” (Green, 2002, p. 6) whilst it focuses on “engaging expertise” (Harris, 2004, p. 13) in various situations rather than pursuing expertise only through official roles (Harris, 2004). In some cases, due to heroic leaders, certain middle managers will not be given opportunities to lead and share their expertise. Green (2002, p. 6) asserts that the “lone warrior model of leadership is heroic suicide”. Moreover, Green (2002, p. 6) maintains that school leaders might end up treating the staff like children instead of allowing the staff to make mistakes and learn from them. Moreover a “collective endeavour” (Hartley, 2007, p. 206) is much needed as, unfortunately, Debono (2015) found out that senior leadership team members in secondary schools seem only to be doing the tasks that they were

distributed and this contradicts Earley's (1998) claim that effective middle managers do not simply conduct their tasks but do contribute to whole-school issues.

2.2.4 Leadership Models.

Bush (2011) outlines ten leadership models: managerial, instructional, transformational, participative, distributed, transactional, postmodern, emotional, contingent, and moral leadership. *Distributed leadership* has already been discussed in Section 2.2.3. Noting that this thesis focuses on positive relationships of school leaders for effective leadership, the *instructional* and *transformational* leadership models can be useful and relevant to the areas being explored in this thesis; these leadership models will be discussed in Sections 2.2.4.1 and Section 2.2.4.2 respectively. Moreover, as outlined by Amanchukwu et al. (2015, p. 6), there is no specific leadership style "that can be considered universal" and according to Bush and Glover (2014, p. 553), new models and styles continue "emerging" and "established approaches [continue] being redefined and further developed".

2.2.4.1 Instructional Leadership.

"Instructional leadership is one of the most enduring constructs in the shifting typology of leadership models" (Bush, 2015b, p. 487). Adapting for leadership in this century means that school leaders need to focus on instructional leadership or on 'leadership for learning', as it is sometimes referred to (Hallinger, 2012; Stewart, 2013). Stewart (2006, p. 4) defines instructional leaders as those who "focus on school goals, the curriculum, instruction, and the school environment". Bush and Glover (2003) demonstrate that instructional leadership is when school leaders concentrate on the behaviour of educators in order to influence student learning. Hallinger (2003, p. 332) defines instructional leadership using three main factors: "defining the school's mission, managing the instructional programme, and promoting a positive school-learning climate". Alvy and Robbins (2005, p. 51-52) argue that most teachers who become leaders do so with

the purpose of impacting positively the lives of teachers and students through instructional leadership; however, due to the demands of the job, most often “the first responsibilities that new principals forsake” include visiting classrooms in order to sustain teachers and celebrate students’ achievements. Stewart (2013, p. 53) warns that although the role of the school leader is about ‘leadership for learning’ various operational and management tasks are a huge burden on school leaders, and governments “often exacerbate the administrative burden on principals with new reporting requirements”. However, Alvy and Robbins (2005, p. 51) state that effective leaders conduct their tasks “bi-focally - taking care of both learning and business as they move through the day”. Bush (2015b) outlines that subject knowledge is required for instructional leadership especially in secondary schools and hence instructional leadership needs to be distributed with Heads of Departments, middle and other teacher leaders. This is also confirmed by Stewart (2013, p. 53) who demonstrates that “a middle tier of teacher leaders” can support instructional leadership effectively.

2.2.4.2 Transformational Leadership.

The transformational leadership model is also referred to by Amanchukwu et al. (2015, p. 9) as the “relationship” model where the focus is “on the connections formed between leaders and followers”. This model that focuses “on the inner motivation of the followers” (Arar et al., 2016, p. 134) suggests that leaders get involved with the teaching staff and the learning community in order to reach the aims and vision of the school through superior performance and dedication (Bush and Glover, 2014, p. 566). Affecting staff in a positive way leads to a better connection with the leader, thus influencing classroom teaching and learning. This is outlined by Leithwood et al. (2006, p. 6) where the leader’s main aim is to “improve employee performance”, more specifically, the teachers’ performance, as it is the most crucial to improve students’ learning. Amanchukwu et al. (2015, p. 9) also concur that leaders will “motivate and inspire people by helping group members see the importance and higher good of the task”. Day and Sammons (2016, p. 19) argue that although the focus of transformational leadership is emphasising relationships, effective leaders work to promote better student

outcomes through instructional leadership. Similarly, transformational leadership is described as “weak in practice” by Bush (2011, p. 86) since most leaders are not confident enough to bravely apply necessary changes due to a controlled educational system. This transformational model is still prominent since the vision is “the central dimension of leadership” (Bush and Glover, 2014, p. 566). However, Bush (2011, p. 86) warns that this model can be instilled by governments or other stakeholders in order to support their own policies. This hinders the autonomy of school leaders with regard to taking decisions and since this thesis focuses on the establishment of positive relationships with all the teaching staff and students, I argue that it would be inappropriate to use the power of positive relationships to instil policies and/or implement procedures that may not be effective for that particular school.

2.2.5 Characteristics for Effective Leadership.

Whilst it appears to be common knowledge that leaders in schools are crucial to the improvement of teaching and learning, what makes leaders effective “remains elusive” (Day, Harris and Hadfield, 1999). MacBeath and Myers (1999, p. 129) outline that effectiveness of leadership is concerned with professional competence and commitment, leadership charisma, relationships with stakeholders, and the improvement of the school community. Day and Sammons (2016, p. 12) also point out that “working effectively with people” is a necessary characteristic in leadership. This brings us to discern the need to maintain positive relationships with all the staff, which will be discussed in the next section of this literature review. Whilst MacBeath and Myers (1999, p. 67) state that “there is no golden rule-book or recipe” in order to have successful leadership in schools, certain characteristics and/or qualities such as having a clear vision, motivation and inspiration, empowering others, making decisions, being available, and establishing effective communication are essential. These six characteristics and/or qualities of what makes better leadership are discussed briefly below in the next six sub-sections, in no particular order.

2.2.5.1 Having a Clear Vision.

Kouzes and Posner (2011b) suggest that leadership begins with an inner journey, but besides knowing oneself well one must also possess a passion for leadership. As Maxwell (2009) outlines, nothing can take the place of passion in a leader's life. It is through this passion for leadership that a clear vision for the school is formed. Barth (1990) argues that a good school is one which the leader would be proud to be remembered as having helped to create. Effective leaders have a clear vision and a sense of direction of where they would like to take the school. Insisting that leadership is all about having a clear vision, Sood et al. (2018, p. 68) point out that this vision is "a passion to make a difference, a better future for the community". Today leaders need "vision, creativity and the ability to communicate" (West-Burnham, 1997, p. 237). Moreover, as Day and Sammons (2016, p. 13) suggest, effective leaders have a "clear vision and sense of direction for the school. They prioritise [and] they know what is going on in their classrooms". The vision is essential and school leaders need to know what they aspire to achieve over a period of time as "without a vision there can be no leadership" (Bezzina, 2014, p. 1). In fact, Barth (1990, p. 515) defines leadership as "making happen what you believe in". Besides having a clear vision, good planning and continuous evaluation are necessary to make the vision a reality in the school. Therefore, the school development plans should be developed with specific targets in order to realise the vision of the school. This helps to give the school a sense of direction and clear school policies which need to be evaluated continuously.

2.2.5.2 Motivation and Inspiration.

As already outlined, knowing oneself is an essential quality in leadership because the leader can then extend these skills to form a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the staff and thus be able to motivate them by "providing plenty of encouragement" (Green, 2002, p. 4). As Bush and Middlewood (2005, p. 9) claim, "people are most likely to show commitment if they are valued by those who have responsibility for them". Bezzina (2014, p. 1) also explains that a leader

should “give the followers what they want most: recognition, a feeling of self-worth and personal involvement in meaningful work”. Besides motivating staff, a leader may be considered effective if s/he is a role model or what is described by Barth (1990) as the ‘leading learner’. The act of inspiring staff can also help in order to enhance leadership as Lee and Pang (2011, p. 331) outline that effective leadership “encompasses a social process of influencing others”. Leadership involves influencing others by inspiring them, because as Allen (2007, p. 8) demonstrates, “leaders do influence followers to bring about results”.

2.2.5.3 Empowering Others.

Whilst middle management and distributed leadership are a necessity, as already discussed, allowing others to take the lead for various initiatives will help all to feel valued and part of the school community. Kouzes and Posner (2008, p. 2) suggest that effective leaders “do not hoard power. They give it away”. Asking the staff for their personal opinions helps so that elements of collegiality and support will flourish throughout the school whilst also making it possible for the staff to do great work in the school. This helps to enhance collaboration and collegiality in schools as Roberts and Pruitt (2009, p. 189) outline that “collaboration is the glue that keeps learning communities together”. DePree (1989, p. 24) argues that “having a say differs from having a vote” and therefore using fairness, school staff should be empowered to discuss how tasks can be improved in order to improve teaching and learning as, after all, the quality of the school is no greater than the quality of the teachers in that school.

2.2.5.4 Making Decisions.

More and more tasks have been added to the school leaders’ workload (Day and Sammons, 2016; OECD, 2008) and throughout the everyday routine of the school, a leader is required to take decisions. The best interest of the students must be kept in mind whilst, in the context of self-discipline and prioritising, decisions are made. Green (2002, p. 4) suggests that “problems ignored usually escalated” so leaders must “make sound and timely decision” (Amanchukwu et

al., 2015, p. 9). Sala (2003) suggests that effective leaders are those who rely less on popularity and are strong, confident, and risk-taking leaders. Taking risks such as distributing responsibilities help to improve leadership. Moreover, besides taking risks it is necessary to adapt to various ongoing changes. As Berg (1977) outlines, leaders who are not capable of adapting to new challenges and situations will consequently fail to implement change. As Day and Sammons (2016, p. 35) explain, school leaders who are determined, resilient and confident are the most effective since these school leaders are not “dogmatic in their thinking”.

2.2.5.5 Being Available.

Being available to the staff by having an ‘open-door’ policy helps to demonstrate high levels of accessibility which allows for communication with the staff even by way of quick unscheduled chats where difficult situations are noted and discussed. Moreover, this is the time during which ideas may be shared by different members of staff with the school leader; this would, in turn, lead to the development of closer working relationships. Walking through the school and going in the classrooms helps to be perceived as accessible, whilst also providing the leader with opportunities to monitor what is happening in order to identify ways of improving the students’ learning and experience in the school.

2.2.5.6 Communication.

Whilst Kelley (1988) emphasises that leaders who are considered effective in their role have “the verbal capacity to communicate enthusiasm” it is of utmost importance that school leaders have effective communication skills. Doug Firebaug (n.d.) asserts that “leadership is about magnetic communication. Leaders have a way of communicating that draws people toward the vision and the horizon”. Communication is the ‘glue’ that unites all the stakeholders and, if necessary, school leaders should support teachers when communicating with parents/guardians because leaders are considered effective if they assist in "clearing up the communication problems" or "convince a parent that the school was trying to help their child" (Blasé, 1987, p. 603). Amanchukwu et al. (2015, p.

9) make it clear that school leaders should dedicate enough time daily to communication. Moreover, Southworth (1993, p. 75) argues that through “developing extensive communication networks”, a collaborative culture is established and sustained by the school leaders.

2.2.5.7 Positive Relationships.

The six characteristics debated above are essential for effective school leaders. However, it is of utmost importance to mention the need to establish positive relationships as Allen (2007, p. 8) suggests that “relationships are the root of effective leadership”. Interestingly, Covey (1989) explains leadership as the “emotional bank account” where deposits in leadership are made through building and maintaining positive relationships with all the school staff. Barth (1990) indicates that the memorable schools that he has visited are the ones where relationships are cooperative and collegial. With regard to positive relationships with students, MacBeath and Myers (1999, p. 8-9) debate that primary school students want school leaders that devote their time to “unhappy kids” and who “cheer you up”. Moreover, they also argue that students in secondary schools want leaders who “listen, take care of students, and [are] accessible and approachable”. Enhancing positive relationships for effective leadership is discussed in Section 2.4 of this review.

2.2.6 Summary.

An insight into educational and effective leadership was given in this second section of the literature review. This section of the review draws attention to what makes an effective leader by discussing necessary characteristics and qualities of effective leadership. Leadership models such as distributed leadership, instructional leadership and transformational leadership were discussed. In the next section, an insight into Malta’s educational system is given with particular emphasis on the leadership context in Malta.

2.3 National Context of Research

In this third section of the literature review, Malta's national context in which this research was carried out is discussed. In order to make school leadership "meaningful and relevant" it is better if this is understood through the local context, including the country's history and political agendas (Bezzina, 2000, p. 299). National milestones in Malta's educational system are highlighted together with a historical view of school leadership in Malta because these will help to better understand the context of the study reported in this thesis.

2.3.1 Malta's Geographical Location.

Located in the centre of the Mediterranean, around hundred kilometres south of Sicily, is a small archipelago consisting of three main islands: Malta, Gozo and Comino, totalling a mere 316 square kilometres with more than 400,000 inhabitants. Malta became an independent state in 1964, bringing an end to the era of British rule. "Constructive and counterproductive" (Calleja, 1994, p. 189) reforms in education followed Malta's independence due to the different needs, aspirations and developments of the Maltese population. In 2004, Malta joined the European Union. Independence and EU membership have both contributed to educational developments since the end of British rule.

2.3.2 The Maltese Educational and College System.

Malta's educational system is tripartite: state, church and independent. All three provide education for all students residing in the Maltese Islands until they are sixteen, which is the compulsory age of schooling. The compulsory age of schooling in Malta was raised from fourteen to sixteen years in 1974. Those attending independent schools pay fee instalments throughout the scholastic year whilst church schools request monetary donations. State education is free for all. Malta's National Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012), henceforth referred to as the NCF, established three educational cycles: the early years cycle (KGI, KGII, Year 1, and Year 2,

spanning the ages 3 – 7); the junior years cycle (Year 3, Year 4, Year 5, and Year 6, spanning the ages 7 – 11); and the secondary years cycle (Year 7, Year 8, Year 9, Year 10, and Year 11, spanning the ages 11 – 16). The NCF (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012) states that even though these three educational cycles are different, they all support the strengthening of competencies, principles, and skills.

Since 2006, all state schools have been grouped in ten colleges: nine in Malta and one in the sister island of Gozo. A college consists of several primary schools, usually one school in each town, grouped according to their geographical position, and two to three secondary schools to cater for the students residing in the same catchment area of the college composition. A College Principal is the person with overall leadership of all the schools within the college. This long-haul reform that started in 2006 has brought to an end to the ‘11+ Junior Lyceum examination’ which was used to distinguish between those students who would go on to attend a ‘Junior Lyceum’ school or the ‘area secondary’ schools. With the formation of the ten colleges, a benchmark examination for the end of the junior years was introduced and all students would attend either the boys or the girls secondary school within their college, ensuring a smooth transition as outlined by the National Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012). This reform led to various secondary schools being phased out whilst a small number of students moved from one school to another as some schools were closed. Since the college system reform, Malta has invested heavily in educational structures. The Foundation for Tomorrow’s Schools (FTS)¹ was set up by the Government of Malta in 2001 with responsibility for building new schools and refurbishment of others to transform primary and secondary schools into “tomorrow’s schools”, in line with the requirements of the local curriculum (Foundation for Tomorrow’s Schools, 2016). Malta’s Education Minister, Evarist Bartolo (2016b), made it clear that whilst in the previous years, various large schools had been built, the Education Ministry was now focusing on building smaller schools where a sense of community could emerge.

¹ FTS is a foundation within the Ministry for Education and Employment and is accountable for the building and/or refurbishment projects of schools.

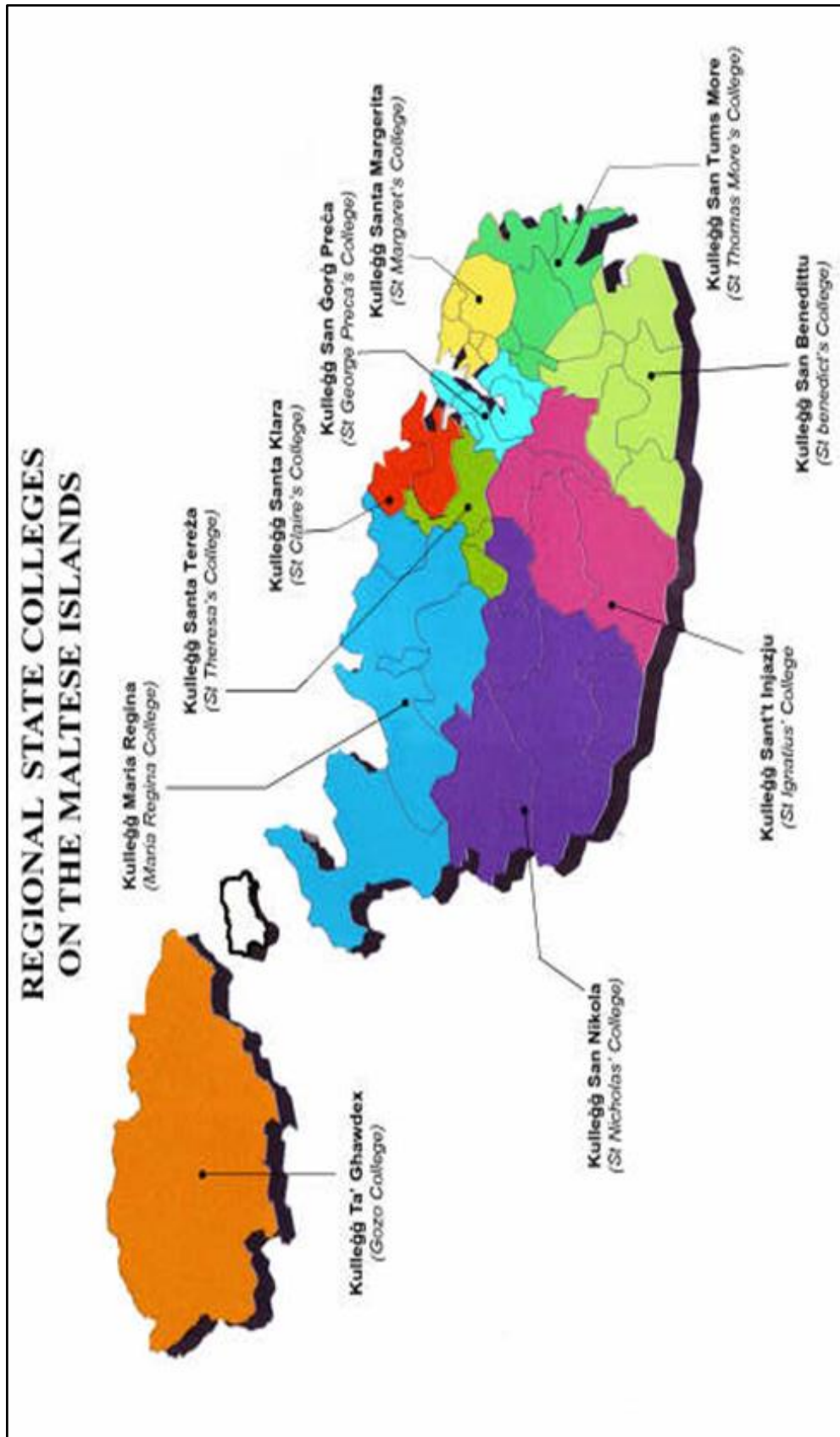


Figure 2.1 - The ten state colleges in Malta and Gozo (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment (2008))

The college system also aimed at addressing autonomy and decentralisation as “until recently the Maltese system of school governance was hierarchical and centralised” (Camilleri, 2011, p. 36). “The constitution of school networks in Malta is an intrinsic shift from the current centralised system to a new network system” (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005, p. 41). Cutajar (2007, p. 5) argues that Malta’s educational system “had been and, in certain areas, still is, a centralised one as it is the Government that decides what should be taught and placed in the curriculum”. Despite decisions now being taken at school or at college level, financial and human resources remain with the Ministry for Education. Moreover, Cutajar (2007, p. 8) states that the Ministry for Education is “still responsible for curriculum development, implementation and review”. Cutajar (2007) argues that schools produce their own materials to complement textbooks whilst half yearly examinations are school-based and schools “can purchase equipment and teaching and learning material” (Cutajar, 2007, p. 8). However, all textbooks used in state schools are prescribed and all annual examination papers are set by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE). Whilst internal reviews are carried out in schools by the Head of School and the School Leadership Team, the Quality Assurance Department² carries out external reviews in schools. External reviews are carried with notice to the school and are described as “an instrument for accountability and conformity with national standards and aspirations” (Mifsud, 2016a) so that all students can achieve the necessary skills and fulfil their education entitlement.

The reform of the college system in 2006 also brought a change to the existing management of the Education Division by setting up two directorates with two Director Generals: the Directorate for Educational Services (DES) and the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE). This has been followed by the establishment of two further directorates: Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and Employability; and Strategy and Support making four Director Generals, as shown in Figure 2.2.

² Department within the DQSE at the Ministry for Education and Employment.

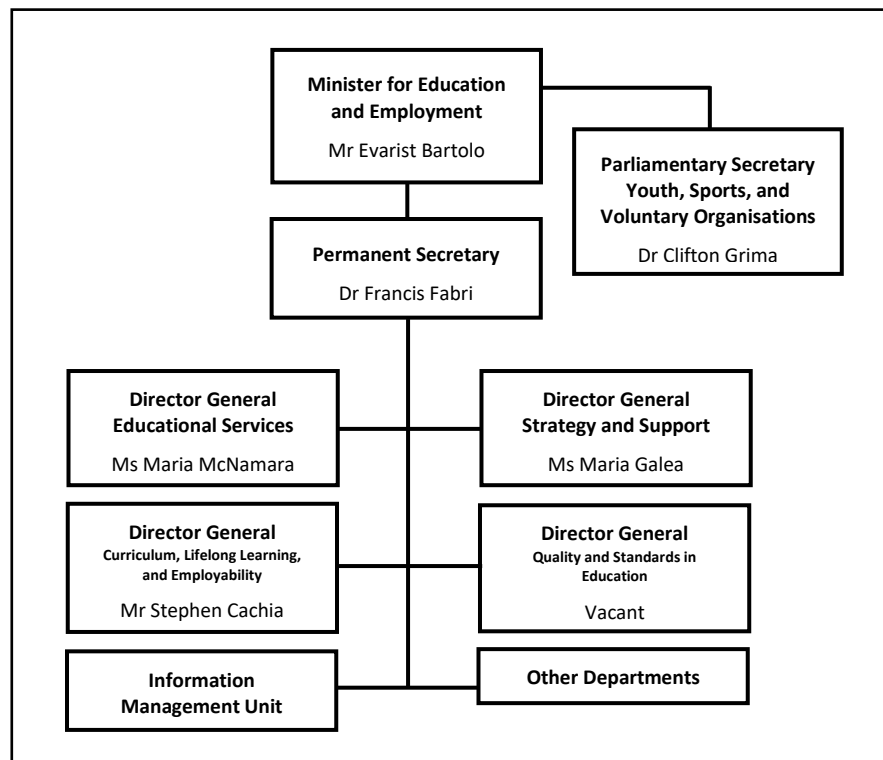


Figure 2.2 - Organisational Structure of the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE, 2018b)

After the first few years of the college system in place, Borg and Giordmaina (2012) found out that there were two different realities: that of teachers and that of school administration (including college principals). In the study commissioned by the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT)³, Borg and Giordmaina (2012) found that although 69% of the teachers were in favour of the college system, there were other complaints such as classes with a large number of students in secondary schooling when mixed-ability teaching was phased in and also an increase in the teachers' workload. Borg and Giordmaina (2012) made it clear that teachers were also tired of all the simultaneous changes. However, not a decade had passed from this major college system reform when another reform, that of co-education, was announced. In 2014, single-sex education in state secondary schools started to be phased out which brought about the need to set up middle schools for the first two years of secondary schooling. Secondary schools designated for girls were mainly phased out and a middle-school was set up instead, whilst boys secondary schools were also phased out and senior schools to

³ The Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) is 'Malta's largest and most influential trade union for educators since 1919'.

cater for the last three years of secondary schooling were phased in. A recent investment in educational technology saw the Government investing €15 million to upgrade classes with the latest technology as well as to provide equipment for staff (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2016a).

2.3.3 School Leadership in Malta.

In Malta, school leaders “are teachers, and have been trained as teachers” (Muscat, 1997a, p. 9). For the post of assistant head of school, a teacher should have at least ten teaching years’ experience in the primary or secondary sector “in which the appointment is being made” (Muscat, 1997b, p. 10) but there is “no formal training required” (Bezzina, 2007, p. 54). However, for the post of Head of School (HoS) in Malta, besides the ten scholastic years experience in teaching, four scholastic years in middle management⁴ is necessary whilst “all prospective heads need to be in possession of at least a diploma in educational administration and management” (Bezzina, 2007, p. 54). Leadership and management skills, together with knowledge relevant to Malta’s state educational system of prospective school leaders are scrutinised during interviews to fill vacant posts, as can be observed in Table 2.1 below.

Intellectual Ability	40
Leadership Skills	40
Management Skills	40
Knowledge of Competences relevant to Post/College System/Directorate	60
Knowledge of Education Reform and Policies	30
Experience and Past Achievements	30
Qualifications relevant to Post	10
Maximum Mark	250
Minimum Mark	150

Table 2.1 - Sample of the criteria used by DES for interviews in order to select candidates for the post of Heads of Schools⁵

⁴ Middle management referring to Assistant Heads, Head of Departments, Inclusive Education Co-ordinator or School Counsellor (Circular DES 27/2016 – Post of Head of School in DES).

⁵ DES 27/2016 and 28/2016 - Assessment Criteria for the Post of Head of School in DES.

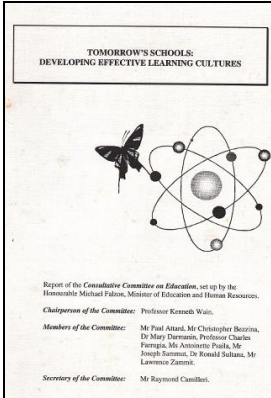

In 1985 the University of Malta introduced the ‘Diploma in Education Administration and Management’ with various prospective HoSs returning to university after many years in schools to follow this post-graduate course. There now exists a wider range of possibilities for prospective heads to enhance their qualifications, including through distance learning with various renowned international universities. In 1997, it was formally agreed by the Government of Malta, together with the MUT, that prospective HoSs should be “in possession of a post-graduate diploma in educational leadership, administration and management or a comparable qualification in these areas” (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 1997, p. 9). However, since 2013, there have been cases of new HoSs being recruited without the necessary qualifications, this may be due to a shortage of interested applicants. The fact that the job of HoS “has now become more demanding, especially with the move towards decentralization and autonomy and the ever-increasing expectations of stake-holders - authorities, parents and the community” (Chetcuti, 1997, p. 75) could be responsible for appointment without agreed qualifications.

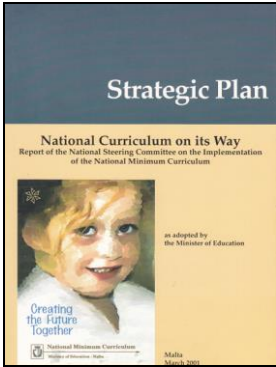

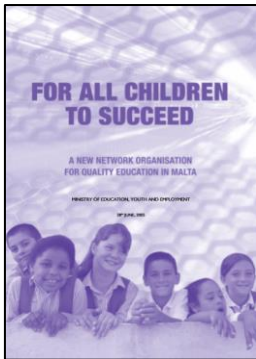
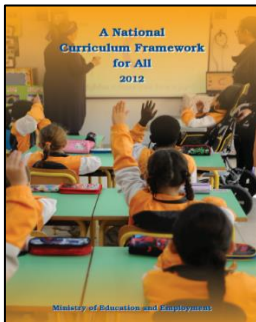
I would suggest that a qualification in educational leadership should also be required for the post of assistant head of school where many candidates apply for such posts in both the primary and secondary sectors, because further teacher-research in the area of school leadership can enhance the quality of school leadership. Further, I suggest that HoSs should be appointed heads according to the sector where they served as teachers and assistant heads in order to counter the perception that leadership in primary schools is easier, thus making this role the first preference of many applicants. Attard (1997) expressed concern that in Malta many primary school leaders brought only secondary school experience and vice-versa, and suggested “it is time HoSs be appointed only according to their qualifications and experiences in the particular sector”. This was some 20 years ago, yet the problem persists. It is essential to note that following a call for application, a HoS can express interest if the school population exceeds 500 students. Having said that, it is the prerogative of the Ministry for Education and Employment to deploy HoSs according to exigencies of the service. However, recently, the MUT expressed its concern over various transfers of HoSs and



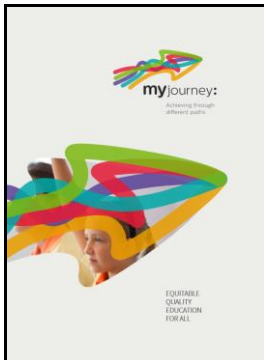
outlined that “heads who have been found to be effective are being transferred just the same to the detriment of the schools, community, and purposes of continuity” (MUT, 2014a).

2.3.4 Malta’s Education Timeline.

In this section, the major facts and educational reforms that happened in Malta as from the 1995 ‘Tomorrow Schools’ policy document are listed in the timeline in Table 2.2, all reforms having one communal purpose: that of enriching the learning experience of the Maltese students. It is not the purpose of this thesis to give a full historical background of education in Malta but brief discussion of the reforms in these last twenty-five years provides a better understanding of the present Maltese educational context. It is also to be noted that the development of Malta’s Education Act is discussed in the next section.

<p>1995</p>	<p>Tomorrow Schools: Developing Effective Learning Cultures</p> <p>A consultative document to “review and evaluate the educational policies that were being followed” in primary and secondary schools in Malta and “to point the direction which further developments and reform of the Education system should aim at during the next decade” (Ministry of Education and Human Resources, 1995, p. 4). This document discusses schools as learning communities and the role of educational leaders.</p>	
<p>1999</p>	<p>The National Minimum Curriculum (NMC): Creating the Future Together</p> <p>Ten years after that the first curriculum was established in Malta, educators and stakeholders in Malta’s education system were challenged with various principles and objectives established in this NMC. The principles were shaped with the aim of ‘creating the future together’ whilst the objectives were set in order to prepare in the best way possible the next generations in Malta.</p>	

<p>2001</p>	<p>The Strategic Plan: The National Curriculum On Its Way</p> <p>A plan with a number of targets to implement the National Minimum Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999) over five scholastic years before the end of June 2005. The targets outlined encouraged initiatives and policy-making in schools.</p>	 <p>The cover of the report 'Strategic Plan: National Curriculum on its Way' features a photograph of a young child's face. The text on the cover includes 'Strategic Plan', 'National Curriculum on its Way', 'Report of the National Steering Committee on the Implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum', and 'as adopted by the Minister of Education'. It also mentions 'Creating the Future Together' and 'Ministry of Education, Malta, March 2001'.</p>
<p>2004</p>	<p>Knowing Our School</p> <p>This document depicts the internal audit processes within the schools, giving checklists for seven main areas in order to analyse school performances. This policy document aimed “to provide tangible benchmarks” (Ministry of Education, Youth, and Employment, 2004, p. 3) against which school leaders, their SLT and staff can measure their performance and be able to take informed decisions during the school SDPs. Bezzina (2000, p. 299-300) recognises that through this policy document, more power of responsibility and authority was given to state schools by being encouraged to develop their SDP.</p>	 <p>The cover of 'Knowing Our School' is a purple document with a grid pattern. It features the title 'Knowing Our School' and 'Department of Operations' at the bottom. A small crest is visible in the upper right corner.</p>
<p>2005</p>	<p>For All Children To Succeed</p> <p>A policy document proposing the new network organisation or as better referred to as the College System in Malta. This major reform aimed to foster an environment where all students boost their self-esteem and confidence whilst there will not be any distinction according to the ability of students. Through this networking policy, autonomy, together with a shift from centralisation to decentralisation, were emphasised.</p>	 <p>The cover of 'FOR ALL CHILDREN TO SUCCEED' features a photograph of diverse children smiling. The text includes 'FOR ALL CHILDREN TO SUCCEED', 'A NEW NETWORK ORGANISATION FOR QUALITY EDUCATION IN MALTA', and 'MINISTRY OF EDUCATIONAL, YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT'.</p>
<p>2012</p>	<p>The National Curriculum Framework</p> <p>The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) is a curriculum that prepares students to continue to learn throughout their life. This National Curriculum Framework was introduced as a reaction to the effects of globalisation.</p>	 <p>The cover of 'A National Curriculum Framework for All 2012' shows a classroom scene with students at desks. The text includes 'A National Curriculum Framework for All 2012' and 'Ministry of Education and Employment'.</p>

<p>2013</p>	<p>Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024</p> <p>A document outlining four main aims as set by the EU. These are: decreasing the amount of students with learning difficulties in literacy and numeracy amongst others; supporting the educational needs of students in the risk of poverty; supporting lifelong learning; and assisting students in further education and training. These four goals led to the publication of a National Literacy For All policy and established the Early School Leavers strategy, and Lifelong learning strategy.</p>	<p>FRAMEWORK FOR THE EDUCATION STRATEGY FOR MALTA 2014-2024: SUSTAINING FOUNDATIONS, CREATING ALTERNATIVES, INCREASING EMPLOYABILITY</p> 
<p>2014</p>	<p>Respect For All Framework</p> <p>The Respect For All Framework published in October 2014 is constructed on a philosophy of respect and values throughout the educational journey that ensures and supports active citizenship. This framework “provides a context for policies, brings together different policies that help the school provide a conducive environment to achieve and inspires the school to provide a safe, secure and motivating environment for all” (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014, p. 8).</p>	
<p>2016</p>	<p>myjourney: Achieving through different paths</p> <p>A policy structured for students’ needs that will replace the current secondary school model. As from the scholastic year 2019-2020, senior secondary schools will offer not only the traditional academic path but also applied and vocational learning programmes as optional subjects. The aim of this reform in secondary schools is to move from a ‘one-size-fits-all’ system to one that caters for all students even those who prefer a hands-on approach. This is the first time that a Minister of Education has announced a reform which has not yet come into effect so that there is enough time for preparation, the development of syllabi, and teacher training.</p>	

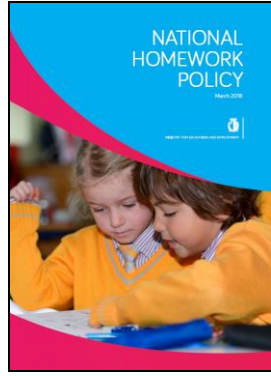
<p>2018</p>	<p>National Homework Policy</p> <p>A policy document relevant for early years to end of secondary aimed to identify meaningful understandings and practices of homework. A policy that offers direction regarding meaningful homework taking into account the different needs of all the learners. Homework assignments that increase the effectiveness and quality of homework are indicated together with guidelines about timing, scheduling, and quantity of homework. Roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders regarding homework are given.</p>	
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Table 2.2 - Malta's Education Timeline

2.3.5 Malta's Educational Act.

The Education Act found in Chapter 327 of the laws of Malta was passed in the Maltese Parliament in 1988 (Laws of Malta, 1988). Various acts and legal notices throughout these last three decades aided to enhance and develop the education law in respect to the latest developments in Malta, mainly due to the college system reform (Act XIII of 2006) and other developments as highlighted previously in Malta's education timeline.

As this thesis focuses on educational leadership, it is crucial to point out that since the Education Act of 1988, the grades of Head I and Head II, with the latter being for schools with over 500 students were removed and a system of bands was introduced: Band I for schools with less than 300 students, Band II for schools with a population between 300 and 500 students, and Band III for schools with more than 500 students. This system of bands resulted in many HoSs changing schools as Muscat (1992) referred to "like migrated birds" because every September, Heads were trying to find a school corresponding in size to the salary band into which they had now moved. As expected, this system was changed in 1994 and a salary scale was introduced.

The need for changes in the Education Act (Laws of Malta, 1988) has been urgently felt. In 2014, an assistant head of school was allegedly accused of

defiling a 10-year old boy and it was a year later that this assistant head was acquitted of defilement charges of a minor. Whilst expressing its concern, the MUT requested Malta's Prime Minister "to make the necessary changes in legislation to protect all parties concerned from the abuse of a system which appears to be flawed and incongruent" (MUT, 2014b). It appeared that the MUT received various queries from educators and thus made it clear that "the methodology in question is also proving to be a death blow for many initiatives taken by educators within the context of extracurricular activities, and an even harder blow on non-governmental organisations who provide voluntary service to children" (MUT, 2014b). Not even a year had passed when another alleged abuse case hit the Maltese media; the MUT said that "unfortunately the teacher concerned seems to have been found guilty, particularly by the media, before any investigation has been concluded" (MUT, 2016).

In 2016, Malta's Hon. Prime Minister and the Hon. Minister for Education proposed changes in the Education Act. Bartolo (2016d) stated that the new educational law was proposing democratic and participative leadership, giving a voice to all those involved, care for vulnerable children, and better standards. As well as addressing the issue of home-schooling, a new approach for licensing of schools was being proposed as, whilst the Education Act (Laws of Malta, 1988) did not give any right to the Minister to suspend or cancel such a license once it has been granted, now a school license, including those of state schools, can be revoked. Mifsud (2016b) argued that this process enhanced the autonomy of schools whilst giving a better service to the student.

2.3.6 Summary.

This section has provided a critical overview of Malta's education system with particular emphasis on the last radical reform of the college system. Additionally, an insight into educational leadership in Malta emphasising the need for HoSs to continue to focus on effective school leadership because "education is considered to be one of the main pillars of the Maltese society" (Said, 1997, p. 115). Discussing autonomy and decentralisation that comes after many years of a top-

down system, the Maltese government is committed to the mission that “the school’s vision and direction will be in reach of educators in that school with the help of the local authorities” (Bartolo, 2016b). Malta’s Hon. Minister for Education Evarist Bartolo argued that each school and its community has its realities and hence it should not be the system ‘one-size-fits-all’ (Bartolo, 2016b). Continuous review of the Education Act (Laws of Malta, 1988) and policies is needed to improve state education in Malta because as Cutajar (2007, p. 16) claims, “although education in Malta has made progress, we cannot stop there”. In the next section of this literature review, leadership and the need to maintain positive relationships is discussed.

2.4 School Leadership and Positive Relationships

Allen (2007) and Stewart (2013) argue that an effective leader attracts followers and Crippen (2012, p. 192) argues that leaders need followers. However, these are not the same arguments put forward by Weymes (2003, p. 320) who emphasises that leadership needs to turn away from “leaders and followers to leaders as inspirational players”. Being an inspirational player means placing relationships in the centre and heart of leadership where a leader has the crucial task “in facilitating the development of these relationships and networks” (Weymes, 2003, p. 320). Robert B. Woyach (n.d.) states that “leadership does not rest within a person. It is a relationship among people” keeping in mind that relationships are “something gravely critical, silently pivotal, and painstakingly challenging to sustain” (Perron, 2013, p. 25). All the writers quoted above discuss the importance of relationships in connection with leadership, which prompts me to reflect on the need for positive relationships that can be developed in order to improve school leadership.

Throughout various circumstances in the life of the individual, numerous ups and downs are experienced, with personal situations of each and every human being, including teachers, students, and parents, which can lead to anxiety, stress, and tension. Since the educational setting involves dealing with humans, relationships are of the utmost importance. Youngs (1979, p. 429) reports that anxiety often

occurs in teachers, sometimes due to a range of “personal, social and physical events from inter-personal experiences in the school setting”. This extraordinary level of teachers’ anxiety might affect student learning whilst leaving detrimental effects on the students themselves (Youngs, 1979). Troman (2000, p. 331) emphasises that insufficient professional relationships with workmates such as the school leader, other teachers and parents “elicit hostile emotions from teachers and appear to be a source of stress in teaching”. This suggests the need to enhance positive relationships in schools as leadership is “getting the best out of the people you work with” (MacBeath and Myers, 1999, p. 61) and how can this happen if people are stressed or feeling anxious or are depressed?

2.4.1 A self-aware leader.

An important aspect for a leader is to know oneself well and here, the Johari window technique can be used to improve relationships. The Johari window was created in 1955 and named after Joseph Luft (1916-2014) and Harrington Ingham (1914-1995). Whilst by disclosing information about oneself there can be trust, the other main idea of the Johari window is that with the help of feedback, one can learn about the self and explore any ‘blind areas’. Kelley, Thorton, and Daugherty (2005, p. 23) point out that such so-called ‘blind spots’ can occur in many areas such as a lack of communication skills or inconsistent discipline procedures that can hinder the quality of relationships in schools. Knowing one’s personal values and developing integrity and honesty, will help the leader to be consistent in order to walk the talk and ensure effective leadership. According to Weymes (2003, p. 320), “if a leader is unable to interact effectively with the staff, the organisation will not succeed”. I argue here, that it is a fundamental responsibility of the school leader to create and facilitate such relationships.

Crawford (2009, p. 164) asserts that “educational leadership cannot, and does not, function without emotion”. Goleman (2006) refers to the emotions of school leaders and emotional intelligence as essential for effective school leadership. Moreover, Goleman (2004) points out that people who excel in creating relationships that flourish have a clear understanding of their own emotions and

others around them. Daniel Goleman's (1998) model of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) discusses a vast range of skills and competencies on how a remarkable attainment can be accomplished by the leader, which are explained in these five main points:

- (a) Self-awareness – Knowing one's own feelings, values, aims and capabilities, amongst others;
- (b) Self-regulation – Adapting to challenging circumstances even by managing one's own feelings;
- (c) Social skill – Leading individuals according to the established aims and goals;
- (d) Empathy – Understanding and bearing in mind other individuals' emotions when taking necessary decisions;
- (e) Motivation – Motivating oneself whilst helping others to achieve as well.

Whilst this theory may sometimes be rejected, Howard Gardner (1983) explains the notion of multiple intelligence in order to define performance outcomes through the leader's skills of understanding the stimuli, intentions and aims of the staff (interpersonal intelligence), together with the importance of appreciating their emotions, fear and enthusiasm (intrapersonal intelligence).

Sinek (2009) also emphasises that a leader needs to know oneself quite well. Simon Sinek (2009) suggested the concept of 'The Golden Circle', shown in Figure 2.3, that "helps us [leaders] understand why we [leaders] do what we [leaders] do" (Sinek, 2009, p. 38). Sinek (2009, p. 39) outlines that this model "starts from inside out. It all starts with Why" as "some companies and people know How they do What they do" (Sinek, 2009, p. 39) but "very few people or companies can clearly articulate Why they do What they do" (Sinek, 2009, p. 39). Sinek's Golden Circle is grounded in the tenets of biology: the neocortex in the human brain which corresponds with the 'What' level of the Golden Circle and the limbic brain system responsible for all the human's feelings and emotional connections (Sinek, 2009).

Applying Sinek's model in school leadership requires school leaders to really understand the 'Why' of such a leadership post and to ensure that teachers and students know the reason behind the decisions aimed to enhance the quality of education for all students within the school.

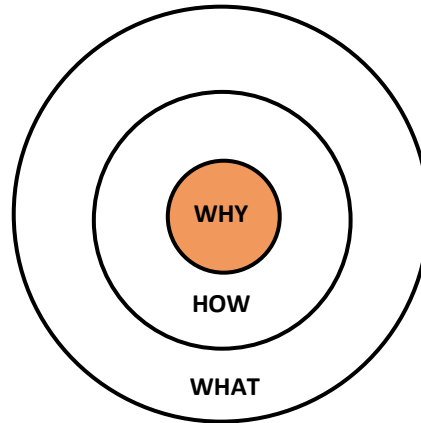


Figure 2.3 - The Golden Circle (Sinek, 2009, p. 37)

As well as a leader needing to know him/herself well, creating and maintaining relationships requires considerable time, dedication and energy because, according to Crippen (2012, p. 197), they are “developed, in part, through caring, listening, trust, honesty and collaboration”. Authentic relationships need effort to construct and maintain and “must be a priority if a sense of inclusivity, respect, collaboration, transparency and caring is to be developed and valued” (Crippen, 2012, p. 193). Through positive relationships, trust is also developed in schools, which can be considered as a main advantage of instilling positive relationships in our schools, as discussed next.

2.4.2 Trust and Educational Leaders.

Achieving trust amongst the school community can be achieved through positive relationships of school leaders with the teachers, students and parents. Weymes (2003, p. 331) points out that “trust, respect and fairness” form the basis of relationships and Walker et al. (2011, p. 473) outline that “trust is a necessary, yet fragile, part of human relationships” and hence is the most essential ingredient that holds all relationships. For Caldwell and Dixon (2010, p. 94), “trust is widely

acknowledged to be the glue that holds relationships together” and Chaleff (2009, p. 23) also suggests that trust and using trust to communicate decently and fairly are both crucial factors in positive relationships where one is meaningless without the other.

Noting the importance of trust as a basis for relationships, it is paramount to discuss trust in order to have positive and caring relationships in our schools. What happens if the teachers, students, and parents do not trust the school leader? Walker et al. (2011, p. 472) argue that it is not easy to express what is understood by ‘trust’ since it is a “complex and multi-faceted” term. Furthermore, it can be challenging to create and sustain (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000, p. 549) point out that we rely and depend on people we trust, “having confidence that our expectations of other people will be met”. Baier (1986, p. 259) states that “trust is reliance on others' competence and willingness to look after, rather than harm, things one cares about which are entrusted to their care”. Meanwhile, Caldwell, Davis and Devine (2009, p. 104) depicts trust as “the relinquishing of one’s personal choice or power in the expectant hope that another party will honour the elements of the social contract between the parties”.

Trust is essential for effective leadership as Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000, p. 549) highlight that trust is crucial in “well-functioning organizations”. Creating a positive climate filled with “trust and respect among staff members” is outlined by Bisschoff and Watts (2013, p. 24) as a vital feature of leadership. These authors claim the need for a leader to invest in trust which requires considerable time and energy. Tschannen-Moran (2013, p. 4) advises that trust cannot be developed early in a relationship and school leaders need to either “work actively at it” or school leaders “are not going to get trust”. So trust is developed as teachers and students get to know the school leader further during the various encounters such as whilst visiting classrooms to improve professional practice, going around the school, or even during dismissal. Gledhill and Faust (2003, p. 60) also acknowledge that in the John Kitto Community College, the school leader was seen in corridors and during lessons and “participated in dinner and playground duties to become known and trusted”.

Bryk and Schneider (2002, p. 144) claim that trust “is connective tissue” which enables schools to work effectively. They affirm that high levels of trust enable schools to have a fifty per cent chance of making substantial improvements, and Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) tend to agree, highlighting that the absence of trust can be a major obstacle in various reforms taking place. This leads me to conclude that investment in reforms and resources, is too little effect unless leadership is taken seriously and schools are run by leaders who can be trusted by their colleagues. My experience as a teacher during the various reforms in Malta, have, to some extent, had a negative impact on teaching and learning and, as established by Borg and Giordmaina (2012) the amount of reforms, due to the introduction of the college system in Malta, have had created pressure. This can happen even during SDPs where decisions taken will not be owned and implemented as few feel that there is trust. As Gelsthorpe (2003, p. 25) argues, before staff are prepared to implement the decisions at school level, a high level of trust in each other and confidence in decisions taken jointly are necessary. Daly (2009) suggests that schools with high levels of trust are more likely to seek new ideas and to commit to their goals. Through high levels of trust, teachers trust their school leader and cooperate with what is going on in the school community and students trust their teachers as the students would know that their teachers want the best for them in order to achieve. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000, p. 551) suggest that “students must trust their teachers in order to learn” and school staff “must trust one another in order to cooperate toward accomplishing a common goal”. If students do not trust their teachers or other students in the class “their energies are going to be taken up with self-preservation and concern and worry about what might happen” (Tschannen-Moran, 2013, p. 8-9). The same can be applied to the staff in the school because if there is no trust, the teachers’ performance weakens. Therefore “trust is pivotal” (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000, p. 550).

Daly (2009) maintains that even though trust is understudied, trust remains significant in the educational sector. Caldwell and Dixon (2010, p. 95) suggest that “trust is the basis for both forgiveness and love in the leadership relationship”. This has helped me realise that it is through trust that various

conflicts and day-to-day arguments, even between the school leader and teachers, that happen throughout the scholastic year, may be solved. Debating the necessity of trust in the educational setting leads me to argue that an educational leader must be a person of integrity, whose behaviour is exemplary within the school community and who genuinely desires to improve teaching and learning. An educational leader must have values and a mutual sense of care and concern as Day (2003, p. 171) suggests that good leaders have “clear sets of personal and educational values which represent their moral purposes for the school”. A leader who is honest about oneself inspires the sort of trust that encourages people to take risks and responsibility, as also demonstrated by Kouzes and Posner (1992). Bisschoff and Watts (2013, p. 24) propose a model that shows the influence of values on the behaviours and actions of the leaders. It is argued that the connectedness and interdependence of the three elements, as shown in Figure 2.4, are crucial to the development of trusting relationships whilst the absence of any one of these elements will lead to the breakdown of trust which can be defined as the absence of trust, or distrust.

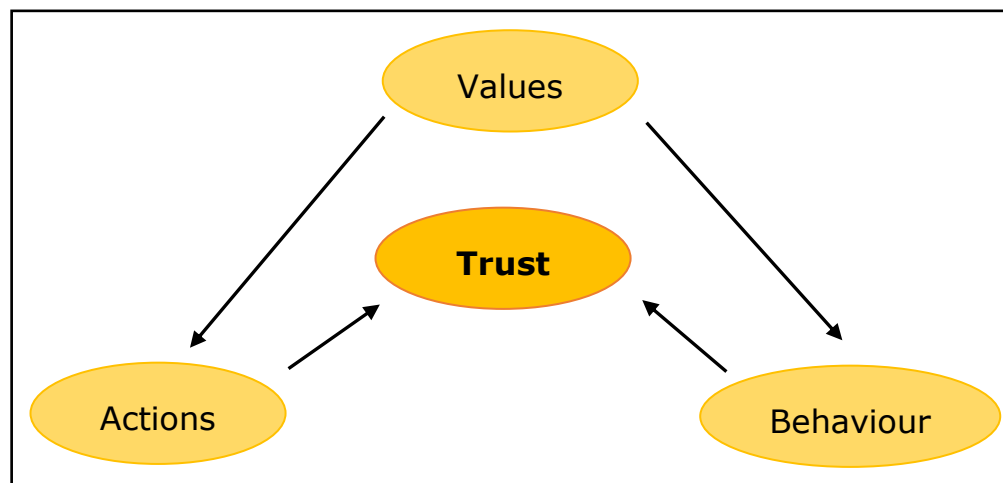


Figure 2.4 - Requirements of Trust (Bisschoff and Watts, 2013, p. 24)

Keeping in mind the importance of the values of the educational leader as highlighted in Figure 2.4 by Bisschoff and Watts (2013) brings us to discern the qualities and characteristics that are expected from school leaders in order for them to be trusted. Several studies (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Kouzes and Posner, 2008; Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000; Walker et al., 2011) identify

important values and characteristics of educational leaders which are summarised in three sub-sections: *benevolence and personal regard*; *honesty*; and *competence*. Benevolence and personal regard will be the first of the three characteristics to be discussed.

2.4.2.1 Benevolence and Personal Regard.

Have a caring and genuine concern for the well-being of the staff and students helps both staff and students to understand that they matter, and they will start to trust the school leader as the leader is the one that wishes them well. It is through building positive relationships whilst caring about others' wellbeing that "leaders can tap into the best within themselves and bring out the best in others" (Caldwell and Dixon, 2010, p. 98). Bringing out the best in others requires leaders to know all the staff and students well. An effective leader should talk with staff and students and help them find out what they intend to achieve, where they see themselves in a few years' time, and discuss their careers and aspirations. Kouzes and Posner (2008, p. 2) suggest that a school leader should be interested in others' dreams, expectations, and achievements.

Whilst showing a sense of benevolence and personal regard means wishing all staff and students the best in life and in their achievements, Sebring and Bryk (2000, p. 443) advise that taking a personal interest in the well-being of others means that sometimes a school leader needs to reach beyond his/her formal role to do so. There will be moments where staff will go through a difficult period or experience new challenges due to personal problems or sickness in the family and therefore a leader who understands these circumstances will help to enrich the personal regard of the staff. School leaders need to realise and acknowledge the "perceptions, emotions, and feelings of those around them" (Weymes, 2003, p. 331). Understanding the staff and their difficulties whilst being sensitive to others is described by Kouzes and Posner (1992, p. 481) as a "truly precious human ability". I believe that safeguarding a personal regard is one of the triangle of pillars that trust rests on. Showing a sense of benevolence and personal regard means showing love to all staff and students and wishing them the best in life and

in their achievements as “love, creates the desire to see others grow and become their best” (Kouzes and Posner, 1992, p. 480).

2.4.2.2 Honesty.

Described by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000, p. 558) as “a pivotal facet of trust”, honesty is the second crucial characteristic required by a school leader in order to gain trust. Kouzes and Posner (2008, p. 3) argue that honesty is one of the most significant values that attracts people towards the leader. There are various situations in the school community where honesty or a lack thereof is encountered, such as when students do not adhere to the school regulations and are not honest in order to avoid the infringement or even circumstances where teachers lie to their leaders to justify turning up late for work. Weymes (2003, p. 331) suggests that trust will only emerge “through openness, honesty and integrity”. An open dialogue through honesty is necessary in schools and although school leaders do have good intentions, not being fair with all colleagues can lead to inconsistency. As Walker et al. (2011, p. 473) argue, ideas must not only be valid but also well-intentioned, such that trust is parallel with honesty. In order to illustrate the point, when speaking to different members of staff the leader should ensure that the content is similar and not try to manipulate staff by withholding certain information. The result is that eventually staff members would find out that the leader has lied, leading to the inevitable loss of trust. Conversely, honest leaders who show concern and get results are well-received by teaching staff and students in the school.

It is through the leader’s personal values that honesty can be practised and primarily a leader should be honest to oneself. Getting to know oneself, as already outlined, is a necessity because “honesty is also related to values” (Kouzes and Posner, 1992, p. 483). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000, p. 558) suggest that “honesty speaks to a person’s character, integrity and authenticity” and it is through this honesty that a leader encourages others to take responsibility (Kouzes and Posner, 1992, p. 483).

