

**The Influence of Board Leadership and Governance on Club Capability within  
New Zealand Community Sport Clubs**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The emergence of the commercialisation and professionalisation of sport has been observed globally by researchers and has resulted in increased academic research within the realms of both leadership and sport governance. To date, however, the majority of this research has been predominantly focussed on national sporting organisation (NSO) boards. The emergence of a more business-like' delivery of sport has proven challenging to the sporting sector (Breitbarth, Walzel, Anagnostopoulos, & Eekeren, 2015; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011), notably with community non-profit sport club organisations (CSCs), as they are traditionally governed by volunteer boards that serve to deliver their respective sport codes to the community via limited resources (Lowther, Digennaro, Borgogni, & Lowther, 2016). The challenges facing CSCs, particularly in relation to leadership and governance, have been acknowledged within the New Zealand sporting sector at national, regional and government level (Sport New Zealand, 2015b). New Zealand Rugby, recognising the need to understand the leadership and governance capabilities of its CSCs (rugby clubs), entered into a collaborative partnership with both Aktive – Auckland Sport & Recreation and Auckland University of Technology's Sports Performance Research Institute New Zealand (SPRINZ). Accordingly, this research was undertaken to investigate the current understanding and influence, of leadership and governance at CSC board level, in order to potentially develop club capability. Specifically, the central research question was, "How can community non-profit sport clubs develop club capability within the realms of board leadership and governance". Three sub-questions supported this overarching question. These involved exploring: what understanding do board/committee members possess concerning leadership and governance; what perceptions do board/committee members possess concerning club capability; and what areas can be identified within leadership and governance with a view to potentially developing community sport club capability.

The theoretical foundations upon which this study was grounded were underpinned by traditional leadership and governance theory. However, this qualitative study sought to extend upon emerging sport leadership and governance theory by way of three instrumental case studies, cross-case analysed in a multiple case research approach. The holistically orientated research approach allowed the creation of new knowledge by gaining a deeper understanding, within CSCs, of leadership and governance as an influence on club capability. Founded on a constructivist-interpretive paradigm, data were collaboratively generated between researcher and CSC (rugby club) board members. Primary data were generated utilising fourteen individual semi-structured interviews and

an inter-club focus group, supported by participant observation. Data analysis, as part of both the instrumental and multiple case study process, was achieved by way of supplementary documentation, audio-tape transcriptions, focus group videos, and reflective note-taking to identify emerging themes and sub-themes.

Outcomes from the study reveal that within the leadership realm, CSCs have a traditional, leader-centric approach in the form of chair leadership and, are underpinned to varying degrees by a servant leadership foundation. Key governance findings from the study reveal that CSCs show considerable disparity in their governance practices and that a progressive approach is required to achieve attainment of collaborative governance.

Whilst untested and beyond the scope of this study, these key findings could assist NSOs to focus their resources on chair leadership development, with an emphasis on servant leadership qualities such as emotional intelligence, and to develop club capability by working towards an NSO-styled shared leadership model. These findings also potentially allow for a CSC progressive governance model to be created with the aim of developing club capability by establishing collaborative governance in the form of inter-organisational relationships.

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## ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Student's signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized capital letter 'M' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> March 2018

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Having been a professional sportsperson for the past seventeen years, the prospect of retiring from competing and embarking on a new journey within the hallowed halls of Auckland University of Technology (AUT) was somewhat daunting. It is fair to say that my journey began in the presence of Lesley Ferkins (primary supervisor) and Gaye Bryham (secondary supervisor) within the Leadership in Sport and Recreation paper of my graduate diploma. You two taught me to truly believe that once you adopt a growth mindset and your eyes are opened, you cannot help but see elements of leadership in every aspect of life. It has been an absolute privilege over these past three years to have you both travel this journey with me, assisting and guiding but always challenging. This current sporting environment is dynamic, changeable, and infinitely exciting, and I'm honoured to be working with you both in bringing forth knowledge that can create real change. Academic knowledge resulting in real world change is, for me, the reason why we seek to understand the hows and the whys.

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The sporting sector in New Zealand is undergoing constant change and the delivery of sport in the community must evolve to meet these changes. I look forward to assisting in this change process and contributing to the development of the next generation of New Zealand athletes.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Background and Theoretical Rationale

Sport is an integral part of many New Zealanders' way of life, with the most recent Sport New Zealand survey stating that approximately 2.5 million adult New Zealanders participate in some form of sporting activity on a weekly basis (Sport New Zealand, 2015c). The structural sporting framework that supports active New Zealanders is based upon nearly 1 million volunteers who engage with paid professionals within sport organisations and their respective CSCs (Sport New Zealand, 2017). CSCs provide two very distinct services. One is the support they provide in identifying, developing, and directing aspiring young athletes on their pathway from club to regional, national, and international representation. The other is providing a safe and enjoyable environment for members of the public to participate in their chosen sporting pastimes (Balduck, Van Rossem, & Buelens, 2010). Alongside these services, CSCs also have to facilitate competitions, source and manage coaching resources, support and train volunteers, manage sponsorship and marketing opportunities, and address legislation requirements.

Beech and Chadwick (2013) examined the commercialisation of sport and noted that the international sport system, inclusive of sport organisations, has gone through various phases of professionalisation and commercialisation. The emergence of more commercially-orientated sport and sport management has proven challenging, as both are traditionally governed by volunteer boards that serve to direct limited resources via limited staffing capacity (Lesley Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012). These challenges have led to a variety of tensions between volunteer decision-makers and full-time staff (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). In 2010, Smith and Stewart critically revisited an earlier research paper (B. Stewart & Smith, 1999) and discussed the fundamental change in sport due to the advent of commercialisation and commodification. They concluded that the sport system is now more diverse and heterogeneous in terms of structures and classifications than ever before, and that makes it difficult to specifically identify features that are relevant to the whole sporting system (Smith & Stewart, 2010). Breitbarth et al. (2015) noted the inherent challenges that "traditional" sport faces both culturally and logistically when addressing the complexity of business-oriented governance. Paul Collins, Chairman of Sport New Zealand, has stated in the foreword to *Nine Steps to Effective Governance – Building High Performing Organisations* that the "future and its inherent complexity can

only be addressed with excellent leadership and governance. Now more than ever a board must deliver on its responsibility for sound planning, oversight and risk management” (Sport New Zealand, 2015, p. 3).

This emphasis on the influence of leadership and governance on a community non-profit sport club’s effectiveness or capability is also acknowledged by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), who state that whilst effective sport governance requires leadership, integrity, and good judgment, ineffective governance practices not only impact on the sport organisation, but also undermine confidence in the Australian sport industry as a whole. The ASC perhaps set a benchmark in 2013 with the publication of its *Mandatory Sports Governance Principles* (Australian Sports Commission, 2013). The ASC states “clubs must have structures in place that reflect a greater level of professionalism...Good governance is a necessary condition for success” (p. 1). In recognition of the influence that effective governance and leadership has on the success and capability of CSCs, Sport New Zealand has twice revised its manual *Nine Steps to Effective Governance – Building High Performing Organisations* (Sport New Zealand, 2015a, 2015b). This detailed document, which describes governance structures, processes, challenges, and issues, was designed to assist non-profit sport organisation boards to develop their own individual governance “Bible”, and has been formatted to emulate the traditional hierarchical structure (Carver, 2006) that currently defines sport organisations (i.e., international governing body, state/regional governing bodies, provincial and community clubs).

Academic literature identifying the influence of governance on a voluntary board’s capability includes work by authors such as Hoye and Cuskelly (2007), who note that the central feature of a non-profit sport organisation’s governance system and structure is the work of the voluntary board. This view was also supported by Bayle and Robinson (2007), who argue further that “the system of governance, most notably the permanence and position of the main unpaid voluntary leaders, are one of the keys to a national sport governing body’s success” (p. 258). Conversely, as noted by Hoye and Cuskelly (2007), “board members who do not possess appropriate skills, who are unsure of their role due to the absence of individual role descriptions, or have not been adequately orientated to an organisation, may find it difficult to contribute optimally to the board and thereby impact negatively on performance” (p. 95). Consequently, a volunteer board that is capable of attracting significant expertise can be a sporting organisation’s most critical asset (Lesley Ferkins, Shilbury, & McDonald, 2009).

Literature that highlights leadership as an influence in relation to a board's capability includes work by authors such as Storey (2005), who noted the influence of top level leadership as an intangible asset to an organisation. This was also noted by O'Toole, Galbraith, and Lawler III (2002), who, when exploring shared leadership within a corporate board setting, discovered "that many of the key tasks and responsibilities of leadership were institutionalised in the systems, practices, and cultures of the organisation" (p. 82).

Whilst substantial research exists (such as works by Tricker, 1983, 1984, and 2000) identifying the link between corporate performance and profitability, minimal academic research exists delving into the link between leadership and governance (Lesley Ferkins, Shilbury, & O'Boyle, 2017; Welty Peachey, Zhou, Damon, & Burton, 2015) and their interconnecting influence on organisational capability at community non-profit sport club level (Burton, 2009; Lowther et al., 2016).

### **Practical Rationale for the Study**

New Zealand Rugby and Aktive – Auckland Sport & Recreation Partnership

In 2016, New Zealand Rugby released its 2020 strategic plan (Figure 1, below), which detailed six key strategic areas of focus. Key strategic focus area number five was described thus:

In recognition of the critical influence of Auckland to the state of the game, our goals are that rugby in wider Auckland has first class facilities, is financially strong, has increased participation of players, coaches and referees, has a strong fan base and has representative teams that are competitive. (New Zealand Rugby, 2017a)



*Figure 1:* New Zealand Rugby 2020 Strategic Plan. Retrieved from: <http://files.allblacks.com/nzr2020/NZR-2020-Strategic-Plan-WEB.pdf>

New Zealand Rugby and Aktive – Auckland Sport & Recreation (Aktive Auckland) formed a partnership that was defined as primarily supporting the wider Auckland strategy with three key purposes:

1. Developing a long-term plan to upgrade existing and create new facilities across wider Auckland to meet the future needs of rugby in the region.
2. Creating a long-term uplift in the club board capability across rugby clubs in the region.
3. Creating stronger rugby clubs across wider Auckland through building leadership, governance, and administrative capability within the rugby club community.

Based on their strategic focus as outlined above, New Zealand Rugby and Aktive Auckland have, via a partnership with Auckland University of Technology (AUT) Sports Performance Research Institute New Zealand (SPRINZ), identified a need to both assess and develop the current understanding of leadership and governance, at community rugby club board level. This increased understanding could potentially contribute to the ongoing development of rugby club (community non-profit sport club) capability.

### **Focus and Approach of the Study**

As described in the background and rationale above, it has been established that sport in New Zealand has undergone rapid change, occurring at government level (Sport New Zealand) as well as via national sport organisations (New Zealand Rugby) through to provincial unions and community rugby clubs. Robust studies (Lesley Ferkins &

Shilbury, 2015a; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015) have been published using the action research process, through which a change process has been implemented to improve governance capability at the national sport organisation level. However, there remains little examination of CSCs to assist in understanding the development of community sport club capability, specifically within the realms of leadership and governance at board/committee level.

In general terms, the focus of this study is therefore to investigate the understanding and perception, at community non-profit rugby club board/committee level, of leadership and governance, with a view to identifying potential areas of club capability development. More specifically, the central research question was, “How can community non-profit sport clubs develop club capability within the realms of board leadership and governance?”

The sub-questions were as follows:

- What understanding do board/committee members possess concerning leadership and governance?
- What perceptions do board/committee members possess concerning club capability?
- What areas can be identified within leadership and governance with a view to potentially developing community sport club capability?

## Method

The theoretical framework that underpinned this research was a constructivist-interpretive paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Characteristics of this paradigm as described by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) that most closely aligned with the researcher’s personal perspectives (as outlined in researcher’s background) were: 1) Relativist ontology – multiple realities will exist; 2) Subjective epistemology – the researcher and participants will co-create understandings; and 3) Naturalist methodology – research will take place in the natural world.

The choice of research paradigm used in this study is reflected in the central research question, “How can community non-profit sport clubs develop club capability within the realms of board leadership and governance?”, in that the researcher’s intention was to understand both what is happening and why, as well as what might be possible.

Implicit in the research question was the assumption that knowledge gained would be complex, contain multiple individual perspectives and insights and, importantly, that multiple contextual environments would exist. Pivotal to the research was the assumed understanding that the researcher and the participants would co-interact and become, in essence, research partners in the research process (Ingham-Broomfield, 2015).

This qualitative study used case study methodology to provide a starting point in understanding people's current perceptions, at community rugby club level, of leadership and governance within their respective organisations' boards. Three community rugby clubs were selected, and data were collected through the use of supplementary document analysis and semi-structured interviews, broadly themed around an interview guide containing questions pertaining to leadership, governance, and club capability of each club's board/committee. Whilst all three rugby clubs were instrumental case studies, and considered within their respective situational contexts, the integration of the combined club board member focus group enabled the researcher to investigate the findings within an integrated multiple case study system (Stake, 2006, 2010). Thematic analysis was then conducted on the data utilising an inductive approach, which enabled organic themes to emerge intrinsically (Smith, 1992).

### Thesis Structure

This introductory chapter is followed by the Literature Review, which outlines the theoretical foundations upon which the study is grounded. Chapter Two defines the ambiguous terms of leadership, governance and club capability, both generally and within the context of this study. Literature specific to sport leadership, governance and capability (within a sport context) are examined. Chapter Three establishes the research framework, explaining the justification for the constructivist-interpretive research paradigm and the use of a qualitative approach for this study. Chapter Three then describes the case study design and methods used to collect, analyse, and review research data. Chapter Four examines the three individual case studies within their respective contexts and details the leadership, governance, and club capability findings. These findings are also discussed in the context of relevant literature. Chapter Five set outs the conclusions drawn from the multiple case studies in a cross-case comparison as well as detailing the limitations and implications of these findings. Chapter Five concludes after highlighting research implications and opportunities.

## Researcher Background

As detailed in the method section above, this study utilised a constructivist-interpretive approach and a subjective epistemology. Mention was also made of the co-interaction and partnership with participants in the desire to extract rich, insightful responses and teachings (McKinley, 2015). In order for this interaction to occur it was necessary for the researcher to actively enter into the “worlds” of the participants in order to see the situation as it was seen by the participant, observing what the participant took into account, and to acknowledge how the researcher interpreted what was taken into account (Schwandt, 1994). Accordingly, in order to accurately understand the perspective of the researcher, his background must be taken into account.

The researcher is a recently retired professional sportsman (professional sailor) who, over the course of his career from 2000 to 2016, experienced a development pathway from local sailing club through to international level (America’s Cup and Grand Prix circuit sailing in Europe). During his involvement at America’s Cup level, he was responsible for the leadership of staff and governance of his department, and experienced first-hand the challenges facing sporting organisations that operate with high levels of sporting experience, but limited leadership and governance expertise. In conjunction with undertaking his Masters in Sport and Exercise (full-time), he has also worked for Auckland Rugby Union (provincial rugby) in a part-time capacity as a strength and conditioning coach for the Auckland Rugby International Academy. The combination of his previous leadership experience in professional sailing and his first-hand experience of the interactive relationship that exists between the Auckland Rugby Union and its affiliated community non-profit rugby clubs has enabled the researcher to understand the situation-specific contexts that influence each rugby club in the study.

## Parameters of the Study

It is acknowledged that, within the study of sport organisations, the definition or interpretation of leadership, governance, and capability needs to be appropriately broad or fluid to reflect both the scope and realities of the sector (Hoye & Doherty, 2011). Accordingly, the primary concern of this study is centred on CSCs. The focus of the study is with community rugby clubs – specifically rugby clubs that are incorporated, non-profit societies run predominantly by volunteers.

The conceptual approach of this thesis is directly aligned with the strategic focus of New Zealand Rugby, and indirectly that of Aktive Auckland: the development of rugby

club board capability within the realms of leadership and governance (New Zealand Rugby, 2017b). This model involved members of community rugby club boards/committees, particularly those who hold positions of leadership and governance influence.

In summary, the parameters of the study are as follows:

- Community, non-profit rugby club board/committee members.
- Of the board/committee members above, those who hold positions of influence in the realm of leadership and governance.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter commenced with a background of the changes and issues facing sport within New Zealand and Australia, then explained the partnership with AUT SPRINZ, New Zealand Rugby and Aktive Auckland and subsequent rationale of the study. The focus and methods of the qualitative study of community non-profit rugby club capability were then described, as well as the researcher's background and the parameters of the study. The use of the case study method provided New Zealand Rugby with new knowledge and insight as to the current condition of selected community rugby clubs within the greater Auckland area, as well as potential areas of development of club capability.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Chapter Introduction

This chapter establishes theoretical foundations for the study within the realms of leadership and governance, and examines the dynamics relating to leadership, governance, and club capability within the context of CSC boards. Firstly, leadership literature pertaining to traditional “leader-centric” approaches that emphasise specific leadership styles are detailed, whilst more emergent sport leadership approaches such as emotional intelligence are examined, and associated literature critiqued. Secondly, corporate governance theories are described and their contextual relevance to a non-profit board explored. Sport governance themes as they relate directly to the CSC boards are also examined. Thirdly, club capability is defined, and the interconnection of leadership and governance is explored to establish the influence they both have on club capability in relation to CSC boards. The literature review concludes with the establishment of gaps in both sport leadership and sport governance research literature, within the realm of community non-profit sport clubs’ board/organisational capability.

### Leadership

#### Leadership Defined

Borland, Kane and Burton (2015) advise in their book *Sport Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* that although they seek to equip future leaders of sport with the skills and perspectives necessary to effectively lead non-profit sport organisations, they deem it crucial and educational to consider both the evolution of leadership and its theoretical development. They consider the organisational challenges faced today to often be variations of situations encountered in the past (Borland, Kane, & Burton, 2015). With this in mind, it is possible to see examples of leadership as far back as the sixth century BC in Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*, however the words “lead” and “leader” appear to have been part of European language since about 1300 (Foley, 2013). According to Bass (2008), a definition of leadership first appeared in *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, circa. 1828. The word “leadership” can be broken down into three parts: 1) Lead – to come or go first; 2) -er – denotes one who performs a task or is employed in a role, for example a sailor; 3) -ship – a craft or a skill, as in the word “seamanship”.

Based on a literal interpretation of the definition above, leadership could therefore perhaps be defined as being performed by someone who is suitably skilled at the forefront of a group, who decides the direction taken. Scott (2014), however, notes that “without a full understanding of the multitude of contextual components of each leadership situation, it is difficult to arrive at a single definition that adequately meets all individual, organisational and cultural perceptions of leadership” (p. 4). Whilst acknowledging the difficulty in defining leadership, there are similarities noted in certain academic leadership literature, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: *Academic Literature Definitions of Leadership*

“An interpersonal influence exercised by a person, or persons, through the process of communication towards the attainment of an organisation’s goals.” (p. 16)	Russell (2005)
“The ability to influence people to willingly follow one’s guidance or adhere to one’s decisions.” (p. 465)	Rue and Bryars ( 2009)
“A process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals, to achieve a common goal.” (p. 5)	Northouse (2016)

*Note:* Adapted from Borland, Kane and Burton (2015)

As noted above, similarities within these definitions include the influence, goal-setting, and the alluding to a relationship between the leader and follower(s).

When looking at defining leadership for the purpose of this study, it was considered necessary to align with the specific framework of a CSC board/committee, and also to acknowledge the traditional hierarchical leadership model (as described in Chapter One). Accordingly, leadership (for the purpose of this study) was defined as the action/style of leading an organisation (through assigned roles as a board/committee member), and the perceived ability to do this.

### Evolution of Sport Leadership Research

Chelladurai (1990) published the first sport leadership literature review in the context of on-the-field performance. This review noted that the majority of sport leadership research prior to 1990 was primarily focused on coaching behaviour and the autonomy of coach decision-making in various sporting contexts. In the mid-1990s transformational/transactional leadership theory became a focus in sport management research. This focus was drawn from the work of Burns (1978), and was based on trait-situational interactions and perceptual biases (Welty Peachey et al., 2015).

Transformational leadership is focussed on motivating followers to change or transform themselves. Within transformational leadership, followers will identify with the needs of the leader, and leaders will motivate their followers to achieve more than the followers thought was possible (Bass & Bass, 2008). Transactional leadership motivates by contract and reward, promising followers rewards for good performance and focussing on rules and procedures (Bass & Bass, 2008; Borland et al., 2015). Extensive empirical analysis of transformational leadership has been conducted (Avolio, 2011; Bass & Bass, 2008; Welty Peachey et al., 2015), measuring and quantifying transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire behaviour. Laissez-faire leadership is defined by Avolio (2011) as the absence or avoidance of leadership, whereby little or no direction is actually provided by the individual in the leadership role (Scott, 2014). Evaluation of the many years of foundational research related to transformational/transactional leadership led to the emergence of the Full Range Leadership Model (Avolio, 2011). This model had elements of transformational/transactional leadership expanded to incorporate active or passive leadership behaviours; in essence, effective or ineffective leadership. From a sport leadership perspective, Doherty and Danylchuk (1996) revealed coaches' satisfaction with the leader, extra effort, and perceived leader effectiveness were positively associated with transformational leadership (Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Whilst positively associated with leader effectiveness, Weese (1996) found transformational leadership to have minimal positive association with organisational effectiveness. This finding has been contradicted in a more recent study by Naidoo, Coopoo, and Surujlal (2015), who found that transformational leadership had a positive correlation with organisational effectiveness within a sporting organisation.

Sport leadership has also drawn from foundation work by Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939), who proposed three classic styles of leadership as described below:

1. Authoritarian – A dictator-like style often described as a commanding and controlling approach with a clear delineation between the leader and the followers. According to Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939), this style of leadership was personal in praise and not openly hostile.
2. Democratic – An interactive facilitator role that allows the group to collectively choose direction. Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) found this type of leadership style positively influenced collective planning and individual decision making.

3. Laissez-Faire – Complete freedom in the decision-making process for group/individual with little to no leadership involvement unless requested. Highly delegative in nature with a “stand back and watch” approach.

Whilst these traditional leadership styles remained a primary base leadership typology for many decades, in 2000 Goleman identified six contemporary leadership styles that both incorporated and evolved the Lewin, Lippitt, and White studies (Scott, 2014), and these are described, in a sporting context, as follows:

1. Coercive – Demands immediate compliance from members/players. Decision making is top-down in nature, which can affect club morale and team harmony. Style has limited effectiveness but is appropriate in performance turnaround situations or with problem players. *Style in a phrase: “Do what I tell you to do.”*
2. Authoritative – Mobilises supporters towards a vision or goal. Leader is self-confident, displays empathy, and is a change catalyst. Style is effective in a change situation, providing new vision, goals, and clear direction. *Style in a phrase: “Come with me.”*
3. Affiliative – Creates harmony and builds player/coach emotional bonds. Leader is empathetic, communicates well, and fosters inter-club relationships. Style is effective in stressful sporting circumstances by way of mediation and communication. *Style in a phrase: “People come first.”*
4. Democratic – Creates participatory consensus by way of collective collaboration, team leadership, and player communication. Style is effective at earning buy-in from club members and increasing input from valuable, experienced players. *Style in a phrase: “What do you think?”*
5. Pacesetter – Sets and maintains high performance playing standards. Leader is conscientious, driven to win, and shows high initiative. Style is effective in achieving quick results from highly motivated and competent supporters, however can also negatively affect club morale and team harmony over time. *Style in a phrase: “Do as I do, now.”*
6. Coaching – Develops players for the future by helping them identify their strengths and weaknesses. Leader is self-aware, empathetic, and encouraging.

Style is effective at improving team performance and developing long-term sporting goals. *Style in a phrase: "Try this."*

*Note:* Adapted from Goleman (2000) Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002), and Scott (2014).

Goleman (2000) points out that effective leaders are skilled at several of the leadership styles and are able to appropriately choose the applicable style based on the situation, the environment, and the people they are interacting with. This variable leadership style aligns with situational leadership, which is based on the work of Hersey and Blanchard (1969) and revised by Blanchard, Zigarmi, and Nelson (1993), which suggests that leadership styles are dependent upon the environment or situation in which the leader needs to act (Scott, 2014). Situational leadership is also noted by Nevarez, Penrose, and Padrón (2013) as “the best course of action, based on the situation and its given circumstances” (p. 51). The obvious key equation in effectively accessing the situation and choosing the appropriate course of action is the leader’s ability to evaluate their self and social awareness (Schneider, 2012). From a sport perspective, Parent, Olver, and Séguin (2009) sought to understand leadership in sporting events and found that situational variables dictated the use of multiple leadership theories. The key finding in their paper was that when interviewees were asked, from their perspectives, to describe good leadership, they consistently highlighted a greater number of variables than could be attributed to traditional leadership theories. Parent et al. (2009) concluded that leaders who had the ability to understand the situation variables and react accordingly were the most successful in managing major sporting events.

As noted above, Welty Peachey et al. (2015) conducted a robust review of leadership research in sport management, which detailed the emergence of several key leadership themes such as collective leadership, servant leadership, and emotional intelligence. Collective leadership was examined by Cullen-Lester and Yammarino (2016), who identified leadership as a collective behaviour resulting from the interaction of individuals to constitute a constantly shifting network of relationships. An important aspect of collective leadership as it aligns with the leader-centric sporting environment is the importance of the formal leaders’ ability to assess, understand, and utilise key competencies and capabilities within their specific system or network. As cited by Kristin, Cullen-Lester, and Yammarino (2016), this view was also supported by Hernandez, Eberly, Avolio, and Johnson (2011), who warned against ignoring the role of the formal leader in exploring shared/collective research. Caution was also noted by Cullen-Lester,

Maupin, and Carter (2017), who stated: “Initiatives attempting to enhance a collective's capacity for leadership without adequately developing individual skill sets may result in people feeling unprepared or overwhelmed” (p. 133). More recently, Ferkins, Skinner, and Swanson (2018), have advocated the need to undertake a multi-level approach to the study of sport leadership as an acknowledgement of the “diverse contexts and ways within which leadership occurs within our [sport] sector” (Ferkins et al., 2018, p. 77).

The theme of servant leadership emerged in 1977 through the work of Greenleaf, who defined his work as a way of life rather than just a leadership/management technique (Parris & Welty Peachey, 2013). Servant leaders are recognisable by their primary motivation to serve (what they do) and their ethical values (who they are). Servant leadership theory was extensively reviewed in an organisational context by Parris and Welty Peachey (2013). Among the findings was the observation that “servant leadership theory is applicable in a variety of cultures, contexts, and organisational settings” (p. 388). Parris and Welty Peachey also surmised that “servant leadership creates a trusting, fair, collaborative, and helping culture that can result in greater individual and organisational effectiveness” (p. 387). From a sport leadership perspective, more recent research was conducted by Welty Peachey and Burton (2017), who stated that servant leadership was “essential in helping participants make positive changes in their lives, in motivating volunteers and staff toward providing the care and trust needed to facilitate these changes, and in steering an organization toward fulfillment of its mission” (p. 126). Welty Peachey and Burton also noted that servant leadership required leaders that demonstrated humility, were able to assess and develop the strengths and weaknesses of followers, and were realistic in self-appraisal of their own leadership.

### Emotional Intelligence in Sport

Emotional intelligence has a variety of definitions, but can be simply expressed as the ability to effectively understand oneself and others, relate effectively to other people, and adapt to and cope with one's immediate environment (Bar-On, 2006; Scott, 2014). Another academic perspective is expressed by Boyatzis, Goleman, and Rhee (1999), who define emotional intelligence as personal competencies including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills that are used at appropriate times and with sufficient frequency to be effective in various situations (Scott, 2014). According to Schneider (2012), emotional intelligence supports effective sport leadership, but he notes that the sport industry has yet to fully embrace emotional intelligence as a component of

effective sport management. This is potentially supported by Pearman (2011), who hypothesises that emotional intelligence can be negatively viewed because of its private and personal objectivity. Gender may also be a potentially limiting factor in universal acceptance of emotional intelligence in sport leadership. As noted by New Zealand Rugby, within the context of provincial rugby, males dominate the majority of leadership positions (New Zealand Rugby, 2017b). According to Fischer, Manstead, and Timmers (2003), men are considered less likely to self-evaluate emotionally than women and, are less permitted to display negative, powerless emotions, although men are reportedly permitted to display powerful emotions. Combining the potential reluctance of emotional self-evaluation and the perceived lack of social permission to express particular emotions inhibits the effectiveness of leadership (Schneider, 2012). Schneider (2012) also notes that it is likely most effective sports leaders utilise components of emotional intelligence without even being aware of the potentially negative perceptions held within the sport industry. This is also noted by Haime (2011), who suggests that whilst the face value of emotional intelligence or “soft skills” is partially accepted, very little time is spent developing these skills. This is considered a key consideration, as according to Neale, Spencer-Arnell, and Wilson (2009), understanding and expression of emotions play a central role in sport leadership.

