

**LEADERSHIP AND CREATIVE TEACHING:
PERSPECTIVES OF HEADS OF SCHOOLS
IN MALTESE STATE SCHOOLS**

By:

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of
Master in Teaching and Learning:
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Abstract:

LEADERSHIP AND CREATIVE TEACHING: PERSPECTIVES OF HEADS OF SCHOOLS IN MALTESE STATE SCHOOLS

Dragan Stojanovic

Education in Malta has become significantly more complex as industry evolves at a rapid pace. Educational leaders are increasingly facing pressures from communities' members, stakeholders, ministry officials and parents to prepare their students for the demands of the 21st century. Many heads of schools have attempted to improve their educational environments by promoting and developing creative teaching. This qualitative phenomenological study was designed to specifically address this phenomenon by exploring the lived experiences of heads of schools in Maltese primary state schools. This study's aim was to gain valuable insights into their leadership practices when supporting creative teaching and the meanings they attach to them. More specifically, this research attempted to capture the voices of heads of schools to link the intrinsic relationships between adopted leadership practices and the gaps which exist in supporting creative teaching. Six inductive themes emerged from this study: 1. Time Constraints 2. Building a Strong Team/Teamwork 3. Motivation Through Learning 4. Communication and Empathy 5. Continuous Learning for Personal and Professional Growth 6. Holistic and Outdoor Learning Spaces. These themes were further analysed to produce this study's major findings as: Three leadership styles, four leadership strategies and one major challenge. These findings provided significant insights into leadership practices that support creative teaching and offers recommendations for future reforms, research, new policies and practices.

Key Words:

Leadership Practice Creative Teaching Heads of schools Malta Primary state school

Dedication:

To my lovely wife Tanya, who packed a suitcase and left her career and family behind to support me in pursuing my dream. And to my son Rajko and daughter Ajla who sacrificed their comfort and friendships to try a new adventure in Malta.

Every morning before heading to school they inspire me with their three golden rules:

1. Be kind
2. Help others, and
3. Never give up

Thank you.

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Also, a special thank you to the participants in this study, who agreed to sacrifice their time to meet for the interviews and offer their valuable experiences. Without your stories, this research wouldn't be possible. Your contributions were greatly appreciated and your experiences were incredibly valuable. Thank you for sharing them with me.

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Preface:

“Children have a right to play” – Dr Charmaine Bonello (Thesis Advisor)

Not long ago, I was an adult educator for a large North American company. My role included the education and enhancement of employees’ leadership strengths and abilities. There were many challenges which accompanied this position, the primary one being an apparent lack of self-belief and willingness to grow amongst my students. Many of the adults I taught seemed to be unaware of fundamental characteristics needed to elevate their personal and professional development. Qualities such as: self-discipline, self-efficacy, decision-making, influencing, creative imagination and vision were inconsistent at best. My experience with teaching adults led me to believe there was a real disconnect between; a) why these students didn’t understand why these attributes were important in life and b) believing they could build these qualities within themselves to become effective leaders.

My mind wouldn’t let it go, and I questioned where this disconnect most likely could have originated from. I began reflecting on my own personal experience going through the education system as a child, teenager and adult. My experience led me to believe the connection seemed to be lost at some point in childhood when education felt like something which needed to be endured rather than enjoyed. School felt like it embraced and rewarded passivity rather than promoting active searching and exploring. As a child, there was always this insatiable curiosity in me to explore and discover knowledge, and at some point, it felt dormant. This inspired me to transition from an adult educator into becoming a primary school teacher in the hopes of playing a role in teaching children that learning can be fun, creative and explorative. Helping children expand their curiosity and imagination to achieve success in both academics and life beyond is something about which I feel truly passionate and enthusiastic.

For education to be enjoyable, I believe it needs to be meaningful and relevant. Children love to play and have fun. So, the best way to teach life-lessons for success would be educating through imagination and creativity.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Research Overview:

Creativity, it has been said, consists largely of rearranging what we know in order to find out what we do not know. Hence, to think creatively, we must be able to look afresh at what we normally take for granted. - George Kneller

The beginning of the twenty-first century saw a significant increase in the importance placed on creativity and innovation in educational systems (Cremin & Chappell, 2019). New strategic initiatives in school policies required school leaders to adapt their leadership practices to be more influential in achieving these educational goals (Cheung, 2012; Cremin & Barnes, 2015). Many of these initiatives began to expose the already existing challenges which school leaders and teachers were facing in the form of time constraints, rigid schedules and demanding curriculums (Cremin & Chappell, 2019).

Additionally, educational leaders are increasingly facing pressures from communities' members, stakeholders, ministry officials and parents to prepare their students for the demands of the 21st century. Many school leaders have attempted to improve their educational environments by promoting and developing creative teaching by A) supporting individual teachers' creative processes; B) establishing professional collaborative communities to discuss creative ideas amongst teachers and staff, and C) improving teachers' ability to manage workload and resources to better facilitate creative teaching. Creativity in the economic world is now seen as a vital skill (Burnard, 2006). In addition, creativity and innovation develop students with the necessary skills

for navigating and problem-solving uncertain problems for a fast-changing future. Therefore, establishing children's creativity during their early development in education is seen as the building blocks for sustaining long-term economic success (Burnard, 2006; Parkhurst, 1999; Shaheen, 2010).

Educational leaders are constantly under scrutiny and examination in their ability to lead effectively to produce results. Therefore, the research presented in this study is an exploration into the unique perspectives and meanings heads of schools give to their lived experiences with supporting creative teaching in Maltese state schools through their leadership practices. This study will further outline research in this phenomenon's background and context, its research question, aims and objectives, the research problem and research purpose, followed by the study's significance and structural synopsis for the upcoming chapters.

1.2 Background and Context:

Continuous educational changes in many countries, including both in Malta and abroad, are constantly advancing. In the process, changes to school policies and curriculum have dramatically altered the responsibilities of educational leaders, creating a need to be resilient and adaptable to reform. The UK's National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education Report (NACCCE, 1999) produced a report which highlighted the effectiveness of creative teaching to develop student empowerment as its primary objective. NACCCE (1999) provided a generalized description for creative teaching as the instructional development for creative lessons and resources, designed with the purpose of igniting children's interests, passions and engaging them in their learning (NACCCE, 1999).

Locally in Malta, it is both a right and a need for every child between the ages of 5-16 years, to be given a formal education and instruction in accordance with the reformed law in the Educational Act (Education Act 1988, CAP 327 Pg. 4). In Malta, two of the more significant documents that address the need for creativity in Maltese schools are the; National Curriculum Framework for All of 2012 (MEDE, 2012) and the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024. In the National Curriculum Framework for All of 2012 (MEDE, 2012), the document specifically outlines an educator's need to engage learners in exploring their creative qualities through, "the development of skills, knowledge, competencies, values and positive dispositions towards learning which will be developed and extended in later years" (MEDE, 2012, p. 33).

Abroad, in the United States, a highly controversial document named 'No Child Left Behind' (2001) has influenced many of the school policies found in the US, UK, Canada and many other countries around the world (Saro et al., 2023). This document had the intended purpose of closing any gaps in education in order to help all children to fundamentally receive a quality education. Accountability and academic standards became the cornerstones for exposing any achievement gaps in the education system. According to the 'No Child Left Behind' (2001) document, all educational institutions are required to; create standards necessary to attain grade-level achievements and develop metrics for the purpose of measuring progress in all students to meet these grade-level standards. During this time, many school leaders reported feeling a lack of adequate development in their professional communities to help deal with these increasing demands, producing substantial gaps in the understanding of how to lead during this rapid change process (Acton, 2020).

1.3 Research Questions Aims and Objectives:

Too often our educational systems don't enable students to develop their natural creative powers. Instead, they promote uniformity and standardization. The result is that we're draining people of their creative possibilities and... producing a workforce that's conditioned to prioritize conformity over creativity. - *Robinson, 2006, TEDTalk*

The meaning behind Sir Ken Robinson's quote can have profound implications for current and future generations of students in Maltese schools. Simply put, a lack of creativity in educational classrooms produces an environment of a 'check -box' mentality which decreases the initiative of risk-taking and promotes passivity in learning (Kupers et al., 2018). The significance placed on standardized testing conditions teaches students not to think creatively, but instead, to embrace a role of passive recipient of pre-determined knowledge (Kupers et al., 2018). Getting correct answers results in students being rewarded while creative answers don't always (Kettler et al., 2021). Therefore, taking risks in creativity could be viewed through the lens of leaving one's comfort zones and embarking on uncharted territory (Kettler et al., 2021).

However, today's society has increasingly complex demands which require creative, innovative solutions to solve problems (Kupers et al., 2018; Thurlings, Evers, & Vermeulen, 2015). Malta's National Curriculum Framework for All (2012), places creativity as a high priority of importance in curriculum (MEDE, 2012). Unfortunately, strategies in creative teaching in educational policies and procedures remains vague at best. On one side, policy makers promote the importance of fostering creativity in educational classrooms, while on the other side, a demand in focusing on examinations and assessments runs contrary to creative teaching practices. For this reason, the researcher believes it is important to explore which support structures heads of Maltese state

schools put in place to discover potential gaps between school leadership practices and how they support creative teaching.

Sir Ken Robinson believed that as educators, it is our responsibility to creatively teach the 'entire being' of the child so they may properly face the challenges of their future (Robinson, 2006). Neglecting to do so, Sir Ken Robinson believed, would result in, "many highly talented, brilliant, creative people thinking they're not — because the thing they were good at in school wasn't valued or was actually stigmatized". - Robinson, 2006, TEDTalk

In order for educators to successfully adopt creative teaching practices into their classroom instruction, a school leader needs to be able to support them in this field by influencing others to collectively work together or independently in order to complete a predetermined goal while effectively accomplishing shared objectives (Yukl, 2002). Therefore, the aim of this research study is to analyse in greater detail key factors in differing leadership styles adopted by heads of schools that lead to stronger contributions in supporting creative teaching in Maltese primary state schools.

The research question being asked for the purpose of achieving this aim was as follows:

How are leadership practices adopted by heads of schools contributing to the support of creative teaching within Maltese primary state schools?

And the primary three objectives that this research aimed to achieve are listed as:

- I. To identify key factors in differing leadership styles adopted by heads of schools that lead to stronger contributions in supporting creative teaching.

- II. To evaluate if the combination of one or more leadership styles enhances greater contribution to supporting creative teaching over a singular leadership practice.
- III. To bridge any existing gaps found in leadership practices by heads of schools through formulating recommendations which may enhance contributions to the overall support of creative teaching in Maltese primary state schools.

1.4 Research Problem:

In recent years, educational institutions and industry stakeholders have placed creativity and innovation as valuable skills for students to develop (Hughes et al., 2018). Unfortunately, research in this area has not painted a cohesive picture all around, often illustrating fragmented representations throughout their findings (Hughes et al., 2018). Additionally, current education systems have long been perceived as pampering and coddling children, which in turn kills their creativity (Kaila, 2005). School leaders are facing additional pressures from ministry inspections and standardized assessments that are resulting in the creativity in education becoming increasingly non-existent, which then diminishes a creative society (Grainger, 2004). Additionally, education is now sometimes regarded as being a barrier to creativity rather than an advocate of it; however, research has shown a strong correlation between creative approaches to instruction and a higher success rate in student achievement (Frost & Durrant, 2002; Davis, 2013).

Furthermore, school heads have the ability to positively influence the educational environment and teacher-student outcomes. This responsibility requires effective leadership practices to support creativity in learning. There are many different leadership styles a school leader may practice. However, not all have the ability to influence educators to produce creative, imaginative

and innovative methods. Therefore, to prepare students to be competitive in a global workforce, it becomes imperative that effective leadership practices are in place in order to support creative teaching and for school heads to understand that the process is mutual and includes the relationship between the leader and the led (Nwachukwu & Vu, 2020).

1.5 Research Purpose:

School leaders have reported that the continuous pressures and demands attached to educational leaders' responsibilities have become increasingly overwhelming due to a lack of specific training and specialized preparation (Bush, 2022). Additionally, applying a stronger emphasis on responsibility and accountability has revealed many new challenges and gaps in the field of educational leadership (Acton, 2020) that otherwise may have gone ignored in the past. Adding to this, previous research on leadership practices and creative teaching has often summarized the existing literature in fragmented sections while identifying gaps without overall coherence (Hughes et al., 2018).

Not a lot of research offers much in the way of linking the relationships between how leadership practices support creative teaching in education. For this reason, exploring the gap between how leadership practices support creative teaching is explored further through the unique insights and perspectives offered by school heads in Maltese state schools. This study also explores how these school heads view the value of creative teaching based on their lived experiences as school leaders and the meanings attached to them. Therefore, it is necessary to research these school heads' perspectives even further so that it may help current and future school leaders understand this phenomenon.

1.6 Significance of the Study:

This research was purposefully designed to capture the voices of school leaders in Maltese state schools to provide a rich commentary into their lived experiences in education. In so doing, school leaders from both locally and abroad may gain valuable insights into ways in which they could better support creative teaching with long-term sustainability. Of the various strategic initiatives to improve academic success, creative teaching has been shown to be a highly effective method of teaching for achieving higher standards in education (Chen & Yuan, 2021). Creative teaching also inspires students to make their learning experiences more personal and relatable to develop stronger cognitive and emotional skills, while a school leader's ability to support creative teaching can make a very positive, long-lasting impact on a child's personal and professional career (Chen & Yuan, 2021).

Unfortunately, educational leaders are continuously being challenged to improve school standards in order to meet the pressures of achieving academic success. With the demand to implement the right strategies to better support student outcomes, school leaders are expected to employ effective leadership practices in order to achieve these initiatives. It is my sincere desire that the findings in this research will contribute to leadership practices being better able to assist school leaders with supporting creative teaching in their respective schools. Furthermore, future school leaders who accept their new responsibilities will have a deeper awareness that leadership is not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach and understand the vital role leadership practices play in supporting creative teaching.

1.7 Conclusion:

An effective school leader needs effective leadership practices to be able to support creative teaching to enhance students' academic success. Facing the demands of the 21st century, school leaders are required to rethink traditional teaching models and adopt creativity and innovation techniques in learning instruction. In the following chapter, a review of previous research will provide a comprehensive look into existing information on this phenomenon of interest, along with gaps in the literature will be presented. In Chapter 3, a theoretical framework will provide a structure for the qualitative phenomenological research methods which were used to uncover the key findings in this study. Next, the themes, patterns and relationships using a thematic approach to analyse the data will be presented in the findings and analysis section in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 will include a discussion of the main findings, limitations and recommendations for further research and a conclusion of the overall research which emerged from this study.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

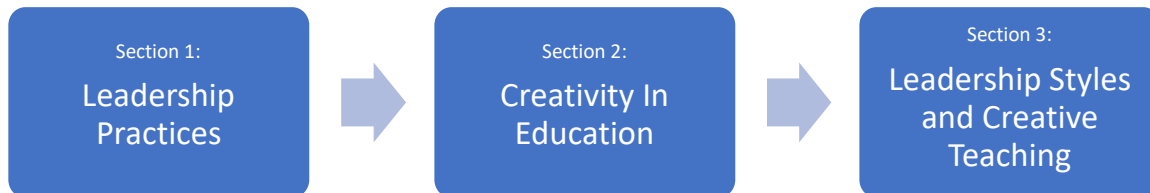
Chapter 1 laid out an introductory outline into this study's structure which included its purpose, aims and objectives. The research question guiding these studies' overall direction is presented as follows: *How do leadership practices of heads of schools contribute to supporting creative teaching in Maltese primary state schools.* Although there is a considerable amount of literature written on the field of leadership within organizational settings, including education, very little empirical research that connects leadership practices to creative teaching can be found, particularly in the primary school level.

In this chapter, a comprehensive overview of theoretical and empirical literature related to leadership practices, creativity in education and, more specifically, how these leadership styles support creative teaching will be presented. Furthermore, chapter 2 will analyse and compare existing literature in specific leadership fields which include: Instructional, Distributed, Transformational, Transactional, Servant and Visionary leadership styles. The 6 leadership styles mentioned above were chosen specifically as a result of the amount of empirical research which has demonstrated their influences on producing academic success. This chapter will also present literature on the Maltese educational system, limitations in qualitative research in educational Leadership followed by a concluding summary.

Literature which reflects leadership in a for-profit setting or best practices for career advancement will not be examined. Neither will literature on creativity related to teachers'

beliefs, experiences or ambitions be included. The literature reviewed in this research study focused solely on the relationships between creative teaching and school leadership practices.

The literature review will be presented in these 3 sections:



Section 1: Leadership Practices

2.2 Leadership Overview:

The study of Leadership practices is by no means a novel concept. Leadership origins and its importance to education can trace its roots through historical texts as far back as the 6th century Zhou Dynasty to educated philosophers in Ancient Greece and Rome who entrenched leadership with stories on morality (Papalexandris & Galanaki, 2012; Tataranni, 2012). However, over the past two centuries, studies on the subject of leadership have moved away from morality and focused their research on describing hierarchical power structures and authoritarian measures during and after the Industrial Revolution. Since the latter part of the 20th century (late 1970s), new models of leadership began to emerge, producing differing styles intended to better impact organizational goals. One such style relied more on managerial and instructional modes as guidance to support best practices (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger 2007; Hallinger, 2011b). Other frameworks sought to transform their people into acting beyond their own self-interests and turning followers into leaders (Avolio et. all, 1999; Bass 1985; Bass, 2000; Bass & Avolio, 1990,

Burns; 1978, Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Since the beginning of the 21st century, many educational scholars and researchers have continued to produce multiple leadership frameworks models which they believe are the best models to support teacher effectiveness and school outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b).

2.3 Leadership Definition:

Despite all the extensive literature conducted on educational leadership, an unanimously agreed-upon definition at the present time still does not exist. This presents many challenges when engaging in leadership discussions, particularly in education, due to the lack of consensus. Below is a definition of leadership the researcher believes offers the most adequate description of leadership within the context of an educational setting:

Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives. (Yukl, 2002, p. 7)

Yukl's (2002), definition of leadership can be interpreted in many ways but for the purpose of this research, Yukl's definition of leadership was chosen because it addresses the evolving new realities school leaders face and how leadership practices are used to navigate success.

2.4 Leadership Characteristics in Education

Prior to the 1970's, literature on specific leadership models was often scarce and reflected authoritative hierarchical systems that relied more on contingency models and situational context. Both these *Contingency and Situational leadership* models reflected decision-making scenarios based on external uncertainties, academic outcomes and organizational planning (Day

et. al, 2011). Benard M. Bass (1985), a renowned scholar in leadership studies, provided a description in his book expressing leadership as being one which is transformative in nature (Bass, 1985). Bass (1985), describes this transformational leader as having the ability to influence and motivate subordinates to exceed their own individualized expectations through conveying awareness in valuing tasks and keeping organization goals above their own personal interests. Bass also refers to this process of transformation by which the followers develop a strong admiration, respect and trust for their leader, thus mobilizing themselves beyond their own limitations to achieve required outcomes with a high degree of willingness and commitment (Bass, 1985).

Philip Hallinger (2007) puts forward that educational leadership always finds itself at the centre of accountability, with growing pressure on school leaders to act as future agents of change (Hallinger, 2007). These '*change agents*' are often described as active and decisive leaders tasked with the responsibility of achieving targeted goals through a clear vision which motivates others to follow (Hallinger, 2007). Ebrahimi et. al. (2017) furthers this argument by suggesting that leaders possess both magnetic and inspirational skills that establish a clear vision and motivate followers to perform beyond their required expectations (Ebrahimi et. al., 2017). Both Hallinger's (2007) and Ebrahimi et. al (2017) descriptions of leadership characteristics outline successful leaders as being influential, motivational and articulating a clear vision to provide accountability to school organizations.

Additionally, Saki Jan and Kokab Manzoor's (2021) research in the field of leadership in education suggests that leadership characteristics are used as influential means to develop teachers; professional and personal growth, student learning outcomes, meaning in educational goals and

clarity in school vision through the process of motivation and providing direction (Jan & Manzoor, 2021). Leithwood et al. (1993) emphasize similar points in their research, suggesting school leaders strive to inspire others to reach higher aspirations for professional improvement. This work also highlights that the biggest influence school leadership has on organizational goals is having the ability to articulate a strong vision and foster strong relationships with staff, parents, students and members of the professional community (Leithwood et al., 1993).

As mentioned earlier, Gary Yukl's book on *Leadership in Organizations* (2002), Yukl discusses the controversies surrounding leadership being studied as a single specialized role or a shared process amongst all (Yukl, 2002). Unlike Bass's (Bass, 1985; Bass, 2000) views on leadership being both *Transformational and Transactional*, Yukl's (2002) concept of leadership centres on a shared process of influence, reflecting more of a '*Distributed*' or '*Participatory*' method of responsibilities. In Yukl's ideal model of leadership, tasks are distributed to all members in various forms, which allows different people to perform influential goals and not rely on designated authoritarian titles (Yukl, 2002).

In his book, Yukl describes what he believes are fundamental characteristics of strong leadership:

- Personal motivation
- Virtues and integrity
- Self-confidence and self-efficacy
- Expertise and knowledge
- Moral behaviour
- Influential ability, beliefs and conviction (Yukl 2002, p. 11).

These characteristics provided above make strong foundational structures for leaders by emphasising the importance of becoming ‘change agents’ as highlighted by Hallinger’s (2007) work on accountability and leadership. Both Yukl and Hallinger indicated the importance of influencing others and transformation through the establishment of a clear vision and motivating followers into achieving higher aspirations for professional and personal improvement.

2.5 How Leadership Affects Pedagogy:

The term pedagogy derives from ancient Greece, and in the Greek language (παιδί + ἄγω), it is defined as “*leading the child*”. (Male & Palaiologou, 2013). Male & Palaiologou (2013) assert that for systems in education to exist, there must be a leader responsible for the ongoing management. An educational system would need to follow a pedagogy. Therefore, a pedagogy in leadership naturally becomes synonymous with each other. However, Male & Palaiologou (2013) argue that combining these terms refers to it as a model and less contextual, leading to a vague and ambiguous idea of what pedagogical leadership actually is (Male & Palaiologou, 2013). Male & Palaiologou’s (2013) research strongly asserts that in the twenty-first century, school environments are changing at a rapid pace and the idea of pedagogy being viewed as only the relationship between teacher and learner needs to evolve. Based on their empirical findings, Male & Palaiologou infer that pedagogy leadership is not just a centralized environment between a teacher-learner model but instead exists as a relationship that encompasses learners with community, family as well as the teachers (Male & Palaiologou, 2013).

Similar to Male and Palaiologou’s (2013) comments that leadership pedagogy extends beyond the teacher-leader framework, Stewart (2006) suggests that as a result of fast-changing

environments, newer paradigm shifts in leadership pedagogy relationships have emerged to reflect ongoing demands for higher accountability in academic performance. Stewart (2006) also argues that leadership teams are responsible for a multitude of administrative tasks, not including the demands of teachers, staff, students, and parents. Stewart's research reveals that many school leaders are so overwhelmed with day-to-day managerial tasks that they feel like they do not have the time to lead in better teaching practices (Stewart, 2006). Unfortunately, as a result of ongoing demands and pressures placed on leadership teams, schools may develop an unhealthy dependence on standardized testing, which Stewart describes as often an inaccurate method for determining school outcomes (Stewart, 2006).

Stewart's research is very important in the study of leadership supporting pedagogy as it points out the overwhelming managerial/administrative demands which may prevent the necessary leadership needed and places an over-reliance on standardized testing as a solution.

2.6 Leadership Effectiveness in Teachers Support:

As far back as the early 1990's, research indicated (Cheng, 1994), that the higher the teacher satisfaction with regards to strong school leadership practices, the more likely teachers were to adapt to school policy changes. Furthermore, Cheng's (1994) research described the relationship between influential school leadership and greater morale amongst teachers and students. Cheng's (1994) extensive research in pedagogical outcomes argued that good leadership directly correlates to better teacher performance. Cheng's (1994) research suggested that teachers were seen to behave with more enthusiasm and dedication towards their jobs, and were more engaged with tasks that accompanied a greater sense of autonomy. With strong school leaders, teachers

stated they felt they had the support to make better decisions and experienced meaning in their overall professional lives (Cheng, 1994).

However, over the next decade, Hallinger (2003) refers to school leadership becoming increasingly more complex as managerial duties so often limit the abilities of leading effectively. (Hallinger, 2003). Hallinger's research provides a closer examination into current school leadership pedagogies, revealing that school leaders are often caught between the academic needs of students, professional needs of teachers and increasing demands of parents and educational stakeholders. To Hallinger, this becomes a major challenge many schools leaders face: the struggle of carrying the leadership burden alone (Hallinger, 2003). For many of the reasons listed in Hallinger's (2003) research, Contreras (2015) believes schools are adopting assembly-line models of pedagogy. As the demand for higher standards in education increases, so too, does the demand for quantifiable evidence. Yet Contreras reiterates the term pedagogy itself means *'leading the student to learning'*, so therefore, pedagogical leadership requires school leaders to strategize and develop quality education rather than act with an authoritarian hand (Contreras, 2015).

A common theme that continuously emerges in literature research on school leadership and its effectiveness on teacher performance, is that good leadership helps in the development of personal and professional growth. What is not commonly agreed upon, however, is which leadership style is best suited to support these ongoing demands facing school leaders in the 21st-century, and how they may best support teachers in their own creative pedagogies. Below will be a brief summary of literature on 6 chosen leadership styles (Instructional, Distributed,

Transformational, Transactional, Servant and Visionary), which are commonly used in educational settings to help support teachers' success.

2.7 Overview of 6 Chosen Leadership Styles:

The last four decades' worth of empirical research on leadership have provided positive results in educational outcomes (Hallinger, 2010). According to Hallinger, these results increase motivation and student engagement to achieving challenging but rewarding goals (Hallinger, 2010) To provide a more contemporary view of conceptual leadership practices, this section will review the six most frequently researched leadership models in education contexts. These models are: Instructional, Distributed, Transformational, Transactional, Servant and Visionary.

2.7.1 Instructional Leadership:

Hallinger (2005) states that an instrumental achievement in educational management is having the term *Instructional leadership* synonymous with school leadership. An abundance of literature Hallinger (2005) claims is the direct result of early academics devoted to the development of school leaders in the 1980's. The focus on developing school leaders resulted from an increased desire for external educational reforms to drive improvements in schools and transition in a forward direction by enhancing the knowledge and skills of effective school leaders (Hallinger, 2005). Hallinger (2005) makes reference to *Instructional leaders* being oriented towards goal achievement, having the ability to articulate a clear direction and influence team members to follow initiatives. Instructional leadership refers to effective management in educational curriculum, administration and tasks, professional learning development and school

environment/culture. The primary aim of instructionally led schools, therefore, is the continuous improvement of the school's overall performances (Hallinger, 2005).

Hallinger and Murphy (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985a) created a conceptual framework for effective management describing *Instructional leadership* as having three distinct categorical influences; *Management of the Instructional Learning, Positive Learning Environments, and The Clear Outline of School's Mission Goals* as described below:

- *Management of the Instructional Learning*: The school leader is very committed to the functions of teaching and learning in schools, monitoring the instruction and providing constructive feedback with the intent on improving school outcomes.
- *Positive Learning Environments*: Teachers and students are expected to perform at high standards with a climate of continuous development, and improvement is consistent with desired outcomes. Professional goals, transparency and incentives are key focusses in this area.
- *The Clear Outline of School's Mission Goals*: Goals could be created by the school leaders or in collaboration with the teachers, staff, students and parents. Regardless, well-defined, clearly articulated goals are critical for school success. (Hallinger & Murphy 1985).

Hallinger's organizational systems would provide school leaders with the structure necessary for developing school mission, clarifying expectations, emphasizing higher standards and providing rewards for levels of achievement (Hallinger, 2011a). For a head of school to adopt Instructional leadership, there would need to be a fair amount of support given to teachers on the integration in innovation, imagination, exploration, discovery-based learning (Sawyer, 2011) into the standardized curriculum. There would more of a shared autonomy between heads of schools and

teachers with the intent of developing effective teaching approaches that place students' needs at the centre of creative teaching.

2.7.2 Distributed Leadership:

With the increase of job complexity and more responsibility in the new age of accountability, the idea of a school leader possessing extraordinary superpowers no longer seems reasonable or fair (Leithwood and Seashore-Louis, 2012). Distributed leadership is currently very popular in educational research for its shared direction in distributing the decision-making process from one person to the collective team. Yukl describes in his book *Leadership in Organizations* (2002) that *Distributed leadership* is a process of sharing authoritative responsibilities amongst individuals or group settings to effectively accomplish desired results (Yukl, 2002).

Kenneth Leithwood and his colleagues (2007) researched the lack of distributed responsibilities in educational institutions and stated that a great number of school systems still do not rely on the transference of shared responsibilities in leadership to meet school policies and academic goals (Leithwood et al., 2007). Leithwood et al. (2007) contend that school leaders are often placed in a difficult position of choosing the appropriate teachers to perform leadership responsibilities based on their experience and qualifications. According to the data provided, Leithwood recommends it is then imperative to have a solid background of every teacher's capability in order to assess appropriate selections on individual strengths and weaknesses so that school leaders will have a better idea of whom responsibilities should be allocated to (Leithwood et al. 2007).

Chang (2011) furthers Leithwood's findings by stating that context in specific situations is essential when determining how a school leader will distribute realistic goals, which need to be

in line with a teacher's willingness to participate (Chang, 2011). Chang goes on to specify that in realistic scenarios, any leadership responsibilities must strongly reflect the expertise of the teachers and school culture (Chang, 2011). However, contradicting research has indicated that although Distributive leadership can at times be an effective approach, often good teachers are very busy and may be reluctant to take on new roles. Teachers may feel that new commitments will take away from student learning and conversely school leaders may view a distribution of leadership as a loss of power (MacBeath, 2005). Distributed leadership places a strong emphasis on good communication and listening skills as a key role in supporting teachers in feeling appreciated and valued (Thornton K, 2019). Further research on Distributed leadership has also revealed that teachers may be increasingly more willing to take on more of a leadership position if they feel they can trust when a bond of trust their head of school, which can lead to greater exploration and risk-taking in their pedagogical practices (Thornton K, 2019).

2.7.3 Transformational Leadership:

Many studies have provided empirical evidence that Transformational leadership links positive relationships between teachers, students and educational conditions (Bass, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Burns (1978) describes the difficulties in separating management from leadership and states the biggest differentiating factor in *Transformational leadership* lies in a leader's behaviour and personality. Bass (1985) further developed this concept from Burns' (1978) research. In Bass's book titled *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectation (1985)*, Bass uses psychological frameworks to quantify which characteristics are best to measure a leader's ability to motivate and inspire. Bass believed the most important characteristic of leadership is charisma (Bass, 1985). He further added that having a shared vision, providing motivation and creating

synergized energy through intellectual stimulation were essential leadership attributes to success (Bass, 1985). Through continuous direction, these leaders transform the attitudes and behaviours of followers into desired results (Bass, 1999).

Bass (1985) points out that in Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1962a) – where individuals progress through a series of interrelated stages until achieving self-actualization – *Transformational leadership* fits into the higher levels with leaders taking followers away from basic needs of safety and security to a process of personal growth and self-actualization. Bass argues when a follower's security, family, love and recognition have been satisfied, they can then move away from self-interests and transform into their highest potential; personal growth, and self-actualization (Bass, 1985).

Bass and Avolio (Bass & Avolio, 1990; Avolio & Bass, 1995) created a Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) in 1990, as a way of providing empirical evidence on *Transformational, Transactional and Passive Laissez-faire* leadership styles to meet organizational needs. It is mainly used as an instrument to measure both assessment and development (Bass, 1997). Over many years, different versions to adapt to varying assessments were created. Originally it started as a 6-factor model but quickly expanded to 7 as two factors in *Transactional and Laissez-faire leadership* were divided and given their own distinct section on a scale (Avolio et al., 1999). Since then, many researchers have continued to add and subtract their own variations of factors into the MLQ framework depending on the personal requirements of their own studies (Avolio et al., 1999). In Avolio et al.'s work (1999) in *Transformational Leadership Behaviours of School Principals*, Avolio expands on the MLQ factors relating *Transformational leadership* to inter-related characteristics which make up a Transformational Leader:

(The 4 I's)

- *Idealized Influence:* Leaders display trust and determination, make decisions in difficult situations, practice values and integrity, and promote commitment and ethical behaviour attached to meaning;
- *Inspirational Motivation:* Leaders communicate a clear vision for the future and inspire followers to higher standards in achieving challenging goals;
- *Intellectual Stimulation:* Leaders challenge old paradigms and encourage new innovative ideas; and,
- *Individualized Consideration:* Leaders target individualistic needs to improve strengths and weaknesses through good listening and empathy (Avolio et al., 1999, Bass, 1997).

The 4 I's in Avolio and Bass's research may offer a unique roadmap to taking bigger risks and achieve more professional growth. This ability to transform others to personal and professional success is rooted in the ability of the leader to be supportive and influential to helping their followers meet their needs. Transformational leadership has often been used to inspire its followers to make their professional experiences become more meaningful and relevant to accomplishing their goals (Rankin & Brown, 2016). A leader's ability to support their teachers in achieving and making these experiences meaningful and relevant can make all the difference in supporting a teacher's creative teaching (Rankin & Brown, 2016).

2.7.4 Transactional Leadership:

As often referenced as the blueprint for Transformational and Transactional Leadership, Burns' book *Leadership* (1978), describes *Transactional leadership* in direct contradiction to a

Transformational leader's desire to change organizational culture. *Transactional leaders* have no interest in motivating and inspiring followers beyond their self-interests (Burns 1978). Burns believed *Transactional and Transformational* leadership were two very distinctly differing concepts while Bass (1985) believed that while conceptually different, both practices were intrinsically linked to one another. To Burns (1978), *Transactional leadership* takes place when an individual in management offers rewards or penalties to followers to optimize performance. Both parties recognize the hierarchy in power relationships between one another and continue to work to achieve the desired levels of outcomes. Those who perform their duties are rewarded while those who underperform are punished (Burns, 1978).

Burns (1978), proposed the idea *that Transactional leaders* “approach followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for another” (Burns, 1978). For Burns this was a process of leaders exchanging compensation for performances carried out which applies in both business and educational institutions. To further this point, Bass’s (1997) research on *Transformational and Transactional* leadership transcending boundaries, Bass states “This transactional leadership depends on the leader's power to reinforce subordinates for their successful completion of the bargain” (Bass, 1997). The follower's sense of self-worth must be addressed to engage and commit the follower. Regardless of institutional boundaries, Bass describes the relationship between the two as:

- Identifying what is specific outcome and whether performance warrants the exchange
- Reward or punishment in relation to self-interests for fulfilling specific requirements

(Bass, 1995 p. 11)

Bass' 7 MLQ (Bass, 1997), educational institutions can utilize the 4 I's mentioned in *Transformational Leadership* or they may choose to follow the other 3 components which make up *Transactional leadership*:

- *Contingent Reward*: Leaders and subordinates engage in the transaction of establishing goals and providing rewards based on levels of performance. Expectations are determined, leaders provide necessary resources, make mutually satisfactory commitments, assist in managerial efforts, and provide rewards for degrees of performance.
- *Active Management by Exception*: Leaders commence monitoring their subordinates to ensure proper job performance has been achieved and take measurable actions if goals are not met to set standards. In the event of poor performance, new initiatives are developed to prevent further mistakes from happening.
- *Passive Management by Exception*: Leaders fail to take actions until situations become increasingly serious. Leaders only then act when problems are brought to their attention. In Laissez-faire Leadership, leaders avoid responsibilities, are consistently absent, avoid taking actions or offering views on problematic situations and do not follow-up when assistance is requested.

Bush's' research (Bush, 2007), describes that many conceptual frameworks in Transactional leadership studied over the years reflect interactive relationships between leaders and their follower's contingent on an exchange of values and resources. To Bush, a teacher's experience with their transactional leader would be short, disconnected and exchange-oriented (Bush, 2007). Transactional leadership is often seen as a popular choice in organizational institutions as

it can lead to quick and efficient solutions to challenges involving increased demands and pressures in workloads, although not sustainable solution in the long run (Bush, 2007; Stewart, 2006).

2.7.5 Servant Leadership:

Servant Leaders possess an intrinsic desire to serve. Service comes first and leadership comes second. This was Robert Greenleaf's main idea when his essay *The Servant as Leader* was published in 1976 (Greenleaf, 1976). Greenleaf (1976) outlines that all service begins with desire. Servant leadership is not a new idea. Conceptualizations on *Servant leadership* can be found in many historical and ancient texts around the world. However, Greenleaf's accounts in (1976) articulated this conceptual idea into modern day literature. Greenleaf's inspiration for building the Servant Leadership Framework (Greenleaf, 1976) was inspired by Hermann Hesse's 1956 book *The Journey to the East* (Hesse, 1956). Greenleaf believed the message in Hesse's book signified when one desires to put the service of others first, only then are they recognized as leaders who exemplify these characteristics of *Servant Leadership* (See appendix 5 for visual example):

1. Listening – strong communication attributes
2. Empathy – acceptance and valuing others
3. Healing – seeking fulfilment
4. Awareness – intuitive guidance and self-reflection
5. Persuasion – convincing through actions of integrity
6. Conceptualization – seeing beyond short-term outcomes

7. Foresight – ability to search out potential problems and solutions
8. Stewardship – the innate desire to serve
9. Commitment to the growth of people – promoting development and growth
10. Building community – establishing relationships and independence (Greenleaf, 1991b)

Taylor et al. argue that to fully understand a Servant Leadership educational system, one would need to take the traditional hierarchy triangle and turn it upside down or “reverse the pyramid” (Taylor et al., 2007). This, in turn, provides teachers with more freedom to be creative and innovative to perform in a professional capacity (Taylor et al., 2007). Taylor et al. (2007) claims that the real purpose of being a manager is to help followers accomplish their goals by conducting themselves selflessly (Taylor et al., 2007). Similarly, Bass compares servant leadership with transformational leadership as having many shared attributes and says that servant leadership goes even further than transformational leadership by selecting the needs of others as its the highest priority (Bass 2000).