2.4.2.3 Competence.

A school leader can have the necessary skills to establish positive relationships, show a sense of benevolence and personal regard for all the school community and behave honestly, but if the leader is not competent, the school will not move forward and thus the staff, students and parents might not trust the school leader. A lack of competence results in a lack of trust. Brewster and Railsback (2003, p. 5) confirm that if the leader “means well” but does not have the required skills, the leader will not be trusted in such a post. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) emphasise a particular study where the school leader had various positive characteristics such as being friendly, encouraging and supportive, but above all, was professional in his approach.

A school leader who is competent knows his/her job well and has a passion for school leadership. Kouzes and Posner (2008, p. 3) define competence as “the leader’s track record of getting things done”. To put it simply, a leader who is competent is able to get things done and solve issues with teachers, students and parents in an efficient manner. It is in this way that trust is developed. A competent school leader can convince teachers that s/he can be relied upon, as pointed out by Coates (2015), who argues that teachers’ jobs will become easier and more fulfilling when they feel that they have a trustworthy leader. Bennis and Nanus (1985, p. 44) indicate that individuals trust those “whose positions are known” whilst also standing on personal values and beliefs. Kouzes and Posner (2008) demonstrate this and argue that being competent also means making decisions and taking positions whilst also taking a stand on personal values and beliefs as, unknowingly, individuals have strong admiration for leaders who show strong commitment and hold clear opinions on important values and principles whilst being confident and not reticent in explaining their views and principles (Kouzes and Posner, 2008).

Trust cannot occur without a sense of benevolence and personal regard, honesty, and competence. Embarking on an inner journey of self-discovery is essential for a school leader, as suggested by Kouzes and Posner (2011b), whereby the leader

must first engage in a process of self-examination and, amongst others, know well his/her personal visions and dreams. It is through this process of self-discovery that a leader reflects on and comes to terms with personal characteristics, thereby exercising values that others tend to look for in a leader, and which eventually will lead to the achievement of trust.

2.4.3 Relationships and Distrust.

Walker et al. (2011, p. 472) concede that most school administrations, in one way or another, have possibly “experienced trust-breaking situations in their work”. There are various situations in the everyday life of the school community where trust may be fragmented or, unfortunately, lost due to minor conflicts. For example, a teacher asks the HoS for special leave due to a personal problem. A few days later the teacher learns that a colleague is aware of this personal circumstance. Consequently, this particular teacher loses trust in the school leader. This real-life example shows that school leaders need to be very careful because “just one slip of the tongue” (Walker et al., 2011, p. 472) can lead to loss of trust and hence school leadership can be affected. Brewster and Railsback (2003, p. 10) argue that top-down decision making, ineffective communication, and lack of support for school improvement are some of the barriers which hinder the development of trust and trusting relationships.

Tschannen-Moran (2013, p. 3) admits that there was something “that nobody is talking about in the research of schools” that made the school function and that something was ‘trust’. Tschannen-Moran (2013) found that there was a noteworthy effort of trust amongst the teachers, students, and parents. Trust is significant when considering today’s schools particularly when trust is often only discussed as a lack of trust experienced. Baier (1986, p. 234) suggests that trust is like air and “we notice it as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted”. When trust has been damaged, the energy becomes focused on the source of distrust and thus the energy is lost from teaching and student learning, in turn hindering effective leadership. Tschannen-Moran (2013, p. 4) suggests

that when trust is lost, energy is removed from the crucial mutual work and instead “invested in self-protection and in hyper-vigilance”.

2.4.4 Summary.

The connection between school leadership and positive relationships was discussed in this section keeping in mind that “without relationships, there is nothing” (Willis, 2013, p. 29). The need for school leaders to be aware in order to create and maintain positive relationships with teachers and students was outlined. This section also draws attention to the necessity of trust with regard to positive relationships in schools. Whilst trust is a difficult notion to describe and define, its absence is usually felt as, unfortunately, “trust in schools is often taken for granted” (Walker et al., 2011, p. 474). Trust is vital in schools and where trust flourishes schools are more likely to commit to their aims and goals. Where trust is damaged, the energy of the teachers and students is deflected from teaching and learning towards self-protection. “Trust-related matters are an important, yet fragile, aspect of the work of leaders” (Walker et al., 2011, p. 489). However, a leader that invests in the three characteristics discussed: *benevolence and personal regard*, *honesty*, and *competence*, will help to maintain positive relationships in schools through trust. An inner journey of self-discovery is imperative for a leader, as suggested by Kouzes and Posner (2011b, p. 23) so that schools will have “even better leaders”. The next section of this literature review, provides a critical discussion of the benefits of enhancing positive relationships with teachers and students for effective leadership.

2.5 Benefits of Positive Relationships in Schools

After outlining the necessity of maintaining positive relationships and trust in schools, in this fifth section of the literature review the literature on the benefits of positive relationships of school leaders with teachers and students is discussed. Positive relationships play a vital role and, as outlined by Sebring and Bryk (2000, p. 442), schools that observed improvements are those schools identified by “co-operative work relations among all adults”. In this section, the benefits of

maintaining positive relationships for effective school leadership are divided into four main areas: Positive school climate and sense of belonging; Maintaining a Professional Learning Community (PLC); Establishing effective communication in schools and with parents; and Treating everyone with care and respect.

2.5.1 Positive School Climate and Sense of Belonging.

Sather (1999, p. 517) argues that a school leader's focus on positive relationships, made all teachers and students in her study feel important in the school and therefore "student anonymity was decreased". The growth in school embracement led to "a climate of harmony" (Sather, 1999, p. 517). On entering a school, the first impressions, such as the decor and the mission statement hanging on the wall, give a feel and atmosphere of that school. In my experience, entering a school without being welcomed or without being noticed can affect one's first reactions to that school. Having a receptionist welcoming visitors and parents in schools, offering assistance, offering a coffee to those waiting for a meeting to start, shows that in the particular school, relationships matter. Positive relationships between all those working in a school can lead to a difference that may be felt by visitors but most importantly, this positivity will motivate teachers and students. Contrastingly, Sergiovanni (1994, p. 19) warns that if relationships are poor, "threats of or incidents of violence, as well as a sense of depression and hopelessness exist".

The daily routine of the school, including how the SLT relate with teachers and students, reflect the values of the school, as school influences particular attitudes through the development process. Youngs (1979, p. 428) outlines that the school should endeavour to create "group supportiveness among staff" in order to instil "a warm friendly atmosphere". Crippen (2012, p. 193) states that "although schools are about learning, development, values and ethos, schools are all about relationships". Hence as Tschannen-Moran (2013, p. 7) points out, it is necessary for a new leader to slow down and take time to build relationships, demonstrating "a genuine caring and sense of benevolence about people as human beings, not just as functionaries in the organisation". Whilst the direction of the school leader

is crucial in a school climate context, a positive climate is most usually the result of “the product of the relationship” built amongst the school leader and the teachers, between the teachers themselves, and between teachers, students and parents (Rapti, 2013, p. 124).

Doll (2010) suggests that the main elements of school climate embrace the positive relationships in schools including the school community and also their families, and Rapti (2013) supports Doll’s (2010) argument that positive relationships together with prospects, principles and faith amongst the school community create the school climate. People in the school keep the school culture alive, and school cultures are influenced by relationships between people and “if these relationships are strengthened, professional practice will be improved” (Barth, 2006, p. 8). A school climate is also the result of the students’ academic achievement (Doll, 2010) which is affected by the students’ attendance and their participation in classes.

Developing a sense of belonging through positive relationships can enhance motivation. Swift (2012) suggested that if the school environment reflects order, beauty and comfort, then teachers and students will be more motivated to teach and learn and a tidy room is important as it sends the clear message to the students about being tidy and neat in their work. Sood et al. (2018, p. 38) maintain that “creating an environment which allows each young person to achieve her or his potential” is a fundamental responsibility of school leaders. Ramos and Barnett (2013, p. 36) also explain that through relationships and a sense of belonging, “the school bulletin board displays are respected and never vandalised” whilst the amount of garbage left around the school “has greatly diminished”. These studies indicate that if classrooms are in disorder, students feel that adults in their school do not care about them (Elias, 2010, p. 25). Youngs (1979, p. 428) also suggests that a student masters knowledge through the way the school is organised, which also indicates that students not only learn subject-related content during the various lessons but also values which inform their attitudes and interactions with others. As Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) demonstrate, the school leader’s attitude can influence how the students feel about themselves

as well as the attitudes of others in the school. Students want to see their school as the best place for them to go every weekday and need to develop a sense of pride and ownership of their school.

Students are more likely to achieve their full potential if they feel safe and have a sense of belonging whilst being academically challenged (Sebring and Bryk, 2000). Through a focus on building trust and forging relationships to turn around schools, Andrews (2011, p. 21) suggests that it is the leader's full "responsibility and accountability" through strong and honest discipline that creates a sense of belonging in the school. This sense of ownership is confirmed because although in the past years "all you heard was negative, it's now all positive" (Andrews, 2011, p. 21) and this was the result of improved relationships in the community as relationships are "the life-blood of the community" (Gelsthorpe and West-Burnham, 2003, p. 10). The sense of positivity and ownership is also encouraged by Saphier, King, and D'Auria (2006) who argue that students' success is teachers' joint responsibility, and this means that when a student achieves his/her goal, all teachers would be willing to celebrate his/her achievement.

Having a sense of belonging means that teachers and students feel proud of their school and feel a responsibility to look after school resources and to participate in various social and learning events and activities throughout the scholastic year. As Andrews (2011, p. 21) suggests, enhancing the appearance of a school can maintain a sense of belonging "and collaborative culture". On a different note, Saphier, King, and D'Auria (2006, p. 55) outline the need for all teachers and students to be known as individuals and respected for their individuality so that they feel part of a "cohesive, supportive community", engendering pride in teachers and students. As emphasised by Coates (2015), "it's imperative that children are proud of their school: it should be the best in the world as far as they're concerned". Dimmock and Tan (2013) mention the need for monitoring and appraisal by school leaders in order to achieve motivation of teachers and students in schools. Similarly, Weymes (2003) discusses the Atlanta Braves example in order to outline the impact of motivation through positive relationships that led the basketball team to be the most successful team of the

1990s after it was one of the worst performing teams in the previous years, a challenge which “was addressed by building a pride and passion within the staff” (Weymes, 2003, p. 322-323).

2.5.2 Maintaining a Professional Learning Community.

A school community is a group of people working together under common rules with a particular aim and therefore a school community should involve all the teaching staff, students and parents. Sergiovanni (1994, p. xiii) defines a community as “the tie that binds students and teachers together in special ways” because it improves their “self-understanding, commitment and performance”. Moreover, in a community, a united ‘we’ stands instead of many ‘I’s’ as Sergiovanni (1994) asserts. Hence, as suggested by Roberts and Pruitt (2009, p. 25), a shift from schools as “bureaucracies” towards schools as communities with a particular sense of belonging is necessary.

Sergiovanni (1994, p. 71) argues that in a Professional Learning Community (PLC), all individuals commit “altruistic love” to each other where positive relationships will be “clearly *Gemeinschaft*⁶”. Positive relationships help to build a community where its members listen to each other’s concerns, are there to help each and every individual; and gather together to lay foundations and implement school policies and the mission statement. The importance of a sense of community is also emphasised by Tschannen-Moran (2013, p. 2) who argues that it was a “strong sense of community” that held things together in the school he led in Chicago. Similarly, Harris and Chapman (2002) found that a sense of community through a climate of collaboration existed in the schools in their study where there was a commitment to working together. The need for a community is universal, and this sense of community is much needed in schools where “being connected to others” (Sergiovanni 1994, p. xii) creates a feeling of belonging that enriches our life.

⁶ *Gemeinschaft* is a German word that translates to community. Sergiovanni’s (1994) Theory of Community Building presents educators with the challenge to build *Gemeinschaft* through a common goal and shared values.

2.5.2.1 Communities that are Learning.

PLCs can be considered to be healthy if those communities are learning (Gelsthorpe and West Burnham, 2003, p. 11), and ‘a good school’ has been defined by Barth (1990, p. 513) as the school where “everyone is teaching, and everyone is learning”. Ensuring that the community is learning is one of the main challenges that the job of the school leader entails (Day and Sammons, 2016). In PLCs individuals commit to professional development (Sergiovanni, 1994) where teachers and students can enhance their understanding and strive for excellence. This means that teachers help students academically and holistically and help other teachers and colleagues by holding discussions, formal and informal and providing feedback to each other. Having “a community of learners” (Barth, 1990, p. 513) who listen to each other, understand and do not judge others whilst helping in various activities and events, creates a sense of professionalism in the community. This helps the staff to unite as one and share values and ideas whilst supporting each other’s activities, such as happened in Chicago where, in order to improve schools, school leaders ensured that there were regular opportunities for reflection and dialogues between teachers (Sebring and Bryk, 2000) enabling teachers to learn from each other by observing one another and sharing their work.

When colleagues share ideas and values, a “bond of fellowship emerges that provides a moral climate that empowers the membership as a whole” (Sergiovanni, 2009, p. 114). DuFour and Eaker (1998, p. 25) assert that a “collective inquiry” is the backbone of development and progress in a PLC which can offer support and motivation to its teachers who will be able to draw on the help of their colleagues to handle obstacles (Kruse et al., 1995). Eliminating “barriers” in the community can enhance collaboration (Beyerlein, 2003), thereby bringing about a harmonious environment in which staff are more motivated to work for the benefits of the community, especially the students. Harris and Chapman (2002) reported that through a PLC, teacher morale was raised whilst Kruse et al. (1995) found out that teachers felt more effective in their jobs.

As well as investing in positive relationships, Kruse et al. (1995, p. 4) consider time and resources to be some of the “critical elements” to ensure and establish PLCs in schools. They propose that school leaders should: provide time for reflective dialogue; encourage physical proximity to ensure teachers discuss, collaborate and work together; ensure teacher empowerment and autonomy so that teachers take risks and decisions in order to prepare and cover with students what they have confidence in and seems worth it for students to learn; creating communication structures, create workshop and other opportunities for all members of staff to learn new knowledge whilst supporting, trusting and respecting all members of the school community. Roberts and Pruitt (2009) also affirm that educators need to have the necessary support of school leaders in terms of resources, time, and motivation amongst other important factors that help them to promote mutual collaboration.

Talking about relationships and team building in staff meetings and Professional Development Sessions (PDSs) is a necessity, as Perron (2013, p. 25) states “relationships matter but dialogue, discussion or a study session regarding relationships is not set up or done”. However, contrary to Perron’s affirmation (2013), Crippen (2012) describes a PDS where staff were grouped in pairs and spent an hour discussing questions to really get to know one another, showing that PDSs can be used intelligently to discuss relationships amongst the staff. Chapman and Harris (2004, p. 223) also argue that staff development has a major influence in school improvements and so successful schools “have policies in place that support staff professional development”. Recently, “professional development is evolving into something new and inspiring” (Starkey, 2012, p. 11) with terms such as “connected learning, collective inquiry, mentoring, lifelong, reflective and practice” (Starkey, 2012, p. 11) have emerged.

2.5.2.2 Communities for Success.

Henrik Ibsen (n.d.) wrote that “a community is like a ship; everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm”. In PLCs, leadership is distributed as both teachers and students perceive themselves as a community of “learners and leaders”, instead of

“participants in the traditional leader-follower roles” (Roberts and Pruitt, 2009, p. 25). Teachers and students are all important as everyone is responsible for particular duties; even a student in charge of a really small task is given the opportunity to learn even if s/he does not succeed immediately. Interestingly, teachers and students assuming responsibility does not only mean that some teachers will assume posts of ‘Head of Departments’ or ‘Head of Years’ or a minimum number of students will be involved in the students’ council but as Barth (1990, p. 515) argues, schools should ensure that “everyone becomes a school leader in some ways and at some times”. McNeely (2003, p. 3) insists that “when students develop a positive social bond with their school, they are more likely to remain academically engaged and less likely to become involved in antisocial behaviours”. Therefore, students should be given small leadership tasks so that they feel part of the school community whilst also setting some of their own goals, building leadership potential and skills and sharing the skills learnt and achieved throughout the scholastic years. Student-led seminars and conferences for parents can help students to achieve more as they share their knowledge with “the people who matter most to them” (Champeau, 2011, p. 40) who will be invited to school.

Green (2002, p. 4) suggested that creating a successful learning community is a key issue for school effectiveness; in fact it is argued that “good schools would be shining examples of learning communities”. Through PLCs, schools have been shown to achieve success because, in communities, teachers worked together through finding ways of improvement after regular evaluations and thus kept students in the centre of their profession (Green, 2002). Effective leaders set high targets and thus what is worth fighting for in schools is “interactive professionalism” within the school community (Fullan, 1998, p. 39). This means that school leaders and teachers that work together as a community become more committed and take necessary risks in order to achieve the targets set whilst being better equipped through professional development, which result in more outcomes to produce successful schools. As Chapman and Harris (2003, p. 3) demonstrate, regular celebrations of students’ successes such as presentations of certificates and rewards and praising students can lead to a motivation to improve

in academic achievement. Kruse et al. (1995, p. 2) also conclude that, in schools, where PLCs are strong, teachers work more together in an effective manner resulting in “creating and sustaining opportunities for student learning”.

2.5.2.3 Links via the Communities.

Through positive relationships in schools and PLCs, links with local agencies and organisations can yield to more opportunities for the school community, such as exposure for students in different sectors, job shadowing training with different companies, voluntary work, and many more experiences that can enrich the students to reflect and develop holistically. Celebrating all achievements of students will help to boost the PLCs because, “all actions or outcomes that promote the values of the learning community are reasons to celebrate” (Roberts and Pruitt, 2009, p. 221). Further, activities such as the “mentoring program, after-school activities, leadership opportunities for students, English classes for parents, a parent centre, and student recognitions” (Perron, 2013) have all been found essential to maintain a community. Day and Sammons (2016, p. 28) suggest that building relationships outside the school community is also essential to achieve long-term success, and Chapman and Harris (2003, p. 3) also acknowledge that educational leaders are often ‘entrepreneurial ambassadors’ because they work with various agencies and councils for the benefit of the school community whilst also making the best of every opportunity to raise the school’s profile and build stronger rapport.

2.5.3 Effective Communication.

Bush (2018, p. 536) clearly outlines that communication between school leaders and teachers “is vital if schools are to be led and managed successfully”. Effective school leadership requires strong channels of communication, and positive relationships between school leaders and the teaching staff and students can enhance communication channels in schools. As Clark and Clark (2005, p. 57) outline, “effective two-way communication is the foundation on which successful parent/community/school relationships are built”, a point also

highlighted by Clift et al. (1992, p. 886) who report that a school in their study experienced, “communication between teachers and administration” as a problem which took some three years, and a clear action plan, to bring about improvement. Day and Sammons (2016) also address the need for effective communication in schools; for whilst various circulars, e-mail updates, and regular school newspapers can enhance communication with teachers, students, and parents, it is informal communication such as socialising through positive relationships that can effectively maintain regular communications with teachers and students. Communicating and building a rapport with students can even occur during breaks or whilst students are waiting for their transport during dismissal. Doll (2010, p. 16) remarks that school leaders should “protect” some time every day for teachers and students to talk together. Brewster and Railsback (2003, p. 16) suggest that school leaders can enhance communication “by making time in the schedule for teachers to work together” whilst, as also suggested by the OECD (2009, p. 45), “colleagues need to communicate through meaningful professional conversations around evidence”. Moreover, Barth (2006) suggests that there is no more crucial role for any school leader than to make it possible for adults to discuss their professional relationships, and whilst communication with parents may be challenging, is vital in order “to help youngsters succeed in school and in later life” (Epstein, 2010, p. 82) and each school needs to decide how it will make a start in developing parental involvement (Epstein and Dauber, 1991, p. 302).

2.5.3.1 Communication with Parents.

Epstein (2010, p. 82) suggests that “schools make choices” about how and how frequently they communicate with parents, but Clark and Clark (2005, p. 54) see parents and the local community as an untapped resource in many schools. This may arise due to various situations through the day-to-day running of the school including a non-ending list of tasks and decisions required by a school leader and so parents may be neglected in many schools. Flessa (2008) observed that school leaders were not attending to parents due to what he described as new accountability pressures on a daily basis that impede parental involvement. Similarly, Clark and Clark (2005) found out that leaders in their study had little

time to devote to developing relationships between parents and members of the school community. Meanwhile,

It is no longer acceptable for schools, colleges or any other educational setting to act in an autocratic or god-like way, claiming to know ‘what is best’ for learners and their families and ignoring the wishes and feelings of the communities they serve (Sood et al., 2018, p. 85).

The leader’s positive relationships and his/her attitude towards communication with parents influences whether parents are “involved in and contribute to the everyday activities of the school, or whether they feel too intimidated to enter the school gates” (Barr and Saltmarsh, 2014, p. 501). Positive relationships of school leaders can yield to more communication with parents even when parents visit schools to observe classrooms or when picking or dropping off their children as “the community’s culture becomes familiar and welcoming” (Doll, 2010, p. 13). Orientation meetings with parents before the beginning of the scholastic year, seminars and conferences on various parental skills, and school information for parents at convenient times for all working parents do say a lot about inviting parents to come to school. Epstein (2010, p. 93-94) reports that the “I Care Program” held in the Baltimore project which included an “I Care Parent Club”, and an “I Care Newsletter”, were amongst numerous activities and events in order to enhance communication between teachers, students and their families. Doll (2010, p. 16) also suggests having activities and events that both teachers and parents enjoy and through these activities, positive relationships are strengthened whilst also reinforcing the shared commitments between teachers, students, and families.

Communicating with parents can help to increase links between the parents and teachers as studies over several decades have shown that communication can ultimately lead to improve student achievement and outcomes (Epstein, 1987; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Chapman and Harris (2003, p. 2) demonstrate that parents were instrumental in the improvement of teaching and learning as “a strong clear commitment to academic achievement was regularly communicated to parents”. By having regular communications and interactions between schools and families, students are more likely to perceive common insights from teachers and parents about the importance of school, amongst other significant values (Lee

and Burkam, 2003; Epstein, 2010). Regular communication with parents can help in managing positive behaviour in schools. School leaders do not usually know all the parents and an interesting concern addressed by Clark and Clark (2005) is that school leaders often know the expectations of parents of students with disability and other conditions and also of parents of high achieving students, as usually school leaders have frequent contact with these parents. Moreover, some school leaders meet parents of students who need to be disciplined or after being sanctioned; however, tackling certain situations, even with parents “takes time and perseverance” (Epstein 1987, p. 120). Thus Doll (2010, p. 14) suggests that it is essential to have established professional relationships with parents prior to any difficulties whilst allowing them to help in resolving any struggles or clashes that might arise.

Schools often have a school council or an association made up of teachers and parents. Whilst I suggest that this should not be the only involvement of parents, Sebring and Bryk (2000, p. 442) recognise that productive schools have active councils and committed parents, and the school council can serve to build and maintain the school community. As suggested by Tschannen-Moran (2001), the school council can help to gain support for the school and can be a means of improving the ways in which schools respond to community needs and issues. Parents can act as school ambassadors, recommending the school to other parents and the community, as Heystek (1999, p. 97) found, parents can be crucial partners in a school community. With various groups within the communities sharing similar values, this can help to improve relationships between schools and families.

In the 1980s, Epstein, (1987) argued that because family life and make-up was changing, parents may not be available due to early or late shifts or shifting from one full-time to another part-time job. Reporting on work in the 1990s, Heystek (1999) sustained that most parents neglected their mission to be involved in school activities and although this view is the one that many school leaders hold to by arguing that parents need to show enthusiasm and participate in the school activities, more recently, Barr and Saltmarsh (2014, p. 500) report that things

have changed, and rather than them not being interested in involvement in their child's school, they felt unlistened to and excluded from participating – or in some cases – entering the school. Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) ask leaders to reflect and think about the crucial role of necessary communication through positive relationships with parents because, as Flessa (2008, p. 21) observes, “parental involvement is an important aspiration for schools”.

2.5.4 Treating Everyone with Care and Respect.

Positive relationships can also yield to a culture of care and respect, where teachers and students are treated as individuals with their own unique ambitions and dreams. This is in line with what Rapti (2013, p. 115) advises, that in order to avoid feelings of loneliness and disinterest, it is of the utmost importance that hospitality is shown to all learners. This means sustaining positive relationships that emphasise respect (Andrews, 2011, p. 21) for all teachers and students by realising the differences and potentials of each student and celebrating their success and determination. Church (2016) debates that in this day and age, considerable time in leadership seminars is spent discussing on how to prioritise. Whilst acknowledging various important tasks carried out by school leaders, it is necessary to have leadership that promotes a culture of care and respect. As acknowledged by Simon Sinek (n.d.): “Good leadership is always human. It takes time and energy. It is hard work. Which is why good leadership is so special when we find it”. Bezzina (2009, p.13) also outlines that “a genuine and authentic person treats others with respect. How different we feel when we know that others, the people around us, believe in us as individuals”.

Through positive relationships with teachers and students, the school leader will make all stakeholders feel welcome in the school. Brewster and Railsback (2003, p. 16) advise that it is essential that school leaders make teachers feel welcome by developing a friendly relationship including with new teachers from the beginning of the scholastic year. They suggest that inviting teachers to lunch, introducing one teacher to another, and offering help and resources is the way forward to avoid isolation whilst building teacher-teacher trust. Students also

need to feel welcome in the schools and to be treated as individuals with their unique ambitions. Knowing students by name and later on getting to know the students' hobbies, interests, strengths and weaknesses regarding academic abilities, and their challenges to develop holistically show interest in students, which, in turn, makes them feel welcome at school. If students feel welcome through the establishment of positive relationships, students will be more eager to learn and achieve academically. As pointed out by Doll (2010, p. 12), "strong interpersonal relationships", together with teachers who administer fair discipline amongst students, will result in a better environment for learning and development.

Through positive relationships, care is expressed in schools. At school, teachers need good friends whom they can trust and with whom to discuss even their personal issues over a cup of coffee in the staffroom. Barth (2006) points out that, fortunately, schools also flourish with adult relationships that are interactive and positive whilst also pointing out that an example that shows personal and friendly relationships is when "one teacher makes the coffee and pours it for a colleague" (Barth, 2006, p. 11). On the same note, Doll (2010) emphasises that similar to students who search for friendships amongst their classmates, the teachers also desire good friendships from their workmates. Through these friendships, teachers would be able to liaise and share school resources and solve trivial conflicts. When students know that teachers are firm, friendly, caring, and consistent in the classrooms, they feel safe, and cared and loved for, therefore they are connected to learning (Swift, 2012). Care and warmth for students should allow students to feel protected and comfortable while leaving no room for peer pressure, violation and bullying (Doll, 2010) so that the students make the best of the learning experience in the particular school. Lee and Burkam (2003) found out that because teachers had no interest in whether the students succeeded or not, and as there was no care for students on a personal level and teachers would not go the extra mile for them, even if asked, these unhealthy relationships led to student dropouts from schools. Elias (2010, p. 23) clearly states that "students who don't feel heard or engaged are in danger of dropping out", whilst Epstein

(2010, p. 82) points out that if students feel a sense of warmth they are motivated to succeed by doing their utmost to learn academically and develop holistically.

Building a culture of appreciation in our schools can also be achieved through positive relationships with teachers and students. A school leader that appreciates and thanks teachers shows that people are important in the particular school. Through the appreciation for teachers' work, leaders will bring teachers on their side and as Coates (2015) suggests, "once you've got staff on side there's not much that can get in your way. Teaching is, after all, a team sport". Moreover, through this culture of appreciation, more work is carried out for the benefit of the students as Swift (2012) debates that long-term staff who feel valued, will therefore provide value for the students to perform better. Mercola (n.d.) also agrees with the latter and suggests that "a person who feels appreciated will always do more than what is expected" and thus can go an extra mile for the students. Hence positive relationships will lead to the achievement of school goals that are not necessarily under the teachers' obligations, such as holding extra-curricular activities during breaks, organising activities for parents and outings for students. This is summarised by Doll (2010) who points out that the performances of teachers progresses when a culture of appreciation is fostered.

Decisions and challenges faced by teachers and students are amongst the various situations that school leaders encounter in the daily running of schools. Help and suggestions from teachers and other staff would be welcomed by an effective leader but help will only come after collaboration has flourished in the particular school. Tschannen-Moran (2001, p. 309) argues that skilled school leaders are capable to take decisions "through collaboration". Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) also point out that effective school leaders value insights from their colleagues thus making efficient use of human resources in solving such day-to-day problems. Having established positive relationships, it is important to listen to teachers' opinions when it comes to taking decisions that affect them and their teaching. A school leader should ensure that students are not facing any challenges alone as it is suggested that individual learning plans should not be carried out only for students with disabilities, but individualized progress plans

are needed for all the students. In order for every student to matter, Champeau (2011, p. 39) suggests a process whereby the advisory teacher checks the “student’s progress and determine whether the student needs any additional support” so that s/he is encouraged and empowered. Doll (2010, p. 15) argues that students should be helped to achieve learning goals one after the other, step by step. Guidance and other relevant services also offer advice for students to find which path they intend to follow. As advised by Champeau (2011, p. 39), “all students should be able to articulate in fairly good detail what they plan to accomplish and how they plan to do it”.

School leaders also need to take decisions that teachers and students might not like at first or do not like at all but which are aimed at improving the school experience. Marley (2007, p. 22) states that the first moves by the newly appointed school leader was to bring in a no hats, caps and hoodies rule whilst “toilets are now locked during lessons times, leaving fewer places to hide” so that students turn their attention to improve their learning. This happened as in the previous years “many wasted time milling through corridors and smoking in toilets when they should have been in lessons” (Marley, 2007, p. 22). Tschannen-Moran (2013) discusses a leader who “wanted to be liked by everybody” but “conflict ran rampant in his school” (Tschannen-Moran, 2013, p. 6). It was also noted that the effective leader “managed to balance an orientation towards the task with an orientation towards relationships” (Tschannen-Moran, 2013, p. 6). The same idea of not pleasing everybody was mentioned by Gledhill and Faust (2003, p. 60) who point out that whilst enhancing a culture of relationships and trust, the use of mobile phones in the college was banned with the consequence that “the first week saw minor confrontations; the second week brought a change in atmosphere which had to be sustained”. This accords with Swift (2012) who emphasised that students need structure and order in their day because routines and rituals are important. Marley (2007) found that a new behaviour policy in a particular school which aimed to improve the relationships between staff and students resulted in a change from students being punished without “having a right to reply” to a situation where staff “who discipline students have to meet them later in the day to explain their point of view and listen to what students

have to say” (Marley, 2007, p. 22). As outlined, investing in positive relationships can also help to acquire the necessary school discipline needed. With regards to discipline, Coates (2015) suggests that school leaders should talk about students’ learning and not students’ behaviour whilst making the classroom central to every decision they take.

2.5.5 Summary.

In this fifth section, the benefits of positive relationships with regard to effective leadership were discussed. It was debated that positive relationships of school leaders with teachers and students could result in having a positive school climate and a sense of belonging. As Rapti (2003, p. 110) suggests, schools should be places that are “safe and positive” so through positive relationships a sense of belonging can be attained. This section also discussed the importance of a PLC. Allocating time and necessary resources may seem difficult but every investment in fruitful relationships and trust will result in maintaining a PLC. The final will of engaging in a community of collaboration is the decision of all individuals: teachers and students; as emphasised by Barth (2006, p. 11) “schools are full of good players. Collegiality is about getting them to play together, about growing a professional learning community”. When educators work together and a PLC is formed, both teachers and students achieve more as an environment of care and mutual concern is developed, teachers help each other, discuss and aim for better working methods which, after all, result in the improvement of teaching and learning. As outlined by Sergiovanni (1994), a community can start thriving in one classroom and then one classroom might become two and so forth, till the whole school is reached.

This section also addressed the importance of effective communication with the school community, with particular emphasis on parents. As suggested by Willis (2013, p. 29), school leaders need to create opportunities for the staff, students and parents to “come together for the success of our students and their posterity”. Moreover, the importance of instilling a culture of care and respect in schools was also debated within this section. As discussed, through positive relationships and

a sense of appreciation, the learning experience is enhanced with less discipline problems in schools.

2.6 Positive Relationships for Effective Leadership

The importance of effective leadership in schools today, and the necessity of establishing positive relationships through achieving trust has been discussed in the previous sections of this literature review. It was suggested that trust cannot occur without the leader's sense of benevolence and personal regard, honesty, and competence. Through trust in school leaders, I suggest that care and collaboration will flourish in schools. Birchfield (2014) states that "collaboration is central to leadership. At the heart of collaboration is love". Leadership and love is quite a new subject area and it has been under-studied. As Birchfield (2014) stresses, although the concept of getting to know oneself and discovering leadership through emotional intelligence is relatively common, the idea of love in leadership still needs to be explored further. Bryant (2010, p. 38) similarly suggests that "love leadership is a new approach to leadership". Contrary to these, Church (2010) discusses her mission to help leaders lead in powerful and authentic ways emphasising that when speaking of love, this means "acknowledging and valuing each other - one human being to another".

Biro (2014) argues that people recall leaders who leave an impact on them because these leaders are a source of inspiration. Thinking back to my school days, I remember certain leaders that inspired me and touched me personally which leads me to agree with Biro's position. As Weymes (2003) proposes, the most important aim of school leaders should be to leave an impact on the perceptions of those involved by establishing positive relationships between those who form part of the school community. Influencing feelings and emotions through love will also be discussed in this section which will argue that through love, leaders help those whom they lead to achieve their best in life. Kouzes and Posner (1992, p. 480) also agree with Weymes (2003) with regard to emotions and feelings as they point out that "love creates the desire to see others grow" while becoming outstanding as they succeed in reaching all their goals.

In this sixth section of the literature review, the concept of relationships for effective leadership is discussed. An insight into servant leadership is given in order to better understand the concept of ‘Leadership that Loves’, envisaging the research question of this thesis that of enhancing school leadership through positive relationships.

2.6.1 Servant Leadership.

In 1970, Robert K. Greenleaf coined the term ‘servant leadership’, defined as “a philosophy and set of practices that enriches the lives of individuals, builds better organizations, and ultimately creates a more just and caring world” (Greenleaf, 1970). This leadership style puts others first and starts off naturally with the passion to serve others because Greenleaf argues, real leadership is found in serving others. The basis of servant leadership is found in the Bible:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be your slave (Matthew 20, 25-27).

Some of the world’s greatest leaders including Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, and Nelson Mandela placed people first and as Gill (2013) suggests, it is necessary to serve others by putting the “needs of customers, employees and communities first”.

Before serving others, leaders must know themselves and it is after knowing oneself well that a leader can serve others through honesty, listening, helping, caring, being understanding, encouraging moral reasoning, giving lots of encouragement to others and clearly wishing them well. These characteristics of servant leadership are adhered to by Ahlquist (2013) who argues that authenticity, humility, openness, moral courage, and answering a call to serve others are all characteristics of servant leadership. In relation to this, Spears (2005) presents these 10 characteristics: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to people, and building community. When analysing these characteristics, one has to recognise the importance of positive relationships in order to achieve the leaders’ goals. In

servant leadership, leaders are responsible for “ministering to the needs of the schools they serve” (Sergiovanni, 2009, p. 9) by being of service to teachers, students and their parents (Caldwell and Dixon, 2010). Ahlquist (2013) argues that through emotional healing, servant leaders value those around them whilst collegiality is requisite in their school.

Servant leadership takes time as Spears (2005) remarks that servant leadership is not a “quick-fix approach” but “a long-term transformational approach to life and work” with the possibility of instilling a positive difference in the world as “servant leaders are deeply committed to the growth of every individual” (Bezzina, 2009, p.14). It is through the time allocated to building relationships that a leader will truly serve by inspiring colleagues and students to bring out the best in them. Ahlquist (2013) suggests that leaders should not hesitate in getting to know both staff and students on both a professional and personal levels.

In this section, servant leadership was discussed noting that in these modern times servant leaders are much needed as Bezzina (2009, p.14) declares that “the servanthood of leadership needs to be felt, understood, believed and practised”. Furthermore, it could be important to consider what might happen if we take servant leadership a step further and “treat people as valued partners” (Caldwell and Dixon, 2010, p. 92) by including love in the leadership role. Sergiovanni (2009, p. 109) maintains, “the quality of relationships is an important ingredient in the makeup of a good school”. Because it is important to consider leadership in schools through loving positive relationships, the term ‘Leadership that Loves,’ (LtL) is developed for the purpose of this study and is discussed, after debating and defining what love is.

2.6.2 What is Love?

Love is usually described as a feeling of warm personal attachment; however, love as a professional concept is not the same love as for a life partner or children (Bryant, 2010; Schaefer, 2015), but rather what the Greeks call ‘agape’, which is brotherly love and charity and, as described by Schaefer (2015), behaviour and

not feelings. It is putting the other individual first, that is, not doing what you want but what is good for the other person. Caldwell and Dixon (2010) point out that love in the educational setting is defined in relation to caring and wellbeing in order to bring happiness and motivation to others. Birchfield (2014) discusses that it is natural for humans to love one another since love boosts the individual, widens perspectives, encourages sharing, and is conducive to helping others accomplish their goals, whilst also promoting creativity. Ferris (1988, p. 42) outlines that love seems to be recognised only with “very personal activities or relationships, and then only with hesitation, if not with embarrassment and reluctance”. Similarly, more than two decades later, Page (2011, p. 312) outlines that “love is not easily discussed, but not talking about it implies that the topic is somehow taboo”. This is also remarked by Wood (2013) who suggests that in today’s world it is necessary to be cautious about the use of ‘love’ so as to avoid the risk of being accused by “the headline-seeking media of entirely inappropriate professional behaviour”.

It is necessary to point out that in the context of the study reported in this thesis, love will be referred to in terms of ‘professional love’, (Page, 2011, p. 313), or as outlined by Ferris (1988, p. 42), “a deep respect based on a sense of oneness with others”. The attachment theory developed by John Bowlby (1982) in the late sixties notes the importance of attachment with regard to personal development, which has a valid educational purpose (Page, 2011; Wood, 2013). Page (2011) talks about love and attachment in early years settings where, she argues, the relationship between the child-carer and the child was of the utmost importance for mothers who chose childcare “even if they did not call it love” (Page, 2011, p. 319-320). Wood (2013) contends that professional love is appropriate in education by arguing that “love and teaching are inseparably connected in a very unique sense”.

On a personal note, I do remember that in my first days as a teacher, a particular school leader told us teachers to treat all students like they were our own children. Whilst writing this thesis, this memory became the starting point for the term ‘Leadership that Loves’. Wood (2013) argues that professional love means being

“committed to caring and protecting” the students by putting the students’ interests first, teaching and leading by example, protecting the students’ health and safety whilst also celebrating the students’ success. The ‘Respect For All’ document (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014, p. 12) defines love as “caring for others and sharing with others whilst feeling safe” which concurs with love as a “deep interest in another’s welfare (Ferris, 1988, p. 44). However, for the purpose of this thesis, the term *Leadership that Loves*’, henceforth referred to as LtL, will be defined thus:

Leadership that Loves refers to the school leader who, with respect to diversity, recognises that every person within the school community is unique and has a fundamental right to grow holistically and develop his/her potential to the full. The school leader treats every person with respect and care, ensuring their safety and wellbeing whilst having optimistic thoughts about everyone within the school community.

2.6.3 Leadership that Loves (LtL).

Through LtL, school leaders “sleep well at night” (Bryant, 2010, p. 36). Bryant (2010, p. 34) explains that a leader “will never go bad doing good” and “will never be wrong doing right”. Working to do well requires the leader to embark on “an inner quest” (Kouzes and Posner, 1992, p. 482) to get to know the self quite well (as discussed in Section 2.4.1). Birchfield (2014) insists that leaders need to be alert to how “their personal ego blocks access to the deeper love that is at the heart of being human”. Certain daily situations and experiences may change the leader’s perspectives developed through self-reflection and over a period of time and therefore the leader’s values and beliefs are of utmost importance in LtL. Leading by example is also necessary as the school community desires a leader who practices what is preached otherwise the “big words accompanied by little action” (Bryant, 2010, p. 37) will not leave an impression. Sergiovanni (2009, p. 2) confirms that “the heart of leadership has to do with what a person believes, values, dreams about, and is committed to” and, as confirmed by Kouzes and

Posner (1992, p. 483), if a leader suggests and promotes particular values but then performs otherwise, this leader is considered as “duplicitous and hypercritical”.

LtL comes from a leader with charisma who knows the people under his or her lead well by establishing proper relationships. As put by Weymes (2003, p. 325), “caring is the heart of leadership”. Moreover, Mahembe and Engelbrecht (2013, p. 3) outline that the heart of leadership lies in serving others. RaviShankar (2009) highlights the fact that leadership and love go hand in hand, and success will only be achieved by a leader who loves generously and unreservedly. Thus, I believe that all people are to be loved without discrimination be it nationality, race, gender, or identity. Leaders should also love that person who leaves the community due to a career change, a change in school. Basketball coaching legend John Wooden (2009) refers to another basketball coach who never had one player he did not love. He mentions that this particular basketball coach had a lot of players he did not like but loved just the same. This helped me to reflect upon the need of school leaders to love all their staff despite having situations when persons within the school community may not offer love back to the leader. In addition, it is interesting to demonstrate what Turkel (2014, p. 175) suggested, that what is carried by the leader is radiated amongst the school community. Thus, if the leader practises love and compassion, the community is going to be peaceful. On the other hand, if a leader carries fear or anger, negative feelings will emerge.

Augsburger (n.d.) states that “being listened to is so close to being loved that most people cannot tell the difference”. This implies that leaders should be good listeners. Whilst not everyone would agree that listening can be equated with love, it can be argued that in today’s technology-driven world, when a leader takes time to listen to a teacher, student or a parent, then the act of listening can be construed as love. Eikenberry (2010) argues in simple mathematical terms that since listening = love and listening = leadership, therefore leadership = love. Moreover, Cashman (2012) points out that a major strength of an effective leader is to practise authentic listening. In this day and age, e-mail seems to be replacing one-to-one conversations that are vital in our schools and despite that not all those

within the school community find time to listen to others, these members of the community still expect the school leader to listen to them. Therefore, it is being suggested that educational leaders should “make the choice to lead with love” (Schaefer, 2015) in order to have effective schools. This means maintaining positive relationships, discussing difficulties and avoiding situations where people leave school “with a knot in their stomach or suffering a great heaviness in their heart and possibly losing sleep that night” (Schaefer, 2015). Birchfield (2014) concludes that if love is not considered fundamental in leadership then the “centrality of humanity” is lost. Both Birchfield (2014) and Schaefer (2015) suggest the need to include love with leadership and thus compel me to embark on this critical discussion on LtL.

What is being suggested in this thesis is that we should strive for LtL in our schools. Although travelling distances between one place and another in Malta are relatively short and many families enjoy a decent standard of living that includes free education and health for all, stress, depression, and anxiety are still high. Everybody has a unique story, and all will be fighting their individual battles and carrying scars and hurts of which others may not be unaware. With this in mind, LtL can be of great benefit within our schools, where it is important that everyone is treated with dignity. Every member of the school community should feel that they matter, that they are not just another cog in the wheel. LtL does not carry with it the risk of punishment, of losing one’s job, or feelings of shame. It is leadership that builds bridges of understanding and helps persons to reach their full potential. This is in line with Biro’s (2014) claim, that the relationship between the school leader and the staff is parallel to dating and even marriage where “if successful, ends with a fulfilling relationship in which both parties thrive in a culture that balances independence with emotional support”. This implies that through the fostering of professional love in our schools, positive relationships of the school leader with all stakeholders can be established and effective leadership can be enhanced.

It is essential for a leader to make everyone within the school community feel better, develop friendships, make personal connections, and understand one’s

motivations and aspirations. A school leader needs to help the staff and students develop their strengths by listening and delivering, and by providing them with the necessary resources and equipment they need to do their jobs well (Biro, 2014). Getting to know the staff and students involves taking care of them, making them believe in themselves, and increasing their self-esteem. Caldwell and Dixon (2010, p. 96) claim that through the qualities of love and forgiveness “an increased self-esteem, a sense of personal worth and worthiness” is achieved by the individuals within the school community. Woodbury (2010, p. 2) also agrees with the latter as through long-term meaningful human relationships, “self-awareness is reflected not only in the ability to articulate the values and motivations, but also consistently reflected in actions and decision making”.

Promoting LtL in our schools helps people feel better because they are cared and loved for just for being them. Townsend (1982) maintains that the act of caring about the welfare of others is a fundamental characteristic which is similar in both leadership and love. In this manner, PLC is built through commitment and connectivity. Through positive relationships and LtL an atmosphere of love can mean that “problems or prey begin to look more like opportunities” (Woodbury, 2010, p. 3). As also suggested by Ferris (1988), leaders should work with people through love. This may seem more challenging but building a community through a number of months and years should yield to much more positive and long-term results. Through the community formed, members will be inspired to take risks, learn and grow through the challenges and thus it becomes possible to achieve ‘turnaround schools’ where an atmosphere of care and love is the answer to many hitches (Bryant, 2010; Woodbury, 2010). Kouzes and Posner (1992) also maintain that it is through the love and trust of a sincere leader that members within the school community are encouraged to take risks and responsibility. Through love and inspiration, members of the school community “feel aligned with a common purpose” (Ferris, 1988, p. 48) and then “creativity and commitment become inspired and with inspiration comes great energy” (Ferris, 1988, p. 50).

Through LtL staff are touched and usually the school leader becomes the model of the school's vision; the staff feel appreciated and thus give more energy and dedication. This is confirmed by Mahembe and Engelbrecht (2013, p. 3) who argue that if a leader cares for the wellbeing of the staff, the staff will turn out to be more committed in their school community. Thus, LtL is seen as a winning strategy by Biro (2014) who argues that school leaders can boost their performance if they "put love into their toolkits" because "emotionally connected employees simply perform better". Ferris (1988, p. 48) proposed that LtL needs to be an indispensable element in leadership because love is "the secret to increased productivity and organizational effectiveness". Wooden (2009) also maintains that LtL is "the most powerful thing" that exists in order to achieve success. Crowley (2013) concludes that the way that individuals are being led in America is failing, having reported that 52% of Americans confessed that they are disengaged in their workplace whilst a further 18% felt actively disengaged (Gallup's State of the American Workplace report, 2013). Biro (2014) also highlighted this crisis in America's workplaces whilst arguing that this crisis is proof that "love is the ultimate tool" in order to achieve success and engagement in the place of work. In this thesis, LtL will also be investigated through positive relationships whilst taking into account Malta's Education Minister, Evarist Bartolo's, comment that "the educational experience is above all a human experience and to excel it needs to be built on love" (Bartolo, 2015).

2.6.4 Summary.

This section of the literature review has focussed on the argument that the present time is the right time to take servant leadership a step further and to include love in leadership through positive relationships. As Kouzes and Posner (1992, p. 483) put it "love is the source of the leader's courage and the leaders' magnetic north". Through LtL, school leaders will find "a sense of purpose, fulfilment, and fun" in their work whilst helping others to find these qualities in their job too (Ferris, 1988, p. 42). Without any prejudgments and differences, leaders will care for and support each member of the school community in order to achieve their best in life in a holistic manner and not only academically and professionally. It was

maintained that a leader needs to know ones-self well and then through personal qualities, inspire and bring out the best in others. This is the kind of love that is needed in our schools, a love for others by recognising everyone's self-worth and, as Woodbury (2010, p. 4) puts it, "risky or not, we must find ways to bring love and wellbeing back into our organisational cultures if we aspire to move leadership out of the domain of fear".

In this section it was debated that simply by listening, the leader would be showing love. Through LtL, members of the school community feel better at school because they matter and the performance of the staff can positively be impacted due to more energy and support which, in turn, result in better student learning. Failures and obstacles in schools become positive challenges through LtL; however, results cannot be achieved overnight as this leadership style requires a long-term vision. Whilst some of the members within the school community might find it uneasy to mention and debate love, especially in the present local context where alleged cases of child abuse were recently reported, Wood (2013) maintains that "it is entirely proper for teachers to speak about loving their learners". Indeed, LtL offers school leaders "a chance to build a legacy that [they] can truly be proud of" (Bryant, 2010, p. 38).

2.7 Conclusion

School leadership entails hard work and school leaders can vouch that a forty-hour week is not enough (Bezzina, 2014, p. 1). Sheppard (2013, p. 33-34) admitted: "I found a school still in chaos, but knew this was the challenge I needed in order to keep the fire burning within me". Sheppard's (2013) statement indicates that a personal challenge can boost and enhance school leadership. Hargreaves and Fink (2004, p. 9) also note that "from their first day of their appointment, some leaders thought hard about how they might implement deep, broad, and long-lasting reforms" in order to enhance school leadership. As Hayward (2016, p. 71) insists "if we demand transparency from students, we need to model some ourselves" because "the model of leadership that will make a

difference in the 21st century is one that focuses on character, on formation, on connections” (Bezzina 2009, p. 17).

In this literature review chapter, effective school leadership was discussed, highlighting characteristics of effective school leaders and various leadership theories and models. An insight into Malta’s education system followed with particular interest in school leadership in Malta that also offered a description of the context where this research took place. The theme of positive relationships according to the literature was reviewed together with a debate on the importance of trust. The concept of Leadership that Loves was also introduced and critically discussed in this chapter. In the next chapter, the research methods and methodology adopted in this thesis are discussed and justified.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research methods and methodology used for this thesis is discussed and justified. This chapter consists of the following:

- The research questions;
- The philosophical assumptions and paradigms where I present my ontological and epistemological standpoints and the positionality that form my research;
- The strategy used: that of a case study through mixed methods, and the four stages of this research;
- The research population and sample;
- The research instruments and piloting of the research instruments;
- Criteria for the trustworthiness of this research;
- Ethical considerations taken into account in this research;
- The approach to data analysis; and
- The limitations of the approach.

3.2 The Research Questions

This thesis reports a study designed to investigate the main research question and its subsidiary questions:

Main Research Question:

How can positive relationships between the school leader, teachers, and students enhance school leadership?

Subsidiary Questions:

- (a) What does school leadership look like?
- (b) How are relationships between school leaders, teachers, and students currently played out in schools?
- (c) What changes might be made to improve upon positive relationships in order to enhance school leadership?

In this 21st century, “education leaders are charged with the weighty responsibility of leading their organisations in a constantly changing turbulent environment” (Sood et al., 2018, p. 5). This environment includes issues of migration, broken families, injustices and acts of terrorism amongst other salient issues. Acknowledging also that effective leadership is greatly needed in our schools, taking action and making a small difference in the lives of teachers and students, justifies the need for the above research question to be asked and reflected upon. Answering the main research question through the three subsidiary research questions, and therefore analysing how positive relationships between school leaders, teachers and students are currently played out in schools will further help to identify the necessary changes that are needed in order to enhance school leadership in Malta.

3.3 Philosophical Assumptions and Paradigms

Research in educational leadership about very similar phenomena “appear to reach different as well as similar conclusions” (Morrison, 2007, p. 18). So researchers in the field of educational leadership, like other researchers in the social sciences, need to address carefully assumptions on the “two conceptions of social reality”: (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011, p. 5) ontology and epistemology. In this section of the methodology chapter, my positionality is clearly stated as resulting from the ontological and epistemological standpoints that thus lead to the selection of the research methods adopted for this research. As highlighted by Greenbank, (2003, p. 792) researchers “will inevitably be influenced by their underlying ontological and epistemological position” when choosing which methods to adopt to conduct their research.

3.3.1 Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology.

Ontology is “the nature of reality” (Creswell, 2007, p. 16). Cohen et al. (2011, p. 5) determine two facets of reality, the reality that is “external to individuals” and thus “imposing itself on their consciousness from without” and the reality which “is the product of individual consciousness”. Keeping in mind the two facets of

reality as highlighted by Cohen et al., (2011, p. 5), as a researcher it was necessary for me to ask whether the responses were the interviewees' personal interpretation or "the product" of the interviewees based on the realities witnessed in their school. A careful selection of questions and probes was made so that the realities described by interviewees were not self-invented. However, the interviewees' responses were the interpretation of the situations encountered during their everyday school life and thus it was necessary for me to understand "their particular social frameworks" (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012, p. 27) and their challenges in schools, in particular the instability that is hampering the Maltese educational system which the Malta Union of Teachers established as "a crisis in the teaching profession due to a variety of urgent issues which remain unsolved" (MUT, 2017). Acknowledging that "reality is multi-perspectival", (Morrison, 2007, p. 26) trusting the interviewees was essential. Morrison (2007, p. 26) argues that "the way that humans create meanings" is in fact by giving accounts of what they do, "affected by context". Whilst it was not that straightforward for me to conclude whether the realities given are subjective and/or objective, I considered reality as independent to my knowledge, given that I am a teacher and was seeking data about positive relationships and school leadership. Thus, I subscribed to the view that reality and truth are the product of individual perception. This ontological position helped me to appreciate the complexity of the research question under investigation about positive relationships in schools as interviewees (Heads of School, sample of teaching staff, and students) had contrasting and sometimes even contradicting views about the issues raised. Throughout the research process, I became aware that almost all of the respondents were giving the real view as various interviewees even highlighted personal anecdotes and told me that certain responses were highly sensitive, at which point the interviewees were reassured of the anonymity and confidentiality of this study. Thus in this research, I go along with the view that the reality is "the product of individual consciousness" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 5).

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and asks questions that "concern the very bases of knowledge", (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 6) how knowledge is acquired

“or what the rules for knowing are” (Scheurich, 1994, p. 18). Morrison (2007, p. 18) indicates that every researcher asks questions about knowledge and how knowledge distinguishes “truth from falsehood”. As this research is about the effect of positive relationships in schools, the humanistic approach through experiences of school leaders, teachers, and students is knowledge, and thus subscribing to the views of intuitive knowledge such as knowledge through interviewees’ feelings, attitudes, and beliefs was of vital importance in this research. I subscribed to the view that knowledge is based on experiences that school leaders, the teaching staff and students encounter at school. I adopted this epistemological position as I believe that knowledge about positive relationships in schools can be better obtained and understood through the daily experiences that all these stakeholders encounter at school. These ontological and epistemological views discussed were subscribed to in this research and as Morrison (2007, p. 19) outlines, these “epistemological and methodological concerns are implicated at every stage of the research process”.