Two examples of emotional intelligence models are Cooper and Sawaf’s (1997) four cornerstone model (emotional literacy, emotional fitness, emotional depth, and emotional alchemy) and Goleman’s (1998, 2000) five components of emotional intelligence. These five components or elements as they relate to sport leadership are described thus:

1. Self-Awareness – The ability to recognise and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as the effects these have on others. This is a cornerstone of emotional intelligence in sport leadership (Haime, 2011), as personal emotions are easily aroused within the context of competitive sport, and the leader needs to be able to identify his or her emotive state and react (or not overreact) appropriately.
2. Self-Regulation – The ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods, and the propensity to suspend judgement; to think before acting. Accordingly, a leader or coach who is capable of producing positive emotions in times of stress is more likely to be capable of “seeing the bigger picture” and acting appropriately (Gasper & Clore, 2002).

3. Motivation – A desire to work for a purpose that goes beyond financial remuneration or status; the propensity to set and pursue long term goals with energy and persistence. According to Schneider (2012), optimism and motivation are inter-connected, and if a sport leader’s optimistic presence is accepted and embraced by the followers within a sport organisation, it can serve as a powerful motivator and lead to the organisation achieving its strategic goals.
4. Empathy – The ability to understand the emotional needs of other people; to treat people according to their emotional reactions. According to Chan and Mallett (2011), understanding emotions and how emotions affect individuals, teams, and organisations can inform how a coach or leader might create conditions to support higher performance.
5. Social Skill – Proficiency in building and maintaining relationships and networks; an ability to relate on common ground and build rapport. From a coaching perspective, as coaches lead and manage the coaching process, social skills are crucial for facilitating improved interpersonal relationships that may lead to improved interpersonal functioning and performance outcomes (Chan & Mallett, 2011).

Laborde, Dosseville, and Allen (2016) have recently undertaken a systematic review of emotional intelligence in sport and exercise. Of the 36 studies assessed, only three were coach- or sport leader-centred, with the remaining 33 athlete-centred. In the three studies that were leader-centred, they noted that emotional intelligence was important for the effective leadership and function of athlete coaches. According to O’Neil (2011), empathy and emotional contagion are considered particularly important in coaching, with the emotional climate feeding into the relationship between coaches and athletes. This creates a positive and challenging emotional climate which is considered by O’Neil to be an important part of developing successful coach-athlete relationships. Chan and Mallett (2011) also noted the link between emotional intelligence and effective coaching leadership skills, however this was disputed by Crombie (2011) in his critique of Chan and Malletts’ work. He argued that “there are a number of fundamental and problematic issues relating to extant emotional intelligence and leadership research that impact upon the appropriateness of its use” (p. 345). This is considered an important critique and follows on from Conte (2005), who undertook a review of emotional

intelligence measures and expressed concern with issues such as discriminant validity related to scoring and self-reported measures. Whilst critical of the measures of emotional intelligence, Conte suggests that ability-based measures look to be promising and deserve more research attention. This request for further research is supported by Laborde et al. (2016) who note that “further theoretical and measurement progression is required in addition to a wider consideration of emotional intelligence among alternative leaders (coaches, officials, managers etc.), populations and cultures” (p. 871).

## **Governance**

### **Governance Defined**

The word governance derives from the Latin verb for govern, meaning to steer. Its earliest usage in English refers to monarchy rule and “governance of the realm”. Interest in the realm of corporate governance was first observed in the early 1980s as a result of large company corporate governance failures (Evans & Clifford, 1996). These failures instigated large-scale committees of inquiry that focussed on the manner in which companies were governed and the makeup of boards (Tricker, 1993). The importance and influence of governance in a corporate context was observed by influential author Tricker (1984), who stated, “if management is about running a business, governance is about seeing that it is run properly” (p. 7).

The definition of governance is ambiguous because of the variance in the contexts in which it is viewed. Governance from a corporate, profit-making organisational perspective deals with the governance of protecting and enhancing shareholder value. From a non-profit organisational perspective, governance is based on providing a community service, either by way of a charitable service or activity (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007). Whilst there are many similarities in the governance elements of both organisation types, there are also a number of important points of difference that have been reflected in the differing direction of historical academic research (Alexander & Weiner, 1998; Balduck et al., 2010; Bradshaw, 2009).

When attempting to define sport governance, Hoye and Cuskelly (2007) note that the term “sport governance” encompasses the practice of governance within a sporting context. They also acknowledge the absence of universally agreed terminology and refer to definitions from various sources such as Sport New Zealand and the Australian Sports Commission, which describe elements of direction, control, and regulation. Yeh, Taylor and Hoye (2009) noted that whilst relevant to larger scale sport organisations, the

definitions did not account for informal sport organisations such as CSCs in a realistic and practical way. In other words, the emphasis of existing research had been focussed on the role of the boards of national/regional sport federations rather than the small committees and community sport clubs (ACEVO, 2011). Accordingly, when looking at defining governance for the purpose of this study, it was considered necessary to align with the specific contextual framework of a CSC whilst also acknowledging the pre-established core elements of corporate and non-profit governance. Governance (for the purpose of this study) was therefore defined as the responsibility for the functioning and overall direction (strategic leadership) of a sporting organisation (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012).

### Governance Theory

In acknowledging the theoretical and empirical influences from the corporate governance setting, there are six contemporary theories that inform and underpin the understanding and practice of governance (Clarke, 2004). These theories have been criticised by various researchers as being one-dimensional and emphasising particular roles of the board rather than the whole board in context (Cornforth, 2003; Hung, 1998; Tricker, 2000). This criticism appears valid when attempting to align relevant theoretical perspectives against three of the roles of community club boards, as described on the Australian Sports Commission website:

1. Set objectives, define policy, develop strategic direction and make decisions.

*Stewardship Theory* – highlights the role of the board in increasing organisational performance by contributing to the organisation's strategy and top decision-making (Cornforth, 2003).

2. Monitor the performance of management and volunteer team.

*Agency Theory* – sees the board as the instrument to ensure that management acts in the best interests of shareholders or members, as it assumes that management is likely to act in their own interests rather than to the benefit of investors or beneficiaries (Miller, 2002).

3. Manage communication with members and other stakeholders including government, sponsors etc.

*Stakeholder Theory* – the board’s role is to mediate among stakeholders and balance their interests (Freeman & Evan, 1990).

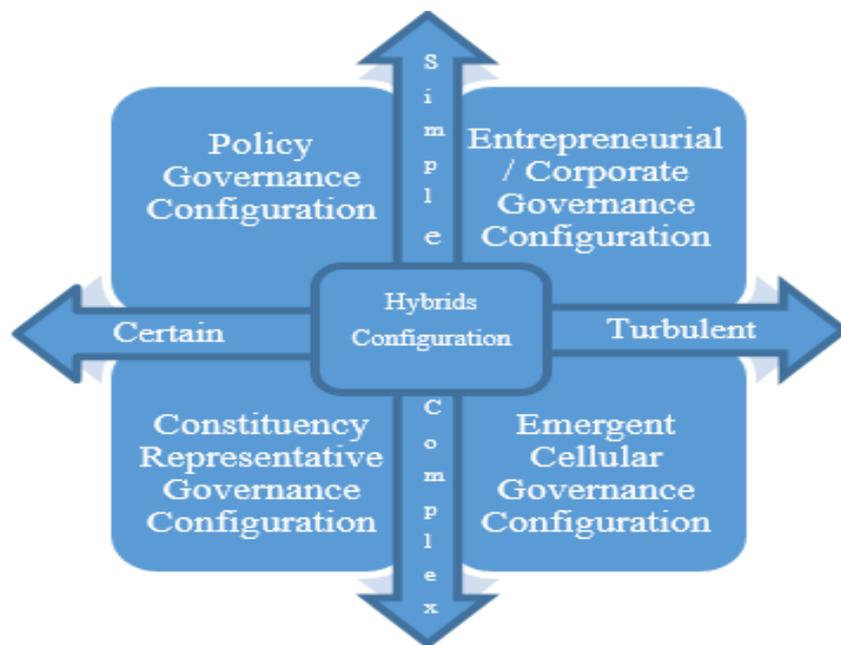
Salipante (2013) suggested that the use of a single theory when attempting to describe governance in a non-profit context might be inadequate, as it is not appropriate to expect that best-fit practices exist for the wide ranging non-profit governance situations. This view is met with caution, however, by Bradshaw (2009), who warns that a move away from a best-fit or normative approach to governance within a non-profit context could result in an undesirable “anything goes” approach to governance. Lowther et al. (2016), in attempting to explore and establish a framework for effective governance in European grassroots sport organisations, observed that the theoretical explanation and framework for governance within the CSC context was a blend of many theories that took into consideration the changing internal and external environment. A similar observation within the context of non-profit boards was made by Cornforth (2003), who noted the need to take into account the contextual factors that influence or shape non-profit boards’ characteristics and how they work. Cornforth (2011) further revised his research into non-profit governance by looking at the limitations inherent in utilising a purely corporate organisational model. Cornforth argues that a corporate style of singular focus on a non-profit organisation’s board is unduly narrow and fails to account for the “changing context in which many non-profit organisations operate or the complexity of governance arrangements that are common in the sector” (p. 1117). Specifically, Cornforth notes the ignored influence that internal factors such as managers, members, and volunteers play in assisting with an organisation’s governance functionality. Lesley Ferkins, Jogulu, and Meiklejohn (2013) explored the sport governance landscape from a New Zealand sport organisation perspective and note that most New Zealand sports consist of a “network” of organisations that effectively represent each sport code. This is an important observation and is considered integral to the concept of systemic governance (governance between organisations) rather than corporate organisational governance (singular focus, as noted above).

## Contingency Theory

Contingency theory represents a movement away from the contemporary theories discussed above and is based on the understanding that “organisational effectiveness results from fitting characteristics of the organisation, such as its structure, to contingencies that reflect the situation of the organisation” (Donaldson, 2001, p. 1). The overarching theme is based on identifying the organisation’s characteristics (such as board size, skillset, and operational effectiveness) and aligning with various external variables such as stakeholders, media, and the community in order to perform effectively. The theory is that as the organisation’s contingencies change, the organisation adapts and stays in alignment in order to remain effective (Bradshaw, 2009). Morgan’s integration of contingency theory suggests the profiling of an organisation’s characteristics to determine the degree of congruence or non-congruence between the various organisational subsystems, such as environment, strategic, technological, human/cultural, structural, and managerial. The profile of the organisation’s congruence across the various subsystems can be quantified and any alignment changes identified (Morgan, 1989). Bradshaw (2009) noted in her article on a contingency approach to non-profit governance, that the classic contingency model, as espoused by Morgan (1989) could preclude alternative, more organic styles. This is considered an important critique, as noted by Donaldson (2001), who stated that with strategic choice, “perceptions, beliefs, political interests, and power are added to contingency theory so that human action is entered into a framework that otherwise deals in impersonal variables such as environment, size, and performance” (p. 132). Bradshaw (2009) lists an example of this as being related to the size of an organisation (size is a well-researched contingency variable and is defined by the number of members in an organisation). A non-profit organisation may make the strategic choice to stay small in congruence with its culture, values, and constitution. The contention that boards are responsible for consciously reflecting on their governance configurations, taking into account their values, missions, and subjective assessment of their external contingencies, resonates well with the contextual factors that influence or shape CSCs and how they work (Lowther et al., 2016).

Bradshaw, Hayday, and Armstrong (2007) proposed a contingency model for non-profit organisations that attempted to both address previous academic critique and encompass the contextual nature of the non-profit board. Bradshaw (2009) critiques and expands further on this model (Figure 2, below) with the inclusion of another dimension to assist in the defining of the external environment: the dimension of complexity, (shown

via vertical arrows) ranges from simple to complex. As an example, with regards to membership, simple is defined as the extent to which the organisation’s external environment is composed of a well-defined and simple membership (sports players and family), whereas complex represents a wide-ranging network of stakeholders with differing expectations (sponsors, local community, NSOs, etc.). This extra dimension is seen as acknowledgement that, in the field of non-profit governance, membership demands in different organisations have unique governance needs that existing governance approaches do not adequately address (Bradshaw, 2009). The acknowledgement of extra characterisations within grassroots sport organisations was also noted by Lowther et al. (2016), who undertook a review of the six contemporary corporate theories within the context of grassroots sport. They found that Agency and Stewardship theories took a narrow, internal view on governance, whereas the remaining four (Institutional, Resource Dependence, Network, and Stakeholder) took a broader, externally orientated perspective. In their opinion, a blend of appropriate internal control, development of internal capabilities, and active consideration of the external environment was required for effective practice. This blended perspective aligns closely with the model described below.



*Figure 2: Non-Profit Contingency Theory – The Four Configurations of Governance. Bradshaw (2009)*

Bradshaw (2009) detailed each of the four configuration quadrants and these are summarised and critiqued as follows:

1. **Policy Governance Configuration:** This configuration clearly distinguishes between the leadership roles of the board and paid staff. The board's role is stewardship in nature, focussing on the vision, values, and strategic capability of the organisation. The board applies traditional approaches to governance (Carver, 2006), however the limitations are potential vulnerability and disconnection due to separate roles on the board, lack of involvement at an operational level by the board, and potential mistrust between board and paid staff around organisational policy. This configuration can be self-limiting due to an inability to recognise and embrace change and, can be seen to perpetuate the status quo due to the structure of its policy framework. From a sport governance perspective, an example of this configuration could be the hiring of a general manager to oversee administrative policies and procedures.
2. **Constituency/Representative Governance Configuration:** This configuration details a clear link between an organisation's board and its constituents, who are involved, via board representatives, in both policy and planning. This allows for the de-centralisation of power and increases the participation base. Typically, the boards and subgroups are large, and although roles are clearly outlined, communication and productivity can be compromised. Potentially there is scope for personal self-agenda to occur, and multi-interest group conflict issues can be problematic to address. This can be potentially observed within a sport governance setting, when an organisation establishes subcommittee groups for specific purposes such as annual events.
3. **Entrepreneurial/Corporate Governance Configuration:** Comparable to a business- or corporate-based model, within this framework there is emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness. This configuration is strategically located within the short-term, fast-return model rather than a long-term perspective and vision model, which can fail to address societal community changes. A disproportionate focus on fiscal return can be at odds with the values of the members. An example of this within a sporting setting would be the external hiring of an organisation's hall facilities at the expense of members' patronage.

4. Emergent Cellular Governance Configuration: An organic and flexible structure that is designed to rapidly assess and adapt to changing external and internal contingencies via emergent or ad hoc committees. Decision making is done via power sharing and collaborative interdependence. Bradshaw (2009) defines emergent cellular governance as “an organic organisation that includes principles such as responsiveness, proactive self-organisation, and proactive re-configuration” (p. 70). A limitation to this configuration could be the reliance on the skill set of the board and a requirement of a strong cultural environment in order to maintain the integrity of the model. This configuration would be aligned, within a sport governance setting, with a smaller, newly established sport club that was in its infancy and adapting rapidly to its members’ expectations.

The central hybrid configuration represents the unique configuration relevant to the organisation undergoing the evaluation process. As stated by Bradshaw (2009), “there is no single hybrid configuration; organisations can select board characteristics that combine to align best with their own unique contingencies” (p. 71).

The usefulness to sport governance in adopting a contingency approach such as the Bradshaw Model is based on the acknowledgement that ongoing governance systems and processes are likely to require adjustment according to necessary changes in the nature of a sport club’s situational context (Bradshaw, 2009; Lowther et al., 2016). Chelliah, Boersma, and Klettner (2016) recently provided research into the governance challenges faced by Australian non-profit organisations and, advocate the use of a contingency approach. They noted the effectiveness of governance systems within non-profit organisations as being influenced by internal and external contingencies such as variations in board roles, stakeholder and membership demands, funding arrangements, board member recruitment, skills of volunteer board members, and resources for training and strategic development (Chelliah et al., 2016). Given the similarities in contextual board/committee makeup with CSCs, and the paucity of research data to prove otherwise (Hoye, Smith, Nicholson, & Stewart, 2015), it is presumed that Chelliah et al.’s (2016) argument for a shift of focus away from generic governance models to a contingency approach would also be promising for CSCs.

## Sport Governance Themes

From a governance perspective, this literature review has attempted to define governance, examined some of the key corporate governance theories, and detailed and critiqued contingency theory. It has proposed that contingency theory may be applicable, within a sport governance context, as an underpinning theoretical foundation to the evaluation and creation of sport governance models for CSCs. It is now appropriate to review literature pertaining to sport governance themes that potentially act as influences on a community non-profit sport club's organisational effectiveness and capability. The themes and sub-themes, shown in Figure 3, as well as relevant supporting research literature, are discussed in detail below.

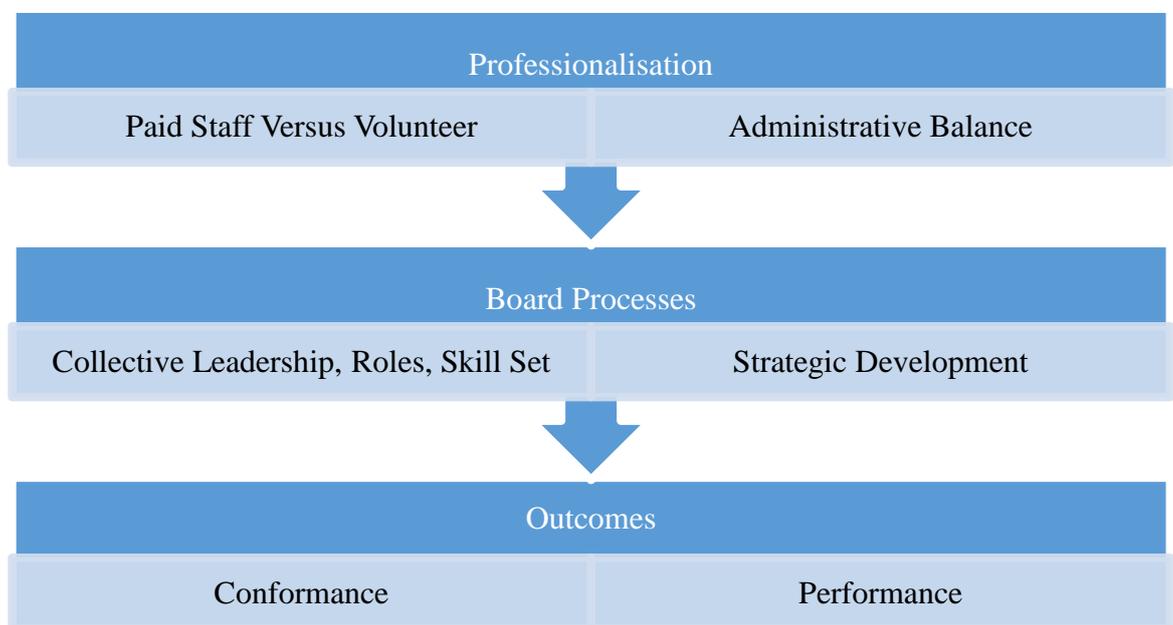


Figure 3: Sport Governance Themes within a Community Non-Profit Sport Club Context

### ***Professionalisation***

As detailed in Chapter One, although sport remains a hobby for the bulk of New Zealand's population, the governance, management, and delivery of sport is no longer able to be grounded in the amateur arena (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). The balance of retaining the "play-like" features of sport has become increasingly strained due to the need to deliver sport in an increasingly professional manner (Shilbury, Ferkins, & Smythe, 2013). Researchers have noted that the traditional "old school" structures, customs, and traditions employed by amateur non-profit sport organisations have not kept pace with the relatively rapid professionalisation of sport (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011).

Accordingly, from a CSC perspective, it is through the direction-setting governance mechanisms that amateur sport and corporate governance cultures endeavour to be amalgamated and implemented. The obvious difficulty for CSCs is their limited human and financial resources from which to undertake a transition to a more professional governance culture (Cuskelly, Hoye, & Auld, 2006; Misener & Doherty, 2014; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011; Shilbury et al., 2013). Within CSCs that have few or no employed staff, board members fulfil both the governance and the operational role. This puts considerable time pressure on the board, but is acknowledged as a reality of governing a small organisation (Sport New Zealand, 2015b). CSCs that have managed to attain sufficient financial resource to employ staff have had subsequent time pressure reduction but have faced tensions due to shared leadership issues. This is highlighted in the work by Shilbury (2001), who concluded, “tensions evident in the transition from amateur to professional governance have contributed to the need to examine the role of the board of directors in sporting organisations” (p. 253).

The advent of professionalism has also forced the boards of CSCs to look at their administrative balance. As noted by Sport New Zealand (2015) in their guidelines *Nine Steps to Effective Governance*: “In essence, the board’s role is to ensure the organisation is well managed, but not to do the managing” (p. 13). This is supported by Carver (2006) within his Policy Governance Model, which assumes a clear distinction between governance and operational duties. As noted by Cuskelly et al. (2006), however, some non-profit community sport clubs have neither the human nor financial resource to accommodate this administrative balance. This is acknowledged by Sport New Zealand (2015) in a recent update to their guidelines *Nine Steps to Effective Governance*, where they note the typical stages of board development to include a period of time whereby “there will be some spill-over between governance and management at board level, with systems somewhat loose and being developed ‘on the run’ as issue and challenges arise” (p. 17). The issue of balance was noted by Cornforth (2003), who argued that “boards face a tension concerning how much attention they should pay to contrasting roles and how to balance the different demands on them” (p. 14). This was also supported by Lesley Ferkins and Shilbury (2015a), who noted a need to achieve balance between the elements of operational knowledge and strategic involvement in consideration of board strategic function within non-profit sport organisation boards.

### ***Board Processes***

As stated by Lesley Ferkins et al. (2017), literature within the sport governance realm is lacking with regards to understanding how leadership influences governance within sport organisation boards. Hoye and Doherty (2011) note the concept of shared leadership as being a core group within the board that are able to influence change. Welty Peachey et al. (2015) undertook a review of forty years of leadership research within sport management, and note the under-researched concept of leadership influence via the board on an organisation's governance systems. Given the hierarchical nature of CSC boards, whereby the chair has an inferred elected position of power, it is proposed that the leadership within the board will influence not only a board's governance effectiveness but play a major hand in establishing roles and responsibilities and evaluating the skillsets required to competently undertake these roles. Accordingly, the role of chair is pivotal in possessing the leadership-related ability to perceive individual competencies in order to have highly capable board members (Balduck et al., 2010). Lesley Ferkins et al. (2017) looked at sport leadership in governance from a collective board leadership perspective, and suggested that collective board leadership had the potential to influence and facilitate a more collaborative approach to governance within a sport organisation network. This potential is also noted by Welty Peachey et al. (2015), however the authors also noted the competitive nature of sport and the fact that there could be power influences and legitimacy constraints in such an approach. Tomlinson (2014), in his examination of leadership, ethics, and governance in FIFA, also noted that the competitive nature and governance of sport could have significant influence on the challenges associated with undertaking a collaborative governance dynamic.

Lesley Ferkins and Shilbury (2012) explored strategic capability development of two national sporting organisations and noted that "the board's strategic role is considered to be a subset of the overall governing function" (p. 68). They also noted the interchangeability of strategic terms such as strategic development (McNulty & Pettigrew, 1998) when used to describe a board strategic function. Ferkins and Shilbury (2012), in the context of their study, utilised the term strategic capability, and found that to be considered strategically capable, a board must have capable, competent people who, as a board, were involved in the development of a clearly articulated strategy (Lesley Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012).

## ***Outcomes***

Shilbury (2001), in his examination of board member roles within Victorian sporting organisations, describes governance as encompassing two important notions: conformance with regulations, and performance of the organisation (Francis, 1997). Effective community non-profit sport club boards are required to attempt to find reasonable balance between their performance roles (strategy formulation and policy making) and conformance roles (accountability, monitoring, and control). Cornforth (2003) found that the contrasting requirements of conformance and performance required very different orientations on behalf of the board members, stating, “the conformance role demands careful monitoring and scrutiny of the organisation’s past performance and is normally risk averse; conversely the performance role demands forward vision, an understanding of the organisation and its environment, and perhaps a greater willingness to take risks” (p. 13-14).

In practice, because CSC boards are typically limited from a human resource perspective, they often permit their time and attention to be diverted disproportionately towards their conformance role at the expense of their performance role (Pedersen, 2017). Ashburner (2003), in her review of reforms of governance structures in the UK’s National Health Service, suggests caution for boards looking to emulate a corporate model focused on performance at the expense of the board’s conformance role. A counterargument is put forth by Cornforth (2003), who suggests early involvement in the performance aspect could improve conformance at later stages. Hoye and Doherty (2011) undertook a review of non-profit sport board performance and found that “there have been few attempts to actually measure the performance of non-profit sport boards” (p. 278). Lesley Ferkins and Shilbury (2015a), when exploring board strategic balance, noted that having an appropriate understanding of operational knowledge had an influence on board strategic involvement. These differing views are indicative of the difficulties boards face with balancing their conformance/performance outcomes.

To the best of the researcher’s knowledge there is currently no published research that has explored sport governance themes (as outlined above) and their influence on the capability of CSCs.

## **Club Capability**

### **Club Capability Defined**

As noted previously, the aim of this research is to examine how CSCs, specifically their boards, can develop their club capability within the realms of leadership and governance. The board is considered a critical mechanism of club capability because its main responsibilities are to make certain that the activities of the organisation are carried out in the best interests of the organisation, members, and stakeholders (Yeh & Taylor, 2008). Club capability, in a practical sense, is a well-used term within the sport and recreation sector. However, within the context of a CSC board, club capability has not been a focus nor clearly defined within sport academic literature. Accordingly, it is considered necessary to look to other research literature in order to establish the framework for this definition.

According to BusinessDictionary.com, from a corporate perspective, the definition of organisational capability is noted as:

Ability and capacity of an organisation expressed in terms of its (1) Human resources: their number, quality, skills, and experience, (2) Physical and material resources: machines, land, buildings, (3) Financial resources: money and credit, (4) Information resources: pool of knowledge, databases, and (5) Intellectual resources: copyrights, designs, patents, etc. (BusinessDictionary.com).

In a recent sport and recreation report, Angus and Associates (2016) investigate building the capability of organisations to respond to the changing needs of members and to ensure sustainability of the sport sector. They note: “If organisations are to respond to demand, and to meet the changing needs of participants, they must have both the capability and capacity to do so” (p. 28). Angus and Associates broadly define capability to include capacity, and consider both concepts to be “key enablers (if present) and a critical barrier (if not)” (p. 28).

In a sport management setting, Ferkins and Shilbury (2015) used the notion of strategic capability within the sport governance context in a series of studies spanning 2005 to 2015. In their use of the concept, they draw from a definition of capability that also encompasses capacity: “As it applies to human capital, capability indicates the intersection of capacity and ability with the distinction often drawn between competence (a static state) and capability (a more dynamic state signalling development potential)

(Merriam-Webster Inc., 2002)” (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015, p. 490). This idea of capability being more dynamic aligns with Albort-Morant, Leal-Rodríguez, Fernández-Rodríguez, and Ariza-Montes (2017), who define dynamic capability, within a management and business context, as enabling “a firm to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments” (p. 2). This definition is supported by Teece and Pisano (1994), who define dynamic capability as “Timely responsiveness and rapid and flexible product innovation, along with the management capability to effectively coordinate and redeploy internal and external competencies” (p. 537). With this in mind, the researcher seeks to incorporate the terms “capacity, ability, competency, effectiveness, and development” within the words “club capability” to represent the development potential of a CSC board’s capability, specifically in relation to leadership and governance.

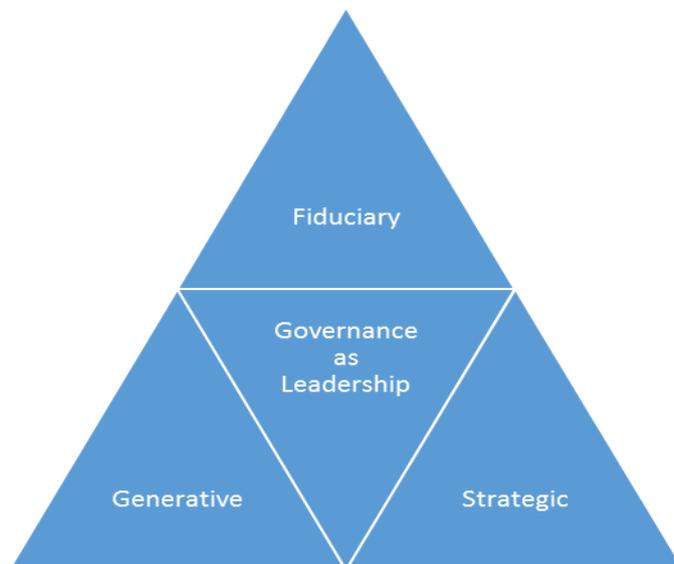
### Leadership in Governance

Welty Peachey et al. (2015), in their review of forty years of leadership research in sport management, noted the impact that professionalism has had on volunteers serving as board members within sport organisations internationally. They also note that the effect of governance on leadership in sport organisations has become more pronounced. This observation was also discussed by Hoye and Cuskelly (2007), who noted that “the diminution of volunteer control in many non-profit sport organisations has challenged decision-making and leadership processes in the governance of these organisations” (p. 148). Hoye (2004, 2006) also noted the relevance of leader-member exchange (LMX), a sentiment consistent with Hoye and Cuskelly’s (2007) observations as a ‘useful heuristic to explore the dynamics of leadership within the context of non-profit sport organisation boards’ (p. 144-145). The inter-relationship of leadership and governance was also supported by Erakovic and Jackson (2012), who noted that, within a corporate organisation board context, there was much to be gained from incorporating a theoretical rapprochement between leadership and governance. The authors also argue that there are three important intersections at which leadership and governance intersect, namely: “team leadership on the board, the Chair’s leadership of the board and strategic leadership by the board” (Erakovic & Jackson, 2012). Chait, Ryan, and Taylor (2005), support this view in their book *Governance as leadership: Reframing the work of non-profit board*, noting that when organisations reframe governance as leadership, the board becomes more than a trustee of tangible assets; it becomes capable of creating strategic thinking and can

develop successful governance. As shown below in Figure 4, Chait et al. (2005) consider the “governance as leadership triangle” to encompass three key stages of board development. These are described thus:

1. Fiduciary: Stage 1 is concerned primarily with the stewardship of tangible assets, and encompasses domains such as legal compliance and financial viability (conformance).
2. Strategic: Stage 2 is creating strategic capability through collective board input, and anticipating internal and external stakeholders’ needs (performance).
3. Generative: Stage 3 is moving beyond the conformance and performance stages to the identification of risks and opportunities. This stage is seen as an amalgamation and evolution of the first two stages of board development.