Shroeder goes further to describe Servant leadership within educational settings as a process requiring the empowerment of teachers in their personal development and professional growth (Shroeder, 2016). Shroeder (2016) also states that this allows educators the autonomy to take risks, and opportunity to achieve their goals. Teachers then establish their own vision and become effective and empathetic leaders.

Servant leadership is designed to put people and organizational goals before their own needs. People who follow a Servant leader often feel like their voices are being heard and their needs are being met. This leadership style’s very foundation is structured in supporting others.

Therefore, in order to perform a job effectively, one first must believe their needs have been looked after and their well-being is important to their school leader (Shroeder, 2016)

2.7.8 Visionary Leadership:

Shanti et al. (2020) identify in their research that poor performances in the educational system can be traced back to a lack of strategic vision. They argue that education performances are directly correlated to a school leader's strong vision and articulating a clear vision provides direction and structure to an organization's future. Shanti describes how a school leader's vision will empower appropriate change while encouraging teachers, faculty and students to actively participate using their creative experiences (Shanti et al., 2020). Their study puts forward that people are a school's biggest resource and enhancing the organization's vision is vital to improve educational performance while providing direction to meaningful goals (Shanti et al., 2020).

Kurniadi et al., (2021) describes *Visionary leadership* as superior agents of change with foresight into future directives. This leadership model establishes significant and meaningful challenges that determine which direction a school's educational goals will take (Kurniadi et al., 2021). In *Visionary Leadership*, motivation is pivotal in turning learners into active, not passive participants in their educational journey by articulating a clear vision, which acts as the driving force for performing activities and assignments with higher standards (Kurniadi et al., 2021). Early pioneers of the study LeSourd & Grady (1990), attribute to the *Visionary leadership* theory by describing effective school leaders as those who practice:

- Connecting meaning to learning
- Acting as guides and coaches

- Acting decisively
- Visualizing the bigger picture, and
- Influencing others to take action (LeSourd & Grady, 1990 p. 117).

Visionary leadership promotes collaboration as a team to achieve a desired result and inspires higher achievement. The leader creates a vision and puts it forward. Additionally, if a head of school can communicate their vision effectively, this could have a significant impact on their followers feeling increasingly motivated to achieve the shared goal as well as a willingness to grow personally and professionally.

Section 2: Creativity in Education

2.8 Creative Teaching:

Jennifer M. Gidley's (2012) research on the *Evolution in Education* argues changes are necessary to move away from factory-model education at all levels and embrace new methods of transformative pedagogies (Gidley 2012, p 4). Gidley suggests that there is little point in teaching students for future innovation with a 19th-century mentality in teaching (Gidley 2012). Educational systems in the past often trained students for careers in factories or vocational professions, and unfortunately, many of these teaching practices, without realizing it, still exist in school systems today. (Gidley, 2012)

Moos' (2014) research indicates that educational institutions put school leadership teams in precarious situations by being stuck between two competing bureaucratic expectations: Firstly, students' academic achievements must be maintained at the highest level of standards, and second, students need to develop original, innovative and creative aptitudes (Moos, 2014). Moos

states that school leaders opt to provide students with the necessary affordances to meet academic expectations and finish high in national standardized testing as it directly reflects the school's academic reputation (Moos, 2014). Instruction by teachers can easily be taught by giving the specific information necessary to pass assessment criteria. Teaching directly for standardized testing, Moos argues, unfortunately, closes the door on creative teaching, curiosity, flexibility, exploration and contemplation (Moos, 2014).

Cremin et al. (2006) further point out Moos's (2014) findings by suggesting that ongoing challenges in establishing teaching creatively in classrooms are a result of national standards in accountability. Cremin et al. (2006) state that when instruction is bound by structure, routine and tight schedules, school leadership's decisions to teach creatively become less likely as a teacher's autonomy to create is greatly reduced. Given the importance placed on assessment and accountability, Cremin et al. (2006) argue that it seems improbable that teachers would work towards the development of children's creative thinking and imagination as policy constraints hinder many innovative practices. Constantly focusing on school assessments and producing higher standards has turned many educational institutions into a mindset of ticking off boxes in a curriculum checklist for school leaders, teachers, and students (Cremin, 2009).

2.9 Importance of Creative Teaching:

The White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*, in the United Kingdom produced a report in the mid-1990's claiming that students need to be prepared for the 21st century by developing all learner's unique creative talents and abilities (The white paper, 1997). Building off the *Excellence in Schools* report, The National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education NACCCE (1999)

recognized that teaching creatively and teaching for creativity as being interwoven and closely dependent on one another to develop students' talents and abilities (NACCCE, 1999). Creative teaching is described as utilizing creative pedagogies and techniques to achieve effective learning outcomes while teaching for creativity is viewed as developing learner's abilities to think in more creative and innovative ways (NACCCE,1999). Although different in their methodical approaches both teaching creatively and teaching for creativity both aim to provide their learners with a quality education (The NACCCE 1999).

The NACCCE (1999) report maintains that raising the level of standards in reading, writing and arithmetic is not sufficiently educating our children for future challenges. School curriculum, NACCCE (1999) argues, should not be entirely based on developing social integration and human capital, rather it should be motivated by children's individual interests and talents (NACCCE, 1999). In their view, educational objectives are only realized when education promotes unlocking the creative potential within all learners (NACCCE, 1999). According to (NACCCE, 1999), Creative Teachers use *Teaching for Creativity Practices* by:

- Promoting a strong belief in one's own creative potential
- Identifying individual creative abilities in learners, and
- Fostering creativity by becoming more knowledgeable about the creative processes using hands-on approaches (NACCCE, 1999). According to NACCCE (1999) the most important thing to start with when practicing creative teaching is:

To encourage young people to believe in their creative potential, to engage their sense of possibility and to give them the confidence to try' (NACCCE, 1999 p. 90).

Grainger et al's., (2004) research shows how governments have taken a keen interest and have actively given directions or injunctions on school policies through national standardized testing, structuring curriculum, professional development and strategies on literacy and arithmetic (Grainger et al., 2004). As a result, Grainger et al. (2004), states that educational professionals feel too controlled by external regulatory influences. Even school leaders who are under constant watch of government ministries feel overwhelmingly pressured to achieve school targets, which place strong limitations on their ability to support teachers in creativity and innovative pedagogies (Grainger et al., 2004). Through a process of slow de-motivation, Grainger explains how students quickly adapt to the inner workings of the school systems and over time creativity is replaced by conformity. Today's students know that to attain imposed targets they must comply to the conventional path that allows for measurable results (Grainger et al., 2004). To complicate today's educational systems even further, Grainger et al. (2004) explains that school leaders and teachers must navigate through the contradictory messaging of creativity while still achieving ambitious national standards (Grainger et al., 2004).

2.10 Challenges to Creative Teaching:

Current research suggests that many of the world's educational institutions promote the idea that all children deserve the right to education, however their policies and procedures are geared towards teaching traditional conformity rather than creativity (Shaheen, 2010). Educational systems are increasingly being challenged and accused of indoctrinating and destroying creativity (Shaheen, 2010). This increased demand focusing on student learning in reading, writing and numeracy to meet the standards of national curriculum, assessments and accountability has led

many in the educational field to believe that creativity in education is non-existent (Shaheen, 2010).

However, some researchers are more optimistic, suggesting that as a result of this global reform to adapt learners for the 21st century, educational systems are undergoing a transformation of attitudes in shifting school policies to reflect valuing the importance of creativity (Wilson, 2005). In order to achieve these lofty demands placed on educational systems, teachers will not be able to develop young learners' creative potential if they do not receive the adequate support from their school leaders (Zhang et al., 2018). Therefore, it is essential that educators receive the autonomy and flexibility needed to explore creative pedagogies by their school leadership teams (Wilson, 2005). Creative teaching is not just a form of knowledge transference through creative means, but instead creative teaching offers guidance, mentoring, inspiration, curiosity, and engagement, which students explore meaning and relevance through their creative abilities to develop original and innovative work as a result (Zhang et al., 2018).

Unfortunately, the role of many school educators is being blamed for spoon-feeding students, thus slowly killing any creative potential in our children's imaginations (Kaila, 2005). The increasing demand to meet the requirements of high academic outcomes, many teachers in primary education believe that creativity in teaching is no longer seen as important, which inevitably prevents creativity from flourishing in society (Grainger, 2004). A key challenge in educational systems with regards to developing creative students within schools is that current teaching methods are often too focused on providing knowledge acquisition and not exploration (Davies, 2002).

As a result, education systems around the world have undergone major changes in their resources, attitudes and understanding of teaching practices so that creativity is seen more as an important asset in their schools (Wilson, 2005). Additionally, there has been a shift in attitudes towards combining these creative teaching practices with knowledge exploration and student-centred learning (Wilson, 2005).

Section 3: Leadership Styles and Creative Teaching

2.11 Relationship between Leadership and Creativity:

Often school leaders are tasked with increased responsibilities in changing the overall culture and turning their schools into high-performing learning institutions (Hallinger, 2005). In fact, often a high emphasis is placed on providing appropriate management (Hallinger, 2005) over leadership. Effective managerial duties would include: Implementing policies and procedures, fostering academic success, coordination of school activities, administrative duties, parental involvement, managing finances, supporting their staffs, teachers and students' emotional well-being and physical safety (Teig et al., 2019). Heads of school's responsibilities require them to constantly remain engaged and be approachable, using their experience to navigate challenging situations (Teig et al., 2019).

However, with these demanding responsibilities placed on the heads of schools, time becomes a critical factor in their ability to be fully present in supporting a teachers' pedagogical decisions (Pelletier et al., 2002). Research has provided insights into the effectiveness of teacher's pedagogies when feel they are more supported in their professions. Pelletier et al., (2002)

research suggested that teachers are more likely to feel confident in taking greater risks in their classrooms when they feel supported (Pelletier et al., 2002). Unfortunately, research studies have also provided empirical evidence which has identified that many teachers perceive a school's demanding restrictions in time and standardised curriculum as challenges that do not support the ability to foster creativity (Murphy et al., 2007; Wang, 2011).

Fortunately, school heads do have the ability to promote collaborative original ideas and create necessary innovation to enhance creative working environments in schools (Borup, 2010). Old systematic hierarchical frameworks implemented during the industrial age are no longer relevant for a knowledge-based future (Borup, 2010). In a school environment where the leadership is too authoritarian, in all likelihood creative teachers felt less flexible and autonomous which prevented them from exploring imaginative concepts and pursuing creative pedagogical teaching (Borup, 2010). Furthering this argument, studies have additionally shown that contrary to authoritarian leadership, in a collaborative environment where leadership is shared, creativity and innovation increased when leadership provided teachers with necessary support (Borup, 2010).

Stoll & Temperley's (2009) research further suggests that both innovative thinking and freedom to take risks presented the most immediate challenges for school leadership in supporting creative teaching. A lack of willingness to adopt new methods in creativity, Stoll & Temperley (2009) believe, is a result of government ministers, stakeholders, parents and educational community members all having their own diverse perspectives on best practices for raising national standards and improving student outcomes (Stoll & Temperley 2009). The multitude of opinions on educational practices creates pressure and stress for school leaders between what

they believe is best for school/student performances and what they're accountable for by outside agencies. (Stoll & Temperley, 2009)

Acton's (2020) studies suggest that in the current environment of accountability and increasing school standards, school leaders are confronted with relentless demands to produce reforms in their schools. However, Acton's (2020) findings showed that school leaders felt they had been given very little instruction on how to become the leaders or "*change agents*" that are now required (Acton, 2020).

2.12 Creativity in Maltese Educational Systems:

Bringing the focus into how leadership relates to creativity in Malta's educational system, in Mangion & Riebel's (2023) research on how creative perceptions impact Maltese students, they argue that policy ministers and future employers want students to be prepared and ready for the workforce in the 21st century with creativity as a learnt skill. Mangion & Riebel's (2023) research on young Maltese primary students echoes a growing sentiment consistent with many scholars (Male & Palaiologou, 2013; Kurniadi et al., 2021) that creativity is at the top of the list for educational development contributing to 21st century skills. Educating students with transferable creative skills for changing situations is key for developing Maltese children to adequately adapt to future scenarios (Mangion & Riebel's, 2023). Their research investigated the impact of school culture on their creative process among State, Church and Private Schools. One of the most compelling takeaways from Mangion & Riebel's (2023) study was the concept of time throughout student responses. Time was characterized as being a critical theme with

relationships to having the ability to think and actively participate in creative activities that contribute to the problem-solving process.

This description channels scholars Anna Craft's (2003) and Keven Gormley's (2020) previous assertions that the creativity in schools will struggle to penetrate the formidable walls set in place by traditional pedagogies (Craft,2003; Gormley, 2020). When interviewing teachers in the Maltese educational system, Pulis Xerxen's (2006) research revealed that Maltese teachers believe that integration of creativity in education is an important aim, however the reality of restrictions and rigid constraints in teaching curriculum as mentioned in Mangion & Riebel's (2023) findings make it challenging to be anything more than a superficial attempt.

School leadership can be the necessary change agent to support teachers with the tools necessary to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed for the 21st-century. However, in Cauchi Cuschieri's (2007) research, it is stated that often under the Maltese educational system, school leaders typically feel like they are being observed under a microscope, with many of their decisions being constantly judged by people around them (Cuschieri 2007). Feeling the pressures of their superiors watching them with a critical eye, Cauchi Cuschieri (2007) states that heads of schools often miss out on opportunities to lead their teachers into more creative, risk-taking and explorative pedagogical practices. This creates a struggle, Mifsud (2015) argues, that the decision-making process from heads of schools becomes more prescribed, leaving no room for visionary or impromptu leadership for individual leaders to grow or the development of creativity to evolve within the classrooms.

Furthermore, Cutajar et al., (2013) states that heads of schools are increasingly being given a far greater amount of work to accomplish. Cutajar et al. (2013) shows that heads of schools in Malta are experiencing demands not only from their educational superiors but also from community organizations, stakeholders and parents (Cutajar et al., 2013). In relation to this, Cutajar et al. (2013) suggest that heads of schools have become inundated with far-reaching extensions in their responsibilities and feel these goals have unrealistic expectations for completion, especially when dealing with matters of school improvement. Cutajar's research points to creating a balance between a centralized and decentralized leadership governance that equally requires innovative approaches to co-operation and attitudes. This approach, Cutajar et al. (2013) argue, moves towards a governance framework for heads of schools and teachers to generate more favourable circumstances to overcome challenges as they arise and develop educational systems into professional learning communities.

2.13 Lack Professional Learning Communities

Literature pertaining to leadership supporting creative teaching involves the establishment of professional learning communities in schools. In the current environment on producing overall academic success and improvements in child-centred learning practices, heads of schools are faced with incessant demands to create educational reforms that can support new educational initiatives (Acton, 2020). Findings suggest that heads of schools often feel they did not receive the adequate training necessary on being a leader of change (Acton, 2020). Instead, many heads of schools reported their leadership developed through job experience and collaborating with trusted peers (Huber, 2011). This lack of professional development suggests that there may exist knowledge gaps in heads of school's abilities to support change in their schools (Acton, 2020;

Huber, 2011). The demand for improvement in educational systems has not lessened, even though support structures for professional development in school leadership lack any real benefit (Huber, 2011). There is a growing concern that educational demands have increased the workloads in both school leaders and teachers' responsibilities are creating real problems with regards to time-management and well-being (Timperley & Robinson, 2000).

However, Lasater's (2006) research suggests that professional development for school leaders and teachers could address many of the challenges they face by considering important components in relationship-building that begins rapport and trust first (Lasater, 2016). Using rapport and trust as a foundation, heads of schools are in a unique position to use their leadership styles to motivate and influence teacher development and collaboration within their schools. However, when fostering a collaborative environment for educators, heads of schools need intimate knowledge about structuring professional learning communities and how to nurture them (Lasater, 2016).

Collaborative school environments generally include grouping teachers into effective teams to take on different leadership roles, share resources, encourage activity and empower these teams to be involved in effective decision-making and risk-taking (Seashore-Louis & Riedel, 2003). According to Seashore – Louis and Riedel (2003) professional learning communities involve the sharing of knowledge and resources of teachers, and the focus on examining pedagogical practices which improve academic outcomes (Seashore-Louis & Riedel, 2003).

According to research, professional learning communities have also been seen as reducing isolation while increasing motivation to strive towards accomplishing shared goals (Balyer et al.,

2015). By participating in professional learning communities, teachers are in a better position to be well-informed in school issues while feeling inspired to contribute to school excellence (Balyer et al., 2015). Fullan's (2001) research furthers this argument by suggesting that successful schools develop collaborative cultures by shifting the focus from individual success to developing interactive learning communities (Fullan, 2007). Further to this, Fullan (2007), also claims that school leaders who develop professional learning communities in their schools not only increase teachers' knowledge, but also add to the contribution of academic success (Fullan, 2007).

As a result, more and more educational institutions are gaining interest in establishing teacher learning environments within their establishments (Bush, 2018). School leaders are beginning to adopt professional learning communities as an alternative to more traditional teaching methods and hierarchical leadership models, while also providing opportunities for teachers to actively engage in the decision-making processes (Bush, 2018). Research suggests that the role of professional learning communities in education significantly impacts the school environment (Bush, 2018). Therefore, professional learning communities can be used as a platform to develop personal and professional growth, while increasing overall academic success of the school (Balyer et al., 2015).

2.14 Conclusion:

There have been significant contributions made in the area of both educational leadership and creative teaching as a pedagogy. In the field of educational leadership, scholars such as Hallinger, Leithwood, Bass, Avolio, Bush, Chen, Chang, Stewart, LeSourd, Grady and Greenleaf are many of the great academics whose contributions have paved the way of presenting leadership practices

that best support educational environments, reforms and higher academic achievements. Regardless of which leadership practice is used, it is clear that leadership plays a tremendous role in the educational system and the contributions made to its research have created effective changes in policies and procedures.

Additionally, creative teaching scholars such as Robinson, Craft, Cremin, Stoll, Temperley, Borup, Zhang, Wilson, Grainger, Moos and Shaheen have equally provided valuable and significant studies into how to implement creative teaching practices in educational pedagogies. Their works have pushed boundaries on conventional teaching methods and continue to inspire other researchers to continue to push for stronger creative reforms in in our schools.

However, the literature review presented in this chapter has also exposed gaps in literature pertaining to important knowledge on which leadership practices best support creative teaching. This area in particular is where this research study will attempt to shed some light. Closing this gap in knowledge would create an important building block school towards establishing policies and procedures necessary to support the practice of creative teaching in classrooms.

Although current research on a head of school's ability to support creative teaching still remains limited, there is increasing evidence which indicates that having a relationship between supportive leadership practices and a teacher's ability to practice creative teaching does translate to higher levels of achieving academic success (Frost & Durrant, 2002). Therefore, a head of school's contributions to supporting creative teaching will continue to gain more traction for further examination, and this research study will serve as a significant contribution to closing that gap in knowledge.

In the following chapter, a detailed explanation on the phenomenological qualitative research methods will be presented. This will include a research design, methodology, and methods adopted for the purpose of answering the research question, aims and objectives.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction:

In the previous chapter, an extensive theoretical and empirical literature review gave a synopsis of prior research in relation to leadership, leadership practices, creativity, creative leadership and, more specifically, leadership supporting creativity within Maltese state schools. In this chapter, an analysis of the qualitative research methods used to conduct the research will be explored in detail. This chapter will outline the research question, aim and objectives that guided this study, along with details relating to the rationale for adopting a qualitative research design and how it relates back to the research topic. A discussion will then follow on how choices for interview locations, sampling techniques and participant selections were made for this study. Next, procedures used for data collection will be presented, along with the methods adopted for applying a thematic analysis to the collected data. Last, this chapter will address the validity of this study's credibility and trustworthiness, highlighting the ethical standards and the researcher's role throughout the research process.

3.2 Research Aims and Objectives:

It is the aim of this research study to analyse in greater detail key factors in differing leadership styles adopted by heads of schools that lead to stronger contributions in supporting creative teaching in Maltese primary state schools. The research question being asked for the purpose of achieving this aim was as follows:

Research Question:

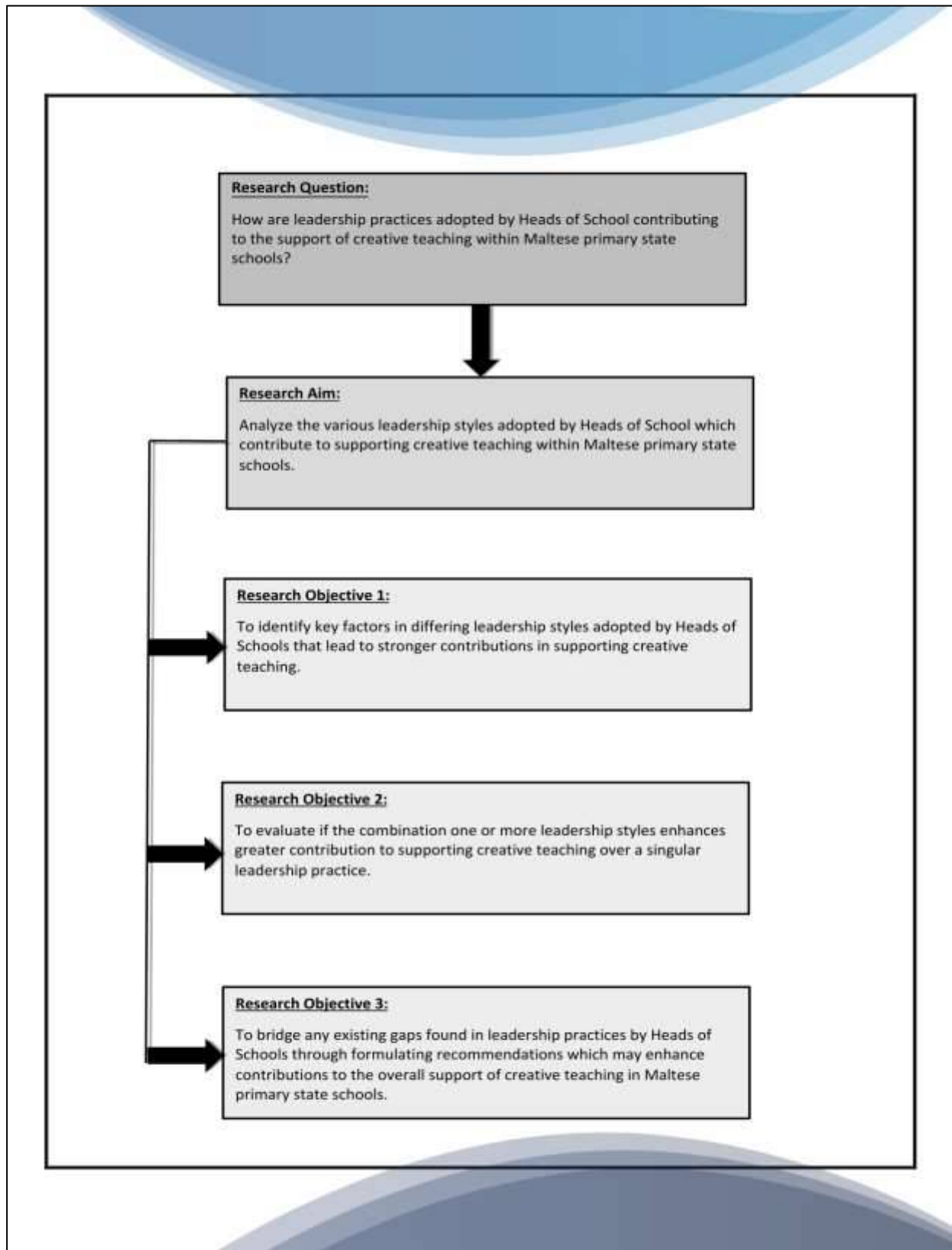
How are leadership practices adopted by heads of schools contributing to the support of creative teaching within Maltese primary state schools?

The above research question encompasses not only leadership practices which heads of schools use to contribute to supporting creative teaching in Maltese state schools, but also their experiences, knowledge and challenges that represent underlying factors for many of these practices.

Additionally, this research question hopes to provide insight into the unique perspectives of school heads' effective leadership strategies when supporting creative teaching, while also exploring any gaps or limitations which may emerge throughout the data collection and analysis. The research question is explored through a qualitative method focusing on the participants' individual interpretations and perspectives throughout their lived experiences as school leaders (Ultanir, 2012). The research question will further examine hidden meanings and emotions associated with the participants' experiences that influenced their leadership practices towards creative teaching (Neimeyer et al, 2001; Dickson et al, 2016). This data will then be used to draw out significant themes, patterns and relationships (Neimeyer et al, 2001) to present the detailed findings and results of the study. (Dickson et al, 2016).

Throughout the research process, the model presented in Figure 3.1. below was used as a visual for reviewing the research questions, aims and objectives throughout the data collection and data analysis processes:

Figure 3.1 Research Question, Aims and Objectives Model:

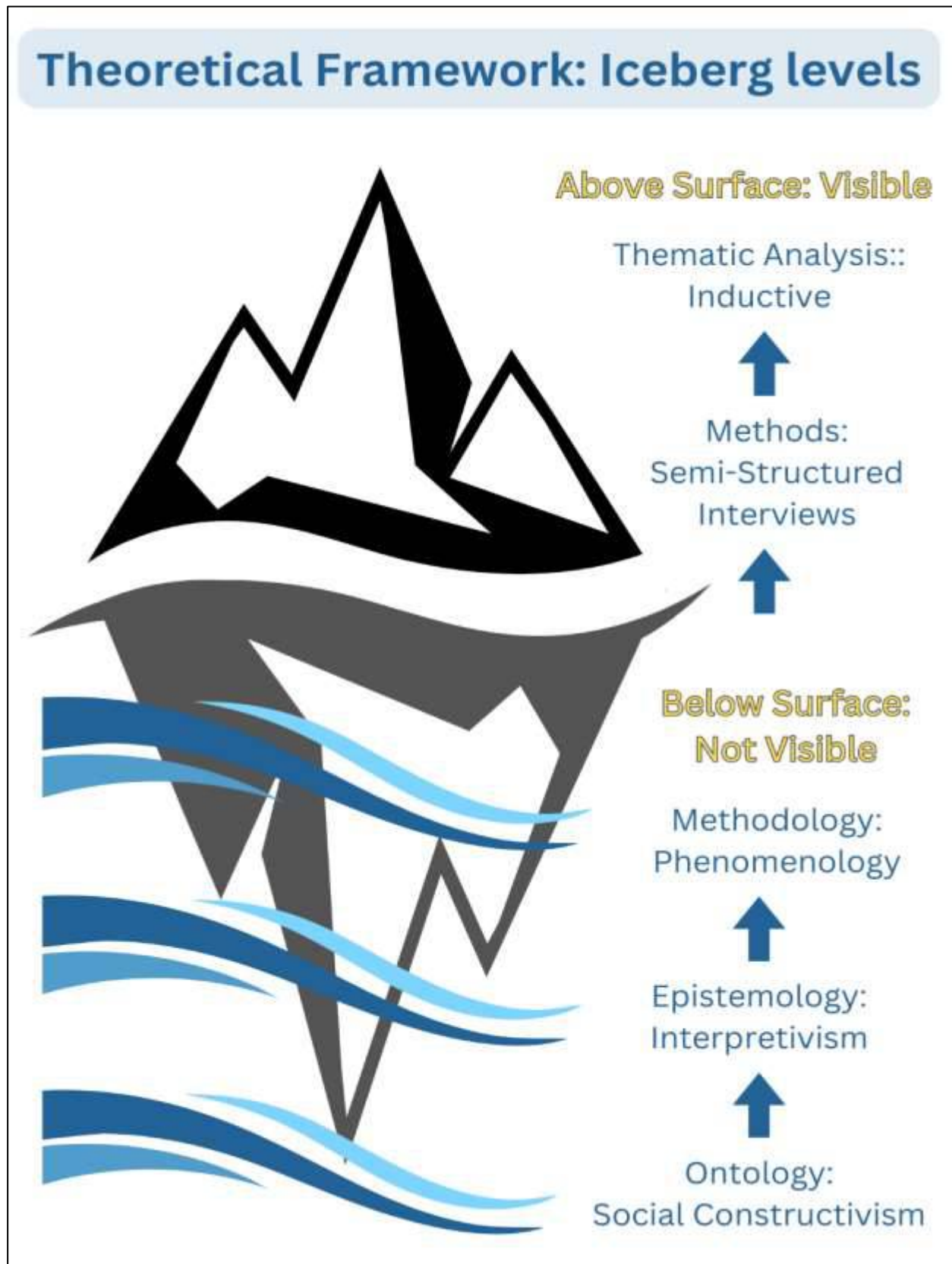


3.3 Research Design:

Using a qualitative research approach to this study is based on the philosophical perspective that all reality is subjectively constructed through lived experiences (Corbin & Strauss, 2012; Garvey & Jones, 2021). For this reason, having a theoretical framework provided foundational structure throughout the entire process of research (Miles et al., 2020; Garvey & Jones, 2021).

In the table below, an outline of the theoretical framework used for this study is presented, highlighting the philosophical theories which underpin the rationale for this research. An Iceberg model (Last, 2013), was chosen as a metaphorical description which was best suited to illustrate the multiple layers of the research process. Below the surface, the first level of the iceberg is the Ontology which, in this research study, focused on 'Social Constructivism' and the belief that all reality is subjective (Miles et al., 2020; Garvey & Jones, 2021) and knowledge is constructed through lived experiences (Naylor & Keogh, 1999; Boghossion, 2006; Ultanir, 2012). The next level of the iceberg is 'Epistemology', primarily centring on the theory of 'Interpretivism'. In interpretivist epistemology, knowledge is interpreted throughout each individual experience, attaching meanings and perceptions to every phenomenon (Prasad & Prasad, 2002; Creswell, 2013; Putnam & Banghart, 2017). The next level of the iceberg is the 'Methodology' which takes these attached meanings and more deeply explores their internal beliefs, emotions and values (Garvey & Jones, 2021), that are associated with an individual's lived experiences (Miller et al., 2018; Fuster-Guillen, 2019). Once we move to the visible levels of the iceberg, we begin to see the instruments and techniques the researcher applied while conducting the research investigation. Finally, at the very tip of the iceberg are the themes, patterns and relationships which emerged and are rigorously documented and presented via a thematic analysis approach.

Figure 3.2 Research Design Iceberg Levels:



In the research design iceberg model above, every level of the iceberg (below the surface) acts as philosophical underpinning before advancing to the next level such as Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology. In these cases, the non-visible – such as how knowledge is constructed and interpreted – and the beliefs, meanings and values that are attached to them are explored. The above level or surface is the visual component that reflects the behaviours, actions and events which lead to the phenomena being researched (Last, 2013).

3.4 Ontology: Social Constructivism

This study adopted the ontology of social constructivism as its underpinning philosophy. Constructionist theory suggests that the participants involved did not discover their knowledge through objective truths, rather it was constructed through their lived experiences (Boghossion, 2006; Ultanir, 2012). From this vantage point, the researcher approaches their exploration with the understanding that reality is a construct of the human brain, and as such, all reality therefore remains subjective. The individual's reality is inseparable from their past experiences and knowledge along with their beliefs, perceptions and ideas. The research data obtained throughout the study maintains that from a constructivist viewpoint, all knowledge and lived experiences are a constructed representation of the real world and that knowledge and the knower cannot be separated. Therefore, for purpose of this study, uncovering knowledge created through lived experiences was believed to be the best approach to answering this dissertation's research question.

Realism or a realist perspective of knowledge relies on the scientific principles that our world solely exists independently of us – regardless of whether we exist in it or even become aware of

it (Bodner, 1986). However, constructionist theorists like John Dewey believed knowledge is created through the interaction with our environments, building from prior knowledge and meaningful experiences through discovery (Dewey, 1966; Dewey, 1998). To further this sentiment, Piaget (1977) claimed that knowledge is gained through the construction of its meaning rather than passive engagement. According to Piaget, when an individual interacts with his or her environment, they perform the act of assimilation and adaptation. If the previous knowledge does not work with the new, the individual adapts their understanding to incorporate or disregard the new knowledge (Piaget, 1977).

In their 1999 research, Naylor and Keogh identified the core principles of constructivist theory by illustrating that meaning is constructed through the linking of new ideas with learnt knowledge. Naylor and Keogh (1999) emphasize that when constructing knowledge, individuals begin to attach interpretations and meanings by relating relevant ideas and theories to their lived experiences and existing knowledge:

The central principles of this approach are that learners can only make sense of new situations in terms of their existing understanding. Learning involves an active process in which learners construct meaning by linking new ideas with their existing knowledge.

(Naylor & Keogh, 1999, p.93)

Therefore, based on the above descriptions of social constructivism, this study adopted this philosophy to gain important insights into the participants' knowledge attributed through lived experiences, their interpretations and understanding of such lived experiences and the meanings and values they attached to these outcomes within the context of an educational environment (Bauersfeld, 1995; Dickson et al., 2016). Social constructivism was felt to be the best philosophical

approach to understanding the complexities of this phenomenon - how heads of schools' leadership practices contribute to supporting creative teaching in Maltese state schools.

3.5 Epistemology: Interpretivism:

Moving up to the next level of the thematic iceberg is interpretive epistemology which approached this study from two distinctive viewpoints; the first being that participants' interpretations are directly associated to their lived experiences and then secondly, using these interpretations to explore the various points of view that influence meanings and beliefs (Putnam & Banghart, 2017).

Interpretivism aims to provide richness in the insights discovered through participants' lived experiences by focusing its questions around uncovering individual meanings and perceptions (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). The interpretivist epistemology allows for deeper exploration into the beliefs, emotions and values attached to the phenomena of interest. Furthermore, interpretive research is interconnected to social constructivism by working off the premise that reality is subjective through constructed knowledge and shapes the way individuals interpret this experience in their environment (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022).

In relation to this research study, many of these interpretations will become the precursors (Zoller & Kline, 2008) to eventually understanding how the participants' leadership practices develop throughout their educational careers. The interpretative epistemology provided a solid base for revealing insights, perspectives, and meanings with which the participants constructed their knowledge when applying leadership practices to support creative teaching.

3.6 Methodology: Phenomenology:

The next level of this study looked to further deepen the understanding of how the leadership practices of heads of schools contribute to supporting creative teaching within Maltese state schools. As examined in the previous chapter, current literature offers a variety of choices regarding which leadership style would be best adopted by school leadership teams for supporting creative teaching within their educational environments. Having the voices of school heads who are directly involved with leading educational responsibilities offered the researcher valuable information into how the interpretation of these lived experiences translated to direct beliefs and meaning, which shaped their leadership practices for supporting creative teaching.

In order to understand these perspectives even deeper, a methodological approach using phenomenological research explored how interpretations were established through participants' constructed knowledge (Miller et al., 2018) while exploring any hidden beliefs, emotions and values attached to this phenomenon of interest (Fuster-Guillen, 2019). Phenomenological research methods through personal in-depth interviews were the most preferable choice for data collection, which empowered participants with a voice (Creswell, 2013) when reflecting on their viewpoints through the personal exploration of perceptions, beliefs and meanings when recounting these lived experiences (Creswell, 2013).

This research study's focus throughout each interview was to obtain the most accurate information with regard to how heads of schools in Maltese state schools contribute to supporting creative teaching by understanding their lived experiences and the meanings, emotions and perspectives they attribute to them. Therefore, a phenomenological approach was

deemed to be the most appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005 p. 3).

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) describe qualitative research as focusing on interpreting phenomena within their natural environment to make sense of different meanings and interpretations that these situations create (Denzin & Lincoln 1994). Additionally, qualitative research often uses an inductive approach (Creswell, 2013) that can incorporate many different research methods, including observations, interviews, focus groups and documents to study the phenomena of interest. Afterwards, an analytical process of identifying themes and patterns through coding techniques is used, then placed into categories and headings which emerge throughout the data collection (Relacion, 2018). The features of qualitative research are often very purposeful and flexible, which enables researchers to explore meaning and understanding through comprehensive, descriptive, detailed and holistic methods of investigation (Relacion, 2018). The researcher and the participant become interdependent throughout the data collection process (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). Furthermore, the role of the researcher throughout this interdependence is to interpret the perceptions and meanings the participants attach to their lived experiences while investigating the phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln,2011; Creswell, 2013).

Through in-depth semi-structured interviews with 7 school heads in Maltese state schools, the researcher examined the relationships between leadership practices and creative teaching within educational environments. School heads in Maltese state schools continuously face new challenges with changing demographics, technology and pressures to meet the increasing demands of the 21st century (Cauchi Cuschieri 2007; Cutajar 2007; Mangion & Riebel’s 2023).

Meeting these demands from stakeholders, parents, ministry officials and community members, it is imperative to understanding school leaders' experiences when supporting creative teaching to acknowledge what is working, but also to identify any gaps which may be restricting. This chapter will explain in further detail the process of the method chosen in the coming sub-sections.

3.7 Data Collection Methods:

3.7.1 Site Selection:

The research site was selected based on the school head's availability and ability to feel comfortable in an undisturbed environment for a duration of 1.5 – 2 hours. For many of these participants, feeling comfortable in a preferred location or medium (on-line/Zoom) was the most logical choice to ensure the likelihood of receiving the best information. Having a convenient location that made the participants more at ease may have invoked particular insights and experiences in relation to the research question that otherwise may have been forgotten (Bjørvik et al., 2023). Furthermore, having participants choose their own locations out of convenience, comfortability, or both attached a sense of empowerment to the individuals to feel more relaxed in their own natural environment (Elwood & Martin, 2000; Bjørvik et al., 2023).

3.7.2 Participant Selection:

Research participants were selected from state schools in the country of Malta. The school heads who were interviewed fell into the category 'Purposeful (targeted) Sampling' (Suri, 2011; Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024); for their knowledge, ranges of experience, different age brackets and leadership characteristics based on the school ethos. The study required between 6-8 heads of

schools to participate in semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions to further explore how their leadership practice contributed to supporting creative teaching.