3.3.2 Research Paradigms.

Described by Denscombe (2010, p. 326) as “a set of beliefs and practices associated with a particular style of research”, a research paradigm is also referred to by Creswell (2007, p. 19) as “worldview” which he defines as “a general orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher holds” (Creswell, 2009, p. 6). Quantitative and qualitative research are the “most obvious” (Denscombe, 2010, p. 326) research paradigms with Clough and Nutbrown (2012, p. 18) advising of a third paradigm: “the emergence of critical theory” which is “linked with the political stance of emancipation of individuals and groups within society” (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012, p. 18). Denscombe (2010, p. 326) further outlines that research is carried out “with a specific philosophy and world-view and that those who operate within the research paradigm share those views”. Thomas (2004, p. 165) argues that “leadership is not achieved in a social vacuum” and this means that the particular context affects leadership. As highlighted by Thomas (2004, p. 165), school leadership should therefore consider “possibilities and constraints derived from the cultural,

political and economic contexts of education and from education policies framed within these contexts”. Creswell (2007, p. 15) observes that “good research requires making these assumptions, paradigms, and frameworks” clear as these do “influence the conduct of inquiry”.

Creswell (2007) outlines four worldviews: Post-positivism, Constructivism, Advocacy and Participatory, and Pragmatism. Post-positivism is “a scientific approach” (Creswell, 2007, p. 20) through logic and is normally associated with quantitative research. Contrary to post-positivism, where research starts with a theory, in constructivism, qualitative researchers “generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning” (Creswell, 2007, p. 21). The advocacy and participatory worldview gives a voice to individuals or groups with “an action agenda for reform” (Creswell, 2007, p. 21) that helps these individuals or groups with “specific social issues” (Creswell, 2007, p. 22). In pragmatism, often used by mixed methods researchers, researchers are free to choose “the methods, techniques, and procedures of research that best meet their needs and purposes” (Creswell, 2007, p. 23). However, Cohen et al. (2011, p. 23) clearly state that in pragmatism, “there may be both singular and multiple versions of the truth and reality, sometimes subjective and sometimes objective, sometimes scientific and sometimes humanistic”. Being a mixed-methods study, as will be discussed in Section 3.4, pragmatists believe that research occurs in a social, historical, political, and other contexts (Creswell, 2007, p. 23). Similarly, Clough and Nutbrown (2012, p. 14) argue that “all social research takes place in policy contexts of one form or another, research itself must therefore be seen as inevitably political”.

When discussing research paradigms, it is worth noting that in educational research, researchers “do not select one research paradigm to investigate all their questions” (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012, p. 21) but instead combine paradigms in order to “berate the boldness or exaggeration of research claims emanating from one paradigm” (Morrison, 2007, p. 21). Cohen et al. (2011, p. 26) claim that “it is perhaps too early to judge” whether or not mixed methods “constitutes a new

paradigm”; however, “it is a way of thinking, in which researchers have to see the world as integrated” from their ontological and epistemological standpoints.

3.3.3 Positionality of the Researcher.

Clough and Nutbrown (2010, p. 10) clearly state that all research in the social sciences “is saturated with positionality” as it is carried out by human beings and “it is inevitable that the standpoint of the researcher is a fundamental platform on which enquiry is developed”. I feel that it is necessary that as from the very beginning, my position will be declared as was the philosophical approach to knowledge through establishing the ontological and epistemological standpoints.

Being a teacher myself, I know that my position could have led to bias as it could have been difficult for Heads of School to say certain things that they do not want any teacher to know regarding matters which they felt should remain solely amongst their Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Being aware of this bias and through careful self-reflection, keeping in mind that Malta is a small island where people in education and other settings do know each other, I assured the Heads of School of strict confidentiality and that not a single word said throughout the semi-structured interviews would be repeated to any other person, especially to other teachers whom I happened to know and who taught at the very same schools within what I am calling, St David’s College. Assuring the Heads of School of my values and integrity and that no judgement was going to be passed as the data was being collected for the sake of my PhD research only was the way forward before conducting the semi-structured interviews. In spite of the fact that I am a very organised person and dream of effective schools, being a teacher and not involved directly in the schools’ SLT could also have impacted this research as all the Heads of School had more professional experience than myself. Having said that, it is worth mentioning that apart from holding a teaching role, I’m in charge of discipline at my workplace. Furthermore, I have some educational leadership experience, having coordinated various summer schools in Malta for eight years; during one particular summer students totalled six hundred.

Careful attention was taken even when sitting down for each semi-structured interview. Taking into account that some of the interviewees were females, as a male researcher I kept a reasonable distance from the interviewees so that they would not feel uneasy about being alone with me inside an office or classroom. Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, as well as the interviewees' ease of mind and comfort helped to reduce any bias, thus providing me with their school realities.

I must also declare that being a Catholic who in the past was also an active voluntary member of the Society for Christian Doctrine known as M.U.S.E.U.M., founded by St George Preca in 1907 in Malta, helping others to achieve their best and doing good are values that are deeply ingrained in me and this has without doubt influenced me in my choice of the concept 'Leadership that Loves' for this thesis. This goes on with what Denscombe (2010, p. 302) states: that my "identity, values and beliefs cannot be entirely eliminated". Also, being raised in a family where my parents have done everything in their power to see me succeed and to have the best educational experience in schooling further influences my positionality. I am aware that not all students share my experience, and that their realities as students attending state schools in Malta, may be very different, some whose most basic needs need to be fulfilled first before being able to learn. I must also make it clear that I do not have any political agenda and, have no party political bias or involvement.

3.4 The Research Approach

This is a case study approach of the "cause and effect" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 289) of how positive relationships will enhance school leadership. "Case studies investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relations and other factors in a unique instance" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 289). Bassey (2007, p. 154) suggests that case-study research in educational leadership "is vitally needed" so that the reasons behind "good, bad or mediocre" practices can be identified and understood. This research followed the twists and turns of a case-study approach where the research methods used in a case-study

were applied in order to obtain “rich and vivid descriptions” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 290) whilst aiming for conclusions that are “a step to action” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 292).

Whilst my epistemological and ontological views were previously discussed, this section aims to justify the research approach adopted, specifically a case study through mixed methods. Clough and Nutbrown (2012, p. 21) point out that researchers in the social sciences “do not select one research paradigm to investigate all their questions” but instead researchers opt to work within “both positivist and interpretivist paradigms”. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p. 10) describe mixed methods research as a “typical approach” because through mixed methods, the “central premise” (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011, p. 5) is that by combining both approaches, a deep and better understanding of the research question is provided rather than using only one paradigm. Described as “the third research paradigm” by Cohen et al. (2011, p. 22), mixed methods research “provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research” (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011, p. 12). Therefore quantitative results can be explained through qualitative data as “qualitative data and results can help build that understanding” (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011, p. 9). Day, Sammons and Gu (2008, p. 330) clearly agree with the latter as through mixed methods research, they were able to “arrive at more synergistic understandings” that resulted “in more nuanced, authentic accounts and explanations of complex realities”.

Opting for mixed methods research through semi-structured interviews, focus groups and questionnaires is justified by two crucial motives which are my philosophical position, as already explained in Section 3.3, and because mixed methods “provide the best opportunity” (Morrison, 2007, p. 29) to address the research question and the subsidiary ones. Whilst mixed methods research “provides a bridge across the sometimes adversarial divide between quantitative and qualitative researchers”, (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011, p. 12) I opted for mixed methods as “mixing enhances triangulation” (Morrison, 2007, p. 31). Triangulation is important because one method “may bias or distort the

researcher’s picture” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 195) of the particular behaviour under research. Moreover, mixed methods “give a fuller overall research picture and allows the incorporation of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ perspectives” (Morrison, 2007, p. 31). Through mixed methods, the “richness and complexity” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 195) of human behaviour can be explained more fully. The research methods identified for this research will help to ensure validity that is “truthfulness” and “how well the social reality being measured through the research matches with the constructs researchers use to understand it” (Neuman, 2000, p. 164) as discussed in further depth in Section 3.7.

This research took place in one of the ten state colleges across Malta and Gozo, which for the purpose of anonymity would be referred to by the pseudonym St David’s College. After carrying out the pilot study as described in Section 3.6.2 of this chapter, data collection involved four stages within the schools of St David’s College as shown in Figure 3.1.

Research Stages	A	Semi-Structured Interviews with Heads of School	8 Heads of School in St David’s College were interviewed.
	B	Questionnaire for Teachers/SLT members	Questionnaires were administered to all teachers and SLT members (except Heads) in St David’s College.
	C	Semi-Structured Interviews with Teachers/SLT members	5 Semi-Structured Interviews in St David’s College: - Primary Teacher - Primary Asst Head - Secondary Teacher - Secondary HOD - Secondary Asst Head
	D	Focus Groups with Students	Focus Groups with students in 8 schools within St David’s College. 6-10 students participated in each Focus Group.

Figure 3.1 - Research Stages

Stage A involved semi-structured interviews with the Heads of School. Stage B involved the dissemination of a questionnaire to all the SLTs (except Heads of School) and teachers within St David’s College. In Stage C, five semi-structured interviews with different teaching staff were held. These teaching staff included a

primary teacher, a secondary teacher, a Head of Department (HOD) in a secondary school, and assistant heads in both the primary and secondary sectors. Stage D was made up of focus groups of between six to ten students in primary and secondary schools within St David's College.

All the four stages of the research were held during the same period of the data collection process, thus adopting the convergent parallel design. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p. 77) state that the convergent parallel design occurs when both qualitative and quantitative data is collected and analysed simultaneously and furthermore the researcher "merges the two sets of results into an overall interpretation". The convergent design was also adopted to better understand the phenomenon under research carefully as each type of data was collected in the same research period. Thus, this design is "efficient" because both types of data were collected "in one phase of the research at roughly the same time" (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011, p. 78). Moreover, before merging results for a complete view of the phenomenon, each type of data was analysed according to the traditional approach, either positivist or interpretivist. Opting for the convergent design also helped so that when having both quantitative and qualitative results, I placed together the anecdotes from the semi-structured interviews and focus groups and the statistics resulting from the questionnaire, which is described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p. 78) as when the researcher "reaches the point of interface and works to merge the results of the two data sets in the third step". Data analysis is further explained in Section 3.9. In this section, the research strategy, particularly the use of mixed methods, was explained; details about the research population, the sample, and the chosen research methods are discussed in the next sections.

3.5 The Research Population and Sample

3.5.1 The Research Population.

Identifying the appropriate population is an imperative part of developing the research as emphasised by Fogelman and Comber (2007). Choosing the right

sample was vital as “a good sample is one that is representative of the population from which it was selected” (Gay et al., 2009, p. 125). Malta’s state schools are divided into ten colleges across the Maltese Islands, one of which is located on the sister island of Gozo. Primary schools are grouped into a college according to their geographical position. Moreover, each college has its own middle school and senior school/s where students continue their secondary schooling after they finish their early and primary years in their home-town school. Since this research sought to examine the relationships of school leaders in the interests of effective leadership, it was decided to focus on one college as the research population referred to in this thesis as St David’s College. St David’s College has a total of nine primary and secondary schools. For the purpose of anonymity, the exact number of primary and secondary schools within St David’s College will not be stated and the names of schools will not be disclosed either. Choosing to analyse one college helped to have a real context depending on a number of primary and secondary schools with the particular geographical positions’ advantages and/or disadvantages. Noting that “the target population is all instances that meet the requirements of the research issue” (Newby, 2010, p. 231), the target population for this research will be the Heads of School, SLT members, teachers and students within St David’s College.

3.5.2 Access to the Research Population.

After obtaining the necessary ethical permissions from the University of Sheffield and permission by the DES within the MEDE to carry out research in state schools was granted, a formal meeting with the College Principal of the particular college was set up. The College Principal collaborated, offered the necessary help and furthermore invited me to explain the aims and procedures of this research to the Heads of School during a Council of Heads (COH) meeting. COH meetings are held once monthly during school hours where school leaders, together with the College Principal, discuss issues concerning the particular college. Attending the COH meeting to explain details about my research helped me to initiate contact with all the Heads of School so that all the research stages could be carried out in the schools within St David’s College.

3.6 The Research Instruments and Piloting

3.6.1 Description of the Research Instruments.

3.6.1.1 *Semi-Structured Interviews.*

Ribbins (2007, p. 208) argues that through interviews, views “that cannot be achieved by other forms of research” can be discovered. “Asking questions and getting answers” (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012, p. 141) is “the most fruitful” (Ribbins, 2007, p. 207) way to address the research question. Interviews have a purpose and are initiated by the researcher and so are not “an everyday conversation” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 409). Neuman (2000, p. 274) defines the interview as “a short-term secondary social interaction between two strangers with the explicit purpose of one person obtaining specific information from the other”; its importance is emphasised by Cohen et al. (2011, p. 401) who state that “the interview is a powerful implement for researchers”. All semi-structured interviews for this research were face-to-face interviews as these “have the highest response rates” (Neuman, 2000, p. 272). Semi-structured interviews were used for Stages A and C of this research:

A	Semi-Structured Interviews with Heads of School	8 Heads of School in St David's College were interviewed.
C	Semi-Structured Interviews with Teachers/SLT members	5 Semi-Structured Interviews in St David's College: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Primary Teacher - Primary Asst Head - Secondary Teacher - Secondary HOD - Secondary Asst Head

Figure 3.2 - Extract from Research Stages

Purposive sampling was used to identify all the interviewees for this research. As Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) point out, in qualitative research, sampling is usually always purposive because cases are selected “with a specific purpose in mind” (Neuman, 2000, p. 198). In Stage A, all the nine Heads of School were

chosen as they could provide me with rich data and unique circumstances that are “especially informative” (Neuman, 2000, p. 198). With regard to Stage C, the aim of the interviews was to get to know the views of the teachers and members of the SLT’s further, whilst obtaining a full representation of the teachers and members of the SLT via the questionnaire. In Stage C, it was decided to have five semi-structured interviews with a primary school teacher, a secondary school teacher, a Head of Department in a secondary school, an assistant head from the primary sector, and an assistant head working in a secondary school. This decision was taken in order to have a better representation of all the teaching grades within the schools.

All interviewees were provided with an information sheet about the study and e-mail was used to agree a particular date and time as to when to carry out the semi-structured interviews. All interviews were held at the interviewees’ workplaces. Eight out of nine Heads of School agreed to take part in this research. One Head of School chose not to take part despite originally confirming her participation. Whilst the semi-structured interviews with the Heads were all carried out in their offices, it is noteworthy to mention that sometimes an unoccupied classroom or office in schools was difficult to find, but with the help of the school administrations, a place was always provided in which to conduct the five other semi-structured interviews with the school staff. Whilst the gender of the HoSs is given, for the purpose of anonymity, the age of each HoS and the number of years in such a post were omitted as otherwise, in a small island like Malta, it would become easy to determine the college under research. The codes used for the purpose of anonymity are shown in Table 3.1.

It was decided that for each semi-structured interview, there would be one interviewer (myself) and one interviewee so that the interviewees would not feel intimidated by the presence of more than one interviewer. This helped the Heads of School and school staff feel more at ease during the interview. Both Ribbins (2007) and Johnson (1994) point out that in semi-structured interviews, one can adapt the interview schedule to each interviewee, as was the case for this research

where the schedule was adapted according to the discussion that evolved with each Head of School or staff member.

Code	Sector	Post	Gender	Age	Years in post
HP1	Primary	Head of School	Female	n/a	n/a
HP2	Primary	Head of School	Male	n/a	n/a
HP3	Primary	Head of School	Male	n/a	n/a
HP4	Primary	Head of School	Female	n/a	n/a
HP5	Primary	Head of School	Female	n/a	n/a
HP6	Primary	Head of School	Female	n/a	n/a
HS1	Secondary	Head of School	Male	n/a	n/a
HS2	Secondary	Head of School	Male	n/a	n/a
TP1	Primary	Assistant Head	Male	40	8
TP2	Primary	Teacher	Female	31	8
TS1	Secondary	Assistant Head	Male	42	1
TS2	Secondary	Head of Department	Female	38	3
TS3	Secondary	Teacher	Female	24	2

Table 3.1 - Codes for semi-structured interviews with HoSs and teaching staff

Audio recording was necessary to generate data (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012) and I felt this was the most suitable method. Each interview was recorded after obtaining the written consent of each interviewee and explaining to each one how I would use and store recordings and transcripts (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012). This ensured the collection of all the data as “relying solely on handwritten notes inevitably means that some comments are lost” (Clough and Nutbrown (2012, p. 142). However, during each interview, I took note of the non-verbal expressions, such as facial expressions and body language, which further enhance the points made by the interviewees. When possible, the audio recordings were transcribed within three days from when the interview was carried out so that the experience was still fresh in my memory and important details were not forgotten. After each interview was transcribed, the transcript was sent to the particular interviewee so that it could be confirmed, amended, or rejected. All interviewees confirmed the transcript I sent them.

3.6.1.2 Questionnaires.

Clough and Nutbrown (2012, p. 158) argue that:

The questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straightforward to analyse.

I believe that collecting structured and straightforward data helped me to draw conclusions with regards to the research question that were then interpreted by means of the data resulting from the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups. Questionnaires were used for Stage B of this research:

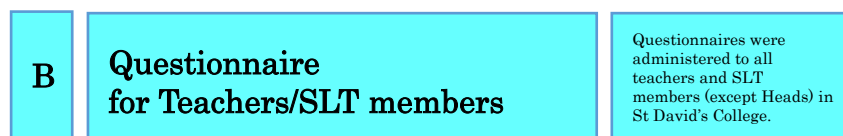


Figure 3.3 - Extract from Research Stages

During the development of the questionnaires, particular attention to formulating the questions was required because “good survey questions give the researcher valid and reliable measures” (Neuman, 2000, p. 251). Leading questions and any bias was avoided (Cohen et al., 2011) since, as suggested by Cohen et al. (2011, p. 179), “validity might be improved through careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatments of the data”. When dealing with sampling, Cohen et al. (2011, p. 153) explain that “every member of the wider population has an equal chance of being included in the sample”. For this research, the questionnaire was distributed to all the research population, that is, all the SLT members and teachers, excluding the Heads of School. Since there are 431 teaching staff (teachers and SLT), when opting for a 95% confidence level and 5% confidence interval, a minimum sample of 203⁷ from a population of 431 was required. For this reason, it was decided that the questionnaire will be distributed to all the SLT members and teachers within the schools of St David’s College.

⁷ The sample size calculator was used to determine the required sample size.

Although sampling was not required, I distributed the questionnaires to all the population, as I wanted to have accurate results according to the two main subpopulations, mainly the primary sector and the secondary sector. Neuman (2000, p. 208) suggests that stratified sampling does produce a better representation of the research population “if the stratum information is accurate”. Even though stratified sampling was not in itself adopted, being aware of the need to have a certain number of teachers and SLT members from each sector (primary and secondary) for the particular scholastic year when research was carried out as given by the College Principal’s administration was a necessity so that, keeping in mind the two main subpopulations, it was calculated that 67 and 136 questionnaire returns were needed as a minimum in the primary and secondary sector respectively in order to ensure unbiased survey results. This is better explained in Table 3.2 where the actual teaching staff population of St David’s College, the minimum sample required, and the number of questionnaire returns are clearly indicated. It is also important to mention that a total of 235 questionnaires were returned which is 54.5% of the actual population. Questionnaire returns in the primary sector amounted to 94 whilst those returned in the secondary sector amount to 141, as shown in Table 3.2.

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Actual Teaching Staff Population	143	288	431
Sample Required	67	136	203
Questionnaires Returned	94	141	235

Table 3.2 - Questionnaires according to Primary and Secondary sectors

In order to maximise the number of returned questionnaires, Likert scales (Neuman, 2000) were used and it was made sure that the questionnaire was not overly long and tedious to fill in. It also included two open-ended questions so that the respondents were free to express their opinions. I encouraged Heads of School within St David’s College to inform the SLT and teachers of this research by adding a sentence or two in their staff weekly updates, a suggestion that was accepted by some of the Heads of School. However, questionnaires were self-administered and two or three persons in each school were appointed to be responsible for collecting the questionnaires and to be on hand to offer the

participants the necessary “encouragement to participate” as suggested by Cohen et al. (2011, p. 209) who highlight the importance of “a friendly third party”. Setting a requested date by which questionnaires were returned, as suggested by Clough and Nutbrown (2012, p. 162) was also important. Not more than ten working days were allocated to each school from the day that the questionnaires were distributed in each school within St David’s College. I also hoped to maximise returns by visiting each school to distribute the questionnaires personally; I purposely did this during the half-yearly examinations period which is usually a quieter time for teachers as they are invigilating and correcting exam papers instead of teaching. I also attached a cover letter to each questionnaire guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity so that participants could fill in the questionnaire with confidence.

What follows is a demographic analysis of the 235 respondents within St David’s College. Gender, age, and grade of respondents are given according to sector (primary or secondary) in Tables 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 below.

	Gender	n	%
Primary	Male	10	10.6
	Female	84	89.4
Secondary*	Male	46	32.9
	Female	94	67.1

* 1 missing

Table 3.3- Gender of Respondents - Questionnaire Q1.1

	Age	n	%
Primary	21-30	44	46.8
	31-40	31	33.0
	41-50	13	13.8
	51+	6	6.4
Secondary	21-30	49	34.8
	31-40	53	37.6
	41-50	32	22.7
	51+	7	5.0

Table 3.4 - Age of respondents - Questionnaire Q1.2

	Grade	n	%
Primary	Assistant Head	11	11.7
	Teacher	83	88.3
Secondary	Assistant Head	4	2.8
	Head of Department	7	5.0
	Teacher	130	92.2

Table 3.5 - Grade of respondents - Questionnaire Q1.3

In the administered questionnaire, the teaching staff had to answer two open-ended questions. Such data was inputted on a word document and anecdotes by the teaching staff were used as necessary and according to the sector of the particular teaching staff member. Such codes are shown in Table 3.6 below.

Code	Sector
QP	Primary
QS	Secondary

Table 3.6 - Codes for anecdotes from questionnaire

3.6.1.3 Focus Groups.

Cohen et al. (2011, p. 436) pointed out the increasing popularity of the use of focus groups in educational research. This research tool is a form of group interview, depending on “the interaction within the group who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 436). Clough and Nutbrown (2012, p. 92) state that “mutual respect for opinions, cultures, experience” is necessary within the group as “everyone has something to offer”. Focus groups were used in Stage D of this research:



Figure 3.4 - Extract from Research Stages

Noting that “the views of pupils do indeed represent an important perspective in leadership research”, (Todd, 2018, p. 50) it was decided that eight focus groups with students will be held in eight different schools within St David’s College.

Clough and Nutbrown (2012, p. 93) suggest that a group should be “large enough to be a group but small enough for everyone to have a voice” and thus I decided that each group was to consist of between six and not more than ten students. Random sampling was used to choose the participants for the focus groups. It was decided that for the primary schools, focus groups will be held with groups of students in Years 4, 5 or 6, that is with students aged 8-11 years. Ten students were chosen from each primary school from the Junior Years (Years 4 to 6) from a number of classes depending on various factors such as logistics, school activities and outings. With regards to secondary schools, students in Years 7-10 (aged 11-15 years) were chosen. No Year 11 students (aged 15-16 years) were chosen as these were in their final weeks of schooling when the research was being conducted and were busy preparing for their school leaving and ordinary level examinations.

I was the moderator in all focus groups and, considering that students were quite young, especially students in the primary schools, I sometimes used prompting; however, this was not made use of all the time as the students were allowed to discuss freely and reply only to the issues they felt the wish to discuss and participate in. As Cohen et al. (2011, p. 436) advise, in focus groups “the participants’ rather than the researcher’s agenda can predominate”. The aim of the focus groups was to yield “a collective rather than an individual view” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 436) by having participants, in this case students, interact with each other. As focus groups were held in eight schools, students possibly did not know each other well as they were in different age groups and classes; however, I made sure that the older students did not influence the views of the younger students. Clough and Nutbrown (2012, p. 92) advise to establish confidentiality and therefore, in this case, students were asked to keep the issues discussed confidential like they do in their Personal and Social Development lessons at school.

Code	Sector	Age/s of Students
SP	Primary	8-11 years
SS	Secondary	11-15 years

Table 3.7 - Codes for students' focus-groups

Conducting focus groups was not an easy part of this research as I had to visit each school several times, which was really difficult given that I am a teacher myself and I have the same working hours. As ethical procedures were followed to the full as described in Section 3.8, consent forms were required to be signed by parents and students. In situations where consent forms were not signed or returned or where students declined after showing interest, other students were chosen and the procedure of distributing the information and consent forms had to start over whilst also taking into account students who would not be “turning up on the day” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 437). Focus groups are usually criticised as “the number of people involved tends to be small” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 437) but being aware of this limitation I decided to conduct a focus group in eight schools to get a fuller picture of St David’s College. Focus groups with students were also used to triangulate data with what Cohen et al. (2011, p. 436) refer to as the “more traditional forms” of interviewing and questionnaires.

3.6.2 Piloting of the Research Instruments.

De Vaus (1993, p. 54) is very clear in advising, “Do not take the risk. Pilot test first”. Cohen et al. (2011, p. 118) also recommend the piloting of the research instruments before the actual data collection because “clarity, layout and appearance, timing, length, types of questions” can all be improved in order to collect rich data that truly addresses the research question. I did the pilot study in one school that does not form part of St David’s College where personal contacts meant it was easy to negotiate access for the pilot study. For this reason, critical considerations regarding how to avoid the contamination of the research project by the pilot study were prioritised. Malta is a small island and words about the focus and processes of the research can spread but this was counteracted thanks to the fact that I was in a position to ask the Head of School and teachers in question for strict confidentiality till the actual data was collected from St David’s College.

Piloting interview instruments is also advocated by Clough and Nutbrown, (2012) as through the pilot study, inappropriate questions can be identified whilst the wording of questions may be refined as necessary (Fogelman and Comber, 2007).

Neuman (2000, p. 241) advises that after the piloting of the semi-structured interview modifications can be made by reviewing the process. Through an informal discussion after the semi-structured interview with the Head of School and upon some personal reflection, I opted for some modifications - some questions were omitted and some replaced with other questions. As Fogelman and Comber (2007, p. 130) highlight, the pilot study “will weed out inappropriate, poorly worded or irrelevant items” and through constructive feedback by the Head of School, the semi-structured interview schedule for Heads of School was scrutinised and edited as necessary. The interview schedule for the teachers’ semi-structured interviews was also pilot-tested with a teacher-friend which allowed me to refine the list of questions for the semi-structured interviews with the teaching staff. This teacher with whom the semi-structured interview was pilot-tested also helped me to conduct a focus group with her Options class students, thanks to which I was able to improve the focus-group schedule.

Piloting the questionnaire is also defined as “crucial” by Cohen et al. (2011, p. 402). The questionnaire for teachers and members of the SLT was piloted with the eight teachers who had followed the same undergraduate course at the University of Malta. Thanks to these ‘critical friends’, a lot of useful feedback was obtained. The presentation and content of the questionnaire were amended. Originally four pages long, the questionnaire was reduced to two pages, allowing me to give out just one front-to-back A4 paper to maximise returns. Cohen et al. (2011, p. 402) also confirm that it is through the pilot-study that the time taken by participants to complete the questionnaire is checked, whilst also ensuring reliability of the research method. During the pilot-study I found it difficult to collect the questionnaires. Fogelman and Comber (2007, p. 130) warn that “too often neglected is the equally important need to pilot administrative procedures” so it was decided that for the actual questionnaires, two persons were to be identified in each school to collect the questionnaires and the names of these persons were written on a small paper that was attached to each questionnaire in order to maximise the number of returns.

In this section, the research instruments and the necessary samples for this research were discussed and justified. Details concerning the pilot study were presented. Even though the data resulting from this pilot study could not be analysed since the school did not form part of St David's College, piloting still proved fruitful as it set the tone for the actual data collection that commenced a few weeks later after the pilot study.

3.7 Criteria for Trustworthiness of Research

I consider it suitable to define and consider the trustworthiness of this research according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) who define trustworthiness using these four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria and how they led to the trustworthiness of this research are all discussed in this section.

3.7.1 Credibility.

Choosing a timescale that spanned the duration of just one scholastic year 2016-2017, throughout which this research was carried out, helped to sustain credibility because in the beginning of each scholastic year, there may be major changes in state schools such as the number of teachers, students on roll, and even deployment of staff including the Heads of School. Using three different methods of data collection, namely the semi-structured interview, the questionnaire, and the focus group, led to the triangulation of data, which is imperative. As outlined by Cohen et al. (2011, p. 193), a mixed methods research “provides triangulation and concurrent validity and gives a closer, more authentic meaning” to fully understand the phenomenon under research. Described by Bush (2007, p. 100) as “fundamentally a device for improving validity”, triangulation had both the aims to enhance “honesty, depth and richness” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 179) to better understand this phenomenon under research and also to triangulate the research methods adopted by directly comparing and contrasting the quantitative and qualitative findings. Cohen et al. (2011, p. 295) refer to this as “concurrent validity”.

During the data collection phase, interviewees were given plenty of time to reply to the questions and to make use of anecdotes as they felt necessary. Moreover, as suggested by Clough and Nutbrown (2012, p. 148), all interviewees were given the opportunity to agree when and where the interview took place, keeping in mind that they were busy during school hours and any distractions such as telephone calls or people knocking on the door would affect the richness of data. Ensuring clarity of questions, (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012), using prompts when necessary, and avoiding leading questions (Ribbins, 2007), helped to reduce bias. Warned by Bush (2007, p. 98) that “the main potential source of invalidity in interviews is bias”, careful attention was made when formulating the interview questions, which were also piloted. Each interview was audio-recorded and carefully transcribed. Moreover, each transcript was sent to the particular interviewee so that the transcript could be confirmed or amended. Particular attention was given to my tone of voice during the interviews and the focus groups, as inspired by Neuman (2000) so that the impact of my voice on the interviewees was minimised.

As purposive sampling is largely used in qualitative research, “a random approach may negate charges of researcher bias in the selection of participants” (Shenton, 2004, p. 65). It was decided that the five members of the teaching staff to be interviewed would be all chosen from at least four different schools, and students were also chosen randomly from different classes within the same school. Acknowledging restrictions such as not choosing students from classes with student teachers during teaching practice and not choosing students from classes who were busy preparing for their school’s celebration day, a random sample of students was chosen from each school within St David’s College. Here it is also necessary to point out that in order to ensure honesty from research participants, all Heads of School and school staff took part of their own free will. As a case in point, one of the Heads of School first expressed her willingness to take part but then did not reply to two emails requesting her preferred date and time to conduct the interview. Furthermore, there were students who declined to participate. In these instances, I made no attempt to persuade them to participate because it would have been unethical to pressurise potential participants and I

wanted honest responses that only come from those “genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely” (Shenton, 2004, p. 66). An informal discussion with the Heads of School and staff before the semi-structured interviews and also with the students before the beginning of the focus-group helped to “establish a relationship of trust between the parties” (Shenton, 2004, p. 65). Visiting schools to distribute the information and consent sheets helped to establish a personal relationship with the Heads of School, the teachers, and the students themselves. Being a teacher myself, my integrity, and providing a good example to students also ensured credibility because this is vital when collecting data (Shenton, 2004).

Following the pilot study, it was decided that a question would be added to the questionnaire to check for reliability. As a measure of internal consistency, the Cronbach’s Alpha was run and resulted in a value of 0.798, which is greater than the standard threshold of 0.7 and therefore it can be concluded that the respondents replied similarly to both questions (Questions 2.1 and 3.3) thus indicating the statistical reliability of the responses.

3.7.2 Transferability.

Transferability, or generalisability as referred to in positivism, suggests that the conclusions of the research can be applied in other contexts with different research populations. All methodological details are discussed in depth in this chapter, as advised by Houghton et al. (2013, p. 16) who argue that a concise narrative of “the original context” of research should be given so that judgements about transferability can be made. Giving detailed description for data analysis also enhances transferability of findings to other contexts and, as Houghton et al. (2013, p. 16) highlight, “rich and vigorous presentation of the findings, with appropriate quotations, also enhances transferability”.

Shenton (2004, p. 69) concedes that it is impossible that all the findings can be applied to a wider population. The findings of this research do not relate to each school within St David’s College individually but the findings given are either

according to sector, that is: the primary schools and the secondary schools, or else as the whole St David's College. Considering that all the ten colleges in Malta are made up of a number of both primary and secondary schools, call for applications and the selection processes for the posts of Heads of School and Assistant Heads are the responsibility of the Ministry for Education and Employment and not college-based; recruitment of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and the deployment exercise is carried out by the Ministry for Education and Employment; and students attend schools in the particular town in which they live within the college composition suggest that, unlike various studies, there is more likelihood that the findings in this research can be transferable. For the purposes of this thesis, it was too cumbersome and potentially difficult to obtain a sample from all the ten colleges. Since focusing only on one college, it is not legitimate to generalise to all other colleges; however, what is being proposed in this thesis is still valid, as it constitutes an in-depth study of St David's College. This is in line with what Shenton (2004, p. 69) suggests: that "although each case may be unique... the prospect of transferability should not be immediately rejected".

3.7.3 Dependability.

Dependability replaces the term reliability in quantitative research and refers to the stability of the data (Houghton et al., 2013, p. 13). The audit trail shown in Appendix 14 is the main evidence of dependability of this research. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), raw data from the interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups, and the development of such research instruments is amongst what is required in an audit trail.

Conducting a pilot study, as discussed in Section 3.6.2, helped to increase the trustworthiness of this research. A few amendments were necessary after the pilot study so that the research instruments would better reflect the context of this research. Amongst the necessary amendments after the pilot study, it was decided that I would personally choose students at random for the focus group and not the Head of School or other teachers. This measure helped to increase dependability

as otherwise the school staff could have chosen high-ability or other particular groups of students that would have affected the findings of this research.

3.7.4 Confirmability.

Confirmability “refers to the neutrality and accuracy of data” (Houghton et al., 2013, p. 13). Particular attention was given to Malta’s political scenario especially when quoting educational policies in Malta. There are two main political parties in Malta: the Labour Party and the Nationalist Party. Independent candidates and other small parties were not taken into consideration due to triviality and lack of significance. Based on Duffy’s (1992, p. 55) advice not to select documents such as parliamentary questions (PQs) or press releases by the Ministry for Education and Employment, on the basis of how well these documents support my own views or hypothesis, “careful analysis and interpretation” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 253) was required. Declaring that I had no potential conflicts of interest was also necessary to make certain that views depending on my personal aims and ambitions were avoided. Bush (2007, p. 102) observes that “there is no perfect truth” but it is through the measures of trustworthiness that an “acceptable level of authenticity” is reached. Shenton (2004, p. 72) tends to agree with Bush (2007) when stating that some researcher bias is unavoidable and therefore precautions such as avoiding “selective reporting” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 290) were taken so that the findings reflected the real situations experienced by the research population of St David’s College. Shenton (2004, p. 72) emphasises the place of triangulation as a way of reducing bias by comparing quantitative results, namely the questionnaire survey findings with the qualitative data emerging from the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups with students.

3.7.5 Authenticity of Research.

Being vital in determining the quality of research, Bush (2007, p. 91) outlines that authenticity in educational research “can be judged by the procedures used to address validity, reliability and triangulation”. In the previous sub-sections, these

criteria were all debated according to the four criteria: credibility; transferability; dependability; and confirmability – set by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Through the three research methods (questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups) engaged in this research, triangulation was achieved as this is fundamental for authentic data. Creswell (2014, p. 201) suggests “checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures” and this was also acquired through the six steps of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) as described in further depth in section 3.9 of this research methods and methodology chapter. Clarifying “the bias that the researcher brings” (Creswell, 2014, p. 202) to this research was carefully thought of by clearly stating my epistemological and ontological standpoints together with my positionality. Conducting a pilot-study, sending the transcripts to all the interviewees to be confirmed or amended, careful sampling and leaving respondents and interviewees to participate only of their own will, all assured authenticity in this thesis.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

A good researcher “must take into account the effects of the research on participants” by preserving “their dignity as human beings” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 84). This claim by Cohen et al. (2011) and what Clough and Nutbrown (2012, p. 196) refer to as the “protection and well-being” of the research participants highlight clearly the ethical responsibilities that I had as a researcher so as not to cause any harm to the participants. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2011, p. 4), maintains that educational researchers must conduct research “with an ethic of respect for the person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research and academic freedom”, and therefore careful attention to abide with the BERA guidelines throughout all stages of this research was taken. It is necessary to point out that besides the ethical guidelines issued by The School of Education at The University of Sheffield together with those specified by the BERA, this research was also conducted in accordance to the Data Protection Act as in Chapter 440 of the Maltese Laws (Laws of Malta, 2012).

Access to the research population was only requested after obtaining the necessary ethical approval from the School of Education at The University of Sheffield and also after obtaining the permission to carry out research in state schools from the Research and Development Department within the Ministry for Education and Employment in Malta, as can be verified in Appendices 12 and 13 respectively. After obtaining both permissions, I accessed the research population by setting up a meeting with the College Principal of St David's College where the aims and procedures of this research were explained. The College Principal invited me to explain the aims and procedures again to all the Heads of School of the particular college during one of the monthly Council of Heads (COH) meetings. During this COH meeting, the aims and procedures of research together with ethical considerations were explained in order to safeguard all the potential participants. As this research was carried out in one of the ten colleges in Malta, it was made clear that no particular findings about each individual school or its particular school leader can be given, except that of distinguishing schools between primary and secondary. This precaution was taken due to the delicate nature of the data involved in order to protect both the participants and also the educational community in Malta.

Promising confidentiality, (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 92) helped to protect the privacy of the participants and before the start of each semi-structured interview or focus group I felt that assuring confidentiality was a must. Since Malta is a small country where most people such as school leaders and staff in the educational setting know each other, even those coming from different schools and colleges, I assured all the interviewees, especially school leaders and staff, that their responses will remain strictly confidential and recordings were only to be used by myself for the purpose of this research. Having a good rapport with the participants helped to reduce any stress or concern that participants could have felt when being asked certain questions such as questions about relationships with colleagues in schools. Ensuring confidentiality to respect the privacy and dignity of all the respondents paid off since none of the interviewees refused to answer any particular question. I believe that confidentiality helped to ensure the honesty of all the interviewees. Students participating in the focus groups and all teachers

and SLT members who participated by completing the questionnaire were also assured of confidentiality. Students that participated in focus-groups were told that what was going to be said during the focus-group needed to remain in that room like what happens during their weekly Personal and Social Development lesson/s as I was aware of the sensitive issues that were going to be discussed. Cohen et al. (2011) assert that if responses were to be recorded, procedures should be observed and permissions are to be sought. Semi-structured interviews and focus-groups were only recorded after obtaining the written informed consent form of the interviewees. With regards to the focus-groups where students under sixteen years of age were involved, besides obtaining their parents' and/or guardians' consent, the students were also asked verbally for their consent in front of a witness, usually a teacher or assistant head followed by the completion and signing of the student assent-consent form, as shown in Appendix 10.

Anonymity means that “the information provided by the participants should in no way reveal their identity” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 91). Codes for the semi-structured interviews and focus groups were used as outlined earlier in Tables 3.1 and 3.7 respectively to guarantee anonymity. Permission so that recordings and questionnaires will be kept till the research project is disseminated was sought from each interviewee and respondent when signing the consent form and also by word of mouth as a reminder before the start of each semi-structured interview and focus-group. After conducting each semi-structured interview in Maltese, as the Maltese language was preferred by all interviewees except by the students taking part in some focus-groups, a transcript was sent back by e-mail within three working days from the day and time of the semi-structured interview to the particular interviewee in order to confirm that the transcript was authentic and to check whether they wished to contest anything. With regards to questionnaires, effective administrative arrangements were made for the collection of the questionnaires so that anonymity was promised and guaranteed. Selecting persons responsible from each particular school to collect the questionnaires allowed the school staff to hand in the questionnaire to any of the person/s responsible in their school instead of giving it to me personally, thus safeguarding their anonymity. Moreover, no names and surnames or any other identifiable information was

required to be written on the questionnaire, making the questionnaire completely anonymous. Through these considerations, “dignity and privacy” (Pring, 2000, p. 143) of all interviewees and respondents were respected whilst anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed.

Noting that “a key principle for constructing ethical research is that of voluntarism by the participants”, (Busher and James, 2007, p. 110) nothing was assumed and participation in this research was not taken as a given. This means that participants were informed that they could withdraw at any stage of the study without explanation (Cohen et al., 2011). The participant information sheet and the consent form informed the participants that they could withdraw at any stage without explanation; furthermore, before the start of all the semi-structured interviews and focus groups, participants were reminded again verbally that they can withdraw their participation at any time, even though the consent form was signed and that there was no need to give any justification. Also, in this study, participants were allowed to decide whether or not to complete the questionnaire, as it was not obligatory to fill it in (Johnson, 1994).

These ethical issues were all clearly explained in the Participant Information Sheet, as shown in Appendix 1. It is necessary to point out that another version of this Participant Information Sheet was purposely set up for students. The students’ version, that is shown in Appendix 8, included simplified terms and information, pictures, and was in both Maltese and English so as to cater for all the students.

3.9 Approach to Data Analysis

Data analysis is shaped by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 10) as “three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification”. These three stages are reached through thematic analysis which “is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Thematic analysis “is one of a cluster of methods that focus on identifying patterned meaning across a dataset”

(Braun and Clark, n.d.) and was deemed best for approaching data analysis and findings in this mixed methods research because “knowledge and empathy about a person, an interaction, a group, a situation, an organization or a culture” can be gained through thematic analysis (Komori, n.d.). Noting that this research included three different methods of data collection: semi-structured interviews with eight Heads of School and five teachers and SLT members, eight focus groups with students and also a questionnaire administered to all the teachers within St David’s College, thematic analysis was chosen as “through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex accounts of data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 78).

Braun and Clarke (2006) present six phases of thematic analysis, shown in Table 3.8, which were deployed in this research in order to ensure “a trustworthy thematic analysis”. However, it is worth noting that whilst following the six-phased method, this thematic analysis approach required “an iterative and reflective process that develops over time and involves a constant moving back and forward between phases” (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 4).

Phase 1	Familiarising yourself with the data
Phase 2	Generating initial codes
Phase 3	Searching for themes
Phase 4	Reviewing themes
Phase 5	Defining and naming themes
Phase 6	Producing the report

Table 3.8 - Phases of Thematic Approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006)

The semi-structured interviews and focus groups were transcribed and the quantitative data was inputted on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Each interviewee was given a code and students’ focus groups were coded according to the school sector (primary or secondary). Commas and [pause] helped to “record hesitations, small to long pauses, and silences” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 537). Cohen et al. (2011, p. 537) indicate that “important detail and an accurate verbatim record of the interview” can be obtained by transcripts and since transcribing was done shortly after the interviews or focus groups, I was

in a better position to freshly remember interesting details and anecdotes that the interviewees mentioned passionately, and these were highlighted immediately on a Microsoft Word document and then coding notes were entered. As qualitative data can yield to large amounts of data, transcribing shortly after the interviews or focus groups helped “to reduce the problem of data overload by selecting out significant features for future focus” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 539). This is referred to as Phase 1 where raw data is organised whilst the researcher familiarises himself with the data. Phase 2 includes generating initial coding and, in this research, the qualitative data was firstly analysed by manually going through all the transcripts where coding notes were entered on the right column of a word document whilst pertinent quotes were highlighted as shown in Tables 3.9 and 3.10 that present excerpts from a semi-structured interview and focus group respectively. Coding is defined by Glesne and Peshkin (1992, p. 133) as “a process of sorting and defining” the collected data according to the need of the research question.

Transcript Document (Original in Maltese) – Interview HP3	Transcript Document (translated to English) – Interview HP3	Coding Notes
<p>Mela, il-persuni huma importanti hafna għaliex għandek different types of persons tajjeb? Għandek l-ewwel haġa l-istaff li jġigini f'mohhi: l-SMT, it-teaching staff, l-LSAs u l-caretakers u l-minor staff, huma dawk in-nies li lili bħala Head of School ha jwassluni ha jghinuuni għall-ghan ahhari tiegħi li huwa t-teaching and learning prattikament, jġigifieri through the people you have to achieve your goals, jġigifieri importanti hafna li inti dawn, tkun fis-sinkronija mal-members of staff kollha, mbagħad għandek ukoll il-klijenti tiegħek li huma t-tfal u li huma l-ġenituri, jiena qed ngħidilhom klijenti ehe għax fl-ahhar mill-ahhar ahna qed nagħtu servizz lit-tfal u lill-ġenituri tagħhom. Jġigifieri ukoll l-element uman kif għedtlek l-ewwel</p>	<p>So, the persons are very important, because you have different types of persons, right? The first thing that springs to mind is the staff; SMT, teaching staff, LSAs, caretakers, and minor staff - these are people who will lead me to, help me to achieve my ultimate goal, which as Head of School is that of teaching and learning practically. What I mean is that it is through people that you have to achieve your goals, so it is very important to be in synchrony with all the members of staff, then you also have the clients, that are the students and parents, I am calling them clients, yes, because at the end of the day, we are giving a service to the students and their parents. So there is the human element, as I told you about the duties of the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a clear aim of School Leadership - Aim of School Leadership through people - School Community - Students and Parents as clients - Dealing with humans - Guidance and leadership - Supporting staff

ħaħa li semmejtlek fix-xogħolijiet ta' head, ħija tipo ta' guidance teacher bazikament ħaliex it-tfal, il-ġenituri, u anke l-members of staff huma umani, huma persuni u kulhadd ħandu l-pakkett tiegħu, kulhadd ħandu l-esperjenzi tiegħu, kulhadd ħandu s-sofferenzi tiegħu, u kollox u allura you have to deal with that on a daily basis.	head, it is like a guidance teacher role basically because the students, the parents and also the member of staff are humans, they are persons and everyone has his package, everyone has his experience, everyone has his own anguish, and everything, so you have to deal with that on a daily basis.	
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Table 3.9 - Excerpt of transcript document with coding: Semi-structured Interview - HP3

Transcript Document (Original in English) – Focus Group SS	Coding Notes
It depends on the teacher. For example, when the teacher doesn't even care about the subject, about the students, about even the notes or exams, you don't want to be motivated at all, at all, but when some teachers shows respect towards you, respect towards all the class, she brings the notes and stuff, you feel motivated, you feel like you need to learn the subjects, for yourself and even for her to make her a little bit proud. I can switch subjects, the teacher because my computer studies class I feel motivated because the teacher is nice and he helps me every time I need help and every time I need that, and not like my Miss of Biology who she just shouts and she doesn't come for the lessons , for any reason and, just that.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher affects students' motivation. - Respect towards students results in better student learning. - Students want to make their teachers proud if they are motivated. - Students are aware of who are those who help them the most - Students analyse teachers well

Table 3.10 - Excerpt of transcript document with coding: Focus Group - SS

NVivo and/or similar computer-assisted analysis packages for qualitative data were not used as I felt much more comfortable and confident with different highlighters on a word document. In fact Komori (n.d.) argues that “researchers code the data by hand or through a software programme”. Through an inductive (bottom-up) approach, similarities, differences and repeated codes in the participants' views helped to identify sub-themes. Cohen et al. (2011, p. 559) maintain that “coding enables the researcher to identify similar information” and thus themes were established through word repetitions, metaphors and key-words in the context of this research about positive relationships and effective leadership. Inspired by Denscombe, (2010, p. 115) I deeply examined the “links and associations that allow certain codes to be subsumed under broader headings”. This meant that the sub-themes unfolded into eight themes that were

considered as a basis for organising the data analysis and findings. Identifying themes is referred to as Phase 3 and the process required that I would go through the selected quotes and highlight them with different colours.

Transcript Document (Original in Maltese) – Interview HP3	Transcript Document (translated to English) – Interview HP3	Coding Notes
<p>Mela, il-persuni huma importanti hafna għaliex għandek different types of persons tajjeb? Għandek l-ewwel haġa l-istaff li jiġini f'moħħi: l-SMT, it-teaching staff, l-LSAs u l-caretakers u l-minor staff, huma dawk in-nies li lili bħala Head of School ha jwassluni ha jghinuni għall-ghan ahhari tiegħi li huwa t-teaching and learning prattikament, jiġifieri through the people you have to achieve your goals, jiġifieri importanti hafna li inti dawn, <u>tkun fis-sinkronija mal-members of staff kollha</u>, mbagħad għandek ukoll il-klijenti tiegħek li huma t-tfal u li huma l-ġenituri, jiena qed ngħidilhom klijenti ehe għax fl-aħħar mill-aħħar ahna qed nagħtu servizz lit-tfal u lill-ġenituri tagħhom. Jiġifieri ukoll l-element uman kif għedtlek l-ewwel haġa li semmejtlek fix-xogħolijiet ta' head, hija tipo ta' <i>guidance teacher</i> bażikament għaliex it-tfal, il-ġenituri, u anke l-members of staff huma umani, huma persuni u kulhadd għandu l-pakkett tiegħu, kulhadd għandu l-esperjenzi tiegħu, kulhadd għandu s-sofferenzi tiegħu, u kollox u allura you have to deal with that on a daily basis.</p>	<p>So, the persons are very important, because you have different types of persons, right? The first thing that springs to mind is the staff; SMT, teaching staff, LSAs, caretakers, and minor staff - these are people who will lead me to, help me to achieve my ultimate goal, which as Head of School is that of teaching and learning practically. What I mean is that it is through people that you have to achieve your goals, so it is very important <u>to be in synchrony with all the members of staff</u>, then you also have the clients, that are the students and parents... I am calling them clients, yes, because at the end of the day, we are giving a service to the students and their parents. So there is the <i>human element</i>, as I told you about the duties of the head, <i>it is like a guidance teacher role basically because the students, the parents and also the member of staff are humans, they are persons and everyone has his package, everyone has his experience, everyone has his own anguish, and everything, so you have to deal with that on a daily basis</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a clear aim of School Leadership - Aim of School Leadership through people - <u>School Community</u> - Students and Parents as clients - <i>Dealing with humans</i> - <i>Guidance and leadership</i> - <i>Supporting staff</i>

Table 3.11: Excerpt of transcript document with selected themes: Semi-structured Interview - HP3

Table 3.11 shows the selected quotes highlighted in typography according to the themes. This process thus led to Phase 4 where the themes were reviewed. Reviewing, refining and renaming themes was necessary during the use of the

“constant comparative method” (Glazer and Strauss, 1967, p. 102) by noting the consistencies, connections, and differences in the emerging codes that led to incorporating codes into themes “as they emerge” (Denscombe, 2010, p. 116). This fourth phase included “double-checking the codes for consistency and validation” (Komori, n.d.).

As Creswell (2014, p. 234) notes, this process included the organisation of data into “increasingly more abstract units of information” which “inductive process illustrates working back and forth between the themes and the database until the researchers have established a comprehensive set of themes”. Phase 5 is defining and naming themes and the following eight themes were outlined: (A) Effective Leadership; (B) Motivation; (C) Communication; (D) Positive Relationships; (E) Trust; (F) Sense of Community; (G) People Matter; and (H) Leadership that Loves. It was only after that the eight themes emerged that the quantitative data was considered. In fact, the questions that formed the teachers’ questionnaire were divided according to the theme so that all the data in this thesis was analysed through the eight emerging themes. This approach was adopted as Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 94) warn that using “data collection questions as the themes” is a common error. Furthermore, as Komori (n.d.) advises “themes emerge from the data” therefore these are “not imposed or predetermined by the researcher” (Komori, n.d.). Also, around sixty comments acquired by the open-ended questions on the questionnaire were typed in a Microsoft Word document and then categorised according to the themes they best fit in, developed for this research through the qualitative data analysis approach.

Data emanating from the teachers’ questionnaire was coded and inputted into the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), which software was utilised to analyse the quantitative data. “SPSS provides various ways of examining data in greater detail” (Davis, 2013, p. 53). Data collected in the questionnaire from the teaching staff is in categorical form, with teaching staff indicating their level of agreement to various statements. The responses were then coded as follows: strongly agree=1, agree=2, neither agree nor disagree=3, disagree=4, strongly disagree=5. SPSS was used to produce frequency tables for each question, and

also to produce cross-tabulations of the various questions by respondent sector (primary and secondary), and to obtain the frequency distribution separately for primary and secondary teachers. As Davis (2013, p. 48) advises, the case processing summary was “worth checking in case of error”, such as having respondents who did not answer all the questions.

In order to test the relationship between two categorical variables, the chi-square test for independence was used. Pell and Fogelman (2007, p. 323) claim that statistical significance in the study of aspects of human behaviour holds “as long as the research results have less chance than 5% of being natural variations”. Described by Cohen et al. (2011, p. 654) as “one of the most widely used tests, and is applicable to nominal data in particular”, the chi-squared test is “an extremely elegant statistic based on the simple idea of comparing the frequencies you observe in certain categories to the frequencies you might expect to get in those categories by chance” (Field et al., 2012, p. 814). When differences in the frequency distribution for the primary and secondary sample respondents was noted, this non-parametric test was run to test whether the differences noted in the sample are statistically significant and can be generalised to the whole population within St David’s College. In a few occasions it was also interesting to run cross-tabulation according to gender. The chi-squared test provides a general test for the association between the two variables being considered, and therefore standardised residuals were obtained to identify which specific categories show a significant difference at 95% or 99% confidence level, [and therefore the p-value is <0.05 and <0.01 respectively]. According to the chi-squared test, if there is a significant difference, H_1 would be accepted, and therefore one would conclude that there is a significant association between the two variables, and the null hypothesis H_0 rejected.

Bryman and Cramer (1997, p. 123) outline the restriction on using chi-square as with two categories, “the number of cases expected to fall in these categories should be at least 5 before this test can be applied”. In cases where the expected count was less than 5 for more than 20% of cells, responses were re-categorised by aggregating the strongly agree and agree categories together and also the

disagree with the strongly disagree. This re-categorisation was affected to ensure that the chi-squared test results are valid. Then the chi-squared test was re-run on a recoded version of the variables in order to identify whether the differences in responses noted between primary and secondary teachers were in fact statistically significant and therefore not present in the sample simply due to chance.

I decided that the data would not be analysed according to each particular school opting to “amalgamate key issues emerging across the individuals” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 539) to obtain one complete picture for this case study - St David’s College. Mixing both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms helped to better triangulate the findings. Moreover, analysing the data and writing the report is referred to as the last phase (Phase 6) of the thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006). Since data analysis and findings are debated in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, according to each of the three subsidiary research questions, it was difficult to combine some of the themes to a particular subsidiary research question due to overlapping. However, it made sense to fully cover each theme under one subsidiary research question and, after careful reflection, each theme was matched with a specific subsidiary research question to maintain the sequence of this thesis. Thus, each subsidiary research question is analysed through themes and through a maximum of three different research methods: semi-structured interviews with the Heads of School and a sample of five teaching staff; questionnaires with the teaching staff; and focus groups with the students.