Chait et al. (2005) consider the three stages to be directly influenced by the intersection of governance and leadership and the development stages align with the development of a board’s capability.



*Figure 4: The Governance Triangle. Chait, Ryan, and Taylor (2005)*

From a sport governance perspective, leadership and its influence on governance is also noted by the Australian Sports Commission in its *Mandatory Sports Governance Principles 2013*, in which it states, “Confidence in the leadership capacity and capability of sports, particularly in relation to management, governance, internal controls and business systems is acknowledged as being critical” (p. 1). This is supported by Erakovic and Jackson (2012), who note: “Having sound leadership and governance processes are vital to the long-term health and vitality of any organisation” (p. 77). However, as also observed by Lesley Ferkins et al. (2017), there remains a lack of research literature in this area, both generally within sporting organisations and especially within the realm of CSCs.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

As detailed in Chapter One, CSCs are central to the delivery of sport for nearly three-quarters of the adult New Zealand population (Sport New Zealand, 2015c). As sporting codes have evolved from the amateur domain to the professional era, the expectations and demands from both internal and external stakeholders has increased, which has placed increased stress on the volunteer boards that lead and govern these CSCs (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). The importance of having effective leadership and governance within CSCs and at the board level has been directly expressed by entities such as the Australian Sports Commission and Sport New Zealand. Conversely, poor governance has been shown to negatively affect an organisation’s performance (Hoye & Doherty, 2011).

As the above literature review states, leadership and corporate governance, in their respective fields, have been a domain of significant academic research (Erakovic & Jackson, 2012; Lesley Ferkins et al., 2017). From a sport leadership and governance perspective, however, the literature is less comprehensive (Chatzigianni & Angeliki, 2017; Lesley Ferkins et al., 2017; Welty Peachey et al., 2015), and in the case of CSCs, notably limited (Lowther et al., 2016). Critique of sport governance and leadership literature from a CSC-capability perspective highlights ambiguity in both definition and theoretical framework. This provides direction for sport governance and leadership researchers, especially when considering the influence of the sport club’s board on an organisation’s capability (Balduck et al., 2010; Hoye & Doherty, 2011; McNulty & Pettigrew, 1998; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). Furthermore, this new knowledge could

provide the foundation upon which to explore three key areas. First, the advancement of emerging sport leadership themes such as collective leadership (Cullen-Lester & Yammarino, 2016), servant leadership (Welty Peachey & Burton, 2017) and emotional intelligence (Laborde et al., 2016; Schneider, 2012). Second, the identified gap in the development of a sport governance model that could inform and underpin the understanding and practice of governance that allows for a context-specific understanding of the external and internal contingencies relevant to CSCs. Third, as noted by Hoye and Doherty (2011), other than a conceptual understanding, there is little research published on the effectiveness of a community sport club board in influencing an organisation's capability. There remains, however, a general assumption that the board's performance has some relationship to organisation capability (Papadimitriou, 2007).

The research focus of this study, therefore, is to examine and understand how board leadership and governance influences within community non-profit sport clubs can potentially develop their club capability. Sub-questions will seek to understand what perspectives board/committee members possess concerning leadership, governance, and potential development of their respective CSC club capability. The following chapters explain how the study was conducted, the results of the research undertaken, and the major outcomes and implications.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND DESIGN

### Research Aim and Paradigm

The aim of this research is to co-interact with board members of CSC organisations in order to examine and understand their perceptions of leadership, governance, and club capability, with a view to identifying key leadership and governance influences which could potentially develop their club capability. In order to achieve this, sub-questions posed were:

- What understanding do board/committee members possess concerning leadership and governance?
- What perceptions do board/committee members possess concerning club capability?
- What areas can be identified within leadership and governance with a view to potentially developing community sport club capability?

Whilst the term “research” has a multitude of definitions, it can perhaps be simply explained as “a systematic process of discovery and advancement of human knowledge” (Gratton & Jones, 2004). The research paradigm, as detailed by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), contains the framework of the researcher’s epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises that guide the researcher’s actions. Accordingly, a researcher’s personal perspective and experience will influence their choice of theoretical framework, which in turn influences the way research is undertaken. Recognition of this potential impact on research outcome has seen a growing trend, in both qualitative and quantitative research, in the researcher explicitly stating his or her choice of research paradigm (Jones, 2015).

Looking broadly at two differing research paradigms, positivism and interpretivism, it is obvious that there are differences in the respective frameworks, and as such contrasting ramifications for the research methods utilised. Positivism, in a sport organisation context, assumes separation between researcher and participant, and that there exists a corresponsive theory of truth in which data measures reality and research results can be reproduced (Walker, 2005). In the study of human behaviour, such as required for this study, positivism denies the importance of subjective, spiritual, and interpretive aspects of the participant, their relationships, and psychosomatics (Clark,

1998). Interpretivism in its broadest sense substantiates the constructed and evolving nature of social reality and rejects the positivist view that knowledge must be objective and tangible. Terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The central research question, “How can community non-profit sport clubs develop club capability within the realms of board leadership and governance?” reflects the choice of research paradigm utilised in this study, in that the intention was to ascertain what is happening and why (understanding), but more importantly what might be possible (develop). Also implicit in the research question is the assumption that there will be multiple individual perspectives and insights and that multiple contextual situations will exist. Central to the research question was the assumption that the researcher and the participants will interact and become, in essence, partners in the research process.

The research paradigm that most closely aligns both with the research question and the researcher’s personal perspectives is therefore that of the constructivist-interpretive paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This is the most appropriate theoretical framework for this research as it characterises a relativist ontology (multiple realities will exist), a subjective epistemology (the researcher and participants will co-create understandings), and naturalist methodology (research will take place in the natural world) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This research paradigm supports the desired interactive research process which allows the co-influence of researcher and participant, through which a socially constructed reality can be examined (Ingham-Broomfield, 2015).

As discussed in Chapter Two, there is a paucity of studies that have utilised the constructivist-interpretive paradigm to study club capability, specifically within the CSC setting. Whilst leadership continues to be a heavily researched area across a multitude of academic fields, governance (structural and procedural) remains heavily weighted in the empirical corporate environment (Lesley Ferkins et al., 2017). The decision to exclude positivistic and quantifiable paradigms was based on the way the research question has been posed and also to contribute to current knowledge by way of the emergence of new insight and meanings (Ingham-Broomfield, 2015).

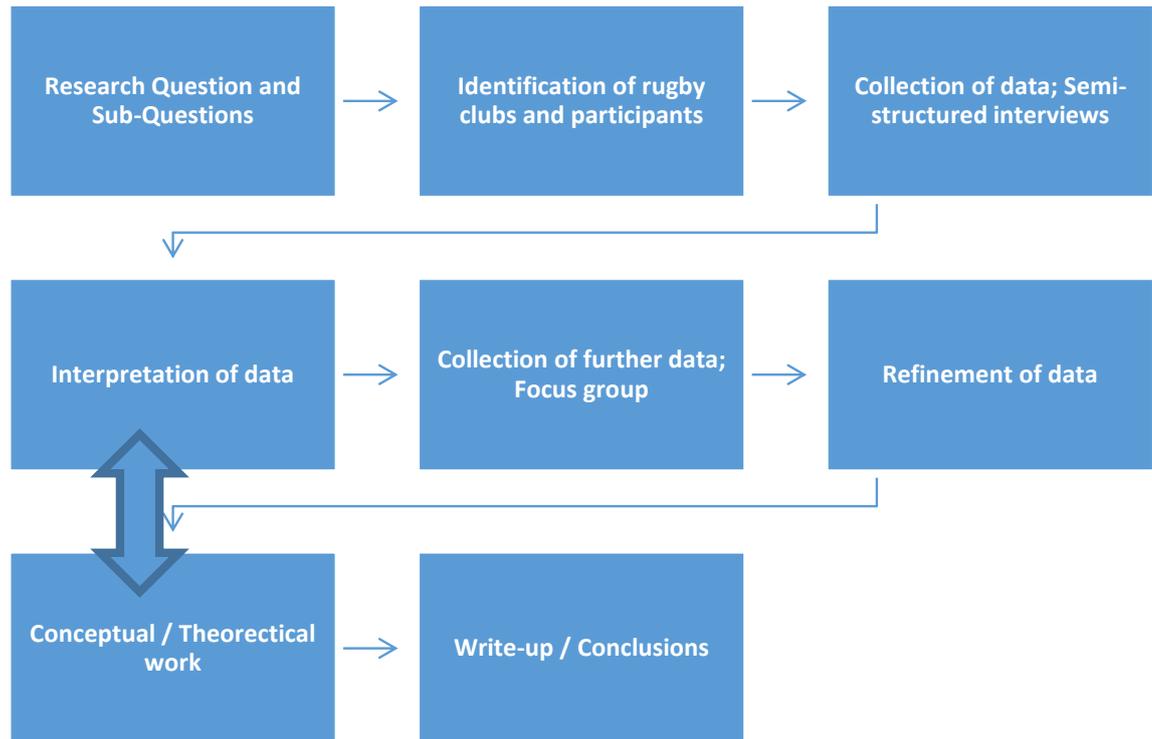
## **Qualitative Research Approach**

Given the aim and objectives of this study (development of sport club capability), the review of relevant literature, and the researcher's sporting background and knowledge, a qualitative research approach was deemed to be appropriate. Qualitative research is a method of research designed to explore or explain little-known or ambiguous phenomena rather than to verify a cause and effect (Farrelly, 2013). Traditionally qualitative research is undertaken when the researcher wishes to understand the meanings behind people's behaviours and actions; that is, an in-depth understanding of the underlying reasons, attitudes, and motivations behind various human behaviours (Rosenthal, 2016). Qualitative research recognises that human beings base their actions on feelings, motivations, principles, and culture, which is difficult to measure quantifiably (Clark, 1998). Accordingly, qualitative research is holistic in orientation, treating the phenomenon as a whole system whilst searching for patterns that lie within the contextual bounds (Park & Park, 2016). This is particularly relevant to the study, as the intention was to understand and develop club capability (with regards to leadership and governance) from the respective participants' perspectives within their specific case study contexts.

Utilising the constructivist-interpretive paradigm to qualitatively look at the research and sub-research questions through a social constructivism lens is explained by Creswell (2013):

In this world view, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences.... These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for complexity of views.... Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. In other words, they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives (p. 24-25).

Acknowledging the multi-layered phenomenon under study and recognising the research/participant interaction led the researcher conclusively to this qualitative research approach. Whilst qualitative research studies differ in their processes depending on the research question and researcher's theoretical framework, the general stages of the qualitative research process utilised in this study are set out in Figure 5 below.



*Figure 5: The General Stages of the Qualitative Research Process, adapted from Bryman and Bell (2015).*

As explained in Chapter One, the research question was born out of a desire to contribute to a perceived gap in current knowledge pertaining to community club capability, specifically in relation to leadership and governance. This advancement in knowledge was also recognised by New Zealand Rugby as being desirable to its organisation. This led the researcher to the development of a set of sub-questions and the subsequent identification of suitable community rugby clubs and their board members (participants). After the design and implementation of semi-structured interviews and interpretation of the data, a focus group was established from selected participants to both seek confirmation that the researcher’s findings and interpretations were congruent with the views of the participants from the earlier semi-structured interviews, and to explore further meanings and insights (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Data analysis of both the semi-structured interviews as well as the focus group was then undertaken, culminating with the conclusive write-up.

## **Case Study Research and Design**

Case study research has been used in a multitude of academic fields from psychology and medicine through to law and political science (Creswell & Poth, 2007). Case study research has been most recently promoted in social sciences by authors such as Yin (2014), who discusses “explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive qualitative case studies” in great detail. The definition of case study research within academia can be contentious (Liamputtong, 2013) due to the variance in definitive descriptive properties. For the purpose of this study, case study research is defined as a “detailed, intensive study of a particular contextual and bounded phenomenon that is undertaken in real life situations” (Luck, Jackson, & Usher, 2006). Case studies allow data to be collected from many different sources, which provides a more holistic view of the phenomena that is being studied, and can reflect complex, problematic relationships (Stake, 2006).

Stake (2006, 2010) categorises case studies into three distinct groups: the intrinsic case study, the single instrumental case study, and the collective or multiple case study. The focus of an intrinsic case study is on the case itself, and typically exhibits a unique or unusual circumstance (Liamputtong, 2013). The instrumental case study requires the researcher to focus on a particular area of interest and then select a bounded case to give meaning to the area of interest (Creswell & Poth, 2007). The collective or multiple case study is an instrumental case study but is expanded to involve several case studies (Stake, 2006). Case study research can include multiple cases when researchers feel that they may provide more in-depth and multifaceted layers of meaning than the study of a single instrumental case (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). This study involved three single instrumental case studies, which were then cross-case analysed in a multiple case study approach. As outlined by Stake (2010), this required several criteria, such as relevance to the case situational context (rugby clubs), diversity across contexts (participant selection) and the use of opportunities to learn about complexity (sub-research questions).

Whilst each case was studied as a stand-alone, complex entity located in its own situation, the purpose of this research was to gain a multi-layered understanding of the research question (club capability as it pertains to leadership and governance) bounded within the specific social context of the community rugby club. Accordingly, instead of club capability being explored by way of a stand-alone single case study, the use of multiple case studies allowed for the varying layers of the research question, in different environments, to be extrapolated, examined, and refined.

Multiple case research starts with the study of the three single cases with regards to the phenomenon, and then compares similarities and differences about the cases to better understand the phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Stake (2006) eloquently describes this overarching, multi-layered understanding as a “quintain” (pronounced kwin’ton) which represents “...the arena or holding company or umbrella for the cases under study” (p. 6). Whilst recognising that larger-scale multiple case studies may require the distinction, for the purpose of this study the “quintain” shall be referred to as the phenomenon.

As detailed below in the Participant Selection section, three community rugby clubs were selected for this study, and from each club five club board members were selected as participants. Each rugby club and its respective board member participants represented a single instrumental case. This was important, as it was necessary to consider the research question within both a bounded context (instrumental case study) and an integrated system (multiple case study) (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Stake, 2006). In order to better understand the phenomenon via a social constructivist lens participants from each club attended a focus group, and this provided both refinement and triangulation of single instrumental case data for analysis within a multiple case study context. Triangulation is defined by Gratton and Jones (2010) as utilising multiple means of data collection to examine a phenomenon, and, in a qualitative sense, is not considered a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation.

### **Participant Selection**

The sampling size and scope of the study were initially pre-determined by the boundaries imposed within a 120-point thesis; however, careful consideration was also given to the following factors as outlined by Galvin, (2015):

- Achievement of “saturation” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967): conducting sufficient interviews until confident that minimal new data, relevant to the research question, would emerge if more board members were interviewed.
- Historical qualitative sample size from a similar field: 11 to 17 (Galvin, 2015).
- Quasi-empirical foundation: Francis et al. (2010) concluded that qualitative data saturation occurred within 12 interviews.

Based on the above criteria, and to satisfy the research collaboration with New Zealand Rugby, it was decided to conduct three single case studies, each comprising five board member semi-structured interviews (15 interviews in total).

After collection, analysis and interpretation of the semi-structured interview data, a focus group comprising selected board members from each club (seven in total) was held to enable discussion of the semi-structured interview data, and to explore the research question in more depth within a group setting. Once sampling size had been established, consideration was given as to which three rugby clubs (from North Harbour, Auckland, and Counties Manukau) would be invited to participate. In collaboration with New Zealand Rugby and Aktive Auckland, it was decided to invite three clubs that fitted within the small (<300 members), medium (<600 members), and large (>900 members) requirements. Participants from each of the selected rugby clubs were chosen using purposeful sampling as a method of selection to ensure that the best possible insights and information-rich data were gathered (Coyne, 1997). Information-rich cases offer in-depth understandings and insights into the findings instead of empirical generalisations (Liamputtong, 2013).

It is important to note that individual participant selection was based on positive response to both an informal chair's meeting and an invitation to board/committee members (delivered via the chair of each club) sent by the New Zealand Rugby and Aktive Auckland representatives on behalf of the researcher. Accordingly, whilst purposeful sampling was utilised as a preliminary method of selection, due to the possible coercive nature (see ethical considerations below) by way of relationship with New Zealand Rugby, it was necessary to incorporate a purposeful/convenience sampling strategy. This is reflected in the selection criteria below, with availability and willingness to engage holding selection priority. To establish the most suitable participants, the following criteria was considered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Jones, 2015):

1. Access: availability and willingness to engage in the interview process and offer insightful reflections. Due to the size of the project and the time requirement for completion (both academically and within the research collaboration), access to participants was first and foremost dependent on their availability and willingness to participate.

2. Insight: appreciation for the importance of governance in a sporting context and an understanding of the perspective of those who exhibit leadership qualities and those who do not. This was to ensure that participants were likely to be familiar with the notion of leadership and governance and had experienced it, both in their professional capacity and within the context of the club board/committee structure.
3. Diverse experience levels: having contributed to running a rugby club, both within the context as a board member but also perhaps previously as coach, manager, administrator, volunteer, board member, or another off-field position – both male and female. Whilst experience and age diversity were achieved (see Appendix E), it was difficult to achieve satisfactory gender diversity (only one female participant from the total group of 14) due to the gender disparity amongst the rugby club boards that took part in this study.

The participant selection for the focus group was undertaken following similar criteria, but also after consultation with the researcher's supervisor, who undertook the role of focus group moderator. This consultation involved discussion around the researcher's co-interaction with the participants and also his interpretation of the semi-structured interview data. This process served not only as a form of investigator triangulation (Jones, 2015), but also enabled the supervisor to become familiar with the research question and understand the selected participants. This was considered an important process, as it enabled the moderator to understand the comments that were likely to be made in the focus group setting and the contextual relevance of those comments (Carey & Asbury, 2016).

### **Data Collection**

Within the constructivist-interpretive paradigm there exist a multitude of qualitative collection methods (Farrelly, 2013). These methods were chosen as they enabled the collection of data from different sources, which provided a holistic view of each single instrumental case within their specific situational contexts (Farrelly, 2013; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). Accordingly, three types of data collection methods were utilised in this study:

- Supplementary document analysis
- Semi-structured interviews
- Focus group

The use of supplementary document analysis was assessed against criteria suggested by Scott, (1990), which utilised the following criteria:

- Authenticity: Is the evidence genuine and of unquestionable origin?
- Credibility: Is the evidence free from error and distortion?
- Representativeness: Is the evidence typical of its kind?
- Meaning: Is the evidence clear and comprehensible?

Based on the above criteria, the researcher utilised two forms of public documents. Each club is an incorporated society and its constitution is duly registered under the Incorporated Societies Act 1908. This detailed the structure of the club and also listed its elected board/committee members. Secondly, each club must publish its financial statements for each year ending September. This allowed evaluation of financial viability and movement of equity from the previous year, and what each club's fixed asset structure was. Virtual documentation was also analysed. Each club had a website containing varying layers of detail pertaining to club history, vision/mission statements, and evidence of social media communication. This allowed a representative evaluation of aspects such as community engagement and governance structure. Use of these supplementary documents gave the researcher the ability to assess the structure and financial viability of each case study, and allowed the case study to be viewed within a situational context (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Broadly speaking, there are four main groups of interviews: structured, semi-structured, unstructured and group interview (Bryman & Bell, 2015). For the purpose of this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews in order to interact with the participants, and in doing so, co-create understanding. This required a mix of set questions in the form of an interview guide, as well as an ad hoc component that allowed the participant to feel comfortable and at ease, and ideally to engage in creating richer and more meaningful data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

In an ideal focus group setting, all the participants are comfortable with each other but do not have in-depth knowledge of each other (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Accordingly, given the size and nature of the industry (Auckland community rugby), it was envisaged that all of the focus group participants would most likely have at best limited knowledge of each other. Given that homogeneity is considered a key factor to maximising disclosure within a focus group (Greenbaum, 1998), the selection criteria noted earlier was carefully followed.

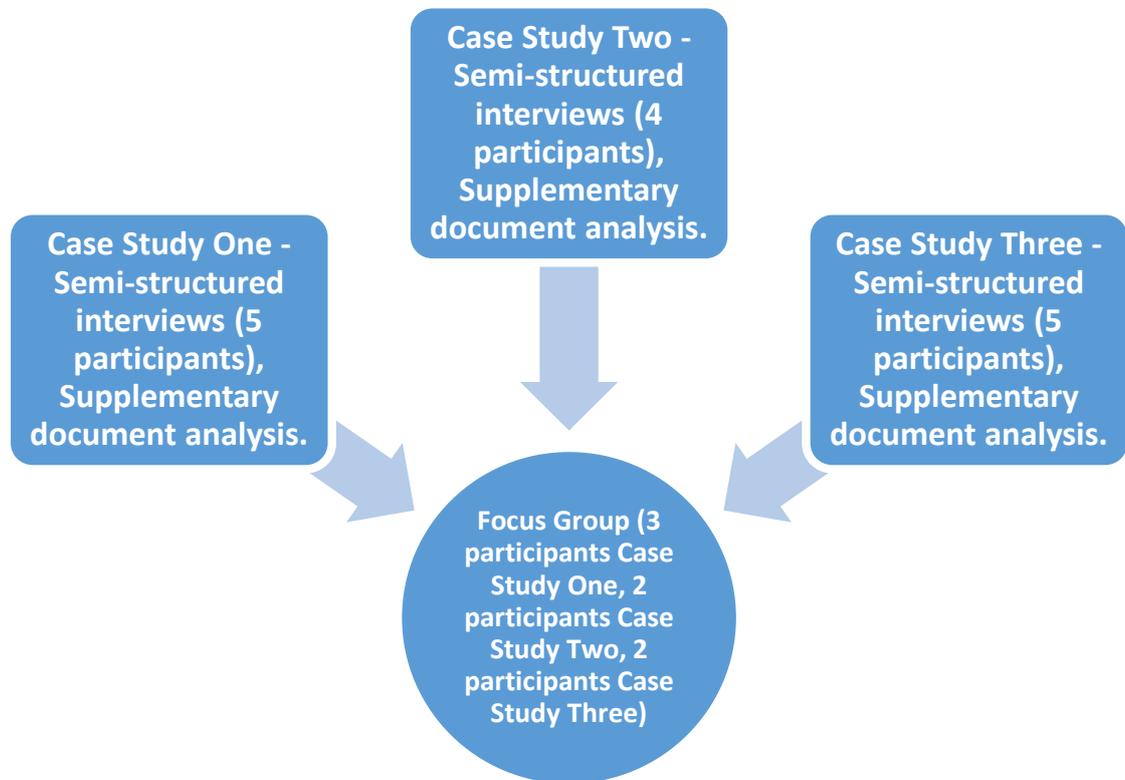
The mix of these data collection methods was considered appropriate to understanding the individual participants' perspectives, as well as creating deeper, underlying evaluation of the case studies as both singular and multiple cases within their respective contextual bounds (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). Semi-structured interviews and focus group data were collected using a combination of audio and audio-visual recording devices, as well as detailed note-taking by the researcher. A total of 16 hours and 13 minutes of audio, over two hours of audio-visual, and 17 A4 pages of data were collected.

The semi-structured interviews were undertaken by the researcher and took place over a period of two months. Fourteen interviews were conducted (one participant withdrew from the study due to time limitations). Interviews were, on average, an hour long and were conducted at various sites of the participants' choice. As mentioned above, the interviews were audio-recorded and were transcribed by an independent third party. Copies of transcripts were made available to participants upon request and only small amendments were requested. An interview guide (see Appendix A) with a total of 12 questions was utilised in order to provide some structural bounds, but the questions were apportioned in a fluid context to encourage a more informal, conversational setting (R. Edwards & Holland, 2013). The researcher varied the wording and phrasing of the questions to ensure participants had every opportunity to provide rich, insightful, and in-depth data (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

The focus group comprised seven participants, the researcher (as note-taker), the videographer, and the primary supervisor (as moderator). The choice of moderator was seen as a critical selection due to the need to have an individual who could skilfully manage outspoken group members, keep discussion on topic, and most importantly ensure that all attending focus group participants were able to provide their perspective and input if desired (Del Rio-Roberts, 2011). The use of a moderator also allowed the

researcher to take notes, observe group dynamic interaction, and contribute as and when required (D. L. Morgan, 1995).

A summary of the data collection methods, as utilised in this study, is shown below in Figure 6.



*Figure 6:* Summary of Data Collection Methods Utilised in this Study

### **Analysis Methods**

Analysis of the data was initially undertaken by way of the writing process carried out by the researcher, both at the time of the semi-structured interviews (in the form of short-hand note taking) and reflectively post-interview. This process allowed the researcher to draw meaning from each participant interview, and helped shape both the nature of subsequent semi-structured interviews within each single instrumental case study, as well as providing the structure for the subsequent focus group questions (in conjunction with participant validation). The primary data analysis method utilised for both the semi-structured interview and focus group data was undertaken by way of qualitative thematic analysis, deriving key themes and concepts. For the purpose of this study, thematic analysis is defined as “...a rigorous, yet inductive, set of procedures designed to identify and examine themes derived from textual data in a way that is

transparent and credible...” (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Whilst the intention was not to analyse the data in direct relation to the questions asked, a mixture of deductive and inductive approaches was utilised to both allow themes to emerge organically (Patton, 1990). This allowed the researcher to undertake a more “top down” approach to ensure key sub-questions were answered. This mixed approach allowed each single instrumental case study to be examined within its particular bound context, and also allowed comparative multiple case analysis to be undertaken.

Although the analysis of data was recursive in process, the phases of thematic analysis as first suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) were utilised as the skeletal framework for this study. This framework for the semi-structured interview analysis is detailed below:

**Step One:** Familiarisation with the data. Transcript of interview read through in its entirety, both in conjunction with and separately from the audio version. Key points noted for each participant and prioritised according to research importance.

**Step Two:** Coding. Code words created for each key point and sorted by priority to research and sub-research questions.

**Step Three:** Theme creation. Codes were grouped according to relevance to sub-questions and broadly associated with the four main themes: Capability (perceived), Leadership, Governance, and Development. Colour schemes were utilised along with page and quote notations to allow ease of subsequent review and correlation.

**Step Four:** Defining themes. Refinement of the four main themes, identifying the “essence” both spoken and inferred.

The key themes from each single instrumental case study were utilised as the framework for the focus group. This allowed respondent validation to occur, that is, “are these identified themes accurate, appropriate, and relevant?” (Massey, 2011) This process also provided the raw material for the collection of both articulated and emergent data. Articulated data is defined by Massey (2011) as data that arises from participants’ direct response to the moderator’s questions and prompts, which offers the researcher descriptions, interpretations, and commentary on topics of interest (sub-research questions). Emergent data is defined as unexpected or unanticipated insights that are more attributable to beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. A similar analysis process as the one

used for the interview analysis was adopted, but pre-identified codes were utilised for all articulated data and any emergent data were coded and themed accordingly. Multiple case study analysis was then undertaken to enable increased understanding of the phenomenon within the bounds of a multiple case context. This process was defined by, and adopted from, Stake (2006) and is detailed below:

**Step One:** Emphasising case findings – Sorting the importance of the main themes as they occur in each single case study. Importance was noted as H = High, M=Middle, and L=Low.

**Step Two:** Merging case findings – Sorting and merging codes from each case study into a collective case finding.

**Step Three:** Emergence of key themes – Utilising newly merged codes to allow the emergence of key themes as they pertain to the multiple case study.

Sim (1998) talks of the collection and analysis of qualitative data, specifically as it pertains to focus group settings, and notes the requirement for a systematic yet developmental process. For the researcher, the journey from one-on-one interviews to a focus group setting with a selection of the interview participants represented a development process that emerged as each single case study began to take shape. The continual interaction with the participants, either by way of transcript validation or re-enforcement of key findings in a focus group setting, ensured the collection and analysis of data was both robust and insightful.