Using purposeful sampling methods was done by design to ensure that not only were the right participants selected, but also enough participants were available in case of personal or scheduling conflicts with this study. In total, 11 heads of schools in Maltese state schools were asked to be interviewed, and 7 were then chosen to offer the researcher their unique and differing perspectives required for this study. The participants were also selected based on their school's proximity to one another. Each participant was a head of school in a differing city or locality. To not oversaturate the data, the researcher decided that 7 participants would be an ideal number to garner a strong collection of data to represent the target population and avoid creating redundancy of repetitive answers (Shaheen et al., 2016). For these reasons, it was determined by the researcher that a smaller sampling size allowed for greater in-depth analysis to establish experience-rich perspectives of the phenomena (Shaheen et al., 2016; Shaheen et al., 2019).

Maltese state schools were chosen over their counterparts in Church and Independent schools as a result of the significant reforms in recent years, which decreased the overall centralization in education to better prepare its students for success outside the classroom (Cutajar, 2007). The Ministry of Education's policy underlined the importance that educational leadership has to engage and promote their teachers to further develop their abilities and allow more autonomy and decision-making for each school (Ministry of Education Youth and Employment, 2005; Cutajar, 2007).

The researcher felt that choosing a state school's autonomy because of their decentralized policies was best suited to explore leadership practices. Past research has suggested that Maltese education systems were often highly centralized, possibly due to its British colonial past (Cutajar, 2022). As a result, the Maltese government enacted a decentralized model of decision-making policies in the mid-1990s (Cutajar, 2022). This decentralization adopted a framework that made education more relevant to the needs of the students in Malta. School leaders were entrusted with the responsibility of promoting participation within each level of their own schools (Cutajar, 2022). Additionally, if a school leader's decision-making abilities are more decentralized in their schools, then it may provide valuable insights into leadership weaknesses or strengths otherwise hidden in a school with less autonomy (Schembri & Sciberras, 2022).

3.7.3 Demographics:

A demographic table was used during the investigation process so as not to assume the idea that the phenomena of interest was targeting only a single homogenous population, but that the research included diversity in age, gender, years of experience and socio-economic backgrounds (Hammer, 2011).

Therefore, the target needed to be appropriately disclosed, otherwise there would be little in the way of providing a frame of reference to examine the generalizability of the research (Thacker, 2019). In addition, demographic information ensured that the selection of participants was well balanced and represented. Providing the readers with an accurate depiction of an inclusive demographic sample could only add to the validity of the research findings (Hughes et al., 2022).

In the illustration below; an example of a demographic table which was used to ensure that a good diverse range of participants were selected.

Figure 3.3 The 7 Heads of Schools Demographic Profiles:

Participants:	Age:	Gender:	Number of Years in Teaching:	Years in a Leadership role:	Type of Primary School Attended:
P1	44	Female	17 Years	1 Year	Independent/Church School
P2	42	Male	12 Years	1 Year	Church School
P3	58	Female	13 Years	17 Years	Church School
P4	63	Female	22 Years	8 Years	State School
P5	52	Male	13 Years	11 Years	State School
P6	58	Female	17 Years	19 Years	Church School
P7	61	Male	15 Years	13 Years	State School

3.7.4 In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews:

As mentioned earlier, the philosophical foundation for this research study was qualitative in nature. Once the locations and participants were chosen and had agreed to be interviewed, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect all the necessary data to answer this study's research question. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to be flexible and adaptable depending on which direction the questions lead (Mashuri & Software, 2022). Additionally, follow-up questions enabled the researcher to engage in additional conversations depending on the answers that otherwise may have been missed in questionnaires, surveys or focus groups (Mashuri & Software, 2022). In order to preserve the validity of the participants'

answers, the researcher sent back a copy of the transcribed notes (from the interview) back to the interviewees to ensure all answers were correct and described in the proper context. If the participants disagreed with or wanted answers omitted, they were given the opportunity to do so. Furthermore, if additional answers came to light in the time since the original interview, the participants would now be allowed to add to their previous answers.

In Rubin & Rubin's (2005) study, they point out that qualitative interviews are described as a conversation in which the researcher facilitates the discussion with the interviewee for the purpose of in-depth analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Additional viewpoints for semi-structured interviews are having the researcher taking on a metaphoric position of an archaeologist or gold miner. From this perspective, information is buried, and the researcher must excavate or dig out the hidden knowledge underground (Kvale, 1996). Although still inductive in its approach, there remains an element of objectivity when mining for information as knowledge is assumed to be in its purest form (Kvale, 1996).

A second metaphor the researcher can assume is one where they become a traveller. From this perspective, the researcher commences on a journey that engages in conversations with the local townspeople (participants) on their perspectives on lived experiences within their environments (Kvale, 1996). The archaeologist or gold miner emphasizes the impartiality of uncovering the facts from the participants, while the traveller looking for new knowledge can easily deviate into other avenues of the conversation depending on what information is discovered throughout the discussion (Mashuri & Software, 2022). In the latter, the interview is more flexible and adapts to whichever direction the conversation takes (Kvale, 1996; Mashuri & Software, 2022). Based on both of these descriptions, the researcher decided to approach each interview using the

metaphor of the traveller who embarks on a journey of participants' thoughts, feelings and perspectives on this particular phenomenon.

6 of the 7 interviews were conducted at the school head's office in the Maltese state school in which they presided. 1 head of school requested the interview be conducted via a Zoom platform as they felt this would give the best opportunity for the least amount of disturbance. Each participant was given the choice of location to ensure they felt as comfortable as possible.

21 interview questions were carefully constructed prior to the discussion (see Appendix B). This gave the researcher a clear focus on the direction of each meeting and ensured each participant received the exact same questions. The researcher gave room for ample flexibility to allow the discussion to manifest organically. For each interview, the questions were asked in the exact same order to establish consistency in the research method. Additionally, using a structured set of interview questions allowed the researcher to speed up or slow down the process, depending on time management and respect for the interviewee's time constraints (Patton, 2002).

Follow-up questions were asked during the interview process to further extract information or clarification (Patton, 2002). Interview questions followed a specific sequence of; demographic, general, administrative, leadership, creativity, and leadership in creativity. Each section was designed to build information off the last. Additionally, many of these sections started off with a question asking about the interviewee's knowledge of management, leadership, leadership styles, creativity and creative leadership so that the researcher had a foundation of the participant's prior knowledge before moving forward (Patton, 2002).

3.7.5 Instruments:

Aside from the researcher himself being the primary instrument during the interview process, which is discussed further in the section 'Role of the Researcher', no recording devices were included in the discussions. When interviewing participants for a research study, the researcher can never know the behavioural decisions being made inside the individual's subconscious mind (Priya et al., 2021). This is very important to the researcher because not all actions and thoughts are a byproduct of our conscious thinking. Instead, many of the answers given are brought forth from the subconscious mind to the conscious and relayed back to the researcher (Priya et al., 2021; Kamble, 2021). Research has shown that our subconscious mind has a profound influence on our behaviour regardless of our awareness of it (Kamble, 2021).

Studies have shown that when data taken from audio recordings were compared to field notes taken directly in the interview, the results have proven that both were equivalent in capturing relevant details (Rutakumwa et al., 2019). In many circumstances, not recording the data is even seen as the best option rather than second best (Rutakumwa et al., 2019). The reasons for this are; recording devices, like the interviewer himself, become an instrument in the process. This means the device itself cannot remain neutral or impartial because every instrument used, including the interviewer, unconsciously has the potential to influence the data (Nordstrom, 2015). Therefore, part of the responsibility of the researcher is to minimize as much as possible any unpleasantness to ensure confidence and reliability of the participant's contributions (Tuckett, 2005). Having the assumption that using a recording device will always produce the most accurate results negates the human element of 'trustworthiness' that may influence the accuracy of the data. (Rutakumwa et al., 2019).

In order to get the most real and authentic answers as possible, the researcher opted to not record the interviews, instead take thorough field notes during each interview. Additionally, not including a recording device during the interview process was intentionally done to diminish any potential for unconscious fears of repercussions from answers given and allowed the participants to feel less vulnerable and more in control of their environment. For that reason, all participants were told well beforehand that they would not be recorded during the interviews.

3.8 Data Analysis Strategies:

For this study, the researcher used a thematic analysis to guide in the examination of all data obtained. Thematic analysis is a step-by-step process whereby the researcher engages with the data while looking for themes and patterns which relate back to the research question (Nowell et al., 2017). This model provided a solid structure when analysing the information.

Thematic analysis, therefore, was the most logical choice for analysing the collected data. It included the coding and descriptive data along with documenting all themes and patterns which emerged. These themes were redefined constantly to identify any overarching narratives within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is exploratory in nature and is a great method for structuring information. It can be used with numerous epistemological philosophies such as the phenomenological approach used in this research study. Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher coded and categorized the data into different themes. The themes were then developed extensively to thoroughly examine the phenomenon of how heads of schools' leadership practices contributed to the support of creative teaching in Maltese state schools.

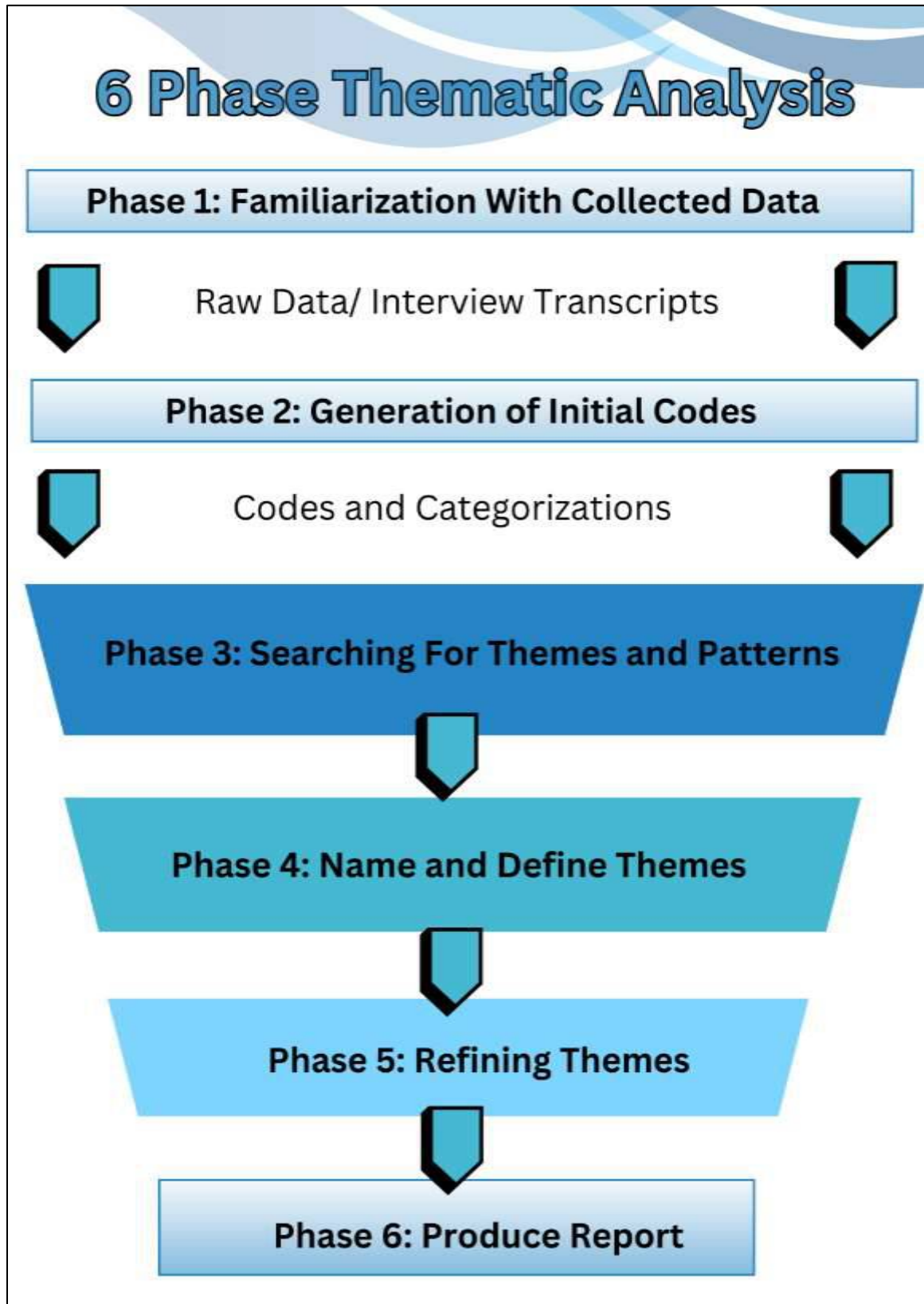
The researcher in this study chose to adapt Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis as their guide throughout this method. This process of examination serves to identify, analyse, and report patterns (themes) within data, and often goes further than this, interpreting meaning, emotions and perceptions. Furthermore, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide is designed to ensure that each level of analysis builds off of the last one, to provide coherence and structure to the data, while connecting findings to themes and patterns (Naeem et al., 2023).

After all the raw data from each interview was initially collected, the researcher then sent the participants a copy of their personal interview transcription to check for accuracy and consistency with the answers. This procedure is referred to as 'member checking', which is also at times referred to as 'respondent validation' (Birt et al., 2016). This approach to data collection and analysis continues to work alongside the participants post-interview to guarantee the precision of the information aligns with the intended views (Busetto et al., 2020).

Once the final approval from all participants was given and any adjustments made, the researcher then performed the initial coding to begin identifying themes which related to school heads' leadership practices that contributed to supporting creative teaching. Once transcripts were coded, categorized and short descriptions were added, themes and patterns began to emerge from the collected data and were documented thoroughly. Afterwards, some quotes from each participant's interview were selected and inserted into the transcript to add additional richness and depth to the findings.

Below I have outlined the steps taken in this analytic work, which have been informed by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide to thematic analysis.

Figure 3.4 Six Phase Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006):



3.8.1 Phase 1: Familiarization of Collected Data

The very first step is to completely immerse oneself in the data obtained. As a result of collecting the data first-hand, the researcher was already aware of much of the information provided in the interviews. Regardless, it was imperative that the researcher become completely familiarized and immersed in the totality and extensiveness of the data. Phase 1, therefore, became the foundation for the next 5 phases.

3.8.2 Phase 2: Generation of Initial Codes

Once all data had been thoroughly read, the coding process began by generating a catalogue of features which appeared relevant to the research. In this stage, all data was assessed through the lens of finding meaning and relationships.

3.8.3 Phase 3: Searching for Themes and Patterns

Once all relevant information had been coded and categorized, the researcher then began to search for themes and patterns within the data set. In phase 3, there was a shift in the approach to analysing data. From this point forward, the researcher moved from coding to identifying potential themes. This stage also involved naming these codes to begin creating a thematic map.

3.8.4 Phase 4: Name and Define Themes

This phase started when the researcher had identified a list of candidate themes. During this process, it became evident to the researcher that some of the initial themes were not actually themes at all. Some did not have enough evidence to support them or were far too broad to

include, and simply collapsed into other themes. In this phase, the thematic map began to reveal a coherent pattern.

3.8.5 Phase 5: Refining Themes

Once the thematic map of the data had been generated, the researcher continued to define and further refine all themes that were considered relevant to the analysis. For all individual themes, the researcher had to write a comprehensive analysis. At this stage, it was vital that the researcher considered how each theme related to the research question.

3.8.6 Phase 6: Producing Report

A report was now created with a full set of worked-out themes which included the final analysis and write-up in order to share the findings and validity of the researcher's analysis.

3.9 Quality of Research Methods:

3.9.1 Trustworthiness:

Many steps were undertaken to preserve the integrity of this research study. In order for the research to remain as trustworthy as possible, first and foremost the identities of each participant were pseudonymized so there would be little motivation to compromise the truth about their experiences and perceptions. Throughout each interview, participants were allowed to speak openly about their opinions, challenges and emotions, and the impact their experience plays in the educational environment.

Correctly providing the most accurate answers from each participant's lived experiences towards the phenomena of interest is imperative for both the trustworthiness and credibility of this study

(Stahl & King, 2020). All data provided by the participants needed to be as truthful and relevant to the research question as possible to ensure the most accurate results (Stahl & King, 2020).

3.9.2 Credibility:

To provide credibility to the research, a technique known as member checking was implemented. After interviews were finished, the researcher sent a copy of the entire transcription to each individual and allowed them to review it in its entirety and edit anything they wished to remove, felt was misconstrued or anything they felt was overlooked or remembered at a later date and wished to include. Member checking also limits the potential for researcher bias to creep into each interview, which could then jeopardize the credibility of the data (Stahl & King, 2020).

The researcher must at all times remain vigilant to their own prejudices and influences which may arise during the data collection and data analysis process (Stahl & King, 2020). The researcher during this study applied a member-checking technique to establish the research process did not result in any kind of biases.

3.10 Ethical Considerations:

At the beginning of this process, the Faculty Research and Ethics Committee (FREC) at the University of Malta gave full permission to proceed with data collection. This was accompanied by the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research & Innovation granting permission from specific college principals to interview heads of schools within their districts.

Selected school heads were approached with an explanation of the research study, the research question and a request to participate. Once invitations were accepted, dates, times and locations

were established and the data collection process began. All interview procedures and potential concerns were explicitly disclosed to participants prior to the interviews by information/consent forms along with a signed statement allowing for permission to proceed (see Appendices 2, 3). All participants were well informed of the researcher's expectations before giving their approval to be interviewed.

Additionally, participants were informed that all data collected – including written and online platforms – would be stored on a computer in a secure place, saved as password protected, and in an encrypted format. The participation in this study was entirely voluntary; and individuals were free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason. Participants were also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions. Participants were informed that if they chose to withdraw, any data collected would be erased as long as it was technically possible.

There were no direct benefits, inducements, rewards or compensation offered to the participants. Participation involved no physical or emotional risks. Furthermore, all participants had the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify, and – where applicable – ask for the data concerning them to be erased. All data collected has been stored in an anonymized form for a period of 1 year following the completion of the study.

3.11 Role of the Researcher:

As mentioned earlier, when conducting research using a phenomenological qualitative approach, the role the researcher took on was that of an instrument which facilitated the process (Fassinger

& Morrow, 2013). The researcher's primary function was to explore and examine the information provided by the participant's answers with relation to their lived experiences for further analysis (Fink, 2000).

Therefore, it was important to clarify in the beginning to all participants that as an instrument of the study, the researcher would remain transparent in their responsibilities, expectations and intentions. For the quality and trustworthiness of the research, it was also the responsibility of the researcher to provide the most reliable and accurate information available as to not negatively impact the credibility of the study (Creswell, 2013).

3.12 Conclusion:

To summarize, Chapter 3 provided a comprehensive analysis on the qualitative methodology used for this study, while providing the philosophical underpinnings which influenced the research. The researcher first reviewed the aims and objectives of the study, then the research design which outlined the research question, aims and objectives in detail. The intent of the research question was to explore the lived experience and the meanings/perceptions of how heads of school's leadership practices contributed to the support of creative teaching in Maltese state schools. The researcher then discussed the research design along with the theoretical framework used as the foundational underpinning for this study providing an illustration of an' *Iceberg Model*' as template (Last, 2013).

After reviewing the philosophical underpinnings and data collection strategies, the chapter included the data collection and analysis methods incorporated for this study. The data analysis explained in detail the intent of choosing a thematic analysis for this study and incorporating

Braun and Clarke's (2006) '*Six-phase Guide*' for using it (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following these sections, the researcher discussed the trustworthiness, credibility and dependability (Stahl & King, 2020), and the overall quality of the research methods. Finally, this study revealed the ethical considerations and the role of the researcher in this study.

In the following chapter, research on the key findings of the study will be presented and discussed along with the analysis of all themes, patterns and relationships discovered from the participants' answers.

Chapter 4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction:

In the previous chapter, an extensive analysis of the qualitative research methods used to conduct this research was given along with the methods adopted for applying a thematic analysis to the collected data. In this chapter, the main themes and sub-themes generated from data collected while conducting semi-structured interviews of 7 heads of schools in Maltese state schools will be presented in detail. This will be followed by an analysis and discussion of each theme in relation to the research question, aims and objectives and will be compared to existing literature. Further recommendations will be included in this chapter as well.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to provide insights into the many unique lived experiences and perspectives of each school head's adopted leadership strategies when supporting creative teaching and the meanings/interpretations attached to them.

It is the aim of this research study to analyse which leadership styles adopted by heads of schools led to stronger contributions in supporting creative teaching in Maltese primary state schools. Additionally, this research aimed to identify any key factors and/or combinations found in each head of school's differing leadership styles while exploring any existing gaps found in the current leadership practices in Maltese state schools. The research question below served as the primary guide throughout the entire data collection process:

How are leadership practices adopted by heads of schools contributing to the support of creative teaching within Maltese primary state schools?

4.2 Demographic Findings:

As previously referenced in the Methodology chapter, a demographic profile was created to ensure that the participants were well balanced and represented. Creating a demographic profile added to the validity of the research findings in this study. Including variations in participants' demographics was chosen so that the research study was not unintentionally targeting individuals who may have shared similar experiences. Instead, the researcher focused the research on getting as unique and rich perspectives through diversity in age, gender, years of experience and socio-economic backgrounds as possible.

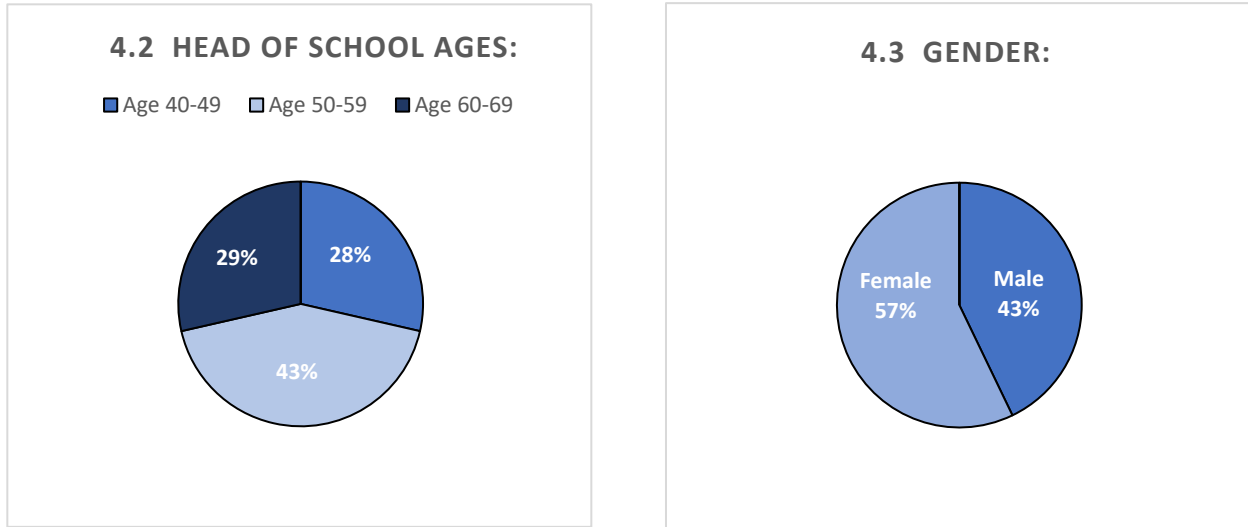
All 7 participants received a very traditional educational experience. 5 out of the 7 participants said the experience was very negative, reporting elements of humiliation, punishment and shaming. 3 participants referenced the phrase 'Talk and Chalk' a method of teaching which involves the teacher lecturing and students taking notes. 2 participants (P4) and (P6) stated that although their primary education was traditional, they found it to be an enjoyable experience. All 7 participants stated that creativity was either non-existent, not important or belonged to the arts. To note, (P3) was exposed to creative teaching in an independent secondary school and (P4) stated she grew up in a creative family environment. The other 5 participants (P1), (P2), (P5), (P6), and (P7), experienced little to no creativity in their primary education with the exception of the Arts, P.E and random school events.

4.2.1 Age and Gender:

In the area of age, all heads of schools were above the age of 40 with the youngest being 42, and the oldest being 63. Having a broad range of ages which covered almost two decades showed

that perspectives could be viewed through different lenses. All participants identified as either male or female. The percentages between the 7 participants' ages and genders are displayed below:

Figure 4.2 & 4.3 Heads of Schools Ages and Genders by Percentage



4.2.2 Years of Teaching and Leadership Experience:

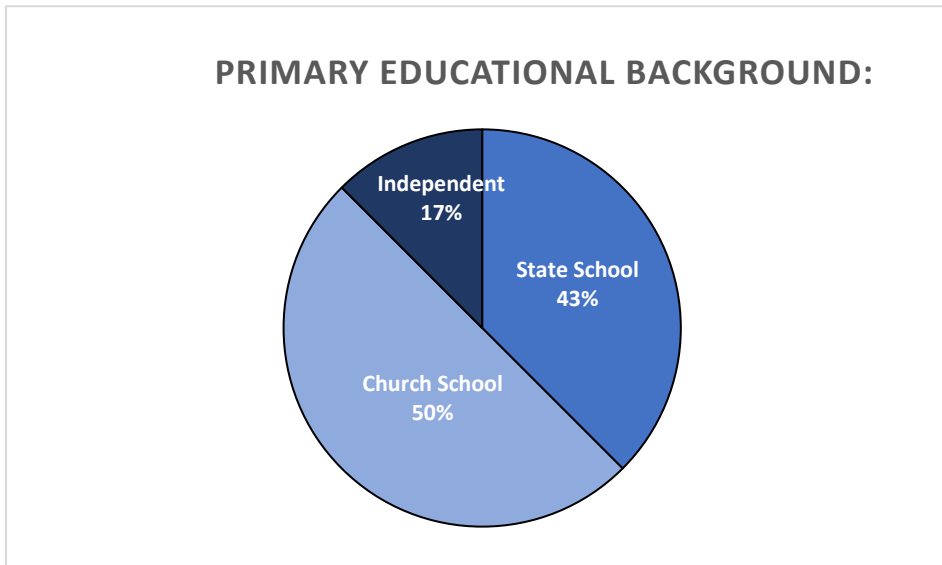
Variances amongst years of teaching experience were much closer together with only 10 years separating the least amount of teaching experience (12 years) and the longest amount of teaching experience (22 years). Most averaged anywhere from between 13 years and 17 years of teaching experience.

The differences in leadership experience as head of school was much more significant, with two participants starting in their first years while others have been in the role for over 10 years.

4.2.3 Educational Background in Primary School:

Finally, the last column in the school head’s demographic profile illustrated the different educational backgrounds each participant experienced in while attending primary school in Malta. The percentages between the 7 participants’ primary schools which they attended are displayed below:

Figure 4.4 Heads of Schools Primary Educational Background by Percentage:



4.3 Interview Results:

Figure 4.5 Participants Original Transcribed Interviews:

Participant 1: Original transcribed interview can be found in appendix 10.
Participant 2: Original transcribed interview can be found in appendix 11
Participant 3: Original transcribed interview can be found in appendix 12
Participant 4: Original transcribed interview can be found in appendix 13
Participant 5: Original transcribed interview can be found in appendix 14
Participant 6: Original transcribed interview can be found in appendix 15
Participant 7: Original transcribed interview can be found in appendix 16

In the results section, all data collected relevant to the research questions, aims and objectives will be presented and described without interpretation. For this phenomenological study, the results present the raw findings from each of the 7 participants' unique experiences including direct quotes to further support the research. All data will be displayed through the six main themes which emerged from the interview results using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach. The 6 main themes which emerged from this research can be seen in Figure 4.6 below.

Figure 4.6 Main Themes:

6 - Main Themes
Theme 1: Time Constraints
Theme 2: Building A Strong Team/ Teamwork
Theme 3: Motivation Through Leadership
Theme 4: Communication and Empathy
Theme 5: Continuous Learning
Theme 6: Holistic and Outdoor Learning Spaces

Additionally, the number of interviews where the theme appeared are listed below

Figure 4.7 Number of Interviews the Main Theme Appeared In:

Number of Interviews The Main Themes Appeared In	Participants
Time Constraints appeared in 6 of 7 interviews	(P1) (P2) (P3) (P4) (P5) (P7)
Building A Strong Team/ Teamwork appeared in 7 of 7 interviews	(P1) (P2) (P3) (P4) (P5) (P6) (P7)
Motivation Through Leadership appeared in 5 of 7 interviews	(P1) (P2) (P4) (P5) (P7)
Communication and Empathy appeared in 7 of 7 interviews	(P1) (P2) (P3) (P4) (P5) (P6) (P7)
Continuous Learning appeared in 5 of 7 interviews	(P1) (P2) (P3) (P4) (P5)
Holistic and Outdoor Learning Spaces appeared in 7 of 7 interviews	(P1) (P2) (P3) (P4) (P5) (P6) (P7)

4.3.1 Theme 1 Results: Time Constraints

Participant 1

Participant 1 mentioned time constraints as obstacles to support because of timetables and curriculum being too structured with not enough time for creative teaching lessons. They went on to say that school heads are overwhelmed with workload to assist with observations and feedback, “there is not enough time to get everything done on your own”. Participant 1 describes having far too many responsibilities especially with managerial and administrative tasks, and not enough time to complete everything on their own. However, participant 1 did acknowledge they feel very supported by both staff and superiors.

Participant 2

Participant 2 described time constraints as preventing their ability to support creative teaching because of school heads getting trapped in too many managerial duties. Participant 2 goes on to explain the very lengthy list of responsibilities, with the biggest challenge being time and getting out of the office. "A school leader's responsibilities are 60% leadership and 40% managerial". Additionally, participant 1 states that teachers say they do not have enough time to teach creatively because the curriculum is too rigid and lot to cover in a short period of time. Students need to be prepared for exams and traditional teaching is seen as good, "learning outcomes are designed for examination". Plus, teachers are afraid to teach creatively and get out of their comfort zones. Participant 2 also stated that "teachers are competing with gadgets and technologies, in traditional teaching, children are losing interest". Furthermore, participant 2 added that teachers are struggling to compete with attention spans.

Participant 3

Participant 3 describes time constraints as not having enough time to work out all of the challenging situations including administrative duties and teachers' well-being, "managing people is the most challenging aspect of the job". Participant 3 stated that currently schools are really focused on teaching the core subjects. The National Curriculum Framework does support creativity in curriculum, "we are producing a society of robots; however, STEM education is a really good way to break away from traditional ways of teaching".

Participant 4

Participant 4 mentioned time constraints as, "spending way too much time in maintenance of

school issues and less time needed to lead". Additionally, participant 4 stated that many teachers say that the "syllabus is too rigid". Participant 4 also stated that the National Curriculum Framework's expectations are not all practical. In order to implement creativity in lessons, the LO's also need to change and teachers need to get away from handouts.

Participant 5

Participant 5 described leadership and teaching time constraints as administrative/managerial tasks which prevents school heads from supporting teachers in creative teaching.

Participant 5 stated that they were always bombarded with too much homework in the Maltese system. Unfortunately, not much has changed from then until now. Teachers feel that they don't have enough time to teach everything they need to, and it becomes a "checked box" mentality.

There are a lot of "time restraints", however, when I taught, the curriculum was bigger but we always managed to find time but now that there is a push for creativity, the teachers are complaining that they have no time, "The ministry of education tries to instil creativity into the curriculum but it is not practical for real life". Participant 5 further explained that there are more learning outcomes than there is time to teach, and teachers feel responsible based on students' performance on their assessments and exams. "Teachers end up teaching curriculum that they know is going to be on the exam". The students just figure out what needs to be done and they do it. It doesn't promote any kind of critical or creative thinking. "Students are not taught to think creatively or critically in Maltese States Schools".

Participant 5 stated that they always see teachers going into class with tons of handouts and textbooks. There is way too much of a reliance on teaching this way. Things like creativity and

imagination and even critical thinking end up not being part of the learning process. “The way teachers are being formed or transformed right now is they are in a constant race to cover content”. “I hate seeing it, but it is a systematic problem”.

Participant 7

Participant 7 described how time constraints affect creative teaching as “fun and creativity are being lost, there is no time for it because everything is geared towards assessments”. Participant 7 went on to say that in Malta we are still too reliant on textbooks, handouts and homework. It’s too compliant on fill in the blank and “check boxes” mentality here, “it’s just assessment after assessment and clicking off boxes”. Additionally participant 7 states that “our students don’t think”. Participant 7 added that when a teacher would teach creatively, “I would get notes from the parents saying they are not good teachers”. This goes against creativity. “Teachers go from one learning outcome to another, and simply check off boxes”. Additionally, participant 7 states that students need to, “not to waste time on games and social media, instead students need to be challenged and to learn to think outside the box”.

Additionally, all 7 participants were asked to describe their day-to-day responsibilities of being a school head. Their responses are displayed in a word cloud below:

Figure 4.8 Day-To-Day Responsibilities of a School Head:



Development of teachers, staff and students appeared the most frequent followed by managing attitudes, school policies, administrative tasks and financing.

4.3.2 Theme 2 Results: Building a Strong Team/Teamwork

Participant 1

Participant 1 described building a strong team and teamwork in their leadership practice as a very important part of leadership because it creates a structure for the school environment. Participant 1 reiterated that good leadership are leaders who transform people which includes a visionary aspect as well. Participant 1 further added that part of running an effective school means being of service to your team in order to help transform the school leadership team and all teachers to be their own leaders.

Additionally, participant 1 stated that with the amount of managerial and administrative duties a school needs to perform, it is important to always keep an open-door policy and provide more support, "I needed to build a team and then put in a structure".

Participant 2

Participant 2 described building a strong team and teamwork for supporting creative teaching as the head of school, you need to surround yourself with a great team through Distributed leadership, "it comes down to the team, everyone can be a leader in his or her own way". Participant 2 added that encouragement is given through autonomy to be their own leaders and share their creative ideas with everyone. Being present, face-to-face communication and empowerment are all part of being on a strong team and working together. Additionally,

participant 2 stated that “one needs to build a school community, otherwise the education system can get too tiring and exhausting without help”. Additionally, participant 2 added that an effective manager gets things done, while an effective leader gets things done by using the “Hands of the many not of the few”.

Participant 3

Participant 3 described team building and teamwork as being one team with one head of school and seven assistant heads. When the workload is shared it becomes lighter and we all gain more insight.

“My leadership style is Distributed, as a team we use our voices to speak out and become introspective with how the school environment can improve”. Participant 3 shared that when problems are shared the situation becomes diluted and we get back good advice. “I am surrounded by a team of strong leaders who all share in the responsibilities and provide honest feedback on directions and improvement”.

Additionally, participant 3 stated “the school manages because we have a team of really good leaders”.

Participant 4

Participant 4 described team building and teamwork as balance between achieving all of your goals through creating change and stability, inspiration and control, and always promoting developmental growth as a team. Participant 4 further added “I am a Servant leader, Transformational leader and Visionary leader, there are aspects and qualities in all three that are

shared to lead a school and cater to teachers, staff, students and clerks' needs as a strong team". Participant 4 also stated that it is important to use inspirational leadership, face-to-face communication and team building. Again, like in the 'charismatic conductor' example where everyone strives for a good orchestra.

Participant 5

Participant 5 described team building and teamwork through their distributed leadership style as not believing in hierarchy, but that everybody is equal. "My leadership style is Distributed and Servant, you have to guide the teachers to not be lost but also allow them to be as free as possible". So, I pick out different people's strengths, and I give them tasks and challenges accordingly. Participant 5 mentioned that what is very important, is that their team does not become complacent and bored, "it's all in the way you distribute the leadership and keep your team motivated and challenged".

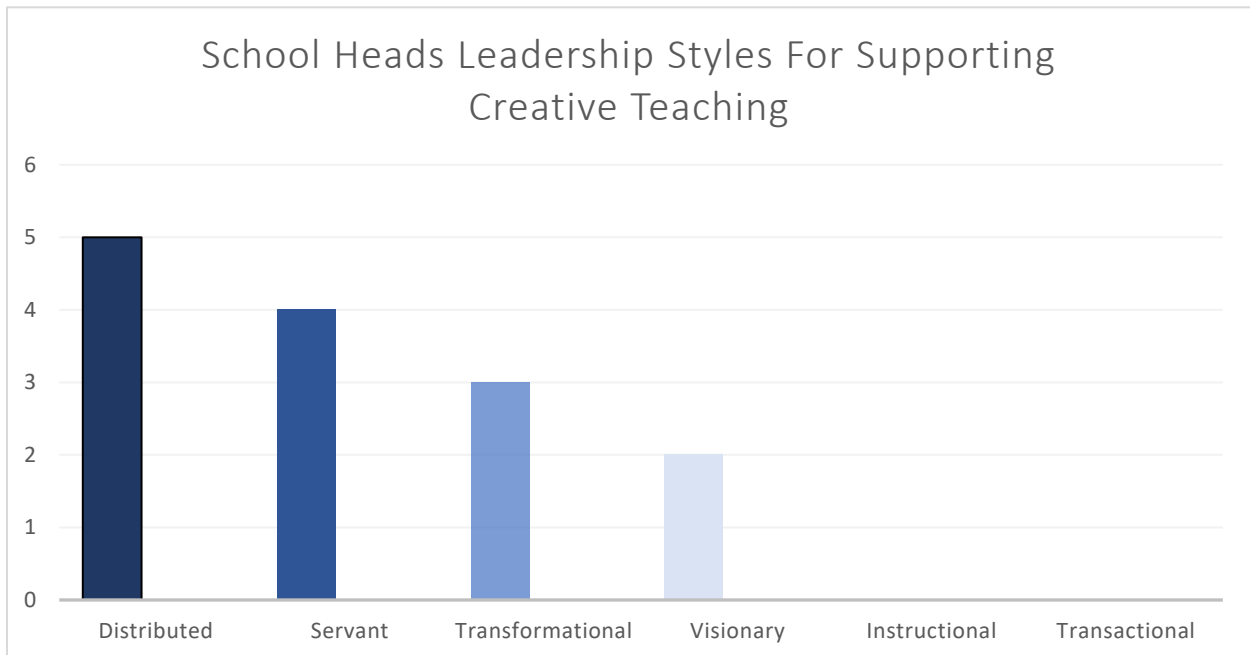
Participant 6

Participant 6 described the need for team building and teamwork to support creative teaching through practicing a very democratic (distributed) style of leadership where everyone has a voice and emphasize the importance of personal transformation, giving teachers more leadership responsibilities to empower them to make creative choices when providing lessons to their students. "My type of leadership is Servant with Transformational and Distributed as well, it is very important and helps support teachers and students into developing themselves".