3.10 Quantitative data adds value to this research

This section aims to justify how the inclusion of quantitative data presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 – the findings and discussion chapters – adds value to this thesis. Section 3.6.1.2, justifies the use of a questionnaire, as arguably the best tool to reach all the teaching staff within St David’s College. Noting that this thesis investigates how positive relationships of school leaders with teachers and students can enhance school leadership, it was of utmost importance to have the

teachers contribute from a whole spectrum – the nine schools within the college under research.

Whilst through administering the questionnaire, the findings were triangulated, “structured, often numerical data” (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012, p. 158), led to the development of analysis in the form of various tables which present the quantitative findings in this thesis. Cohen et al. (2011, p. 623) argue that “a cross-tabulation is simply a presentational device, whereby one variable is presented in relation to another” and in this thesis it felt best to provide findings according to sector (primary and secondary) as it was of utmost importance to note whether there was a similar or different response according to each particular statement according to sector and in particular cases, the figures were also given according to the gender. In this regard, the quantitative data add value to this case-study research, and in so doing give a further layer of meaning to policy makers interested in change.

Creswell (2014, p. 210) points out that “a final step in the data analysis is to present the results in tables or figures and interpret the results from the statistical test”. This advice was followed so that the data presented in tabular form enabled the findings to be further interpreted and debated. Moreover, since questionnaire data were in categorical form, tabular presentation made it possible “to produce a clear, informative report of the findings” (Bell, 2007, p. 233) whilst also applying the chi-square test for independence in order to test the relationship between two categorical variables as already explained in section 3.9. As Cohen et al. (2011, p. 622) insist “graphs and charts may look appealing, it is often the case that they tell the reader no more than could be seen in a simple table of figures”.

3.11 Limitations of the approach

Some limitations in this research should be noted. When data was being collected in schools, secondary state schools in Malta were not yet formed by the intended student cohorts. As co-education has been implemented gradually, some secondary schools included cohorts of students made up of boys or girls only and

not mixed because, until recently, secondary schools were separated between middle and senior schools and not by gender. This may have had an effect on school leaders and/or teachers who at that point might have been concerned about co-education challenges in schools, especially those who had worked with boys only throughout their career and for the very first time, during the scholastic year when the data was being collected, were teaching mixed students.

It would have been interesting if parents' and/or guardians' views about positive relationships and school leaders were sought but this lay outside the scope of the study reported in this thesis. Whilst acknowledging that parents could have added value to this research as they could have provided me with different views, and noting the importance of parental involvement in schools for effective leadership, I am confident that obtaining the views of school leaders, teachers, and students were enough to collect robust data that led to strong conclusions and recommendations so that this research would yield a valid contribution to knowledge in the field of educational leadership.

It was impossible to have a representative sample from all the colleges within Malta and Gozo and although opting to conduct this research in one college, the data should not be regarded as insignificant as this research constitutes an in-depth study of St David's College and it gives useful conclusions and recommendations about how positive relationships of school leaders with teachers and students can lead to effective leadership in our schools. Therefore, what is being proposed in this research is still useful to understanding other colleges within the Maltese Islands - and perhaps beyond - and the conclusions can be used for further research in this particular area of study in educational leadership.

3.12 Concluding Note

The aim of this research was to serve as an inspiration for all school leaders and help policymakers and educational authorities in Malta when reviewing policies concerning school leadership. Through a careful choice of the research population

and research instruments, as discussed in this methods and methodology chapter, all stages of the research were carefully debated and justified. My ontological and epistemological positions that influenced the choice and use of mixed-methods as the research paradigm for this study were explained. Details about the pilot study were given together with a discussion on the lessons learnt and thus applied for this research both to enhance credibility and also to maximise the number of respondents. Trustworthiness of this research was justified according to the four criteria by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The relevant ethical considerations were also debated. The approach to data analysis was discussed as well, together with any limitations of the approach.

Now that the research methods and methodology adopted in this thesis have been justified, the findings and discussion according to the three subsidiary research questions will be debated in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 respectively. The summary of the findings and conclusions will then be presented in the final chapter (7) of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION I:

**What does school leadership look
like?**

Chapter 4 - Findings and Discussion I: What does school leadership look like?

4.1 Introduction

Firstly, this chapter outlines the research methods used in this case-study research and explains the codes adopted throughout the findings and discussion chapters. Necessary demographic information and respondent rates are also provided. After that, the first subsidiary research question is examined.

4.2 Demographics

As stated in the research methodology chapter, this research took place in one of the ten state colleges across Malta and Gozo, which for the purpose of anonymity, is referred to by the pseudonym St David's College. St David's College has a total of nine primary and secondary schools. For the purpose of anonymity, the exact number of primary and secondary schools within St David's College will not be stated and the names of schools will not be disclosed either.

Eight semi-structured interviews with HoSs [six primary and two secondary] were carried out as one HoS refused to participate in this research. Table 4.1 illustrates the codes of the semi-structured interviews held with the HoSs.

Code	Sector	Post	Gender	Age	Years in post
HP1	Primary	Head of School	Female	n/a	n/a
HP2	Primary	Head of School	Male	n/a	n/a
HP3	Primary	Head of School	Male	n/a	n/a
HP4	Primary	Head of School	Female	n/a	n/a
HP5	Primary	Head of School	Female	n/a	n/a
HP6	Primary	Head of School	Female	n/a	n/a
HS1	Secondary	Head of School	Male	n/a	n/a
HS2	Secondary	Head of School	Male	n/a	n/a

Table 4.1 - Codes for semi-structured interviews with HoSs

Whilst the views of the teaching staff were addressed through a quantitative approach, specifically by means of a questionnaire, five semi-structured interviews with the teaching staff (teachers and SLT members) were necessary for triangulation. The codes used for these five semi-structured interviews are provided in Table 4.2.

Code	Sector	Post	Gender	Age	Years in post
TP1	Primary	Assistant Head	Male	40	8
TP2	Primary	Teacher	Female	31	8
TS1	Secondary	Assistant Head	Male	42	1
TS2	Secondary	Head of Department	Female	38	3
TS3	Secondary	Teacher	Female	24	2

Table 4.2 - Codes for semi-structured interviews with teaching staff

The teaching staff was asked two open-ended questions in the administered questionnaire. This data was inputted on a word document and anecdotes by the teaching staff were used as necessary and according to the sector of the particular teaching staff member. The codes are shown in Table 4.3.

Code	Sector
QP	Primary
QS	Secondary

Table 4.3 - Codes for anecdotes from questionnaire

Eight focus groups with students were held in eight different schools within St David's College. The codes shown in Table 4.4 below were used to identify anecdotes by students during focus-groups.

Code	Sector	Age/s of Students
SP	Primary	8-11 years
SS	Secondary	11-15 years

Table 4.4 - Codes for students' focus-groups

Regarding the questionnaire that was administered to all the teaching staff within St David's College, 235 questionnaires out of the 431 distributed questionnaires

were returned. Questionnaire returns in the primary sector amounted to 94 whilst those returned in the secondary sector amounted to 141, as shown in Table 4.5. This resulted in a response rate of 54.5% of the actual population.

	Questionnaires Distributed (Teachers and SLT)	Questionnaires Returned (Teachers and SLT)
Primary	143	94
Secondary	288	141
Total	431	235

Table 4.5 - Questionnaires distributed and returned according to sector

What follows is a demographic analysis of the 235 respondents within St David's College. Gender, age, and grade of respondents are given according to sector (primary or secondary) in Tables 4.6, 4.7, and 4.8 respectively.

	Gender	n	%
Primary	Male	10	10.6
	Female	84	89.4
Secondary*	Male	46	32.9
	Female	94	67.1

* 1 missing

Table 4.6 - Gender of Respondents - Questionnaire Q1.1

	Age	n	%
Primary	21-30	44	46.8
	31-40	31	33.0
	41-50	13	13.8
	51+	6	6.4
Secondary	21-30	49	34.8
	31-40	53	37.6
	41-50	32	22.7
	51+	7	5.0

Table 4.7 - Age of respondents - Questionnaire Q1.2

	Grade	n	%
Primary	Assistant Head	11	11.7
	Teacher	83	88.3
Secondary	Assistant Head	4	2.8
	Head of Department	7	5.0
	Teacher	130	92.2

Table 4.8 - Grade of respondents - Questionnaire Q1.3

4.3 Subsidiary Research Question 1: What does school leadership look like?

Recently, the importance of school leadership has been widely acknowledged (Day and Sammons, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2006). Leithwood et al. (2006, p. 5) insist that “there is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership”; this implies the vital role of school leaders and their SLTs (Huber, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2006; Sebring and Bryk, 2000; Spillane, 2003). As Huber (2004, p. 669) insists, “school leaders matter” because they “do make a difference” in schools. In the next sections, the first subsidiary research question will be analysed: ‘*What does school leadership look like?*’ School leadership is explored according to the data emanating from the semi-structured interviews with the Heads of School (HoSs), the teachers’ views derived from the administered questionnaire and the one-to-one semi-structured interviews, together with the views of students’ elicited from the focus groups conducted in schools within St David’s College. The three emerging themes debated in answer to this first subsidiary research question ‘*What does school leadership look like?*’ are: (A) Effective Leadership; (B) Motivation; and (C) Communication.

4.4 Theme A – Effective Leadership

Heads of School (HoSs) within St David’s College are aware that the ultimate aim of a school leader is to “improve the quality and standard of teaching and learning” (HP2); however, most HoSs talk about the number of tasks they have to handle, where they are required to be a “jack of all trades” (HP1) as they have to

deal with issues relating to finance, minor staff, getting quotations, and maintenance works. These tasks are described as “dirty work” by HP5, as they are seen as being a huge burden on school leaders. This resonates with Lee and Pang (2011, p. 336) who outline that “generating funds to cover part of the school expenses” and “rent out the school premises” are amongst the duties of the school leader and thus Bush (2008) asks whether the shift from management to leadership is just semantic or meaningful. Consequently, HoSs claim that not enough time in their schedule is left to focus on teaching and learning. HoSs argue that they have to take care of “a whole lot of other matters, which strictly speaking do not require the involvement of the Head of School, take up thirty-five to forty per cent of the day” (HS1). Similarly, another HoS argues that his job includes being:

“A teacher, a manager, an accountant, a lawyer, a nurse, a guidance teacher, a maintenance man, you become a bit of everything. These tasks take up much of the time that should really be dedicated to the development of the school’s curriculum” (HP3).

Despite outlining that school leaders do not have enough time for curricular development, HoSs are aware that ensuring quality teaching and learning in schools is a must so that “every student benefits fully, the maximum possible” (HP2) as outlined by the National Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012, p. 5) which states that each learner is to follow “the best pathway that will allow [him or her]...to reach the maximum of his or her potential” irrespective of the particular ability and/or disability. Day and Sammons (2016, p. 12) mention that “providing effective financial management” and “carrying out restructuring so that the school organisation is more effective and efficient” are also tasks under the responsibility of school leaders. HS1 argues: “Is it really necessary that I am in ten different places at the same time because a drain pipe has sprung a leak?” There seems to be a different point of view with regards to maintenance works carried out in schools. Whilst school leaders seem to agree that unless urgent, various maintenance works need to be carried out during recess, especially during the summer holidays, teachers have raised their concern about maintenance works and minimising the effect on teachers and students: “Is it really necessary that a paint job is carried out at a time when the corridors are bustling with students?” (TS2). Although the responsibility to oversee various maintenance works and other duties are usually

distributed within the school SLT, an assistant head even mentioned this same issue when arguing that “if there are issues with the building facilities, they need to be checked by us, even if it simply is a matter of replacing a screw, we have to see what needs doing” (TP1). This insight into maintenance works brought to light the need for on-site personnel responsible for maintenance works so that school leaders and middle leaders can focus on the quality of teaching and learning in schools, as they already have to deal with multiple issues during their day:

“As Head of School, I would like to think that I am an inspiring leader. Everyone is now using SLT instead of SMT, and we are being told that we should lead rather than manage, but I feel that we are left with barely enough time for leadership. It is more a question of managing and managing by crisis, whatever you are faced with” (HP5);

“Days can get crazy, as you try to keep up with everything and everyone. You need to remain composed, yet be effective, you have to revise marks, you have to make time for, at times, angry parents, and lend an ear to teachers when they have something to tell you” (HP6).

Bush and Glover (2014, p. 567) highlight that instructional leadership, that is leadership for learning, “is an essential element for successful schooling”. It is worthy of note that throughout the semi-structured interviews, school leaders only gave details of their direct involvement in order to improve the teaching and learning when pressed with a direct question. HoSs claimed that amongst others, their influence on teaching and learning is achieved through some of these initiatives:

“We have started working on Kindergarten II by preparing children for what awaits in Year 1. Some time ago we had children moving up to Year 1, not knowing how to properly hold a pencil. We have introduced a reading system, whereby children are given a book to take home with them every week, the teacher listens to them” (HP1);

“We draw up action plans, which are based on two pillars: numeracy for maths and literacy for English and Maltese, and we go from there” (HP2);

“A lot is done; first off there’s monitoring, which is practically ongoing, carried out informally and formally, and which includes classroom observations” (HP6);

“With regard to the SDP, I try to ensure that the focus is on the educational aspect. Our SDP focuses heavily on educational aspects, so it is not just a matter of meeting up and organising an activity, but rather knowing what the educational aspect and the targets behind it are” (HS1).

HoSs within St David’s College sustained that a substantial number of tasks are required from them as also maintained by Huber (2004, p. 671) who define a “complex range of tasks” besides focusing directly on teaching and learning and

include “others to managing resources like the budget” (Huber, 2004, p. 671). Mistry and Sood (2017, p. 125) also outline that leadership is multi-faceted, with various aspects ranging “from leading pupil learning to leading staff”. It is necessary to point out that it is apparent that most HoSs within St David’s College are really dedicated to their profession and do more than that which is required of them and treat their place of work as if it were their own home. In fact, a female HoS recalled “having to phone [her] husband after encountering technical words” (HP5) in order to solve issues and difficulties when workers turn up at school for routine and maintenance works. HoSs argue that their role requires them to “learn and become knowledgeable about everything” (HP1).

Being such a challenging job, as HoSs themselves outline, commitment is required: “a very intensive job, which requires commitment as it takes up a lot of time, even outside school hours” (HS2). The school leader’s job keeps you “on the go from dawn till dusk” (HP4) as even after school hours “e-mails keep pouring in” (HP1) and thus HoSs have to handle various paperwork tasks after school hours together with keeping up-to-date with the various correspondence they receive. On the same lines, a secondary teacher mentioned that “HoSs have a lot of paperwork and do not have time to manage the school properly” (QS). Interestingly, a middle manager also described his job as “hectic, [and being continuously] under pressure” (TS1) whilst maintaining that “sometimes I feel burned out, but considering the responsibility we have, I still believe that we are grossly underpaid” (TS1). These findings are consistent with Harris and Chapman (2002, p. 12) who found out that school leaders in really challenging schools “worked long hours, were constantly ‘on call’ and spent large parts of their time in face-to-face meetings with a range of stakeholders”. Taking into consideration the long hours involved, Blase (1987, p. 601) concludes that effective school leaders are “defined as individuals who managed time efficiently”.

HoSs point out that, unfortunately, the main neglected task in school leadership, due to the various administration tasks and meetings, are the class visits: “I enjoy class visits, but unfortunately so many departmental, college, and administrative matters crop up that you end up not doing as many class visits as you envisage

doing” (HS1); “unfortunately, most of us do not have time for classroom visits” (HP5) as “unfortunately we spend most of the time in our office” (HS1). HP2 says that he wished to visit each class during each term “but you find that you cannot, one of the reasons is the number of meetings that we have”. This is contrary to what Sebring and Bryk (2000, p. 441) argue, as they maintain that “principals of productive schools...visit classrooms regularly, demonstrating their conviction and taking the instructional pulse of the school”. Since time constraints apparently seem to be the major challenge that hinders class visits, some HoSs conduct class visits randomly and briefly: “I do many classroom visits, I just drop in briefly to speak to the students” (HP3). HS1 knows what is happening in classrooms by relying on Education Officers (EOs) who, from time to time, may visit teachers according to their subjects and/or areas of specialisation:

“I try not to settle for being told hello, I am done, goodbye, but rather invite her [EO] to take a seat and, if need be, tell me that she would have observed three teachers, spend half an hour, three quarters of an hour to tell me what she would have seen, what she thinks. This way, I am still briefed about what is going on, even if I don’t have the time to witness certain things at first hand” (HS1).

Whilst that the HoSs admit that it is not easy to find time for class visits, a secondary teacher mentioned that “the HoS’s presence should be felt more by both the students and staff” (QS). Meanwhile, Bush (2015b, p. 487) acknowledges the possible lack of capabilities of school leaders “especially in secondary schools where specialist subject knowledge is required to underpin instructional effectiveness”. However, Green (2002, p. 2) queries whether this busyness is leaving enough time for the “core activities like classroom observation” which Hargreaves and Fink (2004, p. 9) describe as “the prime responsibility” of school leaders. Whilst some students in St David’s College mentioned that they meet their HoS every morning during assembly, other students do not seem to meet their HoSs often but only during special assemblies or particular activities:

“We see our Head of School almost every day, because he leads the assembly. Sometimes he drops by the classroom, and during the assembly. Sometimes we see him during the assembly and he comes to speak to our teacher or else he stays in his office” (SP);

“We see [our Head of School] infrequently, during assembly, in the hall” (SP);

“No, because like normally she is in her office so I do not meet her like anywhere” (SP).

“Yes, not regularly, not regularly at all, because she would be busy, very busy. In the morning, mostly during assembly, the light in her office would at times be switched off because she would be somewhere else, in a meeting or on an outing, or speaking to someone on her mobile or over the phone, and at times she closes the door when we pass by. At times the [College] Principal would be visiting and we would not be able to speak to her, and you cannot really blame her for keeping the door closed as the school can get noisy and she would have important calls to make. She does not really drop by the classrooms, she would at times be writing and all that, we would knock and not be told to get in, almost as though there is no one” (SP);

“No, we hardly ever see him, and I think that there are a couple of teachers who would be better off in the role of headmaster, because our Head has a lot on his plate, he has a very big school to run, and meetings never lack. He would see you once in a while, and if you are doing something which he is not in favour of, he would sort of have a poor opinion of you. I am not very close with our Head, we are on good terms and I think he is ok, but to us, he is not a headmaster figure, and there are certain teachers who are better suited to his role” (SS).

Students are potentially suggesting that they need to be at the centre of the school leaders’ job. Chapman and Harris (2003, p. 2) outline that in schools, especially in those facing challenging circumstances, being a school leader “was clearly not a desk job, but rather about displaying people-centred qualities and skills”. HP4 is the only school leader who states that she knows all the students in her school by name; this contrasts with the other HoSs:

“I don’t know all students, it could be that this is my shortcoming, but I do know a person who knows all students in her school, where there are more students than I have, but I think that not being able to remember names is my shortcoming. Unfortunately, you tend to remember those who are in your office frequently, very often due to behavioural issues” (HS1).

HP1 also admits that “only a few, the ones with challenging behaviour come here” [in the head’s office]” (HP1). This suggests the need for school leaders to know the students more, even by being more accessible, as Blase (1987, p. 601) claims that school leaders are required “at various times and in various locations in their schools to talk, advise, and make decisions required by teachers and students” Robinson (2007, p. 15) also affirms that “the more leaders focus their influence, their learning and their relationships with teachers on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their likely influence on student outcomes”.

Large schools, together with all the current requirements make it impossible for school leaders to solely lead the school, and “distributed leadership has become the normatively preferred leadership model” (Bush and Glover, 2014, p. 559-560). HoSs distribute leadership mainly with their assistant heads as these

members of the SLT are seen as “an extension” (HP5) of the HoS and in some cases involving also various members of staff that act as middle leaders. HoSs mentioned that they distribute leadership by “delegating tasks” (HP3) to their assistant heads and, through SLT meetings, the way forward for each school is discussed and any difficulties are shared: “I have two Assistant Heads, each one having his/her duties, but we meet regularly in meetings and should there be a problem, we share it” (HP2) and “there is a strong element of delegation and communication among us” (HP3). Distributed leadership happens when school leaders “recognise the limitations of a singular leadership approach and adopt a form of leadership distributed through collaborative and joint working” (Harris, 2004, p. 16). Moreover, “some patterns of distribution are more effective than others” (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 3).

Delegating tasks is just one element of distributed leadership that also includes reflecting collaboratively about the school aims as HP4 mentions that, during her SLT meetings, she distributes leadership with her assistant heads and clearly discusses with them when taking decisions: “at times I feel somewhat, I ask listen, if you were in my position, what would you do? I really cannot complain, because I do find the support I need, and I am very happy this year” (HP4). Day and Sammons (2016, p. 35) outline that “distributed leadership can be seen as a form of concerted action which is about the additional dynamic that occurs when people work together or that is the product of joint agency”. HP4’s attitude, that of believing in sharing her leadership whilst being supported, is vital, since as Harris (2005, p. 261) concludes, “distributed leadership is unlikely to flourish unless those in formal leadership positions positively promote and support it”.

Middle leaders, such as assistant heads, feel prepared to take decisions and help in whole school leadership: “our Head is not here all the time, so it is up to us to deal with most of the things that crop up, at times, even before they are brought to the Head’s attention” (TP1). HoSs recall that assistant heads are required to work hard as well, notwithstanding long hours and even during summer recess: “here, we work even after school hours and in summer. In fact, summer holidays are non-existent at times. An Assistant Head who is willing to work only until quarter

to two would put you in a fine pickle” (HP5). These extracts confirm Huber’s (2004, p. 675-676) argument that “leadership is no longer statically connected to the hierarchical status of an individual person but allows for the participation in different fields by as many persons from staff as possible”. Moreover, it is also evident that the HoSs within St David’s College are willing to and have made the decision to distribute their leadership, because as Harris and Chapman (2002, p. 11) found out, “the decision to work with and through teams as well as individuals was a common response to the management of change”. Unfortunately, secondary HoSs (HS1 and HS2) did not mention HODs at all, besides their assistant heads during the semi-structured interviews, and whilst HODs are part of the school SLT, distributing leadership with HODs can help in ensuring a much more collective endeavour.

HoSs stated that making decisions in their position is necessary, contrasting to what Blase (1987, p. 599) maintains, as he reports that only some school leaders were willing to make decisions “in a timely manner” as “decisions are postponed endlessly” by other school leaders whilst “some of them won’t make decisions”. HoSs mention that their preferred way to make decisions is after consulting with the staff; however, decisions are taken in the best interest of the students: “every decision that needs to be taken, is first discussed with [the staff], even if ultimately it is up to me to take a final decision that would be in the best interest of all our students” (HP4). HP5 argued that when she was a teacher she disliked that her HoSs used to take decisions themselves, therefore she still thinks as a teacher and “does not take decisions she would have dreamt up” (HP5). When in a leadership position, some decisions are difficult to take, especially when directly involving students or members of the staff, but sometimes decisions are necessary in order to safeguard the rest of the school community: “one of our students was causing a lot of problems, and he was a bad influence on the other students too. I had to take the decision that this student could not step into school before presenting a doctor’s certificate declaring that he was not a threat to others” (HP1). As Sebring and Bryk (2000, p. 441) argue, it is necessary that school leaders “start off by dealing with problems that can be solved quickly, they keep their long-term focus on improving student achievement”. Blase (1987, p.

597) found that leaders who were accessible by their “availability and visibility” took decisions that made sense to teachers as these school leaders were aware of what was going on in their school.

It also seems that the majority of the school community help to implement decisions taken by HoSs even if they do not like these at first or at all; however, there remains the need for the HoS to clarify the reasoning behind why certain decisions had to be taken and if possible to explain clearly the pros and cons of such a decision. Teachers do appreciate such explanations about decisions: “the mode of delivery should be better, I agree that taking a stand is sometimes necessary, but I mean that what is being done needs to be marketed better” (TS2). HP4 explains that when a decision is necessary, she talks to the persons concerned, staff or parents, to inform them “and after I explain to them the reasoning behind the decision to be taken, I believe that the majority understand the whole point and side with you, even if the decision is a difficult one” (HP4). HP1 mentions that, unfortunately, “there still remains a few individuals who do not realise that decisions taken are in the best interest of students, despite that these [staff members] are professionals” (HP1).

Questionnaire - Question 2.7							
The Head of School accepts feedback from us staff.							
Valid Respondents		235	100%	Missing Respondents		0	0%
		Primary		Secondary		Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	51	42	89			
	% within Sector	54.3%	29.8%	39.6%			
Agree	Count	37	74	90			
	% within Sector	39.4%	52.5%	47.2%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	5	19	24			
	% within Sector	5.3%	13.5%	10.2%			
Disagree	Count	1	4	10			
	% within Sector	1.1%	2.8%	2.1%			
Strongly Disagree	Count	0	2	1			
	% within Sector	0.0%	1.4%	0.9%			
Total	Count	94	141	235			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 4.9 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q2.7

As can be noted in Table 4.9, 93.7% and 82.3% of the primary and secondary staff respectively responded quite positively in view of the fact that their HoS accepts their feedback. Also, the number of members of staff that neither agreed

nor disagreed with such statement was quite low when compared to other questions in the questionnaire, amounting to around a tenth of the teaching staff. That said, one can still notice that the rate of non-committal respondents is higher in the secondary sector in relation to the primary sector, where the percentage is just 5.3%. Staff do feel valued if suggestions are taken on board by their HoS and implemented, even if school leaders take their time to reflect, analyse, and decide:

“There was a suggestion to collect marks in a different manner so as to avoid unnecessary paperwork, and this year it was implemented. It is nice to be approached by a teacher expressing his appreciation for the fact that a suggestion was taken on board, a year later true, but better late than never” (HS1).

Green (2002, p. 7) outlines that a “good enough” leader is one who will sometimes fail. It is necessary “to set up mechanisms in schools that allow us [school leaders] to examine and question our routine ways of doing things” (Barth, 1990, p. 515). School leadership gives “a lot of satisfaction although there are a lot of challenges” (HP4). One might even experience despair, especially when feeling unappreciated:

“Our school is relatively big, so, obviously, there are many bits and pieces to put together. It is a very complex job, yet interesting, but there are times when you feel a certain helplessness arising from the fact that you wouldn’t know which course to take and, sometimes, a lack of appreciation” (HS1).

Allen (2007, p. 8) alleges that “self-awareness is foundational for effective leadership, along with the ability to communicate a vision and help others see how they fit into the vision” because, as HS2 explains, difficult or tense moments even arise from having to satisfy those under your leadership and tough moments can arise from the need to satisfy clients, not only the students and their parents but also directors within the Ministry for Education and Employment, school staff, and school neighbours:

“You have to take care of your students, your teachers and staff, the parents, and even the surrounding area, including the neighbours, at times. Then there are directors and the department too. There are many ‘clients’, the needs of whom have to be satisfied” (HS2).

There is the perception in Malta that Church and Independent schools are of a higher standard than government schools and TS3 seems to subscribe to this perception when stating “anything goes in the public sector” (TS3). Despite this reputation that can instil doubt in school leaders, HoSs are clearly committed that they need to give their best to all the students: “I believe that we have to give a

good service in this school, and it is not the case that anything goes just because this is a state school” (HP5). Students are also aware of this perception in mentality:

“Sometimes when you mention the school with others, you get a couple of dirty looks because certain students would have sullied the school’s reputation. However, in the long run, one’s performance in school depends highly on the individual and not on the others” (SS);

“Since this is a state school, we get more students from a lot of different backgrounds, who do not always have the same morals and values” (SS).

It is to be acknowledged that there are serious challenges in state schools due to the larger number of students and lately due to various migrant learners who sometimes are not fluent in either of the two official languages—Maltese, and English. According to HP5, these students negatively impact the reputation of her school:

“We are still battling off a reputation that this school is a shambles. Yes, there is a mixture of different nationalities, but it irks me that this is sometimes perceived as being tantamount to chaos. Here, you have classes where all students are foreign and classes with just four Maltese students, so the social, cultural, and ethnic challenges are huge” (HP5).

It is worth pointing out that some schools within St David’s College offer induction classes where teachers “prepare notes and exam papers both in Maltese and English without any grumbling” (HS1) and certain classes are set up to help students improve their literacy in Maltese and English: “we improved [as a school] in languages as we run induction classes and we have two other specialised classes that offer support for students who are not fluent in Maltese and English” (TP2).

4.5 Theme B – Motivation

HP3 makes it clear that it is through the people under his leadership, that the aim of a school leader is ultimately reached:

“The first thing that springs to mind is the staff; SMT, teaching staff, LSAs, caretakers, and minor staff - these are people who will lead me to, help me to achieve my ultimate goal, which as Head of School is that of teaching and learning practically. What I mean is that it is through people that you have to achieve your goals” (HP3).

This brings us to the idea that leadership is a process of influence as outlined by Bush and Glover (2003, p. 5) as they define school leadership in the following manner:

Leadership is a process of influence to the achievement of desired purposes. Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision. The philosophy, structures, and activities of the school are geared towards the achievement of this shared vision (Bush and Glover, 2003, p. 5).

Similarly, Yukl (2002, p. 3) argue that:

Most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person [or group] over other people [or groups] to structure activities and relationships in a group or organisation.

Defining leadership as a process of influence, it is necessary to point out that more than three-quarters of the teaching staff within St David's College (76.5%) claimed that their HoS inspires them to perform. This is quite a positive finding as it indicates that most school leaders influence the staff positively. Having said that, one out of five teachers (18.8%) opted to neither agree nor disagree with the statement that their school leader inspires them to perform. Worthy of note is the fact that 40 out of 44 respondents in this category pertain to the secondary school sector, as outlined in Table 4.10. In fact, 28.6% of the secondary staff opted not to take a position on whether their HoS inspires them, when compared to 4.3% of primary staff. Applying the chi-square test, this difference observed, resulted in significance at 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$). So, the primary teaching staff has better perceptions of how inspirational their leaders are.

Questionnaire - Question 2.8							
The Head of School inspires teachers to perform.							
Valid Respondents		234	99.6%	Missing Respondents		1	0.4%
		Primary	Secondary	Total			
Strongly Agree	Count	52	37	89			
	% within Sector	55.3%	26.4%	38.0%			
Agree	Count	37	53	90			
	% within Sector	39.4%	37.9%	38.5%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	4	40	44			
	% within Sector	4.3%	28.6%	18.8%			
Disagree	Count	1	9	10			
	% within Sector	1.1%	6.4%	4.3%			
Strongly Disagree	Count	0	1	1			
	% within Sector	0.0%	0.7%	0.4%			
Total	Count	94	140	234			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 4.10 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q2.8

Questionnaire - Question 3.9					
I feel motivated at my school.					
Valid Respondents	230	97.9%	Missing Respondents	5	2.1%
		Primary	Secondary	Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	39	22	61	
	% within Sector	42.9%	15.8%	26.5%	
Agree	Count	44	65	109	
	% within Sector	48.4%	46.8%	47.4%	
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	4	36	40	
	% within Sector	4.4%	25.9%	17.4%	
Disagree	Count	4	15	19	
	% within Sector	4.4%	10.8%	8.3%	
Strongly Disagree	Count	0	1	1	
	% within Sector	0.0%	0.7%	0.4%	
Total	Count	91	139	230	
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 4.11 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q3.9

Furthermore, 73.9% of the teachers feel they are motivated at their workplace. More primary teachers claimed they are motivated at school, when compared to secondary teachers, with 91.2% to 62.6% respectively, as shown in Table 4.11. It is noteworthy that a high count of secondary teachers in the sample, 36 in total, failed to take a position on this matter, similarly to other statements noted above. The chi-square test established that the observed difference in the motivation self-assessment of teachers between primary and secondary teachers is statistically significant at 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$) and thus can be generalised to the teacher population within St David's College.

HoSs expressed their concern about the various radical changes in Malta's educational system throughout these last two decades, which have left a negative impact on teachers' motivation. HoSs argued that the new education directors being appointed from time to time within the directorates brought about various changes in educational policies as "newly appointed [directors] tend to dream up new agendas, without first giving themselves some time to find their feet and build a solid foundation" (HP5) and consequently "they [the teachers] have become tired of all these changes" (HP4). This tends to resonate with Barth (2013, p. 11) who claims that "teachers' plates are full. Teachers already have a huge amount of responsibility for their students". TS1 claims that the recent policies, such as the co-educational reform, impacted the workload as effective

policing is much more needed than ever before in school corridors: “co-ed has given rise to a new phenomenon, that of romantic problems, which I believe has increased the workload for SLTs, as well as for teachers”. HS2 argues that Malta’s educational system focuses only on academic subjects and thus the system is not catering for low-ability students:

“Currently, we have only one system, which is focused on academic subjects from primary level through to secondary. A student who starts falling behind at that age does not have many other routes to explore, and this leads to a low level of satisfaction with the school both from the student’s and from the parents’ end” (HS2).

This challenge, mentioned by HS2, paved the way for the new policy ‘myjourney’, yet another reform that will be introduced as from September 2019 onwards, but unfortunately, teachers are so far in the dark about the development of this programme and logistics. As TS2 argues: “I hope that the ‘myjourney’ does not mean another transfer for me, there are a lot of rumours of which schools are going to cater for myjourney”. HP2 argues that in his eleven years as school leader: “as more time elapsed, more things were introduced. Just to give you some examples, during my time the common entrance and the Junior Lyceum exams were discontinued, we had a streaming system that was put to an end and replaced by banding, and now we are moving towards myjourney. There are other things as well, such as co-ed” (HP2). This suggests that all these radical changes in Malta’s education system were not of benefit to school leaders to really focus their attention on the teaching and learning aspect of leadership as too many policies were being put into place, whilst replacing older ones. Besides that, HP5 claimed that certain changes were just on paper and not of actual value in the real context, such as, for instance, “it’s SLT now, I have to start getting used to saying that” (HP5) without any real changes that enhance school leadership. HoSs argue that more and more tasks are being given to teachers from time to time due to the radical changes in Malta’s educational system and thus it is to be acknowledged that this is hindering teachers’ motivation:

“There are too many changes in the education system, and the demands on teachers are always piling up. For instance, I remember a time when there were no LSAs, no statemented students, and no transitions. All of this has given rise to more work that, up until a few years ago, did not fall under a teacher’s responsibility. Today, we have to step up to the plate” (HP1);

“I can assure you that there are many teachers here who go the extra mile, and work even after school hours to come in well prepared for their classes. However, the fact that the

central authorities keep adding new tasks to what is already expected of teachers, is basically ticking them off” (HP3);

“When you talk to the staff, the plea is: miss give us a break” (HP4).

Given the fact that nowadays social media forms an integral part of our lives, HP3 suggests that traditional media and social media are leaving an impact on teachers’ motivation:

“Social media and traditional media have been contributing to demoralising teachers, even those who are motivated. I can safely say that the majority who work here are very motivated, but constant messages saying that teachers’ working conditions are bad do take their toll on one’s motivation” (HP3).

This comment by HP3 resonates with Attard Tonna and Calleja (2018a, p. 22) who found out that amongst various factors, “job satisfaction and professional morale can be influenced by the public’s attitudes towards schools”. Attard Tonna and Calleja (2018b) further argue that “teachers are mentioned quite often in local media and are sometimes under attack or criticised as failing to serve the changing needs of society, or of benefitting from too many holidays throughout the year”. Meanwhile, assistant heads and teachers claimed otherwise:

“If I weren’t motivated, I wouldn’t come in on Saturdays - we have already worked three Saturdays. This happened last year as well and I was told that participation levels were the same as this year’s. I did truly feel a positive vibe” (TP1);

“I am always motivated, otherwise I wouldn’t come to work. You always need to find a source of motivation” (TS1);

“I am a professional and very much self-motivated, so I will do my job properly, but as for the rest [pause]” (TS2).

Whilst TS1 and TS2 claim that they are motivated as professionals, they still mentioned situations where they feel unmotivated:

“It is difficult to stay motivated for a number of reasons, but one of principle factors, which is also one of the things that annoy me the most, is the change we’ve experienced in a short time. This change is putting a lot of stress on teachers and SMTs, and I have my doubts as to whether this change will really translate into a better education system” (TS1);

“Sometimes motivation is impacted by underlying, unresolved issues. For instance, you get a new student in your class, and you wouldn’t have wanted this to happen for very valid reasons, but you never get an answer as to why your arguments were ignored” (TS2).

Other teachers argued:

“I love the atmosphere in my class and the students. However, I tend to be cautious when I need something, because help is not always forthcoming from the Head of School. When I used to ask the Head something at the beginning of the scholastic year, the Head did not

help. If you don't find the support you need from the person who's leading the school, who are you supposed to turn to for help?" (TS3);

"You get your satisfaction from seeing students do well, obviously. I am happy, but it is also disheartening to see certain students give up and fall behind, but I'm still motivated" (TP2).

Arar et al. (2016, p. 134) claim that effective school leaders "enhance students' learning through the motivation of teachers, staff and students", so it is necessary for school leaders to keep assisting their staff in order to enhance their motivation which will, in turn, result in better quality teaching and learning:

"I worked with Kinder II, by conviction and not by imposition, because you cannot impose, and we reached a decision that children who would be ready to learn how to write, would be given the opportunity to do so. We also introduced a reading system" (HP1);

"If members of your staff are happy, they will go beyond what is expected of them" (HP3);

"We have discussed this a number of times, namely that the Head of School is not very consistent in what says and does; he would plan one thing and then do something completely different. For instance, we were going to organise this day-long initiative, whereby students could get a taste of all subjects, and now we are not going to go through with it. If something is going to be done, it first needs to be planned well, last-minute planning results in half-baked outcomes" (TS3);

"For instance, I wanted to organise an activity, which was beneficial for all students, but I had to send, at least, two reminders to receive an acknowledgement" (TS2);

"General feedback does not necessarily motivate staff, personal feedback does" (QS);

"I feel frustrated when e-mails are never answered, HoS can be more approachable" (QS).

It appears that positive relationships and having school leaders who communicate effectively, give honest feedback, and plan carefully are the recipe to enhance teachers' motivation. Stewart (2013, p. 50) praises Singapore's way of assessing young teachers for their leadership potential and giving them responsibilities as middle leaders in order to enhance their motivation. Moreover, Leithwood and Riehl (2003, p. 19) outline that school leaders should be developing people to "positively influence the motivation and capacities of their colleagues" and therefore avoiding situations such as "I just do the lessons and that's it, as in I do not have any other curricular activities" (TS2), noting that the holistic development of the students through extra-curricular activities is vital. This tends to disagree with Barth (2013, p. 12) who encourages every teacher to take responsibility and every September asks teachers: "what piece of this school do you want to take responsibility for?" This meant that "teachers were not just

permitted to take on leadership roles in the school [but] they were expected to take them on” (Barth, 2013, p. 12).

Students themselves mentioned during the focus-groups that they enjoy the various extra-curricular activities organised. Whilst primary students argued that their motivation depends on the various activities that happen during their school days, interestingly, both primary and secondary students mentioned that their teachers can instil motivation or demotivation:

“He doesn’t miss a single activity. He just asks our Head whether it can be organised, sees whether we’re interested in the activity, and then does his utmost to actually organise it. We had a sort of hot chocolate day in our class, and every day he lets a different student change the interactive whiteboard wallpaper” (SP);

“Our teacher prepares interesting and informative lessons, ones from which we learn and which will serve us well in the future too. She can explain things well, very well too” (SP);

“It depends on the teacher. If you have a boring teacher who just gives out notes, you’d be looking forward to break time, but if your teacher makes lessons interesting, then you don’t get bored” (SP);

“If you like the teacher, then you will do everything to learn and do better” (SS);

“Let’s say it was Maltese and the teacher, when I first met her she was very nice, she was teaching very nice and it was really motivating, I wanted to learn the language, but after a few months she really changed and that really affected me, I hated the lesson because she made it really bad” (SS).

Whilst effective leadership requires school leaders that motivate teachers in order to enhance teaching and learning, and in this research it emerged that HoSs motivate teachers within St David’s College, unfortunately, in this research it was also outlined that the HoSs’ motivation is affected due to a lack of support from the local education directors. HoSs are not referring to the support offered by their College Principal who “still has contacts in schools, and can feel the pulse of the school” (HP5) but to those in the top tier. HoSs argued:

“The people who hurt me the most are those working within the education sector, who do not always appreciate the complexity of the system. Most of the time you would be with your back against the wall and in need of some support, but this support is not always forthcoming” (HS1);

“At times, you feel as though you are asking for help and your pleas are falling on deaf ears. But then, you see your students in the morning and you hear certain comments coming from them, and it’s satisfying enough” (HP3);

“Rather than help, I would say that what you need is support. At times, you would want to do something, and all you find are doors being slammed in your face. Nowadays, we speak about autonomy, and this is the autonomy we are being faced with” (HP4);

“What upsets me are people who work within the directorate, but who are always at their desk and are, consequently, cut off from the reality of what goes on in a school. There’s this trend now of being told; “was this sent in writing?”, whenever you ask these people something. And if you wouldn’t have sent it in writing, then you’ve had it” (HP5).

As Lee and Pang (2011, p. 331) argue, “the credit or blame tends to be assigned” to school leaders amongst other administrators, therefore directors and officers within the Malta’s Ministry for Education and Employment need to understand better the HoSs and, if possible, offer them support instead of making their life difficult with certain situations. As HS2 describes:

“You would have your timetable ready and you would have to rethink it completely just because they would want to take away one of your teachers. You need to be mentally strong, otherwise you’d just cave in” (HS2).

Whilst timetabling and help in scheduling could be offered to school leaders by the education directors, HoSs also feel that they need to be supported when it comes to human resources. HoSs described that they always ask education directors to address the shortage of human resources in schools: “if another assistant head is allocated, we have two assistant heads, there will be a person focusing on curricular work” (HP2). Clerical work is also a necessity; “Clerks are the engine of the school. Departmental work has increased, and you cannot do without clerical help” (HP2) and “How can a secretary be shared between two schools; two days spent here and the other three spent in another school?” (HP1).

HoSs, especially in the secondary sector (HS1 and HS2), argued that they always ask the educational department for more teachers in order to have smaller classes and where possible having classes offered the same subject in different languages. This would be beneficial for non-Maltese speaking students, the teachers themselves feel the need to have smaller classes as mixed-ability and migrant students are the main challenges being reported nowadays: “it is a challenge to cater for mixed abilities in the same classroom, and language is a major hurdle here” (TP2). Since deployment of teachers is the prerogative of the educational ministry, HoSs feel that they are not supported and are powerless in various issues such as when having a teacher who does not report to work:

“A particular teacher hasn’t reported to work for two weeks, and she is not sick, she has just disappeared. I have to face the parents, and so I cannot tolerate this level of indifference towards work” (HP5).

This same frustration is shown by HoSs when having teachers, especially NQTs, who although are graduates, are still not ready to handle a class of students. Here one needs to recognise that “the educational sector provides a unique perspective from other sectors in that oftentimes schools cannot change employees or students but must work with existing resources to perform beyond expectations” (Stone-Johnson, 2014, p. 646). The unprofessionalism of teachers is also something that HoSs are facing, and without any support from the education directors:

“You go into a classroom and see a Nicki Minaj video plastered across the interactive whiteboard, not to mention the lyrics, some of which are inappropriate” (HP5);

“Had I been complaining about all of my staff, the problem would clearly have been me. However, here I am talking about a couple of individuals, and external people such as EOs have also acknowledged the fact that there is a problem. What remains for me to say is please help me out, if you really have the educational interests of the students at heart. Unfortunately, we cannot hire and fire, so I have to make do with the teachers I am sent” (HP4);

“A small number of teachers are not up to the job, and so they do not necessarily perform as well as one would expect them to” (HS1).

This contrasts with Stewart (2013, p. 50) who argues that in Singapore “every new teacher is mentored by a senior or master teacher, and every teacher is entitled to hundred hours of professional development each year”. HP5 admits that when she is not convinced about decisions coming from education directors and that these are not in the best interest of the students and the school as “they [the education directors] do not know the situations in schools” and thus a particular decision “will affect my teachers, or the school as a whole. In such cases, I call the MUT, with which I enjoy a very good relationship, and ask them to advise me on what to do. If they say no I wouldn’t do that, then I do not” (HP5). HP5’s argument seems to agree with Sebring and Bryk (2000, p. 440) who found that through a decentralization plan in Chicago, “the quality of the principal’s leadership is a critical factor in determining whether a school moves forward to improve learning opportunities for students”.

Interestingly, a teacher also noted that “if I could, I would give more authority to the HoS who has his hands tied most of the time” (QS). HoSs sincerely wish that more support is offered from education directors instead of only being bombarded with e-mails from time to time asking them “to provide particular information by

noon” (HP2). Unfortunately, during the semi-structured interviews, it was demonstrated that when HoSs do not get what they want from the education directors they involve the parents and the media. Spillane’s (2003, p. 343) illustration that “leadership is a central theme in recent conversations about improving K-12 education” needs to be taken seriously in Malta as improving education should be done through effective leadership and policies and not due to the moaning of parents. HP5 argues that in Malta “parents have a lot of power” (HP5). The HoSs give the following examples:

“There was a particular problem of which we were aware, and parents reported it directly to the Department. They were right in doing so, especially since this resulted in an action being taken” (HP1);

“If an action needs to be taken, you have to involve the parents. If a teacher is regularly absent, you can complain until you are blue in the face only to be ignored. On the other hand, if parents complain, and the media is brought in, then they feel threatened. This is somewhat annoying for me, but I have learnt to use it as a tool” (HP5).

4.6 Theme C – Communication

HoSs explained how they maintained contact with their staff. HP1 mentioned practices such as “the weekly ‘what’s on’ and regular e-mails, and addressing the staff during assembly.” HoSs refer to the regular contact by e-mail where information is communicated in no time:

“It is not unusual that information is passed on to everyone digitally. Nowadays e-mails are a simple and effective means of communication, and, in fact, we use them to communicate even after school hours” (HP2).

HoSs mentioned briefing sessions with staff: “I meet regularly with staff at least once weekly for sure” (HS1) and:

“I deliver a briefing every fortnight, meaning that every two weeks I conduct four separate sessions, and repeat the same things four times, to reach all members of my numerous staff” (HP1).

TS2 argued that whilst in her school, briefing is held weekly:

“Our Head comes to discuss the ‘What’s On’ he sends us by e-mail, but what worries me is that students are left for around twenty minutes on their own, and the first lesson becomes a twenty-minute lesson instead of forty minutes” (TS2).

This shows that effective arrangements should be made if school leaders are to communicate with staff as a whole during school hours. Meanwhile, HS1 points out that he communicates with particular groups of teachers too:

“Sometimes, I would go into a subject meeting and take the opportunity to speak about certain ongoing matters, and I also try to get feedback on a one-on-one basis in the corridors. I try to utilise the little time that remains in this way, but unfortunately it is not always one hundred per cent possible to maintain contact with the teachers.” (HS1).

Doll (2010, p. 16) asserts that “even stolen moments”, as HS1 explains, can help so that through positive relationships, communication is enhanced. Quite encouragingly, 91.4% of the primary teachers were satisfied with the way their school leader communicates with them. In comparison, in the secondary sector, 73% of the secondary staff indicated that they are satisfied with how their HoS communicates, which is still a positive percentage but substantially lower than the primary context. The chi-square test was run and it was found that the difference observed between sectors is statistically significant at 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$).

Questionnaire - Question 2.4							
The Head of School communicates with me and other teaching staff effectively.							
Valid Respondents		234	99.6%	Missing Respondents		1	0.4%
		Primary		Secondary		Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	43	27	70			
	% within Sector	46.2%	19.1%	29.9%			
Agree	Count	42	76	118			
	% within Sector	45.2%	53.9%	50.4%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	7	14	21			
	% within Sector	7.5%	9.9%	9.0%			
Disagree	Count	1	20	21			
	% within Sector	1.1%	14.2%	9.0%			
Strongly Disagree	Count	0	4	4			
	% within Sector	0.0%	2.8%	1.7%			
Total	Count	93	141	234			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 4.12 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q2.4

Table 4.12 also indicates that 17% of the secondary teaching staff disagreed about effective communication whilst another 9.9% neither agreed nor disagreed. In fact, a secondary HOD argued that her communication with a HoS is only once a year and with regards to classification purposes:

“When you would really need to speak to him [the head of school], very often you end up communicating with him towards the end of the year to discuss classification and similar matters, and it is then that you start seeing him regularly, and maybe in summer as well with regard to timetables and all that” (TS2).

TS2 further argued that:

“There are many things that you end up learning of at the eleventh hour, and sometimes you are promised further information that, in actual fact, never reaches you. I believe that the channel of communication between the Head and the teachers is not all that efficient, in reality” (TS2).

Similarly, TS3 expands on an issue that worries her.

“We never have meetings where we are briefed about the important happenings of the upcoming week, but we always communicate via e-mail, many e-mails at that. Something which really annoys me is that certain updates, such as the calendar of events, are posted in a Facebook group, even if not everyone has access to this platform. School-related stuff, such as calendars and other important things, should not be posted on such sites. If anything, these updates should first be communicated via e-mail, and then posted on Facebook later, but this should not be the only platform on which they are available. To be fair, we’ve seen some improvement lately, as certain things are being communicated via e-mail” (TS3).

Contrary to the comments by teachers, members of the interviewed SLT mentioned a much better communication with their HoS. TP1 argued that “telephone communication is very regular, when we would need to speak to [the Head], we would either call her or e-mail her” (TP1). Meanwhile, TS1 claims “e-mails are sent on a very regular basis, there’s the SMT meeting, and we communicate informally too, so if the need arises, I do go to speak to him [the Head]” (TS1). Whilst quantitative and qualitative data by teachers about communication by school leaders seem to differ it is necessary to draw on Youngs’ (1979, p. 430) argument that “if a lack of communication exists, it may hinder or stop interaction among staff members, and thus dissonance occurs”. HoSs within St David’s College maintain that they use e-mail, letters, and memos in order to enhance their communication with the staff and, therefore, as Temel et al. (2011, p. 11232) insist, school leaders should “communicate effectively through speaking as well as in writing” whilst “being clear, relevant and tactful in phraseology and tone, concise and informative”. Interestingly, Blase (1987, p. 605) found out that “face-to-face interaction was identified by teachers as the major means for the expression of both individual and group praise, although letters, notes, and intercom remarks were also cited in the data”. This makes me reflect on whether nowadays we are making overuse of e-mail instead of interacting with teachers and “using impromptu opportunities to discuss and support teacher goal attainment” (Blasé, 1987, p. 597).

With regards to communication with parents, HoSs mentioned “Facebook pages and regularly updated websites,” (HP1) “in addition to the circulars that we send, we have a school website and a Facebook page, through which we pass on information to the parents and share photos of activities and similar material. We also receive messages from parents on this page, which I answer myself” (HP3). Nearly all HoSs mentioned the use of a Facebook page and school website which, in their opinion, are vital for communication with parents. Moreover, HP4 also mentions focus groups with parents which were “found to be very effective. I [HP4] wish I [HP4] had more time so as to conduct focus groups more often than once a term, but to be honest, even these once-a-term focus groups prove to be a headache to fit in the schedule” (HP4). This kind of face-to-face communication with parents is also mentioned by a few HoSs as otherwise ‘Facebook’ seems to be the main method of communication. HP4 strongly believes in face-to-face communication as she argues that “if someone sends me an e-mail saying that they have a problem, I answer by telling them to kindly set an appointment, because generally when you speak face-to-face” (HP4). Thus, it is evident that “leaders have less time to cultivate strong parent and community relations” (Clark and Clark, 2005, p. 54). Meanwhile, Athanasoula-Reppaa et al. (2010, p. 2210) claim that the creativity of the school leaders is the main factor in establishing good communication between the school and parents.

Six out of the eight HoSs (HP1, HP2, HP3, HP4, HS1, HS2) argued that they have adopted a system of fixed appointments for parents: “yes, I have set aside two days on which I try to fit in parents’ appointments” (HP4); “they come in on Tuesdays and Thursdays, ideally after having made an appointment. Those who walk in, would have to wait according to what I have on my agenda” (HS1). Meanwhile, HP2 claims that if parents could not make it to school personally in particular days, “we make arrangements to meet and they come on another day” (HP2). Conversely, HP6 argued: “I tried the appointment system for two years, but it did not work out. When parents come in the morning, I ask them to wait until assembly is over, and I speak to them afterwards” (HP6). HS1 argues that “in urgent, extreme, cases, parents have the go-ahead to come to school without an appointment” (HS1). Meanwhile, HP6 who runs the smallest school within St

David's College, mentions that her communication with parents is also done before or after the school day: "I communicate with parents by giving them a call or else when they drop off or pick up their children. I take them aside and tell them that I need to speak to them, and then we speak formally" (HP6). HP6 shows a positive attitude towards developing communication with parents and, according to Barr and Saltmarsh (2014, p. 501), it is the school leader's attitude towards parents that has "a significant factor in determining whether they feel entitled to be involved in and contribute to the everyday activities of the school, or whether they feel too intimidated to enter the school gates". Meanwhile, HP5 mentioned that school leaders and staff do encounter instances where they have to face parents and students whose languages are unfamiliar which Sood et al. (2018, p. 131) refer to "as a result of increasing migration":

"Questionnaires were completed and returned [referring to the external review questionnaire for parents], translating into a response rate of over 90%. We were very glad about the fact that parents were supporting the school, and it was something that took me by surprise. We are faced with a bit of everything, there are the non-communicative ones who communicate with signs and there are those who use google translate" (HP5).

Whilst the use of e-mails is currently widespread, only one HoS (HS1) explained that circulars are sent to parents by e-mail; other school leaders pointed out that circulars are still being distributed to students whilst Facebook is used in order to speed up communication with parents. Meanwhile, HoSs argued that parents who sent their queries via e-mails are answered by school leaders themselves: "e-mails by parents are passed to me, and I [Head of School] do reply" (HP2). HS1 argued:

"Most of the time the [administration] tries to answer as soon as possible, within 24 hours. However, there are certain e-mails that require more time, because we would have to check certain things before getting back to the parents. In that case, we generally acknowledge receipt of the e-mail and inform the parents that we shall be getting back to them in the coming days. Sometimes we don't send this e-mail of acknowledgement, and some parents would think that we wouldn't have seen the e-mail, when in actual fact we would be tackling it. We get regular telephone calls too" (HS1).