### **Limitations of the Approach**

Within the greater Auckland area (North Harbour, Auckland, Counties Manukau) there are currently 52 community rugby clubs. Whilst this study has addressed participant sampling size criteria, it is accepted that only three community rugby clubs were chosen to participate. This is acknowledged as the primary limitation of this study and is a direct reflection of the both the size of a 120-point thesis and the requirement to provide findings to New Zealand Rugby and Aktive Auckland within a predetermined timeframe. It is accepted that a larger study that encompassed all regions within the greater Auckland area, with a resulting broader range of participants and socio-ethnic/cultural groups and

representing greater community club diversity would add value, depth, and knowledge to the New Zealand sport club research.

### **Issues of Credibility**

Reliability and internal/external validity have traditionally been the two key areas by which the quality of research is assessed and limitations determined (Gratton & Jones, 2010). These terms, with regards to qualitative research, are now referred to as dependability, credibility, and transferability (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Dependability asks whether the research findings “‘fit’ the data from which they have been derived” (Carpenter & Suto, 2008, p.150). Dependability requires the researcher to document in detail their choice of methodology (constructivist/interpretivist) and the methods of data collection (qualitative case study research – semi-structured interviews and focus group) and establish coherent and transparent linkages between the data and the research findings (Liamputtong, 2013).

Credibility and authenticity are terms that determine whether research is genuine, reliable, or authoritative (Carpenter & Suto, 2008). Credibility is “...based on the constructivist assumption that there is no single reality but rather multiple realities that are constructed by people in their own contexts and require authentic representations of experience that can be seen as plausible by the participants...” (Carpenter & Suto, 2008, p.149). Research is seen as accurate and adequate when the participants are able to immediately recognise the description and interpretation made by the researcher (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). Accordingly, credibility was achieved via respondent validation, whereby the participants were able to co-interact with the researcher in exploring the phenomenon under study.

Transferability, as opposed to positivist external validity, emphasises the theoretical or analytical generalisability of research findings (Carpenter & Suto, 2008). Transferability conveys that the theoretical knowledge obtained from qualitative research can be applied to other similar individuals, groups, or situations (Carpenter & Suto, 2008; Padgett, 2017). Partial transferability was achieved via the application of cross-comparative case study analysis of the phenomenon within the single case study to multiple case study situational context (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012).

## **Ethical Considerations**

Research that is likely to harm participants is universally regarded as unacceptable, but as Bryman and Bell (2015) point out, “What is harm?” Harm can encompass everything from physical to mental harm through to harm to a participant’s career or development. It is therefore vitally important to consider all relevant ethical principles and ensure strict adherence to these principles.

The Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee dictates that all research involving human subjects, such as this study, require ethics approval. Accordingly, approval for this study was sought and granted (see Appendix B). Whilst this study was identified as minimal risk – no deception, coercion, nor vulnerable participants, it was acknowledged that it was targeted at a particular social group (community rugby clubs). It was also noted that the study would be utilised as a data source to compile a report requested by New Zealand Rugby/Aktive Auckland. The collaboration with New Zealand Rugby was noted as a potentially coercive influence (in the recruitment process), and this was mitigated by the voluntary participation aspect of the study, and the fact that only clubs that perceived a benefit from being involved with the study were inclined to indicate a willingness to partake. Rugby clubs were under no direct or indirect influence to participate, and, accordingly, any individual participants (committee board members) were assured that their participation was voluntary and would in no way affect their relationship with New Zealand Rugby. In a further effort to remove any possible coercion, club board representatives were asked to pass on an invitation to board/committee members to individually contact the researcher to register their interest and to receive full disclosure of the study by way of relevant information and consent forms (see Appendices C and D).

From a research process perspective, New Zealand Rugby had no involvement other than to receive result findings in the form of the finalised research work. Participant contact details were confidential to the researcher and New Zealand Rugby/Aktive Auckland representatives, but due to the size of the industry and the collaborative nature of the focus group, the privacy and confidentiality of the participants were unable to be protected. Participants were given the option to be formally identified in the research findings or to not be implicitly identified, but the research findings contain reference to the participants’ rugby clubs and therefore no privacy and confidentiality protection was able to be offered. This was clearly detailed in both the invitation sent via New Zealand Rugby/Aktive Auckland and the information and relevant consent forms, which the

participant was required to read and sign prior to interview commencement. Each participant was verbally informed of this prior to commencement of the semi-structured interviews and also in the group setting at the focus group. As a final mitigation to any possible risk of harm, participants were offered the opportunity to peruse and edit transcripts of their interviews and focus group (if attended) and also any research draft findings that contained direct quotation of the participants.

## CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDIES – ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### Case Study One – Marist North Harbour Rugby and Sports Club Inc.

#### Club Structure and Context

Marist North Harbour Rugby and Sports Club Inc. (MNHRC) is a relatively young club, forming in 1986 and moving into its current clubhouse located adjacent to the North Harbour Stadium Complex in 1995. Whilst the clubhouse is owned by the club, they lease the land and playing fields from the local council, with the lease currently up for renewal. The club is incorporated as a non-profit society, under the Incorporated Societies Act 1908 and its most up to date constitution is dated 16<sup>th</sup> November 2012 (*Constitution of Marist North Harbour Ruby and Sports Club Incorporated*, 2012). According to its website, the club undertook an internal feasibility study of its potential capability development in 2011 (*Marist North Harbour Rugby Club - Club history*), but this was not sight-verified as the current administration could not find the feasibility document. Perusal of the website indicates that some sections are at least five years out of date and some links appear broken. There are separate links to both junior and senior teams, and overall the look and content of these sections are different, indicating separation of direction. It is evident that some social media communication exists in the form of a Facebook page, however it relates only to junior rugby, so both senior and club rugby appear unrepresented. MNHRC currently has approximately 300 registered members: 180 junior and 120 senior players. According to the constitution, the club operates a management board of up to 12 members and up to 12 various sub-committees inclusive of senior rugby and junior rugby committees (*Constitution of Marist North Harbour Ruby and Sports Club Incorporated*, 2012). The management board comprises:

- i. board chair
- ii. president
- iii. club treasurer
- iv. house chair
- v. rugby chair
- vi. club captain
- vii. juniors chair
- viii. a further nominee from the junior club

- ix. vice-presidents (max. 2)
- x. the North Harbour Rugby Union delegate from the senior club
- xi. delegates to NZ Marist Federation and NZ Universities Rugby Council.

All board positions including the chair are elected annually by ballot at the annual general meeting. This has been specifically identified by Sport New Zealand as a traditional aspect of non-profit sport organisations. It also notes that board members themselves are generally better suited to select the chair as they are in a better position to ascertain the skill set required to fulfil the role (Sport New Zealand, 2015b). However, Sport New Zealand, in its *Governance Benchmarking Review 2014*, also states that “election at an annual general meeting can be more of a popularity contest than a careful consideration of skill sets” (p. 21). According to MNHRC’s constitution, board positions have no fixed term expiry and are therefore held until resigned or a successor is elected (*Constitution of Marist North Harbour Rugby and Sports Club Incorporated*, 2012). This lack of fixed term expiry of board positions was also noted by Sport New Zealand in their *Governance Benchmarking Review 2014* as “the continuing memberships of people who had been on their boards for too long” (p. 8). It also notes that the increasingly common board term is now three successive three-year terms. Defining a specific board term can make it easier to replace long-standing board members who are holding on to their positions for the wrong reasons (Sport New Zealand, 2015a).

Participants were all asked their opinions on the size of their board, with two responding that they felt the board (twelve) was too large. This was supported by Sport New Zealand in its *Nine Steps to Effective Governance*, which states that the ideal board size is around seven and that boards larger than 10 run the risk that “...individual contributions can be lost or more difficult to make. Absent members might not be missed and thus there is an excuse for non-attendance. Meetings can become more difficult to manage within acceptable time frames...” (p.21). Ingram and O’Boyle (2017) examined board structure and performance within Australian national sporting organisations and noted that, within research and practice, the debate around board size was ongoing, however “it does appear that a shift is taking place to adopt smaller skills-based boards” (p. 11). It is contextually important to note that none of the participants could recall the constitutionally mandated number of seats, and that these seats were rarely filled during the club’s annual general meeting but rather on an “as received” basis.

Perusal of the financial statements for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016 revealed a net (before depreciation) profit of \$9.9K, which was a marked improvement on the 2015 \$43.3K deficit and resulted in a subsequent increase in movement of equity. MNHRC's statement of financial position indicated current assets of \$104.8K versus current liabilities of \$32.4K, and fixed assets (buildings and chattels after depreciation) of \$305.2K versus nil fixed liabilities. This financial result meant the club had total equity of \$377.6K for the 2016 season (*Statement of Financial Performance for the year ended 30 September 2016, 2016*).

As detailed above, MNHRC has a mix of junior and senior teams who compete with 11 other local clubs in the North Harbour Rugby Union's club competition. Historically, competition at club level has been heavily community orientated, and special promotion (by the provincial union, North Harbour) has always been made of club finals day. As well as the premier final (ASB Cup), plate and pool playoffs are held, as well as finals for the respective lower grades. In terms of the amateur to professional pathway, playing for a top performing club team can be seen as advantageous to a player seeking to advance to higher levels of rugby. Accordingly, players will consider the historical success of a club when considering which club to play for (Owen & Weatherston, 2004). Traditionally this has meant that the stronger performing clubs have had their pick of emerging player talent, which has enabled them to continue to perform strongly. Conversely, lower performing clubs struggle to attract quality emerging players and, accordingly, they continue to perform poorly. Clubs that have higher performing senior premier teams win a higher ratio of games and are therefore given more exposure in local newspapers (National club rugby results, 2016), and attract a higher number of local community supporters. This means the club's brand has higher value and it is more desirable to align with on a sponsorship basis (Misener & Doherty, 2014; Owen & Weatherston, 2004). Accordingly, it is commonly accepted both within community rugby and within local media that the performance of a club's premier side is a reflection of the club's overall standing within the provincial union. Historically, clubs that have attained Top Four in North Harbour's annual competition (known as the ASB Cup) have been viewed as "Top Tier" clubs. Based on this understanding, MNHRC's standings at premier level for the last five years are detailed below and provide perspective as to how the club is viewed both internally by its club members, and also within the wider North Harbour rugby community.

- 2013 – 4<sup>th</sup> place
- 2014 – 12<sup>th</sup> place
- 2015 – 12<sup>th</sup> place
- 2016 – 12<sup>th</sup> place
- 2017 – 6<sup>th</sup> place

It was acknowledged by all participants that the past five years had been difficult for the club, specifically with regards to its premier results, and that drastic improvements to the club's capability, in the form of leadership and governance, were urgently required.

### **Key Learnings**

#### **Leadership**

The aim of this research is to examine how community sport clubs can develop their club capability within the realms of leadership and governance. Accordingly, in order to better understand how leadership was perceived within a CSC, participants at MNHRC were asked to define their ideal of leadership as well as their personal perspective of their leadership strengths and weaknesses. As per the data analysis process detailed in Chapter Three, the following themes about leadership as it relates to club capability were established and are discussed in the context of relevant literature.

#### Laissez-Faire/Servant Leadership

Other than the leader-centric understanding – that the leader was the chair of the board – one of the key concepts to emerge from the analysis of the data pertaining to leadership at MNHRC was the lack of concerted, cohesive leadership perceptions. Of the five participants, three agreed that passion, vision, and direction were key indicators of leadership. This perspective was supported in current leadership literature by Bertsch et al. (2017), who noted that leaders are the ones who create vision and motivate others to pursue that direction. Two participants mentioned experience and strength of personality as their perceived indicators of ideal leadership, but they both added conditions to those perceptions.

“...I think they would need to be a strong personality and to be driven, but at the same time you need to be...because everyone is not in a work situation and

everyone is an enthusiastic volunteer so it's being able to stitch together everyone's personalities to work for the common good." (1A, 08 JULY 2017)

Delving deeper into this perceived aspect of leadership within MNHRC, it became apparent that the participants felt that they were struggling with the emergence of professionalism and the associated increased expectations on volunteers (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). Volunteerism in sport and the associated impacts of professionalism are a critical component of understanding club capability within a CSC (Hoye & Doherty, 2011), and it serves as an important context from which to attempt to understand the leadership within MNHRC.

Initial analysis of data pertaining to participant perceptions of leadership within MNHRC revealed five key observations:

- Very little leadership guidance. Board members are not given guidance on their roles and responsibilities.

"...they obviously have never really done it before so we're all just kind of making it up as we go, to some degree. Really, we could use some help, just a bit of guidance and direction..." (1D, 01 AUGUST 2017)

- A lack of leadership authority. The volunteer aspect of the boards' makeup inhibits the perceived ability to lead with authority.

"...you can't tell someone this is what you have to do, you have to be more coercive and accepting of their view..." (1C, 15 JUNE 2017)

- No apparent delegation accountability. Board members are not held accountable for non-completion of delegated tasks.

"...at times not hard enough...to be more...and I won't say directorial, but to actually be able to sort it out, make it happen, force the issue rather than reconcile and mediate the issue, people need to be held accountable at times..." (1B, 14 JULY 2017)

- Role responsibility is accepted by board members. Board members feel responsible for the positions they are asked to fulfil.

“...he’s happy with people to take responsibility for their roles. He wants to understand it and have an input, but he is not a micro-manager...” (1D, 01 AUGUST 2017)

- Freedom for board members to make decisions. Board members are given free rein to decide the appropriate course of action within their positions.

“...you know I sort of stood off because basically I’m wanting people to step forward and take it on themselves...” (1A, 08 JULY 2017)

The overarching theme to emerge from discussions with the participants of MNHRC was that leadership within the board, and therefore the club, whilst willing and passionate about the giving back to rugby, was distinctly “hands off” and provided very little guidance or direction. This theme appears to closely align with both a laissez-faire and a servant leadership style.

Laissez-faire leadership is often defined as a “hands off” style, with the least amount of control or guidance from leaders and complete freedom for followers (Furtner, Rauthmann, & Baldegger, 2013). Laissez-faire leadership style involves leaving followers to their own will and relies on them having appropriate skill sets and self-direction to complete tasks as required (Skogstad, Hetland, Glasø, & Einarsen, 2014). In a recent study on employee motivation, Zareen, Razzaq, and Mujtaba (2015) noted that a laissez-faire style of leadership was effective when employees were highly skilled, experienced, motivated, and capable of working autonomously. Conversely they noted that, if the employees were not proficient at self-management, lacked motivation, or were not suitably skilled, then this particular leadership style was ill-suited (Schyns & Hansbrough, 2010).

Servant leadership, as noted in Chapter Two, is an emerging theme in sport literature (Welty Peachey et al., 2015), and as noted by Welty Peachey and Burton (2017), involves “appreciating the contributions of others and acknowledging the importance of

expressing gratitude toward others” (p.130). This aspect of servant leadership is referred to by the current MNHRC Chair.

“...why do I do it? It’s because I’ve got this love of rugby and rugby has been very good to me and you know I want to give back to rugby...” (1A, 08 JULY 2017)

Parris and Welty Peachey (2013) conducted a systematic literature review of servant leadership theory in organisational contexts and identified that, as an emerging leadership theory, there was no consensus on either definition or theoretical framework. From a volunteer sport perspective, however, Parris and Welty Peachey (2012) found that servant leadership enhanced volunteer motivation, which in the context of CSCs such as MNHRC is an important factor to consider.

## Culture

As noted above, it is important when viewing the leadership of MNHRC to understand the club within its specific internally and externally variable context. Participants unanimously expressed varying levels of concern with regards to the perceived organisational culture of the club and accordingly the leadership of the club.

“...I think it comes from the top. If you have leadership that shows that they are promoting both junior and senior, (committees) that pulls everyone in and shows that we have each others’ backs and that filters down to the club...” (1E, 07 JULY 2017)

Organisational culture, in layman’s terms, is often described as “the way things are done around here” (Frontiera, 2010). From a research perspective, culture has been described as a set of values or meanings shared by a group of people (Louis, 1985), or “the shared values, beliefs, expectations, and practices across the members and generations of a defined group” (Cruickshank & Collins, 2012, p. 340). Some researchers have expressed the opinion that it is difficult for a leader to have any meaningful impact on culture, as culture has a larger influence on leaders (Balmer, Van Riel, Hatch, & Schultz, 1997). Others, such as Sarros, Gray, and Densten (2002) have found that “leadership was a far more prominent predictor of culture than culture was of leadership” (p. 15). Irrespective of the order of influence, the literature collectively suggests a link

between the leadership and the culture of an organisation. According to Frontiera (2010), alongside the actual process of cultural change, an additional factor that contributes to successful cultural change efforts may be the type of leader or leadership style that is in place. This suggests that, with regards to MNHRC, any change in organisational culture will require either a change in leader or a change in the current leadership style.

### Summary

It is important to note that the laissez-faire type style of leadership at MNHRC may be reflective of how the club has been unable to appropriately adapt to the changing environment of sport in New Zealand, as well as the underlying organisational culture of the board. MNHRC has been struggling for some time to come to grips with the emergence of professionalism and the increased demands this has placed on its volunteer board. These demands have been noted in historical sport literature and illustrate the delicate balance between maintaining the “fun” aspect of volunteer sport versus the now business-like delivery of sport (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). This need for change was acknowledged and accepted by both the chair and the board.

“...because I feel like we’ve been there long enough, and we need new blood, we need younger people coming in...” (1A, 08 JULY 2017).

Frontiera (2010) argues that the lack of sporting success within a sport team can be symptomatic of issues within that organisation’s culture, and accordingly the author advocates that a new leader may be required when undertaking organisational changes. Alternatively, a more collective leadership model may be needed, as suggested by Ferkins et al. (2017), whereby the board itself undertakes a shared leadership dynamic.

### **Governance**

Following on from the lack of unity expressed by the participants when asked to define leadership, the participants were also notably divided in their views on what governance was and how it applied to MNHRC. Governance from the perspective of a sporting non-profit organisation is defined by the Australian Sports Commission (2017) on its webpage as:

The system by which organisations are directed and managed. It influences how the objectives of the organisation are set and achieved, spells out the rules and procedures for making organisational decisions and determines the means of optimising and monitoring performance, including how risk is monitored and assessed (“Sports Governance Principles”, 2017).

In the sport management domain, governance is considered to be one of the most influential elements for the success of a non-profit sporting organisation (Balduck et al., 2010). As noted by Sport New Zealand (2015) in its guidelines *Nine Steps to Effective Governance*, there is no “one size fits all” approach that will cover every sporting organisation. Diversity in the form of external and internal variables will potentially dictate the appropriate governance guidelines (Lesley Ferkins, McDonald, & Shilbury, 2010), for example, whether to operate as a board or as a committee. With MNHRC’s specific context in mind, amalgamation and analysis of the participants’ data pertaining to governance revealed two key themes, and these are discussed in detail below.

### Professionalisation

As discussed in Chapter Two, the increasing focus by national sport organisations on effective governance within CSCs emphasises the importance of moving towards professionally delivered community sport services (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). Implementing a more professional, business-like delivery of sport potentially leads to improved coordination and allocation of club resources, which can have a positive impact on the attraction, retention, and development of youth (Sotiriadou, Shilbury, & Quick, 2008), which is MNHRC’s constitutional mission statement. According to Shilbury and Ferkins (2011), improved governance can also positively impact on the development of top tier club athletes capable of national representation, which can encourage junior community sport participation. The positive effects improved governance can have on the conformance and performance of a CSC board have not as yet been explored extensively, however a considerable amount of national and regional sport board governance literature suggests that comparative benefits exist (Lesley Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015b; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011; Shilbury et al., 2013). As discussed in the leadership section above, the adoption of a more professional organisational culture was associated with a change in either leader or leadership approach. This cultural change will also need to occur, from a

governance perspective, with regards to the MNHRC board's perception and understanding of its professional governance responsibilities.

“...for a rugby committee you've got a group of willing people. And you know, I mean you could have professionalism...I don't think it necessarily needs to be run professionally but I guess that would help?” (1C, 14 JULY 2017)

“...I think our governance has probably improved, from what I've seen in the season that I've been there so far, but I think it has a long way to go...” (1D, 01 AUGUST 2017)

Based on the analysis of participant data relating to sport governance, board members within MNHRC are cognisant of the need to make steps towards more professional governance.

### Strategic Capability

Sport New Zealand, its *Nine Steps to Effective Governance*, states: “One of the board's major roles is ‘*strategic governance*’, setting strategic direction, helping to plot the organisation's path through an uncertain future, and ensuring the organisation achieves what it should. They also define one of the main strategic connotations as “A plan, direction, guide or course of action in the future, a path to get from here to there” (p. 92). There is much consensus within the scholarly literature that the strategic role of a board is a critical part of what boards do (Lesley Ferkins, Shilbury, & McDonald, 2005; Kim, Burns, & Prescott, 2009; McNulty & Pettigrew, 1998). In a non-profit governance context, Ferkins, Shilbury and McDonald (2009) were the first to propose the notion of “board strategic capability”. They sought to understand the “factors that both constrain and enable sport boards to think and act strategically” (p. 219). Ferkins and Shilbury (2015) expanded this field of literature by examining the strategic capability of a sport board and proposing a theory of board strategic balance. This theory encompassed a holistic model of six components, which encompassed a balance of input influences such as increasing the contribution of part-time board members and the board operational knowledge of the organisation, as well as process influences such as board co-leading of strategic development and strategy processes (Lesley Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015a). The first influence, increased contribution of part-time volunteer board members,

acknowledges that if a board is to function strategically then there will be a related increased demand on the requirements of board members. This concept of a relationship between the activity levels of board members and the board's strategic role has also been noted by Pugliese et al. (2009), who undertook a literature review of boards of directors' contribution to strategy. Drawing on this literature and the participants' perceptions, it can potentially be presumed that if the MNHRC board is to become more strategically capable, then the board members will need to become more involved in areas of strategic development and design.

Whilst it was not directly noted, none of the MNHRC participants were able to state the club's strategic direction or plan when discussed within the context of strategic capability. Two of the participants expanded further to state that not only was there no strategic direction, but that they felt the board (and therefore the club) was unable to operate in a strategically capable manner.

“...as a board and strategy, I think we are still in reaction mode not pro-action (SIC)...” (1E, 07 JULY 2017)

“...it's completely reactive from month to month, season to season. There is no real thinking about it, that we want to follow the plan or whatever it is. There is no end goal in mind to get to those things...” (1D, 01 AUGUST 2017)

Given the established link between strategic development and organisation effectiveness (Brown, 2005; Hoye & Doherty, 2011), it would be logical to assume that if the MNHRC board were to develop its strategic capability it would also potentially develop its club capability.

## Summary

As stated by Bayle and Robinson (2007), “the system of governance, most notably the performance and position of the main unpaid executives [voluntary leaders], are one of the keys to an NGB's [national sport governing body's] success” (p. 258). This statement is supported by Sport New Zealand in its *Governance Benchmarking Review 2014*, where governance effectiveness is described in terms of the potential to enhance a sport organisation's capabilities to provide delivery of sport to the community. It is also noted, however, that there remains a weakness in the sport and recreation sector with

regards to boards and their lack of understanding of the central role in effective governance, particularly with regards to the quality of strategic planning (Sport New Zealand, 2015a). These noted weaknesses are also apparent in the analysis of the governance performance of MNHRC, and are reflected in the themes that have emerged, namely the professionalisation of the board and the lack of strategic capability.

### **Club Capability Development**

As the research question states, club capability, for the purposes of this study, has been focussed on two key components, namely leadership and governance. As noted by Erakovic and Jackson (2012), whilst leadership and governance have, in their own domains, attracted significant academic interest, they rarely integrate with each other and there is little that is known with regards to the impact of one's theoretical framework on the other (Lesley Ferkins et al., 2017). Regardless of the reasons behind the lack of academic research, it is acknowledged that having sound leadership and governance processes is vital to the long-term health and vitality of any organisation (Erakovic & Jackson, 2012) . Accordingly, the researcher has focussed, within the instrumental case context of CSCs, on MNHRC participants' perceptions and insights surrounding leadership and governance. These perceptions and insights, as revealed within the data analysis process, were key contributors to the emergent themes that explored the potential to develop club capability. Based on these emergent leadership and governance themes, the researcher also explored board members' perceptions of what they felt club capability meant, as well as their insights on what potential areas of club capability development existed within MNHRC. The key perceptions of the MNHRC participants, as an amalgamation of the semi-structured interview and focus group data, were ranked and are listed in Table 2. The key theme of club membership growth is explored in more detail below.

## Key Perceptions of Club Capability

Table 2: *Participant Perceptions of Club Capability*

<b>Understanding of Club Capability within Marist North Harbour Rugby and Sports Club Inc.</b>
<i>Club Membership Growth</i> – Having a consistent number of full teams in each grade was seen as essential to a capable club.
<i>Culture / Values</i> – The environment within the club needed to be family-friendly and welcoming to all.
<i>Resources</i> – A capable club was self-sustainable, had adequate playing/training grounds, and could provide appropriate facilities such as clubhouse and team equipment.
<i>Sporting Results</i> – The success of the premier side was an indicator of a capable club.

### ***Club Membership Growth***

The theme of growth was key amongst the MNHRC participants, with all expressing the perception that a capable club was able to field full teams in all grades of the community competition.

“A capable, successful club has a consistent number of teams in the bulk of the grades...” (1C, 14 JULY 2017)

This key perception is significant in that whilst it appeared to be a desire to simply increase the club’s ability to put more teams on the playing field, it also appeared to incorporate how the participants perceived the club’s financial situation. In this, they perceived growth as representing an increase in subscription fees, and money across the club house bar. However, perhaps most importantly, within the participant perception of club membership growth was the underlying reluctant acceptance of the professionalisation of their club. Interestingly, whilst all participants wanted financially based growth within the club, some participants perceived that a rugby club need not be run in a more business-like manner in order to achieve it. This perception is at odds with the Australian Sports Commission, who state that the legal responsibilities of the board extend to accountability for the overall performance of the organisation, compliance with all legislative matters, and remaining financially solvent at all times (Australian Sports Commission, 2013).

“...there are policies but whether they have an appropriate place in rugby, a sports thing, I’m not so sure...does there really need to be governance policies around playing rugby?” (1C, 14 JULY 2017)

Another participant expanded on this sentiment:

“...we’re the old generation and we grew up with rugby working bees and bottle draw raffles...clubs now days seem to have gone more corporate and get as much funds as they can and then putting it back into paying players...we just focus on getting players, getting everything running well because, at the end of the day, our core business is putting players on the field to play rugby...” (1A, 08 JULY 2017)

Based on the thoughts and insights of the majority of the participants, the acceptance of the need to adopt more professionalised business practises by incorporating better governance principles was the underlying driver upon which club capability themes such as club membership growth, culture/values, resources, and sporting results were founded.

### Key Perceptions of Potential Club Capability Development

Table 3 below lists the key ranked and coded responses amalgamated from participants’ data when they were asked to define their perspectives on where they saw potential development of club capability. The key perceptions of potential club capability development are discussed in more detail below.

Table 3: *Participant Perceptions of Potential Development of Club Capability*

<b>Development of Club Capability for Marist North Harbour Rugby and Sports Club Inc.</b>
<i>Chair Leadership</i> – Developing chair leadership to create effective board relationships and developing/delivering long-term vision by way of effective governance.
<i>Strategic Board Leadership</i> – Both individual and collective contribution to developing the strategic capability.
<i>Communication</i> – Improving communication within the board and respective sub-committees and ensuring a clear, singular message delivered.
<i>Resources</i> – Working collaboratively with council/other clubs to find resource avenues to support growth.

### ***Chair Leadership***

According to Erakovic and Jackson (2012), there is widespread acceptance amongst academic researchers that the role of the chair is both central and critical to a board's effectiveness. In a value-creating board, the chair is expected to undertake a variety of tasks such as: relationship building with the board and club members; supporting and motivating board members to become more capable; encouraging and facilitating open and honest communication both in the boardroom and the club; chairing robust, collective discussions at board meetings; and actively developing and refining governance structures and processes (Huse, Gabrielsson, & Minichilli, 2009). When considering the tasks outlined above, the researcher proposes that the current leadership style at MNHRC potentially aligns with "leader unintentional errors" (Schyns & Hansbrough, 2010). Sport New Zealand (2015) states in *Nine Steps to Effective Governance* that "while holding special responsibilities, the Chair ideally is regarded, and regards him or herself, as primarily a first among equals. The concept of 'servant leadership' is a useful way to think about the role" (p. 66). The concept of servant leadership has emerged recently (Parris & Welty Peachey, 2013) based on the concept of developing the follower in order to achieve improved organisational effectiveness (Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Servant leadership also relates well to the community sport club context, in that the majority of roles within the clubs are held by volunteers and servant leadership has been shown to further the development of volunteers (Parris & Welty Peachey, 2013).