Participant 7

Participant 7 described team building and teamwork as important to supporting creative teaching as being on a good team and working together with shared responsibilities. Participant 7 further added that a lot of times teachers may offer suggestions on new ideas or initiatives so it is good to have different responsibilities carried out by different people. “My leadership style is Distributed absolutely, sharing responsibilities and empowering others to take on leadership roles”. Participant 7 further added sometimes teachers do not think on a school level or at a class level. “I hand pick specific roles for teachers to help empower them and not let them become enclosed and isolated”. In the chart below, an illustration of the leadership styles of all 7 participants identified with.

Figure 4.9 School Heads Leadership Styles for Supporting Creative Teaching:



Each participant identified their leadership style as the following:

(Participant 1) identified as a Servant leadership and Transformational leader

(Participant 2) identified as a Distributed Leader

(Participant 3) identified as a Distributed and Visionary Leader

(Participant 4) identified as a Transformational, Servant and Visionary Leader

(Participant 5) identified as a Distributed, Transformative and Servant Leader

(Participant 6) identified as a Servant and Distributed Leader

(Participant 7) identified as a Distributed Leader

None of the 7 participants identified their leadership style as Instructional or Transactional when contributing to the support of creative teaching in their schools.

Additionally, all 7 participants were asked if they felt their strengths lied more in leadership or management. 5 participants stated that they were definitely stronger leaders than managers while 2 participants said they were equal in both leadership and management.

Figure 4.11 Stronger in Leadership or Management



Although 5 of 7 participants felt they were stronger as leaders over managing, all 7 reported an overwhelming number of managerial duties which took time away from performing leadership responsibilities.

4.3.3 Theme 3 Results: Motivating Through Leadership

Participant 1

Participant 1 described motivating through leadership by providing support and additional help as teacher's voices need to be heard to help transform teacher's weaknesses into strengths. "Good leaders transform people".

Participant 1 added that motivation can make that change "We can help with that by providing observations and reports on new teachers and fostering a creative environment to practice". It is always important to keep intrinsic and extrinsic motivation alive. "We can encourage the teachers to be creative but first we need to support them to be creative".

Participant 2

Participant 2 described motivating through leadership to support creative teaching as always keeping the team challenged, "good teaching is innate, and teaching is intrinsically motivating". Participant 2 believed that teachers need to keep feeding their passion and enthusiasm. Further to this statement, participant 2 added "many teachers graduate full of enthusiasm and want to make a difference, unfortunately, teachers can influence each other negatively as well". Participant 2 also stated that a school head's role is to empower teachers into good teaching

practices by “motivating through offering autonomy and leadership roles to explore creativity. A teacher needs balance between autonomy and structure.

Participant 4

Participant 4 described motivating through leadership as having balance between achieving all of your goals through creating change and stability, inspiration and control, and always promoting developmental growth, “A good leader focusses on fostering a vision of imagination”.

Participant 5

Participant 5 described motivating through leadership in supporting creative teaching as it being important that everyone feels a sense of progress and accomplishment. “Students will learn much more if they are engaged and motivated, which I think a creative classroom supports”. Participant 5 continued with the importance that everyone feels a sense of progress and accomplishment, “it’s all in the way you distribute the leadership and keep your team motivated and challenged”.

Participant 7

Participant 7 described motivating through leadership as utilising emotional intelligence to make sure teachers and students know they are present through the practice of good communication and empathy. “It is good to be approachable and that everyone feels safe and welcome, Staff and students need to feel comfortable to approach you”. Participant 7 added that giving suggestions and empowering people to explore creativity is very important.

4.3.4 Theme 4 Results: Communication and Empathy

Participant 1

Participant 1 described their reasoning for good communication and empathy in supporting creative teaching by stating that teachers need to feel like they are in a safe environment to approach their school leader to voice their concerns and ideas. “School heads need to transform weaknesses into strengths, and leadership needs to be empathetic, kind and good-listeners so that teachers feel supported in creative teaching”.

Participant 2

Participant 2 mentioned supporting creative teaching by emphasising importance of communication through the sharing of ideas. Further to this, participant 2 added that they must always remain present and offer constructive face-to face communication and empowerment. “It is important to be able to provide feedback from observation. Sometimes a school head cannot prove creative teaching is happening, so the teachers need to take ownership”.

Participant 3

Participant 3 described the way in which they support creative teaching through communication and empathy by putting the needs of teachers before theirs which promotes empowerment. Participant 3 further added that it is important to be empathetic but still create boundaries and practice what you preach. Additionally, participant 3 stated that communication involves being a strong listener and actively participating, while staying surrounded by a team of strong leaders, “that way everyone provides feedback on direction and improvement”.

Participant 4

Participant 4 described the way they support creative teaching but stating that “it really comes down to communication and relationship building”. This is primarily done through inspiring through your leadership style and the best way to face challenges is by doing so head-on. Participant 4 further added that good communication is key through the process of talking to one another and receiving support from the college principal. To avoid burnout, participant 4 mentions that it is important to receive emotional support and have their voices heard. Essentially, “one cannot not communicate”.

Participant 5

Participant 5 described the way communication and empathy is used to support creative teaching by illustrating the importance of having an open-door policy. It is important as well that teachers and staff feel comfortable to communicate if they are struggling. “The school leadership teams offer continuous feedback and deal with situations head on”. Additionally, participant 5 stated that “you really need to be a good communicator and know when your staff are struggling or upset, because it’s important to keep them motivated and challenged”. Participant 5 also stated that “as the leader of the school the best approach to keep motivation and engagement is through empathy, kindness and compassion”. Applying kindness as your basic foundation makes everything else fall into place.

Participant 6

Participant 6 described how communication and empathy are important in supporting creative teaching by stating that having one-on-one conversations with teachers can establish your

individual goals for your teachers and identify any areas which need improvement, “keep an open-door policy”.

Participant 5 added that being present and available at all times allows the teachers and students know that they can approach. “As a servant leader it is my role to mentor and guide everyone in my school by being empathetic, a good listener, kind and supportive” Additionally, participant 6 stated that “one of the biggest things I needed to learn was to say no”. Try to always serve with empathy and be a strong mentor for everyone. “I need to greet every morning with a big smile the moment the doors open”.

Participant 7

Participant 7 described the importance of communication and empathy by having good emotional intelligence. It is good to be approachable and that everyone feels safe and welcome, “staff and students need to feel comfortable to approach you”. Participant 7 further added that giving suggestions and empowering people is important for them to achieve more, “it is important to show empathy and act as a role model”. Adding to this participant 7 stated that “good leadership is communication and knowing your staff” as well as “it is very important to offer feedback constructively and regularly when warranted”.

Additionally, all 7 participants were asked to list the 3 most important characteristics using single words which they believed are the most important qualities of effective leadership. The highest answer for effective leadership that supports creative teaching was ‘*Empathy*’ followed by ‘*Good Listener*’. All participants’ answers were produced in a word cloud and are displayed below:

Figure 4.12 Most Important Qualities in Effective Leadership:



4.3.5 Theme 5 Results: Continuous Learning for Personal and Professional Growth

Participant 1

Participant 1 mentioned continuous learning by stating that professional Learning Communities are very helpful for training and team building. Participant 1 further added that it is very important to build a team and create structure for the purpose of continuously improving oneself through educational learning and supporting creative teaching.

Participant 2

Participant 2 described continuous learning as being beneficial to take training courses, and that school leaders need to support and encourage the importance of a professional learning community. Participant 2 added that “teachers need to evolve and adapt and change their mentality through training while moving them away from their comfort zones”. Further to this,

participant 2 stated that training is important for “sharing and incorporating new and fun activities with other teachers”.

Participant 3

Participant 3 described the importance of continuous learning as being beneficial to the job. “Many teachers are creative and need to share ideas with each other and community”. Participant 3 added that their school practices professional learning communities once a month to accomplish this aim.

Participant 4

Participant 4 mentioned continuous learning as encouraging cooperation and trust building through creative learning techniques and sharing them with colleagues, “I believe that if professional learning communities get together with outside agencies like the local community members, council, grandparents and parishes, creativity can thrive in education”. Participant 4 also stated that “I think it would be a good idea to co-teach with other schools as well as community”. Further to this, participant 4 added “it is important that everyone pursue training to develop their skills, however, courses really need to focus on the needs of the teachers, and to be practical”.

Participant 5

Participant 5 described the need for continuous learning by stating that “we have a strong professional learning community”. Additionally, participant 5 added that heads of schools, “need to attend mandatory conferences where we address ongoing issues, challenges and strategies, as

a team we do communicate regularly. We send teachers and school leadership teams to all courses both during school hours and even after school hours (if possible)".

4.3.6 Theme 6 Results: Holistic and Outdoor Learning Spaces

Participant 1

Participant 1 described holistic and outdoor learning spaces as incorporating cross-curricular learning with outdoor activities, "learning needs to be meaningful and relatable". Further to this, participant 1 stated that creativity needs to be used as a tool. Children's rights to creativity have made teaching more holistic. Children bond through creativity in their lessons, "we need to support teachers on how to be creative". Participant 1 added that a leader must provide structure and a safe environment that feels welcoming and fosters creative environments to support and encourage creative teaching practices.

Participant 2

Participant 2 described holistic and outdoor learning spaces with teachers needing to take responsibility in creative teaching and have ownership, "we teach for life not for exams". Participant 2 added that education needs to promote holistic learning in the classrooms as much as possible by creating innovative teaching methods, "this can be done by putting children at the centre of learning and moving away from traditional talk and chalk".

Participant 3

Participant 3 described holistic and outdoor learning spaces by stating that "we encourage creative teaching by offering support and the environment to explore and share creative teaching

methods". Creative teaching looks like teaching outside of the classroom. Outside learning removes the need for textbook and worksheets, "we are not rigid when it comes to creativity". In addition to this, participant 3 added that their school engages in 'super fun days and activities'. "We promote creativity as much as possible and create a positive atmosphere". It is important to break up negative teachers to avoid influencing up the mindset. We need more hands-on practical approaches to learning. When children are learning in environments, especially outdoors, the lessons are so much more impactful and meaningful, "schools are really focused on teaching the core subjects, our objective is to add creative teaching to the core subjects".

Participant 4

Participant 4 described holistic and outdoor learning spaces as allowing every child to work at his or her own level and express creativity in their work. Participant 4 also stated the need for encouraging cross-curricular learning, using all spaces for teaching and having lessons being taught outdoors to create more meaningful experiences. "I strongly believe in schools without walls".

"We could have lessons outside, even on the roof and bring in outside professionals to teach their skills in a lesson, I also do not like the atmosphere of a classroom of desks in single roles, I very much support group work". Participant 4 further stated that cross-curricular lessons are invaluable to a student's education. "It is very important to foster improvement in learning to develop individuals by adapting and incorporating cross-curricular learning".

Participant 5

Participant 5 described holistic and outdoor learning spaces as “to me creativity is going outside the four walls of school and learning from nature”. It is also how you teach, “creative teaching is teaching more outdoors, more classrooms outside” which focuses on children to be happy and emotionally connect with their environment. “This creates resistance for an unpredictable future”. You have to do your best to teach ‘holistically’. Participant 5 stated that it is important that children also learn skills that we learnt in the past, “all skills are important not just 21st-century skills”. Classroom settings are the most unnatural way of learning, “having more classes outdoors, maybe creating learning stations”, that’s what they call holistic learning. Additionally, participant 5 stated that cross-curricular learning is where you can integrate many different subjects into one topic of interest.

Participant 6

Participant 6 described holistic and outdoor learning spaces as trying to innovative strategies to help students learn in a more holistic way that also incorporates STEM activities. Participant 6 added that it is important to think ‘outside the box’ and be imaginative in their approach to teaching and learning the curriculum. “I do think a mix of traditional teaching methods mixed with creative holistic approaches to learning is most beneficial for students”. Further to this, participant 6 stated that “teaching needs to be palatable. It needs to be engaging, relatable and make sense to the students”. The school Ethos and policies need to be promoted and adopted into everyday life “think before you teach”.

Participant 7

Participant 7 described holistic and outdoor learning spaces as “we need to bring students out of the classroom to become critical thinkers and leave their comfort zones”. Adding to this, participant 7 stated that holistic learning, learning outside of the classrooms and learning to think critically through exploration and discovery teaches students to learn to think critically, and push them out of their comfort zone. “Students need to be challenged and supported in different learning environments, not to waste time on games and social media”.

4.4 Discussion:

In the following section, a detailed interpretation of the key findings by themes will be presented to further identify relevant meanings while also exploring its significance to this phenomenon of interest. Analysis and discussion of the research findings in relation to previous and current literature will be included in this section as well.

4.4.1 Theme 1 Analysis of Findings:

Time Constraints

The key findings in theme 1 suggested that all but one head of school identified ‘time constraints’ as a significant challenge or obstacle when contributing to supporting creative teaching. One of the most compelling findings while interviewing the 7 participants was the constant struggle with time throughout their responses. The primary areas which most heads of schools deemed problematic were related to an overwhelming workload in administrative and managerial duties which ultimately took away time from supporting creative teaching practices. During their interview, participant 4 referenced this specifically by indicating that they are, “spending way too

much time in maintenance of school issues and less time needed to lead". Previous literature in this area also indicated that school leadership is becoming increasingly more complicated due to managerial duties which limits the ability to lead effectively (Hallinger, 2003).

This relationship between effective leadership and time constraints is similar to the Mangion & Riebel's (2023) findings which suggested that learners in Maltese primary schools do not feel they have adequate time for risk-taking and exploration due to the rigid structure of the national curriculum (Mangion & Riebel, 2023). 4 of 7 heads of the schools related an increased demand in developing the professional needs of their teachers, while managing the school's maintenance and administrative duties.

The school heads also revealed that many teachers have a reluctance to change or leave their comfort zones, citing rigid or heavy curriculums and a need to teach towards assessments and examinations "learning outcomes are designed for examination" (Participant 2). Similarly, previous studies have shown that in these rigid teaching environments, students eventually adapt to the methods teachers impose and over time creativity is replaced with passivity (Grainger et al., 2004).

This reluctance to change plays a significant role in the decisions teachers make towards creative teaching (Teig et al., 2019). Teachers who feel less stressed about time constraints in their classrooms are more open to practicing student centred learning which involves creativity and discovery, giving additional freedom to explore (Pelletier et al., 2002; Teig et al., 2019).

Literature has provided many empirical studies that identify teachers' perception of time constraints as challenges which hinder their decision to teach creatively (Murphy et al., 2007; Wang, 2011).

Participant 7 referred to Maltese state schools as being too reliant on textbooks, handouts and homework. Additionally, a term which often arises in literature in relation to creative teaching is having a 'check-box' mentality (Participant 7). Participant 7 specifically referred to students having a 'check-box' mentality during their interview and further reiterated that, "it's just assessment after assessment and clicking off boxes".

Adding to their experiences, participant 7 stated that "our students don't think". Cremin et al. (2006) create a similar argument by stating that it seems improbable that teachers would work towards the development of children's creative thinking and imagination as policy constraints hinder many innovative practices.

Participant 1 alluded to this same sentiment by signifying a constant focus on school assessments and rigid standardized curriculums do not allow enough time to teach creatively because of the time constraints and too much to cover in a short period of time. Participant 2 maintained that time constraints are preventing their ability to support creative teaching because school heads are getting trapped in too many managerial duties. As a result, many of these experiences suggest a continuous cycle in Maltese state schools as a process of 'ticking off boxes' in a curricular checklist that is geared towards assessment and not creativity or innovation.

Similar to these findings, research suggests that a constant focus on school assessments and producing higher standards has turned many educational institutions into a mindset of ticking off boxes in a curriculum checklist for school leaders, teachers, and students (Cremin, 2009).

Given this importance placed on assessment and accountability, past and current literature furthers this argument by stating the improbability of teachers wanting to develop children's creative thinking and imagination (Timperley & Robinson, 2000) as a heavy curriculum often hinders many innovative practices (Cremin et al. 2006). Participant 5's interview referenced similar information by stating that creativity and imagination end up not being part of the learning process. "The way teachers are being formed or transformed right now is they are in a constant race to cover content; I hate seeing it, but it is a systematic problem".

These findings in theme 1 reveal a real challenge in Maltese state schools and for current/future students in Malta. Educating students with creative skills is key for developing Maltese children to adequately adapt to future scenarios (Mangion & Riebel's, 2023). However, the ongoing time constraints which frequently arose during the analysis of the data suggests that creativity in education will struggle to find support as a result of a rigidly structured curriculum and demand for assessment will make a head of school's ability to support creative teaching extremely challenging (Murphy et al., 2007; Wang, 2011). Furthermore, Mangion & Riebel state that creativity in education will still find it difficult to find a place between the fixed curriculum and the unbending syllabus found in traditional teaching (Mangion & Riebel's 2023).

In addition, these demanding responsibilities placed on the heads of schools create obstacles to be able to support teachers' pedagogical decisions (Pelletier et al., 2002). This was substantiated

by all 7 heads of school's experiences that emphasized demanding restrictions in time constraints and standardised curriculum presenting ongoing challenges in their ability to support and foster creative teaching.

4.4.2 Theme 2 Analysis of Findings:

Building A Strong Team/Teamwork

Next, key findings in theme 2 identified that of the 6 of the leadership styles presented in the literature review, all 7 participants adopted one or more of Distributed, Transformational, Servant or Visionary leadership practices when contributing to the support of creative teaching. The findings suggest the heads of schools felt the only way to manage a lack of time was to build a strong team and promote teamwork as main contributors to successful school outcomes, "I am surrounded by a team of strong leaders who all share in the responsibilities and provide honest feedback on directions and improvement" (Participant 3). Adding to this, participant 6 stated that "my type of leadership is Servant with Transformational and Distributed as well, it is very important and help support teachers and students into developing themselves". Previous literature also alludes to various combinations in leadership styles to promote effective leadership. Bass' (2000) research compared servant leadership with transformational leadership as having many shared characteristics and stated that servant leadership goes beyond transformational leadership by putting the need of others above their own (Bass 2000).

Further research revealed that teachers may be increasingly more willing to take on more of a leadership position if they feel they can trust and build a relationship with their head of school,

which can lead to greater of exploration and risk-taking in their pedagogical practices (Thornton K, 2019). Therefore, relationship building is seen as a foundational building block when practicing educational leadership (Hallinger, 2007). Building relationships by combining different leadership styles like Distributing leadership through a Transformational approach has long proven to be very effective in many organizational systems (MacBeath, 2005; Mascall et. al, 2009). Additionally, transformational leadership is seen as having the ability to influence and motivate beyond one's own personal expectations. Participant 3 stated in the interview that "I am surrounded by a team of strong leaders who all share in the responsibilities and provide honest feedback on directions and improvement". In addition, participant 3 mentioned "the school manages because we have a team of really good leaders". The findings in this research indicate that building a strong team and teamwork is seen as essential to developing teachers into leadership roles to promote personal growth.

With the demand of managerial and administrative responsibilities in addition to leading as effective change agents, the notion of a school leader performing beyond human capacities no longer seems reasonable or fair (Leithwood and Seashore-Louis, 2012).

Participants in this study referred to their jobs as being 24/7 and needing to learn to say 'no'. Building a strong team and promoting teamwork was essential to creating balance for their own well-being and practicing empathetic towards themselves. Further to this, in Cutajar's (2013) research, similar findings point to establishing a balanced approach between a centralized and decentralized leadership that equally requires innovative approaches to co-operation and where teachers then establish their own vision and become effective and empathetic leaders (Cutajar et al., 2013).

4.4.3 Theme 3 Analysis of Findings:

Motivation Through Leadership

Findings in theme 3 suggest that heads of schools felt the need to motivate through leadership when supporting creative teaching which empowers teachers to lead so that everyone feels a sense of progress and accomplishment, “students will learn much more if they are engaged and motivated, and I think a creative classroom supports this” (Participant 5). Additionally, responses from two participants promoted the effectiveness of ‘emotional intelligence’ for being critical to motivating their teachers, (Participant 2, Participant 7). Participant 1 and participant 4 referred to the need of having the voices of teachers heard as major contributing factors in their ability to support creative teaching, “We can encourage the teachers to be creative but first we need to support them to be creative” (Participant 1).

In effective leadership practices, motivation is a pivotal cornerstone in turning learners into active participants by communicating a clear vision, which acts as the driving force for performing activities and assignments with higher academic standards (Kurniadi et al., 2021).

Much of current and previous literature suggests that leadership characteristics are used as influential means to develop teachers; professional and personal growth, meaning in educational goals and clarity in school vision through the process of motivation and providing direction (Jan & Manzoor, 2021). Often school leaders strive to inspire others to reach higher aspirations for professional improvement as described in Leithwood’s (1993) research. Participant 4 mentioned their experiences with motivation as having balance between achieving all of your goals through

creating change and stability, inspiration and control, and always promoting developmental growth, “A good leader focusses on fostering a vision of imagination”. Adding to participant 4’s focus on fostering a vision of imagination, research in the area describes the importance of motivation as being influential, motivational and articulating a clear vision (Hallinger, 2007; Ebrahimi et. al, 2017).

Additionally, Saki Jan and Kokab Manzoor’s (2021) research in the field of leadership in education suggests that leadership characteristics are used as influential means to develop teachers, increase academic outcomes, create meaning and relevance through the process of motivation through effective leadership (Jan & Manzoor, 2021). Increasingly, literature is providing results which suggests that increasing motivation achieves challenging but rewarding goals (Hallinger, 2010)

4.4.4 Theme 4 Analysis of Findings:

Communication and Empathy

The analysis of the findings in theme 4 frequently identified that heads of schools believed communication and empathy as strong leadership factors to supporting creative teaching through keeping an open-door policy. The data also suggested the need for teachers and staff to feel comfortable to communicate when they are struggling, “as the leader of the school, the best approach to keep motivation and engagement is through empathy, kindness and compassion” (Participant 5). Communication and empathy are mentioned in the literature review with Bass and Avolio’s creation a of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire in 1990 (Bass & Avolio, 1990; Avolio & Bass, 1995), that referenced in its 4th pillar that in Individualized Consideration: Leaders

target individualistic needs to improve strengths and weaknesses through good listening and empathy.

Each head of school felt communication and empathy were very important characteristics to maintain by having an 'open-door' policy in every aspect of their relationships. Literature which does reflect the 7 participants' experiences focuses on all types of communication, not only verbal. For instance, one of the most effective ways school leaders can practice communication and empathy according to literature is through making eye contact (Lasater, 2016). Eye contact is a subtle explanation that their voices are been heard (Lasater, 2016). Another effective way according to literature to practice communication and empathy is through school leaders' vocal tones within their own speech, specifically the rate of speech and pitch (Brinia et al., 2022). As participant 7 stated in his interview, "it is not what you say, but how you say it". In this light, communication is used as a tool which can be either the cause or solution to many problems (Brinia et al., 2022).

When failure in communication occurs, teachers may take the position the head of school either lacks the empathy required to attend to their concerns or they are preoccupied with their own self-interests (Lasater, 2016).

This perception by teachers makes it imperative that heads of schools focus on communicating effectively through all methods of speech including body language (Ivey et al., 2010).

Furthermore, each participant in this study strongly believes what many findings in literature have also suggested, that strong communication and empathy builds trust, strengthens relationships and prevents teachers from feeling their voices are being adequately heard (Ivey et al., 2010).

Additionally, literature on leadership places a strong emphasis on good communication and listening skills as a key role in supporting teachers in feeling appreciated and valued (Thornton K, 2019).

4.4.5 Theme 5 Analysis of Findings:

Continuous Learning For Personal and Professional Growth:

Findings in theme 5 identified that 5 of the 7 heads of schools described that in order to effectively support creative teaching in their schools, continuous development through Professional Learning Communities needed to be in place. Continuous learning was viewed as encouraging cooperation and trust building through creative learning techniques and sharing ideas with colleagues, “I believe that if professional learning communities get together with outside agencies like the local community members, council, grandparents and parishes, creativity can thrive in education (Participant 4)”. Continuous learning was seen as having a purpose of personal growth through educational learning and supporting creative teaching and share this idea with other teachers, “sharing and incorporating new and fun activities with other teachers” (Participant 2). Continuous learning through professional learning communities was related to developing leadership skills and transformation in theme 2, motivation to be challenged in theme 3 and to communicate and have teachers’ voices heard in theme 4).

Additionally, previous literature argues a need to move towards a governance framework for heads of schools and teachers to generate more favourable circumstances to overcome challenges as they arise and develop educational systems into professional learning communities (Cutajar et al., 2013). Similarly, findings in this study suggested that heads of school’s experiences

point towards Professional Learning Communities as a means for empowerment of teachers in their personal development and professional growth which promotes creativity in classrooms.

An important aspect in education that heads of school's encounter has been the ability to navigate through complicated situations to ensure their teachers have the necessary skillset and knowledge to educate students effectively in a fast-paced, changing environment (Hudson, 2023).

As a result of this, an increased demand for professionalism is now required of teachers to be highly qualified, self-motivated, driven, ambitious and skilful, not just at the beginning of their teaching careers but throughout (Hudson, 2023).

Professional learning communities aim to push teachers towards not being functionaries but instead valued professionals (Apple, 2012). Much of the past professional learning communities have traditionally been led by administrative, hierarchical approaches with little importance placed on collaboration (Apple, 2012; Fullan et al., 2015). All participants in this study have suggested that their professional learning communities are internally focused and teacher led, to avoid too much bureaucracy and encourage effective collaboration through the sharing of ideas.

4.4.6 Theme 6 Analysis of Findings:

Holistic and Outside Learning Spaces

This study's findings suggested that all 7 participants viewed holistic and outdoor learning spaces as taking on some form of cross-curricular learning with outdoor activities, "learning needs to be meaningful and relatable" (Participant 1). Holistic and outdoor learning spaces were additionally viewed as empowering every child to learn at their own level to express creativity in their work

“to me creativity is going outside the four walls of school and learning from nature” (Participant 5). The findings further indicated that heads of schools believed that teaching holistically and in outdoor spaces created meaningful and relevant learning experiences, “creative teaching is teaching more outdoors, more classrooms outside” (Participant 5). Many of these strategies in creative teaching focus on children to be happy in their learning and emotionally connect with their environment, “This creates resistance for an unpredictable future” (Participant 5).

Literature in the field supports this idea by suggesting the development of holistic and outdoor teaching in need for more meaningful and relevant education which identifies and meets the unique learning abilities and needs of each student (Miller, 2018)

Research suggests that holistic learning seeks to educate the entire student (Johnson, 2023). Teachers therefore strive to help students develop towards their full potential. In holistic teaching methods, students are not considered empty vessels to have knowledge deposited. Instead, students are free thinking, creative, imaginative beings, that use all their gifts to contribute to the world (Johnson, 2023).

Often, holistic learning and learning outside of the classrooms are seen as a means to develop more critical thinking skills through exploration and discovery. All participants believed that holistic and outdoor learning spaces pushed students out of their comfort zones. Participant 6 reiterated this by adding that it is important to think ‘outside the box’ and be imaginative in their approach to teaching and learning the curriculum, “it needs to be engaging, relatable and make sense to the students”.

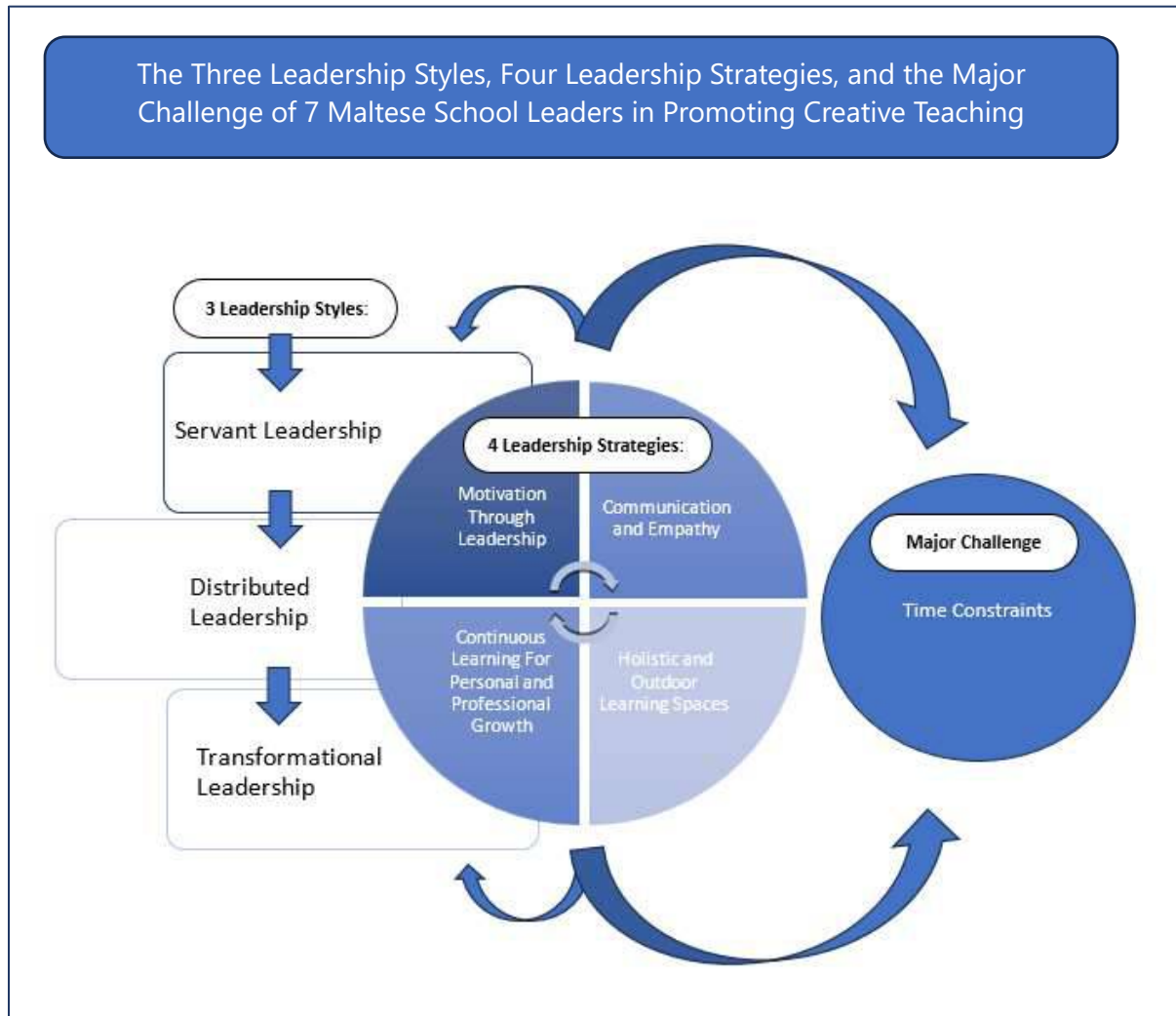
Participant 3 commented that their school promotes creativity as much as possible to create far more impactful and meaningful learning, “we promote creativity as much as possible and create a positive atmosphere”, while participant 4 added the necessity of encouraging cross-curricular learning, using all spaces for teaching and having lessons being taught outdoors to create more meaningful experiences, “I strongly believe in schools without walls”.

Both holistic and outdoor learning spaces nurture growth mindsets and change. This method of teaching is considered more personal and exploratory (MacAskill & Lauricella, 2015). Additionally, both holistic and outdoor learning spaces provides students with unique opportunities to be active in their learning through creative and imaginative learning experiences. This will provide students with essential skills and knowledge skills to thrive in environments which go well beyond the 4 walls of a classroom (MacAskill & Lauricella, 2015).

4. 5 Synopsis of Finding:

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to examine how leadership practices contribute to the support of creative teaching in Maltese state primary schools. The research explored the lived experiences of 7 heads of Maltese states schools to gain insights into their unique interpretations and meanings they place on the phenomenon of interest. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain the relevant information and a thematic analysis was used to extract multiple themes which guided the interpretation of the findings. The overall findings from the 7 participants interviewed indicate that heads of schools in Malta deal with very complex challenges in their day-to-day professions. The figure below is an illustration of the key findings of this study.

Figure 4.13 The Three Leadership Styles, Four Leadership Strategies, and the Major Challenge of 7 Maltese School Leaders in Promoting Creative Teaching



Analysis of the 6 - themes presented; three leadership styles, four leadership strategies and one major challenge. All 7 participants identified 'time constraints' as the major obstacle hindering their ability to support creative teaching. The 7 participants believed that they are leaders first and foremost, and could be more effective to their schools if they were not constrained with so many managerial and administrative tasks. Lack of time contributed to much of the participants inability to fully express their leadership styles to their fullest.

Additionally, each participant reported dealing with continuous negative teacher attitudes towards their rigid/heavy curriculums and incessant demands to teach towards assessment. This negativity was also reported by participants as having a negative impact on enthusiastic recent graduates in the teaching profession. Therefore, time constraints posed to be the biggest challenge hindering a head of school's ability to support creative teaching.

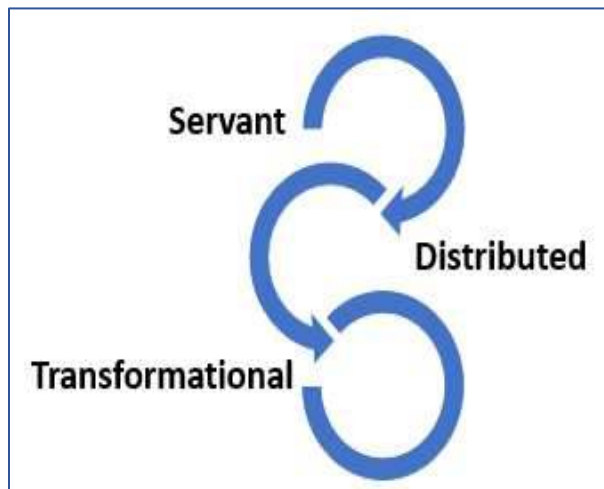
Next, the findings revealed 3 differing leadership style the heads of schools adopted that best supported creative teaching. Participants all reported to using one or more of these three leadership practices; Servant, Distributed and Transformational. The participants' experiences suggest that practicing at least one these three-leadership styles to be very effective, however, combining multiple leadership styles was found to have the most significant impact. Servant leadership was seen as the cornerstone to supporting teachers as it enabled the school leaders to support from behind. The participants who practiced Servant leadership believed that ensuring that teachers felt that their voices were heard and needs were met was fundamental in building trusting relationships.

This was followed with Distributed leadership. The participants expressed that after teachers felt their needs were being taken care of, they were more likely willing to take on more leadership responsibilities. This creates a cyclical effect, as the more heads of schools were able to empower their teachers with responsibilities in leadership, the more time participants had to support their development.

Teachers taking on more leadership roles in their schools then translated to a transformational effect. Findings in this study indicated that this transformation empowered teachers to engage in

more decision-making and taking bigger risks for the greater good of the school. All three leadership styles were complimentary to each other and even strengthened particular aspects in one another. Participants often used one more leadership practice interchangeably in a cyclical model, as seen in the figure below:

Figure 4.14 Interchangeable Leadership Practices:



4 key strategic leadership practices emerged from the leadership styles of school heads. The Participants emphasised the value of motivation to empower and influence their teachers to take on more of an autonomous role in their classrooms and explore child-centred learning. Motivation was also highlighted as an important component of communication and empathy. All 7 participants equally stated that motivation, communication and empathy were essential tools in their leadership tool box. Furthermore, these tools supported the need for both school leadership and teachers to engage in personal and professional development as foundational supports to create sustainable growth-minded environments.

To answer the essential research question of this study of; *How are leadership practices adopted by heads of schools contributing to the support of creative teaching within Maltese primary state schools?*

the answer can be found through a combination of Servant, Distributed and Transformational leadership (Halinger, 2005; Shroeder, 2016; Taylor et al., 2007), which supports motivation, communication, empathy and personal/ professional development (Kurniadi et al., 2021; MacBeath, 2005; Thornton K, 2019) to foster an environment where teachers feel supported, valued and empowered (Creswell, 2013; Ivey et al., 2010) to make autonomous decisions and take greater risks in practicing creative teaching in their own classrooms (Kettler et al., 2021; Kupers et al., 2018).

4.6 Conclusion:

Chapter 4 presented the results, interpretations and discussions on findings related to how heads of schools contribute to supporting creative teaching in Maltese primary state schools. The results revealed many significant findings which helped close the knowledge gap related to the research question and offered surprisingly new insights which the researcher feels deserves future exploration. In the following chapter, a conclusion to the research, limitations to this study, and recommendations for future research, policy and practice will be presented.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

5.1 Introduction:

This chapter will conclude the research by providing a summary of the key findings which emerged from the data and how these findings relate back to the research question, aims and objectives of this study. This chapter will also address the contributions the research has made to this area of study along with limitations and recommendations for future research, policy and practices.