The fact of acknowledging e-mails shows good channels of communication between the school leader and parents. Secondary school leaders argued that if they hand circulars to students for their parents, these circulars will not reach the parents:

"This year we even introduced a Facebook page, where we post regularly, according to what activities and events would be going on in the school. I think this page is much more effective than circulars. We don't give circulars to the students to take home, but send

them via e-mail. A trick we have learnt is to also advise parents to check their mail on our Facebook page, when we send out a circular” (HS1).

Meanwhile, HS2 seemed concerned:

“The truth is that it is difficult to reach parents. However, Facebook is proving to be an excellent tool, because it allows many more parents to follow the day-to-day happenings and events of the school, and there’s more interaction too. On Facebook, everything, from calendars to exam timetables, is accessible all the time, and this platform has replaced telephone calls and e-mails as parents’ go-to means of communication” (HS2).

Regarding communication with parents, secondary teachers mentioned the two occasions held yearly: the parents’ evening in the first term, and the parents’ day in the second term: “just parents’ day” (TS2); “except of course when there’s parents day, but up until now I’ve never come to a point where I’ve had to speak to parents about problems that would have arisen” (TS3). Epstein and Dauber (1991, p. 290) refer to this type of communication as the “basic obligations of schools [that] include communications with families about school programs and children’s progress”. However, a primary teacher also mentioned that communication with parents is “not limited to parents’ day, I sometimes see them around and they stop to speak to me. Up until now, I’ve never had problems with parents” (TP2). Moreover, TP2 claimed that issues are firstly discussed between class teachers and members of the SLT before parents are contacted:

“In cases where a child would be concerned, I would sometimes discuss it with them [the SMT], but first we [teachers] speak to the SMT before going directly to the parents. Up until now, I’ve never found myself in a situation where I’ve had a problem and had to ask to talk to them [parents]” (TP2).

This seems to agree with Hargreaves’ (1995, p. 34) metaphor of some 25 years ago, “no parents beyond this line” which Hargreaves (1995) labelled then as the traditional school culture. Meanwhile, Clark and Clark (2005, p. 55) insist that clear communication with parents is necessary and should include “developing cooperative strategies for helping students”. However, it seems that is necessary to involve parents more than just twice yearly for a parents’ days because as Arar et al. (2016, p. 135) maintain, “involving parents in education has been reported to yield positive outcomes in many aspects including increased student attendance and satisfaction with the school...and fewer discipline problems”.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, responses to the first subsidiary research question '*What does school leadership look like?*' was debated drawing on the data emerging from the semi-structured interviews with the HoSs and the teaching staff, the teachers' questionnaire and the focus groups held with the students. School leadership within St David's College was examined according to the three emerging themes: (A) Effective Leadership; (B) Motivation; and (C) Communication. In the next chapter, the second subsidiary research question '*How are relationships between school leaders, teachers, and students currently played out in schools?*' will be answered through the following three themes: (D) Positive Relationships; (E) Trust; and (F) Sense of Community.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION II:

**How are relationships between school
leaders, teachers, and students
currently played out in schools?**

Chapter 5 - Findings and Discussion II: How are relationships between school leaders, teachers, and students currently played out in schools?

5.1 Subsidiary Research Question 2: How are relationships between school leaders, teachers, and students currently played out in schools?

In the previous chapter, school leadership in St David's College was explored and thus the first subsidiary research question was answered. The aim of this fifth chapter is to answer the second subsidiary research question: *'How are relationships between school leaders, teachers, and students currently played out in schools?'* "Relational trust is the connective tissue that binds individuals together to advance the education and welfare of students" (Bryk and Schneider, 2003, p. 44). Willis (2013, p. 29) maintains that "relationships and a plan are the keys to success". However, the need to improve "interpersonal relationships in schools has received too little attention" (Kruse, Louis, and Bryk, 1994, p. 8) and, therefore, school leaders need "to think harder about how best to organise the work of adults and students so that this connective tissue remains healthy and strong" (Bryk and Schneider, 2003, p. 44). Champeau (2011, p. 40) insists that "for the sake of the students and communities" schools should have "the means and the will to build such relationships and connections". In this section, the second subsidiary research question will be analysed and, therefore, relationships between school leaders, teachers, and students are explored according to the data gathered within St David's College. The three themes emanating and debated in this chapter are: (D) Positive Relationships; (E) Trust; and (F) Sense of Community.

5.2 Theme D – Positive Relationships

All HoSs interviewed within St David's College argued that they believed in positive relationships as these were essential for successful leadership; however,

the issue of lack of time cropped up, especially in relation to the non-ending list of tasks required from school leaders. As Lee and Pang (2011, p. 331-332) argue, a school leader “needs to endeavour to establish appropriate relationships with external authorities and members of staff”. HP4 justified the need for positive relationships and that the success of students is achieved through these positive relationships:

“I believe that we are three: the school, the students and their parents. By school, I am not only referring to myself, the school encompasses everyone; SLT and the staff, parents, and children. If one side of the triangle collapses, the students will suffer” (HP4).

HP3 explained that “relationships foster better leadership” whilst HP2 emphasised that any difficulties in relationships are the first challenge for the school leader to solve, besides all the other tasks and the never-ending list of duties that form part of the school leader’s role:

“You face challenges every day, you have a relationship with the many members of your staff, the directorate, the College Principal, the assistant heads reporting directly to you, the teaching staff, LSAs, caretakers and other people, the psycho-social team, the precincts officer. You have to maintain a relationship with everyone, and as soon one of these relationships stops working smoothly, you have the first challenge.” (HP2).

This resonates with Chapman and Harris’s (2003, p. 3) argument that the headteachers within their study “had a high degree of emotional intelligence, and they were acutely aware of the need to build purposive relationships with staff, students and parents”. In fact, Bush and Glover (2014, p. 554) argue that most definitions of leadership “reflect the assumption that it involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people” and that “the person seeking to exercise influence is doing so in order to achieve certain purposes”. Interestingly, HP2 did not only mention the relationships with the staff who he meets on a daily basis but also other staff members within the particular college such as the psycho-social team and the precincts officer. Then, however, he [HP2] did not mention his relationship with the students and parents. This might not be that surprising, especially when taking into consideration Barth’s (1990, p. 516) claim that “during an average day, for instance, a teacher or principal engages in several hundred interactions”. In contrast, HS1 argued that he places relationships with students in the centre whilst stating: “one of the issues I am facing right now, is that I do not have as much time as I would like to have to dedicate to the staff and the students” (HS1). This seems to be the

situation not only in secondary schools but also in primary schools as a primary teacher pointed out: “I need to find more availability when I need to speak to the head when he can give me his full attention in his office rather than while doing something else” (QP).

As discussed in Section 4.4 of this thesis, HoSs highlighted the need to distribute their leadership with members of their SLT, and thus the necessity to maintain positive relationships within the SLT was regarded by HoSs to be of crucial importance. The HoSs pointed out circumstances where, within their particular school, a lot of energy has to be shifted from the core task of improving teaching and learning due to a lack of positive relationships. HP5 stated clearly that the shift in energy is inevitable as a lot of time is wasted in trying to solve conflicts amongst members of the SLT: “you waste a lot of time trying to patch things up in their relationships” (HP5). All the eight HoSs interviewed stated that they are happy with their relationship with members of the SLT although some of the school leaders maintained that this was not always the case as in previous years they experienced difficulties in maintaining positive relationships with members of the SLT. Interestingly, HoSs used two effective Maltese idioms, namely “*tigbed l-istess ħabel*” (to pull on the same end of the rope) and “*bsaten fir-roti*” (to put spokes in the wheel) to highlight the importance of positive relationships with the SLT:

“The worst thing that can happen to a Head of School is having an Assistant Head, even if just one, who doesn’t pull the same rope, or is detached from the team” (HP1);

“When an individual from the SMT is not on your side and starts putting spokes in the wheel – I’m speaking from experience here – this sets you back and everyone, from the students to the staff and the parents, suffers” (HP4).

Similarly, difficulties in distributing leadership may arise due to not maintaining positive relationships:

“The result would be that you stop trusting her with tasks completely and do everything yourself, because you know that she’d either make a mess out of every task given to her and you’d have to clean up after her, or cause trouble with other staff members. This is all extra work and it doesn’t help” (HP1).

Although the HoSs maintained that there are good relationships between the members of the SLTs in their schools, less than three-quarters of the teaching staff (72.6%) answered that they felt that there were good relationships between

the SLT members in their school. Secondary teachers were the most preoccupied as only 61.2% agreed that assistant heads maintain positive relationships amongst each other, whilst opted for the neither agree nor disagree position, as shown in Table 5.1 below. The chi-square test resulted at 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$) therefore confirming that the observed difference in positive relationships between the SLT varies by sector. Secondary teachers noted that “more collaboration between the SMT is necessary, more SMT presence around the school, these have to be authoritative and their presence constant” (QS), thus noting that a more collective endeavour is necessary.

Questionnaire - Question 3.4							
There are good relationships between the members of the SLT in my school.							
Valid Respondents		230	97.9%	Missing Respondents		5	2.1%
		Primary		Secondary		Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	40	29	69			
	% within Sector	44.0%	20.9%	30.0%			
Agree	Count	42	56	98			
	% within Sector	46.2%	40.3%	42.6%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	9	43	52			
	% within Sector	9.9%	30.9%	22.6%			
Disagree	Count	0	9	9			
	% within Sector	0.0%	6.5%	3.9%			
Strongly Disagree	Count	0	2	2			
	% within Sector	0.0%	1.4%	0.9%			
Total	Count	91	139	230			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 5.1 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q3.4

It appears that only after establishing positive relationships with the members of the SLT that school leaders can refer to their team “as an extension of myself” (HP5), as HP5 put it, as otherwise if the SLT members “do not share the same vision” (HP5) of the school leader it is “like having children, and you need to keep a peaceful situation among them, as there would be underlying conflicts” (HP5). HP2 claimed that “meetings and good relationships are important, but if you don’t enjoy a good relationship with the assistant heads, you cannot lead the school”. When relationships between the school leaders and members of the SLT are positive, school leaders feel that they can put their mind at rest, as HP1 described: “yesterday a situation that we had to deal with arose, and I found total backup from all of them [the assistant heads].” Therefore, “through consistency and teamwork you can work better” (HP5).

It was found that only 2.6% of the teaching staff disagreed that there were good relationships between the teachers and the members of the SLT. Table 5.2 shows that 79.4% of the primary and 75.5% of the secondary staff agreed that there are positive relationships between teachers and members of the SLT. However 47 teachers opted for a neutral reply.

Questionnaire - Question 3.5							
There are good relationships between the teachers and the SLT in my school.							
Valid Respondents		231	98.3%	Missing Respondents		4	1.7%
		Primary	Secondary	Total			
Strongly Agree	Count	34	26	60			
	% within Sector	37.0%	18.7%	26.0%			
Agree	Count	39	79	118			
	% within Sector	42.4%	56.8%	51.1%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	17	30	47			
	% within Sector	18.5%	21.6%	20.3%			
Disagree	Count	2	4	6			
	% within Sector	2.2%	2.9%	2.6%			
Total	Count	92	139	231			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 5.2 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q3.5

Meanwhile, HS1 described an issue between a teacher and an assistant head that happened in his school, whilst TS3 recalled that she felt more comfortable to discuss issues in her school with an assistant head:

“Last week, there was an issue about a replacement, and the teacher concerned came up to me to tell me that she didn’t feel comfortable speaking to the assistant head [in charge of scheduling replacement lessons] about the matter. I encouraged her to do so, and after she plucked up the courage and did, she came to thank me and to let me know that the assistant head had been very nice about the matter. Sometimes there are issues with perception, arising from the fact that some individuals wouldn’t know each other too well, but there don’t seem to be major issues with communication and similar stuff. On the contrary, sometimes I think we’re too open” (HS1);

“There isn’t that desirable level of communication with the Head of School. If I see him in the corridor, I do acknowledge his presence with a nod, but if I have problems, I don’t feel comfortable sharing them with him, so I’m more likely to go to an assistant head. Even if it is a matter concerning a student, I prefer going to the assistant head rather than to the Head, because I don’t feel comfortable opening up to him” (TS3).

HP2 argued that maintaining positive relationships with the staff is demanding as in primary schools it is more difficult to build positive relationships with the teachers as these teachers are occupied mostly all the time with their class and in order to talk to a primary teacher, the class needs to be taken over by another teacher: “primary is not secondary, to talk to a teacher you need to do so whilst

the class is with a peripatetic teacher” (HP2). Besides the problem of availability, that only HP2 mentioned and which Crippen (2012, p. 194) seems to agree with as “time for staff interaction is often restricted in schools”, other primary school leaders argued that they try to find time to maintain positive relationships with their staff, but that like in the case of every other relationship, there might also be misunderstandings with members of staff:

“Sometimes you’d be under the impression that you would have properly explained something to a member of staff and given him enough time to understand what you need, but then you’d find out that this wasn’t the case. You are approached by this particular individual, sometimes with eyes welling up, and you’re told – at times even accused – that you hadn’t explained things well enough” (HP6);

“When an issue arises, I wish that the Head of School addresses the directly concerned personally and not the whole group” (QP).

As Table 5.3 indicates, 91.1% of the teachers within St David’s College answered that they have a good working relationship with their HoS. Specifically, primary teachers were more likely to indicate a positive relationship than secondary teachers, 97.9% when compared to 86.5%, resulting in a significant difference of 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$) when running the chi-square test. Secondary teachers were more likely to opt for a neutral response, specifically 12% when compared to 1.1% of primary teachers. This data from the questionnaire resonates with the views raised during the interviews with the HoSs who all viewed positive relationships with teachers as vital for the success of the school.

Questionnaire - Question 2.1					
I have a good working relationship with my Head of School.					
Valid Respondents	235	100.0%	Missing Respondents	0	0.0%
			Primary	Secondary	Total
Strongly Agree	Count		55	45	100
	% within Sector		58.5%	31.9%	42.6%
Agree	Count		37	77	114
	% within Sector		39.4%	54.6%	48.5%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count		1	17	18
	% within Sector		1.1%	12.1%	7.7%
Disagree	Count		1	2	3
	% within Sector		1.1%	1.4%	1.3%
Strongly Disagree	Count		0	0	0
	% within Sector		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	Count		94	141	235
	% within Sector		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 5.3 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q2.1

Despite the fact that a school leader can have a personal vision and plenty of good ideas, it is the school staff that is going to implement the vision and ideas in the classrooms and it is through a positive relationship with teachers, that teachers can actuate this vision, as HP6 argued:

“Teachers are not going to go against your word, out of respect for you. They might appear to be agreeing with you at face value, but ultimately they will not adopt those measures at classroom level. I think that the success of a school not only depends on the vision of the Head and on the ability of the Head to push that vision through the community, because on the receiving end there is the teacher who has to execute and implement this vision” (HP6).

This is consistent with Crawford’s (2002, p. 279) claims that “as followers internalise the leader’s vision, and trust and confidence in the leader are high, followers feel more confident and they develop a sense of working together as a team”. As most HoSs claimed that they had established positive relationships, teachers feel comfortable giving their sincere feedback in order to improve the learning experience: “there will be things that teachers would not be happy about and they come to tell us” (HP1). In fact, a primary school teacher recalled “our HoS is always willing to listen to our worries and feedback” (QP). It is through positive relationships that teachers make a step forward and are ready to admit and discuss any wrongdoings to their HoS. Meanwhile, HoSs felt that being open with teachers was necessary: “being an open book is important, meaning that I inform the staff of all the things I feel they should know about” (HS1). It is through positive relationships that HoSs can discuss issues being discussed at higher levels and which the HoSs feel that the staff is to be informed about, as HS1 clearly demonstrated: “if I get wind of something that is happening next year, why should I keep it a secret from my staff? I encourage my staff to give me their feedback all the time” (HS1). This agrees with Barth’s (2006) argument that the kind of school he wants to work in is the school where educators discuss school practice and where educators are observing one another whilst being engaged in daily activities. Moreover, Harris (2005) demonstrates that in schools where teachers share good practices and learn together, better quality teaching can be secured. Meanwhile, Mistry and Sood (2017, p. 127) outline that it is evident that “leaders need to continue to consider flexible organizational structures for staff to meet individually or in teams to have an open dialogue and learn on the job”. Thus, when positive relationships with teachers have been

established, teachers will more readily accept feedback and improve their teaching in order to enhance student learning, as a HoS mentioned:

“Even when it comes to giving feedback on a lesson, the relationship with the person receiving the feedback makes a difference. If you enjoy a good relationship with the person, your feedback will be appreciated rather than dismissed as remarks made by someone who doesn’t know the subject” (HS1).

Bush (2015b) debates that secondary school leaders may lack specialist subject knowledge required for instructional leadership, as HS1 mentioned; however, through positive relationships, the teacher is willing to accept feedback and remarks passed by the school leader during classroom visits. Another HoS argued that when staff members inform the HoS of any difficulties in relationships with colleagues, these are considered in the classification exercise:

“I feel that I have built a good relationship with the staff, with every teacher and every LSA. I always give them a heads-up before taking an action, even when it comes to classification, for instance. At times you’d be under the impression that everything is going swimmingly, and then you discover that there are underlying problems between certain individuals. In this case, I try to make sure that these two people do not work together to ensure that my teachers or LSAs are in happy with their environment and immediate team, and this in turn helps students succeed” (HP2).

Questionnaire - Question 2.3							
I have regular conversations with the Head of School.							
Valid Respondents		233	91.1%	Missing Respondents		2	0.9%
		Primary		Secondary		Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	35	18	53			
	% within Sector	38.0%	12.8%	22.7%			
Agree	Count	44	52	96			
	% within Sector	47.8%	36.9%	41.2%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	6	25	31			
	% within Sector	6.5%	17.7%	13.3%			
Disagree	Count	7	37	44			
	% within Sector	7.6%	26.2%	18.9%			
Strongly Disagree	Count	0	9	9			
	% within Sector	0.0%	6.4%	3.9%			
Total	Count	92	141	233			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 5.4 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q2.3

Whilst it has already been established that 91.1% of the teachers had a good working relationship with their HoS⁸, quite interestingly, only 63.9% of the teaching staff answered that they had regular conversations with their HoS. Less than half of the secondary teachers (49.7%) agreed that they had regular

⁸ Questionnaire with Teachers - Question 2.1: I have a good working relationship with my Head of School.

conversations with their HoS, when compared to a high 85.8% of the primary staff. In fact, 32.6% of the secondary staff disagreed that they had regular conversations with their school leader, whilst almost a fifth of the secondary teachers (17.7%) opted not to take a position, as outlined in Table 5.4.

Regular conversations between HoSs and teachers seem difficult to maintain, especially in large schools, as secondary teachers noted and as HP5 maintained:

“It is like one big family. If a child tells you that he has a headache, he expects his mother to look after him, and it is the same for the staff here. When the staff is numerous and there are many matters that need to be done, it is difficult to empathise with these people and stay in touch with them” (HP5).

As HP5 argued, sometimes it is difficult to maintain contact with all the staff members about personal issues and situations; however, it results that both primary and secondary teachers felt comfortable to talk to their HoS. In fact, as Table 5.5 depicts, 92.6% of the primary teachers and 88.7% of the secondary teachers felt comfortable talking to their HoS.

Questionnaire - Question 2.5				
I feel comfortable talking to the Head of School.				
Valid Respondents		235	100.0%	
Missing Respondents		0		0.0%
		Primary	Secondary	Total
Strongly Agree	Count	53	50	103
	% within Sector	56.4%	35.5%	43.8%
Agree	Count	34	75	109
	% within Sector	36.2%	53.2%	46.4%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	3	12	15
	% within Sector	3.2%	8.5%	6.4%
Disagree	Count	4	3	7
	% within Sector	4.3%	2.1%	3.0%
Strongly Disagree	Count	0	1	1
	% within Sector	0.0%	0.7%	0.4%
Total	Count	94	141	235
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 5.5 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q2.5

HoSs asserted that their staff do talk about their personal matters with them although one should be cautious when discussing what HoSs referred to as ‘personal problems’, for example, those instances when members of staff require some special leave due to “something, such as maintenance, cropping up at home” (HP2) and “other major problems at home, about which a person would have a heart to heart with you, and then ask for some leave” (HP1). HS1 claimed

that there are other personal issues that the staff talked about and discussed such as “ongoing issues at home, involving their children for instance” but HS1 insisted that he “is not the only point of reference as staff talks to assistant heads too” (HS1). A teacher argued that “the HoS supports the staff and is always ready to help” (QP). Another HoS explored the possibility that female teachers might find it difficult to talk about certain issues with a male HoS:

“At the moment, a number of female teachers are pregnant. I’m not the first person they announce their pregnancy to, I would generally be informed by an assistant head after a particular individual asks her to do so. Then when I see her I would congratulate her. There are certain issues which they do not necessarily come to talk to me about” (HS1).

Whilst it is understood that female teachers might find it difficult to open up about certain issues with their male HoS, it also emerged that whilst 96.5% of the male teaching staff felt comfortable talking to their HoS, 88.2% of the female teaching staff felt comfortable talking to their HoS, as shown in Table 5.6. However, using the chi-square test, it was found that this difference is not statistically significant.

Questionnaire - Question 2.5							
I feel comfortable talking to the Head of School.							
Valid Respondents		234	99.6%	Missing Respondents		1	0.4%
		Male		Female		Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	30	73	103			
	% within Gender	53.6%	41.0%	44.0%			
Agree	Count	24	84	108			
	% within Gender	42.9%	47.2%	46.2%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	2	13	15			
	% within Gender	3.6%	7.3%	6.4%			
Disagree	Count	0	7	7			
	% within Gender	0.0%	3.9%	3.0%			
Strongly Disagree	Count	0	1	1			
	% within Gender	0.0%	0.6%	0.4%			
Total	Count	56	178	234			
	% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 5.6 - Data according to gender for Questionnaire Q2.5

HoSs argued that their staff felt comfortable discussing school issues with the school leader. Some members of staff even discussed personal issues with the school leader:

“Yes it happens a lot. First off, I think that my role of Head of School puts people at ease and stimulates them to talk about certain issues. I feel I’ve always given everyone space to talk to me, so teachers, LSAs and SMT open up to me about problems that wouldn’t always necessarily be school-related and other school-related issues, such as what they could be doing better” (HS2).

Teachers confirmed that they felt comfortable talking to their HoS as 92.6% of the primary teachers and 81.5% of the secondary teachers answered that they preferred talking to their HoS in person rather than sending an email, as outlined in Table 5.7 below. This resonates with Sinek’s (2016) point that “people are more important than email”.

Questionnaire - Question 2.6					
I prefer talking to the Head of School in person rather than sending an email.					
Valid Respondents	235	100.0%	Missing Respondents	0	0.0%
		Primary	Secondary	Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	59	48	107	
	% within Sector	62.8%	34.0%	45.5%	
Agree	Count	28	67	95	
	% within Sector	29.8%	47.5%	40.4%	
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	5	14	19	
	% within Sector	5.3%	9.9%	8.1%	
Disagree	Count	2	10	12	
	% within Sector	2.1%	7.1%	5.1%	
Strongly Disagree	Count	0	2	2	
	% within Sector	0.0%	1.4%	0.9%	
Total	Count	94	141	235	
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 5.7 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q2.6

A few of the school leaders interviewed within St David’s College expressed their concern that although they strive to establish positive relationships with all the school community, it seems that positive relationships are sometimes hindered when a member of staff does not get what s/he wants and despite the professionalism required by the job, these members of staff end up with certain negative attitudes towards the school leader and, unfortunately, this affects the school community due to the small talk that starts to circulate, therefore minimising the effect of positive relationships. HP3 clearly claims:

“I tell my staff that if I confront someone on a professional level, this doesn’t mean that we’re on bad terms on a personal level. So if I draw someone’s attention to the fact that they would have made a professional mistake, it doesn’t mean that they can’t speak to me when they see me outside school” (HP3).

HP3 highlighted that there remains the necessity for everyone within the school community to make a distinction between the professional and personal relationship, because as HP4 also outlines:

“There’ll always be a couple of teachers who are miffed because you would have drawn their attention about something, but you cannot turn a blind eye to everything. If you come to school at half eight instead of quarter past, I cannot let that go by uncommented upon” (HP4).

The job of a school leader requires the drawing of the staff’s students’, and parents’ attention to any wrongdoings when required, and as Bryk and Schneider (2003, p. 42) suggest, “even when people disagree, individuals can still feel valued if others respect their opinions”. HP6 outlines that whilst positive relationships are established with the students, “she tells students off in her own way if the need arises” (HP6). HoSs argued that when making decisions that not everyone likes, relationships may be affected:

“Some weeks ago, we had a transport issue, since Kinder students do not use transport. We had a chaotic situation, which ended up on Xarabank [a current affairs programme with a very good following aired every Friday evening in Malta]. I answered the question, sent the reply that was expected of me, because of a certain law, and everyone calmed down and seemed to be happy” (HP4).

Similarly, HP6 recalled her experience of what happened within her school community when she wanted to maximise the physical space of the school in order to create another classroom:

“Teachers were taken aback and some parents were all out against this decision, but you cannot please everyone. In this instance, I won points with the parents whose children were going to benefit from this move. Here, I’m speaking about when I had to take up the adjacent room, which was a library, so as to turn it into a classroom to avoid overcrowding. The village library had been housed within the school for donkey’s years, and I had to find a way to turn it into a classroom, and leave it up to the local council to transfer this library out of the school premises. This was one of the toughest decisions I have ever taken, and I made a few enemies too in the process. People did not see this move as beneficial for the school, but rather as inconvenient for them. Some even accused me of closing down the library, rather than transferring it” (HP6).

The incidents illustrated by HP4 and HP6 recall real situations that school leaders encounter on a daily basis and despite the fact that staff, students, and parents may complain about decisions taken, maintaining positive relationships does not mean that the school leader is obliged to take decisions that others seem to like. On the same lines, McGee (2013, p. 54) maintains that “to be successful with people it’s more important to be respected than to be liked”.

As regards the relationships of the students with their teachers, primary students described very positive relationships and thus this resonates with Elias’ (2010, p. 23) argument that “schools must encourage students to express themselves,

clearly and often, and be places where students feel listened to and understood”.

In fact, primary students argued:

“Our teacher is very nice and caring, and he tries to see that even when certain students are sick, they don’t miss out on much. We love our teacher, because he can be serious at the right moments and funny in other instances” (SP);

“To teachers you become a son or a daughter, because they don’t prefer a student over another. All of our teachers are nice and deliver fun lessons” (SP);

“She’s kind, helpful, funny, helps us when we’re stuck on a sum and helps us work together as a group. She helps us memorise things in a fun way. She’s a very good and kind-hearted teacher” (SP);

“She is very, very nice and so kind, with a nice character and lovely manners. She doesn’t shout at us and never uses bad words” (SP);

“We spend a year together with all the good and the bad this brings with it. I really, really like our teacher, because she doesn’t make up stuff about us and she doesn’t stand in our way of learning. She’s just like our classroom mummy” (SP).

Students in primary schools defined their relationships with teachers by mentioning that their teachers are nice and kind whilst showing good manners to students and that teachers have nice characters. Interestingly, in two focus groups with primary students, the relationship of these students with their teachers was described as that of a son or daughter. Also, these comments by primary students tend to agree with Ramos and Barnett’s (2013, p. 36) line of thought as these maintain that there is “a strong correlation between academic performance and the feeling of connectedness to school”. Moreover, secondary students also described these characteristics in order to define positive relationships with their teachers; however, they further stated that they want teachers who are fair with them and who are ready to listen to them, are patient, and are ready to help them with their needs:

“There are many people who are willing to lend you an ear. Some teachers are ok and others aren’t, because they would prefer other students over you. I had a somewhat difficult time in Form I, because my teacher and I did not have a good relationship, and I’d feel left out. The marks she would give me did not reflect the quality of my work, it was as though she did not want me to do well. As she said, for instance, in Form I we had a teacher who just always focused on a group of three students. I started realising that other people were being left out, and even my friends used to tell me that I was the chosen one [laughs]” (SS);

“Many teachers are willing to listen, there are many of them in this school. However, there are others who tell you that now that you are in secondary school, you should try to solve your own problems. Others make it clear that they aren’t there to mother you or to act as a guidance teacher. But there are other teachers who become a mother figure, making you feel safe and cared for” (SS);

“Nice teachers, they are really gentle, they help us, teachers are more patient with the students, not like when you do not understand anything they start shouting at you, and here they explain to you again and again, until you understand. Teachers are really nice, most of them are polite, they respect us but LSAs sometimes they can be quite annoying. She [the LSA] must control him [the student] but she keeps on checking on me, if we need help it should be us who ask them for help and not them who help us without us wanting them to. The teachers are really helpful, so they are trying to help us, in whichever way they can” (SS).

Ultimately, 96.1% of the teachers answered that they had a good rapport with the students, with only one secondary teacher who disagreed and another eight secondary teachers who opted for neither agree nor disagree, as highlighted in Table 5.8 below.

Questionnaire - Question 3.6							
I enjoy good rapport with the students.							
Valid Respondents		231	98.3%	Missing Respondents		4	1.7%
		Primary	Secondary	Total			
Strongly Agree	Count	60	50	110			
	% within Sector	65.2%	36.0%	47.6%			
Agree	Count	32	80	112			
	% within Sector	34.8%	57.6%	48.5%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	0	8	8			
	% within Sector	0.0%	5.8%	3.5%			
Disagree	Count	0	1	1			
	% within Sector	0.0%	0.7%	0.4%			
Total	Count	92	139	231			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 5.8 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q3.6

Sather (1999, p. 527) explains that “efforts that addressed human relationships involved using staff and support personnel who cared deeply about promoting success for all students”. This means that teachers are willing to listen to their students as teachers themselves argued that students feel better when they talk to their teachers:

“Many confide in us their concerns about problems their parents would be facing, about their father leaving home to be with another woman. These things do worry children” (TP2);

“I don’t mind hearing children out, because I feel as though I am also their big sister” (TS2).

An attitude where “learner voice matters” (Sood et al., 2018, p. 87) is vital in schools and as Jones et al. (2016, p. 63) argue “these everyday occurrences...provide us with unique opportunities to get to know our students”. Similarly, an assistant head in a primary school also claimed that he had built

positive relationships with the young children he is responsible for, whilst stating that he still needed time to get used to very small children:

“It is the first time that I am working with young children and I feel that I still have a lot to learn and a long way to go. I have noticed that since they are young, they tend to get attached to particular individuals, and in the morning, for instance, they find it necessary to come to wish me a good day. But I feel like I’m slowly getting the hang of it, and I believe that they have got very much used to me” (TP1).

Meanwhile, an assistant head in a secondary school (TS1) pointed out that girls prefer to talk about certain issues with female staff:

“Since we are now in a co-ed setting, many female students prefer to discuss their problems with another female rather than a male. I think this is a common trend, and I used to observe it even when I used to teach females only” (TS1).

Similar to Champeau (2011, p. 38) who claims that “with a systematic means of building relationships, all students are supported”, HoSs recognised the importance of positive relationships between teachers and students:

“I am lucky enough to have a group of hard-working and creative teachers this year, bar the one that I mentioned to you earlier. We have many students with problems here, and if the teachers weren’t empathetic, the students would probably be running amok all over the school right now. We also have a counsellor from a private foundation, whom I feel is working wonders” (HP5).

Whilst the school leaders recognised the importance of positive relationships between teachers and students, HoSs claimed that it was impossible to know all the students as it seemed that most school leaders knew only those students who misbehaved:

“I know many of them [the students], but the biggest problem is that I know the problematic ones best” (HP1);

“I call to my office extreme cases, either students who would have excelled at something to be rewarded, or students involved in cases of bullying, theft and fights, and these negative situations do crop up from time to time” (HP2);

“With regard to students with problems, especially if they are bit older, in Year 5 or 6, I authorise teachers to let them have some time out away from the classroom and to come to me for a chat, for instance” (HP3);

“Students are, for want of a better phrase, afraid of me. When I notice a student who does not regard me as an authoritative figure, then I start thinking that trouble is looming. I do want children to see me as an authoritative figure, because if they don’t, this will lead to chaos” (HP5).

Contrary to these HoSs, HP4 claimed:

“Yes, I enjoy a very good and friendly relationship with students. It makes me happy that students who would be experiencing problems feel comfortable talking to me” (HP4).

This supports Elias's (2010, p. 23) argument that "students need social support from peers and teachers, and they benefit from seeing their schools as caring and fair...they want to see school as a place to which they want to go every day and as a source of pride". Similarly, Ramos and Barnett (2013, p. 36) witness "a 30% reduction in behaviour referrals" through positive relationships. Whilst HP4 defined her relationship with students as "friendly", assistant head TS1 claimed that:

"My point of departure is that students can never be friends, but you need to have a fair and respectful relationship" (TS1).

School leaders also argued that since some students are young, these students are not independent enough to visit school leaders in their office to talk to them:

"They [the students] are not independent enough to go directly to the Head. They do speak to me when they see me around, only this morning they were all wishing me a happy Valentine's day, but they're different from older students. They still don't have the sense to declare a need to speak to the Head" (HP1);

"Not a lot of students, we are talking about students of certain ages, from eight to ten" (HP2);

"Not all the students feel comfortable coming here, not all [the students] like to talk to the Head of School" (HP6).

This seems to agree with the primary students' account of how they recall their positive relationships with their school leader:

"After Prize Day we were making our way out to see the bike track and he congratulated me upon getting good marks. Yes, I've had problems in the past, which I discussed with him and which he helped me solve. Sometimes, he jokes around with me. I get a bit shy when I see him. When he speaks to me, I do speak back to him, but when he doesn't I don't approach him, because I'm shy, I'm always a bit timid. I speak to him on a friendly basis" (SP);

"Not a lot, because sometimes she has a lot of meetings. I haven't met her, I haven't talked to her and I haven't talked to her because she's got a lot of work to do and she cannot always talk with me. You can talk to the counsellor as well. Sometimes, we go to her office to take some papers or something of the sort that the teacher would need and we meet her, otherwise" (SP);

"On my birthday, I went to talk to her, but otherwise I rarely do so, either because I would be in trouble or because I would have done something right. Sometimes, I'm afraid because I wouldn't know what to say or you would ask something and not know how she'll answer" (SP);

"She's not the first person I go to. First I talk to the teacher and if she tells me that what I would have told her is serious, then I go to the Head. If she's not busy, she tries to make things right immediately. Not that active, it is in certain circumstances, not that common. She'd be in the playground many times, and there she would speak to the teachers and ask them whether everything's all right and she'd also watch us play. You can see her in her office, or in the corridor going from one classroom to another" (SP).

These accounts by primary students confirm that positive relationships between school leaders and students are not consistent. Fortunately, despite the workload of school leaders, evidence shows that HoSs are seen in corridors and yards and talk informally to students although there are situations where they are not always available to talk to. This is seen positively by Crippen (2012, p. 194) who argues that “using a few minutes to make connections at staff meetings, in the hallway or on yard duty helps staff to know each other better”. Secondary students stated otherwise as they did not see their school leader regularly and, unfortunately, they thought that they had no relationship with the school leader at all. Thus it is necessary that school leaders take forming positive relationships with students more seriously as students themselves outlined:

“Our relationship was limited to just seeing him around, and not really talking to him. He never tries to approach us to ask us how we are doing” (SS);

“He’s always in his office, especially when compared to the other Heads, who go around the school. The only time you see him is during assembly, special assembly. Don’t get me wrong, when you see him around, he always smiles at you, and he’s a good headmaster. If you go to speak to him, he’ll listen, and he’ll never tell you that he’s too busy to stop for a minute. I don’t feel very comfortable with this year’s headmaster, I just try to prove that I am a good student, but I don’t feel like I have established a relationship with him” (SS);

“We don’t have a relationship, when there is assembly he tells us what is new, but we don’t talk to him. The relationship between a Headmaster and a student, I guess, is limited to you respecting the Headmaster and the Headmaster respecting you. If you don’t respect the Headmaster, there’ll be consequences. I once talked to the Head of School because one of the teachers was absent for a lot of lessons and we wanted to know why. He was very friendly with us, because he told us what happened and he explained why she was absent, and then we told the others and they understood that” (SS).

Despite the fact that students believed that they should have better relationships with their school leaders, TS1 pointed out: “along with the many things that need doing, I believe that students’ access is too easy” (TS1). Contrarily, HP3 argued that he believed that he should listen to everyone:

“I believe that I should listen to everyone, and I promise everyone that I shall listen to them. Obviously, I do not have a solution for everyone’s problems, but at least I hear everyone out and help where I can” (HP3).

Building relationships is not an easy task and requires a lot of time. As Crippen (2012, p. 193) declares, “authentic relationships require work to build and strengthen and maintain”. A primary assistant head of school emphasised that relationships took time. He explained: “the relationship is quite new as I have only been six months here with this head [of school]” (TP1). Meanwhile, an

assistant head of school in the secondary sector also referred to the fact that he knew the head of school beforehand as an advantage: “The relationship [with the Head of School] is good, very good I would say. I had the advantage of having worked with him before in another school, so I knew exactly what his leadership style entailed, and I adapted quickly” (TS1). Meanwhile, a secondary school teacher claimed that no relationship had developed with the new head of school despite being six months into the scholastic year:

“Last year, I was here too and we had a different Head, so I can see the difference between the old and the new Head more clearly. Something which I liked about the old Head was that she’d do corridor rounds during lessons and pop in the classroom to check whether everything was ok. As for the present Head, sometimes weeks pass by and we don’t as much as get a glimpse of the Head, and this doesn’t help in nurturing a good relationship” (TS3).

Students felt that their teachers do know them well. One secondary student even highlighted that a few teachers’ perceptions may depend on what these teachers have heard about the particular students:

“He [our teacher] knows us well and when something happens, it is rare for him to forget it. He even knows what our personalities are, for instance he knows who fiddles about with things under the desk and who doesn’t” (SP);

“They [school staff] know me well, and I think they know me well because when we say something we laugh. My teacher knows me a hundred per cent well, because we’ve been together from the start up until now” (SP);

“They [teachers] would know what you are, even from what they gather about you from other students. They’d hear your name being mentioned, and they’d think: “Oh, I know her.” But, they might have one impression of you, which is altered by what others say about you” (SS);

“They know us better than we think. Sometimes, a teacher would see you in the corridor and give you a word of advice, which would show that she knows what you are doing and cares about you even outside of the classroom. If you are a student they like, they will ask after you and about how you would be doing” (SS).

HP4 mentioned: “I definitely believe a lot in [positive relationships], not only with teachers, but also with students and their parents, we have to bring them on board” for the success of the school and for the benefit of all the students. This goes on well with the argument put forward by Sood et al. (2018, p. 95) that “most families want to be involved in their children’s education as significant partners with valuable contributions to make”. It results that most HoSs within St David’s College argued that they have an open-door policy for parents:

“I have an open-door policy for parents” (HP1);

“Parents come in, mostly by appointment, and then there are those who come by unannounced. If I have time, I still see them, and if I’m in a meeting, I tell them to wait for me. Yesterday, I had one such case. I asked the parent to wait for me and she did. In the end, she was very appreciative of the fact that I made time for her, despite the fact that she didn’t have an appointment” (HS2).

Whilst school leaders do make time for parents, HoSs expressed contrasting views about positive relationships with parents:

“Parents sometimes feel that they have a right to certain things, when in actual fact it isn’t always their right. There are always going to be a couple of problematic parents, but I cannot complain when it comes to relationships” (HP4);

“It is not easy, but when I get to know of cases where higher authorities would have been approached, I immediately call the parents and ask why they hadn’t come to me first. In my case, these instances are very rare” (HP1);

“Relationships with parents are somewhat delicate, because parents judge how good the school is depending on whether their children would be doing well or not. All in all, my relationship with parents is very good, but unfortunately there’d be a couple of disgruntled parents, because their children would have lost interest in academia. This is not really the school’s fault, but possibly the fault of a system that doesn’t intercept the child early on” (HS2).

These views resonate with Crawford’s (2009, p. 5) point that “parents and the community may view the headteacher as the most important person in the school, responsible for their child’s progress or lack of it”. As Tschannen-Moran (2013, p. 8) insists “leaders put themselves on solid ground with parents when they make it clear that they’re going to be open and honest with them and that they’re not going try to hide what’s going on, even when the news may be hard to hear”. However, it is “reasonable to ask whether attitudes of administrators and staff are an effect of low parental involvement, or potentially, a cause” (Flessa, 2008, p. 19) and whether in this twenty-first century, it is the time to move on from “a client-type to a partnership-type” relationship between parents and schools. Meanwhile, HS1 declared that suggestions and complaints by parents are also dealt with and taken in consideration:

“There have been parents who have shown their disagreement with certain decisions taken and put forth their own suggestions. We do take these suggestions into account, and sometimes we implement them too. We feel the need to discuss certain issues, but when we feel that something is doable, we execute it. I don’t want to sound as though we give in to parents and their wishes all the time, but something practical and that isn’t going to cause any issues, should be implemented really. We adopt the same approach with regard to students and teachers too” (HS1).

This accords with Sood et al. (2018, p. 133) when pointing out that “every opportunity to build positive relationships with all parents should be taken”. HP4,

who also mentioned that she believed in a tripod of relationships: the school staff, students and their parents, claimed that “it is very important that there is a strong relationship between the three, but is this easy? Not at all” (HP4). TS3 highlighted that relationships take time as she outlined that she found it difficult to open up to her HoS: “His ways do not put me at ease. It could be that this is because this is his first year here and so we don’t enjoy a certain relationship as yet” (TS3). HP4 claimed that “you need to work a lot on a relationship, to make sacrifices and to leave words unspoken if need be. It is not easy, but I believe in relationships” (HP4). HP5 also agreed with HP4 as she admitted that more patience and effort is required: “When I do not succeed, it might be due to a mistake from my end, but it also may be that my limitations wouldn’t have been fully understood, or due to a lack of patience” (HP5).

Barth (1990, p. 513) highlights that “in too many schools, personal relationships tend to be adversarial: teacher against student, teacher against teacher, principal against teacher, school people against parents”. Fortunately, some schools “have begun to find ways of transforming these adversarial relationships into cooperative and collegial ones” (Barth, 1990, p. 513) as day-to-day arguments influence relationships and despite the fact that a school leader might be right in an argument with a teacher or a teacher might be right in an issue with a student, positive relationships require doing things differently in order to enhance school leadership:

“When you argue with a teacher, and I’m speaking for myself here, I believe that both parties are affected. In turn, strained relationships impact the classroom environment, the wider school environment, and relationships with other teachers. You might start fretting about whether other teachers would have learnt of your argument and about this being leaked on Facebook. Even if you would have had strong grounds for starting this argument, the teaching system and the relationship are going to be impacted” (HP6);

“When I am scolded, especially if there are other students witnessing this and the scolding isn’t really necessary, at night when I go to bed, I keep replaying the incident in my head. I think that if teachers correct you without a lot of unnecessary shouting, you are more likely to respond well to the correction” (SP).

Particular attitudes, characters, and moods of individuals affect positive relationships in the school context as HoSs claimed that certain individuals make relationships difficult:

“There are always a couple of individuals with whom you have a strained relationship, either because of their personality or because of their attitude” (HP4);

“I love cracking jokes and I’m very outgoing, and this helps me forge better personal relationships with certain individuals, but not with others who are more withdrawn. Relationships that aren’t of a professional nature are highly dependent on one’s character, of course” (HP3).

Secondary students also noted that the different characters of their teachers influenced their relationship with them and also affected whether or not they interested themselves in that particular subject. Interestingly, a group of primary students also mentioned that some students may feel uncomfortable to open up with their teachers due to their character:

“Some teachers will keep asking you questions and pushing you to tell them why you wouldn’t have done your homework, for instance, even if it is clear that you aren’t comfortable with telling them. Some students do not do their homework out of carelessness, and in that case the teacher would have every right to be angry, but others would have valid reasons for not doing it” (SP);

“When you compare teachers together, it becomes more obvious why certain teachers are better than others. The teacher makes a world of difference, because when you love the way a teacher delivers the lesson and speaks to you, you enjoy lessons more. On the other hand, if you have a teacher you don’t like, you end up counting the minutes until his lesson is over, and end up learning nothing” (SS);

“Teachers know us well, because we see them every day. There are some with whom we feel comfortable opening up, but there are others we don’t really speak to because they are a bit unsociable” (SS).

However, HP4 claimed:

“There are ways and means which can help you convince someone see your point. Sometimes, it all boils down to one’s personality and how you communicate with an individual. Even when it comes to correcting someone, there are ways how you can go about it to soften the blow, as it were. When I deal with parents, I never start by telling them that they are at fault. First I hear them out, then I point out issues upon which we would be in agreement, and finally I explain why we wouldn’t be agreeing upon other matters. Generally, this approach wins people over. Does it always work though? Definitely not, I’ve had cases of defiance, but they are the exception not the rule, indicating that the problem doesn’t lie with me. You cannot convince everyone, but I believe that good relationships among the three are crucial. They take a lot of work too” (HP4).

Being humble by acknowledging any mistakes is also an ideal value, as HP4 outlines:

“Do I make mistakes? Yes, many of them. When I make a mistake, I appreciate it when someone draws my attention to it, but then again there are ways how this should be done. I believe people should be discreet in telling you that something isn’t working out, but without beating about the bush” (HP4).

However, Willis (2013, p. 27) suggests that when admitting mistakes and solving conflicts “a stronger relationship” can be developed and if something happens

again, “the two parties...are starting from a position of greater understanding about each other” (Willis, 2013, p. 27).

5.3 Theme E – Trust

Whilst recognising the importance of school leaders in order to have effective schools, Burke et al. (2007, p. 606) highlight that “a key component in a leader’s ability to be effective within such environments is the degree to which subordinates and co-workers trust him/her”. Trust, although understudied, “is an important component of schools” (Daly, 2009, p. 174) as Sebring and Bryk (2000, p. 442) declare that “a strong base of social trust” between all members within the school community is crucial for schools to improve and be successful. Kouzes and Posner (2008, p. 11) highlight that “trust is a central issue in human interactions” and its absence can “provoke sustained controversy around resolving even such relatively simple problems” (Bryk and Schneider, 2003, p. 43) within school leadership whilst eliciting an environment of “anxiety, estrangement, and isolation” (Daly, 2009, p. 174).

Whilst it was observed that school leaders view positive relationships with members of the SLT as imperative in order to effectively lead the school, only six out of eight of the school leaders interviewed stated that they have complete trust in their assistant heads as HP1 and HP2 made concerning statements that imply distrust in distributed leadership:

“At the end of the day, despite the fact that I have Assistant Heads who help me, everything is channelled through me. I’m completely responsible for finances” (HP1);

“When a communication is sent and someone is invited to visit the school, I would be kept in copy so as to avoid situations where I wouldn’t know what’s going on. It is important for me to have this information, so this is how we work. Even when [SLT members] send an email, they always keep me in copy” (HP2).

These anecdotes show that there is not enough trust between school leaders and their assistant heads and as Harris (2005, p. 260) argues, distributed leadership implies that school leaders “relinquish power to others”. Situations where for each task that is distributed, further action is required by a school leader so that SLT members would not fail, highlight that through better work on the school

leaders' relationships with their SLT, HP1 and HP2 could develop their relationships further in order for leadership to be effectively distributed, because "a strong base of social trust" is necessary for "co-operative working relations among all adults" (Sebring and Bryk, 2000, p. 442). Interestingly, Sheppard (2013, p. 34) acknowledges that when he came to hire an assistant principal, he "needed someone [he] could trust, who could hit the ground running, and who was most of all a strong individual who could deal with [his] personality. [He] needed someone who would strengthen [his] weaknesses", a practice that cannot be done in Malta as assistant heads are posted in schools according to the exigencies of the educational authorities, but which clearly highlights the importance of trust within the SLT, as some HoSs demonstrated:

"There's a strong element of delegation and communication among us. I trust [SLT members] blindly, and I know that they will deliver every time I give them a task" (HP3);

"You first need to trust the people who surround you, so you have to have faith in your SMT members. I trust SMT members without question, and know that if they become aware of an issue with which I wouldn't be pleased, they are going to bring it to my attention. We have chosen a vision for our school and we know we have to get to a particular point, so everyone is working towards that vision now" (HS2).

Undoubtedly, communication is essential for trust as strong relationships are based on trust and communication; therefore, if there is no communication there will be no trust (Sinek, 2009). Moreover, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000, p. 551) point out that "school personnel must trust one another in order to cooperate toward accomplishing a common goal". Thus, having a common goal is necessary within the school SLT, and when each member of the SLT makes this common goal a commitment, trust develops through enhancing positive relationships, as HS2 maintained:

"I strongly believe that to reach goals you must have a winning team. If the team isn't on the ball, everyone is going to suffer. You can have a star player, yet he won't make a difference within a dysfunctional team. The team is important and you need to have a very good relationship with the SMT, where trust is mutual and everyone knows what their roles are. You need to know what a person is capable of doing and how far they can go, and on their part, they need to accept their roles. I believe that the thing that cements the team together the most is a common goal, which everyone would have agreed upon. Once everyone is committed to reaching the same goal, the team becomes stronger, because everyone starts trusting, helping, and supporting each other more. From my experience, a strong SMT makes a strong school" (HS2).

This resonates with Tschannen-Moran (2001) who found out that there was a greater level of collaboration in schools where trust was present. HoSs within St

David's College expressed diverse feelings on whether they should trust their teaching staff or not. It seems that HoSs trust more teachers as professionals rather than on a personal level:

“I trust them as professionals, who know their job and who will do what is necessary for the benefit of the students. I am always up to giving some guidance where needed, but I trust them completely” (HP1).

Similarly, HP2 and HP5 stated: “Obviously, I trust a lot” (HP2); and “in the almost absolute majority of cases, they have my trust” (HP5). Noting that Walker et al. (2011, p. 490) declare that “trust-related matters are an important, yet a fragile, aspect of the work of principals” and despite the fact that HP1, HP2, and HP5 claimed that as school leaders they trust teachers as professionals, HP3 clearly pointed out that there are persons who cannot be trusted and as HP3 explained, with these individuals, relationships are restricted to dealing with work issues only:

“No, no, no way, there are people you can trust with certain things, there are others you can trust on a strictly professional basis, and there are yet others who are just colleagues, and even then you have to be careful what you trust them with. There are people you can trust blindly; they're given a task and you can consider it done, there are people you can open up to safe in the knowledge that they'll keep everything between the two of you, and there are others you simply cannot trust, because they will stab you in the back at the first opportunity they get” (HP3).

HP3's position on trust tends to agree with Walker et al. (2011, p. 485) who found out that “the majority of participants acknowledged that sometimes it was easier to trust particular individuals than it was to trust others”. Whilst that, similarly to HP3, HP4 also mentioned that there are certain individuals who can be trusted more than others, the other school leaders within St David's College did not state their position regarding this issue. As Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000, p. 558) argue “trust may be based on one's disposition to trust, on moods and emotions, on values and attitudes, on calculative motions, on institutional supports for trust, or on knowledge of or a sense of identification with the other person”. Having said that, HP3 clearly stated that whilst the teaching staff is made up of professionals, unfortunately there are individuals who cannot be trusted:

“A professional knows what needs to be done, and does not have to be chased to do it. Basically, that's professional trust. Unfortunately, not everyone can be counted on, and there are some people who need to feel watched in order to do their job. If everyone were trustworthy on the job, I believe that everything would work out much better. Unfortunately, there are people you cannot depend upon, and consequently you cannot

trust. Trust is a two-way thing, so if you lose my trust because of something you would have done, then I would have to start checking on you” (HP3).

This was confirmed by an assistant head, TP1:

“I trust the absolute majority, but there are those wouldn’t necessarily be doing their job properly. There are some individuals who raise my doubts as to whether they’re doing everything by the book” (TP1).

Tschannen-Moran (2001, p. 327) also found out that “when trust was absent, people were reluctant to work closely together, and collaboration was more difficult”, thus negatively impacting the PLC, as will be discussed later on in Section 5.5. HoSs argued that in Malta’s educational system, it is the central authorities who choose teachers and place them in schools and yet as Brewster and Railsback (2003, p. 10) argue, “failure to remove teachers or principals who are widely viewed to be ineffective” results in low levels of trusting relationships amongst staff members, which unfortunately may be the case in some of the schools under research within St David’s College.

HP4 argued that she trusted teachers but still monitored what was going on: “I trust them but this does not mean that I do not check what is happening and what is going on”. Tschannen-Moran (2001, p. 314) asserts that school leaders “who do not trust their teachers will not share authority and responsibility”. However, HP6 is absolutely against HP4’s attitude as she recalled a particular episode that happened with a teacher in her first year as a school leader:

“This might seem trivial to you, but when I started keeping an eye on the amount of paper being used for photocopies, he [a teacher] got annoyed and uneasy. Then one day, someone mustered up the courage and told me, and when I heard that sentence it was confirmed. At times, I would be speaking with other Heads of School and come to the conclusion that the teacher is a teacher, a professional whom I should trust, but with some caution” (HP6).

This type of distrust “can impair organizational effectiveness” as the teachers’ performance may decline (Tschannen-Moran, 2001, p. 313). Barth (2006, p. 8) also warns that if “relationships between administrators and teachers are fearful, competitive, suspicious, and corrosive, then these qualities will disseminate throughout the school community”. HP6 outlined that trust takes time but she now trusted all her staff. HS2 claimed that:

“Ideally, you are in a position where you can trust everyone. Trusting your teachers and the members of staff is of utmost importance, because it is neither healthy nor productive to

constantly wonder whether your staff is plotting against you. I like to project an image of optimism, because this certainly inspires more than a glass-half-empty approach. You have to project an image, believe in this image, and appreciate what's good and the positive" (HS2).

Similarly, to HP6 and HS2, Grahn-Laasonen (2017) reports that in Finland "the system is based on trust rather than control" where "teachers in Finland are trusted professionals" and an emphasis is made that "one of [their] biggest strengths is the culture of trust". Walker et al. (2011, p. 490) declare that "trust poses many challenges" for school leaders where the trust between the school leader and the teacher may be threatened even by a small complaint by a parent, as HP4 elaborates:

"When I receive a complaint from a parent, I do not beat about the bush, but go directly to the teacher to get to the bottom of the problem. The teacher might admit that he is at fault or tell me that he had grounds for doing what he did. In any case, I then bring the parent and the teacher together" (HP4).