### ***Strategic Board Leadership***

As discussed above, it was noted that in order to improve strategic capability, the board must first adopt a "will and skill" mentality whereby their ability to increase their time commitments to a voluntary role must be assessed and acknowledged alongside their governance-related skill and experience (Lesley Ferkins et al., 2009). Erakovic and Jackson (2012) consider a board's contribution to strategy making an important value-adding activity and, in their opinion, the purest demonstration of the board's leadership role. This opinion is considered somewhat contentious, as the nature and extent to which a corporate board should be actively involved in shaping strategy is under some debate (Pugliese et al., 2009). However, as noted by the Sport New Zealand in its *Governance Benchmarking Review 2014*, this contention, was not supported, stating that boards are

more proactively involved in the drafting of strategic direction and urging them to continue to engage directly in strategy workshops etc. From a strategic board leadership perspective, the MNHRC board can provide an active contribution to the formulation and implementation of strategic capability (Huse et al., 2009), but the club must be adequately resourced, both in terms of volunteer personnel and governance-related skill set.

## Summary

Based on the co-interaction of the researcher and the participants' perspectives (as captured in the data analysis process), Figure 7 below visually depicts the identified themes discussed within the leadership (laissez-faire/servant leadership and club culture) and governance (professionalisation and strategic capability) sections above. These themes and their influence on leadership and governance have the potential to develop club capability for MNHRC. From a leadership perspective, it has been identified that the current leadership within the club is perhaps not suited to the present environment (Schyns & Hansbrough, 2010).

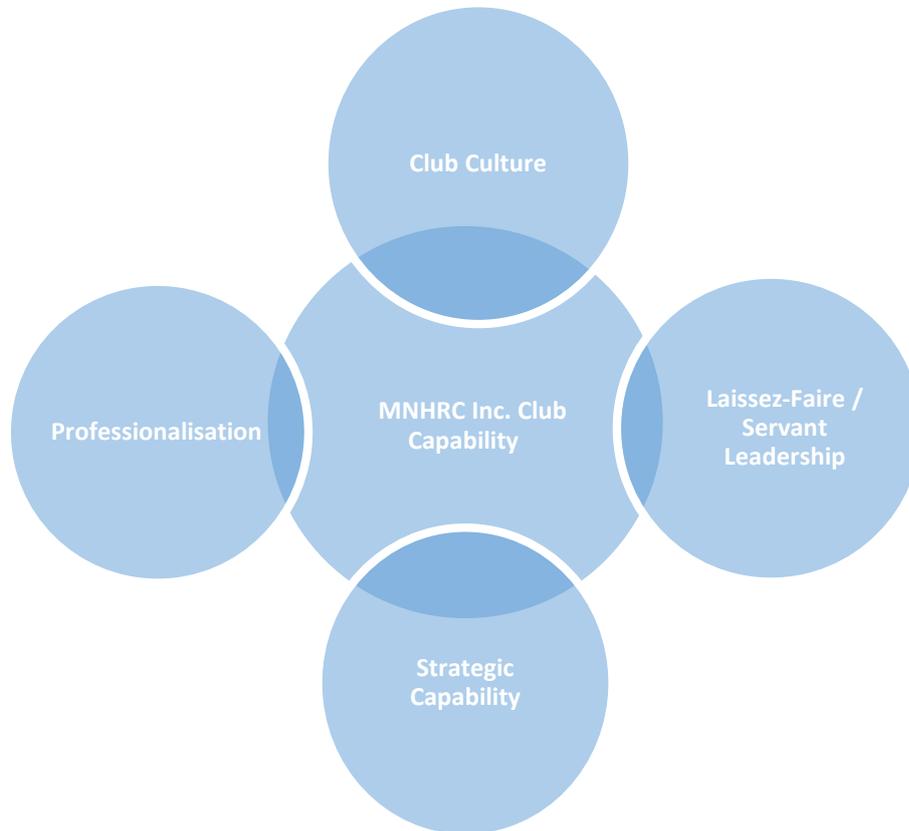
“...a leader needs people skills, emotional intelligence, particularly when you're working in this environment. It's not a commercial setting so you're working with a whole lot of people who are all really good people but have different levels of capabilities within their own roles...” (1D, 01 AUGUST 2017)

Within the framework of non-profit sport organisations, servant leadership has been shown to have a positive influence on volunteer motivation and also the cultural environment (Parris & Welty Peachey, 2013). Whilst still an emerging theme, as scholars are yet to connect servant leadership and governance to CSCs (Borland et al., 2015), the adoption of a servant leadership style within MNHRC could potentially bring about organisational culture change and, as a result, positively improve the club capability.

Greater strategic board leadership would allow the MNHRC board members, by way of increased involvement, to evaluate their roles, effectiveness, and accountability.

“...I could spend more time at the club, getting the right things done but I don't know if it's too hard...” (1C, 15 JUNE 2017)

Greater board involvement would facilitate an understanding of the evolving needs of MNHRC and its governance requirements, and an appreciation of associated tasks and structures (Erakovic & Jackson, 2012). This could assist board members to improve their club's governance professionalism and increase their strategic club capability.



*Figure 7: Potential Development of Club Capability through Leadership and Governance Themes – Marist North Harbour Rugby and Sports Club Inc.*

## Case Study Two – Eden Rugby Club Inc.

### Club Structure and Context

Eden Rugby Club Inc. (ERC) was formed in February 1922 and incorporated under the Incorporated Societies Act 1908 in March 1925 (*Constitution of Eden Rugby Club Incorporated*, 2014). Its current clubrooms in Gribblehurst Park (council-owned) off Sandringham Road, Auckland, were built in August 1958. The club's most up-to-date constitution is dated May 2014, and the club undertook a full internal review in 2015. Perusal of its website indicates the club has a values, structure, and vision document (created August 2014) which is due for renewal end of season 2017 (*Eden Rugby - Club Values, Structure and Vision*). It is evident that some social media communication exists in the form of Facebook pages relating to both junior and senior teams, however there is no integration of these teams within a club Facebook page. ERC currently has approximately 600 registered members (350 junior and 250 senior players). According to the constitution, the club operates a board of trustees (four members) who are appointed by a past presidents committee (*Constitution of Eden Rugby Club Incorporated*, 2014). These board members are responsible for financial decision-making and must approve any project that requires the use of the club's funds. Fundamentally, the trustees are responsible for the governance of the club, but they also sit on the management committee (fifteen members) comprising:

- i. The president
- ii. The club captain
- iii. The junior club captain
- iv. The secretary
- v. The treasurer
- vi. The senior delegate
- vii. The junior delegate
- viii. The boys delegate
- ix. Seven general committee members

It should be noted that, whilst the terminology used in the club's constitution is outlined above, the participants utilised a variety of terms when referring to "the board". For clarity of understanding, the board (comprising both the trustees and the management committee) is also referred to as the committee or executive committee. This merging of

terminology is also reflected in its operational function, as it operates as a quasi-board, and as such there is no clear delineation between governance and administrative agenda. This structure is contrary to Carver (2006), whose model of policy governance advocates a defined separation between governance and the day-to-day administrative duties of management. This was identified by three of the four participants as being a major limiting factor in the current board's ability to operate efficiently.

At the first annual meeting of the management committee, the committee elects a chair and deputy chair. Voting is either by show of hands or as directed by the chair, and decisions are passed by majority vote. Participants were all asked their opinions on the size and structure of their board, with only the chair knowing the number stated in the constitution, and three noting that they had not filled all the mandated seats. Only one participant expressed a desire to see an external person (not currently a member of the club) sit on the board. Perusal of the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2016 revealed a net (after depreciation) loss of \$11.2K, which was similar to the 2015 \$12.3K deficit and resulted in a subsequent decrease in movement of equity. ERC's statement of financial position indicates current assets of \$32.6K versus current liabilities of \$28.7K and fixed assets (buildings and chattels) of \$764K versus nil fixed liabilities. This financial result means the club had total equity of \$873K for the 2016 season (Eden Rugby Club Incorporated, 2016).

As detailed in Case Study One, it is commonly accepted within community rugby that the performance of the premier side is a reflection of the club's overall standing within the provincial union. Historically, clubs that have attained Top Four in Auckland's annual premier competition (known as the Gallagher Shield) have been viewed as "Top Tier" clubs.

"...the performance of our premiers gives the perception that we're a second-tier club..." (2D, 01 AUGUST 2017)

With this information as a contextual lens, ERC's standings at premier level for the last five years are detailed below, and provide perspective on how the club is viewed both externally by other clubs and the wider rugby community, and internally by stakeholders (members, players, and sponsors) (Lesley Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015b).

- 2013 – 14<sup>th</sup> place
- 2014 – 11<sup>th</sup> place
- 2015 – 9<sup>th</sup> place (winners of Portola Trophy)
- 2016 – 9<sup>th</sup> place (winners of Portola Trophy)
- 2017 – 5<sup>th</sup> place (winners of Pollard Cup and Jubilee Trophy)

The consensus from all participants was that ERC had enjoyed a successful 2017 season and that they considered the playing results reflective of a club that is showing signs of ascendancy.

### **Key Learnings**

#### **Leadership**

As discussed in Chapter Two, there is a very important interaction between sound leadership and the effective governance of an organisation such as a community non-profit sport club. Stakeholders (players and members) demand a sporting result that reflects their perception of the club's capability. The more effective the leadership at board level, the more comprehensive the governance, and theoretically the better the opportunity to attract better players and achieve better sporting results (Welty Peachey et al., 2015).

In exploring the specific context of this case study, the researcher found that over the past three to five years the club had undergone serious and disruptive personnel changes within its board. The most recent change had occurred due to a recognised cultural disconnect within the junior and senior committees of the club.

“...they have their set views and they stick by their views. And when you get (sic)...they are going up against each other, something's got to give, and neither of them do, so you get division...” (2C, 03 AUGUST 2017)

As recently as early 2016, the executive committee experienced division to such a degree that the 2017 chair (who had been chair in the past) was persuaded to come back and initiate a restructure of the club's board. All participants agreed that the chair held the leadership role within the club and, to varying extents, that the 2017 year had been

more stable. Under the direction of their leader they felt the club had made progress in mending the divisions within the club, although it was still very much a work in progress.

“...it’s not so divided, we’re doing our very best to try and mix with the juniors just as much as we can...” (2C, 03 AUGUST 2017)

The following themes were derived from the perceptions of the participants, when asked to describe the leadership at ERC. They are discussed in the context of relevant literature as described below.

### Emotional Intelligence

For ERC, common elements pertaining to the board’s view of effective dimensions of leadership became apparent. These elements were found to be associated with those offered by Goleman et al. (2002), and as such this overall leadership theme was named as emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence, whilst having a variety of definitions, is expressed within this case study as the ability to self-assess, relate effectively and honestly to other people, and adapt to others’ needs within the situational environment. Four common elements of leadership qualities as perceived by ERC participants and based on the work by Goleman et al. (2002) are discussed below.

1. Accurate self-assessment: ERC participants all acknowledge the chair as being able to recognise his strengths and weaknesses. This is supported by the chair himself who noted that, whilst he had extensive board experience, he possessed little understand of social media platforms and as such was actively seeking that experience from within the club membership.

“...a smart leader brings in people who are smarter than them in some areas...” (2A, 02 AUGUST 2017)

2. Transparency: ERC participants were unanimous in their acknowledgment that the club had suffered internal division due to political agenda and self-promotion of individual needs. The reinstatement of the current chair was perceived as creating a more open, honest, and transparent culture within the board which

would potentially be noted, and replicated, within the sub-committees and the club itself.

“...and I think straight answers is (sic) what a lot of people look for.” (2A, 02 AUGUST 2017)

3. Social awareness: In perhaps the closest association to a key conceptual element of emotional intelligence, the chair voiced the need to understand and appreciate diverse points of views and needs as critical to capable leadership within a CSC. The importance of social awareness was supported by all of the participants, albeit to varying degrees, in their assessment of the current leadership at ERC.

“... he has certainly backed me up when I needed, and, he certainly listens.” (2B, 22 JUNE 2017)

4. Relationship management: The ability to build and maintain relationships is noted by Schneider (2012) as being essential, within a sporting environment, to productivity and achievement of goals. Whilst not specifically mentioned by the ERC participants as relationship management, there was specific reference to the leadership within ERC being supportive and positive whilst maintaining focus on agreed visions and goals.

“...might pull us back and say, ‘hold on a second, what was our vision on this point?’ so, we always refer back to it...” (2C, 03 AUGUST 2017)

In amalgamating the perceptions of the ERC committee members within the uniquely specific context of the club, it became apparent that the leadership style of the chair incorporated key elements of emotional intelligence and was of an affiliative nature. This leadership style is discussed in detail below.

#### Affiliative Leadership

The overarching leadership sentiment from all of the participants was that the leader (chair) was perceived to be more of a facilitator than a figurehead, and all expressed

the view that open and collaborative discussion was both healthy and necessary for the continued functionality of the current committee. The unanimous sentiment from the participants was that the leadership of an organisation which had many components, limited financial resource, and all volunteer personnel was both challenging and time-consuming. The insights and perspectives from all participants indicated they saw an affiliative leadership style as most beneficial for their club.

Affiliative leadership represents the collaborative competency in action, with affiliative leaders focussing on promoting harmony and fostering friendly interactions (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). Managing people, having an ability to listen, presenting a shared vision, and being a balanced team player were all mentioned by participants as being characteristics of their leadership ideals. More inclusive decision-making processes tend to increase group member interdependence and therefore group cohesion, whilst also increasing the social skills of individual members (Borland et al., 2015). Historically, this view is not supported by Branch (1990), who found leaders in effective athletic organisations were less orientated to developing good relationships with subordinates. Also, according to Borland, Kane and Burton (2015), a potential limitation to this style of leadership includes the potential conflict, within a group setting, of poor performing individuals receiving group praise and recognition. It is therefore considered critical that individual competencies (motives, traits, self-image, social role, skills, and knowledge) (Balduck et al., 2010) are able to be assessed and that roles and responsibilities are allocated accordingly. The obvious difficulty, as addressed in Chapter Two, is that all roles within ERC's management committee are voluntary and the club struggled to fill the mandated seats. This was acknowledged by a participant who felt they used a "best fit" approach to allocate roles, which was based less on a candidate's competency and more on their desire to contribute to the club and a willingness to volunteer their time.

“...somebody with a passion, somebody who is interested in doing the job...”  
(2C, 03 AUGUST 2017)

This justification was reluctantly supported by the chair, who acknowledged that having more “bodies” to spread the workload was preferable to overloading the few with the desired skill sets to undertake the responsibilities.

“that’s the cards you are given, and you just have to deal with them...I actually have no one else to fulfil it, that’s the hard bit.” (2A, 03 AUGUST 2017)

## Summary

ERC has endured intensive political turmoil over the past five years, the predominant cause of which appears to have been associated with cultural misalignment between the junior and senior committees. Due to the strong personalities that sit on each committee, the club decided that it needed a change of leadership to align with a focus on promoting harmony and fostering friendly interactions. To achieve this goal the group brought back an ex-chair, who was perceived to possess an affiliative style of leadership, to help mend the divisions and assist with improving the skill set of the volunteers that sit on the respective committees. As discussed above, the leadership qualities evident at ERC align closely with the work of Goleman et al. (2002), and this is supported by Schneider (2012), who advocated that a sport leader’s emotional intelligence will play a critical role in effective leadership, because a sport leader must demonstrate positive emotions while fostering and maintaining positive emotions amongst employees.

## Governance

As opposed to the participants’ perspectives on leadership addressed above, when asked to define governance, the participants were somewhat divided in their views. The definition of sport governance as described in Case Study One was “the responsibility for the functioning and overall direction of the organisation and is a necessary and institutionalised component of all sport codes from club level to national body” (Ferkins, Shilbury & McDonald, 2009, p. 245). Sport New Zealand describes governance as “the process by which the board; sets strategic direction and prioritises, sets policies and management performance expectations, characterises and manages risks, and monitors and evaluates achievements in order to exercise its accountability to the organisation and owners” (Sport New Zealand, 2015, p. 13). The consensus amongst the participants, when considered alongside the above definitions, could be broadly split into two main camps: policies/finance and strategy/vision (although only one participant could actually articulate any strategic goals beyond sporting results). Edwards and Cornforth (2003) noted the distinction between policy and strategy whereby strategy relates to how organisations position themselves competitively, while policy relates to “...giving

substance to collective values” (p. 78). It was of interest that there appeared to be divided opinion amongst the participants as to the extent of influence corporate governance should have on defining their governance structure. This is supported by Alexander and Weiner (1998), who theorise that not all clubs will find the corporate governance model appropriate because the priorities and design principles may be contrary to the club’s values and relationships with members, and may alienate volunteers and not align with the club constitution. This idea was supported, in part, by two of the participants, with one explaining that whilst it was imperative to run the club in a business-like manner, it was important to remember that the organisation functioned first and foremost for the sole purpose of providing a service (rugby) to its members.

“...I’ve had this argument a couple of times with people who have sort of said, ‘no you’re a business’ I said ‘no, no we’re a rugby club because the constitution says we are a rugby club’...that must be run in a business-like manner.” (2A, 03 AUGUST 2017)

This view, however, was not supported by another participant, who felt aspects such as vision, core values, alignment, and environment applied regardless of the administrative environment. From his perspective, corporate and sport governance shared many similar concepts and, as such, ERC needed to align itself closer to a more corporate board culture.

“...I was thinking about professional first and I don’t see them as different...it’s about creating... replicating that vision of the environment, for the club, by the board...governance is ensuring that we’ve got our values aligned and knowing the purpose of what we’re trying to achieve...” (2D, 01 AUGUST 2017)

After reviewing the interview notes and re-listening to the audio of the interviews with the participants, two main governance themes began to emerge for the researcher and are discussed in detail below.

### Strategic Role

Three of the four participants had no knowledge of what their club’s strategic role was, however all noted that having some strategic functionality was of importance to the board.

“...and I guess we need a strategic goal to help us get there...” (2C, 03 AUGUST 2017)

This observation is supported by Ferkins and Shilbury (2012), who state that the board’s strategic role is considered to be an important subset of the overall governing function. Various terms have been used in literature to describe aspects of strategic function, such as strategic focus, contribution, development, orientation, and capability (Lesley Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015a; Lesley Ferkins et al., 2009; Pugliese et al., 2009; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). For the purpose of this study, the researcher focussed on the “strategic role” as a label, encompassing aspects of strategic function and strategic capability. This was broken down into defining the club’s direction, creating priorities within that direction, and monitoring results of the direction. This definition sits within the context of CSC and aligns with the participants’ understanding of what it means to be strategic from their perspective.

#### Governance and Administrative Balance

The second and perhaps most frequently articulated theme to emerge was the need to separate the governance and administrative functionality of the board. This theme emerged both as a source of frustration and also as an indication that the ERC board needed to streamline its meeting structures and processes.

“...I 100% feel we need to be looking at the big picture and not the detail, and slowly we have tried to...” (2A, 03 AUGUST 2017)

“so, our executive meetings talk a lot about administrative functions and I think we possibly get side-tracked instead of looking at overall strategy and performance etc. Of the club.” (2B, 22 JUNE 2017)

As noted above, ERC operates within a quasi-board structure. Whilst it is not uncommon for this structure to exist within small CSCs, ERC had achieved reasonable growth in its junior ranks (up 15% from 2016 season) as well as breaking into the top eight ranking of Auckland clubs. This increase in player membership, combined with an increased expectation from its members, resulted in greater demands upon its volunteer resource and highlighted the need to address its governance/administration balance. It is the expectation of the ERC board that this can be initially achieved by allocating financial

resource to employ an administration-based club manager, which would reduce the time demands faced by members of the management committee and allow them to strategically refocus for the 2018 season.

“...by year’s end we want to have one professionally skilled person to drive administrative / financial objectives with a focus on anything revenue generating...” (2D, 01 AUGUST 2017)

This has been identified by at least three of the participants as a priority and is currently being addressed by the club.

### Summary

ERC has been operating as a quasi-board whereby the trustees also sit on the management committee, and as such roles and responsibilities are shared and blurred. Given the growth of the club, the increased legislative and compliance requirements, and increased stakeholders’ expectations, it is evident that the board needs to continue to develop its governance capabilities (Sport New Zealand, 2015b). This is supported by the two themes noted, namely a lack of strategic role, and the governance/administrative balance. Under examination, it appeared that the board had become reactively focussed on managerial duties and as such had no resource to allocate to any strategic discussion. Whilst the allocation of a club manager will ease the administrative workload, it is considered imperative that, prior to the start of the next season, the board addresses its strategic role. This has been highlighted by Sport New Zealand (2015) in its *Governance Benchmarking Review*, which looked specifically at national and regional sport organisations and stated that “most of the strategic plans reviewed were deficient in their basic structure, severely limiting their usefulness for governance purposes” (p. 9).

### **Club Capability Development**

Club capability, for the purposes of this study, has been focussed on the two key components, namely leadership and governance. The intersection of these two components is seen, by the researcher, as essential to the ability to both understand and develop club capability. An example of this is the Australian Sports Commission document, *Mandatory Sport Governance Principles* (2013), which states in its preface,

“Confidence in the leadership capacity and capability of sports, particularly in relation to management, governance, internal controls, and business systems is acknowledged as being critical” (p. 1). As with Case Study One, in order to fully understand club capability within the case study situational context, the researcher also explored board members’ perceptions of what they felt club capability meant, as well as their insights on what potential areas of club capability development existed within ERC.

### Key Perceptions of Club Capability

Table 4 below lists the key ranked and coded responses amalgamated from participants’ data when they were asked to define their perspectives on what makes a capable club. The three key participants’ perceptions are discussed in more detail below.

Table 4: *Participant Perceptions of Club Capability*

<b>Understanding of Club Capability within Eden Rugby Club Inc.</b>
<i>Sporting Results</i> – The success of the premier side was an indicator of a capable club.
<i>Culture / Values</i> – The environment within the club needed to be family-friendly and welcoming to all.
<i>Financial Viability</i> – A capable club was self-sustainable and could provide appropriate facilities and team equipment.
<i>Vision / Drive</i> – Having a clear goal, concerted direction, and passion were seen as essential to a capable club.
<i>Skill sets / Allocation of roles</i> – Having the right people in the right roles and a clear role responsibility.

### ***Sporting Results***

All of the participants agreed that sporting results were one of their highest perceived indicators of club capability, and that performing well in the sporting context should underpin any development strategies.

“...I think if you have a strong premier side, you’re going to attract players here, you’re going to attract sponsorship, you are going to attract money and with all of those things come other benefits...” (2B, 22 JUNE 2017)

Given that the primary function of any CSC is to promote the participation and development of its chosen code, it is logical to presume that achievement of a club’s premier side is seen as a development marker. This is considered an intangible asset to the club and is supported in sport finance literature, whereby the performance of a football side on the pitch can very quickly adversely affect financial performance (Armenakis,

Harris, Cole, Fillmer, & Self, 2007). Accordingly, especially in a community sports club context, a correlation can be drawn between sporting results and club capability.

### ***Culture/Values***

Culture within a sporting organisation can be broadly defined as the shared values, beliefs, expectations, and practices across the members and generations of a defined group (Cruickshank et al., 2015). According to Cruickshank, Collins, and Minten (2015), cultural change requires an initial evaluation of the best fit for the board and the club. This means looking at the personal management style, agendas, values, and expectations of the board and aligning them with the club's history, traditions, profile, and resources. Essentially, the board needs to make sense of the changes internally in order to implement them externally (Allen & Currie, 2011). The board will need to see that changes are more than a shift in structure and processes and involve what Goia, Thomas, Clark, and Chittipeddi (1994) describe as "a redefining of the organisation's mission and purpose or a substantial shift in overall priorities and goals" (p. 364). This is particularly relevant within a community sports club, as the changes proposed must be conveyed to stakeholders (members) who would need to both understand and accept key cultural changes. This is supported in literature (Fiss & Zajac, 2006), which has asserted that "buy-in" by stakeholders is crucial for change to succeed. This change in culture by way of a new leader is also supported by Frontiera (2010), who notes that new leaders are often required in order to make cultural changes within an organisation, and that organisational culture is recognised as a critical component in the capability of a sporting organisation.

"...one of the things I want to do is a seminar think tank...vision, whatever you call it, with the executives, we're not having a formal meeting, but we're going to discuss everything for a day and set a vision..." (2A, 03 AUGUST 2017)

This will require an extensive discussion with the entire board and has been recognised by the chair as first on his "to-do" list.

### ***Financial Viability***

Financial viability, according to historical research (Doherty, Misener, & Cuskelly, 2014; Shilbury, 2001; Yeh, Taylor, & Hoye, 2009), is an area considered crucial by non-profit boards. This was also clearly expressed by all participants in this case study,

both reactively (the need to fundraise to fund improvements to fixed assets), and proactively (the need to hire a club manager to specifically look at revenue generation).

“...ideally, we need a club manager who knows more about hospitality and (sic) go hunting for more hall hire for us, which is what we need, because the bar take just doesn’t cut it anymore. Those days are long gone...” (2C, 03 AUGUST 2017)

This perception aligns well with research by Tacon and Walters (2016), who sought to understand how modernisation has influenced the way board members perceive and enact their roles. When ranking the importance and effectiveness of board roles, overseeing the financial management of the organisation ranked number one. Clearly, the financial viability of ERC is directly affected by the board’s governing processes, and this is reflected in the board’s strategic planning in the form of sourcing external expertise and prioritising a revenue stream (venue hire) independent of the club’s main sports functionality.

#### Key Perceptions of Potential Club Capability Development

Table 5 below lists the key ranked and coded responses amalgamated from participants’ data when they were asked to define where they saw potential development of club capability within ERC. The key perception of potential club capability development is discussed in more detail below.

Table 5: *Participant Perceptions of Potential Development of Club Capability*

<b>Development of Club Capability for Eden Rugby Club Inc.</b>
<i>Skill set</i> – Evaluating skill set weakness within the board and sourcing appropriate new members to offset board weakness.
<i>Communication</i> – Improving communication within the respective committees and ensuring a clear, singular message is delivered.
<i>Club Manager</i> – Externally sourcing a full-time staff member to take over the administrative duties associated with the club to allow the board to re-prioritise its time allocation capabilities.
<i>Volunteer Recognition</i> – Ensuring that volunteers are recognised and rewarded for their efforts. Maintaining and building on the tradition and values of the club.
<i>Strategic Plan / Six Monthly Budgets</i> – Creating greater fiscal control by budgeting proactively and bi-annually.

### *Skill Set*

Of all the topics discussed within the development of club capability, skill set featured both as a perception of club capability and also as an identified area of development within the ERC board. Much has been discussed about the value of volunteer boards in non-profit organisations (Herman & Renz, 2004) and the potential for voluntary board members to influence an organisation's effectiveness (Hoye & Doherty, 2011). The participants have also noted that they experienced difficulty finding suitably skilled volunteers to fill the executive committee seats and that historically, of the seats filled, no real assessment of competency (skill set) has been undertaken. This issue was also identified by Chelliah et al. (2016), who researched governance challenges for non-profit organisations. The study found that membership-based boards are often unable both to recruit directors with appropriate skills and to facilitate the skill set development of existing directors.

It is within the skill set realm that the ERC board participants vary greatly in their perception of how to address this resource shortage. At one end of the spectrum was a participant (who was relatively new to the club but has sat on a different sporting code board for many years previously) who advocated bringing external resource (non-club members) onto the board to specifically address identified skill set weakness (Ingram & O'Boyle, 2017).

“...we're missing areas of expertise and knowledge around the board table...I think we have rugby covered but we don't have the right skills to create the full picture...I would look outside the club for additional people to assist us...” (2B, 22 JUNE 2017)

This opinion was the polar opposite of the view of another participant (who had been on the board six years and a club member for 35-plus years), who maintained that skills (cognitive competencies such as technical abilities or financial skills) could be taught, and that commitment (e.g. having passion for the club), involvement (e.g., time spent/hard working), and motivation (Balduck et al., 2010), were more important competencies to look for. Whilst literature concurs that commitment and involvement are predictors of board member performance (Balduck et al., 2010; Hoye & Doherty, 2011), the key factor to developing the capability of the board (and therefore, potentially, the club) was seen to be the identification of individual board members' strengths and

weaknesses, and sourcing the appropriate skills to address identified weaknesses (Ingram & O’Boyle, 2017). However, as previously discussed, the board struggled to fill the mandated seats and was therefore unable to “pick and choose” personnel based on skill set evaluation. When pressed further on the reasons behind the lack of volunteers, the board acknowledged that it had no documented succession plan in place (to prepare for potential turnover in the executive committee), and that it did not proactively canvas members to fill empty seats on the executive. Given the turbulent history of the board over the previous five years and the subsequent high turnover of executive committee members, this was considered an area that needed attention.