5.2 Key Findings:

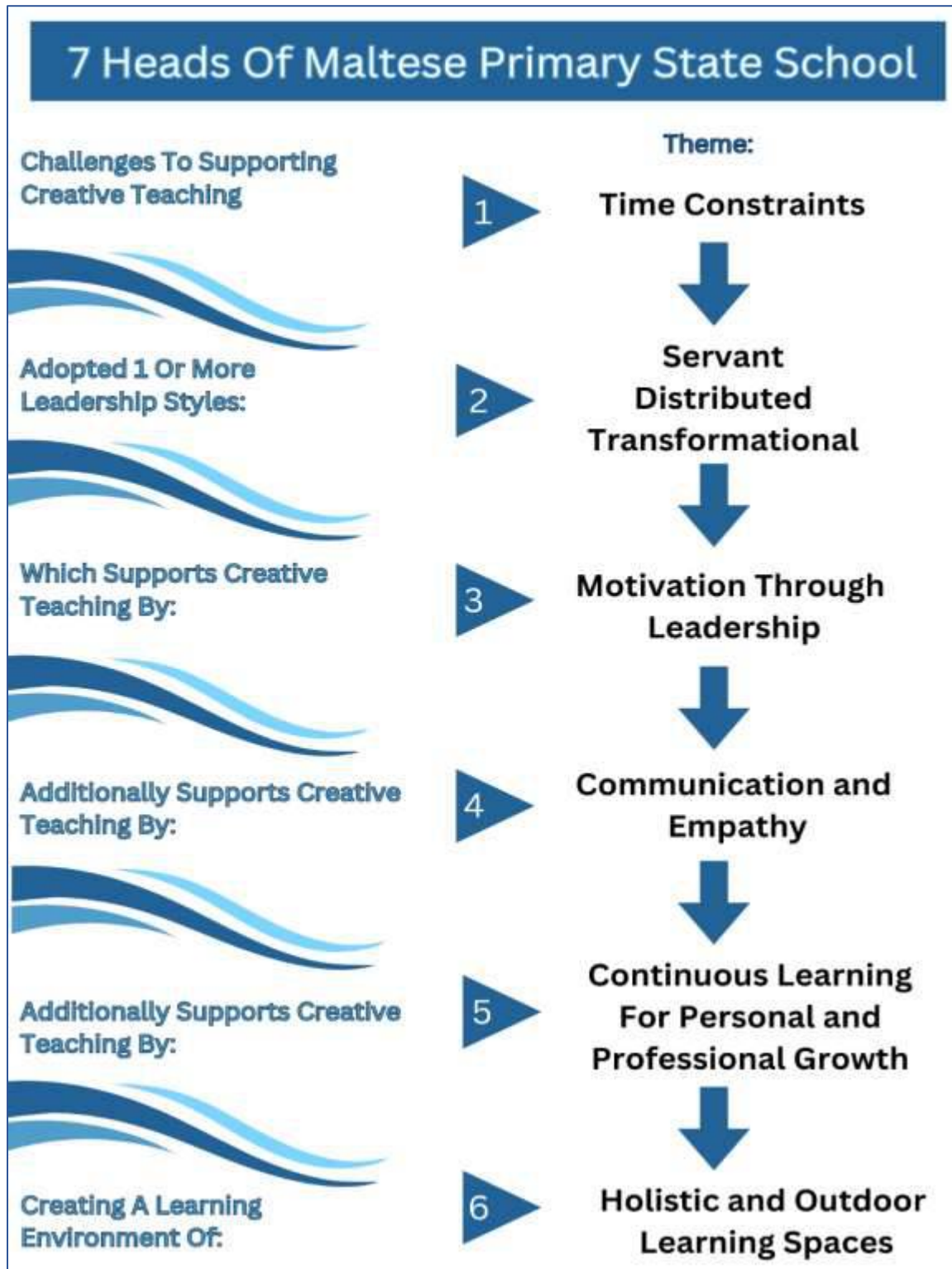
As discussed in the literature review in chapter 2, researchers in the field of education have continued to argue over which leadership practices are believed to be best suited to supporting teacher effectiveness in creative teaching. As a result, this study proposed the following research question to explore this phenomenon of interest even further: *'How are leadership practices adopted by heads of schools contributing to the support of creative teaching within Maltese primary state schools?'* The research revealed many insightful and significant findings from the data collected which suggested that the best leadership practices when supporting creative teaching in Maltese primary state schools are as follows: *Distributed, Transformational and Servant Leadership.*

Through semi-structured interviews and 6-step thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), 6 major themes emerged throughout the extraction process and interpretation of relevant data. The first major theme (theme 1) presented was that head of schools experienced challenges relating to

time constraints in their responsibilities. Many heads of schools felt they were spending far too much time on managerial and administrative tasks, which hindered their ability to lead effectively. Additionally, heads of schools experienced pushback in teachers' attitudes towards adopting creative teaching practices. Teachers cited a lack of time due to heavy workloads, rigid curriculums and demands for teaching towards assessments as major contributing factors for not adopting more creative teaching practices in their classrooms.

In order to navigate through these challenges, heads of schools adopted one or more of these 3 leadership practices; Servant, Distributed and Transformational to build stronger teams and encourage teamwork (theme 2). Motivation (theme 3), communication and empathy (theme 4) and continuous learning for personal and professional growth (theme 5) were the effective tools integrated into their leadership styles to support, empower and influence their teachers into practicing creative teaching. Finally, holistic and outdoor learning spaces (theme 6), revealed the creative teaching methods heads of schools believed were most meaningful and relevant learning environment for their students. The figure below is a visual representation of the key findings which emerged as a result of this study:

Figure 5.1 Key Findings in This Study



5.3 Findings Relevant to The Research Question, Aims and Objectives

Research in literature indicates that creative teaching is one of the biggest influences that helps develop students with transferable skills and is preparing Maltese children to adequately adapt to future scenarios (Cuschieri 2007; Mangion & Riebel's, 2023).

Additionally, there has been a number of research studies which examined the importance of creative teaching when developing students with the necessary skills for future success (Craft, 2005; Cremin 2006; Grainger, 2004, Shaheen, 2010; Wilson, 2005;). Reports such as the NACCCE (1999) and The White Paper, *Excellence in Schools* (The white paper, 1997), maintain that increasing academic standards in reading, writing and arithmetic is not sufficient enough anymore for teaching our children to face complex challenges. The school curriculum, NACCCE (1999) argues, should be influenced in developing children's individual interests and talents.

Furthermore, leadership have been heavily researched with attempting to link leadership practices with overall teachers' performances, (Avolio et. all, 1999; Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Shanti et al., 2020; Stoll & Temperley 2009), who characterise successful leadership as being very influential and motivating in providing accountability towards teacher effectiveness (Ebrahimi et. al, 2017; Hallinger, 2017; Shanti et al., 2020;).

Currently, there exists a gap in knowledge towards heads of school's abilities to support this change in their schools (Acton, 2020; Huber, 2011), along with a school leader's ability to support their teachers in making these experiences both meaningful and relevant (Rankin & Brown, 2016).

As mentioned earlier, the findings in this study indicate that Distributed, Transformational and Servant leadership were the most effective practices, according to the all participants

interviewed. This is supported by existing research which indicates that all 3 leadership styles are effective in *supporting* a teachers' development. For example, Distributed leadership places a strong emphasis on good communication and listening skills as a key role in *supporting* teachers in feeling appreciated and valued (Thornton K, 2019). Additionally, the ability to use Transformational leadership inspires personal and professional success and is rooted in the ability of the leader to be *supportive* and influential to helping their followers meet their needs (Rankin & Brown, 2016). Lastly, Servant leadership provides empowerment of teachers in their personal development and professional growth while *supporting* autonomy to take risks, and opportunities to achieve their goals. Teachers then establish their own vision and become effective and empathetic leaders (Shroeder, 2016).

Participants in this study believed providing motivation, communication, empathy, personal and professional growth were the most effect leadership strategies to supporting creative teaching. This is also supported by research which suggests that personal and professional growth can be achieved through the process of motivation and providing clear direction (Jan & Manzoor, 2021). Motivation in leadership has also indicated a reduction in teacher isolation and increased motivation to strive towards accomplishing shared goals (Balyer et al., 2015). All 7 participants in this study expressed the importance of communication and empathy by keeping an 'open-door' policy, always remaining available, providing face-to-face communication and empowerment as an important part of being on a strong team and working together. Participants stated this ensured that teachers felt their needs were being met. These statements are further supported by research which suggests that strong communication and empathy builds trust, strengthens

relationships and prevents teachers from feeling their voices are not being heard (Ivey et al., 2010).

Additionally, all 7 participants believed that creative teaching incorporated holistic/outdoor learning spaces as the best opportunities for students to achieve a meaningful and relevant experiences in their education (MacAskill & Lauricella, 2015). Research in both holistic and outdoor learning spaces suggests it is the most effective approach to achieving a growth mindset and change in students (MacAskill & Lauricella, 2015). Additionally, this method of teaching is considered more personal and investigative for exploring creativity and imagination (MacAskill & Lauricella, 2015). As participant 4 mentioned during their interview “I strongly believe in schools without walls”.

5.4 Contributions in Research

In the 21st century, creativity is seen as a priority in educational development throughout Malta (Mangion & Riebel’s, 2023), contributing to the increase in demand for the development of higher skillsets in the school’s curriculum (National Curriculum Framework, 2012).

Therefore, this research study was conducted in an effort to contribute to the existing knowledge gaps in leadership practices supporting creative teaching, specifically in Maltese primary state schools. The study examined the lived experiences and insights of 7 heads of schools with the intention of providing important discoveries which will guide future leaders and policy makers with the most effective strategies to overcome many of these challenges and offer a clear pathway towards successful creative practices.

The need for this study arose as a result of ongoing challenges in establishing teaching creatively in classrooms because of increasing demands for assessments and examinations (Cremin et al., 2006) When teaching is bound by rigid curriculums and tight schedules, heads of school's abilities to support creative teaching is greatly reduced (Cremin et al., 2006; Moos, 2014) Given the importance placed on assessment and accountability, it seems improbable that teachers would willingly be receptive to practicing creativity without support (Moos, 2014). Therefore, it is critical now more than ever that school leaders are equipped with the knowledge and the skills necessary to support teachers in creative teaching. For these reasons mentioned, this study's input has made a significant contribution to closing the knowledge gap and provided important insights for new policies and practices moving forward.

5.5 Limitations of Study

The sample size of participants in this study was kept small purposefully to prevent oversaturation in data. However, as a result of having a smaller sample size, any information gathered could not be generalised within the findings. Even still, the researcher believes the findings provided readers with unique experiences and interpretations into the phenomenon of interest while also providing valuable insights for current and future leaders to develop and refine their own skillsets. Furthermore, adopting a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews, the opportunity for bias always remains present. The researcher's aim is to explore and examine the information provided by the participant's answers, however the analysis and interpretation of the findings risk being funnelled through a lens of subjectivity.

Time was another limitation throughout this study, as heads of schools and teachers are extremely busy. If time had permitted, the researcher believes that classroom observations and teacher interviews/questionnaires may have offered a different perspective and may have presented additional information that could substantiate or challenge this researcher's findings. Still, the experiences and interpretations given by the 7 school heads in this study presented valuable context which compliments current literature and aims to continuously improve existing leadership practices for the purpose of supporting creative teaching.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Research and Implications for Policy and Practice:

Gaps between the findings in this study and current literature reveal that time constraints resulting from overwhelming amounts of administrative and managerial tasks are limiting the effectiveness that heads of schools have to support creative teaching. Further exploration into how some of the responsibilities may be lessened or redistributed may free up more time for heads of schools to lead effectively.

Additionally, this study has focused primarily on heads of schools' experiences in leadership practices when contributing to the support of creative teaching. The researcher recommends further study of the teachers' perspectives on whether they feel supported in creative teaching and if these support systems work. Exploring these same leadership practices in Maltese Church and Independent schools, as well as secondary schools in all systems, would also shed light onto how different school practices may affect heads of schools' leadership.

One of the most surprising findings in this research were that 2 participants referenced a greater need for creative teaching as a result of an increase in technology use. The researcher believes it

would be very beneficial for further research to address the role that technology plays in both primary and secondary schools. As revealed by the two participants in this study, replacing traditional methods with creative teaching strategies may prove to be the most effective way forward as a result.

Recommendations for future research include:

- A replicated study conducted in Church and Independent schools
- A replicated study including the same research questions focusing on secondary schools in State, Church and Independent
- An expansion of the current study to include more participants experiences in countries abroad
- Quantitative or mixed methods study involving teachers/school heads interviews, questionnaires and focus groups
- A study focusing on the effects of technology on students' attention spans in traditional based classrooms.

5.7 Implications for Policy and Practice:

The implications in policy and practice as a result of this study, will help educational stake holders address the major challenges that hinder the abilities of school head to support creative teaching. By combing the 3 leadership styles and 4 leadership strategies, heads of schools will feel they have the necessary time to be effective leaders and empower their teachers into leadership roles which will lead to greater autonomy (Cremin et al., 2006) and risk taking (Shroeder, 2016), to practice creative teaching in their classrooms. The trickle effect from key leadership strategies

reflects in students receiving an education geared towards holistic learning both in and out of school classrooms. As a result, students will engage in discovery-based education which involves exploratory learning (Zhang et al., 2018). and teaches students to think critically, creatively and above all, to think for themselves (Cremin et al., 2006; Cremin, 2009; MacAskill & Lauricella, 2015).

The need to adapt learners for the 21st century, educational systems are undergoing a transformation of attitudes in shifting school policies to reflect valuing the importance of creativity (Wilson, 2005). It is crucial, that students are prepared for the 21st century by developing all learner's unique creative talents and abilities (The white paper, 1997). Educating students with transferable creative skills for changing situations is key for developing Maltese children to adequately adapt to these future scenarios (Mangion & Riebel's, 2023). If policies are adopted from the findings presented in this research, Maltese students will be adequately prepared and ready for the workforce in the 21st century with creativity as a learnt skill. As described in this study, if heads of schools are given the necessary time to lead and develop teachers using strategic leadership practices, then the implementation of these policies will significantly contribute to the investment of Malta's richest assets, its people. As a result, students will receive an education with a clear vision for the future that inspires change agents with the knowledge and skills to be leaders of innovation.

5.8 Conclusion:

This qualitative phenomenological study has explored the lived experiences of heads of schools

in Maltese primary state schools and revealed that the challenges in time constraints and an overwhelming workload make it difficult for leaders to support creative teaching in their schools. Each participant in this study shared their experiences in the hopes of shedding light into the importance of creative teaching in Malta's school systems but also the obstacles which accompany them.

In addition, leadership in education was revealed to be often very overwhelming with its requirements to be both managerial and leader (Stewart, 2006).

Supporting creative teaching therefore required the adoption of leadership practices that were of service to their school (Servant), empowering to their teachers (Distributed) and pushed individuals to go beyond their boundaries (Transformational). In so doing, heads of schools were able to highlight key leadership strategies in motivation, communication, empathy and personal/professional growth to support, empower and direct teachers into more creative teaching practices which includes holistic and outdoor learning spaces to ensure all students receive the best possible educations afforded to them. Each of the 7 participants interviewed in this study was fully committed and passionate about achieving this goal.

The experiences and insights provided by the 7 heads of schools will hopefully serve as both inspiration and a catalyst for individual and collective action at every level of education to passionately embrace and nurture creative teaching in Maltese schools.

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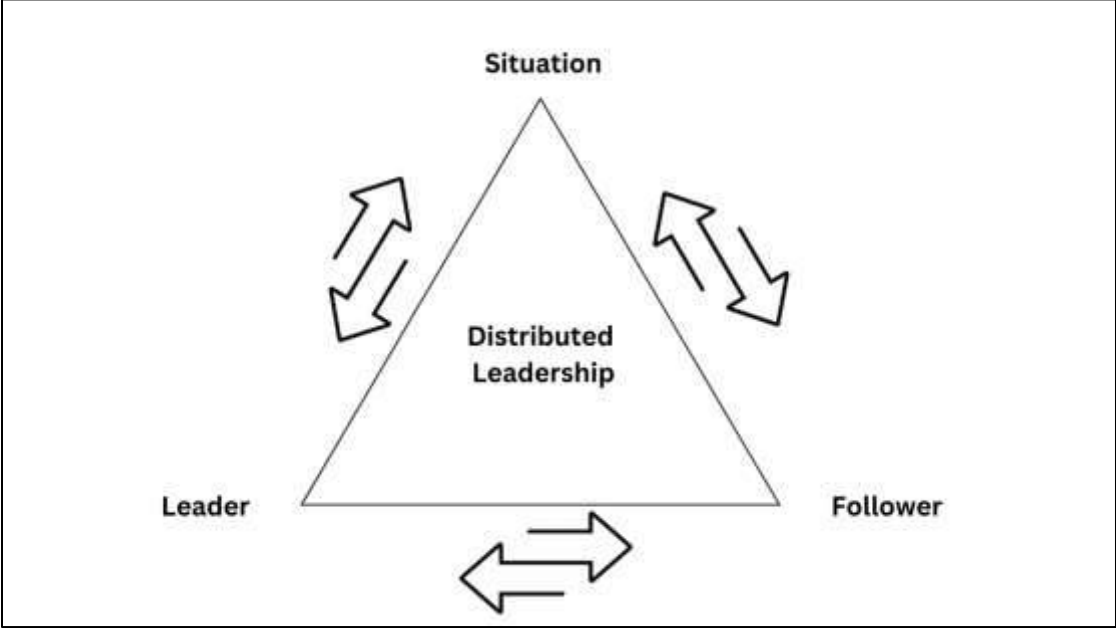
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Appendix 1: Instructional Leadership Example



Instructional Leadership Model (Hallinger 2011a p. 276)

Appendix 2: Distributed Leadership Example



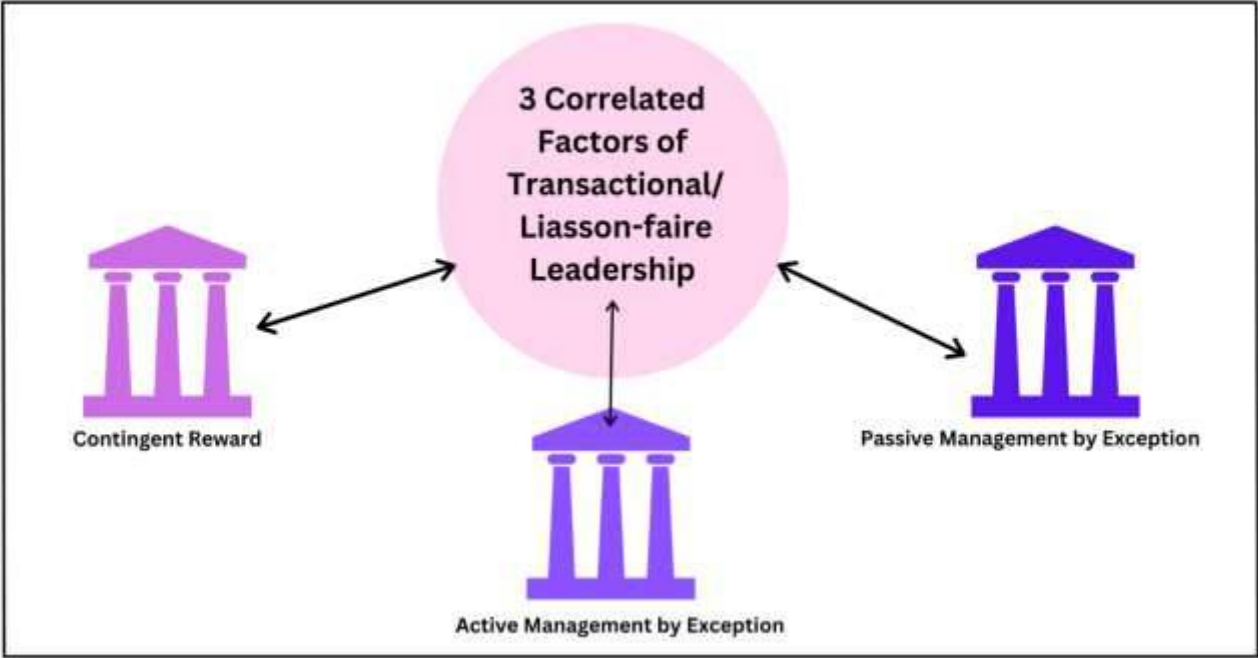
(Yukl, 2002; Leithwood, 2007)

Appendix 3: 4 Pillars of Transformational Leadership Example



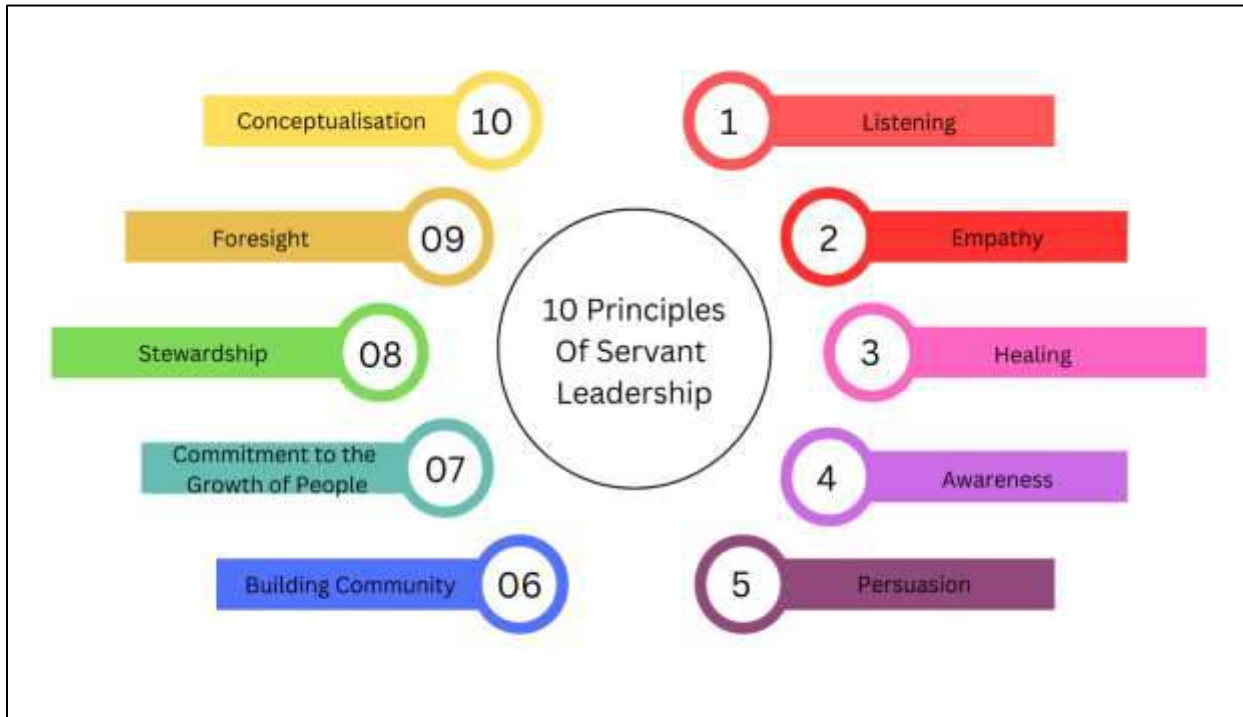
(Avolio et al., 1999, p.446; Bass, 1997, p. 133)

Appendix 4: 3 Correlated Factors of Transactional/ Laissez-faire Leadership



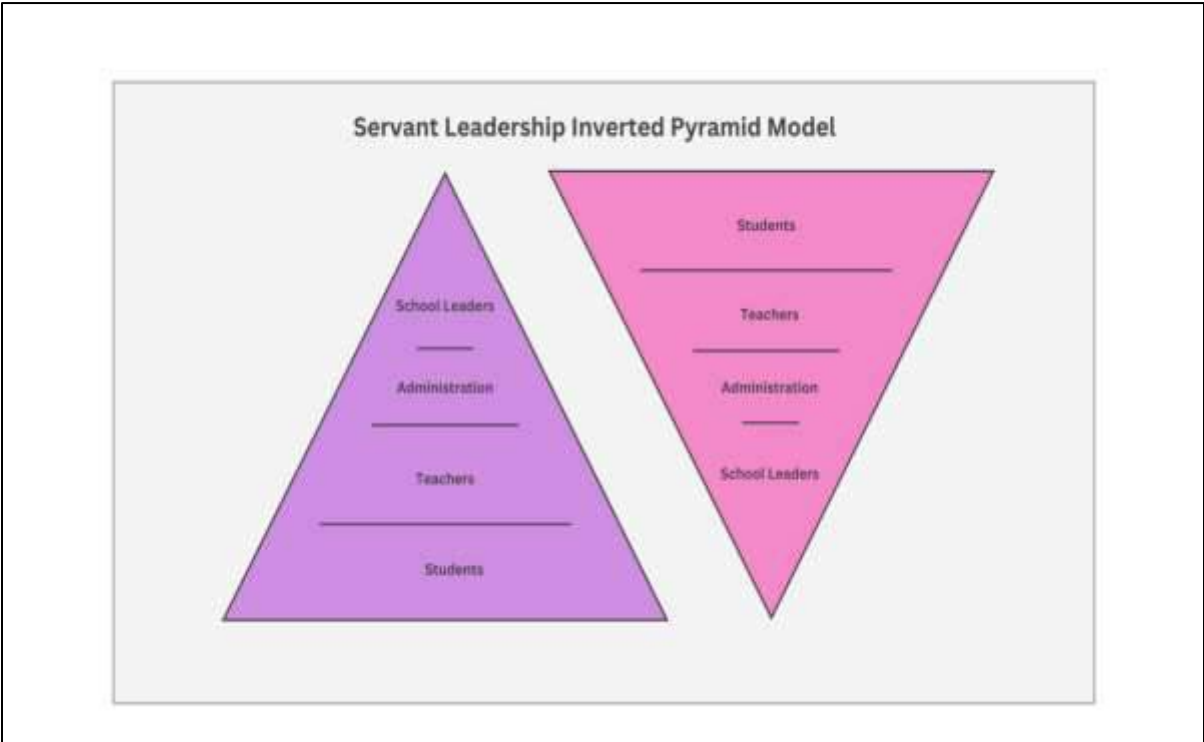
(Bass, 1997; Avolio et al., 1999)

Appendix 5: 10 Principles of Servant Leadership Example



(Greenleaf, 1976, Greenleaf, 1991b)

Appendix 6: Servant Leadership Inverted Pyramid Example



(Taylor et al., 2007, p. 406)

Appendix 7: Attributes of Visionary Leadership Example

Attribute: Highly motivated by personal beliefs

Principals' actions should be consistent with their own beliefs.
Principals are reflective thinkers as well as action-oriented.
Principals should maintain personal goals even if some school patrons complain.

Attribute: Committed to attaining personal goals

Principals are committed to attaining their personal goals for their school.
Principals should do what is needed to get the results that they want.
The values and beliefs of the principal are the major influence upon the work of the people in the school.
The principal's own beliefs should be prominent in the atmosphere of the school.
Principals must actively work to promote their ideals in the school.

Attribute: Value a prominent, shared school ideology

Teachers work hard when the principal makes school goals clear.
Principals should vigorously articulate school goals at every opportunity.
In good schools, the principal and teachers are committed to common purposes.
School climate is different in each school, because of the strong influence of each school staff's beliefs about students and learning.
Successful schools have a clearly understood philosophy.
Goals will be attained in a school in which everyone knows what is important for success.

Attribute: Predisposed toward innovation

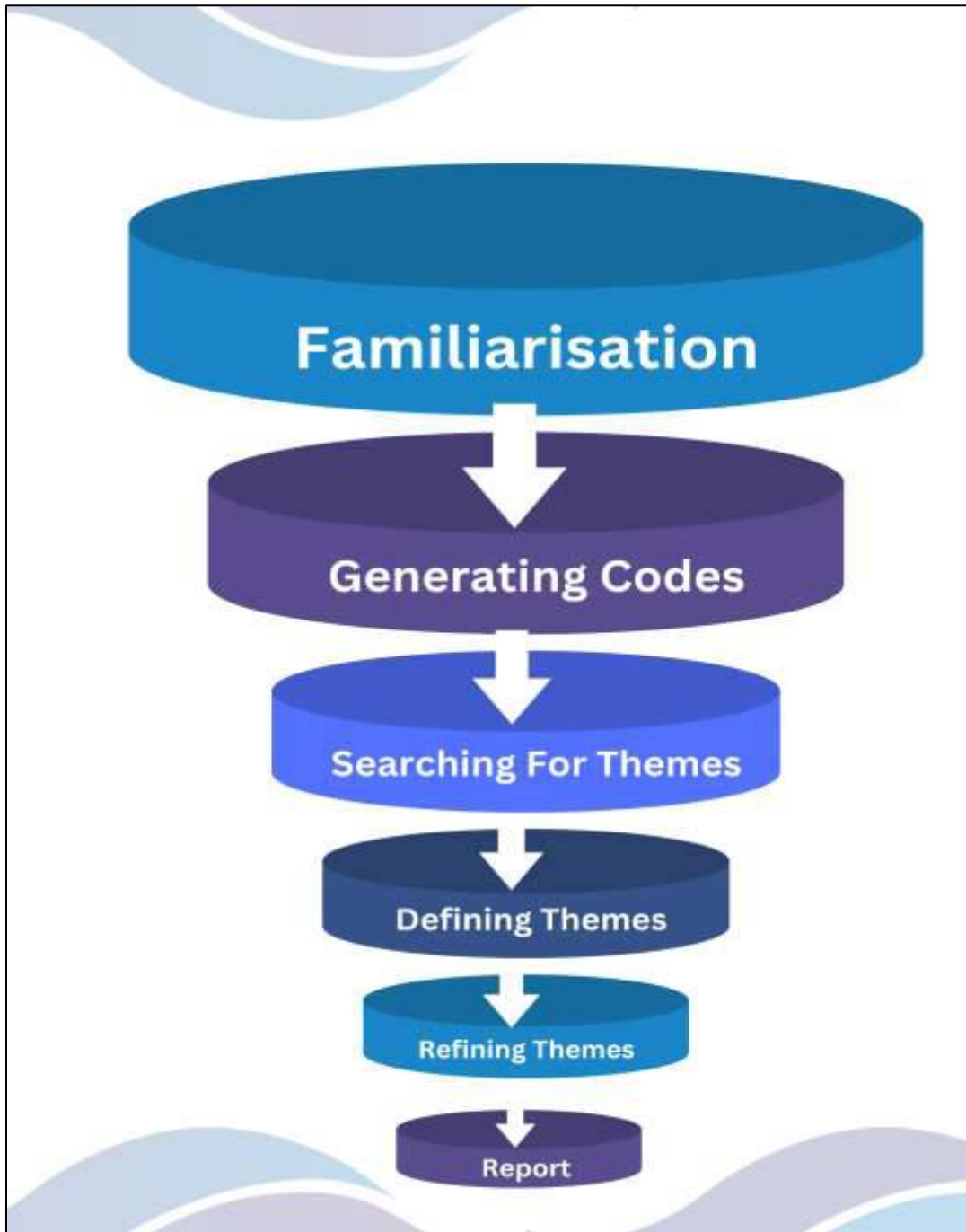
Temporary disruption of school operations is sometimes necessary to achieve progress.
A good principal can be expected to take innovative actions.
The principal should create an atmosphere of creativity in the school.
Good principals are driven by a desire to create new ideas.
Principals must be willing to take risks.

Attribute: Visualize a better future

Leaders should be driven by their vision of a better future.
Some principals become well-known because they are heroic, visionary leaders.
Principals should spend time actively planning for the future.
Wise principals focus their school on an image of what the school should be in the future.
School principals should have a view of a future which is better than the present.

(LeSourd & Grady, 1990 p.113)

Appendix 8: 6 – Step Thematic Analysis Example



(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Appendix 9: Interview Questions

Dissertation Research Questions:

Title: Leadership and Creative Teaching: Perspective of heads of schools in Maltese State Schools;

Research Question: How are leadership practices adopted by heads of schools contributing to the support of creative teaching within Maltese primary state schools

Headings will be highlighted in purple

In some instances, certain questions will start off as a statement first. Prior to asking the question, I will clarify when it is a statement to avoid any confusion. Statements will be highlighted in yellow.

Questions will be in bold

Prompt questions will be headed by Roman Numerals

Demographic

Question 1: Please tell me a little about yourself

- i. What is your name? Surname? Age? Gender?
- ii. What is your highest level of qualification?
- iii. Did you yourself attend a state school in primary education? If not, where else did you study? Church or independent school? Have you ever studied or worked abroad? If so, where? For how long?
- iv. Were you a teacher prior to being a Head of a school? If so, for how long? Was it all in a state school? What years did you teach? Was it all in Malta?
- v. How long have you been the Head of this school? How many years of School Head experience do you have in total? Were they all in primary? Were they all in a state school?

General

Question 2: What was your learning experience growing up in the Maltese educational system?

- i. Was it a traditional model of pedagogy or any other type of teaching method?
- ii. Was there any room for creative freedom within your academic work?
- iii. Did any of your educators or senior leadership teams encourage or promote creativity in learning?

Question 3: What led you into the career path of wanting to be a school head? Why was this important to you? (Please give concrete examples).

- i. During your time as an educator did you experience mainly positive or negative support from the school head?

Question 4: Did you receive adequate training prior to or after becoming the Head of a school? Please give concrete examples

- i. Are their training courses you attend that support your growth to better your professional career?
- ii. Is there a Professional Learning Community amongst your peers to discuss strategies and challenges you face as a school head?

Administrative

Question 5: What are the day-to-day responsibilities of being a School Head? Ex. Budgeting, meetings, conferences, administration work.

- i. What would you say are the most challenging aspects of your profession? (Please give concrete examples).

Statement/question

Question 6: School leaders are often caught between the academic needs of students, professional needs of teachers and increasing demands of parents and educational stakeholders. This becomes a major challenge many schools leaders face: the struggle of carrying the leadership burden alone.

How does your leadership style help navigate through many of these difficult administrative challenges?

- i. Do you feel you have enough time to complete all of your responsibilities?
- ii. Do you feel like you need more support from your superiors?

Statement/question

Question 7: Many school leaders are so overwhelmed with day-to-day managerial tasks that they feel like they do not have the time to lead in better teaching practices.

Do you feel that as a result of these pressures and demands placed on leadership teams, the educational system in Malta has developed a strong reliance on textbooks, handouts and homework?

Leadership

Question 8: What does good leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

- I. In contrast, what would poor leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

Question 9: How would you describe your leadership style?

Question 10: Please list the 3 most important characteristics (single words) you believe are the most important qualities in being an effective leadership.

Question 11: What is the difference between being an effective leader and being an effective manager?

Statement/question

Question 12: Research on leadership practices indicates that strong leaders are often effective managers, however they usually are more comfortable in one of the two areas.

As the head of the school, do you believe your strengths are more as a strong leader or effective manager? Please give concrete examples.

Question 13: Based on your leadership style description, would you categorize it under;

Instructional: Instructional leadership is a model of school leadership in which a school head works alongside teachers to provide support and guidance in establishing best practices in teaching. It is generally defined as the management of curriculum and instruction by a school principal.

Distributed: Distributed leadership is a term used in educational settings to describe how different individuals within an organization share responsibility for leadership.

Transactional: Transactional leadership is a leadership style that utilizes rewards and punishments to motivate and direct followers. The goals and tasks of teachers are highly structured, and educators rewarded when they achieve these goals and reprimanded if they miss desired outcomes.

Transformational: Transformational leadership is a model of leadership that relies on the encouragement of a team to realize overall success. By raising a team's morale and self-confidence, the team can then align itself to an overall vision or common purpose and be inspired to achieve beyond their presumed potential.

Servant: Servant leadership is a leadership approach that puts serving others above all other priorities. Rather than managing for results, a servant leader focuses on creating an environment in which their team can thrive and get their highest-impact work done.

Visionary: Visionary leaders have the ability to see the big picture. They have a compelling vision of the future, where they can make a positive impact and, often, disrupt the status quo. Visionary leaders have strong communication skills, act as mentors, and are able to look at the big picture while inspiring their teams to work together

- I. Please describe why you feel you fit under this category of leadership style
- II. Do you feel that more than one of these leadership styles applies to you? Maybe two or three? Please explain in detail

Question 14: Appreciating the complexity and responsibilities associated with the role of School Head, what leadership attributes (attitudes, characteristics, experience) do you demonstrate to keep teachers wanting to achieve at the highest level? (please give concrete examples).

- I. How do you keep the needs of your teachers before your own needs?
- II. How do you communicate and maintain high morale within the school's walls?
- III. How do you create challenging goals for your teachers and provide constructive feedback?

- IV. How often do you observe your teachers' strengths/weaknesses and provide constructive feedback?

Creativity:

Question 15: What does Teaching Creatively look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

Statement/question

Question 16: Government ministers, stakeholders, parents and educational community members all have their own diverse perspectives on best practices to raising national standards and improving student outcomes.

Do you believe they take creativity, imagination and innovative thinking into account when developing future citizens? Please give concrete examples.

Question 17: With such an increasing demand focusing on students learning core subjects such as; reading, writing and arithmetic to meet the standards of assessments and accountability, how does your leadership style help support creativity and prevent it from becoming non-existent?

- I. Do you feel creative teaching should be a priority for all of your teachers?

Leadership in Creativity

Question 18: As the Head of School, how does your leadership style contribute to supporting creative teaching in your school? Please give concrete examples.

- I. Do you feel the National Curriculum Framework assists and/or promotes creative teaching or is it too rigid and structured?
- II. How does the pressure of time constraints affect practicing creative teaching?

Question 19: Please describe how your leadership style encourages teachers to approach you with creative and innovative teaching practices and feel confident that this open communication effectively makes teachers feel that they are being supported? Please give concrete examples.

- I. Do you regularly communicate your expectations to your teachers?
- II. How do you demonstrate commitment to teachers developing their professional goals?
- III. Do you offer coaching or mentorship to develop your teachers' creative potential?

Statement/question

Question 20: Policy ministers and future employers want students in Malta to be prepared and ready for the workforce in the 21st century with creativity as a learnt skill. [The Education Act, Chapter 605 of the Laws of Malta](#), reinforces the State's commitment towards providing a quality holistic education for all citizens. Furthermore, the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 policy aims to ensure that all children, young people, and adults have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society and to develop a society which is competent, resourceful, critically conscious, and competitive in a global economy driven by information, knowledge and innovation.