It is evident that the majority of the teaching staff within St David's College trust their HoS and according to Tschannen-Moran (2001, p. 314), "teachers' trust in their principal as well as their colleagues has been linked to the effectiveness of schools". Table 5.9 shows that 86.3% of the teachers trusted their school leader. Only nine teachers, two primary teachers and seven secondary teachers answered that they do not trust their school leader. A further 9.8% of the teaching staff opted for no position.

Questionnaire - Question 2.2							
I trust my Head of School.							
Valid Respondents		234	99.6%	Missing Respondents		1	0.4%
		Primary		Secondary		Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	55	44	99			
	% within Sector	58.5%	31.4%	42.3%			
Agree	Count	36	67	103			
	% within Sector	38.3%	47.9%	44.0%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	1	22	23			
	% within Sector	1.1%	15.7%	9.8%			
Disagree	Count	2	5	7			
	% within Sector	2.1%	3.6%	3.0%			
Strongly Disagree	Count	0	2	2			
	% within Sector	0.0%	1.4%	0.9%			
Total	Count	94	140	234			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 5.9 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q2.2

Whilst the majority of the teachers trusted their HoS, teachers gave their views on whether or not they felt trusted by their HoS. TP1 clearly outlined that he felt trusted; however, TS2 questioned trust in relation to whether she was involved in activities because the school leader trusted her or simply because no one else wanted to participate. TS3 queried trust on the basis of the classification exercise, making it clear that trust “is recognised through the attitude and action, and not the speech” (Sabeen, 2012, p. 11213):

“I feel that the Head trusts me. When I speak to her [the Head] and tell her what’s going on, I feel that she takes my word for it, and even the way in which she delegates work indicates an element of trust. I look up to her as the Head of School and when I need some guidance, I turn to her” (TP1);

“Yes and no. Yes, because I think that he [the Head] knows that I do a good job, and he even tried to get me involved in certain school activities. With regard to this, however, I am not sure whether this is an indication of trust, a question of not finding other people to turn to, or a matter of a light workload on the day. But anyway, I think that he does trust me, although he does not explicitly show this. I think he trusts everyone [laughs]” (TS2);

“Sets were not distributed fairly between us teachers of the same subject, I was not given a set of students that are of high ability, all the great classes were given to one particular teacher, so favouring some teachers only diminishes my trust in the Head” (TS3).

Whilst noting that the HoSs within St David’s College did not raised these concerns, Walker et al. (2011, p.482) provide insights into the school leaders’ perspectives that express similar concerns as raised by TS2 and TS3 and that, unfortunately, can lead to a situation of distrust. Walker et al. (2011, p. 482) highlight that according to school leaders, “perceptions of favouritism”, “writing a letter of reprimand to a colleague”, and “one wrong rumour or event can change all the trust built up over a period of years”. Contrarily to what Burke et al. (2007, p. 606) state, that “leaders were able to garner a sense of trust from their people”, TS2 and TS3 justified their distrust in their school leader and as Burke et al. (2007, p. 606) argue “when trust in the leader breaks down...disastrous outcomes may result”. Finnigan and Daly (2014) advise that despite the fact that heads may “push knowledge into the system through meetings and informational resources”, the end result will be affected if “your point person delivering knowledge is not trusted”. Meanwhile, Andrews (2011, p. 20) recall that through building trust and relationships, he began “turning around a failing school”. However, HoSs argued that they felt that they were trusted when the teaching staff and students discussed personal issues with them:

“When you have people who are trusting you and opening up to you, it is a sign that you have won the staff’s trust” (HP3);

“Sometimes they [the students] open up to me more than they do at home, and to me this is an indication of trust” (HP4).

This is in line with Sinek’s (2009, p. 103) argument that “trust allows us to rely on others. We rely on those we trust for advice to help us make decisions”. Thus, as Tschannen-Moran (2001, p. 314) outlines, “openness in the climate of a school and healthy interpersonal relationships tend to foster a climate of trust”. However, whilst HoSs feel trusted, this trust:

“Comes with great responsibility, because you cannot share something someone would have told you in confidence. Sometimes I would tell the Assistant Head, let’s take this one step at a time, and stop there because I wouldn’t be able to divulge more” (HP6).

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) report that when teachers trusted their school leader, then it is more likely that teachers trust their colleagues, parents, and students. Strier and Katz (2016, p. 372-373) argue that “parents who feel trusted by the school staff are more inclined to trust and therefore engage in school”. Whilst teachers note that “children are innocent” (TP2) there seems to be issues of trust between members of staff within St David’s College. Remarkably, only TP2 mentioned trusting parents briefly: “children are innocent, but parents are different, you have to be careful with them. I’ve never had problems with parents or staff so far, but I’m not one to open up to everyone” (TP2) whilst at the same time making it clear that she only trusted a group of teachers with whom she discussed ongoing issues, similarly to TS2:

“Mostly with those who are close to me and with whom I meet often during curricular hours. A friendship has budded among us, and we obviously discuss problems together at times” (TP2);

“[I don’t discuss ongoing issues] with everyone, but with those whom I trust” (TS2).

It is important that teachers discuss together and talk honestly between each other to improve their practice as Kruse et al. (1995, p. 4) describe “reflective dialogue” as critical where “members of the community talk about their situations and the specific challenges they face” but “without trust, genuine conversations of this sort remain unlikely” (Bryk and Schneider, 2003, p. 43). Furthermore, TS2 elaborated on trust with her colleagues whilst making it clear that she only trusted her school SLT on professional issues only:

“At every workplace, everywhere, even among a group of friends, you cannot trust everyone. You’d have a few people who you’d feel comfortable telling everything to from A to Z, then there’d be those who you can trust with A to D, and there are also those who you simply cannot trust with anything. These are the categories of trust among my fellow teachers. I don’t enjoy a relationship with the SMT, which makes me feel comfortable opening up to them about my personal life, so the relationship is strictly professional” (TS2).

Similarly to TS2, assistant head TS1 defined trust on professional issues only and whilst mentioning that there will always be those whose intentions are not honest, he believed that there were no reasons as to why he would not trust staff in their role as professionals:

“I always start with the premise that everyone is good, but then when I’m betrayed that’s another story. I believe that everyone has the same goal, but the paths leading to this goal are different for different people. I don’t see why I shouldn’t trust people at work, as I believe that everyone is a professional. There will always be a couple of rotten apples, but I don’t see why I shouldn’t trust” (TS1).

Teachers also mentioned why they lacked trust in various colleagues and in school leaders:

“There are many factors leading to this, but one of the things that irk me the most is when certain teachers use resources you would have prepared, but then are never willing to share their own resources with you. Another thing that bothers me is the fact that certain teachers give private lessons. I think that if you give your 100 per cent at school, you shouldn’t give private lessons, unless there are low-ability students who would genuinely need a bit of extra support. Giving private lessons as a business is not good” (TP2);

“I do not really trust the Head, because certain decisions are taken haphazardly and sometimes one thing is said and then another thing is done, and not everyone would be informed of the change of plans” (TS3);

“Things are imposed and not discussed with us...one teacher is preferred above us” (QP).

The anecdotes above show that besides showing a sense of care and benevolence, honesty and competence are also fundamental for trust to develop, as the literature suggests (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000; Walker et al., 2011). Similarly, Sinek (2009, p. 84) outlines that “trust begins to emerge when we have a sense that another person or organization is driven by things other than their own self-gain”. Moreover, the “consistency” of school leaders was confirmed as “an important element” in developing a trust-based relationship (Sabeen, 2012, p. 11213). Similar issues of distrust are common in schools as unfortunately “trust in schools is often taken for granted” (Walker et al., 2011, p. 474) and as Tschannen-Moran, (2001, p. 327) argues “when trust was absent, people were reluctant to work closely together”. Unfortunately, “distrust

not only creates a condition for an unpleasant and uncomfortable working environment” but also hinders school effectiveness (Walker et al., 2011, p. 478).

Both primary and secondary students illustrated various examples of what trust means to them and whether or not they trust their teachers, the assistant heads, and their HoS. Only secondary students distinguished between teachers as they mentioned that “there are teachers with whom we are more close, you can tell them various things as you feel more comfortable, others just teach you” (SS), maybe because primary students only thought of their main class teacher. Students referred to trust according to these three criteria: keeping promises; being fair and responsible; and confidentiality.

Students mentioned trust in relation to whether promises are kept and whether they are shown kindness. Interestingly, primary students even mentioned an electoral promise: the “one tablet per child” scheme (Labour Party–Malta, 2013) which was implemented with the current Year 4 students but not with the previous Year 4 classes, now in Year 5, with whom the scheme was piloted but to whom a tablet was never given:

“I trust because if he [the teacher] tells us something, he keeps his word” (SP);

“I feel very confident with my teacher, always ready to help me, if you trust him, you will do very well” (SP);

“Yes I do trust them [staff] because they are kind with us and if we have a problem they help us, I trust my teacher because she helps us a lot and is very kind” (SP);

“There are many times when we were promised this and that, and then we end up with nothing. Like tablets for instance, we were told we’d be given a tablet and were even given a paper, but then she [the Head] changed her position and we weren’t given anything” (SP).

Besides caring for each and every student, being fair is necessary as “trust goes hand in hand with the truth” (Walker et al., 2011, p. 475). Being fair and responsible was also mentioned by both primary and secondary students as they mentioned anecdotes where they felt that teachers were not being fair with them and this affected their trust. They also mentioned that trust is obtained if their teachers and school leader are able to take responsibility for their concerns too:

“Once we were playing and the LSA told us that we’d have to stay in during break for a whole week, just for the sake of punishing us and not because it was necessary. When my friend told her that he’d tell the Head about this, she said that this would only worsen

matters. Even today, someone forgot their reading book, and the LSA decided that they should stay in during break. Sometimes the LSA acts as though she is the teacher” (SP);

“Being fair with the whole class, by treating everyone equally and knowing who every student is. You feel sad when you try to participate and are ignored” (SS);

“I have a particular teacher and he’s kind of racist...there are foreigners in that class, first time I didn’t do my homework, I got a report, and the others who are Maltese, didn’t get a report, and they did it the second time and the third time, yes my history teacher, [some students laugh] he made me super mad, he wasn’t doing a lesson properly, he always comes, but he wasn’t doing a lesson properly, whole year never, he just comes, he jokes around, he accepts bad behaviour of other students and he’s like oh don’t care I’m so stupid, never mind, he’s really stupid, I don’t like him, so, once I forget my notes, and he’s like oh you’re always an innocent one. So awkward, you always do this, you always pretending that you’re an innocent one and he made me super mad, and I told him why I not bring notes one time but he cannot do, don’t do the lesson like whole year, and then he started saying to me: shut up, one more word and you get a report” (SS);

“Sometimes the teacher would tell you to use a method, which you don’t really understand, so you go to the LSA and she teaches you another method. Then you get confused, get everything wrong, and get asked by the teacher why you didn’t use her method, and if you mention the LSA you get told; I am the teacher here” (SP);

“If you tell the teacher, she will send you to someone, who in turn sends you to someone else. If you tell the Head directly, she just assumes responsibility at once” (SP);

“Many say she is the best teacher, because she’s funny and responsible, and you can trust her with your things” (SP).

Whilst primary students insisted on the need for teachers and school leaders to ‘keep secrets’, secondary students explained that breaching confidentiality meant a loss of trust, resulting even in situations where they boycotted the guidance department within schools. As Walker et al. (2011, p. 475) advise, “not keeping one’s promises, gossiping, and hoarding pertinent information are everyday occurrences that translate into the sense of betrayal”:

“I trust my teacher. If I have a problem or a secret I cannot share with my friends, I feel comfortable sharing it with an LSA or the teacher. I trust him because he might have a solution for my problem and because he takes an interest in me” (SP);

“Yes, I do trust my teacher, because she can keep a secret when she’s trusted with one. Sometimes you’d think certain students are real friends, but they aren’t and they tell your secret to everyone. Yes, I feel comfortable talking to my teacher, because she is an adult and she understands me” (SP);

“I trust her because she is the Head of School and seems to be responsible. I’ve been here for eight years and I know that if I tell her something personal, about bullying for instance, she would just keep it to herself or maybe share it with a PSCD teacher” (SP);

“Sometimes you’d have a secret and you’d share it with the teacher, and the teacher then tells the LSA, the LSA shares it with other people, and so on and so forth until everyone gets to know. For instance, once my mother went to speak to the teacher, because I was having some problems with another student, and the LSA got to know about this. Whatever my parents or I tell the teacher, the LSA gets to know about it” (SP);

“If you trust the Head of School with something, she will keep it to herself, she won’t tell the guidance teacher for instance. She does everything in her power to help you, she either helps you herself or asks a guidance teacher to help you. If you go to the Head and tell her that you want to open up with a guidance teacher, she just phones her up and she comes immediately” (SP);

“I do not like going to the guidance teacher. Once we had a problem with our religion teacher, and some of us went to the guidance teacher to tell her of the situation. Things started getting worse after a week, especially with regard to those of us who had spoken up about the matter, and we were constantly reminded that we should have gone directly to her with our problems, rather than to the guidance teacher. I think it is ok to point out the fact that there’s a problem, but the anonymity of those who report it should be protected” (SS);

“Almost every teacher reports back to the staffroom all that happens in the classroom. I do not really trust teachers any more, because I have experienced instances when I would have trusted a particular teacher with something, and then another teacher comes up to me and tells me I did not expect that from you, clearly showing that my secret would have been shared” (SS);

“It is better if you keep it to yourself, or just talk about it after, but to teachers it depends, but there was this time when I went to the guidance teacher and she told me that there was this girl who did something, I don’t remember, and she told it to me and I said, like I just told to myself, it is not fair that you’re telling this to other students when this is supposed to be a guidance place, and you should stay quiet, that happened last year in my old school, now this school is better, I did not go back to the guidance, never again” (SS).

These criteria mentioned by students within St David’s College tend to agree with the findings of Harris and Chapman (2002, p. 11) who found out that the school leaders “were considered to be fair and were seen as having a genuine joy and vibrancy when talking to students. They generated a high level of commitment in others through their openness, honesty and the quality of their interpersonal relationships” whilst also being “able to admit to others when they felt they had made a mistake”. Bryk and Schneider (2002, p. 116) found out that trust does not directly affect student learning; however, trust “fosters a set of organizational conditions, some structural and other social-psychological, that make it more conducive for individuals to initiate and sustain the kinds of activities necessary to affect productivity improvements”. Strier and Katz (2016, p. 366) argue that “trust in schools is perceived as an essential resource that contributes to school effectiveness” and although not directly affecting student learning (Bryk and Schneider, 2002), “high levels of trust improve school efficiency, [and] enhance students’ academic performance” (Strier and Katz, 2016, p. 366).

Whilst Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000, p. 585) claim that “research on trust is just beginning in the school context [and] there are a host of unaddressed issues

and unanswered questions”, certainly trust-related matters are often a challenge to school leaders due to their fragility (Walker et al., 2011). As Bisschoff and Watts (2013, p. 24) outline “one of the most important aspects of leadership” is developing a climate of trust between school leaders and staff and also amongst members of staff. Through enhancing positive relationships, trust can be developed because “as a relationship develops, trust thickens” (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000, p. 570).

5.4 Theme F - Sense of Community

HoSs within St David’s College argued that it was a priority for them to have a sense of community in their school with HP1 and HS2 even highlighting that one of their school’s action plan was to build a sense of community. HP1 argued that:

“We try to organise activities, SDPs and PDSs so as to get all of the staff together” (HP1).

Meanwhile, a teacher in the largest primary school within St David’s College stated: “we [teaching staff] do not meet each other because we are a very large school” (TP2). HS1 also argued that since his school had grown, having started out as catering for just one cohort, it was becoming difficult for the staff to meet up:

“The staff is always growing and we have new assistant heads, so it’s always a matter of new people joining the team and you having to discover who these people are. I tend to take a step back until I get an understanding of who’s who” (HS1).

Both primary teachers (94.5%) and secondary teachers (97.2%) replied that they maintained positive relationships with each other. Moreover, Table 5.10 outlines that only two teachers disagreed that they enjoyed good relationships with most of their colleagues, whilst seven teachers opted for no position at all. Meanwhile, 84.7% of the primary teaching staff answered that there was a sense of community in their school whilst only 58.3% of the secondary teaching staff agreed with such a statement. Interestingly, almost a quarter (24.5%) of the secondary teaching staff opted for no position regarding this statement, as shown in Table 5.11. Using the chi-square test, it was found that there is a significant difference at 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$) between the primary and the secondary teaching staff in maintaining good relationships with their colleagues.

Questionnaire - Question 3.2							
I enjoy good relationship with most of my colleagues.							
Valid Respondents		229	97.4%	Missing Respondents		6	2.6%
		Primary		Secondary		Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	37	67	104			
	% within Sector	40.7%	48.6%	45.4%			
Agree	Count	49	67	116			
	% within Sector	53.8%	48.6%	50.7%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	4	3	7			
	% within Sector	4.4%	2.2%	3.1%			
Disagree	Count	1	0	1			
	% within Sector	1.1%	0.0%	0.4%			
Strongly Disagree	Count	0	1	1			
	% within Sector	0.0%	0.7%	0.4%			
Total	Count	91	138	229			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 5.10 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q3.2

Questionnaire - Question 3.14							
I believe that in our school there is a sense of community.							
Valid Respondents		230	97.9%	Missing Respondents		5	2.1%
		Primary		Secondary		Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	39	14	53			
	% within Sector	42.9%	10.1%	23.0%			
Agree	Count	38	67	105			
	% within Sector	41.8%	48.2%	45.7%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	12	34	46			
	% within Sector	13.2 %	24.5%	20.0%			
Disagree	Count	2	20	22			
	% within Sector	2.2%	14.4%	9.6%			
Strongly Disagree	Count	0	4	4			
	% within Sector	0.0%	2.9%	1.7%			
Total	Count	91	139	230			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 5.11 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q3.14

As most primary schools in Malta are small schools, as usually there is a primary school in each town in Malta, HP2 claimed that there was more unity in the primary rather than in secondary schools: “In primary [schools] there is more unity, you get used to the staff and understand where they’re coming from” (HP2). A primary teacher commented: “I consider school as my second home” (QP). Bryk and Schneider (2003, p. 44) argue that having large schools is hindering the sense of community as “relational trust is more likely to flourish in small elementary schools with 350 or fewer students” whilst “larger schools tend to have more limited face-to-face interactions” (Bryk and Schneider, 2003, p. 44). Besides having small schools that facilitate a sense of community, gossip surely does not help in building a sense of community:

“Some teachers tend to gossip about others, and in the past this led to rumours cropping up about certain individuals” (HP3).

Crippen (2012, p. 194) highlights that “allocating specific uninterrupted time periods for additional relationship building is a worthy investment that could fit easily into planned professional development days”. HS1 argued that secondary school teachers find it difficult to involve themselves in the school community as they are fully loaded with lessons whilst admitting that a group of young teachers were helping to develop a sense of community within the school:

“Teachers have packed schedules, and this is making it difficult for them to do other things besides teaching. A teacher having 25 lessons per week, say English lessons or History lessons; two subjects that involve a lot of correction, is not likely to get involved in other activities. At least, at the moment our team is growing and we have a lot of young teachers and we’re trying to give them more room to get involved. They’re trying, but it isn’t always easy” (HS1).

As Hayward (2016, p. 70) puts it “building community requires people to know and trust one another”. Unfortunately, TS2 claimed:

“To be honest I do not feel like I am part of a community. I get along with almost everyone and I have got used to the work environment, but it’s as though you come to a point of stagnation and you don’t feel as happy as you used to” (TS2).

TS2 talked with regret about social activities that used to be organised amongst her colleagues that undoubtedly had a positive effect on the school community:

“Sometimes, I see that teachers who teach in other schools get together and go out, and that’s nice. On the other hand, I now have a very hectic life so it’s not something that I really miss, but I think that it is nice to work in a place where you have friends and colleagues you can go out with” (TS2).

This is in line with Youngs’ (1979, p. 428) argument that the fact that staff “members shared a genuine concern for others was evident by involvement in various activities generated and experienced by all”. It is worth noting that the majority of the secondary teachers seem to crave engagement in their school community, as is evident through their use of phrases such as the following: “if we try to work on staff relations, work will be a much more enjoyable experience”; “increase in collegiality”; “better cohesion between staff”; “staff unity”; “more staff activities and collegiality”; “more communication, more time to socialise and a common staffroom”; “more gatherings between all staff and students” (QS). Meanwhile, primary teachers had mixed reactions about the

school community: “I am very happy to form part of the school staff” and “working as a team will definitely help” (QP).

On another note, 73.3% of the secondary teaching staff answered that within their schools they shared resources with their colleagues whilst 67.7% of the primary teaching staff answered that they shared resources together. Despite the difference observed in the sample, this difference is not statistically significant and thus cannot be generalised to the population of St David’s College. Whilst a teacher argued that “[they] work as a team” (QP), it is interesting that nearly a quarter (24.4%) of the primary teaching staff opted for a neutral reply, which amounts to 10% less amongst secondary teaching staff, as highlighted in Table 5.12. Furthermore, TP2 also argued that “something which really irks me is that some teachers use your resources, but then wouldn’t be willing to share theirs with you” (TP2).

Questionnaire - Question 3.11							
At school, colleagues share resources together.							
Valid Respondents		229	97.4%	Missing Respondents		6	2.6%
		Primary		Secondary		Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	12	33	45			
	% within Sector	13.3%	23.7%	19.7%			
Agree	Count	49	69	118			
	% within Sector	54.4%	49.6%	51.5%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	22	20	42			
	% within Sector	24.4%	14.4%	18.3%			
Disagree	Count	5	15	20			
	% within Sector	5.6%	10.8%	8.7%			
Strongly Disagree	Count	2	2	4			
	% within Sector	2.2%	1.4%	1.7%			
Total	Count	90	139	229			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 5.12 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q3.11

As illustrated in Table 5.13, 95.7% of the primary and 87.7% of the secondary staff answered that at their school, there was a special person/friend with whom they could share their joys and sorrows. On a positive note, it was also found that 87.7% of the primary and 93.5% of the secondary teaching staff felt they could count on their colleagues when something went wrong, as one may observe in Table 5.14. Unfortunately, there also exist situations about which a teacher would comment: “Honestly, the relationship I have with my students and LSAs present

in class is better than the relationship I have with some members of the staff”. Moreover, Barth (2006, p. 11) defines a good school where relationships between teachers are fruitful and teachers visit each other on a “confidential basis” whilst having “follow-up conversations” in order to improve practice. Claims such as the ones by TP2 and TS2 show that a real sense of community may be hampered and thus it will not necessarily lead to the development of a PLC. Contrary to what TP2 and TS2 stated, TS1 claimed that his satisfaction as an assistant head is:

“The creation of a nucleus of people and a team that, at the end of the day, leads students to succeed in their scholastic life. I think this is what gives me most satisfaction, the ability to build a team of people bringing together different ideas, different inputs and contributions, with the assistant head acting only as a facilitator of these ideas and positive energies” (TS1).

Questionnaire - Question 3.10							
At school, there is a special person/friend with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.							
Valid Respondents		230	97.9%	Missing Respondents		5	2.1%
		Primary		Secondary		Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	62	67	129			
	% within Sector	67.4%	48.6%	56.1%			
Agree	Count	26	54	80			
	% within Sector	28.3%	39.1%	34.8%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	2	11	13			
	% within Sector	2.2%	8.0%	5.7%			
Disagree	Count	1	5	6			
	% within Sector	1.1%	3.6%	2.6%			
Strongly Disagree	Count	1	1	2			
	% within Sector	1.1%	0.7%	0.9%			
Total	Count	92	138	230			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 5.13 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q3.10

Questionnaire - Question 3.12							
I can count on my colleagues at school when something goes wrong.							
Valid Respondents		229	97.4%	Missing Respondents		6	2.6%
		Primary		Secondary		Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	31	53	84			
	% within Sector	34.4%	38.1%	36.7%			
Agree	Count	48	77	125			
	% within Sector	53.3%	55.4%	54.6%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	10	5	15			
	% within Sector	11.1%	3.6%	6.6%			
Disagree	Count	1	4	5			
	% within Sector	1.1%	2.9%	2.2%			
Total	Count	90	139	229			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 5.14 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q3.12

Therefore, as Tschannen-Moran (2001, p. 311) debate, “working with other teachers within a context of mutual respect, but a context that also encourages a productive level of debate, challenge, and conflict, has the potential to invigorate teaching with increased intellectual stimulation”. Meanwhile, Easley (2008, p. 33) argues that “within schools and classrooms, healthy relationships build teachers’ confidence to ask questions of their practice for continuous instructional improvement”. Willis (2013, p. 24) also describes the development of a PLC and “the power of many minds working together” as one of his “greatest accomplishments” where teachers used to plan together during every school day. On the same lines, Mistry and Sood (2017, p. 128) “believe that developing good relationships lies at the heart of good leadership development and how individuals take control of their own learning or through working closely with others”.

HoSs commented positively about whether the staff looked forward to their professional development:

“With regard to learning and teaching, SDPs and social activities, I find maximum cooperation from almost all members of staff. It is unusual that you find an uncooperative individual or two” (HP2);

“The majority are enthusiastic about their professional development, but then there are also those who give me the impression that they come to work just to get paid at the end of the month. I have to admit that some of our parents keep themselves more up to date than certain members of our staff” (HP4);

“Many teachers are enthusiastic and they strive to do a better job. In fact, they would approach me to recommend courses and training that would be beneficial to them, and there’s always a very good response when there are calls for courses. Even when we introduce new initiatives, I always find plenty of support. Here, I see a lot people who strive to improve or expand their knowledge of teaching” (HS2).

Meanwhile, TS2 admitted that keeping up-to-date with subject knowledge is necessary albeit challenging due to a lack of a time to maintain their professional development: “It is difficult to keep yourself abreast as we live in a hectic life, it is difficult to find the time”. However, both TP2 and TS2 remarked that the professional development sessions provided by schools within St David’s College should be sessions that really cater for the teachers’ needs and are not repetitive:

“We are given the opportunity to attend sessions, but at times they get a bit repetitive and tackle the same topics, such as literacy. We need training on how to deal with children having behavioural problems and other problems, but that kind of training is still very much lacking. So we end up always hearing about literacy, maths, and other academic topics” (TP2);

“Very often they are a waste of time and nothing fruitful comes out of them. We recently attended training about different technologies that can be used in the classroom, which was very useful. However, at times training would be completely unrelated to personal development, and I would expect training to be of benefit and interest to us” (TS2).

Whilst Stewart (2013, p. 51) suggests that the school leader should “encourage professional development within the school” it seems necessary that PD sessions should address the real needs of teachers. Crippen (2012, p. 195) suggests that in PD sessions there should be “opportunities for team members to share their background” whilst developing “valuable relationships and a new understanding and appreciation for each other” (Crippen 2012, p. 195). Perron (2013, p. 25) asks whether relationships are discussed in PD sessions “with the same vigour and the same expectations with which we discuss assessment and instruction” whilst suggesting that it is the time that school leaders put the words “relationships matter” into action by dedicating time within the school community for such discussions. This would surely help in making professional development more inspiring and fruitful as Starkey (2012, p. 11) outlines that in this 21st century, professional development “is becoming more relevant, more reflective, and most importantly, more social”.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the second subsidiary research question: *How are relationships between school leaders, teachers, and students currently played out in schools?* was answered according to the three themes: (D) Positive Relationships; (E) Trust; and (F) Sense of Community. Understanding how relationships between school leaders, teachers, and students were currently played out in schools within St David’s College will bring us to examine the third subsidiary research question: *What changes might be made to improve upon positive relationships in order to enhance school leadership?* in the next chapter which concludes by linking positive relationships to the concept of Leadership that Loves.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION III:

**What changes might be made to
improve upon positive relationships in
order to enhance school leadership?**

Chapter 6 - Findings and Discussion III: What changes might be made to improve upon positive relationships in order to enhance school leadership?

6.1 Subsidiary Research Question 3: What changes might be made to improve upon positive relationships in order to enhance school leadership?

In the previous chapter, relationships between school leaders, teachers and students within St David's College were debated. This chapter aims to connect school leadership and positive relationships in order to explore the third and final subsidiary research question: *What changes might be made to improve upon positive relationships in order to enhance school leadership?*

Brewster and Railsback (2003, p. 2) outline that “the quality of relationships” in schools make a difference. However, Block (2015) admits that, in schools, most of the time is spent “racing from one task to another...dealing with the many crises and unexpected situations that develop during the course of any normal school day. It's exhilarating and stimulating but does not promote connection or community”. In this third and final research question, any changes to improve upon positive relationships in order to enhance school leadership are explored according to the data originating from the semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. The two themes discussed in this third and last subsidiary research question are: (G) People Matter; and (H) Leadership that Loves.

6.2 Theme G – People Matter

Interestingly, a HoS mentioned that before considering the person's role, every individual within the school community is, first and foremost, a human being, and should be treated as such. HP3 mentioned the need for school leaders to have the skills of a guidance teacher:

“Children, parents, and members of staff are all human. Everyone is a person and everyone has their baggage, their life experiences, their suffering, their everything, and so you have to deal with all of this on an everyday basis” (HP3).

Malta’s Minister for Education and Employment, Evarist Bartolo, clearly highlights that in this day and age we should strive for “education which is more human where it is recognised that students need to be happy in order to learn” (Bartolo, 2017c). HP5 claims that she is finding it difficult to focus solely on the teaching and learning in her school as human needs need to be prioritised:

“You cannot teach a child who is hungry, and there are children who are suffering hunger. The stories we are faced with are shocking. There’s social poverty and mental poverty, and other forms of poverty too. You’d have children telling you that they wouldn’t have slept at night, because it was their brother’s turn to use the quilt. And then you see the teacher coming into school with a kilo of cereal, quilts and jackets, so the teacher has also become a nurturing figure” (HP5).

Bush and Glover (2014, p. 555) demonstrate that “leadership is increasingly linked with values. Leaders are expected to ground their actions in clear personal and professional values”. It is through the personal and professional values outlined by Bush and Glover (2014) that leadership can be made more human whilst also noting that the anecdote by HP5 clearly resonates with Nelson and Low’s (2003, p. 61) claim that “effective leadership is people centered and effective leaders know, understand, and respect the needs, values and goals of others”. Although during the focus groups, students did not mention the facts directly, as mentioned by HP5, students highlight that “school does everything for us,” (SP) “when you celebrate your birthday, he [the Head of School] calls you to his office and gives you a pen with the college logo or a badge. He is thoughtful” (SP), and “there are teachers who really take care of you and are like family” (SS). Moreover, students mentioned that through positive relationships established with their school leaders, they are helped in “every problem, whether at home, at school, or outside school” (SP) and students did refer to a school leader who they “were close with. If he notices that we are angry, he asks us what would have happened. He always talks to us and wins us over” (SS) and thus “putting people first works” (Hayward, 2016, p. 70). This is in line with Bryk and Schneider’s (2003, p. 42) findings that established that in one particular school, almost every teacher and parent talked about the “principal’s personal style, his openness to others, and his willingness to reach out to parents, teachers, and

students”. HP1 admits clearly that “persons come first, the children always come first. Everything that I do, I do for the children.” HP4 agrees with HP1 as she clearly states that children come first:

“This year I was driven to take the decision to inform them [the education directors] that since one of my classes was missing a teacher, I was going to replace her instead of staying in my office. If push had come to shove, I would have acted upon my intentions” (HP4).

Whilst putting the students in the centre of their role is clearly something these school leaders aspire for, it was also found that, school leaders sometimes still ignore students as they are more focused on issues with staff: “whenever I tried to approach him because there was a problem, I was either ignored, given second preference after the teachers, or simply shrugged off” (SS). Students are aware that “every Head of School works towards making students’ lives better. However, we [students] would not always be aware of what [the Head of School] would be doing for us” (SS). Striving for a culture where people matter requires school leaders to take an active interest in each and every student, without any distinction. Andrews (2011, p. 21) highlights that his “philosophy places a heavy emphasis on showing respect for students and staff members through recognising the individuality of all students”. Furthermore, Chapman and Harris (2003, p. 2) found out that school leaders “treated each person as an individual”. When asked whether or not they know the students in their school, the HoSs had mixed reactions. HP2 claimed: “I know the majority of the students. It takes time to get used to the new students, but I know those who have been here a year or two quite well”. HP4 felt that besides knowing the students by their names, it is important to also know the names of their parents rather than just knowing them by sight:

“Yes, I know students by name, and I think that this is very important. My one regret is that I would know their parents by sight, but wouldn’t know their names” (HP4).

In contrast, HS1 admitted:

“I don’t know every student, but perhaps that is my weak point. You’d know those who are in your office frequently because of behavioural issues. To be fair, when teachers draw my attention to noteworthy projects and achievements students would have reached, I call them to my office and give them the time and attention they deserve. Only yesterday, I had a student here and I told her that we had to meet again to have a small chat, but unfortunately this isn’t always possible” (HS1).

As Wormeli (2016, p. 10) declares, “all of us feel honored when others whom we respect think our names are worth remembering”, some of the students felt important as their school leader “know our names, all of us really” (SP) whilst others argued that their HoS “don’t know all of us” (SP). Interestingly, some students even claimed their HoS knew them quite well as they had been attending their primary school for quite a number of years and the HoS even approached them on an individual basis when particular activities or opportunities cropped up:

“I have been in this school for seven years, so I think she [the Head] has got used to me. She gets used to what we do, knows what our performance is like, and knows what our character is like. She encourages us to participate in competitions and similar events” (SP).

Knowing students as individuals requires school leaders to not only know the students by name but to have a personal interest in each student to see him/her succeed. This is in agreement with Sinek’s (2015) statement that “leadership is not about being in charge. Leadership is about taking care of those in your charge”. On the same lines, Bondy and Hambacher (2016, p. 50) outline that “people won’t care how much you know until they know how much you care”. Arar et al. (2016, p. 134) argue that this type of leadership style is “transformational” where school leaders “are people-oriented, and pay attention to the teachers’ needs, foster warm human relations, empathy, empowerment, delegation of authority and teamwork”.

The changes in modern society are reflected in the grave issues school leaders have to deal with; educators are frustrated that the Maltese educational system is by no means prepared to cope with the family problems students bring with them to school:

“We are in a situation at school, where we are dealing with the results of the collapse of the family. We have been hit by a tsunami and we haven’t fully realised yet. Schools are institutions that haven’t changed enough in the past 150 years to cope with these changes; we don’t have the means, we don’t have the people, and we don’t have the resources to tackle the many problems and complexities that students bring to school” (TS1).

Mistry and Sood (2016, p. 30) emphasise the need for school leaders to understand “what globalisation means for them in their particular context” and whilst globalisation can be beneficial to the school community, school leaders

need to be “continually alert to potentially damaging influences of globalisation such as extremism and associated extremist organisations, which may influence learners’ future behaviour” (Sood et al., 2018, p. 136). Issues at home affect students as outlined by TS1, whilst as HP3 argued, school leaders need to be aware of certain students’ problems that affect their behaviours:

“I know for fact that certain children do not resort to certain behaviours out of cruelty, but rather as a reaction to something that would have happened to them. For instance, one of our students lost his father and then his mother abandoned him, leaving him high and dry. So it becomes almost inevitable that some children are violent, and our mission is to understand what is causing their rage by being their friends. By friends, I do not mean that you let children walk all over you, but rather being someone they can respect” (HP3).

This highlights the need for school leaders to spend quality time with students to build positive relationships. Acknowledging that it is not that easy to make time, making time for students helps to build a relationship and continue to get to know the students. HS1 recounted, “only yesterday, I had a student here and I told her that we had to meet again to have a little chat” (HS1). Meanwhile, HP5 talked about the support offered to students, such as that offered by school counsellors and guidance teachers:

“We are working with a foundation that is already helping us and which is expected to help us even further in the future. Besides the college counsellors, we have roped in a full-time counsellor who is here at every student’s beck and call” (HP5).

Sebring and Bryk (2000, p. 441) argue that securing “social support services for students in need” ensures efficient management “so that classroom disruptions are minimised”.

Besides students, HoSs clearly prioritised “the wellbeing of the staff” (HP1). Quite encouraging, 80% of the teaching staff felt aware that their HoS wanted what was best for them, as shown in Tables 6.1 and 6.2. There seems to be a difference between the primary and secondary teaching staff as 93.5% of the primary teachers answered that their HoS wanted the best for them when compared to 71.2% of the secondary sector. Secondary teachers were more likely to stay neutral, 27.3% when compared to 5.4% of the primary teaching staff. The difference between the primary and the secondary teaching staff noted on a descriptive level is statistically significant at 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$). Whilst around a quarter of the male teaching staff opted for a neutral response,

82.3% of the female teaching staff replied that their HoS wanted what was best for them, in comparison with 74.6% of the male staff. It results that gender was not significant; however, it is noteworthy that after recategorising the Strongly Disagree with the Disagree and the Strongly Agree with the Agree, more than 20% of the cells had an expected count of less than 5. More generally, 90.9% of the teaching staff replied that their HoS wanted what was best for the students and the staff, as illustrated in Table 6.3.

Questionnaire - Question 2.10							
The Head of School wants what's best for me.							
Valid Respondents		231	98.3%	Missing Respondents		4	1.7%
		Primary		Secondary		Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	47	51	98			
	% within Sector	51.1%	36.7%	42.4%			
Agree	Count	39	48	87			
	% within Sector	42.4%	34.5%	37.7%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	5	38	43			
	% within Sector	5.4%	27.3%	18.6%			
Disagree	Count	1	2	3			
	% within Sector	1.1%	1.4%	1.3%			
Strongly Disagree	Count	0	0	0			
	% within Sector	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%			
Total	Count	92	139	231			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 6.1 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q2.10

Questionnaire - Question 2.10							
The Head of School wants what's best for me.							
Valid Respondents		230	97.9%	Missing Respondents		5	2.1%
		Male		Female		Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	25	73	98			
	% within Gender	45.5%	41.7%	42.6%			
Agree	Count	16	71	87			
	% within Gender	29.1%	40.6%	37.8%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	13	30	43			
	% within Gender	23.6%	17.1%	18.7%			
Disagree	Count	1	1	2			
	% within Gender	1.8%	0.6%	0.9%			
Strongly Disagree	Count	0	0	0			
	% within Gender	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%			
Total	Count	55	175	230			
	% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 6.2 - Data according to gender for Questionnaire Q2.10

Questionnaire - Question 2.11							
The Head of School wants what's best for the students and the staff.							
Valid Respondents		231	98.3%	Missing Respondents		4	1.7%
		Primary		Secondary		Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	59	57	116			
	% within Sector	64.1%	41.0%	50.2%			
Agree	Count	31	63	94			
	% within Sector	33.7%	45.3%	40.7%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	2	19	21			
	% within Sector	2.2%	13.7%	9.1%			
Total	Count	92	139	231			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 6.3 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q2.11

It was noted that HoSs were aware that the staff members within the school community mattered. HoSs recognise the need to:

“appreciate what their work entails, what their duties and rights are. You have your teaching staff, and you have to respect their rights, and in turn they have to fulfil their duties. At primary level, I have found that peripatetic teachers help to lighten the workload teachers have” (HP2),

keeping in mind that teaching is a job that does not finish when the school day is over. Berg (1977, p. 213) outlines that “successful leaders are those who can adapt their behaviour to meet the demands of the environment at a particular moment when a problem arises” and HoSs within St David’s College are willing to leave everything else behind and stop to listen and support their staff, even if sometimes “to help, you have to deal with” personal stories (HP1). Furthermore, HP3 and HP5 argued:

“Yes, there are many people who open up to us [Heads of School], but there are others who hold back. However, when I notice that somebody’s struggling, I approach them myself. Sometimes, the cause would be personal issues, such as family illnesses. So yes, I’m here ready with a box of tissues, because when the staff come to me, they end up opening up about everything” (HP3);

“Hearing people out is another challenge. Within these four walls, I learn of personal problems my staff would be facing. At the moment, it is not easy, as I have three staff members - all of them quite young - who are seriously ill. I don’t want to imply that knowing about their health issues is burdening me, but when a member of staff tells you that she is critically ill with half a smile, you are taken aback. You also learn, you learn to complain less” (HP5).

These anecdotes confirm the argument put forward by Hays (2008, p. 123) that “only through listening with an open mind and open heart can one come to understand people”. HP1 also claimed that she was ready to listen to the personal problems of her staff and students and sometimes was even contacted after school

hours: “people’s personal problems keep pouring in. Sometimes, I would be contacted even after school hours to help out” (HP1). This supports Bryk and Schneider’s (2003, p. 42) claim that “respectful exchanges are marked by genuinely listening to what each person has to say and by taking these views into account in subsequent actions”.

Through positive relationships, whilst the HoS helps the particular member of staff concerned, the teaching and learning aspect is also impacted because “the personal lives of people affect their work lives” (HP3). Thus, the performance of the individual is directly linked and depends on the individual’s personal stories; if a person is dealing with a difficult situation, it is harder to focus on teaching and learning. As HP3 explained:

“If someone is sick or has a family member who is sick, this is going to impact their time at work. Sometimes, people would need some time off to look after a family member, some advice about how they should go about taking leave and similar matters, and so I become their first point of contact. Some would ask me to keep everything confidential” (HP3).

Data from the teachers’ questionnaire highlights the conditions that the teaching staff suffered throughout the scholastic year when the questionnaire was administered. Table 6.4 highlights the conditions that the teaching staff has gone through. Worthy of note is the fact that only 4.7% of the teaching staff acknowledged that they suffered from depression. Interestingly, according to Malta’s office of the Commissioner for Mental Health (2017), whilst depression is estimated to affect 4% of the world population, it was revealed that one-tenth of the Maltese population, or 40,000 people suffered from depression.

Conditions	% of the Teaching Staff
Workload Stress	59.6%
Anxiety	49.8%
Anger	31.1%
Low Self Esteem	11.1%
Other	6.4%
Depression	4.7%

Table 6.4 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q1.8

Dummy variables were created for each problem indicator allocating a value of 1 to those who experienced the condition and a value of 0 to those who did not

experienced the condition. A composite score was created by adding the values on all the indicator variables. This composite score, ranging from 0 to 6, with 6 being the highest, provides a measure of the number of problems encountered by each member of the staff. It was found that the worst case was that involving 3 members of the teaching staff (1.3%) who suffered 5 conditions whilst 14.5% experienced no conditions at all. 37% of the teaching staff suffered from 1 condition, 25.5% suffered from 2 conditions, 18.7% suffered from 3 conditions, and 3% of the teaching staff suffered from 4 conditions. The mean score for this problem count composite measure was produced for various employee groups with employees categorised in term of gender, age, and sector. It resulted that females suffered from more conditions than males, primary teaching staff suffered from more conditions than those in secondary schools, and conditions were linear with age, thus the less the age, the less conditions suffered.

Worrying is the fact that 63% of the teaching staff indicated that they had been frequently or very frequently stressed throughout the scholastic year when the questionnaire was administered, as shown in Table 6.5 below.

Questionnaire - Question 1.7							
How frequently have you been stressed during this scholastic year?							
Valid Respondents		235	100.0%	Missing Respondents		0	0.0%
		Primary		Secondary		Total	
Very Frequently	Count	21	19	40			
	% within Sector	22.3%	13.5%	17.0%			
Frequently	Count	47	61	108			
	% within Sector	50.0%	43.3%	46.0%			
Occasionally	Count	23	45	68			
	% within Sector	24.5%	31.9%	28.9%			
Rarely	Count	2	16	18			
	% within Sector	2.1%	11.3%	7.7%			
Never	Count	1	0	1			
	% within Sector	1.1%	0.0%	0.4%			
Total	Count	94	141	235			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 6.5 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q1.7

The teaching staff within St David's College indicated that work overload and inadequate salary, 59.1% and 52.8% respectively, were the major sources of stress. This means that at least half of the teaching staff within St David's College was either stressed about the load of work required or the salary. Quite positively

it was noted as well that poor working relationships with colleagues and pressure from the HoSs were the least mentioned as sources of stress. Table 6.6 below also depicts that discipline and control together with the fact that students do not accept teachers' authority are causes of stress for teachers as well.

Source of Stress	% of the Teaching Staff
Work overload	59.1%
Inadequate salary	52.8%
Students do not accept teachers' authority	49.4%
The never-ending syllabus	37.4%
Discipline and control	37.4%
Equipment in classrooms not working	22.1%
Pressure from parents/guardians	10.2%
Teaching students	5.1%
Pressure from Head of School	4.3%
Poor working relationships with colleagues	3.4%

Table 6.6 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q1.9

The findings that emerged from the questionnaire related to work conditions and stress emphasise the need for HoSs to lead in a way that values people. Now, more than ever, "leaders are called upon to energize their organizations by genuinely attempting to enrich the lives" (Forum for People Performance Management and Measurement, 2009) of each individual. HP4 brought up the fact that there may be instances where certain individuals become jealous when one particular member of the school community is helped. However, the HoS still felt that helping out was the right thing to do. She questioned whether, sometimes, people might abuse of her kindness, but still felt that she was doing nothing wrong in treating favourably those who were in need of help:

"Sometimes, certain people would take advantage of the fact that you are too willing to help. If I become aware that someone's struggling with a problem, it is in my nature to do everything in my power to help them out. At times, however, jealousy rears its ugly head; let me explain. You would help Person A get through a rough patch, and then it's Person B's turn to get extra support because she would be in a difficult situation. At times you would be accused by Person A of showing favouritism, but hadn't I helped Person A too, when she was in a difficult situation? At the moment, I have a case of an LSA who was diagnosed with a brain tumour, and I did my utmost to get her the permission to keep coming to school - but not in a classroom, as she cannot be with children - to take her mind off things and the ongoing therapy. There are certain people who are accusing me of granting her preferential treatment, but with my hand on my heart, I can say that I don't think I'm doing anything wrong" (HP4).

Just as HoSs outlined that they listened to their staff and were ready to help out both teachers and students, the teachers also outlined that through positive relationships with the students, the students felt comfortable talking about their personal lives with them as they were ready to help and assist the students in their needs: “it is not the first time they come to me to tell me that they trust and respect me, and then open up to me. I always help where I can” (TS3). However, TS2 argued that students preferred to talk about their personal problems with guidance teachers rather than with teachers, but that through positive relationships the students felt that they mattered to the teacher, so much so that they would “talk about their weekend plans” (TS2). Teachers who listened to students even about informal things sent out the message that students mattered. Conversely, primary students highlighted the fact that, unfortunately, when faced with particular issues, at times, teachers sent them to talk to the assistant heads instead of taking responsibility and solving their query:

“Sometimes they tell you to go to the Assistant Head, saying that they have nothing to do with your problem. Sometimes, they don’t take an interest in our problems, and at times this happens because they wouldn’t want the added responsibility that comes with helping you out. For instance, if someone pushes you down the stairs during the P.E lesson and you tell one of your teachers, very often you’d be told to report the incident to the P.E. teacher, because it would have happened under his watch” (SP).

Meanwhile, secondary students stated clearly that they realised that “to some teachers you’re just a number. They teach you, do their job, get paid for it, and that’s it. But to others, you’re more than that and, in fact, they try to get to know you” (SS). Whilst there were those teachers for whom people matter, unfortunately, “there are a few teachers who show a genuine interest in the students, but others dig deeper so as to have fodder for gossip with other teachers” (SS). As outlined in Theme E, such gossip led to distrust. Sheppard (2013, p. 35) refers to these teachers as “toxic teachers” who “poisoned the environment” and “did not like kids”.

Students acknowledged that irrespective of whether the individual was the HoS or a teacher, it was the person’s character that influenced the relationship since there were those “who are patient and ready to listen, and there are others who have no patience to hear you out for a minute and wouldn’t know how to help you” (SS). Undoubtedly, students preferred staff for whom people mattered. A student

recalled a particular episode where she was looking forward to meeting the guidance teacher again but this teacher never turned up even though an appointment had been made:

“Recently, I had a problem and made an appointment with the guidance teacher. When I met her she told me to come in to see her again the week after, but she never showed up, because sometimes she’d do visits in other schools too” (SP).

Keeping promises made to students is necessary to show that students matter, whilst offering them all necessary services and support. Interestingly, in all focus groups, both primary and secondary students mentioned bullying and defined that they feel safe at school as “there are not a lot of bullies” (SP) and “I feel a bit safe, because there are adults who can protect us all from big bullies, like cyber-bullies” (SP). It is probable that students mentioned bullying as in Malta a campaign about bullying has recently been launched and it has really left an impact on all the students (Borg, 2016). The campaign was created as a result of Cefai’s (2005) findings as he discovered that one-third of all the students in Malta were affected by bullying in one way or another and thus exposed themselves to long-term mental problems. However, based on the focus-groups with the groups of students, it was evident that students felt safe at school because of “friends” and “teachers” for whom they were individuals who mattered. As Sadowski (2016, p. 33) argues, “safety is an essential prerequisite before any learning can take place. Students need to feel safe before they can focus on reading, math, science, or anything else they can study in school”. Sood et al. (2018) also articulate that a “caring ethic is essential for all learners to ensure they feel safe, secure and valued for any kind of learning to take place”. Ramos and Barnett (2013, p. 37) also maintain that “concerns of safety are at a minimum due to the strong relationships between students and staff. Students said they now feel free to discuss concerns with staff members” because, as Sinek (2009, p. 55) explains, “we are drawn to leaders and organisations that are good at communicating what they believe...make us feel like we belong, to make us feel special, safe and not alone”. Elias (2010, p. 24) also debates “buddies, mentors, and tutors” to enhance the students’ voice in schools where “even struggling students can help those who are younger or less able... the chance to share their knowledge or skills, builds confidence and leadership potential”, but no reference by HoSs within St David’s College was made to this concept. As Jones et al. (2016, p. 64) report, “a positive

relationship with a supportive adult can buffer children from trauma and other adverse life experiences, and can provide the personalized responsiveness... for challenging life events”. Besides listening to others, HoSs are required to take decisions and actions in the best interest of the students. Elias (2010, p. 25) advises that school dropouts may occur if school staff does “not care” for students “and would not go the extra mile for them [the students] even if asked”. A secondary student recalled his experience when no action was taken in order to solve his query:

“Someone put a paperclip in the lock of my locker, and now I cannot open it. I approached them [the Assistant Head and the Head] with my problem and they did not really take any notice of me. They did take a note of my problem on a piece of paper, but did nothing to actually solve it. I don’t really like reminding them of this every day, because I don’t want to bother them. However, if this isn’t fixed after Monday, I’ll go to them again or tell my mother about the situation, but I don’t know what else I can do save for speak to the secretaries” (SS).

Maintaining that all persons, including all students, matter, means that every student is “unique” without any discrimination of gender and ethnicity, as pointed out by the NCF (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012, p. 10). Students shared their experiences of how teaching and learning was conducted in their countries of origin, pointing out that positive relationships were non-existent:

“I’m from the Ukraine, and most of the teachers were kind of bullying children, especially if they didn’t like the student. For example, if a particular student does something wrong, the teacher gives everyone extra homework and then the whole class hates the student. That’s how they bully children” (SS).

Students recognised that the situation in Malta was different and that schools within St David’s College were “multicultural, and the different cultures are accepted in the school, and I appreciate that” (SS). “A good school is one that respects differences”, as identified by Barth (1990, p. 514) and, therefore, there is respect for diversity. In this context, “differences are looked for, attended to, and celebrated as good news, as opportunities for learning” (Barth, 1990, p. 514). Unfortunately, a group of students within St David’s College did point out that, in their previous years, within this college, there were individual teachers for whom migrant students did not matter:

“Yes, they used to be racist. For example, there would be a Maltese student and a student from another country, and let’s say they would both be wearing the uniform with a jacket that’s not part of the uniform, and only the foreign student would be told off and given a report. And even for activities, they never chose foreigners, but not in this school, things are different here” (SS).

This clearly contradicts Sather's (1999, p. 511) portrayal of school leaders as individuals who "served as change agents in schools, demonstrating proactive approaches that resulted in more positive human relationships and increased harmony among ethnically diverse student populations". Meanwhile, Mistry and Sood (2013) suggest that school leaders should embed globalisation in the curriculum. In line with Sather (1999) and Mistry and Sood (2013), HS1 emphasised that for him all students mattered and that he was not happy with the situation of having foreigners learning subjects in Maltese and, thus, despite no agreement was reached with the education directors and/or the MUT, various subjects in his school were taught in both the Maltese and English languages since he was able to reach an agreement with his staff in this regard, thanks to positive relationships. Resources, such as worksheets given throughout the year and the examination papers typically held in Maltese were also translated:

"Our school is multicultural. To me this is a priority, but not one that detracts my attention from the local students, absolutely not the case. The measures we take, are taken for the benefit of both local and foreign students. One of the initiatives we are working on at the moment is taking aside foreign students who would be struggling with language, to support them in enhancing their language competencies so that they come at par with their Maltese peers as soon as possible. We have also established other programmes which cater for students who aren't conversant in English and for those who have a grasp of the English language, but not of Maltese. This year, we went a step further by offering all students the option of taking the humanities subjects in English. It is true that the directive stipulates that these should be taught in Maltese, but here this isn't a problem as teachers prepare exam papers and notes in both languages, and deliver the lesson in either Maltese or English. To make life easier for teachers as well, we split the students according to their language preference, so if Maltese is your choice you attend one class and if English is your choice you attend another" (HS1).

Teachers and students alike feel that they matter when they feel happy at school, as they spend most of their day at school. As a student put it: "they [teachers] tell us that [the school] is like our home, because we spend more time at school than at home" (SS) and so being happy is necessary for both students throughout their school day and also for teachers at their workplace. Both negative and positive elements leave an impact on the students, as they themselves noted:

"Classrooms need to be welcoming and equipment, such as speakers and starboards, should be in working order. The whole school needs to be welcoming really. At the school I attended before, we even had air conditioning in the classrooms. It was a very appealing school, in terms of education, classrooms and even assistant heads" (SS);

"Some of the equipment we have at school doesn't work and this makes it difficult for teachers to deliver a proper lesson. Teachers spend ten minutes to get from class to class or get the class to settle down and another ten minutes getting the equipment to work, and I think that it should take them less time to deliver a proper lesson" (SS);

“I would like to see more discipline in the classrooms. It is unfair that because of one student’s unruly and destructive behaviour, all of the students suffer. I think teachers should have more discipline over this” (SS).

Conversely, some students said:

“Yes the school is very nice, there are a lot of teachers and nice equipment. I’m happy with the school and literally like almost everything. The teachers are nice, we have many interesting subjects, and I also like the building as it is really nice and clean” (SS);

“I learn new things here. There are other children who do not even have a school where to go. Here, the place is very tidy” (SP).