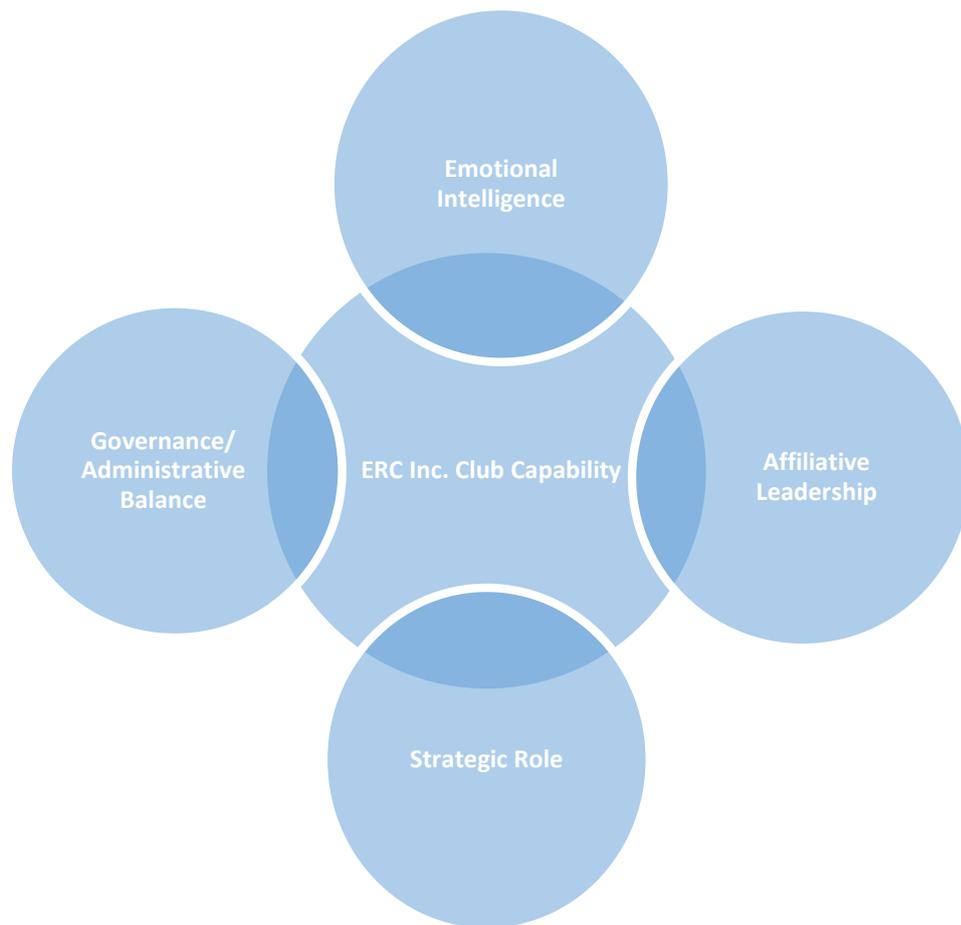
“...you can only find them by asking around. You just keep asking...” (2A, 03 AUGUST 2017)

This also highlighted the fact that, historically, the club did not have a database of its members, which would allow them to identify specific skill sets based on occupation, and allow the specific targeting of perspective committee members as part of a strategic succession planning initiative.

#### Summary

As can be seen in Figure 8 below, potential development of club capability for ERC Inc., as drawn from participant perspectives and derived from the data analysis process, aligns well with both leadership (emotional intelligence and affiliative leadership) and governance (strategic role and governance/administrative balance) application. From a leadership perspective, the combination of emotional intelligence and an affiliative leadership style lends itself to harmonious interactive relationships (Goleman, 2000; Goleman et al., 2002). This approach to leadership is also highlighted by Cullen-Lester and Yammarino (2016), who in their consideration of collective leadership noted that leadership resides “in the interaction between people, thereby constituting a network of relationships” (p. 173). In terms of how these leadership themes relate to governance, emotional intelligence is potentially a crucial element in assisting the board to self-evaluate its individual strengths and weaknesses (Herman & Renz, 2004; Yeh et al., 2009) as well as improving the interaction with the club’s members as a method of identifying capability-enhancing skill sets (Balduck et al., 2010). From a governance perspective, seeding succession planning into the development of the board’s strategic role will serve to address governance/administrative balance and potentially develop club

capability (Girginov & Sandanski, 2008; Hoye & Doherty, 2011; McNulty & Pettigrew, 1998).



*Figure 8: Potential Development of Club Capability through Leadership and Governance Themes – Eden Rugby Club Inc.*

## **Case Study Three – Pakuranga United Rugby Club Inc.**

### **Club Structure and Context**

Pakuranga United Rugby Club Inc. (PURC) was founded in 1965 from an amalgamation of surrounding district rugby clubs, and its clubrooms were opened in 1975 at Bell Park (land donated to the club by the vice-president of the club at the time, Duffy Bell). In the mid-1990s, the club amalgamated with the Lloyd Elsmore Badminton Club, and in conjunction with the Manukau City Council made improvement to its facilities with the construction of a multi-purpose gymnasium (*Pakuranga Rugby Club History*). The club's most up-to-date constitution is dated September 2015 and the club undertakes a full internal review annually (Pakuranga United Rugby Club Incorporated, n.d.). The club's website details the past three years' financial statements as well as an up-to-date club structure and its vision and mission statements. From a communication perspective, the club has easily accessible reports from its president and chair as well as electronic copies of its annual general meeting. Social media communication is substantial, with up-to-date news and reports from both the junior and senior teams, both with standardised look and content. PURC currently has approximately 900 registered playing members (300 senior and 600 junior players). According to the constitution, the club operates a management board of eight members and both senior and junior rugby committees (Pakuranga United Rugby Club Incorporated, n.d.). The management board comprises:

- i. The chair of the senior rugby committee
- ii. The chair of the junior rugby committee plus one other elected representative
- iii. The club's senior delegate to the union's council of delegates
- iv. Four elected members.

The senior and junior rugby committees comprise the club captain plus 10 members and 20 members respectively. Each committee elects a chair and either senior delegate or board representative. It is also important to note that PURC has a full-time general manager as well as approximately five full-time administrative staff. As supported by Shilbury and Ferkins (2011), the structure outlined above allows for the very clear differential between committee administrative and board governance duties. This was acknowledged by a participant, who noted that the hiring of a function manager as well as a bar manager had grown the facility hire side of their business without creating additional administrative workload for the board and respective committee members.

“...I know that if we didn’t have paid employees my workload would increase tenfold...” (3E, 20 JULY 2017)

At the first annual meeting of the management board they elect a chair and deputy chair. Voting is either by show of hands or as directed by the chair, and decisions are passed by majority vote. In the event of equality, the president has a casting vote. According to the constitution, the president plays an active role in the club by overseeing the business and affairs of the club and presiding over all general meetings of the club as chair (Pakuranga United Rugby Club Incorporated, n.d.). Participants were all asked their opinions on the size, makeup, and structure of their board and all expressed a general satisfaction with the status quo, however one participant felt the makeup of the board was more business than rugby orientated.

“...if I was honest I would probably say that we need to have some more rugby coaching people on the board, most have coached their kids but none at premier level...probably that would be our weakness.” (3D, 23 JUNE 2017)

Perusal of the financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2016 revealed a net (after depreciation) profit of \$27K, which was an improvement on 2015’s \$20K deficit and resulted in a subsequent increase in movement of equity. PURC’s statement of financial position indicates current assets of \$45.1K versus current liabilities of \$125.6K (inclusive of payments in advance) and fixed assets (buildings and chattels) of \$2,026K versus \$71K fixed liabilities. This financial result means the club had total equity of \$1,875K for the 2016 season (Pakuranga United Rugby Club Incorporated, 2016b). With overall income of nearly \$1,100K, this makes PURC a reasonable-sized business and one of the largest sports clubs in the Auckland region.

As detailed in the previous case studies, the performance of a club’s premier side is generally perceived, both internally and externally, as a reflection of the club’s overall standing within the provincial union. Historically, attainment of a top four placing in Auckland’s annual premier competition (known as the Gallagher Shield) would place the club in the “Top Tier”. PURCs standings at premier level, for the last five years, are detailed below and provide perspective as to how the club is viewed externally by other clubs:

- 2013 – 1<sup>st</sup> place (winners of the Gallagher Shield)
- 2014 – 4<sup>th</sup> place (Top Four)
- 2015 – 3<sup>th</sup> place (Top Four)
- 2016 – 7<sup>th</sup> place
- 2017 – 7<sup>th</sup> place

Interestingly, the size and quality of the club’s facilities combined with the purported expertise of the club’s board are externally perceived to somewhat mitigate the playing results. This is also reflected by some of the participants, who feel the results are not the primary measure of the perceived capability of the club.

“...it’s not just about the results, probably our premier side has done more for the club than they have ever done in the years gone by...” (3D, 23 JUNE 2017)

“...the club is probably one of the strongest clubs in New Zealand from a fiscal control point of view...” (3C, 13 JUNE 2017)

This view is not universally accepted within the board though, with another participant expressing some misgivings as to the perceived continued emphasis on financial performance rather than players’ results. This perception was also supported in academic literature by Yeh and Taylor (2008), who suggested that “profits made by a sport organisation might not satisfy fans and members if it finishes a season at the bottom” (p. 34).

“...we’ve got the best clubhouse in the country, but shouldn’t we be concentrating on what we actually put on the field?” (3E, 20 JULY 2017)

This suggested a potential misalignment in the board’s strategic balance (Lesley Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015a), and is addressed in more detail in the governance section below.

## **Key Learnings**

### **Leadership**

The board at PURC has enjoyed a stable and consistent period of leadership, with its current chair having held his role since 2012. This was achieved through the modernisation of its constitution and the continued support of the chair from the members of both the board and the club. Extremely consistent indicators of leadership perceptions were identified by all five participants, with the key word “strong” featuring heavily.

“...so, from my perspective, it’s got to be someone that is a strong person, that can make strong decisions and takes onboard, especially from a club perspective, the interests of the parties they are representing...” (3A, 4 AUGUST 2017)

“...it is not really a dictatorship per se, but, effectively there is a strong direction that comes through from the chairman of the board...” (3B, 14 JULY 2017)

“...we will make decisions, we want to get on with stuff and we’re not going to get caught up in politics, because that’s not what we do, so strong leadership helps...” (3C, 13 JUNE 2017)

Strong leadership from the chair is also mentioned in the Sport New Zealand (2015) *Nine Steps to Effective Governance* guidelines: “The role of the Chair is critical in tough times, and strong leadership is often called for. But even a strong leader needs support from those most closely associated with him/her” (p. 23).

### **Authoritarian Leadership**

It was evident that the leadership style at PURC is effective, provides a great deal of direction, and follows rules and procedures closely. There are clear expectations for what needs to be done, when it should be done, and how it should be done. It would be considered appropriate to describe the leadership style at PURC as authoritarian, given participants themselves use words such as controlling, forceful, and dictatorial. Authoritarian leadership is best applied to situations where there is little time for group decision-making, or where the leader is the most knowledgeable member of the group

(Lewin et al., 1939). The authoritarian approach can be useful when the situation calls for rapid decisions and decisive actions (Schuh, Zhang, & Tian, 2013) and is often used when forces facing an organisation have changed and a new, responsive vision or change in direction is necessary (Bowen, Katz, Mitchell, Polden, & Walden, 2017). According to Bowen et al. (2017), authoritative leadership “is one of the more effective methods of leadership with highly educated employees and sport team members” (p. 45). From a sport organisation perspective, Davis, Gagnon, Fiorentino, and Wooten (2017) studied leadership styles within minor league baseball organisations’ front offices and found that male employees had a preference for autocratic (authoritarian) leadership. It is worthy of note that the board of PURC is all male, and this may have influenced participant data collected pertaining to leadership perceptions and ideals.

### Situational Leadership

Researchers have historically theorised that the use of a single style approach when attempting to understand and describe leadership may potentially fail to factor in all the relevant components, specifically the situational context (Borland et al., 2015). The interaction between the leader (chair), the club (board and club members), and the environment will impact the resulting leadership style (Borland et al., 2015; Frontiera, 2010; Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Hersey and Blanchard (1982) detailed a situational leadership model, which was formed on the principle that effective leadership styles vary with the willingness and ability of the people being led. Alongside authoritarian leadership, situational leadership – a leadership principle that connotes that the best course of action is based on the situation and its given circumstances (Nevarez et al., 2013) – was considered the most appropriate for understanding leadership within the context of this particular case study. According to Nevarez et al. (2013), situational leadership involves the consideration of four contextual factors when assessing a situation. When viewed through a lens specific to PURC, these factors were revealed as follows:

1. The relationship between the leader and the board/club members. Social interaction with the board, sub-committees and club members is complex, and a sound understanding of these complexities allows for the appropriate choice of leadership approach at any given time.

“...if you run a committee by discussion nothing would ever get done. So, there needs to be a reasonable amount of direction to come through and that works...”  
(3B, 14 JULY 2017)

2. A clear understanding of the task at hand. The board has ensured that there is alignment within the club with regards to its mission statement and core values. This accurate understanding enables the club is led in the “right” direction.

“...he knows where the club needs to go so his leadership is really good, and he is open and honest, but drives things...” (3D, 23 JUNE 2017)

3. The degree of authority as dictated by the position held. The modernisation of the club’s constitution clearly outlines specific roles and the responsibilities afforded. The decision-making process is democratic, and majority ruled.

“...I will go to a meeting and try to convince them of the paths we should take. Now if people come with input and say, ‘that’s not a good path to take’ then you’ve got to have the ability to step back and take their viewpoints on board...”  
(3A, 8 AUGUST 2017)

4. The level of maturity of each respective member. Assessing a member’s level of maturity is based on their willingness to engage and their ability to complete the task given them.

“...I said, ‘do you really understand what your role will be on the board...you can achieve this far better within the committee, rather than on the board’ and she very quickly said ‘oh yes, I can actually see that’...” (3A, 23 JUNE 2017)

Situational leadership, therefore, gives greater consideration to the complexity of leadership within community sport clubs dynamic social situations as well as more effective interaction with the many volunteer individuals, fulfilling different roles. (Seokhwa, Cox, & Sims, 2006).

“...so, depending on what aspect you’re talking about you could have a pie cut into ten pieces each representing a different sort of leader, so depending on the situation you could say ‘oh, piece three works here or, piece four’ and so on and so on...” (3E, 20 JULY 2017)

## Summary

The leadership at PURC is unanimously perceived by the participants as being visionary, open, honest, driven, and strong, with all these qualities aligning firmly with an authoritarian style (Bowen et al., 2017). When examined through a situational lens, however, it is evident that the chair is cognisant of the necessity, within a sports club environment, to take into account the interest of the members, to have their trust and respect, and to allow collaborative discussion to take place.

“...it is a very robust conversation...people get to voice their opinion, and everyone sits down and collectively goes forward.” (3B, 14 JULY 2017)

It was evident that whilst not consciously acknowledging the concept, the leader (chair) was inherently able to assess and implement either supportive or directive behaviour (Blanchard et al., 1993) depending on the abilities of the respective board members and the complexity of the tasks required. The relationship between the leadership and board at PURC is supported by the participants, who express admiration, respect, and confidence in their leader (Nevarez et al., 2013).

## Governance

Reflective of the diversity amongst the participants, the definitions of governance, and the club’s respective strengths and weaknesses in this area, varied from basic to reasonably comprehensive. However, all agreed that governance covered the direction that the club was heading, and all understood the need for and purpose of a strategic plan.

“...in my eyes, governance is having the vision to know where you are going and making sure that you have your finger on the pulse and know what is happening in the club...” (3D, 23 JUNE 2017).

Whilst attempting to understand the participants’ perceptions of their club’s governance capability, three key themes emerged and are discussed in detail below.

## Strategic Balance

It became apparent that, whilst all participants had great pride in their club, there was some discord as to the strategic direction the club had taken. PURC is perceived, both internally by stakeholders and externally by other clubs, as being financially viable with multiple revenue streams. Whilst this has enabled the club to construct covetable clubroom and grounds, this has not translated into playing results on the field. This appeared to be a source of discontent amongst some participants who felt the board's strategic focus was too fiscally rather than sports performance (rugby) orientated.

“...but that's the huge balancing act you know, success breeds success. Yeah, it's a great clubhouse, not so good on the pitch at the moment. How do you, which way do you want to go? Do you want to be the richest club but not have a decent premier side or do you want to have a decent side and perhaps pull back on the money you got (sic) in the coffers?” (3E, 20 JULY 2017)

This view is also supported in literature, both by Yeh and Taylor (2008), who note that “profits made by a sport organisation might not satisfy fans and members if it finishes a season at the bottom” (p. 34), and Misener and Doherty (2009), who, when undertaking a case study of organisational capacity in community sport, found that financial capacity was not perceived to be a critical factor in goal attainment. This represents the delicate strategic balance that non-profit community sports clubs face between adapting to a more commercialised environment whilst retaining the core function of their constitution and club values. PURC lists its club constitutional values thus: to foster rugby, provide members grounds and facilities, and to be New Zealand's most successful and influential family-based rugby club (Pakuranga United Rugby Club Incorporated, 2016a).

## Paid Staff versus Volunteers

It is of note that, out of the three case studies, PURC is the only club that has both full-time administrative staff and a general manager. As discussed in Chapter Two, there exists plentiful research identifying the change from volunteer-driven organisations to commercialisation and the introduction of paid staff to fulfil roles historically performed by volunteers (Lesley Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015a; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007; Shilbury, 2001). These studies also highlighted the potential influence imbalance that could exist

between a voluntary board and paid management. The board of PURC had attempted to address this potential imbalance by using its constitution as a document to clarify roles and responsibilities, as well as to clearly delineate the administrative function of the paid staff and the respective rugby committees. The board also has a collective group that consists of the president, chair, and general manager (employee), who meet on a weekly basis to collectively discuss operational and strategic planning. Shilbury (2001) researched the dynamic of “shared leadership” within the context of professionalism in sport and found that the influence of paid staff on decision-making was increasing, and was a sign of genuine cooperative power between boards and executive directors. This allows the PURC board to focus on its governance responsibilities whilst collectively overseeing the management of the club’s facilities.

### Collaborative Governance

As supported by participants’ statements below and evidenced by the collaborative work in creating an online knowledge database, PURC is more closely aligned with its provincial union (Auckland Rugby Union) than the other community rugby clubs, and is seen by external stakeholders as being at the forefront of moving towards a collaborative governance model. In general terms, collaboration governance relates to the working together of organisations to achieve goals and outcomes that could not be easily achieved when working individually (Shilbury, O’Boyle, & Ferkins, 2016).

“...Auckland rugby should be collaborating with the Pakuranga, with the Marist, with the Suburbs clubs and helping them assist the weaker clubs...” (3A, 23 JUNE 2017)

PURC has a mission statement that reads: “To be the leaders in the development and management of community-based rugby” (*Pakuranga Rugby Club History p.1*). Auckland Rugby Union shares this commitment as one of its key pillars, and, given the association of the two entities (as described in Chapter One), it is logical for the sharing of resource, information, and capabilities to occur. This is represented in the creation of a freely available document portal on Auckland Rugby’s website which was created in collaboration with PURC.

“...the clubs are becoming more aligned...so I think, as a general statement, we made some really strong strides with Auckland rugby...I think there is still a lot of work to do...we can see a lot of things changing for the better...” (3A, 23 JUNE 2017)

## Summary

Whilst the participants from PURC collectively agree that governance plays a vital role in their board’s effectiveness, their understanding of the term and the underlying functionality varies greatly. This variance in perception is also reflected in two of the three key themes that emerged, namely, strategic balance and paid staff versus volunteers. From a strategic point of view, the club has mission and value statements that centre on the development of rugby, however the perception amongst some of the participants is more financially orientated. The second theme of paid staff versus volunteers is represented in the employment of paid staff (general manager etc.), who are responsible for the day-to-day management of the facilities. This highlights the potential tension between the volunteer board and paid professionals, and the need to balance the increasing demands for strategic thinking and action against the requirements for conformance, policy, and operational functionality (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). The third theme is the emergence of potential systemic or collaborative governance. Potentially, PURC has achieved sufficient levels of efficiency within its own organisation, and, as mandated by its mission statement, in conjunction with Auckland Rugby Union is now looking to assist with the development of rugby outside of its region. The emergence of this theme is supported by Shilbury et al. (2016), who note that the voluntary nature of governance positions (i.e., PURC board members) within community sport club networks creates an interesting variable to explore in terms of a collaborative governance regime.

## **Club Capability Development**

Central to the research question “How can community non-profit sport clubs develop club capability within the realms of board leadership and governance?” was the intention to discover what the participants’ perceptions were with regards to their own definitions of club capability. Research insights were also sought into potential areas of development potential for PURC’s capability within the realms of both leadership and governance and are presented below.

## Key Perceptions of Club Capability

Table 6 below lists the key, ranked and coded responses amalgamated from participants' data when asked to define their perspectives on what makes a capable club. The three key perceptions are discussed in more detail below.

Table 6: *Participant Perceptions of Club Capability*

<b>Understanding of Club Capability within Pakuranga United Rugby Club Inc.</b>
<i>Financial Viability</i> – Multiple avenue streams that are not solely rugby orientated.
<i>Player Retention</i> – A capable club retains its player base and builds from junior through to senior with experienced coaches.
<i>Results</i> – The success of the premier side was an important indicator of a capable club.
<i>Culture / Values</i> – The environment within the club needed to be family-friendly and welcoming to all, which would keep players returning as they progress through the age ranks.
<i>Vision / Drive</i> – Having a clear goal, concerted direction, and passion were seen as essential to a capable club.

### ***Financial Viability***

According to Tacon and Walters (2016), non-profit board members within sport organisations generally consider their financial role to be crucial to the capability of the club. This sentiment was clearly articulated, with all participants acknowledging the “importance of multiple revenue streams” (Doherty et al., 2014) and a need for the club to be run in a business-like manner.

“...everything is accountable, profit and loss, balance sheet on a monthly basis, ticked off by the finance committee which is myself, the general manager and a person who works for an accountancy firm...” (3C, 13 JUNE 2017)

“...successful clubs are the ones that aren't solely reliant on trust funding or over-the-bar takings but have different income streams which they effectively need to make their club grow bigger and better...” (3B, 14 JULY 2017)

### ***Player Retention***

Player retention was a common perception of club capability across all three case studies, however PURC was the only club that unanimously agreed on targeting youth

player retention. According to the participants, the future of PURC lay in the attraction, development, and retention of the junior age teams. The concept behind this process is that by developing and retaining junior rugby players they will hopefully see a transition from the junior to senior rugby teams. This concept is supported in literature, which has looked at mass participation and the pathways to elite participation for individuals (Shilbury & Deane, 2001).

“...it is important to get as many little kids out and about coming through and coming back year after year, and the only way that I think you can do that is good coaches and good management...” (3E, 20 JULY 2017)

According to Sotiriadou, Shilbury and Quick, (2008), the successful attraction, retention, and nurturing of youth players from development through to elite level is considered a key foundation marker of a club’s development strategy.

### ***Results***

Whilst the strategic direction of player retention, as discussed above, was unanimously accepted by all participants, there was some disparity in the way club capability of PURC was perceived. As mentioned previously, the sporting results of a club’s premier side are widely accepted as the benchmark for club capability, and achievement of a top four result gives a perception of a “Top Tier” club. PURC has traditionally been in the top four (winners of the premier competition in 2013), however for the past two consecutive years it has slipped to 7<sup>th</sup> place in the premier completion. Given the strategic focus on the development of club organisational culture and the investment in junior rugby (processes), it was interesting to note that the club also seemingly highly valued a strategic focus on results (outcomes). Ferkins and Shilbury (2015a), in their work on board strategic balance also noted the tensions evident in balancing organisation processes and outcomes.

### **Key Perceptions of Potential Club Capability Development**

Table 7 below lists the key, ranked and coded responses amalgamated from participants’ data when asked to offer their perspectives on how the club might develop its capability. The two key themes of leadership succession, and collaborative

governance, are discussed in relation to club capability development, in more detail below.

Table 7: *Participant Perceptions of Potential Development of Club Capability*

<b>Development of Club Capability for Pakuranga United Rugby Club Inc.</b>
<i>Leadership Succession Plan</i> – Given the strong leadership displayed at the club, identify the succession plan for chair to ensure progress and direction continues.
<i>Collaborative Governance</i> – Continue to build relationships with neighbouring clubs and Auckland Rugby Union to grow rugby as a sport, both locally and throughout the region.
<i>Strategic Balance</i> – Finding a balance between being fiscally viable and improving the coaching quality, player retention, and on-field performance.
<i>Player Retention/Growth</i> – Identifying the reasons behind attrition of players within the club age groups as well as investigating the missing link in school-to-club transition of players.

### ***Leadership Succession Plan***

According to Desai, Lockett, and Paton (2016), when examining the effects of leader succession and prior leader experience on post-succession organisational performance, leadership succession is a critical issue for organisations. The importance of strong leadership was clearly articulated by all participants at PURC, with an acknowledgement from the chair that he often utilised an authoritarian style of leadership.

“...I say you don’t have to be a bully in the way that you do it, but you have to be very strong, and take the path that you are going to take...” (3A, 23 JUNE 2017)

Authoritarian leaders provide clear expectations of tasks. The boundaries between leader and follower are clearly delineated (Schuh, Zhang, & Tian, 2013), and when mixed with other constructs can yield optimal results within a sporting organisation (Borland et al., 2015). Given the lack of shared or delegated power, PURC appeared to rely solely on the chair for the effective leadership of the organisation. According to Grange (2014), an effective leader makes it clear who is in charge, works on their own leadership attributes, makes the tough calls and empowers other people so they can collaborate in the building of a high performing sport organisation. Whilst the majority of the above attributes have been clearly expressed by all participants at PURC, the collaboration of leadership resides within the confines of the club’s collective group (General Manager, President and Chair).

Accordingly, from a leadership perspective, it follows that development of their club capability lies in the creation of a succession plan for the role of the Chair. This ensures that the vision and progress of the club can evolve and develop accordingly (Desai et al., 2016).

### ***Collaborative Governance***

Perhaps the key club capability development theme to emerge from the case study of PURC was the potential for collaborative sport governance. Shilbury et al. (2016) state that collaborative governance has its origins in public administration, however they raise the possibility of using collaborative governance as a theoretical underpinning for future sport governance research. This concept has also been investigated from a top-down perspective by Gowthorp, Toohey, and Skinner (2017) with regards to government involvement in high performance sport in Australia. Given the increased demands brought about by the professionalism of sport, and the fact that the smaller NSOs have traditionally been slower to adopt new processes and systems (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015), it is deemed logical that PURC has the ability to develop its club capability and fulfil its commitment to the growth of rugby as a sport by more closely aligning with the greater resources of Auckland Rugby Union. This logic is supported by the one of the participants, who emphasised the need to prioritise the development of the game of rugby outside the geographical boundaries of PURC.

“...we need to try and grow rugby in this area for the betterment of the game; not just to try and effectively grow our empire. It is for the spirit of the game...” (3B, 14 JULY 2017)

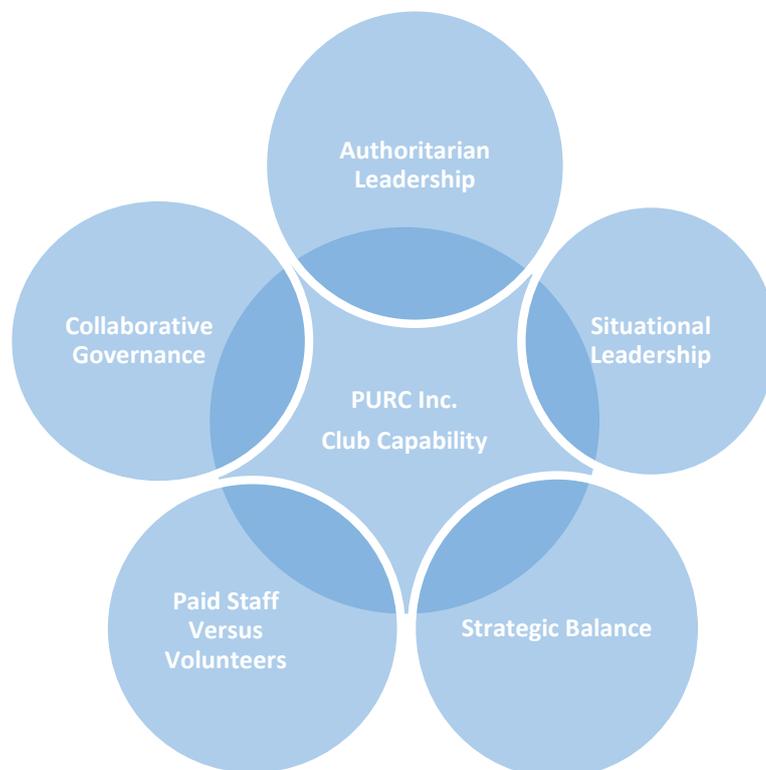
According to the Chair of PURC, the club has collaborated recently with Auckland Rugby in the creation of an online information/documentation portal, and has also offered to collaborate in an inter-club capacity with rugby clubs on its geographical border.

### **Summary**

Potential development of club capability for PURC, as can be seen in Figure 9 below, exists in both leadership and governance applications. As discussed in Chapter Two, the internal and external environment in which a volunteer community non-profit

sport club operates is in a state of change, and the PURC chair chooses the appropriate leadership style (albeit predominantly authoritarian) based on his perception of the situation and the perceived best course of action. This requires an understanding of both the situational context as well as the perceived abilities of the employees/board members involved.