What strategies have you put in place that put innovation and creativity at the top of the list for educational development contributing to 21st century skills?

Question 21:

Is there anything that I have missed that you would like to add or clarify in your answers? Is there another question that you feel should be present in this interview?

END

Appendix 10: Participant 1 Interview

Participant 1 Interview:

Title: Leadership and Creative Teaching: Perspective of heads of schools in Maltese State Schools;

Research Question: How are leadership practices adopted by heads of schools contributing to the support of creative teaching within Maltese primary state schools

Headings will be highlighted in purple

In some instances, certain questions will start off as a statement first. Prior to asking the question, I will clarify when it is a statement to avoid any confusion. Statements will be highlighted in yellow.

Main questions will be highlighted in bold

Prompt questions will be headed by Roman Numerals

**Interview conducted with Participant 1 Isabelle Chircop (P1): on December 20th, 2023 – (Head Master's name has been anonymized for identity protection)*

Demographic

Question 1: Please tell me a little about yourself

- i. What is your name? Surname? Age? Gender?
- ii. What is your highest level of qualification?
- iii. Did you yourself attend a state school in primary education? If not, where else did you study? Church or independent school? Have you ever studied or worked abroad? If so, where? For how long?
- iv. Were you a teacher prior to being a Head of a school? If so, for how long? Was it all in a state school? What years did you teach? Was it all in Malta?
- v. How long have you been the Head of this school? How many years of School Head experience do you have in total? Were they all in primary? Were they all in a state school?

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: Okay, shall we start?

Interviewer: Yes, please and thank you for agreeing to be interviewed.

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: That's no problem. I am 44 years old, female and have completed my Masters in Leadership and Organizational Behaviour.

I've spent 17 years in state primary schools and I have no intention to keep going to become a college principal. At the end of the day, I am a teacher and want to be with children. When you become a

principal, there's way more bureaucracy involved Being on the school leadership team is like being mid-way and I am still connected to the children.

My mother and father were working class people. They taught me that If you put your mind to it, you can do it.

I feel there are more school resources in state schools over church schools. In state schools, you have more time to mix, and it is less structured. I think church schools are more structured and old-fashioned. "When I got into teaching as a young person with creativity, I felt that state schools were for me". Generally, church schools hired church school graduates. "I had the same opportunities with but with a lot less structure".

General

Question 2: What was your learning experience growing up in the Maltese educational system?

- i. Was it a traditional model of pedagogy or any other type of teaching method?
- ii. Was there any room for creative freedom within your academic work?
- iii. Did any of your educators or senior leadership teams encourage or promote creativity in learning?

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: As a child I really worked hard, had good motivation and was committed.

The pedagogy was very traditional, church school were stricter and state schools allowed for more exploration and creativity.

Lots of chalk and talk. Assessments were seen as critical for your future; everything was segmented and streamed. There was no room on creativity, the schools main focus was on the core subjects. The levels of education were higher. "Lessons on Art & PE were given as rewards".

Question 3: What led you into the career path of wanting to be a school head? Why was this important to you? (Please give concrete examples).

- i. During your time as an educator did you experience mainly positive or negative support from the school head?

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: To be a Teacher is an intrinsic motivation. It's a calling, because when you're are teaching you are helping human beings. I always wanted to be teacher; teachers are my role models.

“When I was younger, I role played as teacher, it’s a vocation, you feel it”.

Question 4: Did you receive adequate training prior to or after becoming the Head of a school? Please give concrete examples

- i. Are their training courses you attend that support your growth to better your professional career?
- ii. Is there a Professional Learning Community amongst your peers to discuss strategies and challenges you face as a school head?

P1 (Isabelle’s) Answer: In the masters, yes. I had a lot of help. You must have a masters in leadership. Then you participate in professional development courses, training courses. It is important to keep updated on policies and to promote ongoing learning.

Teachers can also go to courses which are paid for by the school. There are also mentorship courses which are helpful in finding out one’s strengths and weakness or courses on updating skills regarding digital technology

Administrative

Question 5: What are the day-to-day responsibilities of being a School Head? Ex. Budgeting, meetings, conferences, administration work.

- i. What would you say are the most challenging aspects of your profession? (Please give concrete examples).

P1 (Isabelle’s) Answer: My responsibilities include administrative duties, emotional well-being of others, the safety of every person in the school, mentally, physically and emotionally, dealing with complaints, and miscommunication, professional development, navigating supply teachers and newly qualified teachers, I visit classrooms, give reports, develop activities and events, school council meetings, clerks, work on building the calendar, create notices, set up assemblies, create the structure

This school went a year without a head, I needed to build a team and then put in a structure.

You have to learn how to deal with Maltese parents and foreigners by keeping an open-door policy and educating parents. I received a lot of support; I have a good mentor.

Statement/question

Question 6: School leaders are often caught between the academic needs of students, professional needs of teachers and increasing demands of parents and educational stakeholders. This becomes a major challenge many schools leaders face: the struggle of carrying the leadership burden alone.

How does your leadership style help navigate through many of these difficult administrative challenges?

- i. Do you feel you have enough time to complete all of your responsibilities?
- ii. Do you feel like you need more support from your superiors?

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: You have to be of service to your team and help transform the school leadership team and all teachers to be their own leaders. To accomplish this, training becomes key. It creates a less chaotic environment. Having a team of leaders plays a vital role in a school's success.

Often the workload runs from 6am – 6pm, which is still not enough time for the amount of work.

Fortunately, I am very well supported by my superiors.

Statement/question

Question 7: Many school leaders are so overwhelmed with day-to-day managerial tasks that they feel like they do not have the time to lead in better teaching practices.

Do you feel that as a result of these pressures and demands placed on leadership teams, the educational system in Malta has developed a strong reliance on textbooks, handouts and homework?

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: I have so much work to do it often impedes me from being able to attend classroom lessons. Plus, unions don't allow it unless teachers are in their first couple of years.

For warranted teachers, I cannot not sit as an observer and offer feedback unless invited. Now teaching methods are student centred, it's not about teacher, it's about the student

Leadership

Question 8: What does good leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

- I. In contrast, what would poor leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer:

A good leader is one who serves people and is transformative in their abilities. They are empathetic, kind and good listeners who build structure and keep an open-door policy.

In contrast, poor leadership are people who lack empathy, kindness, motivation and listening skills. They manage without considering the human element to the job.

Question 9: How would you describe your leadership style?

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: *Definitely Servant + Transformative.*

My leadership style is being both a Servant leader and Transformative leader. Throughout the day you have to deal with human beings who are your teachers, friends and colleagues. If you "take care of the employees and they take care of their clients" – if teachers are motivated it means a happy child. That is the Servant leadership side.

As a Transformative leader, I tell my teachers to evaluate themselves using the SWOT analysis. The school leadership team and teachers all do one. I believe a successful school is when out of the school can run efficiently without me. When the school is reliable, the teachers move forward.

It is important to create both Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. But when intrinsic motivation is out, then teachers will leave

Question 10: Please list the 3 most important characteristics (single words) you believe are the most important qualities in being an effective leadership.

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer:

Kind

Good listener

structured

Question 11: What is the difference between being an effective leader and being an effective manager?

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer:

Managers want to get things done and may do so void of any human emotion. Management without good leadership results in poor results. A leader has a vision and works as a team.

Power can be very dangerous and a manager can cause a lot of damage if they abuse their power. In contrast, a leader with power and who knows how to use it can be very influential and helpful to others.

Incorporating power in the right way can be a strong motivator to make positive change

Statement/question

Question 12: Research on leadership practices indicates that strong leaders are often effective managers, however they usually are more comfortable in one of the two areas.

As the head of the school, do you believe your strengths are more as a strong leader or effective manager? Please give concrete examples.

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer:

Being an effective leader includes being open, maintaining an open-door policy, fostering kindness while removing fear. Making everyone feel welcome by making the environment feel welcome.

Keep open communication - communication is very important. Also help school leadership team to really help in the communication process. Come to school happy. Conduct informal training sessions on team building. Create bonding activities to bond with school. Always be of service, don't make promises you can't fulfill and be very open about their concerns.

Every instance is a learning opportunity. It's important to make everyone feel safe environment; emotional, social and behavioural. Feedback is important especially when something is wrong.

Create a strong structure and foundation. Get feedback from parents and children, plus include themed classes and promote photos and videos on Facebook.

Question 13: Based on your leadership style description, would you categorize it under;

Instructional: Instructional leadership is a model of school leadership in which a school head works alongside teachers to provide support and guidance in establishing best practices in teaching. It is generally defined as the management of curriculum and instruction by a school principal.

Distributed: Distributed leadership is a term used in educational settings to describe how different individuals within an organization share responsibility for leadership.

Transactional: Transactional leadership is a leadership style that utilizes rewards and punishments to motivate and direct followers. The goals and tasks of teachers are highly structured, and educators rewarded when they achieve these goals and reprimanded if they miss desired outcomes.

Transformational: Transformational leadership is a model of leadership that relies on the encouragement of a team to realize overall success. By raising a team's morale and self-confidence, the team can then align itself to an overall vision or common purpose and be inspired to achieve beyond their presumed potential.

Servant: Servant leadership is a leadership approach that puts serving others above all other priorities. Rather than managing for results, a servant leader focuses on creating an environment in which their team can thrive and get their highest-impact work done.

Visionary: Visionary leaders have the ability to see the big picture. They have a compelling vision of the future, where they can make a positive impact and, often, disrupt the status quo. Visionary leaders have strong communication skills, act as mentors, and are able to look at the big picture while inspiring their teams to work together

- I. Please describe why you feel you fit under this category of leadership style
- II. Do you feel that more than one of these leadership styles applies to you? Maybe two or three?
Please explain in detail

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: Servant leadership and Transformational leadership

Question 14: Appreciating the complexity and responsibilities associated with the role of School Head, what leadership attributes (attitudes, characteristics, experience) do you demonstrate to keep teachers wanting to achieve at the highest level? (please give concrete examples).

- I. How do you keep the needs of your teachers before your own needs?
- II. How do you communicate and maintain high morale within the school's walls?
- III. How do you create challenging goals for your teachers and provide constructive feedback?
- IV. How often do you observe your teachers' strengths/weaknesses and provide constructive feedback?

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: Keeping an open-door policy, being empathetic, kind, supportive and being a good listener. Encouraging cross-curricular learning and outdoor activities. Lessons need to be meaningful and relatable to the students' lives.

As a school head, I am here to encourage, support and mentor my teachers to improve their skills by providing structure and a safe environment.

Creativity:

Question 15: What does Teaching Creatively look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: Teachers lack knowledge that if it's not on the internet, it can't be done. An experienced good teacher incorporates cross-curricular lessons with the outside world and relate it to the instruction. Many creative teachers create learning resources out of the environment to enhance meaning and relatability,

Creativity is very important, especially in the young early years. However, too much can also be bad. There should always be a balance. Too much creativity in lessons may equal to not doing well in the exams.

Creativity must be used as a tool to learn. If you use creativity just to pass time then no, you cannot do it in every lesson. A teacher needs balance.

Statement/question

Question 16: Government ministers, stakeholders, parents and educational community members all have their own diverse perspectives on best practices to raising national standards and improving student outcomes.

Do you believe they take creativity, imagination and innovative thinking into account when developing future citizens? Please give concrete examples.

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: Nowadays days yes, creativity is taken very seriously. Everything is in the curriculum. It is very inclusive. Creativity is not seen as a treat, like Art, it is a need. Art was a treat, we had to work for it. Children's rights to be creativity has encouraged teachers to adapt holistic teaching methods in their lessons, projects, and homework both international and locally

We can encourage the teachers to be creative but first we need to support them to be creative. We can help with that by providing observations and reports on new teachers and fostering a creative environment to practice.

Question 17: With such an increasing demand focusing on students learning core subjects such as; reading, writing and arithmetic to meet the standards of assessments and accountability, how does your leadership style help support creativity and prevent it from becoming non-existent?

I. Do you feel creative teaching should be a priority for all of your teachers?

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: It is challenging because you cannot tell teachers to be creative. Its like a "pocket of water". You can give them all the resources, benefits and training in the world but ultimately, it's up to them to practice creative teaching. As a school head you cannot push, but you can encourage

The best thing you can do is be of service and help transform weakness into strength while offering encouragement and support

Leadership in Creativity

Question 18: As the Head of School, how does your leadership style contribute to supporting creative teaching in your school? Please give concrete examples.

- I. Do you feel the National Curriculum Framework assists and/or promotes creative teaching or is it too rigid and structured?
- II. How does the pressure of time constraints affect practicing creative teaching?

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: By offering coaching and mentorship which is very important in leadership.

Professional development on coaching mentorship is very helpful.

Question 19: Please describe how your leadership style encourages teachers to approach you with creative and innovative teaching practices and feel confident that this open communication effectively makes teachers feel that they are being supported? Please give concrete examples.

- I. Do you regularly communicate your expectations to your teachers?
- II. How do you demonstrate commitment to teachers developing their professional goals?
- III. Do you offer coaching or mentorship to develop your teachers' creative potential?

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: First you encourage and support projects in creativity, use lots of examples of creativity in projects. Then use my past experiences through encouragement on creative projects I had worked on.

Explain the fearful emotions, how I tried it and saw the benefits. The children benefited, the teachers benefited, it is an overall positive experience.

You must guide them; you cannot solve anyone's problems only support and encourage them to try different teaching approaches.

Statement/question

Question 20: Policy ministers and future employers want students in Malta to be prepared and ready for the workforce in the 21st century with creativity as a learnt skill. The Education Act, Chapter 605 of the Laws of Malta, reinforces the State's commitment towards providing a quality holistic education for all citizens. Furthermore, the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 policy aims to ensure that all children, young people, and adults have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society and to develop a society which is competent, resourceful, critically conscious, and competitive in a global economy driven by information, knowledge and innovation.

What strategies have you put in place that put innovation and creativity at the top of the list for educational development contributing to 21st century skills?

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: Keep an open-door policy, balance class sizes, provide more support, if there are demanding classes, provide additional help, ask for financial support for resources, prioritize improvements, all wishes and needs to be worked on slowly so people feel heard.

And very important, give hope that they are always being supported.

Question 21:

Is there anything that I have missed that you would like to add or clarify in your answers? Is there another question that you feel should be present in this interview?

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: Timetables and lack of time. It is too structured. Curriculum is very time consuming. There are barriers when addressing children with special needs because they require additional attention and time. There are also language barriers in many classrooms.

“With all of these challenges, creativity is the thing that bonds these barriers like drama, activities and music. Children bond through creativity so it is important that school activities instill creativity in the lesson and as a school”.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your great insights and experiences with these answers!

P1 (Isabelle's) Answer: Thank you very much.

End of Interview: Duration (126-Minutes)

Appendix 11: Participant 2 Interview

Participant 2 Interview:

Title: Leadership and Creative Teaching: Perspective of Heads of School in Maltese State Schools;

Research Question: How are leadership practices adopted by Heads of School contributing to the support of creative teaching within Maltese primary state schools

Headings will be highlighted in purple

In some instances, certain questions will start off as a statement first. Prior to asking the question, I will clarify when it is a statement to avoid any confusion. Statements will be highlighted in yellow.

Main questions will be highlighted in bold

Prompt questions will be headed by Roman Numerals

**Interview conducted with Participant 2 Gabriel Attard (P2): on December 28th, 2023 – (Head Master's name has been anonymized for identity protection)*

Demographic

Question 1: Please tell me a little about yourself

- i. What is your name? Surname? Age? Gender?
- ii. What is your highest level of qualification?
- iii. Did you yourself attend a state school in primary education? If not, where else did you study? Church or independent school? Have you ever studied or worked abroad? If so, where? For how long?
- iv. Were you a teacher prior to being a Head of a school? If so, for how long? Was it all in a state school? What years did you teach? Was it all in Malta?
- v. How long have you been the Head of this school? How many years of School Head experience do you have in total? Were they all in primary? Were they all in a state school?

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: Thank you for meeting via ZOOM, I feel there will be a lot less distractions.

Interviewer: Thank you, it is very convenient.

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: I am okay if you wish to record this interview.

Interviewer: Thank you but I will just be scribing the entire process. But I do appreciate the offer.

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: Okay let's start, I went to school from 1999-2003. I taught from 2003 – 2016 (12 years)

I became an assistant head in 2016. I received a Master's in leadership and Organization Educational Behaviour. I am 42 years old with 3 Children.

I started as a head of school very recently and I am taking it step by step.

General

Question 2: What was your learning experience growing up in the Maltese educational system?

- i. Was it a traditional model of pedagogy or any other type of teaching method?

- ii. Was there any room for creative freedom within your academic work?
- iii. Did any of your educators or senior leadership teams encourage or promote creativity in learning?

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer:

It was very a very traditional method of learning. There were a lot of disciplinary measures, long rulers were used and almost no interactive lessons.

I think the term is called chalk and dust-talk or talk and chalk, I'm not sure but that was how it was. The teacher's desk was on a platform on the corner, like a podium, we would study for our exams, in particular, we studied for the main subjects needed – the core subjects.

To be honest it was study, study, study. Sometimes creativity came in the form of a research project, we had a teacher give tasks in group work but really there was little to no creativity, it was very traditional. We studied for exams.

Question 3: What led you into the career path of wanting to be a school head? Why was this important to you? (Please give concrete examples).

- i. During your time as an educator did you experience mainly positive or negative support from the school head?

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: I believe leadership was born in me. I had a teacher once tell me I was a born leader. I was involved in youth club, and was also the leader of the youth club. I really LOVE leading and helping others.

Often, I would discuss with situations with other leaders and find out as much as I could to better my skills. When I took on a leadership position it was because I felt my motivation was down and I needed a new challenge. I was comfortable but complacent so I began taking a more active role. I really love leading and helping others. It touches many different areas of my life.

Throughout my experience as an educator, I did feel very supported by Head of school, especially on how to communicate and deal with challenging issues.

Question 4: Did you receive adequate training prior to or after becoming the Head of a school? Please give concrete examples

- i. Are their training courses you attend that support your growth to better your professional career?
- ii. Is there a Professional Learning Community amongst your peers to discuss strategies and challenges you face as a school head?

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: I did a masters and found it was too much theory. At times it was very overwhelming and realistically, we were learning theory that was not very practical for real life situations.

School leadership teams do a lot of the training. It is beneficial to all to undertake a lot of courses.

As a head, I do support and encourage the importance of professional learning community but depends on the individual and their goals. We encourage professional development at staff meetings.

As an example, a doctor has to keep up their learning. They can't prescribe medicine they learnt over 20 years ago, and lawyer can't perform the laws from 20 years ago. You need to evolve and adapt.

You can take the horse to river to but you can't make them drink. As a head, there is only so much you can encourage development. Good teaching is innate.

Administrative

Question 5: What are the day-to-day responsibilities of being a School Head? Ex. Budgeting, meetings, conferences, administration work.

- i. What would you say are the most challenging aspects of your profession? (Please give concrete examples).

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: My day-to-day responsibilities are; meetings clerk, council head meetings, new registrations, meetings with school leadership teams, working with teachers, engaging with parents, structuring professional development, policies/procedures, curriculum, enacting discipline, ensuring a safe school environment.

Interviewer: Wow that is a long list, are you sure you haven't forgotten anything?

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: There's more, sometimes I'm the nurse, other times I'm a psychologist. I also try and promote holistic learning in the classrooms as much as possible.

With management, You have to be very careful; it can be a trap falling into management. You have to learn how to juggle because your biggest challenge is time and trying to get out of the office.

"I'd say 60% is leadership and 40% is managerial".

I am fortunate though; I have a lot of help. I've got 7 assistant heads and 5 clerks so the load is divided but I do have the final word.

Statement/question

Question 6: School leaders are often caught between the academic needs of students, professional needs of teachers and increasing demands of parents and educational stakeholders. This becomes a major challenge many schools leaders face: the struggle of carrying the leadership burden alone.

How does your leadership style help navigate through many of these difficult administrative challenges?

- i. Do you feel you have enough time to complete all of your responsibilities?
- ii. Do you feel like you need more support from your superiors?

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: It is important to adopt a Distributed leadership style. As a head of school, you cannot keep leadership tight

The leadership responsibilities are distributed. An example is, assistant heads deal with parental complaints according to the adequate person. If it escalates, the assistant head brings it to me, otherwise they handle it.

There are many different levels to leadership, so it needs to be very distributed. To help avoid burnout and wellbeing, teachers have 2.5 hours no contact time a week. There are Cope sessions which are full-day training.

As a head of school, you need to surround yourself with a great team. We do morning assemblies for building a school community, we have special assemblies and create fun activities for students.

When you have a bigger school, it really relies on a strong distributed system. School leaders and teachers need to be very confident in themselves. Otherwise, the education system can get too tiring and exhausting without each other's help.

Statement/question

Question 7: Many school leaders are so overwhelmed with day-to-day managerial tasks that they feel like they do not have the time to lead in better teaching practices.

Do you feel that as a result of these pressures and demands placed on leadership teams, the educational system in Malta has developed a strong reliance on textbooks, handouts and homework?

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer:

Sometimes you can get trapped on managerial duties and you cannot motivate and encourage 24/7.

At the end of the day, it is up to the teacher to be innovative and creative in their teaching methods. It comes down to the team. Usually, teachers come out of university full of enthusiasm and promise of making a difference in students' lives. This enthusiasm does not get watered down if they continue attending courses afterwards. Teachers need to keep feeding their enthusiasm and passion but it is up to them to implement.

Unfortunately, teachers influence each other in negative ways as well and bring each other down. There is only so much you can motivate your team. It is up to them to be creative.

Leadership

Question 8: What does good leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

- I. In contrast, what would poor leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: *A good leader is assertive, is strong in decision-making, has really good emotional intelligence, a strong communicator, is very influential, has visionary attributes, is resilient and empowers people so that everyone can be a leader in his or her own way*

In contrast, a poor leader is one who is lacking in decision-making abilities, lacks vision, lacks of presence in critical moments, lacks guidance, is often absent and closes themselves in their office.

Question 9: How would you describe your leadership style?

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer:

I am very definitely a Distributed leader.

Question 10: Please list the 3 most important characteristics (single words) you believe are the most important qualities in being an effective leadership.

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: *I have more than 3 if that is okay?*

Interviewer: Yes of course, go ahead.

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer:

Assertive

decision-making

Emotional intelligence

Communicator

Influential

Visionary

Resilient

Empowering people

Question 11: What is the difference between being an effective leader and being an effective manager?

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer:

An effective manager gets things done, while an effective leader gets things done by using the “Hands of the many not in the few”. The more you can extend your team, the more you can read them. “Emotional intelligence plays a big role”.

When you practice Emotional Intelligence in Leadership, You get to know your teams’ individual characteristics.

“You want to avoid squeezing the same orange over and over otherwise you’ll end up getting the same answers”.

Like I said earlier, everyone can be a leader in his or her own way. On my team, every Assistant head is considered the head of that year group. It is not to be interpreted as passing off responsibilities but about believing in your team.

“Believing in your team and giving them challenges keeps them motivated”.

Statement/question

Question 12: Research on leadership practices indicates that strong leaders are often effective managers, however they usually are more comfortable in one of the two areas.

As the head of the school, do you believe your strengths are more as a strong leader or effective manager? Please give concrete examples.

P2 (Gabriel’s) Answer: I like to keep face-to-face contact; it is important to always remain present and offer constructive criticisms by meeting and communicating with the teacher in person.

The union does not allow for observations after the teacher is warranted. You have to be invited into their classroom.

When I do get to offer support and critique, I like to highlight weakness in a constructive way. I’m not there to please teachers but I need to strike a balance between empowerment and good teaching practices.

Question 13: Based on your leadership style description, would you categorize it under;

Instructional: Instructional leadership is a model of school leadership in which a school head works alongside teachers to provide support and guidance in establishing best practices in teaching. It is generally defined as the management of curriculum and instruction by a school principal.

Distributed: Distributed leadership is a term used in educational settings to describe how different individuals within an organization share responsibility for leadership.

Transactional: Transactional leadership is a leadership style that utilizes rewards and punishments to motivate and direct followers. The goals and tasks of teachers are highly structured, and educators rewarded when they achieve these goals and reprimanded if they miss desired outcomes.

Transformational: Transformational leadership is a model of leadership that relies on the encouragement of a team to realize overall success. By raising a team's morale and self-confidence, the team can then align itself to an overall vision or common purpose and be inspired to achieve beyond their presumed potential.

Servant: Servant leadership is a leadership approach that puts serving others above all other priorities. Rather than managing for results, a servant leader focuses on creating an environment in which their team can thrive and get their highest-impact work done.

Visionary: Visionary leaders have the ability to see the big picture. They have a compelling vision of the future, where they can make a positive impact and, often, disrupt the status quo. Visionary leaders have strong communication skills, act as mentors, and are able to look at the big picture while inspiring their teams to work together

- I. Please describe why you feel you fit under this category of leadership style
- II. Do you feel that more than one of these leadership styles applies to you? Maybe two or three?
Please explain in detail

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: *I use my leadership style to help teachers move away from traditional teaching methods – no talk and chalk. We put children teaching at centre of the learning by approaching new methodologies and new technologies.*

It is important to offer the students more autonomy and leadership roles. Some teachers may be afraid to do this, it feels like giving up control, but it's the opposite. Our teachers do get support from their superiors.

Autonomy is important to creativity, there is more freedom to explore if they do not have to follow rigid guidelines and structures but you cannot be 100% autonomous

There needs to be balance between autonomy but within certain guidelines and structures.

Question 14: Appreciating the complexity and responsibilities associated with the role of School Head, what leadership attributes (attitudes, characteristics, experience) do you demonstrate to keep teachers wanting to achieve at the highest level? (please give concrete examples).

- I. How do you keep the needs of your teachers before your own needs?
- II. How do you communicate and maintain high morale within the school's walls?
- III. How do you create challenging goals for your teachers and provide constructive feedback?
- IV. How often do you observe your teachers' strengths/weaknesses and provide constructive feedback?

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer:

A lot of it comes down to mentality because changing a mentality can be very difficult. Teachers, parents, ministry, many still believe in traditional teaching.

"There are people who see creative teaching as a waste of time - they see creativity and innovations as a waste of time".

Unfortunately, this cannot always be credited to the teachers.

"Teachers have very rigid curriculum to teach. It is very heavy in structure, very time-consuming and teachers don't have time, they have to cover curriculum".

In June the exam comes and students need to be prepared.

"We don't teach for the exam. We teach for life; however, the students need to receive a mark and parents will complain if they're children receive a low mark because we had a creative teacher

Creativity:

Question 15: What does Teaching Creatively look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: Being innovative in teaching methods. Changing their mentality and moving away from their comfort zones. Incorporating new and fun activities and sharing them with other teachers.

Statement/question

Question 16: Government ministers, stakeholders, parents and educational community members all have their own diverse perspectives on best practices to raising national standards and improving student outcomes.

Do you believe they take creativity, imagination and innovative thinking into account when developing future citizens? Please give concrete examples.

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: It should be important because teachers will benefit a lot. Teachers are now competing with gadgets and electronics.

Because of this, "if the teacher teaches traditionally, the children will lose all interest".

Teachers need to evolve, they are competing against students' attention span because of gadgets, internet and technology.

But again, it's a question of mentality and training, do teachers want to move out of comfort zone?

Question 17: With such an increasing demand focusing on students learning core subjects such as; reading, writing and arithmetic to meet the standards of assessments and accountability, how does your leadership style help support creativity and prevent it from becoming non-existent?

I. Do you feel creative teaching should be a priority for all of your teachers?

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: It comes down to extrinsic motivation, and need to give incentives. We have staff meetings, 2.5 no contact time, teachers meet with me and their respective assistant head, emails, face-to-face time, we give coaching/mentoring, but not officially.

We organize staff meetings, there's Cope sessions and a community of professional educators.

We encourage peer tutoring, as an example, if you've tried an activity like a lesson in garden, share it with others.

“Teachers influence each other so it is important to have communication with shared ideas”.

Leadership in Creativity

Question 18: As the Head of School, how does your leadership style contribute to supporting creative teaching in your school? Please give concrete examples.

- I. Do you feel the National Curriculum Framework assists and/or promotes creative teaching or is it too rigid and structured?
- II. How does the pressure of time constraints affect practicing creative teaching?

P2 (Gabriel’s) Answer: There is very little time, the curriculum is very rigid and heavily structured. There is a lot to cover in a short period and students are prepared for exams. A teacher really needs see the benefit. Many people still believe in traditional teaching and may be afraid to try.

Question 19: Please describe how your leadership style encourages teachers to approach you with creative and innovative teaching practices and feel confident that this open communication effectively makes teachers feel that they are being supported? Please give concrete examples.

- I. Do you regularly communicate your expectations to your teachers?
- II. How do you demonstrate commitment to teachers developing their professional goals?
- III. Do you offer coaching or mentorship to develop your teachers’ creative potential?

P2 (Gabriel’s) Answer: Emotional Intelligence in knowing weakness and helping support development. Encouragement is given by given autonomy to be their own leaders and share their ideas with everyone. Being present, face-to-face communication and empowerment is all part of being on a strong team and working together.

Again, you can only motivate and encourage creativity and development so much but the teachers need to act accordingly.

Statement/question

Question 20: Policy ministers and future employers want students in Malta to be prepared and ready for the workforce in the 21st century with creativity as a learnt skill. The Education Act, Chapter 605 of

the Laws of Malta, reinforces the State's commitment towards providing a quality holistic education for all citizens. Furthermore, the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 policy aims to ensure that all children, young people, and adults have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society and to develop a society which is competent, resourceful, critically conscious, and competitive in a global economy driven by information, knowledge and innovation.

What strategies have you put in place that put innovation and creativity at the top of the list for educational development contributing to 21st century skills?

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: What type of teaching and methodology in the classroom

If I am able to observe and provide feedback on lessons on what type of classroom methodology is being used to implement the learning outcomes, then the teachers need to take responsibility to act accordingly.

I do have access to their scheme of work, but at the end of the day, I can't prove that creative teaching has been accomplished.

The question is learning outcomes helping teachers teach creativity? The answer is:

"Learning outcomes are designed for examination".

Question 21:

Is there anything that I have missed that you would like to add or clarify in your answers? Is there another question that you feel should be present in this interview?

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: Unfortunately, assessing students on core subjects and creativity is not seen as an important component in achieving this goal.

Interviewer: Thank you for your honesty and fantastic insights in to this research.

P2 (Gabriel's) Answer: Thank you, it was my pleasure.

End of Interview: Duration (136-Minutes)

Appendix 12: Participant 3 Interview

Participant 3 Interview:

Title: Leadership and Creative Teaching: Perspective of heads of schools in Maltese State Schools;

Research Question: How are leadership practices adopted by heads of schools contributing to the support of creative teaching within Maltese primary state schools

Headings will be highlighted in purple

In some instances, certain questions will start off as a statement first. Prior to asking the question, I will clarify when it is a statement to avoid any confusion. Statements will be highlighted in yellow.

Main questions will be highlighted in bold

Prompt questions will be headed by Roman Numerals

**Interview conducted with Participant 3 Annabel Zammit (P3): on January 15th, 2024 – (Head Master's name has been anonymized for identity protection)*

Demographic

Question 1: Please tell me a little about yourself

- i. What is your name? Surname? Age? Gender?
- ii. What is your highest level of qualification?
- iii. Did you yourself attend a state school in primary education? If not, where else did you study? Church or independent school? Have you ever studied or worked abroad? If so, where? For how long?
- iv. Were you a teacher prior to being a Head of a school? If so, for how long? Was it all in a state school? What years did you teach? Was it all in Malta?
- v. How long have you been the Head of this school? How many years of School Head experience do you have in total? Were they all in primary? Were they all in a state school?

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: Good morning, nice to meet you.

Interviewer: Nice to meet you as well. Thank you for participating in this study, it really means a lot to my research.

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: My pleasure, shall we begin?

Interviewer: Yes, these interviews always end up taking way longer than expected.

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: Okay, question 1, so I am 58 years old and I have a post graduate diploma in Leadership. I began as a teacher for a number of years (13 in total) and I very much enjoyed it and then was an assistant head of school for 4 years. After that I became a head of school and have been doing this role for 17 years now. All 17 years as being the head of school have been in primary state schools.

Growing up, I attended a church school and then in secondary I went to an Independent school. The secondary school was small; however, it was very creative and teaching was about including fun in the lessons.

Interviewer: So, you were exposed to creative teaching in education growing up?

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: Yes, it was St. Catherines Independent school. I have never studied abroad. My daughter actually attends a state school. I wanted her to be exposed to all levels of society.

General

Question 2: What was your learning experience growing up in the Maltese educational system?

- i. Was it a traditional model of pedagogy or any other type of teaching method?
- ii. Was there any room for creative freedom within your academic work?
- iii. Did any of your educators or senior leadership teams encourage or promote creativity in learning?

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: The primary school I went to was not at all a positive experience. It was run by nuns and there was a lot of discipline, humiliation, discrimination based on your socio-economic status. Your position in societies class system effected how you got marked.

However, secondary school was a different story. It was a very positive experience. In fact, I remember having lots of fun at school, we had fun days, expressive drama, arts and music.

The teachers at St. Catherines really promoted creativity. They diminished the role of homework by giving us no homework Wednesdays, and on weekends we were given small projects. No homework on holidays either. The negatives and positives of my school experiences really depended on who was the school head at the time.

Question 3: What led you into the career path of wanting to be a school head? Why was this important to you? (Please give concrete examples).

- i. During your time as an educator did you experience mainly positive or negative support from the school head?

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: I was told by the head of school that I would be a good head of school. So I decided to go and get a graduate diploma in Leadership.

Question 4: Did you receive adequate training prior to or after becoming the Head of a school? Please give concrete examples

- i. Are their training courses you attend that support your growth to better your professional career?
- ii. Is there a Professional Learning Community amongst your peers to discuss strategies and challenges you face as a school head?

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: I received a whole week of training before becoming the head of school. Some of the training was beneficial like budgeting and getting to know other heads of schools.

There is also a professional learning community which happens every month working with a professional. As an assistant head I felt more like I was on my own. When you're a school head under a college you feel less alone. Having a college principle makes things better.

Administrative

Question 5: What are the day-to-day responsibilities of being a School Head? Ex. Budgeting, meetings, conferences, administration work.

- i. What would you say are the most challenging aspects of your profession? (Please give concrete examples).

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: My main responsibilities used to be overseeing the teaching and learning component of education. Now there is a lot of administrative responsibilities and supporting teachers' overall wellbeing.

I think staff is the most challenging, there is a constant stream of problems arising. A lot of it is managing people's attitudes, creating a positive atmosphere, and doing match-making between teachers and LSE's. I spend a lot of the summer figuring out how to match the right teachers, LSE's and students for the upcoming year.

Statement/question

Question 6: School leaders are often caught between the academic needs of students, professional needs of teachers and increasing demands of parents and educational stakeholders. This becomes a major challenge many schools leaders face: the struggle of carrying the leadership burden alone.

How does your leadership style help navigate through many of these difficult administrative challenges?

- i. Do you feel you have enough time to complete all of your responsibilities?
- ii. Do you feel like you need more support from your superiors?

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: I use a distributed leadership style. We are one team with one head of school and seven assistant heads. When the workload is shared it becomes lighter and we all gain more insight.

As a team we use our voices to speak out and become introspective with how the school environment can improve. When problems are shared the situation becomes diluted and we get back good advice. It is important to have colleagues to talk it out with. Often, however, we do not have enough times to work out all of the challenging situations and they end up getting burdened into next year.

The college principle is very supportive, but unfortunately everything has become increasingly politicized. They use a lot of buzz words and sound like politicians. They use a lot of platitudes. But the school manages because we have a team of really good leaders.

Statement/question

Question 7: Many school leaders are so overwhelmed with day-to-day managerial tasks that they feel like they do not have the time to lead in better teaching practices.

Do you feel that as a result of these pressures and demands placed on leadership teams, the educational system in Malta has developed a strong reliance on textbooks, handouts and homework?

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: We as a school do our best to do away with textbooks. It is difficult to gage. Teachers in their first two years can have us sit in on their lessons and offer feedback. But as a union directive, once teachers become warranted, I cannot go and experience one of their lessons unless invited.

The teachers who invite me to their classrooms usually do not need to much direction and the teachers who actually need advice do not invite me into their classrooms.

Leadership

Question 8: What does good leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

- I. In contrast, what would poor leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: Good leadership involves being a strong listener and actively participating in the all-school affairs. A school head needs to get down and dirty in the job. There can be no hierarchical structure, everybody needs to be involved.

Another important factor of being a good leader is having strong leaders around you. We call it 'organized chaos'. Like I said earlier, having a open door policy where everyone feels welcome to come in and discuss their challenges and victories.

Question 9: How would you describe your leadership style?

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: My leadership style is definitely Distributed. I am surrounded by a team of strong leaders who all share in the responsibilities and provide honest feedback on directions and improvement.

Question 10: Please list the 3 most important characteristics (single words) you believe are the most important qualities in being an effective leadership.

P3 (Annabel's) Answer:

Empathy

Flexibility

Responsible

Question 11: What is the difference between being an effective leader and being an effective manager?

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: 'Effective leaders influence people to achieve their goals, a manager makes sure everything works like clockwork'.

Statement/question

Question 12: Research on leadership practices indicates that strong leaders are often effective managers, however they usually are more comfortable in one of the two areas.

As the head of the school, do you believe your strengths are more as a strong leader or effective manager? Please give concrete examples.

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: I feel much more comfortable and confident as a leader, between the two, I would be a weaker in managing. Leadership is my strength but I do manage the school well. It just leadership is stronger than management for myself.

Question 13: Based on your leadership style description, would you categorize it under;

Instructional: Instructional leadership is a model of school leadership in which a school head works alongside teachers to provide support and guidance in establishing best practices in teaching. It is generally defined as the management of curriculum and instruction by a school principal.

Distributed: Distributed leadership is a term used in educational settings to describe how different individuals within an organization share responsibility for leadership.