These anecdotes tend to agree with Sather (1999) who reports that the “quality of positive and personal recognition set the tone and foreshadowed the warm and welcoming climate” and also with Temel et al. (2011, p. 11232) who maintain that the “first impression takes place with the non-verbal communication at first glance”. The Harvard Business Review (2014) outlines that good relationships, purpose, and vision do lead to happiness at work and “it is time to finally blow up the myth that feelings do not matter at work”. Barth (2006, p. 8) also highlights that “the relationships among the educators in a school define all relationships within that school’s culture”. It appears that HoSs within St David’s College do pay attention to the students’ well-being and happiness by actively organising fun events as well as by tackling students’ suffering immediately:

“It is important that the children are happy here and enjoy peace of mind. Besides increasing efforts channelled into decorating the school, we also organise a lot of fun activities, giving children the opportunity to enjoy themselves or to help others, whilst learning. This apart, when we are aware that a student would be facing problems, we try to address the situation immediately, because the children always come first” (HP3).

Whilst Barth (1990, p. 515) suggests that “schools are funny places. A lot of funny things happen in schools”, students from all schools within St David’s College mentioned that they like the various activities organised for them and that these make them happier at school:

“Army soldiers came to school and played us music” (SP);

“We have lot of activities, such as Crazy Hair Day, Pyjama Day, Bubbles for Istrina [Istrina is a charity event in aid of the Malta Community Chest Fund] and bike day” (SP);

“Certain activities, such as Hot Dog Day, are not really related to education, but I believe that they help students feel more at home and look forward to coming to school every day” (SS).

Much like students, teachers prefer a positive vibe at their workplace, despite their stressful work:

“Positive activities going on at school, and at every workplace, stimulate people to report to work with a smile” (TS3);

“It is stressful, but I am happy here, so it is my calling, sort of” (TP2).

As Sather (1999) points out, it is through the positive climate and collegial atmosphere that “teachers here have not become burned out or negative”. On the same note, Barth (1990, p. 515) pinpoints at the importance of humour and argues that “laughter is good for schools and for those who inhabit them”. A strong majority of the teaching staff (88.7%) indicated that their HoS greeted them with a smile. Only one primary teacher answered that s/he is rarely greeted by the HoS with a smile.

Questionnaire - Question 2.9							
When I meet the Head of School, s/he greets me with a smile.							
Valid Respondents		231	98.3%	Missing Respondents		4	1.7%
		Primary		Secondary		Total	
Very Frequently	Count	52	55	107			
	% within Sector	56.5%	39.6%	46.3%			
Frequently	Count	35	63	98			
	% within Sector	38.0%	45.3%	42.4%			
Occasionally	Count	4	21	25			
	% within Sector	4.3%	15.1%	10.8%			
Rarely	Count	1	0	1			
	% within Sector	1.1%	0.0%	0.4%			
Total	Count	92	139	231			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 6.7 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q2.9

Moreover, HoSs that greet teachers and students with a smile and have an interest in students’ holistic development seem to have an impact on students themselves as “leaders connect and establish a relationship with people who believe that the leader has their best interest at heart” (Allen, 2007, p. 8):

“What I really liked about our previous Head of School was the permanent smile on his face, you’d walk into the school and see his smiling face. The Head we have now is nice and all that, but it wouldn’t cost him much to smile. Smiling at students as they walk in makes their day better” (SS);

“During assembly, our Head tells us to study, but then he reminds us that it is important to have fun too, as a balance of both makes things more interesting” (SP).

Creating a culture of appreciation shows that people matter. It has already been discussed in Chapter 4 that HoSs within St David's College felt that they were not appreciated by the Education Directors. HS2 provided an example that proves that whilst people mattered to this leader, Education Directors seemed to view issues from a different perspective:

“It was Thursday before the Christmas holidays, and the weather was really bad, with very strong winds battering the islands. I have a number of Gozitan teachers and LSAs within my staff and I sent them home earlier, at around noon, so as to make the ferry. Like me, they have a family, and it did not make sense leaving them here till 2:30pm and increasing their chances of being stranded in Malta because the ferry would stop crossing. They [the Education Directors] phoned me to justify my position in writing” (HS2).

It appears that whilst school leaders strive for a culture where people matter, they themselves felt unappreciated by their own superiors. In fact, school leaders claimed that “we are in a situation where you either sink or swim, if you sink you are greatly humiliated” (HP5). McGee (2013, p. 48) argues that “being humiliated could literally crush some people psychologically”. Thus, school leaders need “to make criticism count, not crucify” (McGee, 2013, p. 48), as HP4 argued when describing how he was helping a particular teacher who was facing difficulties in classroom: “we sit every now and again to discuss what the problems and issues are, but is this being appreciated at the top levels?” (HP4). HS2 stated:

“Unfortunately, I do not feel appreciated by all segments. There are many segments - parents, students, teachers, the department, and the general public - and you can't tar each segment with the same brush. I get the impression, and this is strengthened by the questionnaire we distribute every now and again, that I am appreciated by parents, teachers, staff members and most of the students. Students who view me as a figure of discipline and authority won't see me in such a good light, of course. Unfortunately, I do not know whether I am appreciated by the department, because we do not get any comments of appreciation” (HS2).

Other school leaders argued that it was not common practice that they were shown appreciation by teachers, students and their parents, and by education directors, and in fact, “no news is good news, no one is going to phone you to say well done and thanks” (HP6). School leaders also mentioned episodes when they felt unappreciated:

“In my first year here, I was reported several times to the Education Minister, the Bishop, Prime Minister Joseph Muscat and the department, but at the end of the day these cases always ended up in my favour. Not to be condescending or anything, but I explain to parents that, at the end of the day, problems need to be solved at school, and not elsewhere. During these past two years, this has always been the case; parents come here, we discuss, we listen to each other, and finally we find a solution” (HP3);

“It is difficult and painful, but I would know that I have nothing to hide so I put my cards on the table for everyone to see” (HP6).

HP4 felt that only a few parents were not appreciative: “sometimes, I feel least appreciated by my superiors. With regard to parents, there will always be a couple of unappreciative ones; maybe five in all, which doesn’t translate into being unappreciated by parents” (HP4). HS2 also emphasised that “generally, parents who come to school appreciate our work, the majority of them do in fact. We wouldn’t know what those who do not come think” (HS2). Similarly, HS1 argued that there will always be that particular parent who does not appreciate you or that teacher who does not understand the complexity of the school leader’s job:

“You might have a parent, who doesn’t realise that you cannot be completely dedicated to their child. Parents naturally focus on their children only, but I have to make sure that all children are doing fine. Then there are teachers, who might not always understand the complexity involved in giving help they would have asked for. Even students, at times don’t appreciate the work involved, but then again it is not their problem to understand this. However, you expect better from adults” (HS1).

In contrast to the HoSs feedback, only 19 teaching staff out of the 231 valid respondents answered that they do not feel appreciated. An encouraging 90.2% of the primary teachers feel appreciated when compared to the 66.2% of secondary teaching staff. Of particular interest is that almost a quarter of the respondents (22.3%) in secondary schools felt that they neither agreed nor disagreed that they were appreciated, as shown in Table 6.8 below. It was found that the observed difference between sectors is significant at the 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$).

Questionnaire - Question 3.1							
I feel appreciated at my work place [school].							
Valid Respondents		231	98.3%	Missing Respondents		4	1.7%
		Primary		Secondary		Total	
Strongly Agree	Count	25	21	46			
	% within Sector	27.2%	15.1%	19.9%			
Agree	Count	58	71	129			
	% within Sector	63.0%	51.1%	55.8%			
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	6	31	37			
	% within Sector	6.5%	22.3%	16.0%			
Disagree	Count	3	13	16			
	% within Sector	3.3%	9.4%	6.9%			
Strongly Disagree	Count	0	3	3			
	% within Sector	0.0%	2.2%	1.3%			
Total	Count	92	139	231			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 6.8 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q3.1

One secondary teacher argued:

“Sometimes, I wake up dreading the school day ahead. When I think about what causes this, the fact that I would have prepared a lot of resources to use with students who really aren’t interested, springs to mind. Then there are underlying issues, such as unsolved matters, a lack of appreciation from the leadership, and a lack of acknowledgement of emails you would have sent, for instance” (TS2).

Instilling a culture of appreciation is necessary as everyone likes to be appreciated. As HP6 put it, “people make you, and people break you” so appreciating one another through positive relationships is essential; as HP5’s comment proves, even the smallest of gestures are enough to make one feel that one matters:

“See that Valentine’s card? A student, whom I think is one of the most neglected children on the planet, gave it to me. At the moment, he’s being picked on because he’s called Donald and other students are calling him Donald Trump. When I told him that it is not a bad thing being called Donald Trump, he retorted that he didn’t want to be him. So he came to my office and we chatted about this whole Donald Trump business, and in the end he made me that card. My husband could have sent me 26 Valentine’s cards, and they still wouldn’t have been as effective as this one. There are students who come to speak to us, especially the older ones, and I feel that boys know what authority is and this is important in their lives” (HP5).

6.3 Theme H – Leadership that Loves

School leaders are facing greater demands and are “under immense pressure” (Stone-Johnson, 2014, p. 669) in order to improve “the efficiency and equity of schooling” (Pont et al., 2008, p. 9). Despite pressure and a more extensive workload for school leaders, through positive relationships, school leaders within St David’s College are aware that being a HoS, just like teaching, is a vocation; otherwise it is a grossly underpaid job. As HP1 claims:

“If it weren’t for my love for the job and the children, I would have left for a better place long ago, because it really isn’t worth the while. Our pay doesn’t reflect the challenges we deal with, but at the end of the day you do it because it is your calling” (HP1).

When one’s work is a vocation, it is implied that one has to love what one does. “The concept of love is increasingly being recognized as a responsibility of leaders in organizations” (Caldwell and Dixon, 2010, p. 91). As a case in point, on a dark day for democracy in Malta, after the murder of the Journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia who was killed in a powerful car bomb in Bidnija, limits of Mosta, Malta on October 16, 2017, Malta’s Prime Minister Joseph Muscat (2017) described the event as “a black day for Malta,” Mifsud (2017) reminded

educators and all stakeholders including parents that the vocation of educators remains “to create a caring and safe, yet lovingly firm and orderly climate where learning and formation of spiritually, morally, emotionally, cognitively and physically healthy individuals unfold, particularly through the example we set”. It was interesting to note that Mifsud (2017) used the word ‘love’ and that Malta’s ‘Respect for All’ Framework (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014) also mentions the word ‘love’. Seven out of the eight school leaders within St David’s College that participated in this research agreed in general with the LtL concept, as defined in Section 2.6.2. HS1 asserted that “ultimately, I believe that if you don’t love, you end up quitting” (HS1) whilst HP5 argued that school leaders “need to love in order to lead” (HP5). Another primary HoS highlighted that:

“Love and respect lead the way. Without them, the most brilliant ideas and leadership philosophies and theories become hollow. You have to have love, respect and passion, for yourself and for others, otherwise all would be lost” (HP6).

A secondary HoS also stated that:

“I strongly believe in LtL. Gone are the days of leading by instilling fear in others and imposing your ideas on them. This kind of leadership is obsolete now; it belongs to a generation that had a different mentality” (HS2).

Despite that mostly HoSs agreed on the LtL concept presented in this research, two HoSs seemed to object to this concept at first, even through their facial expressions, as they were not that sure about the word ‘love’. Having said that, they eventually changed their minds:

“Rather than love, I believe that there should be respect. I believe that we should put ourselves in our children’s shoes and try to imagine what they’ll be like in the future. We need to prepare them for the future, with love, yes with love” (HP3);

“The word is a bit iffy, you have to lead with empathy” (HP5).

Whilst respect and empathy are surely characteristics of LtL, as discussed in the definition of LtL adopted in this thesis, it can be claimed that sometimes the word ‘love’ was not seen as an appropriate term to be used by school leaders. Secondary teachers and SLT members interviewed seemed to be of the same opinion as HoSs, preferring to exercise caution when using the word ‘love’. Teachers argued that “rather than I love, I would say care. When everyone pulls his weight and is a bit more caring about his colleagues, the work environment

improves tremendously,” (TS1) and “love, obviously within the context of the school” (TS2). Page (2011, p. 313) highlights that notions of love, especially in education, “are poorly understood”. Morley and Ife (2002, p. 69) also claim that there is “a tendency in professional discourse deliberately to avoid the word ‘love’ even where its use may be appropriate and obvious”. Block (2015) also defines the absence of love as “the sad truth” due to what he describes as “there is very little about the traditional structure of school that encourages people to build communities that love, serve and create”.

Interestingly, Hayward (2016) and Wormeli (2016, p. 14) feel that ensuring a safe atmosphere and environment and taking “empathy-building steps” respectively are crucial in the first weeks of schooling in order to achieve a successful teaching-learning dynamic. Therefore whilst ensuring a safe environment and caring for everyone within the school community is clearly love as Biro (2014) suggests that the leader who cares about the people and works towards “fulfilling, wellrounded lives, is practising the leadership of love”. Besides caring for everyone within the school community, LtL requires school leaders to encourage, support and having optimistic thoughts about each and every person within the school community as “love creates the desire to see others grow” (Kouzes and Posner, 1992, p. 480).

Contrary to what a few members of the secondary staff argued, it was noticed that primary school teachers used the word ‘love’ without any hesitation. Moreover, primary students do not hesitate to say that their teachers love them: “teachers love us and help us. If we have a problem they will do their best to solve it for us” (SP). This is the type of love that Schaefer (2011) refers to when outlining: “I’m really talking about compassion, empathy or thoughtfulness, but I say love, not the emotion, but love used as a verb”. A primary teacher elaborated that love was already present in her school and argued that teachers cannot do their duties properly if they do not love the students: “I believe that love is already very much present here. Forging friendships and sharing the workload are forms of love, and then there are the children, obviously. If you don’t love the children, you cannot do your job properly. So there’s love among children and love between us”

(TP2). Moreover, an SLT member in a different primary school within St David's College also emphasised that love between the staff was already established: "I feel that here there's a group of people who aren't merely colleagues, but friends. They became friends through school" (TP1). Giving a concrete example of what love is, TP1 demonstrated that the staff in his school expressed solidarity with a colleague of theirs who was experiencing serious difficulties, by pooling their hours of special leave so that this colleague could still receive the wage for a period of time despite being away from school:

"There are members of staff who do not regard their peers merely as colleagues, but they go a step further and look out for them. For instance, we recently had a case where an individual was going through a tough time, and many staff members came forth with ideas of how to help. Some even suggested 'donating' some of their leave to her, for instance. This shows an element of solidarity among the people" (TP1).

This shows collegiality between members of staff, providing moral and financial support where necessary. TS1 evaluated love as the ability to learn from one another and to come together as a team when decisions are taken:

"School one very long chain, in which everyone is an equal link. You can learn something from everyone, from the minor staff to the Head, and you have to be open to accepting different opinions, because there are always going to be a lot of them. You shouldn't be resistant towards authority, and once a decision is taken, I believe, that everyone has to accept it" (TS1).

As shown in Table 6.9, 91.3% and 69.9% of the primary and secondary teaching staff respectively felt that their HoS sympathised with them when they came across a problem. When aggregating 'occasionally' and 'rarely', as no one answered 'never', to use the chi-squared test, a 99% significance between sectors ($p < 0.01$) was found. The administrative data on the number of staff headcount shows that there is less staff in primary than secondary schools and this might explain why HoSs in secondary schools have less time to sympathise with their staff. Moreover, 18.4% of the teaching staff answered that the HoSs sympathised with teachers occasionally, making this a possible area for improvement in order for school leadership to be more humane.

Questionnaire - Question 2.12							
When I come across a problem, I feel that the Head of School sympathises with me.							
Valid Respondents		228	97.0%	Missing Respondents		7	3.0%
		Primary	Secondary	Total			
Very Frequently	Count	49	39	88			
	% within Sector	53.3%	28.7%	38.6%			
Frequently	Count	35	56	91			
	% within Sector	38.0%	41.2%	39.9%			
Occasionally	Count	7	35	42			
	% within Sector	7.5%	25.7%	18.4%			
Rarely	Count	1	6	7			
	% within Sector	1.1%	4.4%	3.1%			
Total	Count	92	136	228			
	% within Sector	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

Table 6.9 - Data according to sector for Questionnaire Q2.12

TS3 recounted an experience to prove that she did not feel loved by her school leader:

“Once I left school in a rush after I got a call from my husband to tell me that he had been in an accident. The headmaster never bothered to call to check in on me later in the day. On the contrary, the headmaster of the school where my sister teaches did call her to see whether everything was ok, because she was the one who picked me up that day. The director called me, but the head didn’t” (TS3).

This unfortunate episode illustrates the need to enhance positive relationships in order to strive for LtL where loving others includes being sensitive towards what people are going through, which is described by Kouzes and Posner (1992, p. 481) as “a truly precious human ability”. Uusiautti and Maatta (2013, p. 112) suggest that successful school leaders are “sensitive and responsive to their followers’ needs”. Treating each human being as your own children is what school leaders hold on to: “You love your children, and give much more than a hundred per cent for them. Treating everyone equally means giving everyone the same treatment you give those who are dear and near to you” (HP4). HP1 subscribed to HP4’s explanation and stated: “it’s inconceivable, you cannot lead if you don’t love the children” (HP1). HP3 also reaffirmed that it was necessary to “have a great love for children and for the job” (HP3). Andrews (2011, p. 21) argues that he “wants the success for every teacher and student in the building” which is clearly love. Along the same lines, HP4 remarked that through love, children can achieve results:

“You have to deal with each and every child as though they were your son or daughter, and this will help students, even the low-ability ones, succeed at their own pace. You cannot expect miracles from everyone, but if you give students nothing short of what you would

give your own children, you see results. This is what I harp on all the time with my teachers” (HP4).

Ferris (1988, p. 48) “propose[s] that love be made an acceptable if not essential, component of leadership”. Instilling love is not easy and having positive relationships is the basis for LtL. As TS2 argued:

“Love is crucial, but it is also difficult to give. It is impossible to be in agreement with everyone all the time, and if you don’t have a good relationship with your Head, then how are you going to show love towards him?” (TS2).

School leaders had diverse opinions regarding whether it is possible to really love everyone within the school community. HP3 admitted that although he tries his best to really love everyone, as a human being, he wanted to be loved back too as he argued “one should not forget that respect and love cannot be one-sided, but have to be a two-way thing” (HP3). However, loving everyone means that school leaders should love even that person within the school community who won’t reciprocate love and, as HP4 acknowledged: “if you put your mind to it, you will succeed in loving everyone” (HP4). Loving everyone is a matter of what’s in the leader’s heart; as Kouzes and Posner (2011b, p. 26) put it: “it’s about leading out of what is already in your soul”. Moreover, Bryant (2010, p. 33) bluntly states that “what you don’t love, you fear” whilst Turkel (2014, p. 176) insists that decisions need to be “based on love not fear”. HP4 also concluded that during particular times, some people need more love than others:

“You love everyone, but there’d be times when certain individuals would need a bit of extra help. This is not a matter of prejudice, but of adapting your levels of support to particular circumstances” (HP4).

Uusiautti and Maatta (2013, p. 112) claim that in LtL, school leaders practice their “ability to use their leadership position in a manner that exemplifies love-based action”. However, school leaders are humans who also have emotions so when issues and conflicts crop up, love can go wrong too. HoSs admitted that “it isn’t easy at all. There are instances in which you feel hurt” (HS2). HS2 referred to situations where due to Malta’s top-down educational system, members of staff, students and their parents report issues to the College Principal or the Directorates and the Malta Union of Teachers without even notifying or consulting the school leader. HP3 seemed to agree with HS2 and despite similar scenarios where it may seem difficult to love, the role of a school leader makes it

necessary to keep loving everyone within the school community: “yes, even with members of staff, you give them one chance after another, and that’s a form of love. You don’t give up on anyone, because everyone has some good within them” (HP3). HP6 described conflict management as her task to “resolve conflicts in a manner that doesn’t fuel existent anger or frustration. My job is to calm things down, in an effort to help people clear their heads and see the silver lining of a situation” (HP6). Although HP6 tried to make the best of each situation, HS2 argued that sometimes he felt frustrated, as he drew attention to the availability of an anonymous online suggestion box where one can post any concerns, HS2 still believed in LtL, despite the fact that he might “be slightly frustrated” (HS2):

“I am not infallible, I make mistakes. I make mistakes because I try out new things. Recently, I had a case where I challenged myself to prove my point even further and put the blame on myself that a message hadn’t reached everyone in the same way. Most of the time, I do not put the blame on the person, but take the responsibility for something that would have been miscommunicated, for instance, myself” (HS2).

Heystek (1999) argues that parents are often neglected by schools but, through LtL, parents are not only invited to come to school to make their voices heard but also to be loved despite that sometimes parents may

“complain behind your back. When we organise focus groups, I urge them to speak up in my presence, as complaining when I am not there to hear what they have to say leads nowhere. When you explain to them, they start seeing your point” (HP4).

This is in agreement with Gerda Bender and Heystek (2003, p. 151) who argue that “school leaders must initiate activities that will motivate parents to participate”. HP4 insisted on the need to have all parents on-board with her and about the need to explain why certain decisions had to be taken to parents especially since, “we have parents whose expertise outclasses that of the staff, so we cannot treat them like idiots either” (HP4). One must note that some parents are themselves educators or employers within the Ministry for Education and Employment and therefore have sound knowledge of the school and the educational system.

Good practices by HoSs illustrate the need to continue to emphasise the need for LtL, especially when having situations where parents themselves take particular matters directly to the Education Directors or even to the media, sometimes even

without notifying the particular school leader. HoSs confessed that they felt hurt in such situations but tried to remain calm and to consider it a challenge: “sometimes, instead of coming directly to you, they ignore you completely and go to higher authorities. When this happens, I take the situation as an extra challenge” (HS2). Moreover, LtL is expressed when the school leader’s actions are motivated by his wish to do what’s best for the students, even when this is not immediately apparent to the parents:

“I try to reach out to the parents by every means possible, and question whether they would have achieved the result they wanted and whether this was truly the best means to an end. Most of the time, even in the most difficult of situations, parents do realise that we do everything with the best interest of the children in mind. You start realising that parents wouldn’t have done something out of malice, but rather in the heat of the moment. There isn’t one single person whom I feel resentment towards because he would have acted in this way. I have come to accept that there are different opinions, people who see things how you see them, and others who view them from a completely different angle” (HS2).

HS1 recalled:

“I’ve just had a parent here of a very problematic child who causes havoc at school. I believe that the fact that I sat down with his parents to discuss what the school can do for him, rather than excluded him, is an act of great love” (HS1).

Showing love is not easy, especially when no respect towards authority is shown.

TS1 explained that:

“What I find extremely worrying is the lack of respect students show towards people in an authoritative position. This sets off alarm bells in my head, because this behaviour at school prefigures similar behaviour within the wider society, and I believe we already are experiencing the effects of this lack of respect for authority” (TS1).

This anecdote shows that effective communication with parents enhance LtL and whilst it has already been established that through positive relationships, communication is enhanced, it is still hoped that LtL will be instilled in our profession in order to enhance teaching and learning: “better communication fosters more love, and more love leads to an environment where children learn more and everyone works better together” (TS2). Bryant (2010, p. 38) suggests that through love, the school leader has “something valuable to offer this world” whilst Kouzes and Posner (1992, p. 483) outline that “leading with love is the ultimate act of service” and despite all the difficulties that school leaders meet in order to love, HP6 concluded by suggesting that school leaders need to be humble and also acknowledge their weaknesses:

“You stand tall when you bend down. By this, I do not mean that you let people walk all over you, but rather put yourself in others’ shoes, listen, empathise, give in, and get the

idea that you are better than the rest because you are the leader out of your head. The humbler you are, the more likely you are to lead successfully. With regard to the teachers, I believe that it is important for them to acknowledge their weak points too and seek help if necessary. Showing your weakness is showing your strength, you stand tall when you bend” (HP6).

Ferris (1988, p. 51) states, “The person who chooses to love makes a difference; the aspiring leader who chooses to love makes a big difference”.

6.4 Conceptual Framework - Linking Positive Relationships to Leadership that Loves

Evaluating the eight themes emerging from this research study has led to a developmental process as to how positive relationships link to the concept of Leadership that Loves, which conceptual framework is shown in Figure 6.1. In this thesis, HoSs, teachers, and students outlined that through positive relationships, communication is enhanced through open and regular conversations and face-to-face communications, as HP2 argued: “the best way to communicate is face-to-face, if there is something that they [the staff] disagree with, they will let me know and they never not hesitate to tell me about it” (HP2). Similarly, HS1 argued: “I believe that there is an open relationship, so the channels of communication in this school are open enough.” Moreover, HP3 outlined that during the last years:

“Not to be condescending or anything, but I explain to parents that, at the end of the day, problems need to be solved at school, and not elsewhere. During these past two years, this has always been the case; parents come here, we discuss, we listen to each other, and finally we find a solution” (HP3).

Having good communication channels in school between the HoS and all the stakeholders will lead to trust, which needs to work both ways: “when you start trusting someone, this person will give you more and start believing more in you. This is a two-way thing; I trust someone and that someone trusts me back a bit more” (TS1). This resonates with Sinek (2009, p. 106) who argues that “only with mutual trust can an organisation [school] become great”. Being honest, responsible, and competent are essential qualities for a school leader to gain the trust of the staff and the students. Sabeen (2012, p. 11213) highlights that the “trustworthiness of a person is something that is recognised through the attitude

and action, and not the speech” and it is only through trust, that motivation is enhanced. As TS3 argued, “if there are good relationships, this will start to show and everyone will come to school a bit happier. Good relationships ameliorate the work environment” (TS3). This resonates with Berg et al. (2018, p. 56) who maintain that “trust makes work more pleasant for everyone”. Sebring and Bryk (2000, p. 442) outline “in schools that are improving, where trust and cooperative adult efforts are strong, students report that they feel safe, since that teachers care about them, and experience greater academic challenge”. This thesis uncovered the loop that teachers were the source of motivation for students whilst HoSs were also the source of motivation for teachers. Regarding motivation, TP1 and TS2 argued:

“I would be lying if I said that I don’t experience moments of almost giving up. You have to keep in mind that there’s a big number of students in a very limited space here, and so we literally step on each others toes all the time, and there’s hardly any space where one can conduct meetings. These things exasperate me, but then you meet the parents, the families, the enthusiastic Kindergarten Assistants, and you regain that motivation. I feel that the school motivates me” (TP1);

“When my contact with the Head of School and others was better, the situation in general was much better, as I felt that I had a say in the run of things. At the moment, I feel as though I just come in, do my job, and that’s it” (TS2).

Being a source of motivation and inspiring others does not mean that leadership is just attracting followers but mainly producing other leaders:

“When you lead, you lead with the idea of producing other leaders, not followers. Followers may follow out of fear, and they may follow because they want to follow you. This is when you’d be producing other leaders, people with their own mind” (HP5).

Huber (2004, p. 680) insists that “leadership always implies some influence on others” and, through motivation, a sense of community is formed as reflected in this thesis where it was found that all of the HoSs were doing their utmost so that a sense of community would be instilled within their schools. As HP5 elaborated:

“We make a whole celebration out of the morning assembly - we sing, we dance, and we clap – to create a sense of community, because this is very much lacking in a school where students come from very different areas. We organise events that keep them happy, whilst retaining an element of teaching and learning” (HP5).

TS3 argued: “Yes, yes, I feel at ease. I believe that I built a relationship with them [the staff]” (TS3). This resonates with Bryk and Schneider (2003, p. 44) who suggest that “good schools depend heavily on cooperative endeavours”.

Furthermore, TS2 pointed out that “better relationships among everyone are conducive to a good feeling that helps everything work out better.”

Having a sense of community where each person matters and wanting the best for every person is necessary:

“We need to be human, and strive to understand the people we lead, the children and their parents, and the backgrounds they are coming from. There needs to be mutual understanding for better leadership” (HP3);

“Today’s classroom realities cannot be compared with what I used to encounter when I myself was a teacher. Most of us do not have the time to drop by classrooms, but teachers expect the Head of School to be aware of the problems they would be facing on a personal level and in the classroom” (HP5);

“You need to understand what their problems and difficulties are. Everyone comes with his or her own baggage, and those who have certain issues would need your support. When someone makes a mistake, you have to draw their attention to it, whilst keeping in mind that you are colleagues” (HS2).



Figure 6.1 - Conceptual Framework - Linking Positive Relationships to Leadership that Loves

When a culture that reflects the fact that people matter is instilled, school leaders can enhance their school leadership through Leadership that Loves, as debated in this thesis. Through the findings, it is evident that the relationship between the themes is highly dependent on how a school leader goes about nurturing all of these themes. Figure 6.1 presents the themes in a cyclical model, showing clearly that each theme is highly interrelated and interdependent, that is, one nourishes the other. Whilst each theme is the result of positive relationships, placed in the middle of the cyclical model, each theme influences the other. This cyclical relationship through Positive Relationships and the other five themes: Communication, Trust, Motivation, Sense of Community, and People Matter, all lead to Leadership that Loves. Through Leadership that Loves, with its focus on care, respect and love, all the other themes come into play, and these all contribute towards enhancing Effective Leadership in our schools.

6.5 Conclusion

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, the findings and discussion of this thesis were presented according to the three subsidiary research questions respectively: *‘What does school leadership look like?’*; *‘How are relationships between school leaders, teachers, and students currently played out in schools?’*; and *‘What changes might be made to improve upon positive relationships in order to enhance school leadership?’*

These questions have been answered according to the eight themes which emerged from the data analyses: (A) Effective Leadership; (B) Motivation; (C) Communication; (D) Positive Relationships; (E) Trust; (F) Sense of Community; (G) People Matter; and (H) Leadership that Loves.

The summary of the findings, together with the way forward for educational leadership in Malta will follow in the seventh and final chapter. Contribution to knowledge, limitations of this research study, and suggestions for further research are also debated in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 7 - Summary and Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has explored how positive relationships between school leaders, teachers, and students can enhance school leadership. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, the findings were analysed and discussed. This seventh and final chapter begins with a summary of the findings through the eight emerging themes that answered the main research question: ‘How can positive relationships between the school leader, teachers, and students enhance school leadership?’ The way forward for school leadership in Malta is also discussed with practical suggestions in light of the findings. This chapter then goes on to highlight the contribution to knowledge arising from this study. Finally, the chapter concludes with a reflection on the limitations of this research and recommendations for further research.

7.2 Summary of Findings

In this section, the summary of the findings emanating from Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are highlighted according to the eight emerging themes that answered the main research question through the three subsidiary research questions.

7.2.1 Theme A – Effective Leadership.

Data from this research has shown that HoSs were aware that improving teaching and learning is the main aim of school leadership; however, it established that school leaders were more focused on management tasks including maintenance of the school buildings. This research study also revealed that class visits were often neglected. Furthermore, this study has shown that the contact of HoSs with students was mainly through assemblies and in special activities organised, due to the number of meetings in their own schools and also outside, on a college and national level. Both the teachers and the students needed to feel the presence of HoSs in schools and more effort was needed by HoSs to know all the students personally, not only those students who end up in the school leader’s office due to

behavioural difficulties. The findings concluded that whilst leadership was distributed amongst the assistant heads, secondary HoSs needed to include HODs more in relation to leadership issues in addition to consulting HODs in relation to their area/subject expertise. It was found that HoSs within St David's College were able to take decisions; however, data from the teachers' questionnaires showed that the teachers felt the need to be consulted more. Data analysis shows that despite being underpaid in relation to other leadership and managerial positions, HoSs were committed to their job, especially when noting that they were doing their utmost to improve schooling in spite of the, oftentimes, negative reputation of government schools, in order to give the students a bright future.

7.2.2 Theme B – Motivation.

The questionnaire survey showed that the majority of teachers, especially those in the primary sector, were motivated and inspired by their HoS. This study has also revealed that the radical changes in Malta's educational system hindered the motivation of both the members of the SLT and teachers, especially since educational authorities did not keep staff fully informed about ongoing changes in syllabi and logistics and despite the fact that both the SLT members and teachers were professionals in their job. It was evident that HoSs were concerned about the various ongoing radical changes. HoSs felt that these changes hindered their real focus on aspects of teaching and learning as they felt that the teachers have become demotivated due to these ongoing changes and increase in the workload. Furthermore, data revealed that HoSs believed their motivation was low due to a lack of support by Malta's educational authorities. HoSs reported feeling distressed due to lack of support from educational authorities who did not seem aware of the realities in schools and who, HoSs felt, made their life difficult instead of offering help. The present study has uncovered a major obstacle that HoSs, especially in the secondary sector, faced in the beginning of every scholastic year: that of complex timetabling. HoSs reported that they were not supported by Malta's educational authorities because work carried out during the summer was often rendered useless due to the major changes affecting the mobility of staff which continued into the first days of each scholastic year. Such

situations also included the sharing of staff between schools, including secretaries, and not enough teachers to cater for the mixed ability settings and migrant learners. HoSs also reported that they did not find support from Malta's educational authorities when dealing with instances of unprofessionalism of teachers. The study has uncovered a loop in which teachers were the source of motivation or demotivation for students and HoSs were also a source of motivation or demotivation for teachers. It was found that the motivation of teachers was affected when HoSs were not approachable, e-mails were not answered, and feedback by HoSs was not given. It also transpired that the public opinion on social media was not helping to enhance teachers' and HoSs motivation or the teaching profession in general. Moreover, it was stated that education authorities do not appear to act upon certain issues, unless they are publicly reported in the media or if parents directly contact the Ministry.

7.2.3 Theme C – Communication.

The semi-structured interviews with the HoSs showed that communication between the HoSs and the teaching staff was done through staff briefings, the use of e-mail, and circulars. Most communication was reported to take place through e-mail and this was seen by respondents to be hindering one-to-one communication that, in turn, would have helped to foster positive relationships between HoSs and the teaching staff. It was evident that the teaching staff within St David's College were satisfied with the communication within their schools, with those in the primary sector being more satisfied than those within the secondary sector. Furthermore, some secondary teachers reported that they did not communicate with the HoSs except in extreme cases or for the purpose of the classification exercise⁹. The secondary teachers were calling for better communication with their HoSs who needed to be more clear, concise, and relevant in their communication with the staff. However, there appeared to be effective channels of communication between the HoSs and the members of the SLTs. The social networking site 'Facebook' was the main communication tool

⁹ The classification exercise is held by HoSs prior to the end of each scholastic year in order to prepare timetabling for the coming scholastic year taking into account the projected students' population, options and subjects chosen by the students, and wishes of the teaching staff.

with parents. Whilst HoSs in the primary sector sent regular circulars to parents, HoSs in the secondary sector were concerned that circulars handed to students were not being given to their parents and whilst e-mails to parents was found to be the practice in one school, Facebook seemed to be the main means of communication in another secondary school. This study suggests the need for secondary schools within St David's College to explore better ways of enhancing communication with parents who were invited to some of the schools on only two occasions per year: the parents' evening and the parents' day. Some HoSs reported that they found it difficult to reach parents and to maintain effective communication. Whilst HoSs showed their availability for parents, only one HoS maintained regular focus groups with parents, and some HoSs did not have a system of appointments for parents. Some school leaders reported difficult situations when dealing with parents of migrant learners who did not speak Maltese or English, where communication was done through symbols and Google Translate.

7.2.4 Theme D – Positive Relationships.

HoSs acknowledged the importance of positive relationships with teachers, students, and their parents for the success of the school. In the absence of positive relationships, energy was shifted from the core task of school leadership to solving hitches and conflicts. HoSs maintained positive relationships with their members of the SLT but recalled previous experiences in the past years where they had experienced difficulties in relationships with their members of the SLT. A small number of teachers still insisted that more positive relationships between the members of the SLT were needed. Positive relationships between members of the SLT and teachers were confirmed in this study, which also showed that the teaching staff within St David's College maintained positive relationships with their HoS. Primary teachers were more likely to indicate a positive relationship with their HoS despite the fact that they were more likely to be occupied with their class. On the contrary, nearly a third of the secondary teaching staff indicated that they have not had regular conversations with their HoS. This research also established that in large schools, it appeared to be difficult to

maintain effective positive relationships between HoSs and the teaching staff, and much more difficult to maintain positive relationships between the HoSs and the students. The questionnaire showed that teachers prefer talking to their HoS in person rather than sending an email whilst it was also established that, through positive relationships, teachers found themselves comfortable to open up with their HoSs. Moreover, teachers usually accepted feedback given by the HoS. It has emerged that there was no statistically significant difference between gender as both male and female staff felt comfortable in talking to their HoS. HoSs within St David's College also reported that positive relationships were negatively impacted when HoSs brought to the attention of the staff any wrongdoings. This study suggests that the students developed positive relationships with those teachers who listened to them, were kind and patient, attended to their needs and queries, and were fair, whilst through the questionnaire it was also found that teachers maintained positive relationships with the students. This study also indicates that primary students were aware that their HoSs knew of their capabilities and talents and that the HoSs could have heard things about the students from the teachers or other students. It was also established that secondary students thought that there was no relationship at all with their HoS as they referred queries to their assistant head or teachers in charge of their form. It was revealed that HoSs had contrasting views about positive relationships with parents with the majority of HoSs only discussed with parents on a one-to-one basis when there was an issue to solve, and usually by appointment. According to a few HoSs, some parents demanded things by right whilst other parents measured the schools according to the performance of their children. It was found that patience and leaving words unspoken sometimes were required to develop and enhance positive relationships in schools. This thesis also showed that positive attitudes, characters and moods, talking with conviction, and admitting mistakes were also necessary to maintain positive relationships in schools.

7.2.5 Theme E – Trust.

It resulted that a few HoSs within St David's College needed to trust their members of the SLT more as there were situations where HoSs were distributing their leadership but still rechecked on their assistant heads. On the other hand, other HoSs viewed themselves and their assistant heads as "one whole team" which was essentially needed for the school to succeed and therefore these HoSs fully trusted their members of the SLT in the distributed tasks. Interestingly, it was found that members of the SLT fully trusted their HoSs. It emerged that whilst some HoSs trusted the teaching staff as professionals, there were situations where HoSs could not fully trust their teaching staff due to a lack of confidentiality, back-stabbing, or in circumstances where these individuals had to be constantly reminded of their professional duties. This research has therefore found that, for HoSs, it was easier to trust some of the staff, than others. HoSs claimed that since Malta's educational authorities were responsible for the selection and posting of the teaching staff, teachers who were not up to standard were negatively impacting the trust built within the school communities. Data revealed that whilst some HoSs argued that they do kept an eye on some of the staff and monitored regularly what was going on, other HoSs trusted the staff with their eyes closed. The questionnaire showed that teachers trusted the HoSs. HoSs confirmed that the teaching staff discussed personal issues with them which showed a great sense of trust, especially when issues had to be kept in strict confidentiality. It was evident that HoSs that were trusted by the staff communicated well, were honest, and did not shown favouritism. By being consistent and competent in their job these HoSs developed a positive relationship with staff. It was also found that not all the teaching staff trusted each other completely, as some discussions with certain teachers or assistant heads were only held on professional issues. Students also felt that they should trust HoSs and teachers who kept promises, were fair and responsible, and who respected confidentiality. Secondary students referred also to gossiping about students by teachers in staffrooms and the breach of confidentiality by the guidance teachers which, in turn, resulted in a lack of trust and a sense of

betrayal. The findings showed the importance of trust in schools, the essentiality of which is often revealed in situations of distrust.

7.2.6 Theme F – Sense of Community.

HoSs were doing their utmost so that a sense of community would be instilled within their schools. Both the primary and the secondary teaching staff maintained positive relationships amongst each other; however, it resulted that there was a significant difference in the sense of community experienced in primary schools as opposed to secondary schools. Data from this research study showed that, in large schools, including all secondary schools, and due to the shifting of staff to accommodate major changes such as the setting up of a new school, impacted negatively the sense of community in some schools. It was evident that secondary teachers felt fully loaded with lessons and so their involvement within the school community was kept at a minimum. The findings reported a cry from secondary teachers for more engagement within the school community as the secondary teachers felt it was necessary to know each other better and work as one team within their school. Meanwhile, data showed that primary teachers were the least to share lesson resources amongst each other. The questionnaire showed that most teaching staff had a special person/friend at school with whom they shared their joys and sorrows and counted on when something went wrong. This thesis showed that unless there is a solid sense of community, there cannot be a professional learning community as whilst some of the staff within St David's College worked collaboratively, others did not engage in school practices such as observing one another and learning from each other. Most teachers were ready to further enhance their professional development despite time constraints, but there remained a small number of teachers who were not interested in enhancing their knowledge. Described as repetitive and unfruitful sessions, the PD sessions held in schools once a term, need to address more the real needs of teachers including maintaining positive relationships and enhancing a sense of community within the school.

7.2.7 Theme G – People Matter.

HoSs were aware that each person is firstly a human being and meeting basic needs, such as by dealing with poverty and difficult situations, do take priority before embarking on teaching and learning. It was evident that students came first for most HoSs; however, there were cases where HoSs even ignored students and sent them back to their classes as they were too busy dealing with staff issues and other cases. It transpired that the students were aware that all HoSs work towards improve their school life. Moreover, students appreciated those HoSs who knew their names and their personal interests. On the other hand, in today's changing society, HoSs felt aware of the importance of knowing each student individually. The questionnaire showed that the teaching staff was aware that the HoSs wanted the best for them and also for the students. In fact, HoSs were ready to listen to the personal stories of the staff and even offered their help. It was disclosed that more than half of the teachers within St David's College suffered stress and anxiety. It was found that HoSs were doing their utmost for migrant learners to feel at ease at school and enhance their learning; however, it resulted that a minimal number of teachers needed to improve their attitude towards migrant learners. This study has shown that teachers listened to students. However, students also identified teachers who did not have a caring attitude. Data revealed that students felt safe in schools and a welcoming environment, together with the various activities and events organised, helped students to be happy. A strong majority of teachers indicated that HoSs greeted them with a smile; students also pointed out that they liked a HoS who smiled to them. It was found that both HoSs and teachers felt it was crucial to be appreciated. The majority of the primary teaching staff felt appreciated and almost two-thirds of the secondary teaching staff indicated that they felt appreciated.

7.2.8 Theme H – Leadership that Loves.

It was found that, similar to teaching, being a HoS was considered to be a vocation and loving the students and staff was essential. HoSs within St David's College agreed with the concept of Leadership that Loves (LtL) whilst most HoSs

mentioned care, respect, and empathy. Contrary to the teaching staff in secondary schools, it emerged that both the primary teaching staff and the primary students used the word ‘love’ without any hesitation. It was found that HoSs and the teaching staff within St David’s College referred to the way they treat students as similar to loving their own children. The majority of the teaching staff within St David’s College felt that the HoSs sympathised with them; however, there still remained the need for some HoSs to show more care and love in view of what the teaching staff and students were going through. It was found that there were staff members within St David’s College who were not only colleagues but real friends who loved one another. HoSs reported that, in certain instances, (such as when conflicts occur and when certain issues were reported to the Education Directors) it was difficult for them to love everyone within the school community, but this was made more possible when the HoSs were humble, were self-aware, and acknowledged their weaknesses. Inviting parents who reported HoSs to higher authorities to schools to discuss and offer help, for the benefit of the students, was also seen as love.

7.3 School Leadership in Malta: The Way Forward

Education in Malta is currently facing “a crisis” (Bonello, 2017, p. 21). Ever since the University of Malta introduced the post-graduate Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) and gradually abolished the Bachelor of Education [B.Ed. (Hons)] and the Post Graduate Certificate in Education [P.G.C.E.] courses, too few students have enrolled to pursue their studies to become teachers. As Caruana (2017) confirms, “the teaching profession is in crisis as the number of graduates in education drops and the shortage of educators become more acute”. This shortage of teachers has “now become so dire that retired teachers as old as 77 [have] been asked to return to work” (Ganado, 2017). Meanwhile, Malta’s Hon. Minister for Education Evarist Bartolo and his Permanent Secretary, Frank Fabri, sent a letter to all educators insisting that the European Quality of Life Survey, (2016) “shed really positive light on the profession of educators and the education sector in Malta” (Bartolo and Fabri, 2018), which contradicts Attard Tonna and Calleja (2018a, p. 13) who found out that fewer than a fifth of teachers (18%)

would remain in classrooms if a new career opportunity arises. Malta's Hon. Prime Minister, Joseph Muscat, is aware that "the responsibility of teachers is the highest responsibility than one can have, they have the responsibility of our country, our children, so it cannot be that this profession had been fallen back for a whole generation and not being appealing" (Muscat, 2017). On the contrary, Grahn-Laasonen (2017) declares how in Finland "the teaching profession is respected and popular". Caruana (2017) insists that teaching may not be an attractive profession due to the "limited career prospects, because the only option for teachers to progress in their career often involves abandoning the classroom to take on some form of management post" with Bush (2015a, p. 855) arguing that "it is perhaps not surprising that headship is unattractive and that teachers may not wish to take on middle or senior leadership roles either". However, Tschannen-Moran (2001, p. 310) confirms that "teaching is not easy work. The changing needs of society, changing expectations for schools, and the changing sets of needs brought each day by each group of students make teaching a demanding task".

The changing needs of society that Tschannen-Moran (2001) debates also impacted educational leaders. Globalisation led to "an enormous impact on educational systems, leadership paradigms" (Litz, 2011, p. 58). Lee and Pang (2011, p. 333) also report that a shift in educational leadership due to globalisation was required. Thus, in the era of globalisation, "there must be leaders who direct and guide people" (Temel et al., 2011, p. 11231). Despite the improvements in technology at a fast pace, the uncertain world we live in, with issues of migration, fraud and corruption, broken families, injustices, and acts of terrorism, require educational leaders to "not only [be] able to stay abreast of the important and multi-faceted worldwide trends that impact everything they do, but that they are also flexible" (Litz, 2011, p. 58-59). Malta's Hon. Minister for Education Evarist Bartolo outlined in the Maltese Parliament:

I will mention one more thing that I was not happy about, it happened yesterday when a person went inside the school premises with an aggressive and violent behaviour towards the Head of School, I know that after speaking to the person and calming him/her down, there is always something human behind the situation, which is not necessarily related to schooling. Often these situations erupt in schools, however, these situations are repercussions of situations experienced outside school. I want to make it clear that whilst I understand and empathise, we need to be human and respect each other. Educators respect parents and parents respect educators but under no circumstances, can one enter school

premises and attack or assault our educators. Educators know that I support them all the time whilst they understand that we need to hear and understand parents as we need to work together (Bartolo, 2016a).

In these situations, Church (2017b) invites school leaders to “see with new eyes, an open heart, and prepare for a new reality in leadership”. Keffeler (2012, p. 11) maintains that “true leaders do not serve for personal glory or resume-building; true leaders serve because they care about the profession and learners served”. Locally, in this day and age, school leaders with strong personal qualities such as firmness and honesty, but who are also competent, are much needed because, as Tschannen-Moran (2013, p. 6) recommend, “staff are watching very carefully because the leader’s behaviour and orientation can have such a major impact on the quality of their professional lives and their sense of well-being”. Therefore, as Kouzes and Posner (2011b, p. 24) warn, “people won’t follow you, or even pay you much attention, if you don’t have strong values”. As Bill Bradley puts it: “Leadership is unlocking people’s potential to become better”. Green (2002, p. 9) asserts that “to be effective in leadership, it is particularly important to know yourself” and as Rodd (1996, p. 123) also confirms, “a degree of self-awareness [is] essential”. Meanwhile, Bush and Glover (2014, p. 555) maintain that “leadership is increasingly linked with values. Leaders are expected to ground their actions in clear personal and professional values”. Therefore, it is necessary that nowadays, school leaders strive to, first and foremost, know their own selves as “becoming a leader is a process of internal self-discovery... it’s important that [one] first define[s] [one’s] own values and principles” (Kouzes and Posner, 2011b, p. 23). As this thesis found out, school leaders within St David’s College were not into a leadership position to make money but to serve to the best of their abilities. As Sheppard (2013, p. 36) insists, leadership does make a difference in the lives of others because as he walked out of the school building for the last time, he looked back, took a deep breath, nodded and said to himself “leadership does matter”. Moreover, “helping others is a calling” (Williams, 2018). Crippen (2012, p. 197) stresses that:

Schools are all about relationships...first, by trying to understand and being true to ourselves and then by trying to understand and appreciate our colleagues. It’s about telling our stories and realising how much we have in common and yet how rich we are in diversity.

As outlined in this thesis, positive relationships of school leaders with teachers and students can make a real difference in the lives of others. Swift (2012) asks: “What do private schools have that government schools don’t? Long-term staff who feel valued, who therefore value the students, who therefore do better. It’s not always about money”. Attard Tonna and Calleja (2018a) recommend that, “if teachers are supported adequately, they are less likely to resign, and structurally initiated initiatives may motivate teachers”. Applying this recommendation in the context of this thesis instills a priority for school leaders to maintain positive relationships and strive for LtL in order to support teachers and students because “to nurture humaneness in school means first to nurture humaneness in those who staff the schools” (Youngs, 1979, p. 432) and “we can’t connect with students we don’t know” (Wormeli, 2016, p. 13). Interestingly, Sood et al. (2018, p. 158) suggest that school leaders take the challenges of this 21st century as “opportunities to continue to act with greater equality and humanity”. Malta’s Hon. Minister for Education, Evarist Bartolo, made use of Pope Francis’s reflections in one of his messages in the beginning of a scholastic year when outlining that “in a world where it is already difficult for children to find a decent point of reference,” (Bartolo, 2016c) educators including school leaders need to be “able to give meaning to school, studying, and culture, without reducing it all just to passing on practical knowledge” (Bartolo 2016c). Moreover, Stewart (2013, p. 54) recommends that “in the age of the Internet, a better image of school leadership may be of leaders in the middle of a circle rather than at the top of a pyramid” which means that leaders would be close to their teachers and students.

In Malta, school leaders who bring positive changes in their schools are immediately promoted to various posts such as College Principals or Directors within the Educational Department. These leave a huge emptiness in headship positions as other leaders are then selected to continue on their work and as Hargreaves and Fink (2004, p. 10) found out “leaders who turn around underperforming schools are prematurely transferred or promoted before their improvements have had a chance to stick”. Therefore, it is necessary that assistant heads or teachers who have a passion for leadership be given the appropriate training and handover so that the improvements in particular schools will not

become undone. Moreover, school leaders must not be rotated without any basis as this hinders effective leadership.

It is necessary to mention that this research study was carried out throughout the period when the Maltese Government and the Malta Union of Teachers were discussing a new collective agreement which was signed in December 2017 and also led to a new union for educators being set up amid disagreements over this new collective agreement (Carabott, 2018). In the next section, recommendations for policy and practice in Malta, are given.

7.4 Recommendations for policy and practice

In the light of the findings and conclusions from this thesis, the following recommendations for policy and practice in Malta are being made:

HoSs need to be more determined about their presence in schools. Class visits and being visible in school corridors will also help to maintain positive relationships with teachers and students.

Introducing middle managers to handle timetabling, administrative duties, and maintenance works will be of benefit to HoSs in order to maintain their main focus on the teaching and learning.

Whilst acknowledging that HoSs have a personal life too, the possibility of having certain college meetings or national level meetings in the afternoons/evenings/weekends is to be explored.

Offering school leaders professional development and sessions in relation to understanding the self and emotional intelligence would enhance HoSs' knowledge and their competence in order to maintain school leadership through Leadership that Loves in our schools in Malta and Gozo.

Professional Development sessions for school staff need to be carefully chosen. Addressing the real needs of the teaching staff is necessary whilst tackling positive relationships through team building events would further help in enhancing a sense of community.

More effective communication between HoSs and teachers in secondary schools is urgently needed. Meanwhile, effective means for communication with parents, such as through an official email system or an online platform, is to be explored on a national level besides the use of Facebook.

Whilst recognising the importance of online communication, one-to-one conversations between HoSs and teachers or students are to be encouraged, as both teachers and students expressed.

HoSs need to trust their SLT more when distributing their leadership whilst also involving further the HODs in school leadership tasks.

Whilst HoSs should strive to know each and every student and member of staff by name and personal interests, it would be ideal that each member of staff would mentor a small group of students, taking a personal interest in them, and referring them to guidance and/or counselling services if and when necessary.

Striving for a culture where every learner and person matters is needed. An educational media campaign focusing on the importance of appreciating one another could enhance positive relationships in schools.

Having small schools, including at secondary level, is the recipe for maintaining school communities where, ideally, HoSs would know all the teachers and staff personally and in which positive relationships are effectively built and maintained.

Education Directors need to support HoSs all the time whilst HoSs should be offered assistance when dealing with the unprofessionalism of teachers.

Whilst students reported that they felt safe in schools, security should be maximised in all schools, with security personnel in school gates ensuring health and safety.

Decisions taken by HoSs in the best interests of students and staff should be respected by Education Directors and not reverted by educational authorities after complaints by parents. Moreover, Education Directors should intervene immediately after reports by HoSs, thus not only after listening to complaints by parents.

The policy that a change in the school of the individual is prerequisite when a change in grade from teacher to assistant head or from assistant head to head needs to be considered as there might be situations where follow-up and handover would work better if some individuals still remain in the same school.

Education Directors should consider having a policy in place for migrant learners. Whilst schools are already doing their utmost with regards to migrant learners, possibilities of opting for core programmes and/or different language programmes should be offered on a national level.

Noting that the ongoing major changes in Malta's educational system are affecting the motivation of HoSs and teachers, it is about time that things are done professionally. Keeping HoSs and teachers in the dark about the coming changes also shows a lack of respect towards all those in the teaching profession.

The number of Director Generals increased from one to four in a decade whilst the number of EOs and support teachers also increased significantly, contradicting the efforts to decentralise.

Reforming The Education Act - Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta is necessary in order for this act to reflect the present changes and challenges in the local context whilst restoring respect towards the teaching profession.

7.5 Contribution to Knowledge

This section highlights the contribution to knowledge of this thesis according to the three criteria set by the Research Excellence Framework (REF, 2014; REF, 2018): originality, significance, and rigour, as clearly stated that 4* research should be of “quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour” (REF, 2014, p. 60). Thus, the contribution to knowledge of this thesis can be considered through these three criteria, each one being discussed in the sub-sections below.