From a governance perspective, strategic leadership in the form of succession planning was noted in Sport New Zealand’s *Governance Benchmarking Review 2014* as having evolved considerably. The review also noted the emergence of skill matrices in the board election process. Whilst this is more relevant within larger sporting organisations, PURC has identified the need to ensure transparency in its succession planning process and the importance of strategically planning beyond the immediate future. From a strategic balance perspective, PURC has identified both the risk and opportunities that exist within the paid staff versus volunteer board situation, however the effectiveness of the board’s strategic balance between fiscal control and attaining sporting results remains unclear. As discussed above, PURC appears to be on the cusp of exploring a more collaborative governance structure with Auckland Rugby, and as noted by Ferkins and Shilbury (2010) this raises the potential of a power-sharing approach in the quest to develop both CSC and provincial union capability.



*Figure 9: Potential Development of Club Capability through Leadership and Governance Themes – Pakuranga United Rugby Club Inc.*

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **Chapter Introduction**

As discussed in Chapter Two, leadership and corporate governance have been a domain of significant academic research (Erakovic & Jackson, 2012). From a sport leadership and governance perspective, however, the literature is less comprehensive (Welty Peachey et al., 2015), and in the case of CSCs, notably limited (Lowther et al., 2016). This paucity of literature also extends to empirical work in leadership and governance – in relation to club capability – which, alongside a lack of focus, has not been clearly defined within sport academic literature. In response, this research sought to examine and understand the perceptions of CSC board members, within the realms of leadership and governance, in order to explore potential areas of club capability development. Specifically, the central research question was posed as, “How can community non-profit sport clubs develop club capability within the realms of board leadership and governance?” Three sub-questions were also posed to address this overarching intent:

- What understanding do board/committee members possess concerning leadership and governance?
- What perceptions do board/committee members possess concerning club capability?
- What areas can be identified within leadership and governance with a view to potentially developing community sport club capability?

To achieve this understanding, a qualitative research approach was utilised in the form of a case study design. This approach to the study of leadership, governance, and club capability development was underpinned by the understanding that the researcher and participants would co-interact to provide rich, insightful data from which to draw meaningful, socially constructed conclusions (Ingham-Broomfield, 2015) that would provide new knowledge in the sport governance field. As discussed in Chapter Three, this research involved three instrumental case studies which were then cross-case analysed in a multiple case study approach. A multiple case study, as defined by Stake (2006), involves the investigation of a particular phenomenon (or a group of phenomena) at a number of different sites (J. Stewart, 2012). Drawing on this definition, this chapter draws

together the outcomes from leadership, governance, and club capability perceptions from each case study (the first two sub questions) to establish an integrated model of club capability development (the third and overall research question). The final section of this chapter explores limitations and influences on findings, as well as proposing future research opportunities. It ends with a concluding statement.

## Leadership

Analysis of participant data from all three case studies, reviewed alongside relevant academic literature revealed three key themes that captured perceptions in relation to leadership. These key themes and their influence on board leadership within CSCs are detailed in Table 8, and are discussed further below.

Table 8: *Key Perceptions of Leadership within Community Non-Profit Sport Club Boards*

<b>Leadership Theme</b>	<b>Influences</b>	<b>References</b>
Servant Leadership (SL)	SL leads to increased leader trust and organisational trust. SL increases team effectiveness.	(Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010) (Hu & Liden, 2011)
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	EI fosters positive emotional states and increases adaptability to change. Sports leaders with EI inspire confidence in self and others.	(Juravich & Babiak, 2015) (Haime, 2011; Huseinagić & Hodžić, 2011; Schneider, 2012)
Situational Leadership (SitL)	SitL can allow sport leaders to analyse factors that may be preventing success and develop strategies/actions that address those factors.	(Nevarez et al., 2013; Scott, 2014; Yukl, 2013)

### *Servant Leadership*

The first theme was servant leadership. As discussed in Chapter Two, servant leadership, within the sporting context of CSC boards, pertains to leaders who can be recognised by their primary motivation to serve. Analysis of all three case studies revealed that the leader-centric position, held in all three cases by the chair of the board, was founded on a passion for rugby and a desire to “give back to the sport”.

“...why did I find the time? Because I love rugby. You have to find people who are passionate and actually want to make the game better...” (3D, 23 JUNE 2017)

“...I love the place, I’d die for yellow and black...you get to meet people here and they just become your mates, and once they’re your mates and they need a hand, you’re going to help them out, and if the club needs a hand you help the club out...” (2C, 03 AUGUST 2017)

“...as a club we owe it to these families to help the kids, it’s just about giving back...” (1E, 07 July 2017)

Exploring sport leadership through the perspective of a servant leadership lens aligns with traditional leader-centric approaches (Parris & Welty Peachey, 2012, 2013), and has resonated consistently through the case study analysis.

### ***Emotional Intelligence***

The second theme that was consistent was emotional intelligence. Serrat (2017) describes emotional intelligence as the “ability, capacity, skill, or self-perceived ability to identify, assess, and manage the emotions of one’s self, of others, and of groups” (p. 329). Whilst the term “emotional intelligence” was only directly referenced by one participant, it was evident to the researcher that the chairs of all three clubs possessed, to varying degrees, emotional intelligence capabilities, especially in the areas of social awareness and social skills. Juravich and Babiak (2015) proposed that greater emotional intelligence output of a leader within a sport organisation would be reflected in the “extent to which these individuals can identify, process, and act” (p. 484) and accordingly impact their effectiveness.

“...you know, you need to be able to read people, and be prepared to make decisions, whilst maintaining their respect and trust...” (3A, 23 JUNE 2017)

Emotional intelligence and its relationship to leadership has traditionally been explored in corporate organisational settings (Boyatzis et al., 2000; Goleman, 2000; Goleman et al., 2002). Juravich and Babiak (2015) utilised an emotional intelligence lens to examine positive effect and job performance in sport organisations, and found that coaches, as former athletes/players, may “be prone to handling emotions in a manner consistent with how they responded during their time as an athlete” (p. 484). Given that

all the identified (chair) leaders within this case study were former players, it is proposed that they may also have potentially drawn on emotional responses that were consistent with their leadership experiences during their playing careers. Goleman et al. (2002), in discussing the link between successful leadership and emotional aptitude, argue that leaders who maintain and monitor control over their own and others' emotions enable organisations to optimally function. As a result, it is suggested that to be an effective leader within this CSC context, leaders must be able to assess, identify, and manage their emotional responses carefully (Schneider, 2012). From a leadership in sport perspective, Juravich and Babiak (2015) suggested that utilisation of emotional intelligence capabilities aligned closely with situational leadership abilities. This suggestion has also been identified within this study, and situational leadership is therefore the third key theme to emerge from the analysis of leadership within a CSC board.

### ***Situational Leadership***

Situational leadership, as developed by Hersey and Blanchard in 1969, proposes that different situations call for different types of leadership styles and actions (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982). According to Northouse (2016), situational leadership is widely used in corporate organisations that are dynamic and fast-changing, and that effective leaders are able to adapt their leadership style to reflect the variable environment. Northouse also notes, however, that research on situational leadership is limited and that the theoretical base of this approach is underdeveloped. Ardichvili and Manderscheid (2008), when researching emerging practices in leadership development from a human resource perspective, believe that situational leadership as a leadership approach is popular in corporate companies due to its “applicability across a variety of settings, and it is relatively easy to understand and apply” (p. 622). Consideration of situational leadership from a sport perspective was undertaken by Radovan (2015), who researched the basic components of successful leadership in sport. The author proposed that “Situational and environmental factors (type of sport, the number of teams, team interactivity...) determine the importance of certain personality traits and leadership style choice” (p. 194). Radovan (2015) also proposed that successful leadership required the blending of leadership styles in order to achieve positive interaction with participants. This concept of blending leadership styles to suit both the situation and the environment was noted amongst many of the case study interview participants, as captured by the sentiment below:

“...you have to be a bit of a chameleon when you are on the board because you are dealing with so many different people and personalities...” (1E, 07 JULY 2017)

The variability of leadership styles as an indicator of successful leadership, as noted by Radovan (2015), above, emerged to differing degrees from all three case studies, and is indicative of the dynamic, changeable environment within non-profit community sport club organisations (Burton, 2009).

### ***Summary***

Analysis of the data from all three case studies reveals that, within the context of a community non-profit sport club board, leadership is viewed as being traditional and leader-centric, with the perception that leadership resides in a single individual, namely the chair. This finding contrasts the latest work by Lesley Ferkins et al. (2017), who studied leadership in governance within non-profit sport organisation systems encompassing national and regional levels. They argued for a shift away from the traditional leader-centric approach toward emergent collective leadership, that is, “how a board comes together to generate leadership and to progress key strategic initiatives within and across a network of relationships that emerges and shifts over time” (p. 2). The present study has identified that the CSC level has not, as yet, embraced such a shift in leadership thinking. Instead, there appears a clearly acknowledged leader-centric lens. Further, analysis of data reveals that all identified leaders (and, in fact the majority of participants) expressed perceptions of a love of rugby, club loyalty, and a desire to “give back” to the community. These perceptions align closely with the fundamental concept of servant leadership, summarised by Coetzer, Bussin, and Geldenhuys (2017) as a leadership theory that “cuts across a variety of leadership theories, but is unique in the sense of its philanthropic characteristics, leadership intent and focus, and multi-dimensional attributes” (p. 2). Utilising a servant leadership lens of multi-dimensional leadership attributes also allows the theme of emotional intelligence to emerge as part of the cross-case analysis of data. This is defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (p. 189). Use of emotional intelligence in a sport organisation setting has been observed by Schneider (2012), who states that “the use of emotional intelligence can be used to embrace the sport

manager’s preferred approach to leadership, which will support the success of the sport organisation” (p. 43), an idea strongly supported within the summary analysis of data.

Drawing further on the concept of multi-dimensional leadership approaches leads to the third key theme that emerged from the multiple case study – situational leadership. Analysis of data from all three case studies revealed strong consistency in the participants’ perceptions pertaining to the need for flexible, adaptable, and empathetic leadership. As noted by Lesley Ferkins et al. (2017), leadership within a sport organisation requires the progression of strategic initiatives and relationship networking within a dynamic and changeable environment. Combining the key themes of servant leadership, emotional intelligence, and situational leadership, as shown below in Figure 10, is also conceptually supported academically by amalgamating the work of Coetzer et al. (2017), who discuss the multi-dimensional attributes of servant leadership, with the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990), who describe the need to assess and evaluate both internal and external variables. Goleman et al. (2002) also support this with the contention that leadership styles (servant leadership) are variable and dependent on a leader’s strengths and weaknesses (emotional intelligence), as well as the situation (situational leadership).



*Figure 10: Multi-Dimensional Elements of Leadership within Community Non-Profit Sport Club Boards*

## Governance

As stated by Yeh and Taylor (2008), “in a governance system, the board is a critical mechanism because its main responsibility is to make certain that the activities of the organisation are carried out in the best interests of the organisation, its members and society” (p. 33). Accordingly, when analysing the data across the three case studies, it was important to both understand what was happening (the core activities of the CSC) from a governance perspective, at board level, as well as why it was happening (what were the perceived best interests of the club and its members).

Four key themes emerged in relation to sport governance from the summary analysis of data. These key themes, their influences upon sport governance, and relevant supporting literature references are listed below in Table 9 and then described within the context of a CSC.

Table 9: *Key Perceptions of Governance within Community Non-Profit Sport Club Boards*

<b>Governance Theme</b>	<b>Influences</b>	<b>References</b>
Professionalisation	Professionalisation leads to increased coordination and more efficient delivery of sport to communities.	(Ingram & O’Boyle, 2017; Lowther et al., 2016; O’Boyle & Shilbury, 2016; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011)
Governance/Administrative Balance	A balance between administrative knowledge and governance focus (strategic) is of significant consideration to the board.	(Lesley Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015a; Huse et al., 2009; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011)
Strategic Capability	Strategic capability builds organisation capacity and promotes responsiveness to changing internal and external variables.	(Lesley Ferkins & Shilbury, 2010; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011)
Collaborative Governance	Potential to share resources and intellectual property between governing bodies/entities to attain efficiencies and results unable to be achieved as individual organisations.	(Hassan & O’Boyle, 2017; O’Boyle & Shilbury, 2016; Shilbury et al., 2016; Vangen, Hayes, & Cornforth, 2015)

### *Professionalisation*

As detailed in Chapter Two, and discussed specifically within Case Study One, the delivery of community sport has become more business-like, and national governing

bodies are demanding greater professionalism from their community sport organisations (Australian Sports Commission, 2017; Lesley Ferkins et al., 2010; Sport New Zealand, 2015b). Analysis of all three case studies revealed that the level of understanding as well as the willingness and ability to adopt a more professional sport governance model varied considerably.

“...so, we run it very much like a business out here, but obviously with the understanding that rugby is our focus... (3A, 4 AUGUST 2017)

“does (sic) there really need to be so many rules around running a rugby club?” (1C, 14 JULY 2017)

Some of the participants’ perceptions of the professionalisation of their clubs’ governance supported the statement by Lesley Ferkins et al. (2010), that “governance has been an invisible process, something that occurs as a matter of course until the organisation runs into difficulty...” (p.603).

“...you’re a business person, you are prepared to bet on a few things, but the simple rule is to never put the club in danger...” (2A, 03 AUGUST 2017)

Tacon and Walters (2016) describe the general process of professionalisation as being bound with modernisation and therefore commercialisation. This process is also referenced by Lesley Ferkins and Shilbury (2015a), who state that national sport organisations have moved from “volunteer driven entities to those experiencing the forces of commercialisation and the infusion of paid staff to fulfil roles historically performed by volunteers” (p. 492).

According to Hoye and Cuskelly (2007), the categorising of non-profit sport organisations and following a non-profit governance approach is not as straightforward as it seems. Shilbury and Ferkins (2011), in acknowledging the “inherent play-like features of sport” posit that finding a balance between business-like governance and delivery of volunteer-based sport is an ongoing challenge for sport organisations. Internal variables such as mission statement, club values, funding, volunteer involvement, and applied strategies all need to be considered before endeavouring to quantify how non-

profit sport organisations could potentially be governed (Breitbarth et al. (2015); Shilbury and Ferkins (2011). Following on from the work by Doherty et al. (2014) in developing a framework of organisational capacity in community sport clubs, Millar and Doherty (2016) most recently undertook the development of a process model with the aim of building capacity within a non-profit sport organisation. Within the proposed model were four concepts for capacity building: organisational needs, readiness, strategies, and strategic outcomes. Analysis of the three case studies reveals some similarities with the Millar and Doherty (2016) model in that all three clubs have different needs, are at varying stages of professional readiness, and recognise the need for strategies and an ability to evaluate the strategic outcomes. There is much evidence across the three clubs to indicate that the evaluation and willingness to undertake an individualised, professional governance model is a critical theme pertaining to sport governance within the non-profit community sport club setting.

#### ***Governance/Administrative Balance***

As noted above, Doherty et al. (2014) researched a multi-dimensional framework of capacity in community sport clubs, and amongst the findings noted that not all clubs studied were able to be engaged in governance areas such as planning and development. This was largely because of a need to focus on day-to-day administrative operations. This challenge of governance versus administrative balance was consistent in the analysis of all three case studies, however the club in Case Study Three had gone some way towards mitigating the issue by employing full-time staff, and had delineated their various roles and responsibilities. The club in Case Study Two had also sought to address the governance/administrative balance by identifying the employment of skilled administrative resource in its 2018 strategic plan. Millar and Doherty (2016) describe intra- and inter-organisational congruence as a degree of alignment (balance) between capacity building (governance) and an organisation's existing processes (administrative). Greater congruency between capacity building objectives and strategies and an organisation's existing processes and systems is deemed to enhance organisational capacity (Joffres et al., 2004).

“...we're sick of discussing the menu for Saturday night's dinner at an executive meeting. Why are we wasting our meeting time on this?” (2A, 03 AUGUST 2017)

Based on the academic literature, and the participants' perceptions, it is considered that the key theme of governance/administrative balance is integral to sport governance within the non-profit community sport club setting.

### *Strategic Capability*

As sport organisations have become more professionalised, the drive toward developing strategic capability has become increasingly important. Participants' perceptions of their understanding of strategic capability within their respective community sport clubs varied considerably, but when cross-analysed against their perceptions of professionalism and governance/administrative balance, it became apparent that there was a distinct relationship between the themes. Participants who perceived that their organisation had adapted to a more professional, business-like model of governance and had found a balance in their governance/administrative duties were unanimous in their understanding of their organisation's strategic capability. Shilbury and Ferkins (2011) described this complicated dynamic as "an important issue as it is specific to sport in its transition from a traditionally volunteer-driven model to a hybrid between paid staff and volunteers" (p. 113). As found within the present study, strategic capability within a community sport club is critical on many levels but perhaps challenging to develop due to the volunteer-driven nature of the sector (Breuer & Wicker, 2015). Despite this, Swierzy, Wicker, and Breuer (2017), in examining the impact of organisational capacity on voluntary engagement in sport clubs, argue that "it is conceivable that volunteers are more likely to engage in clubs with a focussed strategic alignment and a plan for future development" (p. 5). Also, further outcomes from being strategically capable, such as recognition and development of volunteers, are positively associated with the retention of volunteers (Hager & Brudney, 2011).

"...from a strategic point of view, we want to galvanise our volunteer resources by having a full-time person to, you know, co-ordinate and lead the volunteer base..." (2D, 01 AUGUST 2017)

Accordingly, it is theorised that within a volunteer-based environment a strategically capable CSC will have greater volunteer engagement and, as a result, greater club capability.

### *Collaborative Governance*

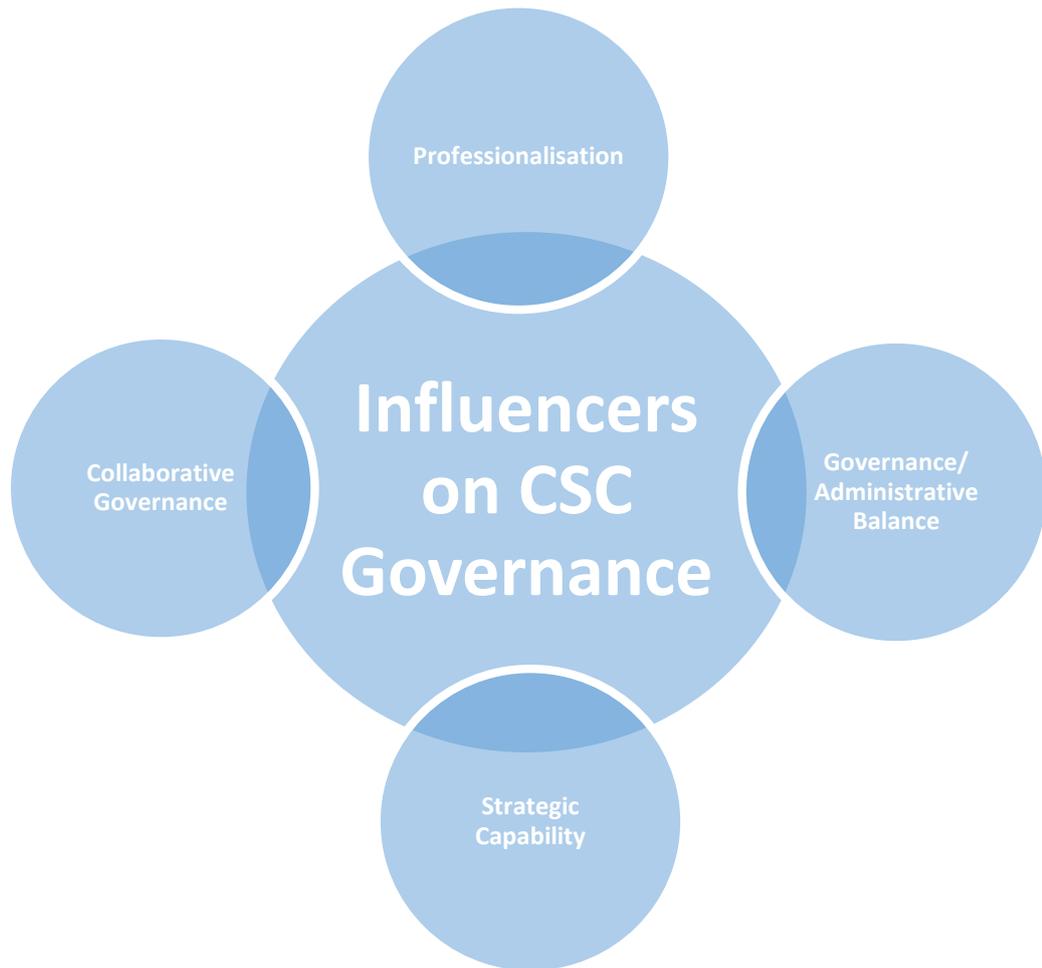
Lesley Ferkins and Shilbury (2010), examined the development of board strategic capability in national sport organisations, and a major finding of the study was the notion that “a board of a NSO [national sporting organisation] could improve its strategic capability by creating a more collaborative partnership with its regional entities...” (p. 252). Collaborative governance within a sport system is described by Shilbury and Ferkins (2015) as being “relevant to national and state sport organisations embedded in systems where sport is supported by government policy and funding...” (p. 380). Analysis of data from the three case studies indicates that there are several perceived barriers to the establishment of collaborative governance both in the community sport clubs and with the regional entity. These barriers were also noted by J. Edwards and Leadbetter (2016) in their critique of a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to standardising a national sport programme, in the form of inadequate resources, time, and opportunities to participate. As discussed in the section above, an association between the level of professionalisation in the form of governance/administrative balance and strategic capability was found in determining the potential willingness and capacity to engage in collaborative governance at either inter-club level or with the regional body.

Interestingly, the choice of small, medium, and large community sport clubs has revealed very different orientations towards collaborative governance and club capability, with the larger club (Case Study Three, PURC) showing a much stronger desire to engage in collaborative governance with its provincial union (ARU), as specifically noted by its involvement in the creation of the online portal website. As noted by Shilbury et al. (2016), issues such as available club resources, constitutional policy and legal frameworks, board political power and control, club and inter-club connectedness, and a club culture pre-disposed to accepting change act as barriers to collaborative governance within a NSO setting. Given the limited resources of the CSC, it is logical to assume that the issues noted in collaborative governance at national level would also apply, proportionally, at club level. In the analysis of all three case studies it was apparent that CSCs needed to have moved toward a more professionalised approach to governance – specifically an understanding and implementation of administrative balance and strategic capability – in order to have the capacity and capability to enter into a collaborative governance relationship. This view is supported in literature by Shilbury and Ferkins (2015), who found that “systemising core collaborative processes is, arguably, more important in organisations reliant on volunteer decision-makers who may have divergent

backgrounds and understandings of business practice and limited knowledge and time to devote to their governance roles” (p. 394). Based on analysis of data it appeared that only PURC (Case Study Three) had met this level of capability/readiness and was in a position to explore collaborative governance with its regional governing body.

### *Summary*

The non-profit sporting sector has historically been slow to adopt processes and systems in response to dynamic and changeable professionalised environments (Shilbury et al., 2016). At a grassroots level, CSCs continue to struggle to adapt to the transition from amateur, volunteer-directed sport to a more business-like delivery (Lowther et al., 2016). The importance of effective sport governance practices is succinctly stated by Shilbury and Ferkins (2011) as impacting on “the efficiencies of developing athletes capable of representing their country at the highest level, and the resultant effect of encouraging participation in sport in the community” (p. 109). It is noted that, when examining the constitutions from all three case studies, that development of the game of rugby was explicitly stated. Academic literature provides clear evidence that the performance of sport organisation boards, whilst central to the practice of governance, is also a weakness (Lesley Ferkins et al., 2005; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007; Hoye & Doherty, 2011). Analysis of the three case studies using a sport governance lens indicates that the ability of a CSC board to evaluate and implement sound governance practices varied greatly and appeared to align directly with a club’s resources, constitutional policy, and legal frameworks, and board political power and control. As shown below in Figure 11 there were four sport governance themes that presented as key potential influencers of CSC club capability. Broadly speaking, sport governance within a CSC is potentially influenced by: the ability to incorporate professionalisation into the delivery and governance of the sport; the ability to balance its governance/administrative functionality; becoming strategically capable; and working toward a collaborative orientation either inter-club and/or with the regional governing body.



*Figure 11: Key Sport Governance Themes within Community Non-Profit Sport Club Boards.*

### **Club Capability**

As discussed in Chapter Two, within the context of a CSC board, academic literature has been unable to clearly define club capability. Therefore, in order to establish a definition framework for this study, the researcher drew upon relevant related literature and incorporated the terms capacity, ability, competency, effectiveness, and development to represent the development potential of a CSC board's capability. It was also noted in Chapter Two that there was a paucity of literature pertaining to the interrelation and influence of leadership in governance (Erakovic & Jackson, 2012; Lesley Ferkins et al., 2017). Accordingly, in order to examine potential development of club capability and to provide new knowledge, leadership and governance were analysed as interrelated

influences on club capability within CSC boards. Utilising a leadership and sport governance lens, data pertaining to club capability within and across all three case studies were analysed for reoccurring themes. Table 10 below sets out the key leadership and governance themes as influences on club capability, and the key leadership and governance themes are discussed in more detail below.

Table 10: *Potential Leadership and Governance Influences on Club Capability Development*

<b>Club Capability Theme</b>	<b>Influences</b>	<b>References</b>
Chair Leadership	The leader (chair) is someone who possesses strong, responsible organisational capabilities, and defines an organisation's reality through the articulation of its mission/values and the generation of strategies to meet the mission/values.	(Storey, 2005)  (Jackson & Parry, 2011)
Communication	Communication is a critical element in the dimensions of community sport club capability. Communication develops relationships and rapport with people within the organisation and across the industry.	(Doherty et al., 2014)  (Pye, 2002)
Skill Set	Cognitive competencies, emotional intelligence, and social intelligence are all valued skill sets that contribute to a club board's capability. Volunteers with specific skills relevant to their roles reflect critical aspects of club capability.	(Balduck et al., 2010)  (Doherty et al., 2014)
Succession Planning	The loss of an organisation's leader creates inertial and disruptive forces. Smooth transition of volunteers in and out of key roles is deemed critical to club capability.	(Desai et al., 2016)  (Doherty et al., 2014)
Volunteer Recognition	Recognition activities are positively associated with the retention of volunteers. The existence of volunteer recognition is considered relevant to the capacity-building process.	(Hager & Brudney, 2011)  (Millar & Doherty, 2016)
Strategic Balance	Understanding of administrative operations can assist with the development of operational strategy. A balance between administrative/operational knowledge and involvement in strategic policy setting is an important component of strategic board function.	(Lesley Ferkins & Kilmister, 2012)  (Lesley Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015a)
Strategic Planning	Strategic planning assists organisations with mobilisation of resources and responding to dynamic and changeable environments. Strategic planning is positively associated with the retention and engagement of volunteers.	(Millar & Doherty, 2016)  (Swierzy et al., 2017)
Paid Staff	Paid staff can potentially replace volunteer decision-making roles within an organisation. Paid administrative staff can enable volunteers to focus on specific roles.	(Swierzy et al., 2017)  (Doherty et al., 2014)
Strategic Capability	Strategic capabilities enable the flexibility to recognise and adjust to uncertain and changeable scenarios.	(Albort-Morant et al., 2017)

	The understanding of internal and external variables that enable a sports board to think and act strategically provides the foundation upon which to develop strategic capability.	(Lesley Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015a)
Collaborative Governance	Collaborative governance can build trust, improve communication, and enhance capability within an organisation's board. Collaboration between and within industry organisations may assist achievement of common goals and optimise strategic outcomes.	(O'Boyle & Shilbury, 2016; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015)  (Shilbury et al., 2016)

Given the previously identified leader-centric model of leadership within community sport club boards, the key leadership influencer of potential club capability development within this context has therefore been identified as chair leadership. From a governance perspective, whilst challenges and barriers exist (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011), the key governance influencer of potential club capability, within community sport club boards, has been identified as collaborative governance. Further explanation and justification of these conclusions is provided below.