Transactional: Transactional leadership is a leadership style that utilizes rewards and punishments to motivate and direct followers. The goals and tasks of teachers are highly structured, and educators rewarded when they achieve these goals and reprimanded if they miss desired outcomes.

Transformational: Transformational leadership is a model of leadership that relies on the encouragement of a team to realize overall success. By raising a team's morale and self-confidence, the team can then align itself to an overall vision or common purpose and be inspired to achieve beyond their presumed potential.

Servant: Servant leadership is a leadership approach that puts serving others above all other priorities. Rather than managing for results, a servant leader focuses on creating an environment in which their team can thrive and get their highest-impact work done.

Visionary: Visionary leaders have the ability to see the big picture. They have a compelling vision of the future, where they can make a positive impact and, often, disrupt the status quo. Visionary leaders have

strong communication skills, act as mentors, and are able to look at the big picture while inspiring their teams to work together

- I. Please describe why you feel you fit under this category of leadership style
- II. Do you feel that more than one of these leadership styles applies to you? Maybe two or three? Please explain in detail

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: As I stated before, I am a Distributed leader but I am also a bit of a Visionary leader. I really believe and work towards "building the spirit of the school".

Question 14: Appreciating the complexity and responsibilities associated with the role of School Head, what leadership attributes (attitudes, characteristics, experience) do you demonstrate to keep teachers wanting to achieve at the highest level? (please give concrete examples).

- I. How do you keep the needs of your teachers before your own needs?
- II. How do you communicate and maintain high morale within the school's walls?
- III. How do you create challenging goals for your teachers and provide constructive feedback?
- IV. How often do you observe your teachers' strengths/weaknesses and provide constructive feedback?

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: I put the needs of teachers before mine by showing empathy. That can get dangerous too sometimes because other people's problems can start to get under your skin. I've learnt to be empathetic but still create boundaries to how much I let it affect me. Again, we have an open-door policy which creates a safe and understanding environment.

You also have to practice what you preach. It is important to lead by example, be there to help and work together to find solutions.

We incorporate a lot of fun days with fun, creative activities for students, teachers and staff to enjoy.

Creativity:

Question 15: What does Teaching Creatively look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: To me, creative teaching looks like teaching outside of the classroom. We need to go beyond the 4 walls and have outdoor spaces for children to experiment and discover learning. Maybe include Zen spaces and meditation circles to explore mindfulness.

Outdoor spaces for learning would also take the place of many instructions that rely on textbooks and worksheets. As a school, we are open to new ideas on how to teach values and knowledge through creativity.

Many teachers in this school are creative and it is important that we share our ideas together as a community.

Statement/question

Question 16: Government ministers, stakeholders, parents and educational community members all have their own diverse perspectives on best practices to raising national standards and improving student outcomes.

Do you believe they take creativity, imagination and innovative thinking into account when developing future citizens? Please give concrete examples.

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: I like to teach children in the same way I like to learn and give the students the experiences that are meaningful and relatable to real life.

Right now, schools are really focused on the core subjects and then you have emergent curriculum in kinder and year 1. Our drive as a school is to promote creativity in learning throughout all the traditional core subjects. I very much believe that creativity in schools develops happy students.

"People in the ministry promotes the importance of creativity in state schools and then send their children to Church and Independent schools".

Question 17: With such an increasing demand focusing on students learning core subjects such as; reading, writing and arithmetic to meet the standards of assessments and accountability, how does your leadership style help support creativity and prevent it from becoming non-existent?

- I. Do you feel creative teaching should be a priority for all of your teachers?

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: Yes, absolutely, otherwise we will be producing a society of robots.

Leadership in Creativity

Question 18: As the Head of School, how does your leadership style contribute to supporting creative teaching in your school? Please give concrete examples.

- I. Do you feel the National Curriculum Framework assists and/or promotes creative teaching or is it too rigid and structured?
- II. How does the pressure of time constraints affect practicing creative teaching?

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: The NCF does give space in the curriculum to be creative especially when you are teaching Maths and Sciences using fun and creative concepts. As a school, we encourage creative teaching by offering support and the environment to explore and share creative teaching methods.

Question 19: Please describe how your leadership style encourages teachers to approach you with creative and innovative teaching practices and feel confident that this open communication effectively makes teachers feel that they are being supported? Please give concrete examples.

- I. Do you regularly communicate your expectations to your teachers?
- II. How do you demonstrate commitment to teachers developing their professional goals?
- III. Do you offer coaching or mentorship to develop your teachers' creative potential?

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: As a school, we are not rigid when it comes to creativity. We have super fun days which offer numerous creative events and games. Teachers and student's ideas for future games are heard and taken into consideration. Obviously not every idea will be accepted, but we always encourage new ideas.

Usually, the creative ideas come from the teachers who are creative, flexible and resilient but the non-creative teachers rarely offer any input. We promote creativity as much as possible and create a positive atmosphere. One of the ways we accomplish this is by trying to break up the groups of negative teachers to break up the mindset. Once they are put with more creative teachers, we encourage them to do assessments and self-reflection on their teaching methods.

Statement/question

Question 20: Policy ministers and future employers want students in Malta to be prepared and ready for the workforce in the 21st century with creativity as a learnt skill. The Education Act, Chapter 605 of the Laws of Malta, reinforces the State's commitment towards providing a quality holistic education for all citizens. Furthermore, the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 policy aims to ensure that all children, young people, and adults have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society and to develop a society which is competent, resourceful, critically conscious, and competitive in a global economy driven by information, knowledge and innovation.

What strategies have you put in place that put innovation and creativity at the top of the list for educational development contributing to 21st century skills?

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: STEM education is a really good way to break away from traditional ways of teaching. We need less theory and more hands-on practical approaches to learning. When children are learning in environments, especially outdoors, the lessons are so much more impactful and meaningful.

I am not sure if parents fully understand that.

Question 21:

Is there anything that I have missed that you would like to add or clarify in your answers? Is there another question that you feel should be present in this interview?

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: No, I think we covered everything.

Interviewer: I really want to thank you for this interview and for your great insights into your experiences!

P3 (Annabel's) Answer: Thank you.

End of Interview: Duration 123-Minutes.

Appendix 13: Participant 4 Interview

Participant 4 Interview:

Title: Leadership and Creative Teaching: Perspective of heads of schools in Maltese State Schools;

Research Question: How are leadership practices adopted by heads of schools contributing to the support of creative teaching within Maltese primary state schools

Headings will be highlighted in purple

In some instances, certain questions will start off as a statement first. Prior to asking the question, I will clarify when it is a statement to avoid any confusion. Statements will be highlighted in yellow.

Main questions will be highlighted in bold

Prompt questions will be headed by Roman Numerals

**Interview conducted with Participant 4 Alicia Zarb (P4): on January 16th, 2024 – (Head Master's name has been anonymized for identity protection)*

Demographic

Question 1: Please tell me a little about yourself

- i. What is your name? Surname? Age? Gender?
- ii. What is your highest level of qualification?
- iii. Did you yourself attend a state school in primary education? If not, where else did you study? Church or independent school? Have you ever studied or worked abroad? If so, where? For how long?
- iv. Were you a teacher prior to being a Head of a school? If so, for how long? Was it all in a state school? What years did you teach? Was it all in Malta?
- v. How long have you been the Head of this school? How many years of School Head experience do you have in total? Were they all in primary? Were they all in a state school?

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: Hello, very nice to meet you.

Interviewer: Very nice to meet you as well, thank you for taking the time to interview today, I know school heads are extremely busy right.

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: you are welcome, I did a lot of interviews for my dissertation so I can appreciate the challenges. I am 63 years of age. I have a Masters in Leadership. I did have a different career before teaching.

I never had a negative experience in school. I was very shy and got good grades. I always believed in a humble way I know I can do it, but I don't like being in the limelight. I like to integrate.

I went to a state school and then a church school in 6th form. But I was very happy always.

I've been a teacher for 22 years, years 4 and 5. I believe as long as a teacher is motivated, they can stay at the same school.

The way I taught was with belief that “We need cater to each and every individual”. It took a long time to apply for an assistant head position. Until the very last day of teaching, I was very happy.

All of my teaching was in a state school. I’ve been an assistant head for 4 years and head of school for 8 years.

General

Question 2: What was your learning experience growing up in the Maltese educational system?

- i. Was it a traditional model of pedagogy or any other type of teaching method?
- ii. Was there any room for creative freedom within your academic work?
- iii. Did any of your educators or senior leadership teams encourage or promote creativity in learning?

P4 (Alicia’s) Answer: Like I said, my experience was very positive. It was a traditional method of teaching, no technology, no handouts. Homework was every day with a lot of copy work.

“Teaching in school needs to be fun and creative however it also needs to be academically progressing”. Parents need to be part of the support structure as well for teachers.

I believe our roles as educators is we need to be there for each and every child.

Question 3: What led you into the career path of wanting to be a school head? Why was this important to you? (Please give concrete examples).

- i. During your time as an educator did you experience mainly positive or negative support from the school head?

P4 (Alicia’s) Answer: There was not a lot of creativity in my school upbringing, but I had a lot of fun and creativity at home. Creativity wasn’t really supported by my superiors either, but my family organized a lot of creative activities.

I got into teaching after speaking with a relative who told me I was a natural born teacher. After starting a new job, I realized I wanted to be a teacher and decided to pursue that career path instead.

Question 4: Did you receive adequate training prior to or after becoming the Head of a school? Please give concrete examples

- i. Are their training courses you attend that support your growth to better your professional career?
- ii. Is there a Professional Learning Community amongst your peers to discuss strategies and challenges you face as a school head?

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: When I became the head of school there was a lot of absenteeism. I managed to get the absenteeism to nil.

Interviewer: Wow that is a really impressive feat.

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: Thank you. It is important that everyone pursue training to develop their skills. Not a lot of the training was adequate however, and courses really needs to focus on the needs of the teachers, and to be practical. You really need to voice your concerns.

Administrative

Question 5: What are the day-to-day responsibilities of being a School Head? Ex. Budgeting, meetings, conferences, administration work.

- i. What would you say are the most challenging aspects of your profession? (Please give concrete examples).

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: I strongly believe in relationships and showing respect to staff – students – teachers and parents. I managed to change the atmosphere of the school, and changed the attitudes of the people. So, relationships are important.

The most challenging aspects of my job is managing the accounts. There are always challenges that crop up. To be honest, we need greater assistance in the school maintenance side of things. I spend way to much time in maintenance of school issues.

“We are leaders not managers, we have to attend to matters that involve staff-teachers and student needs”. But school funds are distributed based on school populations. I do not agree with that. Funds should be equal across all schools. Instead, we get help from school council, arch priest and donations from business.

I had a project called “creative learning spaces”, and most of the help came from entrepreneurs. All of the technology was bought from the donations. Creative learning spaces created futuristic classrooms that all teachers can book the room to teach.

I strongly believe in creativity

Statement/question

Question 6: School leaders are often caught between the academic needs of students, professional needs of teachers and increasing demands of parents and educational stakeholders. This becomes a major challenge many schools leaders face: the struggle of carrying the leadership burden alone.

How does your leadership style help navigate through many of these difficult administrative challenges?

- i. Do you feel you have enough time to complete all of your responsibilities?
- ii. Do you feel like you need more support from your superiors?

P4 (Alicia’s) Answer: You can ask for support but ultimately you need to embrace every challenge as they come. Whenever I voiced my opinions, I always received support whenever I needed it.

It is important to have emotional support to avoid burnout. The best way to face challenges is by doing so head-on. As a leader, as long as you always handle each situation appropriately you will be alright. Good communication is also key, talking to one another and receiving support from the college principle.

Axioms of Communication: “One cannot not communicate”.

I took a course on communication for educational leaders to work as action researchers for the purpose of improving communication competencies by: Claudette Portelli.

It focused on Nurture and Nature of conducting, and the ‘charismatic conductor’, where we all strive to have a good orchestra even though we have different characters.

I also have studied the psychology of Mary Poppins which is really quite fascinating.

Statement/question

Question 7: Many school leaders are so overwhelmed with day-to-day managerial tasks that they feel like they do not have the time to lead in better teaching practices.

Do you feel that as a result of these pressures and demands placed on leadership teams, the educational system in Malta has developed a strong reliance on textbooks, handouts and homework?

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: We have to do our best for the children, and always talk to teachers face-to-face. Cross-curricular learning is really important as well.

"I strongly believe in schools without walls". We could have lessons outside, even on the roof and bring in outside professionals to teach their skills in a lesson. I also do not like the atmosphere of a classroom of desks in single rows, I very much support group work.

We used something called MIXJA which stood for:

M=math

I=engineering

X=science

J=investigate

A=arts

Leadership

Question 8: What does good leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

- I. In contrast, what would poor leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: Inspirational leadership and face-to-face communication. Again, like in the 'charismatic conductor' where we all strive for a good orchestra. It is also very important that teachers, staff, clerks and students feel that their needs are being met.

Question 9: How would you describe your leadership style?

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: *My leadership style is a servant leader who is also a transformational leader and one who creates a vision for the school.*

Question 10: Please list the 3 most important characteristics (single words) you believe are the most important qualities in being an effective leadership.

P4 (Alicia's) Answer:

Communication

Adaptability

Inspiration

Question 11: What is the difference between being an effective leader and being an effective manager?

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: *A good leader has a moral aspect to what they do. It is someone who inspires and influences others and also caring for their needs.*

"A good leader focusses on fostering a vision of imagination".

A good manager on the other hand, deals with the day-to-day operations of the school maintenance.

Statement/question

Question 12: Research on leadership practices indicates that strong leaders are often effective managers, however they usually are more comfortable in one of the two areas.

As the head of the school, do you believe your strengths are more as a strong leader or effective manager? Please give concrete examples.

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: *Better as a leader, there is a balance between achieving all of your goals through creating change and stability, inspiration and control, and always promoting developmental growth.*

A manager is an organizer but can sometimes lack the human element of inspiration and vision.

Question 13: Based on your leadership style description, would you categorize it under;

Instructional: Instructional leadership is a model of school leadership in which a school head works alongside teachers to provide support and guidance in establishing best practices in teaching. It is generally defined as the management of curriculum and instruction by a school principal.

Distributed: Distributed leadership is a term used in educational settings to describe how different individuals within an organization share responsibility for leadership.

Transactional: Transactional leadership is a leadership style that utilizes rewards and punishments to motivate and direct followers. The goals and tasks of teachers are highly structured, and educators rewarded when they achieve these goals and reprimanded if they miss desired outcomes.

Transformational: Transformational leadership is a model of leadership that relies on the encouragement of a team to realize overall success. By raising a team's morale and self-confidence, the team can then align itself to an overall vision or common purpose and be inspired to achieve beyond their presumed potential.

Servant: Servant leadership is a leadership approach that puts serving others above all other priorities. Rather than managing for results, a servant leader focuses on creating an environment in which their team can thrive and get their highest-impact work done.

Visionary: Visionary leaders have the ability to see the big picture. They have a compelling vision of the future, where they can make a positive impact and, often, disrupt the status quo. Visionary leaders have strong communication skills, act as mentors, and are able to look at the big picture while inspiring their teams to work together

- I. Please describe why you feel you fit under this category of leadership style
- II. Do you feel that more than one of these leadership styles applies to you? Maybe two or three?
Please explain in detail

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: *As mentioned before, Servant leader, transformational leader and visionary leader. There are aspects and qualities in all three that are shared to lead a school and cater to teachers, staff, students and clerk's needs.*

Question 14: Appreciating the complexity and responsibilities associated with the role of School Head, what leadership attributes (attitudes, characteristics, experience) do you demonstrate to keep teachers wanting to achieve at the highest level? (please give concrete examples).

- I. How do you keep the needs of your teachers before your own needs?
- II. How do you communicate and maintain high morale within the school's walls?
- III. How do you create challenging goals for your teachers and provide constructive feedback?
- IV. How often do you observe your teachers' strengths/weaknesses and provide constructive feedback?

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: The characteristics I demonstrate are trust and collaboration. It is very important to foster improvement in learning to develop individual by adapting and incorporating cross-curricular learning.

Another key attitude to adapt is encouraging cooperation and trust building through creative learning techniques and sharing them with colleagues.

Creativity:

Question 15: What does Teaching Creatively look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: I think by allowing every child to work at his or her own level and express creativity in their work. This will ensure the best is coming out of them.

Also, making use of every space available, ex. rooftops, outdoor spaces and having real professionals coming in to assist with the lessons.

Parental involvement in class is important. We have parental in-class learning once per term from K-6. Also, cross-curricular lessons are very invaluable to a student's education.

Statement/question

Question 16: Government ministers, stakeholders, parents and educational community members all have their own diverse perspectives on best practices to raising national standards and improving student outcomes.

Do you believe they take creativity, imagination and innovative thinking into account when developing future citizens? Please give concrete examples.

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: I believe that if Professional Learning Communities get together with outside agencies like the local community members, council, grandparents and parishes, creativity can thrive in education.

You cannot always rely on teachers sharing ideas with other teachers. There is too much of a lack of teachers and they are not always regular. I think it would be a good idea to co-teach with other schools as well.

Question 17: With such an increasing demand focusing on students learning core subjects such as; reading, writing and arithmetic to meet the standards of assessments and accountability, how does your leadership style help support creativity and prevent it from becoming non-existent?

I. Do you feel creative teaching should be a priority for all of your teachers?

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: The NFC focusses on wellbeing, a lot of what it imposes cannot exactly get done.

I do strongly believe in implementing creativity in lessons but the LO's also need to change to get away from handouts.

Many teachers say that the syllabus is too rigid and it needs to get down. They say they have no time, but I disagree. We use to have to put on plays on top of getting through all of the curriculum.

So "you can always find the time".

Leadership in Creativity

Question 18: As the Head of School, how does your leadership style contribute to supporting creative teaching in your school? Please give concrete examples.

- I. Do you feel the National Curriculum Framework assists and/or promotes creative teaching or is it too rigid and structured?
- II. How does the pressure of time constraints affect practicing creative teaching?

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: By encouraging cross-curricular learning, using all spaces for teaching and having lessons being taught outdoors to create more meaningful experiences.

The best way I can encourage this is by having strong communication and through inspirational leadership. Teachers need to know their voices are heard and students feel that their needs are being catered to.

Question 19: Please describe how your leadership style encourages teachers to approach you with creative and innovative teaching practices and feel confident that this open communication effectively makes teachers feel that they are being supported? Please give concrete examples.

- I. Do you regularly communicate your expectations to your teachers?
- II. How do you demonstrate commitment to teachers developing their professional goals?
- III. Do you offer coaching or mentorship to develop your teachers' creative potential?

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: I believe very heavily in communication. Teachers are free to send me messages and call me at home. When teachers are listened to and have a voice, it makes a big difference.

It really comes down to communication and building relationships, like the Mary Poppins philosophy.

Statement/question

Question 20: Policy ministers and future employers want students in Malta to be prepared and ready for the workforce in the 21st century with creativity as a learnt skill. The Education Act, Chapter 605 of the Laws of Malta, reinforces the State's commitment towards providing a quality holistic education for all citizens. Furthermore, the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 policy aims to ensure that all children, young people, and adults have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society and to develop a society which is competent, resourceful, critically conscious, and competitive in a global economy driven by information, knowledge and innovation.

What strategies have you put in place that put innovation and creativity at the top of the list for educational development contributing to 21st century skills?

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: We do not have a lot of autonomy. Better teachers should get better pay. There is a lot of bureaucracy.

I'd like to see more creative spaces, outside classes and cross-curricular teaching to teach life lessons and inspire through role-modeling.

Question 21:

Is there anything that I have missed that you would like to add or clarify in your answers? Is there another question that you feel should be present in this interview?

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: No, I think we've covered everything.

Interviewer: I do as well, thank you for your incredible insights to your educational leadership experiences!

P4 (Alicia's) Answer: Thank you as well, I enjoyed our meeting.

End of Interview: Duration (165-Minutes).

Appendix 14: Participant 5 Interview

Participant 5 Interview:

Title: Leadership and Creative Teaching: Perspective of heads of schools in Maltese State Schools;

Research Question: How are leadership practices adopted by heads of schools contributing to the support of creative teaching within Maltese primary state schools

All Headers will be highlighted in purple

In some instances, certain questions will start off as a statement first. Prior to asking the question, I will clarify when it is a statement to avoid any confusion. Statements will be highlighted in yellow.

Main questions will be highlighted in bold

Prompt questions will be headed by Roman Numerals

**Interview conducted with Participant 5 Roberto Falzon (P5): on January 20th, 2024 – (Head Master's name has been anonymized for identity protection).*

Demographic

Question 1: Please tell me a little about yourself

- i. What is your name? Surname? Age? Gender?
- ii. What is your highest level of qualification?
- iii. Did you yourself attend a state school in primary education? If not, where else did you study? Church or independent school? Have you ever studied or worked abroad? If so, where? For how long?
- iv. Were you a teacher prior to being a Head of a school? If so, for how long? Was it all in a state school? What years did you teach? Was it all in Malta?
- v. How long have you been the Head of this school? How many years of School Head experience do you have in total? Were they all in primary? Were they all in a state school?

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: Hi, nice finally meet you. Do you want to record this?

Interviewer: Nice to meet you as well. I don't need to record but thank you, I'm happy with pen and paper.

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: Fine, fine. My full name is Roberto Falzon and I am a male in my 50's, and I was born in Malta but my parents were born abroad. I have a Bachelor's degree in teaching primary education and my highest level of qualification is a post-graduate diploma/degree in Leadership and Management at the University of Malta.

I grew up going to a primary/state school, and also attended a state school in 6th form and secondary. My status: middle class, I have a partner, but no children. I live in an affluent neighborhood by the sea. I am not a religious person, although I was brought up Catholic, but I am very spiritual.

Interviewer: When did you begin teaching?

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: I started teaching in 1997 until 2010. I was an Assistant Head for one year, but the Head of that school was retiring, so I essentially performed the Head of School roles concurrently with my own. When the Head of School retired, I was asked to become the Head of School and did not have to do the mandatory 4 years as now required by most Assistant Heads.

I have been a Head of School from 2011 until now and have been at this particular school for the last 7 years.

General

Question 2: What was your learning experience growing up in the Maltese educational system?

- i. Was it a traditional model of pedagogy or any other type of teaching method?
- ii. Was there any room for creative freedom within your academic work?
- iii. Did any of your educators or senior leadership teams encourage or promote creativity in learning?

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: I went to a very traditional school in both primary and secondary, and it was not a good experience for me. I felt like part of the furniture and did my best to blend in – I never wanted to create a disruption. I was not an 'A' student – I was more of a 'B' or a 'C' student.

There was absolutely no creativity in our education growing up. It was mostly academics and our goal was to pass exams and get good grades.

The senior management in primary schools would have random 'fun days', but were not competitive and would not identify talent. In sports, we only ever played football on sport days, and once a year an art teacher would show up and give us an art lesson.

Question 3: What led you into the career path of wanting to be a school head? Why was this important to you? (Please give concrete examples).

- i. During your time as an educator did you experience mainly positive or negative support from the school head?

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: I always felt that teaching was my calling. It was a vocation for me, not a job. However, after the first couple of years, I became increasingly frustrated and depressed with the mundane of teaching. In my second year at the position, I applied and won the job of something known as an "Activity Teacher". This was an initiative by the Maltese government to change the formation of how teachers taught.

My new hours as an Activity Teacher were between 10:30am to 4:30pm.

From 10:30am to 2:30pm I would teach school lessons. Then from 2:30pm – 4:30pm I would work with parents and children to help with their homework. These last two hours of 2:30pm – 4:30pm were known as "Foundation Educational Services" and were considered separate from the Ministry of Education.

The 10:30am – 2:30pm part of my job was under the Ministry of Education.

What became increasingly frustrating was that nobody cared about us. It was very confusing, and a big mess. No one took ownership because we were part of two different organizations (Ministry of Education and the F.E.S.).

My day started at 10:30am and ended at 2:30pm as I just mentioned, so I only taught for 4 hours, but was given a full course load like any other teacher. This program eventually assimilated into other programs, primarily Klabb and peripatetic teachers.

The only way moving forward with regard to promotions was to become an Assistant Head. I was so frustrated with the experience and how I was being treated, that I decided to leave teaching and become an Assistant Head.

Question 4: Did you receive adequate training prior to or after becoming the Head of a school? Please give concrete examples

- i. Are there training courses you attend that support your growth to better your professional career?
- ii. Is there a Professional Learning Community amongst your peers to discuss strategies and challenges you face as a school head?

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: As I mentioned earlier, I had once become an Assistant Head and took on almost every role of the School Head in my first year.

To be honest, these questions have really given me a chance to reflect on my experiences.

In my first 6 months as Assistant Head, I took over the entire school and was doing all the teacher's meetings as well as the parents' meetings. The only thing I wasn't doing was signing the cheques. When the Head of School retired, the college principal at the time noticed all the work that I was doing and advised me to take on the job of Head of School.

Aside from my dislike of football (which is all we played in primary and secondary school), I have a great love for sports, and played one sport in particular at a very high level. I believe that people who play sports make great leaders and great Heads of School because they know the value of commitment, teamwork, communication and learning from failures.

Other than my post-secondary leadership diploma from the University of Malta, we don't get much in the way of effective courses to help us become better leaders. I believe experience is my best teacher.

With regard to professional learning communities, I belong to a WhatsApp group with other Heads of School in our college (four schools in total, and we collaborate to help each other and cope). Our college principal is extremely supportive and is always there whenever we need them. We do, as Heads of School, need to attend mandatory conferences where we address ongoing issues, challenges and strategies. I don't find them very helpful, as being a leader is a lived job and you practice it by doing.

Administrative

Question 5: What are the day-to-day responsibilities of being a School Head? Ex. Budgeting, meetings, conferences, administration work.

- i. What would you say are the most challenging aspects of your profession? (Please give concrete examples).

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: I delegate a lot. Many of my administrative duties are building maintenance, dealing with financial matters, designing the Teaching and Learning component, and most of all, managing problems that have escalated beyond the Assistant Head's abilities. I don't get to observe the teaching and learning aspect as much as I'd like to be and provide feedback. The union doesn't allow for it.

Interviewer: I've heard the union only allows for you to sit in on classes for teachers before they get warranted.

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: That is correct and it is a shame. Luckily, I have a lot of great teachers here and my Assistant heads are all handpicked. Budgeting for the maintenance of the school building, its facilities and equipment is the main priority of my administrative duties. Everything else is distributed to a very effective team of Assistant Heads. I act as a buffer for anything the Assistant Heads cannot manage. I've been very lucky and blessed with an incredible staff, a great space, a college principal who gives me adequate finances to meet my budgetary needs and a really strong fund-raising team. Again, I am very blessed.

Interviewer: Sounds like it! What are your biggest challenges, though?

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: Oh yes, my biggest challenges would be assigning the right LSE to the most difficult students or having to give a teacher a new/different grade level. You really have to know your staff's likes and dislikes, but unfortunately there are times when you know you're going to have to disappoint them, and you really do empathize because you really know it's going to be a difficult year.

Statement/question

Question 6: School leaders are often caught between the academic needs of students, professional needs of teachers and increasing demands of parents and educational stakeholders. This becomes a major challenge many school leaders face: the struggle of carrying the leadership burden alone.

How does your leadership style help navigate through many of these difficult administrative challenges?

- i. Do you feel you have enough time to complete all of your responsibilities?
- ii. Do you feel like you need more support from your superiors?

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: Through my distributed leadership style, I pass on a lot of my responsibilities to my Assistant Heads and my Administrative Team. That's not to say that I'm lazy and I don't do any work – I don't believe in hierarchy, and everybody is equal. So, I pick out different people's strengths, and I give them tasks and challenges accordingly. What is very important, is that my team does not become complacent and bored. It is important that everyone feels a sense of progress and accomplishment. Everyone from the cleaning staff to the Head of School is equal. I know a little bit about everyone's lives – their challenges and life experiences. When delegating work, I show a sense of empathy and compassion to their needs.

Part of my role as the Head of School is like being a maintenance worker. I sometimes feel like I'm more of a customer service department rather than a head of school. I need to deal with stuff so that the teaching staff doesn't have to. An example would be, students who have challenging home lives and teachers who have problems outside of school. It is important, therefore, that my team remains focused on the distributed tasks, and I take care of the things that they don't need to. It is like a well-oiled machine, and everyone fits into it nicely, and if a part breaks down, we fix it immediately. Example – if a teacher is having marital problems, they will receive the support and time they need to get through it, which means that other teachers may have to take on more responsibilities until that particular teacher is once again able to function at 100%.

It's all in the way you distribute the leadership and keep your team motivated and challenged. As mentioned before, my superiors are very supportive of anything I need and being the Head of School is a 24/7 job, but over the years of experience, I have learned how to take less and less of my responsibilities home with me. My first two or three years, I almost burned out because I was doing too much all the time.

Statement/question

Question 7: Many school leaders are so overwhelmed with day-to-day managerial tasks that they feel like they do not have the time to lead in better teaching practices.

Do you feel that as a result of these pressures and demands placed on leadership teams, the educational system in Malta has developed a strong reliance on textbooks, handouts and homework?

Interviewer: P.S. I hated homework as a child.

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: I did, as well – we were always bombarded with too much homework in the Maltese system. Unfortunately, not much has changed from then until now. I always see teachers going into class with tons of handouts and textbooks. There is way too much of a reliance on teaching this way.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: I think, based on my experience over the years, that it is just easier to teach that way. Teachers feel that they don't have enough time to teach everything they need to, and it becomes a "checked box" mentality. There are more learning outcomes than there are times to teach, and teachers feel responsible based on students' performance on their assessments and exams. Because of this, teachers end up teaching curriculum that they know is going to be on the exam.

Regardless of how supportive I can be, things like creativity and imagination and even critical thinking end up not being part of the learning process. Students are taught to just take in knowledge and simply spit it out in homework and tests.

It's a real problem in Malta. Our children are too passive and they don't participate in their learning. The students just figure out what needs to be done and they do it. It doesn't promote any kind of critical or creative thinking.

Interviewer: I've seen that in my practicum experience as well. It is strange to see.

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: The younger they are the more students are willing to participate. The higher up they go in grades, the more they are taught to be passive and compliant. I hate seeing it but it is a systematic problem. The ministry of education tries to instill creativity into the curriculum but it is not practical in real-life. The teachers teach like the students are on a factory line.

Interviewer: Interesting analogy – factory-line education, I like that. How can it be fixed?

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: Its very complicated because it's not just the teachers but parents get involved too. Parents expect lots of handouts, tests and homework. They think that is a good education. It is sad to say but we do not teach students creative thinking and students are not getting the education for the future. We need to teach students values of the heart, and being able to think independently. But handouts and textbooks kill that.

Also, when we try to move away from handouts, textbooks and homework, and teach more creatively and with more autonomy, these parents or (pests) as I call them, start complaining by email directly to the Minister of Education, claiming their children are not getting a proper education without handouts and homework. It's ridiculous and in my opinion is the farthest thing from the truth.

Leadership

Question 8: What does good leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

- I. In contrast, what would poor leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: I think that the classroom setting is the most unnatural way of learning. We need some sort of compromise, like having more classes outdoors, maybe creating learning stations and – I don't know – something like, what they call holistic learning. Cross-curricular learning comes to mind, where you can integrate many different subjects into one topic of interest. Thematic teaching is also a good idea, by changing the theme on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. For good leadership, I think it comes down to kindness. Applying kindness as your basic foundation makes everything else fall into place. Empathy – as I mentioned earlier – is really important, as is being a good listener. You really need to be a good communicator and know when your staff are struggling or upset, because it's important to keep them motivated and challenged.

Being a poor leader is all about pride and ego. It's keeping my office door shut and me hiding in my office, unaware of what's going on in the school. A poor leader is, in contrast, not a good listener or communicator, and does not show compassion to the people around him/her. A poor leader sits alone in their ivory tower.

Question 9: How would you describe your leadership style?

Interviewer: I think we've talked about this ad nauseum by now.

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: No, it's OK. I enjoy reflecting on my leadership style. For sure, it's distributed. However, I also think – based on the list you provided – that it is also transformative leadership and a little bit of servant leadership. You have to decide when you're a leader, "do I want to be right?" or "do I want to be kind?". You really need balance, otherwise you'll end up taking in a lot. For transformational leadership, I really make a strong effort to challenge my staff and the students to go beyond their comfort zones and push them to discover their untapped potential.

For servant leadership, I try to put the staff and student's needs before my own so that they can continue on with their work and have a happy, professional school environment and get the best education possible.

An example of transformational leadership is appointing teachers to take on responsibility that they haven't tried before, like running the school Christmas concert this year or being in charge of a fundraiser.

An example of servant leadership is taking on a lot of the parental complaints so that my staff doesn't have to deal with them and can rather continue on teaching.

Question 10: Please list three characteristics (single words) you believe are the most important qualities in being an effective leader.

Interviewer: You only have to give 3 words for this answer, not sentences.

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: The three words I think I would choose as being most important are:

- Direction
- Support
- Kindness

Creativity:

Question 11: What does Teaching Creatively look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: I think teaching creatively does not mean going to art classes or drama. To me creativity is going outside the four walls of school and learning from nature. It is also how you teach. Teachers are always complaining about time. We use to mark assignments and tests outside of school and on weekends. We had much more time to teach in creative ways that were innovative and fun. Creativity in teaching is showing children how to use their imaginations and explore their interests. They will learn much more if they are engaged and motivated which I think a creative classroom supports.

I've seen teachers who are very passionate and creative and the funny thing is, their class is always the noisiest but still they behave very well. It's like they have a healthy competitiveness that supports each other. I love when I get teachers like this. The students often also score the highest marks. Creativity sparks imagination, it is so important to students successful learning.

Unfortunately, with the exception of a few very passionate, creative teachers, most education ends up being the check-list mentality where it is very teacher centric and the students are taught to become passive learners. Students develop terrible life habits and we are the ones teaching it to them. It's awful!

Statement/question

Question 12: Research on leadership practices indicates that strong leaders are often effective managers, however they usually are more comfortable in one of the two areas.

As the head of the school, do you believe your strengths are more as a strong leader or effective manager? Please give concrete examples.

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: I am far more comfortable being a leader, if the school is functioning well, then you are both an effective leader and effective manager.

"Leadership and management are a symbiotic relationship".

Question 13: Based on your leadership style description, would you categorize it under;

Instructional: Instructional leadership is a model of school leadership in which a school head works alongside teachers to provide support and guidance in establishing best practices in teaching. It is generally defined as the management of curriculum and instruction by a school principal.

Distributed: Distributed leadership is a term used in educational settings to describe how different individuals within an organization share responsibility for leadership.

Transactional: Transactional leadership is a leadership style that utilizes rewards and punishments to motivate and direct followers. The goals and tasks of teachers are highly structured, and educators rewarded when they achieve these goals and reprimanded if they miss desired outcomes.

Transformational: Transformational leadership is a model of leadership that relies on the encouragement of a team to realize overall success. By raising a team's morale and self-confidence, the team can then

align itself to an overall vision or common purpose and be inspired to achieve beyond their presumed potential.

Servant: Servant leadership is a leadership approach that puts serving others above all other priorities. Rather than managing for results, a servant leader focuses on creating an environment in which their team can thrive and get their highest-impact work done.

Visionary: Visionary leaders have the ability to see the big picture. They have a compelling vision of the future, where they can make a positive impact and, often, disrupt the status quo. Visionary leaders have strong communication skills, act as mentors, and are able to look at the big picture while inspiring their teams to work together

- I. Please describe why you feel you fit under this category of leadership style
- II. Do you feel that more than one of these leadership styles applies to you? Maybe two or three? Please explain in detail

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: Distributed. You have to guide the teachers to not be lost but also allow them to be as free as possible.

Also' a Servant leader. Distributed and servant leadership equals happy children.

Question 14: Appreciating the complexity and responsibilities associated with the role of School Head, what leadership attributes (attitudes, characteristics, experience) do you demonstrate to keep teachers wanting to achieve at the highest level? (please give concrete examples).

- I. How do you keep the needs of your teachers before your own needs?
- II. How do you communicate and maintain high morale within the school's walls?
- III. How do you create challenging goals for your teachers and provide constructive feedback?
- IV. How often do you observe your teachers' strengths/weaknesses and provide constructive feedback?

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: It is an open-door policy. I believe that teachers are the ones that are doing the doing their jobs effectively, so I need to thank them a lot. Without the hard work of teachers, we are nothing.

It is important as well that teachers and staff feel comfortable to communicate if they are struggling. I am here to provide serve.

Every year group shares everything with each other. We have a "strong professional Learning Community."

The school leadership teams offer continuous feedback and deal with situations head on. It's important to put these situations into perspective and understand the context.

Creativity:

Question 15: What does Teaching Creatively look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: "Creative teaching is teaching more outdoors." Also, the Emergent curriculum is creative teaching by teaching to children's interest.

Statement/question

Question 16: Government ministers, stakeholders, parents and educational community members all have their own diverse perspectives on best practices to raising national standards and improving student outcomes.

Do you believe they take creativity, imagination and innovative thinking into account when developing future citizens? Please give concrete examples.

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: "The way teachers are being formed or transformed right now is they are in a constant race to cover content".

Question 17: With such an increasing demand focusing on students learning core subjects such as; reading, writing and arithmetic to meet the standards of assessments and accountability, how does your leadership style help support creativity and prevent it from becoming non-existent?

- I. Do you feel creative teaching should be a priority for all of your teachers?

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: Unless teachers are being paid a decent wage, I am not going to impose a bigger workload. To have teachers do additional work in their lessons, that requires a certain type of teacher, they are usually performance driven.

For creativity, a person learns when there is an emotional association.

"If students are happy being taught in a creative way, then there has been an emotional connection established".

Leadership in Creativity

Question 18: As the Head of School, how does your leadership style contribute to supporting creative teaching in your school? Please give concrete examples.

- I. Do you feel the National Curriculum Framework assists and/or promotes creative teaching or is it too rigid and structured?
- II. How does the pressure of time constraints affect practicing creative teaching?