7.5.1 Originality.

Originality is defined by REF (2018, p. 42) “as the extent to which the output makes an important and innovative contribution to understanding and knowledge in the field”. Existing literature acknowledges the importance of school leadership and that leadership is only second to classroom teaching. Whilst the literature highlights positive relationships as a necessary characteristic of effective school leaders, there appears to be a gap in knowledge regarding the comprehensive process of how positive relationships of school leaders can enhance school leadership. This thesis has investigated this process in depth and the three subsidiary research questions (discussed in detail in Chapters 4, 5, and 6) answered the overarching research question: ‘How can positive relationships between the school leader, teachers, and students enhance school leadership?’

Whilst this thesis reports how positive relationships of school leaders can enhance school leadership, which is quite understudied in an international context, it surely is an area of research neglected on a local context. Despite the various studies in educational leadership, usually by local academics or staff within the educational setting in Malta in their post graduate studies, positive relationships were not addressed from a leadership context. Studying a cohort of individuals that make up one whole college – by interviewing school leaders, administering a questionnaire to all the school staff and interviewing a sample of students through

focus groups, and thus adopting the twists and turns of a case-study, this methodology is also an original contribution to knowledge.

Whilst Bryant (2010) and Church (2010) are founders of ‘love leadership’ in business and political contexts, and Page (2011) coined the term ‘professional love’ with regard to early years’ education settings, the concept of ‘Leadership that Loves’ (LtL) emerged in this thesis and is urgently needed in this twenty-first Century. I suggest that this is an important and innovative original contribution to understanding and knowledge in the field of educational leadership as the REF (2018) contends.

7.5.2 Significance.

Defined as “the extent to which the work has influenced, or has the capacity to influence, knowledge and scholarly thought, or the development and understanding of policy and/or practice,” (REF, 2018, p. 43) the significance of this study’s main contribution to knowledge is highlighted through the summary of findings of the three subsidiary research questions, through the eight emerging themes in Section 7.2 of this final chapter of the thesis. Figure 7.1, which highlights the themes discussed in this research in a cyclical model, is also a contribution to knowledge, highlighting that each theme is highly interrelated and interdependent and that, through the positive relationships of school leaders with staff and students, LtL can be achieved, thus effective leadership is developed in our schools.

Through this case-study of St David’s College, a contribution to knowledge on a national context is made as in the light of the findings and conclusions from this thesis, recommendations for policy and practice are given in Section 7.4 of this concluding chapter. In the current local context, where the educational sector is in crisis despite the fact that new schools have been built, other schools have been refurbishment, the latest technology has been enforced, and a lot of reforms have been implemented, it was necessary to embark on such a research study in order to encourage school leaders to support teachers and students through positive

relationships. This thesis contributes significant knowledge and conclusions about the day-to-day running of the schools, thus also taking into account Hon. Minister Evarist Bartolo's (2016b) aim to make "education evolve around humanity especially in this world which is always changing". Influencing knowledge through the development of policy and practice clearly show that the definition of significance by the REF (2018) holds for this study. The study, I suggest is of national significance and has the potential to offer further insights to international research.



Figure 7.1 - Conceptual Framework - Linking Positive Relationships to Leadership that Loves

7.5.3 Rigour.

Rigour is "the extent to which the work demonstrates intellectual coherence and integrity, and adopts robust and appropriate concepts, analyses, theories and methodologies" (REF, 2018, p. 43). This seventh and final chapter of this thesis

highlighting the summary of findings, the way forward for school leadership in Malta together with recommendations for policy and practice, clearly outlines that the purpose of this thesis has been achieved, that of answering the main research question of how positive relationships of school leaders can enhance school leadership through the three subsidiary research questions. The fact of choosing a sensible research question when in this day and age, we are living in an environment of migration, broken families, injustices, acts of terrorism, and other salient issues, also makes a rigorous contribution to knowledge together with the concept of ‘Leadership that Loves’ (LtL) highlighted in this thesis.

Choosing the appropriate methods and methodology “is a critical early decision” (Brooks and Normore, 2015, p. 799) in order to produce a contribution to knowledge which is rigorous and thus the findings and conclusions of this thesis will be trusted. Chapter 3 in this thesis justifies each methodological decision made in order to collect and analyse rich and robust data that answer the main research question through the three subsidiary research questions. Debating the strategy adopted in this thesis that of a case-study approach through the four stages of this research in the methodology chapter ensured rigorously in such thesis. Moreover adopting the use of the appropriate research methods after the piloting of such research instruments also helped to ensure the trustworthiness and authenticity of such a research which surely led to a rigorous contribution in the field of educational leadership.

Contributing knowledge which is rigorously developed is also demonstrated by the findings and discussion chapters (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) as every strong statement made is justified convincingly by triangulating findings from different methods of data collection and also through debating existing literature. Presenting Chapters 4, 5, and 6 according to the eight emerging themes also helped to ensure rigorously by presenting the findings in a clear and sufficient manner. Therefore, choosing a sensible research question and answering it through robust and appropriate methods and methodology, concepts and analyses ensured a rigorous contribution to knowledge as emphasised by the REF (2018).

Diligent application of methodological and ethical measures contributed to the rigour of the research process as reported in this thesis.

To conclude: by addressing a gap in knowledge, that of positive relationships of school leaders with teachers and students, is an original contribution to knowledge, with the concept of LtL that relate the significance of such study in this 21st century. This thesis has achieved that aim, whilst ensuring rigour through the most appropriate methods, concepts and thorough analysis, thus demonstrating the potential for changes in practice and policy, also in the Maltese context.

7.6 Limitations of the thesis

The aim of this thesis was achieved as the main research question was answered through the three subsidiary ones; however, there were a number of limitations encountered in this research that will be discussed in this section. Whilst this thesis outlined that enhancing positive relationships of school leaders is a critical strategy for effective leadership, it was noted from the start that this research was not going to quantify whether or not positive relationships of school leaders would lead to better student results. Moreover, this research was carried out within one scholastic year. It was not possible due to time constraints to split this research onto two or more scholastic years in order to note the similarities and contrasts between different school leaders and teaching staff within the same school. Having said that, there were teachers and students who still compared the HoSs in schools since they were personally affected by a change in the HoS or since teaching staff or students noted differences in positive relationships themselves when they changed their workplace/school.

Relationships between HoSs and parents were not sought from the viewpoint of parents themselves as this was not feasible due to time constraints. The parents' viewpoints could have provided further insights into positive relationships between HoSs and parents, so this may be considered a limitation of this research.

Analysing one college made up of a number of primary and secondary schools with the particular geographical positions helped to have a real context of a college; however, it is to be noted that this study could have been focused on either the primary or the secondary sector in order to be even more focused. Having said that, what is being proposed in this case study of St David's College still has important messages to offer the other nine colleges in the Maltese Islands.

7.7 Recommendations for Further Research

Further research could consider extending this research study beyond the Maltese state schools to Church and Independent schools in order to compare and contrast findings of this research study in the context of all the Maltese schools and their educational leaders. Moreover, since trust emerged as one of the themes analysed in this research study, further research on school leadership and trust could be conducted. Positive relationships between school leaders and parents could also be sought, including the viewpoint of the parents themselves as it would be interesting to find out how positive relationships between school leaders and parents can enhance school leadership and thus improve the teaching and learning in schools. Analysing positive relationships and school leadership over a number of scholastic years would add to a deeper exploration of positive relationships of school leaders with teachers and students. Whilst generalizability cannot be achieved if research is conducted in just one school, researching one school where a school leader can self-reflect daily on positive relationships with the teaching staff, students and parents, would be an interesting follow-up to this research study. Moreover, students' results can also be compared according to the positive relationships and school leadership.

7.8 Conclusion

This study has investigated how positive relationships between school leaders and teachers and students can enhance school leadership. The findings offer practical insights for educational leaders in Malta in order to enhance school leadership

through positive relationships. Noting that “schools are about service to students”, (Crippen, 2012, p. 193) making school leadership more human through the concept of Leadership that Loves developed in this thesis is necessary. In addition, Hon. Minister for Education Evarist Bartolo (2016b) declares that “education is a journey that needs to keep updated according to the realities of life”. It is necessary to remember that through the journey, “turbulence may be encountered” and, as reminded in the flight safety demonstration before takeoff, “in the case of oxygen failure, we are to put our own oxygen mask first before helping others”. However, Sinek’s (2010) advice to school leaders is: “Don’t quit. Never give up trying to build the world you can see, even if others can’t see it. Listen to your drum and your drum only. It’s the one that makes the sweetest sound”. Some three decades ago, DuFour and Eaker (1998, p. 281) outlined that “there is a basic human desire to live a life of meaning, to serve a higher purpose, to make a difference in this world” and “real leadership doesn’t require a choice between doing your job and honoring the human beings you serve: you can do both” (Robyn R. Jackson). I suggest this still holds true thirty years later. As Bezzina and Calleja (2017) highlight, “honour is not brought about by a leadership title, but rather by a style of leadership characterised by idealism, intuition, and integrity”. Finally, as Martin Luther King says: “we need leaders not in love with money but in love with justice. Not in love with publicity but in love with humanity”, as “when the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace” (Jimi Hendrix).

Whilst the context of this study is focused on one whole college—St David’s College—I am hopeful that the findings from this research study, notwithstanding their limitations, may provide a better understanding of how positive relationships of school leaders can enhance school leadership. I sincerely hope that this research study would serve as an inspiration for prospective educational leaders and all school leaders, and as a basis for policymakers in the field of educational leadership in Malta and beyond.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

Research Information Sheet for Heads of School and Teachers

1st February, 2017

Participation Information Sheet

Research by: David Debono - PhD Candidate - The University of Sheffield.

▪ **Research Project Title:**

Enhancing relationships of school leaders with teachers and students for effective leadership.

▪ **Invitation Paragraph:**

I'm David Debono, mathematics teacher in a state secondary school and am currently reading a PhD in Education at the University of Sheffield. I am sending this information sheet as I appreciate your help by participating in my research so that I can analyse whether or not positive relationships of heads of schools with teachers, students and parents can lead to better leadership in our state schools. All details about my research are explained in this information sheet.

▪ **What are the aims of this research?**

The main aim is to analyse whether or not positive relationships of heads of schools with teachers, students and parents can lead to better leadership in our schools. Through semi-structured interviews with Heads of Schools, questionnaires with the teaching staff and through focus groups with students, any changes that might be necessary to improve relationships in order to enhance school leadership will be identified.

▪ **Why have I been chosen?**

You were chosen because you work in one of the schools that forms part of the college under research.

▪ **Do I have to take part?**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you opt to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. However you can decide to withdraw from participating at any time without the need to give any reason.

▪ **What do I have to do?**

If you are the Head of School you will be invited for an interview whilst if you are a teacher or a member of the school SLT you will be asked to fill a questionnaire which would not take longer than ten minutes. Moreover some teachers and SLT members are invited to take part in an interview too.

▪ **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There are no disadvantages in taking part. All semi-structured interviews, focus groups and questionnaires will be anonymous and only codes will be used when transcribing. All your responses will remain confidential. As this research will be carried out in one of the ten colleges in Malta, the name of the college will

not be disclosed and no particular information about each individual school or its particular leader can be given, except that of distinguishing schools between primary and secondary. Moreover audio recordings and questionnaires will be destroyed after the project is disseminated.

▪ **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

There are no immediate benefits for those taking part in this research. However this research is necessary to illustrate the reality of leadership in state schools in Malta. It is only with truthful and responsible outcomes that a valid contribution to knowledge can be made in the field of educational leadership.

▪ **What happens if this research study stops earlier than expected?**

This should not be the case but in the case of such circumstance, participants will be informed through the College Principal and Heads of School.

▪ **What if something goes wrong?**

Should you have any problems I can be contacted by email on ddebono1@sheffield.ac.uk. If you are not satisfied with the response you can contact my tutors Professor Cathy Nutbrown on c.e.nutbrown@sheffield.ac.uk and Professor Peter Clough on p.clough@sheffield.ac.uk.

▪ **Will my taking part in this research be kept confidential?**

Confidentiality is assured as all participants in this research will remain anonymous and all data will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any part of the thesis.

▪ **What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The findings of this research will be used for the PhD thesis which I will be handing to the University of Sheffield. Moreover the findings will then be published in a peer-reviewed journal.

▪ **Who is organising and funding this research?**

This research is partly financed by the Endeavours Scholarships Scheme of the Directorate for Programme Implementation within the Ministry for Education and Employment, Malta.

▪ **Who has ethically reviewed the research?**

After passing the confirmation review viva voce held on May 5th, 2016, this research was ethically approved by the ethics committee within the School of Education of the Faculty of Social Sciences at The University of Sheffield. The chair of the School of Education Ethics committee is Dr David Hyatt and can be contacted by e-mail on d.hyatt@sheffield.ac.uk. Moreover necessary research permissions were obtained from the Research and Development Department within the Ministry for Education and Employment, Malta.

▪ **Contact for Further Information**

I can be contacted by email on ddebono1@sheffield.ac.uk. Many thanks for taking the time to read this information sheet. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Appendix 2:

Consent Form for Heads of School

Consent Form for Heads of School

Research by: David Debono - PhD Candidate - The University of Sheffield.

▪ **Research Project Title:**

Enhancing relationships of school leaders with teachers and students for effective leadership.

▪ **Invitation Paragraph:**

Heads of School are being invited to participate in a 1-1 semi-structured interview.

Kindly
initial
box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participants Information Sheet dated 1st February, 2017 and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.
3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before data will be analysed. I give permission to the researcher to have access to my anonymised responses.
4. I agree that the 1-1 interview will be audio-recorded and this audio that will be used only for transcript purposes by the researcher will be kept by the researcher till the project is disseminated.
5. I agree to take part in this research project.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Name of Researcher: David Debono

Signature of Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3:

Consent Form (Questionnaires) for SLT members and Teachers

Consent Form for SLT members and Teachers (Questionnaires)

Research by: David Debono - PhD Candidate - The University of Sheffield.

▪ **Research Project Title:**

Enhancing relationships of school leaders with teachers and students for effective leadership.

▪ **Invitation Paragraph:**

Members of the school Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and teachers are being invited to participate in this research by filling the questionnaire.

Kindly
initial
box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participants Information Sheet dated 1st February, 2017 and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.
3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before data will be analysed. I give permission to the researcher to have access to my anonymised responses.
4. I agree to take part in this research project and that the questionnaire will be kept by the researcher till the project is disseminated.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Name of Researcher: David Debono

Signature of Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 4:

Consent Form (Interviews) for SLT members and Teachers

Consent Form for SLT members and Teachers (Interviews)

Research by: David Debono - PhD Candidate - The University of Sheffield.

▪ **Research Project Title:**

Enhancing relationships of school leaders with teachers and students for effective leadership.

▪ **Invitation Paragraph:**

Members of the school Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and teachers are being invited to participate in a 1-1 semi-structured interview.

Kindly
initial
box

- 1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participants Information Sheet dated 1st February, 2017 and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.
- 3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before data will be analysed. I give permission to the researcher to have access to my anonymised responses.
- 4. I agree that the 1-1 interview will be audio-recorded and this audio that will be used only for transcript purposes by the researcher will be kept by the researcher till the project is disseminated.
- 5. I agree to take part in this research project.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Name of Researcher: David Debono

Signature of Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 5:

Semi-Structured Interviews with Heads of School

Interview Schedule

Personal Details:

- (a) Gender of Head of School: Male/Female
- (b) Age of Head of School: _____
- (c) Number of years as Head of School in the present school: _____
- (d) Number of years as Head of School: _____

Part 1: Interview Questions – Leadership and Relationships

- (a) How do you define your job as a Head of School?
- (a) Kif tiddekrivi x-xogħol tiegħek bħala kap tal-iskola?
- (b) What are the challenges of your job?
- (b) Liema sfidi jkollok taffaċċja fix-xogħol tiegħek?
- (c) What hinders you from doing a better job?
- (c) Xi jżommok lura milli twettaq xogħolok aħjar?
- (d) Do you believe that through better relationships can lead to effective results?
- (d) Temmen li b'relazzjonijiet tajba fl-iskola jista' jkun hemm aktar riżultati?
- (e) What can you do in order to have better relationships in your school?
- (e) X'taħseb li tista' tagħmel biex ikollok relazzjonijiet aħjar fl-iskola tiegħek?
- (f) What is hindering you from building better relationships?
- (f) X'qed ifixxklek milli tibni relazzjonijiet aħjar?
- (g) What can be changed to sustain relationships in the school?
- (g) X'taħseb li jista' jinbidel biex jissahħu r-relazzjonijiet fl-iskola?
- (h) What kind of relationships do you have with your stakeholders?
- (h) X'tip ta' relazzjonijiet bnejt mal-persuni f'din l-iskola?
- (i) As Head of School, what do persons mean for you?
- (i) Bħala kap tal-iskola, il-persuni xi jfissru għalik?
- (j) Do you trust each individual in the school?
- (j) Tafda lil kull individwu fl-iskola?

Part 2: Interview Questions – Members of the SLT.

-
- (a) How are your relationships with the SLT?
 (a) X'relazzjoni għandek mal-membri tal-SLT?
- (b) Do SLT members communicate face-to-face - 1-1, by e-mail or phone you?
 (b) Kif jikkomunikaw miegħek? Wiċċ imb'wiċċ, b'imejl jew b'xi telefonata?
- (c) How frequent do you communicate with the SLT?
 (c) Kemm hija frekwenti din il-komunikazzjoni?
- (d) Do SLT members talk about school concerns with you?
 (d) Il-membri tas-SLT juru t-tħassib tagħhom dwar xi ċirkustanzi li jinqalgħu fl-iskola?
- (e) Do SLT members discuss personal problems with you?
 (e) Ġieli jiddiskutu miegħek il-problemi personali tagħhom?
- (f) What is hindering the SLT from doing a better job?
 (f) X'qed iżomm lura lil SLT milli jagħmel xogħol aħjar?
- (g) Do you think that through positive relationships with the SLT, school leadership can be more enhanced?
 (g) Taħseb li b'relazzjonijiet tajba mas-SLT, it-tmexxija tal-iskola tista' tkun aktar effettiva?

Part 3: Interview Questions – Teaching Staff

- (a) How do you define your relationships with your staff?
 (a) Kif tiddefinixxi r-relazzjoni tiegħek mal-istaff?
- (b) How do you communicate with your staff? Do you prefer 1-1?
 (b) Kif tikkomunika mal-istaff? Tippreferi tikkomunika magħhom 1-1?
- (c) Do you initiate these 1-1 conversations or teachers come up to talk to you?
 (c) Inti tibdilhom dawn it-tip ta' konverżazzjonijiet? Jew ikunu l-għalliema li minn jeddhom jieħdu l-opportunità sabiex jiġu jkellmuk?
- (d) Do teachers talk on personal issues with you?
 (d) L-għalliema jiddiskutu miegħek affarijiet personali?
- (e) Do you visit and give feedback regularly to teachers?
 (e) Tmur b'mod regolari tara lill-għalliema jgħallmu sabiex imbagħad tkun tista' ttihom il-fidbek tiegħek?
- (f) Do you trust your teachers?
 (f) Inti tafdahom lill-għalliema?

-
- (g) What about the Professional Learning Community developing in your school?
- (g) X'taħseb dwar il-Professional Learning Community tal-iskola li inti tmexxi?
- (h) Do you find cooperation from teachers?
- (h) Issib koperazzjoni mill-għalliema?
- (i) Do you discuss issues going on with teachers?
- (i) Tiddiskuti mal-għalliema dawk iċ-ċirkustanzi li jkunu għaddejjin fl-iskola?
- (j) Are social events between staff carried out in your school?
- (j) Isiru xi attivitajiet soċjali bejn l-għalliema fl-iskola tiegħek?
- (k) What do you think is hindering teachers from doing a better job?
- (k) X'taħseb li huma dawk l-affarijiet li qed iżommu lill-għalliema milli jwettqu x-xogħol tagħhom aħjar?
- (l) Do you think that better relationships with teachers enhance school leadership?
- (l) Taħseb li relazzjonijiet aħjar mal-għalliema jistgħu iwasslu għal tmexxija aħjar fl-iskola?
- (m) How do you define the relationships of teachers and the school SLT?
- (m) Kif tiddefinixxi r-relazzjonijiet bejn l-għalliema u l-SMT f'din l-iskola?
- (n) Do you think that through trust in each other, school practice is enhanced?
- (n) Taħseb li b'fiduċja iktar f' xulxin nistgħu ntejbu l-iskejjel tagħna?

Part 4: Interview Questions – Students

- (a) How do you show your commitment to teaching and learning, thus enabling each child to get his/her best together with a caring atmosphere?
- (a) Kif turi r-rabta u l-impenn tiegħek għat-tagħlim tal-istudenti?
- (b) How do you think that you are influencing students' learning?
- (b) Kif taħseb li qed tinfluenza t-tagħlim tal-istudenti?
- (c) What have you done so that students feel better in the school?
- (c) X'għamilt b'mod konkret biex l-istudenti jħossuhom aħjar fl-iskola?
- (d) What have you done so that students' learning outcomes are achieved?
- (d) X'għamilt b'mod konkret biex it-tagħlim tal-istudenti jitjieb? (Student Learning Outcomes)
- (e) Are you available for students?

-
- (e) Kemm inti miftuħ għall-istudenti?
 - (f) Do students come to your office?
 - (f) L-istudenti jiġu fl-uffiċċju tiegħek?
 - (g) How do you define your relationships with students?
 - (g) X'inhil r-relazzjoni tiegħek mal-istudenti?
 - (h) Do you know all the students in your school?
 - (h) Taf lill-istudenti kollha tal-iskola tiegħek?
 - (i) Do you send for particular students? What's the reasons and on what basis? Misbehaviour?
 - (i) Ġieli tibgħat għal xi student partikolari? Għal liema raġunijiet u fuq liema bażi? Minħabba problema ta' mġiba?
 - (j) How often does each student have a one-to-one conversation with you?
 - (j) Kemm hija ta' spiss li student ikollu konverżazzjoni wiċċ imb wiċċ miegħek?
 - (k) Do students talk on personal issues?
 - (k) L-istudenti jkellmuk fuq affarijiet personali?

Part 5: Interview Questions – Parents/Guardians

- (a) How is communication with parents done?
- (a) Kif issir il-komunikazzjoni mal-ġenituri?
- (b) How do you define your relationship with parents?
- (b) Kif tiddefinixxi r-relazzjoni tiegħek mal-ġenituri?
- (c) Do parents talk on personal issues with you?
- (c) Il-ġenituri jkellmuk fuq l-affarijiet personali?
- (d) Do parents help with organising activities for different classes?
- (d) Il-ġenituri jagħtu s-sehem tagħhom sabiex jiġu organizzati attivitajiet għal klassijiet differenti?
- (e) Do parents participate in class/school activities?
- (e) Il-ġenituri jipparteċipaw fl-attivitajiet tal-klassi jew tal-iskola?
- (f) Do you ask for parents help when there are problems with particular children?
- (f) Issaqsi lill-ġenituri għall-għajnuna tagħhom meta jinqalgħu problemi li jikkonċernaw studenti partikolari?
- (g) Do you initiate contact with parents or parents initiate contact with you?

-
- (g) Inti tibda l-kuntatt mal-ġenituri jew huma jieħdu l-inizjattiva sabiex jikkuntattjawk?
- (h) Do you encourage parental involvement in your school?
- (h) Tinkuraġġixxi l-involvement tal-ġenituri fl-iskola?
- (i) Are parents allowed to come to school at any time and they may request to talk to you?
- (i) Il-ġenituri jithallew jiġu l-iskola fil-ħin li jixtiequ huma u jithallew isaqsu sabiex ikellmuk?
- (j) Do you communicate with parents via circulars/letters or email?
- (j) Tikkomunika mal-ġenituri permezz ta' ċirkularijiet, ittri jew imejls?

Part 6: Interview Questions – Concluding Remarks

- (a) Do you believe in leadership that loves?
- (a) Temmen fi tmexxija b'imħabba?
- (b) Is it possible to love everyone: teachers/students/parents?
- (b) Hu possibli li tħobb lill-kulħadd?
- (c) What about cases when you had to take decisions that teachers, students or parents disliked? How have they felt? And you?
- (c) Kellek xi każi fejn kellek tieħu deċiżjonijiet li forsi m'għoġbux lill-għalliema, studenti jew ġenituri? Kif ħassewhom u ħassejtek?
- (d) How do you feel if members of staff report any case to the College Principal or the MUT? Do you still love them?
- (d) Kif tħossok jekk membri tal-istaff jirrappurtaw xi każ lill-prinċipal jew lill-MUT? Xorta tista' tħobbhom?
- (e) Is it easy working with parents/guardians that can report even directly to the Minister for Education?
- (e) Kemm hu faċċli taħdem ma' ġenituri/gwardjani li jirrappurtaw forsi b'mod dirett lill-Ministru?
- (f) How do you handle cases of teacher that feel angry about particular cases?
- (f) Kif teħodhom għalliema li jkunu rrabjati fuq xi każ partikolari?

- END OF SCHEDULE -

Appendix 6:

Questionnaire for SLT members and Teachers

Questionnaire for School Staff

I am David Debono and am currently reading a PhD at the School of Education within The University of Sheffield. My area of research is enhancing professional relationships of school leaders with teachers and students for effective leadership. The completion of this questionnaire will be of great help to my research. Respondents will remain anonymous and no names of schools and colleges will be disclosed. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time!

Answer by ticking the box that best suits your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers!

Section 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Gender: Male Female

1.2 Age: 21-30 31-40 41-50 51+

1.3 Grade: Asst Head Head of Dept Teacher

1.4 Sector: Primary Secondary

1.5 Have you got any dependents or children at home to take care of? Yes No

1.6 Do you have a part-time job besides working in a school? Yes No

1.7 How frequently have you been stressed during this scholastic year?
 Very Frequently Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

1.8 Have you suffered from any of the following conditions throughout this scholastic year?
 Workload Stress Low Self Esteem
 Depression Anxiety
 Anger Other - Please specify: _____

1.9 Which of the following stresses you? [You can tick more than one]
 The never-ending syllabus Teaching students
 Work Overload Students do not accept teachers' authority
 Inadequate salary Equipment in classrooms not working
 Discipline and control Poor working relationships with colleagues
 Pressure from Head of School Pressure from parents/guardians

Section 2: MYSELF AND THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

2.1 I have a good working relationship with my Head of School.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2.2 I trust my Head of School.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2.3 I have regular conversations with the Head of School.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2.4 The Head of School communicates with me and other teaching staff effectively.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2.5 I feel comfortable talking to the Head of School.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2.6 I prefer talking to the Head of School in person rather than sending an email.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2.7 The Head of School accepts feedback from us staff.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2.8 The Head of School inspires teachers to perform.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2.9 When I meet the Head of School, s/he greets me with a smile.
 Very Frequently Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

2.10 The Head of School wants what's best for me.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2.11 The Head of School wants what's best for the students and the staff.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2.12 When I come across a problem, I feel that the Head of School sympathises with me.
 Very Frequently Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

2.13 Any other comment regarding your working relationship with the Head of School:

Section 3: MYSELF AND THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

3.1 I feel that I am appreciated at my workplace [school].
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3.2 I enjoy good relationships with most of my colleagues.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3.3 I enjoy a good relationship with the school leader.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3.4 There are good relationships between the members of the SLT in my school.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3.5 There are good relationships between the teachers and the SLT in my school.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3.6 I enjoy a good rapport with the students.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3.7 I have good working relationships with parents/guardians.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3.8 I feel proud of my school.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3.9 I feel motivated at my school.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3.10 At school, there is a special person/friend with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3.11 At school, colleagues share resources together.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3.12 I can count on my colleagues at school when something goes wrong.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3.13 Our school encourages parental involvement.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3.14 I believe that in our school there is a sense of community.
 Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3.15 Any other comment/s regarding leadership at your school. Is there anything you would like to change so that the school will run smoother?

Thank You!

Appendix 7:

Semi-Structured Interviews with SLT members and Teachers

Interview Schedule

Personal Details:

- (a) Gender of SLT member/teacher: Male/Female
- (b) Age of SLT member/teacher: _____
- (c) Role: SLT/Teacher
- (d) Number of years at present school: _____
- (e) Number of years since last appointment: _____
- (f) Number of years as teacher: _____

Interview Questions:

- (a) How do you define your job?
- (a) Kif tiddefinixxi x-xogħol tiegħek?
- (b) Are you happy at school?
- (b) Tinsab kuntent/a fl-iskola tiegħek?
- (c) What makes you happy (or not)?
- (c) X'jagħmlek/ ma jagħmlekx kuntent/a?
- (d) What are the challenges of your job?
- (d) X'inhuma l-isfidi tax-xogħol tiegħek?
- (e) Do you trust each individual in the school?
- (e) Tafda lil kull persuna fl-iskola tiegħek?
- (f) How are your relationships with your Head of School?
- (f) Xi tgħidli dwar ir-relazzjoni tiegħek mal-Kap tal-Iskola?
- (g) And your SLT? Teachers? Other staff?
- (g) U mas-SLT? L-għalliema u staff ieħor?
- (h) Do you have regular 1-1 conversations with the Head of School?
- (h) Ikollok konverżazzjonijiet regolari 1-1 mal-Kap tal-Iskola?
- (i) How frequent do you communicate with your Head of School?
- (i) Kemm hi frekwenti l-komunikazzjoni tiegħek mal-Kap tal-Iskola?
- (j) Do SLT members talk about school concerns with you?
- (j) Membri tas-SLT jiddiskutu problemi tal-iskola miegħek?

-
- (k) Do you discuss issues going on with teachers?
- (k) Tiddiskuti kwistjonijiet li jkunu għaddejja fl-iskola ma' għalliema oħra?
- (l) Are social events between staff carried out in your school?
- (l) Isiru attivitajiet soċjali għall-istaff tal-iskola tiegħek?
- (m) What about the Professional Learning Community developing in your school?
- (m) Xi tgħidli dwar il-Professional Learning Community tal-iskola tiegħek?
- (n) What do you think is hindering teachers from doing a better job?
- (n) X'taħseb li qed ixekkel lill-għalliema milli jagħmlu xogħolhom aħjar?
- (o) Do you talk to a friend or colleague at school on personal issues?
- (o) Titkellem ma' xi ħabib jew kollega fl-iskola tiegħek dwar problemi personali?
- (p) How do you define your relationships with students?
- (p) Kif tiddefinixxi r-relazzjonijiet tiegħek mal-istudenti?
- (q) How often does each student have a one-to-one conversation with you?
- (q) Kemm hu frekwenti li student ikollu konversazzjoni 1-1 miegħek?
- (r) Do students talk on personal issues?
- (r) L-istudenti jitkellmu miegħek dwar kwistjonijiet personali?
- (s) How is communication with parents done?
- (s) Kif issir il-komunikazzjoni mal-ġenituri?
- (t) How do you define your relationship with parents?
- (t) Kif tiddefinixxi r-relazzjonijiet tiegħek mal-ġenituri?
- (u) Do parents talk on personal issues with you?
- (u) Il-ġenituri jitkellmu dwar kwistjonijiet personali miegħek?
- (v) Do parents participate in class/school activities?
- (v) Il-ġenituri jipparteċipaw f'attivitajiet tal-klassi jew tal-iskola?
- (w) Do you ask for parents help when there are problems with particular children?
- (w) Titlob l-għajnuna tal-ġenituri meta jkollok problemi ma' student partikolari?
- (x) Do you initiate contact with parents or you contact the SLT? Do you communicate with parents via email?
- (x) Huwa inti li tagħmel kuntatt mal-ġenituri jew titlob l-għajnuna tas-SLT? Tikkomunika ma' ġenituri permezz tal-e-mail?
-

- (y) Do you believe that through positive relationships, school leadership is enhanced?
- (y) Taħseb li b'relazzjonijiet pożittivi jista' jkun hemm tmexxija effettiva fl-iskola?

- END OF SCHEDULE -

Appendix 8:

Research Information Sheet for Students

1st March, 2017

Participation Information Sheet (Students)

Research by: David Debono - PhD Candidate - The University of Sheffield.

**Dear Student,
Għażiż Student,**



I'm David Debono, mathematics teacher in a state secondary school and am currently reading a PhD in Education at the University of Sheffield. I am sending this information sheet as I appreciate your help by participating in my research so that I can analyse whether or not positive relationships of heads of schools with teachers and students can lead to better leadership in our state schools. All details about the research are explained in this information sheet.

Jiena David Debono, għalliem tal-matematika fi skola sekondarja tal-istat u bħalissa għaddej bir-riċerka fil-livell ta' PhD mal-Università ta' Sheffield. Qiegħed nibgħat din il-karta bl-informazzjoni dwar ir-riċerka għax napprezza l-għajnuna tiegħek billi tipparteċipa f'dan l-istħarriġ sabiex inkun nista' nanalizza jekk hux minnu li r-relazzjonijiet pożittivi tal-kapijiet tal-iskejjel mal-għalliema u l-istudenti jwasslux għal aktar tmexxija effettiva. Id-dettalji kollha dwar din ir-riċerka huma spjegati f'din il-karta ta' informazzjoni.

You were chosen because you attend one of the schools that forms part of the college under research. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you opt to take part, you will be asked to sign the consent form, whilst also obtaining your parents/guardians permission to take part. However you can decide to withdraw from participating at any time without the need to give any reason.

Inti ġejt magħżul għax inti student f'waħda mill-iskejjel li jiffurmaw parti mill-kulleġġ li ġie magħżul għal din ir-riċerka. Il-parteeċipazzjoni tiegħek f'din ir-riċerka hija b'mod volontarju. Jekk inti tagħżel li tieħu sehem trid tiffirma l-formola ta' kunsens filwaqt li l-istess formola tkun iffirmata mill-ġenituri/gwardjani. Tista' tagħżel li ma tipparteċipax meta trid u mingħajr il-bżonn li tagħti raġuni.

Students will be asked to take part in a focus-group where they can participate actively in a 20-minute discussion in their own school with the researcher.

L-istudenti se jkunu mitluba biex jieħdu sehem b'mod attiv waqt focus-group t'20 minuta immexxi mir-riċerkatur fl-iskola tagħhom.



There are no disadvantages in taking part. All focus groups will be anonymous and only codes (not students' names) will be used when transcribing. All your responses will remain confidential. As this research will be carried out in one of the ten colleges in Malta, the name of the college or schools will not be disclosed. Moreover audio recordings will be destroyed after the project is disseminated.



Mhemm l-ebda żvantaġġ li tiegħu sehem. L-intervisti tal-istudenti fi gruppi ser ikunu b'mod anonimu u l-ismijiet tal-istudenti mhux se jintużaw. Għalhekk se jintużaw il-kodiċi biex tkun rrispettata l-anonimità. Hekk kif ir-riċerka se ssir biss f'wieħed mill-għaxar kulleġġi madwar Malta u Għawdex, l-isem tal-kulleġġ jew l-ismijiet tal-iskejjel mhux se jingħataw. L-audio recordings li se jsiru f'dawn l-intervisti jiġu mħassra wara li r-riċerka tkun ippublikata.

Permission to conduct such research was given by the Ethics Committee of the School of Education at The University of Sheffield and also by the Research and Development Department within the Ministry for Education and Employment, Malta. The College Principal and your Head of School also gave their permission to conduct such study.

Il-permessi biex din ir-riċerka tkun tista' ssir ingħataw mill-bord tal-etika tal-Iskola tal-Edukazzjoni fl-Università ta' Sheffield kif ukoll mid-Dipartiment tar-Riċerka u l-Iżvilupp fi hdan il-Ministeru għall-Edukazzjoni u x-Xogħol ta' Malta. Il-Prinċipal tal-Kulleġġ tiegħek kif ukoll il-Kap tal-Iskola tiegħek taw ukoll il-permess tagħhom biex dan l-istudju jkun jista' jsir.

Should you have any problems I can be contacted by email on ddebono1@sheffield.ac.uk. If you are not satisfied with the response you can contact my tutors Professor Cathy Nutbrown on c.e.nutbrown@sheffield.ac.uk and Professor Peter Clough on p.clough@sheffield.ac.uk.

F'każ ta' xi diffikultà jew problema tista' tikkuntattjani b'imejl ddebono1@sheffield.ac.uk. Jekk ma tkunx sodisfatt tista' tikkuntattja wkoll lit-tutori tiegħi, il-Professura Cathy Nutbrown fuq c.e.nutbrown@sheffield.ac.uk jew lill-Professur Peter Clough fuq p.clough@sheffield.ac.uk.

Confidentiality is assured as all participants in this research will remain anonymous and all data will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any part of the thesis.

Il-partecipanti kollha li se jieħdu sehem f'din ir-riċerka se jkunu rrispettati bil-kunfidenzjalità u se jibqgħu anonimi. Inti mhux se tkun identifikat bl-ebda mod f'xi parti tat-teżi.

Thanks for your participation!
Grazzi tal-partecipazzjoni tiegħek!



Appendix 9:**Students' Consent Form for Focus Groups by Parents/Guardians****Students' Consent Form (Focus Groups)**

Research by: David Debono - PhD Candidate - The University of Sheffield.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Your child is being requested to participate in a focus group made up of 8-10 participants. Kindly read the participant information sheet dated 1st March, 2017 and please fill in this consent form if you allow your son/daughter to participate in such focus group. Thanks for your collaboration.

Għeżież Ġenituri/Gwardjani

It-tifel/tifla tiegħek gie/t magħżul/a biex j/tipparteċipa waqt focus group magħmul minn 8-10 parteċipanti. Jekk jogħġbok aqra l-karta ta' informazzjoni iddatata l-1 ta' Marzu, 2017 u imla din il-formola ta' kunsens jekk tixtieq li t-tifel/tifla tiegħek tipparteċipa f'dan il-focus group. Grazi tal-koperazzjoni tiegħek.

Kindly tick/Agħmel sinjal

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participants Information Sheet dated 1st March, 2017 and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

Nikkonferma li qrajt u fhimt il-karta bl-informazzjoni għall-parteċipanti iddatata l-1 ta' Marzu, 2017 u anke kelli ċ-ċans li nsaqsi l-mistoqsijiet.

2. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that s/he is free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

Nifhem li l-parteċipazzjoni tat-tifel/tifla tiegħi f'din ir-riċerka hija b'mod volontarju u j/tista' j/twaqqaf il-parteċipazzjoni tiegħu/tagħha meta j/trid u mingħajr il-bżonn li j/tagħti raġuni.

3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before data will be analysed. I give permission to the researcher to have access to my anonymised responses.

Jiena nifhem li r-risposti tat-tifel/tifla tiegħi se jibqgħu anonimi. Nagħti permess lir-riċerkatur li jkollu aċċess għal dawn ir-risposti.

4. I agree that the focus group interview will be audio-recorded and will be used only for transcript purposes by the researcher. I agree that researcher will keep the audio-recordings till the project is disseminated.

Jiena naqbel li l-intervista tal-focus group tiġi rrekordjata u użata u miżmuma biss mir-riċerkatur għal dan l-istudju. Naqbel li l-audio-recordings jiġu mħassra biss wara li r-riċerka tkun ippublikata.

5. I agree that my child takes part in this research project.

Jiena naqbel li t-tifel/tifla tiegħi j/tieħu sehem f'din ir-riċerka

Name and Signature of Student: _____

Name and Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Name and Signature of Researcher: David Debono Date: ___/___/17

Appendix 10:

Students Consent/Assent Form - Focus Groups

Students Consent/Assent Form - Focus Groups

Research by: David Debono - PhD Candidate - The University of Sheffield.

▪ **Research Project Title:**

Enhancing relationships of school leaders with teachers and students for effective leadership.

Kindly initial box

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participants Information Sheet dated 1 st March, 2017 and have had the opportunity to ask questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. When asked verbally by the researcher before the Focus Group Interview, in my presence, students agreed to take part in the Focus Group. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Students understood that their responses will be anonymised before data will be analysed and gave permission to the researcher to have access to their anonymised responses. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Students understood and agreed that their focus group interview will be audio-recorded and will be kept by the researcher till the project is disseminated. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Students taking part in the focus group understood that their participation is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Any other comments as necessary:

Name of Witness: _____

Role of Witness: Teacher/ LSA /Assistant Head / Head of School

Signature of Witness: _____

Name of Researcher: David Debono

Signature of Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 11:

Schedule for Focus Groups with Students

- (a) Are you happy in this school? Why?
- (a) Intom kuntenti li tattendu din l-iskola? Għaliex?
- (b) Are you proud of your school? Do you suggest this school to your friends?
- (b) Intom kburin b'din l-iskola? Tissuġġeriewha lil sħabek?
- (c) Do you feel safe in this school?
- (c) Tħossukom siguri f'din l-iskola?
- (d) Do you make use of the school library?
- (d) Tagħmlu użu mil-librerija tal-iskola?
- (e) How much time do you spend on homework?
- (e) Kemm tqattgħu ħin tagħmlu x-xogħol tad-dar?
- (f) Do you like studying? Why?
- (f) Tħobbu tistudjaw? Għaliex?
- (g) What do you do when you have a problem? Do you talk to someone?
- (g) X'tagħmlu meta jkollkom problema? Titkellmu ma' xi ħadd?
- (h) How is your relationship with your teachers and LSA's?
- (h) Kif inhi r-relazzjoni tiegħek mal-għalliema u l-LSA's?
- (i) Do you talk about personal concerns to your teachers?
- (i) Titkellmu mal-għalliema dwar xi affarijiet personali li jkunu qed jinkwetawkom?
- (j) Are teachers willing to help you when you have a problem/query?
- (j) L-għalliema jkunu lesti li jgħinuk meta jkollok xi problema?
- (k) Do you think that your teachers are available to listen to you?
- (k) Taħseb li l-għalliema jkunu lesti li jsimgħuk?
- (l) Do you trust your teachers and LSA's?
- (l) Tafdahom lill-għalliema tiegħek u lil-LSA's?
- (m) Is there a teacher who inspires you?
- (m) Hemm xi għalliem/a li hu/i ta'ispirazzjoni għalik?
- (n) How much do you think your teacher/s know/s you?
- (n) Kemm taħsbu li l-għalliem/a jafuk?
- (o) Do you feel motivated during lessons?

-
- (o) Tħossukom motivati waqt il-lezzjonijiet?
- (p) Have you ever talked to the Head of School? On what occasions?
- (p) Ġieli tkellimtu mal-kap tal-iskola? F'liema okkażjonijiet?
- (q) Do you talk regularly to the Head of School?
- (q) Titkellmu mal-kap tal-iskola b'mod regolari?
- (r) How do you describe your relationship with the Head of School?
- (r) Kif tiddekrivi r-relazzjoni tiegħek mal-kap tal-iskola?
- (s) Do you think that the Head of School is doing the best for you to learn?
- (s) Taħseb li l-kap tal-iskola qed jagħmel mill-aħjar possibbli sabiex inti titgħallem?
- (t) Do you trust your Head of School?
- (t) Tafdah lill-kap tal-iskola?
- (u) How much do you think your Head of School knows you?
- (u) Kemm taħseb li jafek b'mod personali l-kap tal-iskola?
- (v) How often do you see your Head of School during the school hours?
- (v) Kemm hu ta' spiss li tara lill-Kap tal-iskola waqt il-ħin tal-iskola?
- (w) What else could be done by the school to offer you the best learning experience?
- (w) X'tista' tagħmel iżjed l-iskola sabiex toffrirkom l-aqwa esperjenza edukattiva?
- (x) On what occasions do your parents/guardians come to school?
- (x) F'liema okkażjonijiet il-ġenituri jew il-gwardjani jiġu l-iskola?
- (y) Do you think schools can include more events for parents/guardians?
- (y) Taħseb li l-iskola tista' torganizza iżjed attivitajiet li jinkludu aktar lill-ġenituri/gwardjani?
- (z) What about discipline in your school?
- (z) Xi tgħidu fuq id-dixxiplina tal-iskola?

- END OF SCHEDULE -

Appendix 12:

Ethics Approval by The University of Sheffield



Downloaded: 16/01/2017
Approved: 16/01/2017

David Debono
Registration number: 140240201
School of Education
Programme: PhD in Education

Dear David

PROJECT TITLE: Enhancing relationships of school leaders with teachers, students and parents for effective leadership.

APPLICATION: Reference Number 011581

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 16/01/2017 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 011581 (dated 29/11/2016).
- Participant information sheet 1024156 version 2 (29/11/2016).
- Participant consent form 1024157 version 1 (22/10/2016).

If during the course of the project you need to [deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation](#) please inform me since written approval will be required.


Yours sincerely

David Hyatt
Ethics Administrator
School of Education

Appendix 13: Permission to conduct research in State Schools by the Ministry for Education in Malta

Ref No 319016

DIRETTORAT GĦAL
KVALITÀ U STANDARDS FL-EDUKAZZJONI
FURLJANA VLT 2000
MALTA



DIRECTORATE FOR
QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN EDUCATION
FURLJANA VLT 2000
MALTA

Request for Research in State Schools

A. (Please use BLOCK LETTERS)

Surname: DEBONO Name: DAVID

I.D. Card Number: _____

Telephone No: _____ * Mobile No: _____ *

Address: _____

Locality: _____ Post Code: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Faculty: University of Sheffield
Social Sciences - School of Education Course: PhD Year Ending: 2018

Title of Research: Enhancing relationships of school leaders with teachers, students and parents for effective leadership.

Aims of research: Long Essay Dissertation Thesis Publication

Time Frame: Nov 2016 - June 2018 Language Used: Maltese + English

Description of methodology: Teachers Heads of School Students
Questionnaires, Semi-Structured Interviews, Focus Groups

School/s where research is to be carried out: _____

Years / Forms: _____ * Detailed methodology attached. Age range of students: _____

* Telephone and mobile numbers will only be used in strict confidence and will not be divulged to third parties. I accept to abide by the rules and regulations re Research in State Schools and to comply with the Data Protection Act 2001.
Warning to applicants - Any false statement, misrepresentation or concealment of material facts on this form or any document presented in support of this application may be grounds for criminal prosecution.

Signature of applicant: D. Debono Date: 15/09/2016

RECEIVED


EU Affairs, International Relations
Research and Policy Development Directorate
Ministry for Education and Employment

1 OCT 2016

B. Tutor's Approval (where applicable)

The above research work is being carried out under my supervision.

Tutor's Name: NUTBEAN Signature: [Signature]



Faculty: Social Science Faculty Stamp: _____

C. Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education - Official Approval

The above request for permission to carry out research in State Schools is hereby approved according to the official rules and regulations, subject to approval from the University of Malta Ethics Committee.

Raymond Camilleri
Director
EU Affairs, International Relations
Research and Policy Development Directorate

[Signature] Date: 01/11/2018

Director
(Research and Development Department)

Official Stamp

Conditions for the approval of a request by a student to carry out research work in State Schools

Permission for research in State Schools is subject to the following conditions:

1. The official request form is to be accompanied by a copy of the questionnaire and / or any relevant material intended for use in schools during research work.
2. The original request form, showing the relevant signatures and approval, must be presented to the Head of School.
3. All research work is carried out at the discretion of the relative Head of School and subject to their conditions.
4. Researchers are to observe strict confidentiality at all times.
5. The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education reserves the right to withdraw permission to carry out research in State Schools at any time and without prior notice.
6. Students are expected to restrict their research to a minimum of students / teachers / administrators / schools, and to avoid any waste of time during their visits to schools.
7. As soon as the research in question is completed, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education assumes the right to a full copy (in print/on C.D.) of the research work carried out in State Schools. Researchers are to forward the copies to the Assistant Director, International Research, Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education.
8. Researchers are to hand a copy of their Research in print or on C.D. to the relative School/s.
9. In the case of video recordings, researchers have to obtain prior permission from the Head of School and the teacher of the class concerned. Any adults recognisable in the video are to give their explicit consent. Parents of students recognisable in the video are also to be requested to approve that their siblings may be video-recorded. Two copies of the consent forms are necessary, one copy is to be deposited with the Head of School, and the other copy is to accompany the Request Form for Research in State Schools. Once the video recording is completed, one copy of the videotape is to be forwarded to the Head of School. The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education reserves the right to request another copy.
10. The video recording's use is to be limited to this sole research and may not be used for other research without the full consent of interested parties including the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education.

Statement of Consent

I hereby give my consent to the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education to process and record personal and sensitive data being given herewith in order to be able to render me with the service I am applying for.
I fully understand that:

- a) by opting out my application cannot be processed;
- b) authorised personnel who are processing this information may have access to this data in order to supply me with the service being applied for;
- c) edited information, that would not identify me, may be included in statistical reports.

I know that I am entitled to see the information related to me, should I ask for it in writing.
I am aware that for the purpose of the Data Protection Act, the Data Controller for this Directorate is:
The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education
Floriana, VLT 2000

I have read and understood this statement of consent myself

This statement of consent was read and explained to me _____

Signature: D Debono ID number: 24486(m) (Data subject)

Signature: _____ ID number: _____ (Reader if applicable)

Date: 15/09/2016

Data Protection Policy

The Data Protection Act, 2001 regulated the processing of personal data held electronically and in manual form. The Directorate for Quality and Standard in Education is set to fully comply with the Data Protection Principles as set out in the Act.

- a) The Directorate will hold information you supply in accordance to your request to carry out research in State Schools and / or Directorates' documents.
- b) The information you give may be disclosed to other Departments of the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, who may also have access to your data.

Your rights:
You are entitled to know what information the Directorate holds and processes about you and why; who has access to it; how it is kept up to date; what the Directorate is doing to comply with its obligations under the Data Protection Act, 2001.

The Data Protection Act, 2001 sets down a formal procedure for dealing with data subject access requests which the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport follows.

All data subjects have the right to access any personal information kept about them by the Directorate either on computer or in manual files. Requests to access to personal information by data subjects must be made in writing and addressed to the Data Controller of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. An identification document such as a photocopy of the Identity Card, photocopy of passport etc. of the data subject making the request must be submitted with the request. Such identification material will be returned to the data subject.

The Directorate aims to comply as quickly as possible with requests for access to personal information and will ensure that it is provided within reasonable time, the reason will be explained in writing to the data subject making the request.

All data subjects have the right to request that their information be amended, erased or not used in the event the data is incorrect.

Appendix 14:

Research Audit Trail

Date	Time	
18 th October, 2016	n/a	Requested Permission to conduct research in state schools - Ministry for Education.
22 nd October, 2016	n/a	Applied for Ethics Permission – The School of Education, The University of School.
18 th January, 2017	15:00	Meeting with College Principal – St David’s College
20 th January, 2017	15:00	Meeting with Head of School (not within St David’s College) for Pilot Study. Meeting continued with Semi-Structured Interview with Head of School.
26 th January, 2017	09:00	Distributed Questionnaires – Pilot Study Piloting of Schedule – Semi-Structured Interview with Teacher. Distributed Consent Forms for Students’ Focus Group.
2 nd February, 2017	09:45	Addressing Council of Heads – St David’s College.
2 nd February, 2017	10:00	Collection of Questionnaires – Pilot Study Conducted Pilot Students’ Focus Group.
3 rd February, 2017	12:30	Collection of Questionnaires – Pilot Study
6 th February, 2017	11:45	Distribution of Questionnaires – School B
6 th February, 2017	13:00	Semi-Structured Interview HP2
9 th February, 2017	09:00	Distribution of Questionnaires – School H
13 th February, 2017	07:00	Semi-Structured Interview HP5
13 th February, 2017	08:00	Distribution of Questionnaires – Schools C, D and E
13 th February, 2017	11:00	Collection of Questionnaires – School B
13 th February, 2017	13:00	Semi-Structured Interview HP3
14 th February, 2017	10:30	Semi-Structured Interview HP1
14 th February, 2017	11:30	Distribution of Questionnaires – School A
15 th February, 2017	08:45	Distribution of Questionnaires – School I
16 th February, 2017	09:00	Semi-Structured Interview HS1
16 th February, 2017	10:45	Distribution of Questionnaires – School F
16 th February, 2017	11:00	Semi-Structured Interview HP6
16 th February, 2017	13:30	Collection of Questionnaires (Final) – School B
17 th February, 2017	08:30	Distribution of Questionnaires – School G
17 th February, 2017	12:00	Collection of Questionnaires – School H
20 th February, 2017	12:30	Collection of Questionnaires – Schools C, D and E
21 st February, 2017	09:30	Semi-Structured Interview HS2
21 st February, 2017	11:45	Collection of Questionnaires (Final) – School D
21 st February, 2017	12:30	Semi-Structured Interview HP4
22 nd February, 2017	10:30	Collection of Questionnaires – Schools A and I Collection of Questionnaires (Final) – Schools C and E
23 rd February, 2017	12:45	Collection of Questionnaires – School F
24 th February, 2017	09:00	Collection of Questionnaires (Final) – School A Collection of Questionnaires – School G
2 nd March, 2017	09:00	Distributing Students’ Consent Forms – School H
6 th March, 2017	10:00	Semi-Structured Interview TS2
6 th March, 2017	10:45	Collection of Questionnaires (Final) – School H

9 th March, 2017	09:00	Collection of Questionnaires – School I Distributing Students’ Consent Forms – School I Distributing Students’ Consent Forms – School B Distributing Students’ Consent Forms – School G
9 th March, 2017	11:20	Focus Group with Students – School H
10 th March, 2017	09:15	Semi-Structured Interview TS3 Collection of Questionnaires (Final) – School I
14 th March, 2017	13:15	Distributing Students’ Consent Forms – School C
23 rd March, 2017	10:15	Focus Group with Students – School C
23 rd March, 2017	13:00	Focus Group with Students – School B
24 th March, 2017	13:20	Focus Group with Students – School I
29 th March, 2017	10:15	Semi-Structured Interview TP1
29 th March, 2017	12:30	Distributing Students’ Consent Forms – School E
29 th March, 2017	13:45	Distributing Students’ Consent Forms – School D
30 th March, 2017	07:00	Semi-Structured Interview TS1
30 th March, 2017	08:15	Distributing Students’ Consent Forms – School G
10 th April, 2017	08:00	Focus Group with Students – School E
10 th April, 2017	09:15	Focus Group with Students – School D
20 th April, 2017	09:00	Distributing Students’ Consent Forms – School F
24 th April, 2017	08:00	Semi-Structured Interview TP2
27 th April, 2017	09:15	Focus Group with Students – School F
4 th May, 2017	10:00	Distributing Students’ Consent Forms – School G
11 th May, 2017	10:30	Distributing Students’ Consent Forms – School G
18 th May, 2017	09:00	Distributing Students’ Consent Forms – School G
24 th May, 2017	10:30	Focus Group with Students – School G