### ***Chair Leadership***

O'Boyle, Murray, and Cummins (2015), in their book *Leadership in Sport*, note that sport organisations sometimes look to “former athletes with a celebrity status to ‘rescue’ a struggling organisation” (p. 245). This concept of promoting former sport players to roles of leadership is relevant to all three case studies in that all three formally elected chairs were past players. O'Boyle et al. (2015) also advocate that “great leaders achieve great results not by themselves, but through the assistance of willing followers who trust their leader and each other and are willing to take on leadership responsibilities when required to do so” (p. 245). There is also growing evidence from empirical work in sport leadership that it may be unhelpful to allow the entire responsibility of leadership of a sport organisation to reside with one person (Lesley Ferkins et al., 2009; Lesley Ferkins et al., 2017; Parris & Welty Peachey, 2013; Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Based on summary analysis of the case studies, it appears that the leader-centric model of leadership within a CSC appears to differ from a more shared/collective leadership approach advocated in contemporary literature, as noted above and articulated by O'Boyle et al. (2015). This key finding is also acknowledged as being contrary to previous research by Lesley Ferkins et al. (2017), who explored and advocate collective board leadership in sport governance systems, stating that “as board members of an NSO [national sporting organisation] are all seen as equal, a formal designated notion of leadership is absent

when conceptualising collective board leadership” (p. 6). Shilbury et al. (2016) note: “The non-profit sporting industry has traditionally been behind the curve when adopting processes and systems that are being practised in more professionalised and commercialised environments” (p. 490). It then stands to reason that if the larger, more resourced national sporting organisations are only in the initial stages of exploring more professionalised practices, then smaller, under-resourced CSC boards would face extreme challenges in adopting these “forward-thinking” ways of delivering sport in the community. These challenges of embracing emergent leadership practices such as collective leadership within CSC boards are also recognised by O’Boyle et al. (2015), who suggest that the top-down nature of traditional on-field hierarchical leadership may have a direct influence on how board members have developed their leadership capabilities. As noted above, the chair leadership in all three case studies are ex-players (as well as all but one of the participants). Although outside the scope of this study it is therefore suggested that the leadership behaviour of chairs within a CSC has potentially been historically influenced by leadership behaviours learnt during their playing careers.

Balduck et al. (2010), in their research identifying competencies of volunteer board members of community sport clubs, stated that “motivated, competent, and influential board members are a prerequisite to improve the effective operation of an organisation” (p. 5). Based on analysis of all three case studies, development of chair leadership is considered the primary developmental step in influencing CSC club capability (Balduck et al., 2010). Development of chair leadership will potentially improve communication within the board (Pye, 2002) and therefore the club, whilst also assisting with the identification and development of an appropriate board skill set (Doherty et al., 2014). Effective succession planning of the chair role will ensure continuation of club knowledge, vision, and goals, which positively impacts on volunteer recognition and engagement (Doherty et al., 2014; Swierzy et al., 2017).

### ***Collaborative Governance***

As discussed by Lesley Ferkins et al. (2013), CSCs compete at a grassroots level with other local clubs, both in terms of playing results as well as membership growth and sponsor revenue. From an organisational perspective, however, all local clubs collaborate with each other via a council of delegates, “regarding rules and regulations and joint initiatives aimed at the betterment of the sport” (p. 251). Collaborative governance is defined from a corporate perspective by Shilbury et al. (2016) as relating to “cross-sector

collaboration between parties who, by working together, may achieve common goals and more optimum outcomes than by working in isolation” (p. 479). Attempting to realign the singular organisational governance of competitive, volunteer-driven, community sport clubs with a more collaborative governance system would face special challenges (Shilbury et al., 2016). Analysis of the data from all three case studies also identified challenges that exist predominantly because each individual club is primarily focussed on its localised performance (playing results), capability (leadership and governance), and longevity (membership retention and player number growth). The growth and development of the sporting code outside the respective clubs’ geographical boundaries is perceived by the majority of participants (two of the three case studies) as more of a national governing body prerogative. In highlighting the lack of research in the area of collaborative governance within a sporting context, Shilbury et al. (2016) sought to offer a research agenda to “guide research and theory development that may enhance our understanding of collaborative governance in sport, and of the barriers to its adoption and how they may be overcome” (p. 479). J. Edwards and Leadbetter (2016) examined collaborative governance in a critique of a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to a nationalised sport program. They stated that

in some cases, a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to programming and collaborative governance can lead to confusion within a sport system. Furthermore, those organisations that are in a governance position need to consider the impact that a standardised program can have on those provinces that are smaller in resources (p. 160).

Doherty et al. (2014), in their development of a multidimensional framework of capacity in community sport clubs, also make specific reference to the need to consider resource in noting that not all clubs were able to undertake capabilities such as strategic planning and collaborative governance due to a lack of human, financial, and physical resources. This finding was also strongly evidenced in the analysis of the case studies. As noted previously, only the Case Study Three board was resource-positioned to work collaboratively with the provincial union (ARU) to enhance its governance capability. Based on the evidence generated within the present study and the mounting evidence from the sport governance literature (albeit at the national-regional level), it would seem that

the notion of collaborative governance could also be a key influencer in the potential development of club capability.

### ***Summary***

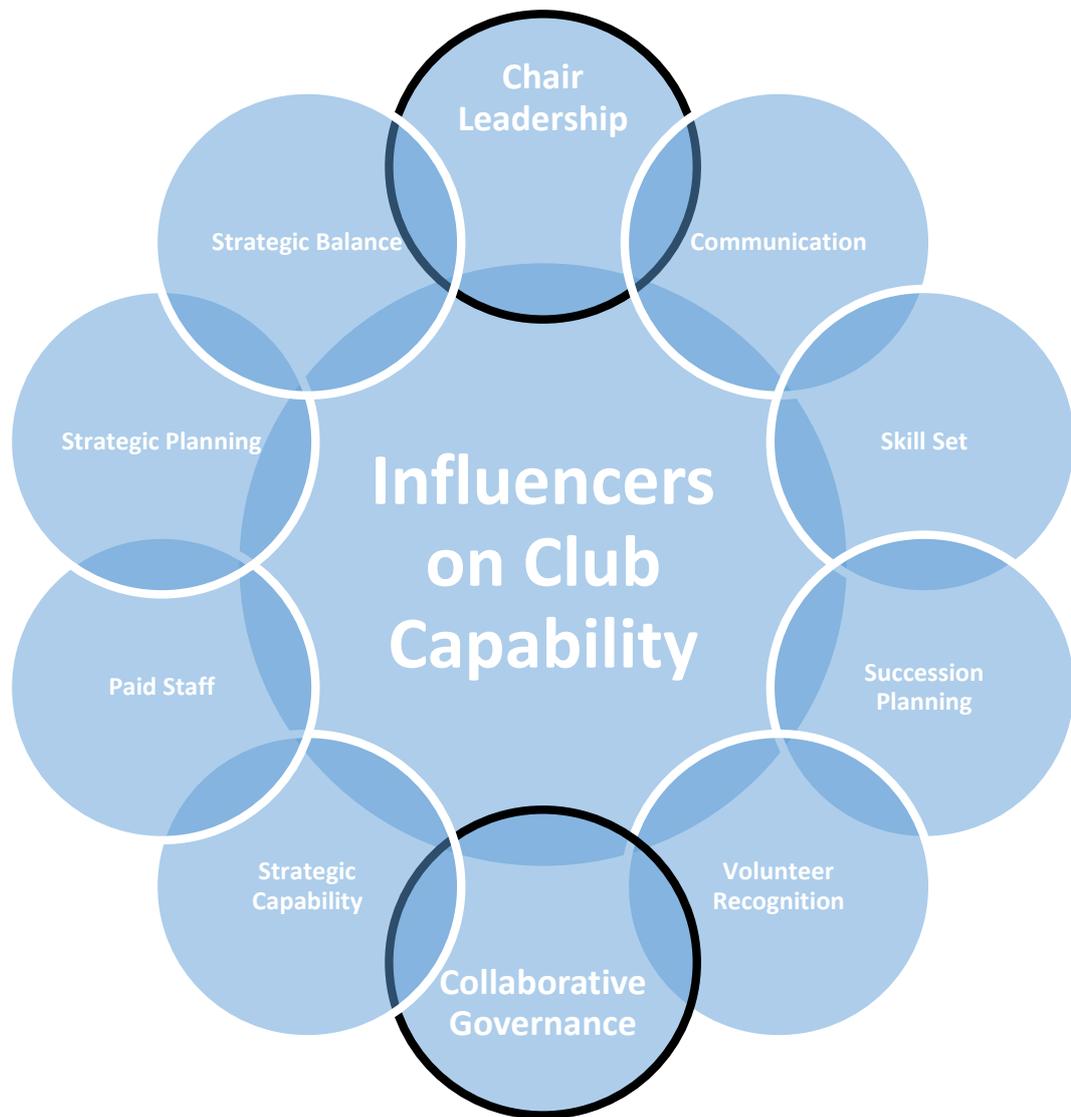
The development of club capability for CSCs is a multifaceted issue that requires an equally multifaceted approach. As with both leadership and governance, any approach must be contextual to the relevant organisation and flexible enough to recognise and evolve in variable ways to respond to an ever-changing sporting environment. Leadership and governance interact in multiple areas (Erakovic & Jackson, 2012; Lesley Ferkins et al., 2017; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015). According to Erakovic and Jackson (2012), there are three main areas of intersection: “board leadership, chair leadership of the board, and strategic leadership by the board” (p. 70). Chair leadership was also identified as the key leadership theme in the analysis of data in relation to developing club capability within the present study. Findings clearly affirm that leadership within a CSC board is leader-centric, and the formally elected chair is first and foremost the leader of the board and thus the club. As depicted in Figure 11 below, given the establishment of a leader-centric leadership model within a CSC board and the influence that a formally elected leader has on its club, it is proposed that any potential development of club capability in the leadership areas of communication, skill set, succession planning, and volunteer recognition must first be accepted, adopted, and driven through the leadership of the chair.

In further support of the leadership/governance interaction, leadership is also seen as a primary and essential driver in the implementation of collaborative governance (Shilbury et al., 2016). Collaborative governance was the key governance theme identified in the present study in relation to potential CSC club capability development within the sport, but there were noted issues and challenges inherent in its implementation. These issues and challenges are represented by the governance sub-themes listed below in Figure 11.

The first challenge faced by a CSC board in progressing towards a state of collaborative governance readiness is strategic balance. Lesley Ferkins and Shilbury (2015a), when examining strategic balance in NSOs, describe a holistic model of components or influences and the need for “equilibrium” between the inputs of volunteer part-time board members and the integration of board strategic processes. Whilst specifically tailored towards NSOs, the concept of a balance between operational knowledge and involvement in strategic functionality is also an important finding

identified in this study. The challenges CSCs faced in attempting to engage in strategic planning is noted by Doherty et al. (2014), who acknowledge that, whilst strategic planning was essential to the achievement of club goals, it was of an informal and reactionary nature. This finding was also noted by Lowther et al. (2016), who, in their study to establish a framework for effective governance in European grassroots sports organisations, stated that “a well-established strategy conceived to improve organisational readiness in terms of good governance is rarely defined” (p. 93). The ability to plan strategically was also seen in Case Study Two and Three as instrumental to the successful employment of paid staff with the CSC. The fourth governance subtheme and potential influencer of club capability was identified as strategic capability. Lesley Ferkins et al. (2005) were the first to conceptually propose the notion of “board strategic capability” within a sport governance setting, stating that “understanding the factors that constrain and enable sport boards to think and act strategically may provide an empirical basis for sports to build their strategic capabilities” (p.219). This finding was supported by the current study, with all three clubs demonstrating the need to become strategically capable. Strategic capability, within the context of a CSC and its potential development of club capability, was seen by each club as vital not only for operating within a better governing environment, but also for engaging in a more collaborative relationship with their respective governing bodies (Lesley Ferkins & Shilbury, 2010).

It is therefore logical to assume that focussing initially on chair leadership as a development driver, progressing towards a collaborative governance relationship with regional governing bodies would be a primary consideration in the potential development of club capability within community sport club boards.



*Figure 12: Leadership and Governance Influencers on Club Capability Development within Community Non-Profit Sport Club Boards*

### **Limitations and delimitations of the study**

Issues of size and scope, as well as credibility (reliability and validity), have been addressed in Chapter Three, however the primary limitations of this study pertain to the fact that only three clubs were involved, and all three clubs represented a single sporting code (rugby). Factors relating to potential research bias, as part of the qualitative research approach, are noted by Roulston and Shelton (2015) as “a potential source of error throughout the design and conduct of the study, and later in analysis and representation of findings.” (p. 335). As part of the thematic analysis approach, data were coded based on the researcher’s interpretation of themes and key insights. Drawing on work by Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007), who proposed a “qualitative legitimation model” as a

way to guard against bias noted above, each interviewee was given the opportunity to review and verify their personal transcripts in order to “check for representativeness” (p. 241). Further bias safeguards were drawn from Chapman (2014) in the form of triangulation data: having key findings discussed and substantiated within the focus group setting. Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011), in their delineation of the constructivist paradigm (as utilised in this study), disband the notion of the “disinterested scientist” in favour of the “co-constructor of knowledge” and emphasise that relationships between researcher and participants should be “dialogic, reciprocal, ethical, and involve critical self-awareness on the part of the researcher” (p. 335). Based on this emphasis, the researcher has undertaken at all times to recognise both his “inquirer perspective”, the implications for the participants’ “voices” as they were represented in text, and how those representations were constructed and interpreted.

### **Research Implications**

The identification of chair leadership and collaborative governance has a number of implications for CSC boards as potential influencers on club capability. Based on the literature review and as established by this study, whilst there are many similarities between NSOs and CSC boards, such as the changing sporting environment, and the volunteer makeup of the respective boards, distinct differences exist in the capacity of human resource, financial resource, and facilities. It is within the capacity of human resource that this study has identified the traditional, leader-centric sport based (referee, coach, captain) leadership model prevalent in participant perceptions of leadership within their respective sport clubs. This is considered the first key research implication, as it differs from previous academic research (Lesley Ferkins et al., 2010; Lesley Ferkins et al., 2017; O'Boyle & Shilbury, 2016; Shilbury et al., 2016) which, in the study of capability in NSO's, advocates the advancement towards a collective, shared leadership model. Viewing potential club capability development through a leadership lens, the identification of a leader-centric, hierarchical model indicates that self-assessment and development in the key areas of communication, skill set, succession planning, and volunteer recognition needs to occur at the top level – chair leadership – before it can be populated through the board with a view to improving the club's capability. Based on the findings of this study, the higher the level of emotional intelligence and appropriate application of situational leadership, the higher the perception of capable leadership. This

means that any attempt to develop the club capability of a CSC must first begin with understanding and development of the leadership capabilities of the chair.

The second key research implication is the identification of collaborative governance as an important influencer of club capability within a CSC. Whilst academic research has identified that collaborative governance is integral to an organisation's overall governing performance (O'Boyle & Shilbury, 2016; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015; Shilbury et al., 2016), it has also been identified that barriers and challenges within the sporting environment exist (O'Boyle et al., 2015). Each case study revealed a CSC in differing stages of collaborative governance capability.

Identified governance sub-influencers of club capability – strategic balance, strategic planning, paid staff, and strategic capability – are perceived as proverbial “stepping stones” towards having the ability to engage in collaborative governance. Accordingly, as shown below in Figure 13, this study suggests that the understanding and development of club capability within the realms of governance should begin with the strategic balance of the club board and integration of strategic planning with a view to progressing to being strategically capable and able to engage in collaborative governance.



*Figure 13: Progressive Model of Community Non-Profit Sport Club Capability*

### **Future Research Opportunities**

This study identified a need to understand how board leadership and governance can develop club capability within New Zealand community sport clubs. In addressing the research question, the study has also raised three research areas still to be examined:

1. How is community non-profit sport club board performance assessed and how can it be measured?
2. What impact does leadership and governance have on board performance?
3. What effect does board performance have on club capability?

Sub-research questions that exist specifically within leadership and governance realms could include: What impact do board member skills, experiences, and competencies have on a volunteer sport club board? And, given the elected leadership position, what impact does the chair's leadership style and use of emotional intelligence have on both individual board members and overall board performance? Welty Peachey et al. (2015), in their review of 40 years of leadership in sport also note the critical need to "move beyond cross-sectional leadership studies in sport management and incorporate longitudinal work to understand the leadership influences and how these influences may change over time" (p. 582). In critiquing the literature in sport leadership, it became apparent that the majority of studies were quantitative in nature (Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Therefore, due to the ambiguities inherent in the leadership process, sport leadership researchers may wish to consider a qualitative approach when conducting multilevel research (Hitt, Beamish, Jackson, & Mathieu, 2007).

From a governance perspective, possible research questions pertaining to the community non-profit sport club board structure could include: What impact might board size, the size of sub-committees, or the presence of independent, non-club members as appointed members of the board have on board performance? From a collective leadership perspective, as noted by (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015), what influence do different board leadership styles have on governance behaviour? Shilbury et al. (2016) have examined the emergence of collaborative sport governance and the noted associated barriers to its adoption within a federally-based sporting network. Future research could investigate the adoption of collaborative processes and systems with regards to a possible collaboration between community non-profit sport clubs and their provincial/regional organisations.

Hoye and Doherty (2011), in their directions for future research findings, stated: "It is not, however, sufficient to contemplate possible research questions in the absence of theoretical perspectives that may frame such future investigations" (p. 282). Whilst naming their choice of integrated models that informed their work, they also note that they do not suggest precluding additional or alternative perspectives that may frame the

examination of non-profit sport board performance, but simply seek to stress the importance that the theoretical perspective may have in the research design. With this in mind, based on the literature reviewed, the changing, dynamic nature of the community non-profit sport club environment, and the study findings, it would seem appropriate to consider the use of a contingency-based model as a theoretical framework for future studies. An in-depth action research approach utilising case studies could be used to evolve existing knowledge (Costello, 2003), and to discover ways to assess and develop club capability at voluntary board level by working in a co-interactive manner to enable the identification of the internal and external factors that influence a board's ability to operate and govern efficiently (Huxham & Vangen, 2003). Ultimately these emergent areas of research will contribute new knowledge within the realm of sport leadership and governance, as well as potentially influencing the design and capability of future community non-profit sport clubs.

## **Conclusion**

Based on its 2020 strategic plan, New Zealand Rugby identified a need to both assess and develop the current understanding, at community rugby club board level, of leadership and governance in order to potentially contribute to the ongoing development of rugby club capability. This study was therefore initiated both to meet New Zealand Rugby's request, and to contribute new academic knowledge in the areas of leadership, governance and club capability within the CSC setting. Accordingly, the focus of this study was to investigate the understanding and perceptions, at CSC board/committee level, of leadership, governance and club capability with a view to identifying potential areas of club capability development. The central research question of the study was, "How can community non-profit sport clubs develop club capability within the realms of board leadership and governance?", whilst sub-questions centred on understanding and perceptions of leadership, governance, and club capability.

It was concluded that board leadership within a CSC was leader-centric (chair leadership), hierarchical, and heavily influenced by elements of servant leadership, emotional intelligence, and situational leadership. It was also proposed that chair leadership behaviour may have been influenced by chairs' previous sporting experiences as players. A second conclusion established that CSC governance capabilities within case studies varied greatly, and that the ability to act collaboratively was significantly impacted by the respective CSC boards' strategic capabilities. A final conclusion regarding the

potential development of CSC club capability revealed that leadership and governance were interrelated, and that any development of club capability within CSCs needed to be accepted, introduced, and driven by the chair. This conclusion potentially provides clarity for regional governing bodies when considering how best to allocate resources in order to develop club capability.

In conclusion, this study found that leadership and governance within a CSC setting are interrelated, and that the volunteer makeup of a CSC board emphasised the need to consider the leadership of the board when attempting to understand the “health” of the CSC. Being a volunteer board member of a CSC is a hugely challenging role that is undertaken primarily out of a need to give back to a sport the members have played and love. Sport organisations, specifically rugby organisations, are tremendously fortunate to have these volunteers as the backbone of the delivery of sport, and although challenging, it is deemed vital to allocate resource to assist them with meeting the demands of the modern environment. It is therefore considered critical that more research studies of sport at all levels are undertaken to continue to assist sport organisations within New Zealand to develop and prosper.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A**

#### ***Interview guide***

**Interview guide questions:**

- How would you describe your ideal leader, what qualities would they possess?
- How would you describe the leadership within your professional environment?
- Who is your perceived leader at the club?
- How would you describe the leadership at your club?
- How would you describe the strengths and weaknesses of your clubs' current board?
- What is your understanding of the term 'governance'?
- Based on that understanding, how would you describe the governance of your professional environment in comparison to the club environment?
- What is your perception of a successful club?
- What are three qualities of a successful club?
- What are your perceptions of the issues and challenges your club may be facing?
- How would you describe your relationship with other clubs within your geographical boundary and also with the ARU (governing body)?
- What could you change, within the scope of leadership and governance, short, medium, and long-term at your club that could influence the success of the club?

**Appendix B**  
*Ethics approval*

## AUTEC Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology  
D-88, WU406 Level 4 WU Building City Campus  
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316  
E: [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)  
[www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics](http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics)

24 March 2017

Lesley Ferkins

Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Lesley

Re Ethics Application: **17/43 Sport club capability: Leadership and governance assessment and development**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 23 March 2020.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 23 March 2020;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 23 March 2020 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz).

All the very best with your research,



Kate O'Connor

Executive Secretary

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: [scotte\\_crawford@yahoo.com.au](mailto:scotte_crawford@yahoo.com.au); Gaye Bryham

**Appendix C**

***Participant Information Sheet***

## Participant Information Sheet

### **Date Information Sheet Produced:**

23<sup>rd</sup> May 2017

### **Project Title:**

*Sport club capability: Leadership and governance assessment and development. - An Invitation.*

Kia Ora, my name is Scott Crawford, Masters Student, of Auckland University of Technology (AUT). I am undertaking research for the fulfilment of my Masters in Sport and Exercise, in collaboration with New Zealand Rugby Union and Aktive Auckland, to assess and, potentially, develop club capability (particularly leadership and governance) within provincial rugby clubs in the wider Auckland area.

You have been identified by the New Zealand Rugby Union / Aktive Auckland as someone who may be suitable to assist me with my research. I would like to personally invite you to participate in this study and, it is important to note that, your choice whether to take part will in no way affect or influence your relationship with the New Zealand Rugby Union / Aktive Auckland.

### **What is the purpose of this research?**

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the current levels of understanding with regards to board leadership and governance within provincial club rugby boards. The knowledge gained from your insights can be used to identify ways/develop initiatives to increase the capability of rugby clubs. This information may also be used to advance the body of literature in this area through academic publications and presentations.

### **How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?**

You have been offered the opportunity to participate based on recommendations from consultation with New Zealand Rugby Union and Aktive Auckland representatives.

To select participants the following criteria was also considered:

1. Access: availability and willingness to engage in the interview process and offer insightful reflections.
2. Insight: appreciation for the importance of governance in a sporting context, an understanding of the perspective of those that exhibit leadership qualities and those that do not.
3. Diverse experience levels: having contributed to running a rugby club both within the context as a board member but also perhaps previously as coach, manager, administrator, volunteer, board member or another off-field position – both male and female

### **How do I agree to participate in this research?**

In order to participate in this research, you need to read and sign the attached consent form and return to myself upon attending the initial interview. Please note that agreeing to participate in this research will involve participation in the one-on one interview

process and (if required) a willingness to participate in the combined clubs focus group (a separate information sheet pertaining to the focus group is attached).

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or, allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

### **What will happen in this research?**

To participate in this research you will be interviewed, by me, for about one hour about your perspectives of club capability with regards to leadership and governance. Interviews will take place at your club headquarters or a public place appropriate to discussion purposes (depending where is most convenient for you).

### **What are the discomforts and risks? How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

It is not expected that you will experience any discomfort or risk by participating in this research. I may discuss potentially sensitive issues or ask questions of a personal/sensitive nature however, you do not have to answer anything which makes you feel uncomfortable. I am merely interested in your understanding of leadership and governance and whether actions can be proposed to develop club capability.

### **What are the benefits?**

For participants, this study is an opportunity to share your experiences and insight and contribute to developing your club capability. This insight could in turn benefit your club personally as well as the wider rugby community and other sports. This information is useful to the New Zealand Rugby union and Aktive Auckland as it will give insight as to the current perceptions of provincial rugby club board/committee members. This information could be used to benefit not only rugby but the wider sporting community as it is likely there are other sports dealing with similar issues. For AUT and the researchers, this study is part of a wider focus on rugby research. As research around this topic is very limited this study is an opportunity to add value to the body of research and knowledge in this area. This research could also be a platform for future research.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

Due to the collaboration with the New Zealand Rugby Union and Aktive Auckland protection of identifying factors such as club name and therefore potentially, participant identification, is not possible. Accordingly, you will be asked to indicate whether you wish to waive your right to confidentiality or, you may choose to not be implicitly identified in the research findings however, it is acknowledged that identification of your identity etc. may still be possible due to the size and nature of your industry. An external third party, who will not know the identities of participants, will complete transcription of the interviews. Participants will be provided with copies of the transcripts to review, approve and confirm that the recordings and data gathered is a true and accurate representation of what was said. Participants will be given the opportunity to provide feedback to the researcher if they wish to extract or remove any parts of the conversation. Participants who have so requested will not be implicitly identified in the final report, however, club identity will be made available to both the New Zealand Rugby Union and Aktive Auckland to allow them to provide appropriate assistance should the club request it in the future.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The cost of participation is your time. The interview will take approximately 1 hour.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You have one week to consider whether you would like to participate.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

A summary of the research findings will be emailed to you upon completion of the study.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Lesley Ferkins, [Lesley.ferkins@aut.ac.nz](mailto:Lesley.ferkins@aut.ac.nz), 022 072 9787.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext. 6038.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the Primary Researcher as follows:

Scott Crawford, [scottc\\_crawford@yahoo.com.au](mailto:scottc_crawford@yahoo.com.au),  
021 294 5714

***Project Supervisor Contact Details:***

Lesley Ferkins, [Lesley.ferkins@aut.ac.nz](mailto:Lesley.ferkins@aut.ac.nz)

*Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017. AUTEK Reference number 17/43.*

**Appendix D**

***Consent Form – Interview and Focus Group***

# Participant Consent Form

## Interview Consent Form

*Project title:* ***Sport club capability: Leadership and governance assessment and development.***

*Project Supervisor:* ***Dr Lesley Ferkins,***

*Researcher:* ***Scott Crawford***

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2017.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I agree to have my identity formally noted in the research findings or,
- I wish to not be formally identified in the research findings.
- I acknowledge that, due to the involvement of the New Zealand Rugby Union and Aktive Auckland, the identity of my club will be disclosed and therefore, potentially, my own identity cannot be protected
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed by an employed third party.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my identifiable data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one):  
Yes  No

Participant signature :

.....

Participant Name :

.....

Participant Contact Details (if appropriate) :

.....

.....

.....

.....

Date:

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017. AUTEK Reference number 17/43.***

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## Focus Group Consent Form

*Project title:*                   ***Sport club capability: Leadership and governance assessment and development.***

*Project Supervisor:*   ***Dr Lesley Ferkins,***

*Researcher:*                   ***Scott Crawford***

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2017.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that, due to the involvement of the New Zealand Rugby Union and Aktive Auckland, the identity of my club will be disclosed and, given other club board members will be present at the focus group, my own identity cannot be protected.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the focus groups and that focus group sessions will also be audio visually recorded, this is purely for data analysis purposes and, no recordings/ stills will be utilised in findings.
- I understand that any audio-visual recordings will be deleted after the research team has transcribed them.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to keep all matters discussed during the focus group session confidential.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes   
No

Participant signature :

.....

Participant Name :

.....  
Participant Contact Details (if appropriate) :

.....  
.....  
.....

Date :

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017. AUTEK Reference number 17/43.***

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form*

**Appendix E**  
*Participant Profiles*

## Participant Profiles

Board/Committee	Board Position	Gender, Age	Employment, Membership
Marist North Harbour Rugby and Sports Club Inc. 1A	Chair	Male, late 50's	Own business - Construction, club member 27 years
Marist North Harbour Rugby and Sports Club Inc. 1B	Treasurer	Male, mid 40's	Director – Chartered accountant, club member 14 years
Marist North Harbour Rugby and Sports Club Inc. 1C	NZ Universities	Male, mid 60's	Employed – Principal architect, club member 17 years
Marist North Harbour Rugby and Sports Club Inc. 1D	Rugby Chair	Male, mid 30's	Employed – Project manager, club member 5+ years
Marist North Harbour Rugby and Sports Club Inc. 1E	Junior Chair	Female, late 30's	Employed – Account manager, club member 10 years
Eden Rugby Club Inc. 2A	Chair	Male, late 60's	Retired, club member 40+ years
Eden Rugby Club Inc. 2B	Junior Club Captain	Male, mid 40's	Principal shareholder – Architect, club member 4 years
Eden Rugby Club Inc. 2C	General Committee	Male, mid-late 50's	Self-employed – Electrical, club member 35+ years
Eden Rugby Club Inc. 2D	Vice Chair	Male, mid-late 40's	Employed – Project manager, club member 5+ years
Pakuranga United Rugby Club Inc. 3A	Chair	Male, mid 50's	Director – Property development/construction, club member 15+ years
Pakuranga United Rugby Club Inc. 3B	Chair Senior Committee	Male, late 40's	Employed – Business banking manager, club member 40+ years
Pakuranga United Rugby Club Inc. 3C	President	Male, mid 50's	Director – Construction industry, club member 35+ years
Pakuranga United Rugby Club Inc. 3D	Club Captain	Male, mid 50's	Director – Manufacturing industry, club member 15 years
Pakuranga United Rugby Club Inc. 3E	Senior Committee	Male, late 40's	Employed – Police officer, club member 7+ years