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: If the workload is not too much, teachers will teach in a creative way to connect learning. However, there are a lot of "time restraints".

The NFC does promote creativity but that doesn't mean it will be implemented. The curriculum tells what needs to be taught but not how to teach it. It really depends on the teacher.

When I taught, the curriculum was bigger but we always managed to find time but now that there is a push for creativity, the teachers are complaining that they have no time.

I remember spending ages creating handouts for my classes.

Question 19: Please describe how your leadership style encourages teachers to approach you with creative and innovative teaching practices and feel confident that this open communication effectively makes teachers feel that they are being supported? Please give concrete examples.

- I. Do you regularly communicate your expectations to your teachers?
- II. How do you demonstrate commitment to teachers developing their professional goals?
- III. Do you offer coaching or mentorship to develop your teachers' creative potential?

P5 (Roberto's) Answer: I normally have staff meetings where we communicate and we also use technology to communicate with each other. It is designed to ensure we are all working towards one common call, the student's education.

I don't normally observe the teachers in their lessons, you get a feel for what kind of teacher they are or an instinct of how they teach.

"You need to stay emotionally connected".

I do a lot of paintings, there are paintings all over the school so yes, I do believe creativity is important.

As a team we do communicate regularly. We send teachers and school leadership teams to all courses both during school hours and even after school hours (if possible). Mentorship is important.

Again, it is an open-door policy. "Creativity needs to be balanced with traditional learning 50%-50% a more holistic approach".

Statement/question

Question 20: Policy ministers and future employers want students in Malta to be prepared and ready for the workforce in the 21st century with creativity as a learnt skill. The Education Act, Chapter 605 of the Laws of Malta, reinforces the State's commitment towards providing a quality holistic education for all citizens. Furthermore, the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 policy aims to ensure that all children, young people, and adults have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society and to develop a society which is competent, resourceful, critically conscious, and competitive in a global economy driven by information, knowledge and innovation.

What strategies have you put in place that put innovation and creativity at the top of the list for educational development contributing to 21st century skills?

P5 (Roberto's) Answer:

"More classrooms outside" which focuses on children to be happy and emotionally connect with their environment. This creates resistance for an unpredictable future."

You have to do your best to teach “holistically”. This is very important. You cannot give children more than they can handle. It is important that children also learn skills that we learnt in the past. All skills are important not just 21st-century skills.

Question 21:

Is there anything that I have missed that you would like to add or clarify in your answers? Is there another question that you feel should be present in this interview?

P5 (Roberto’s) Answer: It’s use putting fancy names on terms or using buzz words.

“We need to teach children how to think not what to think”.

Interviewer: Thank you, sorry this interview took so long!

P5 (Roberto’s) Answer: No not at all, I really enjoyed the self-reflection on my beliefs and experiences on leadership and creativity.

End of Interview: Duration (200-Minutes).

Appendix 15: Participant 6 Interview

Participant 6 Interview:

Title: Leadership and Creative Teaching: Perspective of heads of schools in Maltese State Schools;

Research Question: How are leadership practices adopted by heads of schools contributing to the support of creative teaching within Maltese primary state schools

Headings will be highlighted in purple

In some instances, certain questions will start off as a statement first. Prior to asking the question, I will clarify when it is a statement to avoid any confusion. Statements will be highlighted in yellow.

Main questions will be highlighted in bold

Prompt questions will be headed by Roman Numerals

**Interview conducted with Participant 6 Francis Camilleri (P6): on January 25th, 2024 – (Head Master's name has been anonymized for identity protection)*

Demographic

Question 1: Please tell me a little about yourself

- i. What is your name? Surname? Age? Gender?
- ii. What is your highest level of qualification?
- iii. Did you yourself attend a state school in primary education? If not, where else did you study? Church or independent school? Have you ever studied or worked abroad? If so, where? For how long?
- iv. Were you a teacher prior to being a Head of a school? If so, for how long? Was it all in a state school? What years did you teach? Was it all in Malta?
- v. How long have you been the Head of this school? How many years of School Head experience do you have in total? Were they all in primary? Were they all in a state school?

Interviewer: Good morning, thank you for meeting with me today. I really appreciate it and your answers will go a long way to understanding this area of research.

P6 (Francis') Answer: Good morning, it is my pleasure to help out in any way I can. Okay, so I am 58 years old female, my name is Francis Cutajar and my highest level of education is a post graduate diploma in Educational Administration and Management.

I attended a church school growing up, and have been in teaching for over 40 years. I became the Head of School in 2005 which has always been in the primary, state school sector.

When I was chosen to be the Head of School, it was because the school head at that time went on to become a college principle. I spent much of my time as the assistant school head fulfilling the roles of the school head until I had reached the 4-year mark where I could officially become the school head, which I did.

Interviewer: Interesting, 2005? That's a long time to be a school head. Did you ever have consider following in your former school heads footsteps and become a college principle?

P6 (Francis') Answer: I've been a head of school for 19 years; my heart has always been in teaching. For that reason, I never really had any intention of going beyond. Inside of a school is where I belong.

General

Question 2: What was your learning experience growing up in the Maltese educational system?

- i. Was it a traditional model of pedagogy or any other type of teaching method?
- ii. Was there any room for creative freedom within your academic work?
- iii. Did any of your educators or senior leadership teams encourage or promote creativity in learning?

P6 (Francis') Answer: My educational experience was traditionally strict. I went to a convent school of just girls. Everyone was very well behaved and it was mainly English speaking. The lessons were very scripted; however, the school had a lot of good educators.

Additional to the core subjects, we had the Arts, Home Economics, P.E, Needle Work, Sciences and Humanities. Teaching instruction was delivered very traditionally, there were no labs for experiments.

To be honest, through my experience, it is easier to teach traditionally, it is not so easy to teach creatively. It feels at times like the education system is trying to reinvent the wheel and as a result, standards have dropped. These initiatives that move away from traditional teaching are not necessarily working and I believe students succeed in traditional teaching methods. It even seems like there was more imagination before.

Question 3: What led you into the career path of wanting to be a school head? Why was this important to you? (Please give concrete examples).

- i. During your time as an educator did you experience mainly positive or negative support from the school head?

P6 (Francis') Answer: I was a teacher, and the Head of School at the time was hopeless, they had very little skill. I decided I needed to change schools or move on. So, I chose to sit for an interview and was successful, I became an assistant head for 1 year than acted as the head of school when the current head moved on, until it was made official.

I became much better as the head of school when I worked directly with the college principal. As an assistant head, I was treated differently (not positively), until I became the Head of School. Once I became the school head, I was treated with much more respect by the college principle.

Interviewer: Wow, okay, thank you for your honesty

Question 4: Did you receive adequate training prior to or after becoming the Head of a school? Please give concrete examples

- i. Are their training courses you attend that support your growth to better your professional career?
- ii. Is there a Professional Learning Community amongst your peers to discuss strategies and challenges you face as a school head?

P6 (Francis') Answer: Like I said earlier, I took the post graduate diploma course on Educational Administration and Management.

To be honest, most of my experience as a teacher and leader I've learnt on the job, mostly from observing how others teach and lead and then deciding for myself that I will adapt and what I should never do in my practice. It has always been important to me to keep an open-door policy. I had a school head once that would buzz you into their office if you wanted to see them.

From a professional Learning Community point of view, every college has a council of heads with the college principle to discuss education and curriculum. We meet once a month on WhatsApp and often discuss managerial matters as well.

Administrative

Question 5: What are the day-to-day responsibilities of being a School Head? Ex. Budgeting, meetings, conferences, administration work.

- i. What would you say are the most challenging aspects of your profession? (Please give concrete examples).

P6 (Francis') Answer: My main responsibilities are managing the school affairs and putting everything together in a harmonious way. There is the maintenance of the school, the financial maintenance and

above all, ensuring the staff and students are growing and developing. The school Ethos and policies need to be promoted and adopted into everyday life.

I need to greet every morning with a big smile the moment the doors open. Being a school Head means you are responsible 365 days of the year.

When the Covid-19 pandemic happened, that was extremely difficult, everyone was stuck at home and I sent messages every morning. We got through it as a team.

Statement/question

Question 6: School leaders are often caught between the academic needs of students, professional needs of teachers and increasing demands of parents and educational stakeholders. This becomes a major challenge many schools leaders face: the struggle of carrying the leadership burden alone.

How does your leadership style help navigate through many of these difficult administrative challenges?

- i. Do you feel you have enough time to complete all of your responsibilities?
- ii. Do you feel like you need more support from your superiors?

P6 (Francis') Answer: Yes, I make myself find the time, it is important that everything runs efficiently and it is a relief knowing that school is operating so well.

One of the biggest things I needed to learn is to say 'no'.

Interviewer: I am still learning that!

P6 (Francis') Answer: It is very important to learn to say no and I will work from home if necessary. From an administrative side, I try my best not to open up my laptop for work at home or check my emails on my phone after hours unless it is an emergency.

However, from a leadership side, I am always available to consult teachers, staff and students with the challenges they are facing and am always trying to prop them up if they are feeling drained or struggling with difficulties. I try to always serve with empathy and be a strong mentor for everyone.

Interviewer: Do you feel supported by your superiors when you need it?

P6 (Francis') Answer: Mostly so yes, yes, I do.

Statement/question

Question 7: Many school leaders are so overwhelmed with day-to-day managerial tasks that they feel like they do not have the time to lead in better teaching practices.

Do you feel that as a result of these pressures and demands placed on leadership teams, the educational system in Malta has developed a strong reliance on textbooks, handouts and homework?

P6 (Francis') Answer: Absolutely! It has always been like that. I blame it on convenience. Text books and handouts makes teaching easier but it also kills convenience.

Teaching from textbooks and giving a lot of homework was always seen as good teaching. But experience as a head would dictate to cut down on these things and have a more holistic approach to learning. In our current system, writing has become disastrous, so I would emphasize reading much more. Right now, reading seems that reading is therefore understanding and not for pleasure.

With regards to homework, it is important for children to revise and consolidate what they have learnt but they also need time to play. However, parents want more homework for their children. When there was a union directive to cut down on homework, parents were calling off the hook.

Leadership

Question 8: What does good leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

- I. In contrast, what would poor leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

P6 (Francis') Answer: Someone who is kind, caring and empathetic. A good leader is someone who keeps the door always open and listens to their concerns. Also, a good leader helps transform people to become better and get through their challenges both teachers and students.

A poor leader is someone who locks themselves in their office and runs their school with fear.

Question 9: How would you describe your leadership style?

P6 (Francis') Answer:

My leadership style is definitely Servant Leadership. I believe in being in service of others and help them in any way I can to help them achieve their goals.

I practice a very democratic style of leadership where everyone has a voice and emphasize the importance of personal transformation. As teachers, instructional leadership is important as well, as much of their daily tasks involve giving instruction. I try to help my staff with this.

From a transactional leadership perspective, as heads of school, we cannot hire or fire anyone so transactional motivational doesn't really apply to states schools. At the end of the day, I want to lead from behind and support my staff in any way I can.

Question 10: Please list the 3 most important characteristics (single words) you believe are the most important qualities in being an effective leadership.

P6 (Francis') Answer: *I have 4 if that is alright?*

Interviewer: *Of course, go ahead.*

P6 (Francis') Answer: *The characteristics I believe are most important are:*

Empathy

Trust

Thinker

Good Listener

Question 11: What is the difference between being an effective leader and being an effective manager?

P6 (Francis') Answer: *To be an effective leader, the school head would support and encourage their teachers to know the curriculum off the tips of their fingers, produce clear, well-organized schemes of work and their instructions would engaging and impactful.*

An effective manager would operate the school so that everything runs like clockwork.

You cannot sacrifice one for the other. Both are equally important to ensure that staff, teachers, students and parents all remain happy and remain in good faith.

Statement/question

Question 12: Research on leadership practices indicates that strong leaders are often effective managers, however they usually are more comfortable in one of the two areas.

As the head of the school, do you believe your strengths are more as a strong leader or effective manager? Please give concrete examples.

P6 (Francis') Answer: It is an equal mixture; you cannot be just one. Every 5 minutes you could be changing from strong leader to effective manager. It just really depends on the context of the situation.

It is equally important to know the strengths and weaknesses of all of your staff and students. In order to do this, you first need to establish your parameters. Then you slowly introduce your measures and incorporate the Ethos and policies into the school culture. A school Ethos begins at the front of the door.

When I was in University, I remember being told "Don't smile until Christmas".

Interviewer: That's funny, were told to be like a police officer for the first week of teaching practice. I don't know if I'd last till Christmas without smiling.

Question 13: Based on your leadership style description, would you categorize it under;

Instructional: Instructional leadership is a model of school leadership in which a school head works alongside teachers to provide support and guidance in establishing best practices in teaching. It is generally defined as the management of curriculum and instruction by a school principal.

Distributed: Distributed leadership is a term used in educational settings to describe how different individuals within an organization share responsibility for leadership.

Transactional: Transactional leadership is a leadership style that utilizes rewards and punishments to motivate and direct followers. The goals and tasks of teachers are highly structured, and educators rewarded when they achieve these goals and reprimanded if they miss desired outcomes.

Transformational: Transformational leadership is a model of leadership that relies on the encouragement of a team to realize overall success. By raising a team's morale and self-confidence, the team can then align itself to an overall vision or common purpose and be inspired to achieve beyond their presumed potential.

Servant: Servant leadership is a leadership approach that puts serving others above all other priorities. Rather than managing for results, a servant leader focuses on creating an environment in which their team can thrive and get their highest-impact work done.

Visionary: Visionary leaders have the ability to see the big picture. They have a compelling vision of the future, where they can make a positive impact and, often, disrupt the status quo. Visionary leaders have strong communication skills, act as mentors, and are able to look at the big picture while inspiring their teams to work together

- I. Please describe why you feel you fit under this category of leadership style
- II. Do you feel that more than one of these leadership styles applies to you? Maybe two or three?
Please explain in detail

P6 (Francis') Answer: *Definitely, I practice Servant leadership that would be the category I fall under. However, I also distribute leadership roles to my staff as I feel that is very important and help support teachers and students into developing themselves, which is Transformational. But at the core of my being, I am a Servant leader.*

Question 14: Appreciating the complexity and responsibilities associated with the role of School Head, what leadership attributes (attitudes, characteristics, experience) do you demonstrate to keep teachers wanting to achieve at the highest level? (please give concrete examples).

- I. How do you keep the needs of your teachers before your own needs?
- II. How do you communicate and maintain high morale within the school's walls?
- III. How do you create challenging goals for your teachers and provide constructive feedback?
- IV. How often do you observe your teachers' strengths/weaknesses and provide constructive feedback?

P6 (Francis') Answer: *It really depends on the needs of each teacher. It is not a one size fits all approach. I think during staff meetings and COPE sessions, it is important to introduce and set your expectations and provide congratulations for jobs well done.*

One on one conversations with teachers you can establish your individual goals for your teachers and identify any areas which need improvement. Morales and standards come from leading as a role model and ensuring the school ethos exists in the school culture and environment.

To maintain standards, teachers need to demand higher expectations from their students and ensure that assignments which are not acceptable by students are redone and corrected with feedback.

Creativity:

Question 15: What does Teaching Creatively look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

P6 (Francis') Answer: Teachers need to become thinkers first. "Think before you teach". Teaching needs to be palatable. It needs to be engaging, relatable and make sense to the students.

Statement/question

Question 16: Government ministers, stakeholders, parents and educational community members all have their own diverse perspectives on best practices to raising national standards and improving student outcomes.

Do you believe they take creativity, imagination and innovative thinking into account when developing future citizens? Please give concrete examples.

P6 (Francis') Answer: People in top positions in the Ministry have never been in the classroom.

Many of the decision makers are not doing so with the students or classroom environment in mind. It is more about how to teach for the economy. The way politics works in Malta, the people in charge are not always the right people for the job.

The best Ministers we ever had were ones who started off in the classrooms themselves so they knew what was going on.

State schools are at an advantage because it is government funded so there is a little bit more flexibility in our approach, Church schools receive donations and Independent schools are privately funded so stakeholders have more of an input in teaching matters.

Question 17: With such an increasing demand focusing on students learning core subjects such as; reading, writing and arithmetic to meet the standards of assessments and accountability, how does your leadership style help support creativity and prevent it from becoming non-existent?

I. Do you feel creative teaching should be a priority for all of your teachers?

P6 (Francis') Answer: Yes, if you take creativity the way I defined it which is; "delivering the course content in an interesting and meaningful way depending on the individual needs and abilities of your students. I do think a mix of traditional teaching methods mixed with creative holistic approaches to learning is most beneficial for students". We have to make sure the standards of education are not dropping.

Interviewer: Interesting, a combination of both creative and traditional teaching

Leadership in Creativity

Question 18: As the Head of School, how does your leadership style contribute to supporting creative teaching in your school? Please give concrete examples.

I. Do you feel the National Curriculum Framework assists and/or promotes creative teaching or is it too rigid and structured?

II. How does the pressure of time constraints affect practicing creative teaching?

P6 (Francis') Answer: Time is always a concern especially with such a loaded curriculum. It is easier to just rely on text books and handouts to ensure all the curriculum check boxes are being covered.

Unfortunately, teaching for assessments doesn't always translate to creative or effective learning.

Question 19: Please describe how your leadership style encourages teachers to approach you with creative and innovative teaching practices and feel confident that this open communication effectively makes teachers feel that they are being supported? Please give concrete examples.

I. Do you regularly communicate your expectations to your teachers?

II. How do you demonstrate commitment to teachers developing their professional goals?

III. Do you offer coaching or mentorship to develop your teachers' creative potential?

P6 (Francis') Answer: Being present and available at all times allows the teachers and students know that they can approach me whenever they need to. Also, giving teachers more leadership responsibilities to empower them to make creative choices when providing instruction to their students.

We showcase students' creative works in the halls, inside and outside of the classroom and encourage our students to be thinkers and imaginative.

As a servant leader it is my role to mentor and guide everyone in my school by being empathetic, a good listener, kind and supportive.

Statement/question

Question 20: Policy ministers and future employers want students in Malta to be prepared and ready for the workforce in the 21st century with creativity as a learnt skill. The Education Act, Chapter 605 of the Laws of Malta, reinforces the State's commitment towards providing a quality holistic education for all citizens. Furthermore, the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 policy aims to ensure that all children, young people, and adults have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society and to develop a society which is competent, resourceful, critically conscious, and competitive in a global economy driven by information, knowledge and innovation.

What strategies have you put in place that put innovation and creativity at the top of the list for educational development contributing to 21st century skills?

P6 (Francis') Answer:

Teachers have an open-door policy to speak with me and try innovative strategies to help students learn in a more holistic way that also incorporates STEM activities.

Teachers and students are encouraged to think outside the box and be imaginative in their approach to teaching and learning the curriculum.

Question 21:

Is there anything that I have missed that you would like to add or clarify in your answers? Is there another question that you feel should be present in this interview?

P6 (Francis') Answer: No, I think we've covered everything.

Interviewer: Thank you again for your time, this was a pleasure getting to know your lived experience as an educator and head of school.

P6 (Francis') Answer: Thank you as well.

End of Interview: Duration (145 -Minutes).

Appendix 16: Participant 7 Interview

Participant 7 Interview:

Title: Leadership and Creative Teaching: Perspective of heads of schools in Maltese State Schools;

Research Question: How are leadership practices adopted by heads of schools contributing to the support of creative teaching within Maltese primary state schools

Headings will be highlighted in purple

In some instances, certain questions will start off as a statement first. Prior to asking the question, I will clarify when it is a statement to avoid any confusion. Statements will be highlighted in yellow.

Main questions will be highlighted in bold

Prompt questions will be headed by Roman Numerals

**Interview conducted with Participant 7 Daniel Pace (P7): on February 1st, 2024 – (Head Master's name has been anonymized for identity protection)*

Demographic

Question 1: Please tell me a little about yourself

- i. What is your name? Surname? Age? Gender?
- ii. What is your highest level of qualification?
- iii. Did you yourself attend a state school in primary education? If not, where else did you study? Church or independent school? Have you ever studied or worked abroad? If so, where? For how long?
- iv. Were you a teacher prior to being a Head of a school? If so, for how long? Was it all in a state school? What years did you teach? Was it all in Malta?
- v. How long have you been the Head of this school? How many years of School Head experience do you have in total? Were they all in primary? Were they all in a state school?

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: Hello, nice to see you again, I am Daniel Pace.

Interviewer: Nice to see you to, how is everything?

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: Very good thank you. Very busy. How many school heads have you interviewed so far?

Interviewer: 6 so far, this is my last interview before I prepare for teaching practice in February.

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: Okay good, lets get started then. These questions really had me reflecting on my leadership skills. It was good practice.

So, I am Daniel Pace. I am 61 years old. I finished my BED in 1988. I taught secondary school for a long time. I find it is much more complex.

I received my post graduate diploma in Education Administrative Management. I cam from a state school in the 1970's and I went to a church school in secondary. I have to admit I never studied back then.

I was an Italian teacher for 15 years and I also moved into guidance counselling duties. I really enjoyed my time as a guidance counselor, I began to view the school from a different perspective.

I was a teacher until 2005. Then I was an assistant head for 4 years and became head of a secondary school in 2011. I've been a head of school for 13 years. This is my first year as head of school in primary. I do not find it as stressful. In secondary school you have a lot less time to accomplish your tasks.

I've always been interested in leadership in education and you need to keep challenging yourself to avoid becoming complacent.

General

Question 2: What was your learning experience growing up in the Maltese educational system?

- i. Was it a traditional model of pedagogy or any other type of teaching method?
- ii. Was there any room for creative freedom within your academic work?
- iii. Did any of your educators or senior leadership teams encourage or promote creativity in learning?

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: School growing up for me was very traditional and so was my family upbringing.

Creativity wasn't really supported in school, you would be punished or disciplined if you didn't "follow the line". However, I was brought up valuing education.

Higher education was always something that was promoted around me. But it was important to study. It was always about more studying, creativity in education was a lot less valued.

Question 3: What led you into the career path of wanting to be a school head? Why was this important to you? (Please give concrete examples).

- i. During your time as an educator did you experience mainly positive or negative support from the school head?

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: I chose the path of the school head because leadership always interested me. I like motivating and inspiring others. Teaching sometimes felt redundant. An opportunity presented itself and I took it.

When I was an educator, I rarely saw my head of school. They were always too busy and in their office. Superiors were always overwhelmed with meetings, calls and lots of stress. Their door was closed.

I feel by the time a problem gets to the office, it is too big. I enjoy walking around my school and engaging with teachers to see if they need anything.

Question 4: Did you receive adequate training prior to or after becoming the Head of a school? Please give concrete examples

- i. Are their training courses you attend that support your growth to better your professional career?
- ii. Is there a Professional Learning Community amongst your peers to discuss strategies and challenges you face as a school head?

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: Post graduate diploma in Educational Administrative Management. It was a 2-year course that didn't offer much, it was run by retirees. I did a 3-week compulsory abroad which was a great experience.

One area I do not use much but could work on is social media. I don't like it and do not use it. I think it is helpful though especially for communication, sharing ideas and identifying challenges.

Administrative

Question 5: What are the day-to-day responsibilities of being a School Head? Ex. Budgeting, meetings, conferences, administration work.

- i. What would you say are the most challenging aspects of your profession? (Please give concrete examples).

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: My day-to-day responsibilities are as follows; coordinating all the financing, assemblies, scheduling, initiative programs, managing staff programs, managing some parents, school counsel, fundraisers, etc.

A school heads duties are very complex but get accomplished if managed properly.

The most challenging aspect of being a school head is managing the staff. In primary it feels more compliant, people move along with you. In secondary, there is more of a tendency to fight it out.

As a school head it becomes very important that when speaking "it's not just what you say but is essential in how you say it". Timing is critical.

Statement/question

Question 6: School leaders are often caught between the academic needs of students, professional needs of teachers and increasing demands of parents and educational stakeholders. This becomes a major challenge many schools leaders face: the struggle of carrying the leadership burden alone.

How does your leadership style help navigate through many of these difficult administrative challenges?

- i. Do you feel you have enough time to complete all of your responsibilities?
- ii. Do you feel like you need more support from your superiors?

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: For a school leader, one of the most important qualities to have has been Emotional Intelligence. I do not see my collage principle much. They manage by crisis and sometimes asking for support goes unheard. A lot of the time we need money for resources which is a big concern.

Like I mentioned earlier, to avoid poor management you really need to walk your school in order to really know your school.

Statement/question

Question 7: Many school leaders are so overwhelmed with day-to-day managerial tasks that they feel like they do not have the time to lead in better teaching practices.

Do you feel that as a result of these pressures and demands placed on leadership teams, the educational system in Malta has developed a strong reliance on textbooks, handouts and homework?

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: The only thing I really do on my own is financing. Otherwise, my assistant heads help me with everything. We are a good team and we work together with shared responsibilities.

Unfortunately, yes in Malta we are still too reliant on textbooks, handouts and homework. Its to compliant on fill in the blank and check of boxes mentality here.

Our students don't think. We need to teach like in Edward Debono. Out of 10 students maybe 1.5 can think critically. This is a real problem. When a teacher taught creatively, I would get notes from the parents saying they are not good teachers. This goes against creativity.

Leadership

Question 8: What does good leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

- I. In contrast, what would poor leadership in education look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: Good leadership is communication and knowing your staff. Giving suggestions and empowering people to become more. It is important to show empathy and act as a role model.

Emotional intelligence is very important. We need to manage well through leading by example.

Question 9: How would you describe your leadership style?

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: Distributed leadership, shared leadership. This is very important; also having experts that help who have skills in areas such as literacy.

It is good to utilize all people strengths and is the most effective approach. I like to have my teachers lead as well not just assistant heads.

This is very empowering. Sometimes teachers do not think on a school level on at a class level. I hand pick specific roles for teachers to help empower them and not let them become enclosed and isolated.

A lot of times teachers may offer suggestions on new ideas or initiatives so it is good to have different responsibilities carried out by different people.

There is a good well-being course which stated that 20% of people will do more than just follow, 60% will follow no problem and the last 20% will never follow. You have to know how to manage this and not waste time.

Question 10: Please list the 3 most important characteristics (single words) you believe are the most important qualities in being an effective leadership.

P7 (Daniel's) Answer:

Emotional Intelligence

24/7 commitment

Empathy – You have to know your individual staff issues, even going to support and be present at funerals. Support makes a big difference otherwise it could lead to separation and isolation.

Question 11: What is the difference between being an effective leader and being an effective manager?

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: Again, good leaders know their staff and are effective communicators.

A good manager does order people but instead leads by example.

A good leader is present and not invisible or hidden.

Statement/question

Question 12: Research on leadership practices indicates that strong leaders are often effective managers, however they usually are more comfortable in one of the two areas.

As the head of the school, do you believe your strengths are more as a strong leader or effective manager? Please give concrete examples.

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: At the end of the day, I am a leader.

I've learnt much through experience. As a leader you always need to be present so that people will know you are there.

It is good to be approachable and that everyone feels safe and welcome. Staff and students need to feel comfortable to approach you.

"Personality is a big key". Managing through invisibility is not good. You really need to have presence as a leader.

Question 13: Based on your leadership style description, would you categorize it under;

Instructional: Instructional leadership is a model of school leadership in which a school head works alongside teachers to provide support and guidance in establishing best practices in teaching. It is generally defined as the management of curriculum and instruction by a school principal.

Distributed: Distributed leadership is a term used in educational settings to describe how different individuals within an organization share responsibility for leadership.

Transactional: Transactional leadership is a leadership style that utilizes rewards and punishments to motivate and direct followers. The goals and tasks of teachers are highly structured, and educators rewarded when they achieve these goals and reprimanded if they miss desired outcomes.

Transformational: Transformational leadership is a model of leadership that relies on the encouragement of a team to realize overall success. By raising a team's morale and self-confidence, the team can then align itself to an overall vision or common purpose and be inspired to achieve beyond their presumed potential.

Servant: Servant leadership is a leadership approach that puts serving others above all other priorities. Rather than managing for results, a servant leader focuses on creating an environment in which their team can thrive and get their highest-impact work done.

Visionary: Visionary leaders have the ability to see the big picture. They have a compelling vision of the future, where they can make a positive impact and, often, disrupt the status quo. Visionary leaders have strong communication skills, act as mentors, and are able to look at the big picture while inspiring their teams to work together

- I. Please describe why you feel you fit under this category of leadership style
- II. Do you feel that more than one of these leadership styles applies to you? Maybe two or three? Please explain in detail

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: *Distributed leadership absolutely. Sharing responsibilities and empowering others to take on leadership roles.*

Question 14: Appreciating the complexity and responsibilities associated with the role of School Head, what leadership attributes (attitudes, characteristics, experience) do you demonstrate to keep teachers wanting to achieve at the highest level? (please give concrete examples).

- I. How do you keep the needs of your teachers before your own needs?
- II. How do you communicate and maintain high morale within the school's walls?
- III. How do you create challenging goals for your teachers and provide constructive feedback?

IV. How often do you observe your teachers' strengths/weaknesses and provide constructive feedback?

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: It is very important to offer feedback constructively and regularly when warranted.

I do visit classrooms, if a teacher wants me to visit, they need to keep their doors open. I like to see more transparent classrooms. It is great seeing passionate teachers at work. And there is no problem where there isn't a solution. That is why feedback is so helpful.

Creativity:

Question 15: What does Teaching Creatively look like to you? Please give concrete examples.

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: Holistic learning, learning outside of the classrooms and learning to think critically through exploration and discovery.

Students need to learn to think critically, and push them out of their comfort zone. Students need to be challenged and supported in different learning environments.

Statement/question

Question 16: Government ministers, stakeholders, parents and educational community members all have their own diverse perspectives on best practices to raising national standards and improving student outcomes.

Do you believe they take creativity, imagination and innovative thinking into account when developing future citizens? Please give concrete examples.

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: Not in practical terms but in theory yes. In practical terms, it is not set up that like that.

Teachers go from one learning outcome to another, and simply check off boxes. "Fun and creativity are being lost, there is no time for it because everything is geared towards assessments".

It is just assessment after assessment and clicking off boxes.

Question 17: With such an increasing demand focusing on students learning core subjects such as; reading, writing and arithmetic to meet the standards of assessments and accountability, how does your leadership style help support creativity and prevent it from becoming non-existent?

- I. Do you feel creative teaching should be a priority for all of your teachers?

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: Again, being present, having emotional Intelligence and practicing good communication and empathy.

Yes, creativity should be a priority. We need to bring students out of the classroom to become critical thinkers and leave their comfort zones.

Leadership in Creativity

Question 18: As the Head of School, how does your leadership style contribute to supporting creative teaching in your school? Please give concrete examples.

- I. Do you feel the National Curriculum Framework assists and/or promotes creative teaching or is it too rigid and structured?
- II. How does the pressure of time constraints affect practicing creative teaching?

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: At least in the 2012 document holistic learning was supposed to be implemented, however it was never followed up with strategies.

They are good making documents but implementation of them is another thing.

Question 19: Please describe how your leadership style encourages teachers to approach you with creative and innovative teaching practices and feel confident that this open communication effectively makes teachers feel that they are being supported? Please give concrete examples.

- I. Do you regularly communicate your expectations to your teachers?
- II. How do you demonstrate commitment to teachers developing their professional goals?
- III. Do you offer coaching or mentorship to develop your teachers' creative potential?

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: By using Emotional Intelligence to make sure teachers and students know I am present and here to support them.

Usually, every morning we communicate whether face-to-face or through technology.

Bigger issues are sent out weeks before in order to give enough time to make changes accordingly.

Statement/question

Question 20: Policy ministers and future employers want students in Malta to be prepared and ready for the workforce in the 21st century with creativity as a learnt skill. The Education Act, Chapter 605 of the Laws of Malta, reinforces the State's commitment towards providing a quality holistic education for all citizens. Furthermore, the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 policy aims to ensure that all children, young people, and adults have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society and to develop a society which is competent, resourceful, critically conscious, and competitive in a global economy driven by information, knowledge and innovation.

What strategies have you put in place that put innovation and creativity at the top of the list for educational development contributing to 21st century skills?

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: I would introduce and develop for all students:

THINKING SKILLS!

THINKING SKILLS!

THINKING SKILLS!

Not to waste time on games and social media. Students need to be challenged and to learn to think outside the box!

Question 21:

Is there anything that I have missed that you would like to add or clarify in your answers? Is there another question that you feel should be present in this interview?

P7 (Daniel's) Answer: Again, to teach our students to think critically, be objective to discovery, challenge ideas and norms and retrain our teachers and students to learn to take on different perspectives through critical thinking.

End of Interview: Duration (127-Minutes).

Appendix 17: Dissertation Proposal Form



L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty of Education

Masters in Teaching and Learning
Dissertation Proposal Form

Date	Day	Month	Year
	24	04	2023
Proposal Number	1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Proposal Identifier			
Course Years	2		

1. Name of Applicant:	Dragan Stojanovic
1.1 I.D. 0363486A	1.2 Teaching Area Masters of Teaching and Learning
1.3 Mobile 77328714	1.4 Tel. N/A
1.5 Email dragan.stojanovic.22@um.edu.mt	

2. Name of Principal Supervisor BLOCK LETTERS	Dr. Charmaine Bonello		
2.1 Faculty / Department / Institute	Early Childhood and Primary Education		
2.2 Telephone (office/mobile)	79891728		
2.3 Email	charmaine.bonello@um.edu.mt		
2.4 Post	Full Time <input type="checkbox"/>	Part Time <input type="checkbox"/>	TR status
2.5 I confirm that, as Principal Supervisor, I have discussed the proposed research with the student and endorse this M.T.L. dissertation proposal	Signature 		

3. Name of Advisor (if applicable) BLOCK LETTERS	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1 Faculty / Department / Institute	
3.2 Telephone (home, mobile)	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.3 Email			
3.4 Post	Full Time	Part Time	TR status
3.5 I confirm that, as Advisor, I have discussed the proposed research with the student and endorse this M.T.L. dissertation proposal	Signature		

Appendix 18: Application For Ethics Clearance



Faculty of Education

University of Malta
Msida MSD 2080, Malta

Tel: +356 2340 3058/2932
educ@um.edu.mt

www.um.edu.mt/educ

12th July 2023

RE: Application for Research Ethics Clearance EDUC-2023-00489 Dragan Stojanovic

Dear Dragan Stojanovic,

With reference to your application EDUC-2023-00489 Dragan Stojanovic for Research Ethics clearance, I am pleased to inform you that **FREC finds no ethical or data protection issues in terms of content and procedure.**

Before proceeding, kindly refer to your file 'Indicative_Interview_Questions'.

If you amend any questions for your research schedule, kindly contact FREC office beforehand. Ethical

clearance is provided on the series of questions included in the above file.

You may therefore proceed to approach potential informants to collect data using the tools/documents outlined in this application.

You are reminded that it is your responsibility - under the guidance of your supervisor - to distribute Information Letters and Consent/Assent Forms that are written in appropriate and correct English and Maltese.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Gravina', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Dr Joseph Gravina
Chairperson Faculty Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education.

Appendix 19: Permission To Conduct Research Study Part 1



MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION,
SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH &
INNOVATION

Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department

Tel: 25982743 researchandinnovation@ilearn.edu.mt

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

Date: 28th November 2023

Ref: R11-2023 1771

To:



Title of Research Study: *Leadership Practice and Creative Teaching: Lived Experiences of Headsof Schools in Primary Maltese State Schools.*

The MEYR Research Ethics Committee within the Office of the Director General, Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department, would like to inform that approval is granted to **Dragan Stojanovic** to conduct the research in State Schools according to the official rules and regulations, subject to approval from the Ethics Committee of the respective Higher Educational Institution.

The researcher is committed to complying with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research. The researcher will be sending letters with clear information about the research, as well as consent forms to all data subjects and their parents/guardians when minors are involved. Consent forms should be signed in all cases particularly for the participation of minors in research.

For further details about our policy for research in schools, kindly visit www.research.gov.mt.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation.



Committee Research Unit

Office Of The Director General

Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department



Office Of The Director General

Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department

MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Permission To Conduct Research Study Part 2



MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION,
SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH &
INNOVATION

Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department

Tel: 25982743 researchandinnovation@ilearn.edu.mt

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

Date: 28th November 2023

Ref: R11-2023 1771

To:

Title of Research Study: *Leadership Practice and Creative Teaching: Lived Experiences of Heads of Schools in Primary Maltese State Schools.*

The MEYR Research Ethics Committee within the Office of the Director General, Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department, would like to inform that approval is granted to **Dragan Stojanovic** to conduct the research in State Schools according to the official rules and regulations, subject to approval from the Ethics Committee of the respective Higher Educational Institution.

The researcher is committed to complying with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research. The researcher will be sending letters with clear information about the research, as well as consent forms to all data subjects and their parents/guardians when minors are involved. Consent forms should be signed in all cases particularly for the participation of minors in research.

For further details about our policy for research in schools, kindly visit www.research.gov.mt.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation.



Committee Research Unit

Office Of The Director General

Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department



Office Of The Director General

Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department

MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Permission To Conduct Research Study Part 3



MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION,
SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH &
INNOVATION

Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department

Tel: 25982743 researchandinnovation@ilearn.edu.mt

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

Date: 28th November 2023

Ref: R11-2023 1771

To: [REDACTED]

Title of Research Study: *Leadership Practice and Creative Teaching: Lived Experiences of Headsof Schools in Primary Maltese State Schools.*

The MEYR Research Ethics Committee within the Office of the Director General, Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department, would like to inform that approval is granted to **Dragan Stojanovic** to conduct the research in State Schools according to the official rules and regulations, subject to approval from the Ethics Committee of the respective Higher Educational Institution.

The researcher is committed to complying with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research. The researcher will be sending letters with clear information about the research, as well as consent forms to all data subjects and their parents/guardians when minors are involved. Consent forms should be signed in all cases particularly for the participation of minors in research.

For further details about our policy for research in schools, kindly visit www.research.gov.mt.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation.



CommitteeResearch Unit

Office Of The Director General

Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department



Office Of The Director General

Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department

MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION