

Australian Council for Educational Research

OECD IMPROVING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACTIVITY

AUSTRALIA: COUNTRY BACKGROUND REPORT

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By
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**The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily of DEST, the National
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PREFACE

The report has been prepared in accord with the structure and processes outlined in the *Guidelines for Country Participation* issued by the OECD in February 2006.

The report attempts to address the questions and issues raised in the OECD Guidelines, and indicates the extent to which they apply in the Australian context. It uses the chapter and section headings and recommended page lengths from the Guidelines. However, in some instances it has been necessary to relocate the main discussion of points to reduce duplication and improve the flow of the report. Cross-referencing has been included throughout.

The process of preparing the report has involved consultations, follow-up questions to organisations and individuals, and reviews of published and unpublished material. The Acknowledgements section indicates the wide range of people and organisations with whom we have engaged.

A key source has been the *Australian Education Index (AEI)*, which is compiled and published by ACER. We have concentrated on documents written about school leadership in Australia or relating to school leadership issues in Australia. Other contributions by Australian researchers and policy makers to the wider international literature on school leadership have generally not been discussed in the report.

It has not been possible to include all relevant material and perspectives on school leadership in Australia, given the constraints of space and time. We have tried to describe and analyse the main issues and developments, as well as provide some sense of the range of experiences and views where differences exist in various parts of the country or among different groups. The extensive Reference list will assist readers to obtain further information about developments that the report covers in only limited form.

There have been a substantial number of policy developments and initiatives in Australian school leadership in recent years, and the field is changing rapidly. In a number of instances, developments in the field are well ahead of documentation, and there is a lack of published information about the developments, let alone systematic evaluation of impact. Accordingly, in various parts of the report we draw attention to gaps in the knowledge base and suggest some priorities for future policy and research work.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACDE	Australian Council of Deans of Education
ACEL	Australian Council for Educational Leaders
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AEI	Australian Education Index
AEU	Australian Education Union
AGNAQS	Australian Government National Awards for Quality Schooling
AGQTP	Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme
AHISA	Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia
AJCPTA	Australian Joint Council of Professional Teaching Associations
APAPDC	Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council
APCSSA	Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools of Australia
APC	Australian Principals Centre
APPA	Australian Primary Principals Association
ASIC	Australian Securities and Investment Commission
ASPA	Australian Secondary Principals Association
CBR	Country Background Report
CECV	Catholic Education Commission of Victoria
DEA	Department of Education and the Arts (Queensland)
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
DET	Department of Education and Training (Western Australia)
HOD	Heads of Department
IDEAS	Innovative Design for Enhancing Achievements in Schools
IEU	Independent Education Union
ISCA	Independent Schools Council of Australia
LOLSO	Leadership for Organisational Learning and Student Outcomes
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NAC	National Advisory Committee
NCEC	National Catholic Education Commission
NIQTSL	National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership (since 2005 Teaching Australia)
NSR	Net Separation Rate
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OL	Organisational Learning
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SACLE	South Australian Centre for Leaders in Education
SDP	School Development Planning
SMART	School Measurement Assessment and Reporting Toolkit
SES	Socio-Economic Status
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WALNA	Western Australian Literacy and Numeracy Assessment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The report provides an overview of school leadership developments and issues in Australia, as a contribution to the OECD's *Improving School Leadership* Activity.

The context of Australian schooling

2. Australia's population is just over 20 million people. One-third of Australians are either first or second-generation immigrants, mainly from Europe but increasingly from Asia. About 3% of Australians are of Aboriginal or Indigenous descent. Australia is a highly diverse and economically dynamic society, and becoming more so. Schools need to contribute to social and economic development by meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse range of young people with varying socioeconomic, language and family backgrounds.

3. Although Australia has a good record in international comparisons of student performance, there are strong pressures to lift schooling quality and improve access. The Australian community has become more informed about, involved in and supportive of education, but also more critical and challenging. The school has become a major focus of efforts to lift educational quality. More responsibilities have been devolved to schools and accountability demands have increased. School leadership is widely recognised as an important but challenging role.

School governance and leadership

4. Australia does not have a single school system. Under the federal political structure, education is the responsibility of the eight states and territories. While schooling across the country has many commonalities, there are a number of differences that affect school operations. The situation is made even more complex by the existence of a substantial and growing non-government school sector, which enrolls 33% of all students and encompasses a wide variety of school types. However, in recent years there have been significant steps towards achieving greater national consistency across the eight states and territories. Nevertheless, caution is needed in generalising across the diversity of Australian schooling.

5. School governance and policy in most states and territories has traditionally been highly centralised. Two factors are reducing the degree of centralisation. First, non-government schools are growing rapidly, and while all non-government schools receive some public funding and have to meet registration requirements, they have a large measure of operational autonomy. Second, in the government school sector, there is a growing trend towards devolving decision making to principals and elected school councils or representative boards, though this is still limited in most systems.

6. The principals of most government schools are required to work with their staff and community to develop strategic plans with clearly articulated outcome targets and improvement strategies. In some states these include reporting students' performance against state averages and schools with similar student populations, as well as surveys of teachers' job satisfaction, surveys of students' views, and surveys of parents' views on the school.

7. While principals are vested with overall operational authority, increasingly school leadership tends to be shared or distributed, and there is an expectation that school principals are able to facilitate and work effectively with others with significant leadership roles. School networks are also becoming increasingly important and are broadening the scope of school leaders' work.

8. There is increasing recognition that there needs to be greater clarity around the work school leaders are expected to undertake if they are to be successful in retaining a focus on improving student learning.

Enhancing learning and school leadership

9. Australian research detailed in Chapter 4 confirms that the organisation and leadership in individual Australian schools influences students' learning. Student academic achievement, academic self-concept and engagement in school and further learning are shaped by teacher and school practices - that is, practices that that can be influenced by school leadership.

10. The research shows that the principal has an important role to play in successful Australian schools and how they are run. Leaders contribute to student learning indirectly through their influence on other people, organisational capacity and context. Success is more likely when the schools are collegial, consultative and collaborative. Effective leadership takes account of a combination of contextual, individual, organisational, outcome and evaluative/accountability factors over time.

11. Creating the conditions for effective school leadership requires focus and support from the school systems within which most leaders work. The conditions and policies under which school leaders can exercise this role most effectively include:

- an environment that emphasises school leaders' responsibility for educational leadership;
- much less emphasis on the organisational or managerial role than has previously been the case;
- avoidance of 'the great man or woman' theory of leadership;
- ongoing, relevant supportive professional learning; and
- data and other sources of information that provide schools with valid, reliable and easily administered ways of monitoring performance, diagnosing student learning difficulties and implementing appropriate strategies.

12. A key overall priority is broadening what counts as good schooling. Evidence needs to be collected and evaluated on the social outcomes of schooling as well as on cognitive and academic outcomes.

The attractiveness of school leaders' roles

13. Although school leadership is prominent in policy and practice, the evidence detailed in Chapter 5 suggests that Australia is experiencing serious leadership supply problems. These problems include the replenishment of principal vacancies, the identification of aspirants for vacancies and 'next generation' school leaders, and workplace wellbeing issues associated with leadership.

14. There are around 20,000 principals and deputy principals in Australia, which constitutes about 8% of the total full-time equivalent teacher workforce, or an average of about two such persons per school. The majority of principals are male, with females better represented among primary principals than at secondary level, although the proportion of female principals overall is rising. A large proportion of principals are aged over 50 years, which indicates that substantial replacements will need to be recruited in the next few years as they retire.

15. Eligibility for a principalship appointment in Australia generally requires a (four year) undergraduate qualification and subsequent registration as a teacher by a regulatory authority,

followed by evidence of good teaching and experience in school-wide leadership and management responsibilities. There are no other formal qualification requirements for becoming a principal, although many aspirant and practising principals do engage in postgraduate study and a variety of forms of professional learning.

16. Data on applications for vacant principal positions suggest a broad trend of low and, in some instances, diminishing number of applications. Research on the reasons for this situation points to the impact of negative media coverage of school and leadership issues, concerns in some systems about principal appointment and selection processes, the intensified nature of leaders' work, and principal stress. Paradoxically, however, while surveys of principals report experiences of role overload and stress, the large majority also report that their role as principal gives them great satisfaction.

17. Teacher employers, leaders' professional associations, and universities have initiated a wide range of programmes in response to the issues of leader supply and demand, including measures to address leadership capacity-building, first-time and experienced principal mentoring and shadowing programmes, and professional learning programmes for leading teachers and assistant principals. In general, though, there is a lack of clear and detailed knowledge of identifiable and typical teacher and leader career mobility and progression pathways, along with such key influences on aspirations as sense of self-efficacy, capability and motivation.

18. The role expansion that has occurred as part of principals' work intensification highlights the need for a review and possible re-design of the principal role and other senior leadership roles, especially in the context of greater school decision-making responsibility and accountability.

Professional learning of school leaders

19. While investment in school leadership professional learning is difficult to quantify, it is clear that there is an expanding range of leadership learning activities in Australia. The professional learning of school leaders remains a relatively under-examined area in terms of research and evaluation.

20. Issues to do with succession planning are fuelling a need for better pathways and processes of support for prospective and established school leaders. Most school systems have now developed a leadership continuum framework that traces the 'leadership journey' from aspirations through to beginning in leadership roles, consolidation and growth, high achievement in the role, and transitions to other roles. Such continua are being used to support the preparation and ongoing professional learning of school leaders by identifying the types of foundation programmes and other activities needed at different stages of their careers.

21. The use of standards frameworks to guide the professional learning and development of school leaders is a notable development in recent years. Standards frameworks are starting to have a major role in helping school leaders to learn what it is that they need to know and be able to do in order to develop professionally. Generally, these standards now look more like profession-wide standards than the lists of competencies and elements of job descriptions which characterised many of the statements about leaders' work in the 1990s. The more recently developed standards are generally broader and deeper, and they reflect a complex and comprehensive professional knowledge base.

22. A number of these initiatives have been developed collaboratively and shared across state and territory education authorities and sectors of schooling. However, at a national level, there is no consistent or coordinated framework for providing professional learning for school leaders in Australia. The wide array of professional learning opportunities on offer can meet a

diverse range of school leaders' needs in different settings and stages of career. Equally, however, diversity of provision and providers increases the complexities involved in quantifying levels of investment in professional learning, coordinating efforts and drawing conclusions about impact and effectiveness.

23. A key challenge for developers of school leadership programmes is to identify those factors that are essential in the preparation of school leaders, including the capacity to take on a broad range of responsibilities and facilitate shared leadership, and the relationship between leadership and student outcomes. The relatively small scale of many of the leadership development programmes, and the associated research and evaluation studies, makes it difficult to develop knowledge and understanding of quality professional leadership learning.

1. THE NATIONAL CONTEXT OF SCHOOLING

1.1 Introduction

24. This chapter provides the broad context for consideration of school leadership issues in Australia. It briefly outlines the political, demographic, economic, social and cultural developments that shape the issues that schools need to address. The structure of the school system is the focus of Chapter 2.

1.2 Political, social and cultural background

25. The Commonwealth of Australia comprises six states and two internal territories: New South Wales (NSW), Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. Figure 1 shows the location of the states and territories, their population sizes and capital cities. Australia also has a number of small external territories located in the Asia/Pacific region.

26. Australia is a parliamentary democracy with three levels of government: Australian (or Federal or Commonwealth); state/territory; and local. It is a federal political structure; with the Australian Constitution defining the responsibilities of the Australian Government. These include foreign relations and trade, defence and immigration. The states and territories are responsible for all matters not assigned to the Commonwealth, and each has its own elected legislature.

27. Education is a state/territory responsibility, although the Australian Government is playing an increasingly important role with regard to policy development, funding, accountability and reporting.

28. Australia has a population of just over 20 million people. One-third of Australians are either first or second-generation immigrants. The Australian population is mainly of European background and recent immigration has added to the ethnic and cultural diversity, especially from Asia. Australia is often referred to as a 'multicultural' society.

29. About 3% of Australians are of Aboriginal or Indigenous descent and one-third of these live in isolated communities. Indigenous Australians' school completion rate is only half that of the rest of the population. Improving education outcomes for Indigenous students is a high priority of all governments.

30. English is the official language of Australia. At least 15% of the population speak a language other than English at home, with Italian, Greek, Cantonese and Arabic being the most common (Australian Education International, 2006). There are a large number of different Indigenous languages. Schools and other support agencies place a strong emphasis on developing English language proficiency among recently arrived non English-speaking immigrant groups. There is also encouragement for the development of languages other than English.

31. The Australian continent covers a vast area of 7.7 million square kilometres, but much is extremely arid. Most people live near the coast, especially in the southeast of the country. It is a highly urbanised society with two-thirds of the population living in cities of more than 100,000 people. Almost 50% of the population lives in the three largest cities (Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane). Most of the country is sparsely populated with small communities separated by large distances. There are major challenges in attracting leaders and teachers to rural areas and providing adequate support to isolated schools.

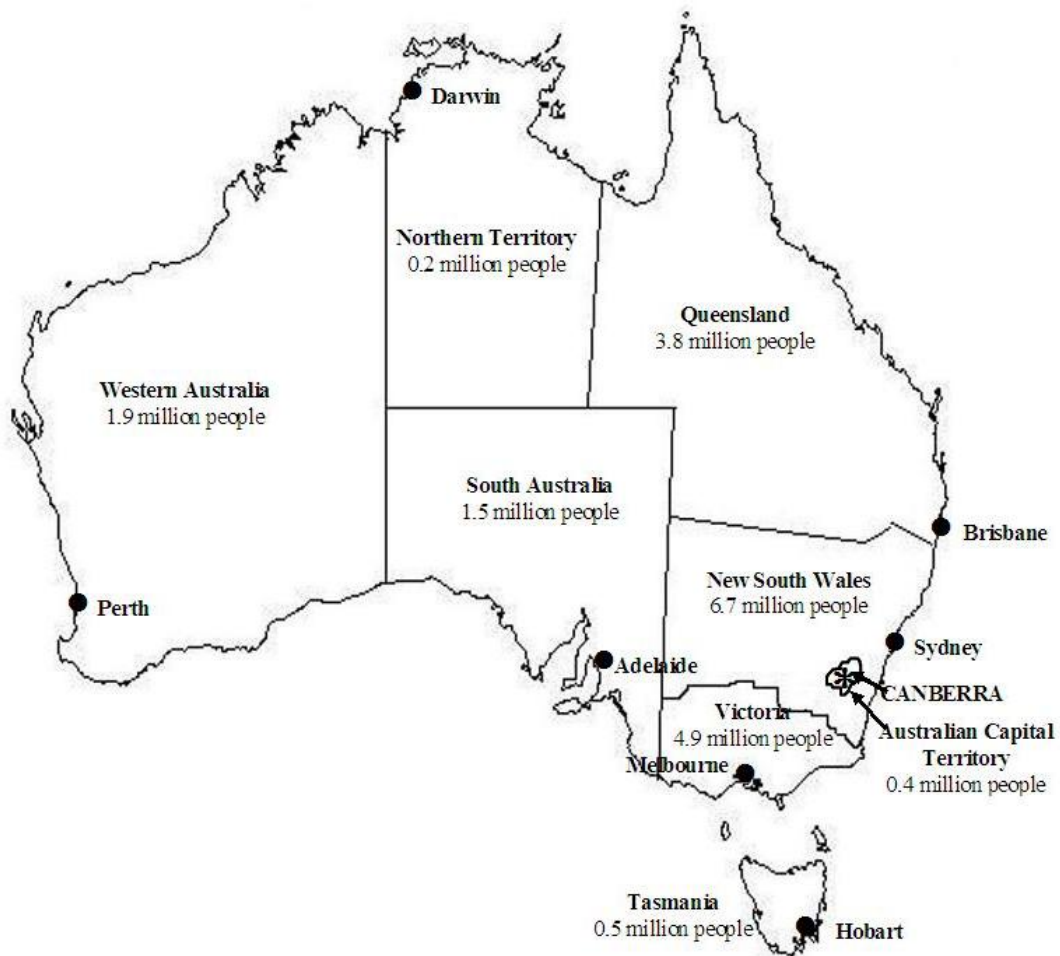


Figure 1: States and territories: population and capital cities

1.3 Broad population trends

32. In 2006 the population of Australia was 20.5 million (ABS, 2006a), having grown from 15.6 million in 1984 and 17.9 million in 1994 (ABS, 2006b). Over the past five years the annual rate of population increase has averaged 1.2%, which was higher than for most OECD countries. Almost half of the population increase is due to net overseas immigration; in 2004 net immigration was around 120,000 people. On current trends, the population is projected to reach about 24 million by 2025 (ABS, 2006a).

33. While the total population has continued to grow, the population is ageing due to sustained low fertility rates and increased life expectancy. Table 1 summarises the age structure of the Australian population in 2005. The proportion of the population aged less than 15 years has fallen from 24% in 1984 to just under 20% in 2005, while the proportion aged 60 years and over has risen from 14% to over 17% (ABS, 2006b). As a consequence, the median age of the population has increased from 30.5 years in 1984 to 36.6 years in 2005.

34. Population ageing is expected to decrease the proportion of children aged less than 15 years to about 16% of the population by 2021 (ABS, 2006b), whereas the proportion of those aged 65 and over will increase to 19%, and the median age will rise to 41.2 years. The changing population structure suggests that the number of school students is likely to show little change over the next 15 years.

Table 1: Population age structure, Australia, 2005

Aged 0-14 years (%)	19.6%
Aged 15-59 years (%)	63.0%
Aged 60 years and over (%)	17.3%
Median age	36.6 years
Total fertility rate (births per woman)	1.75 children
Life expectancy at birth	80.2 years

Source: ABS (2006b).

1.4 Economic and labour market trends

35. Australia is a high-income country. Per capita income in 2005 was around US\$32,000, which is one of the highest levels among OECD countries (OECD, 2006a). Australia has had over 15 consecutive years of economic growth, averaging around 3% per annum.

36. The strong economic performance is due to a number of factors, including: Australia's extensive natural resources and the global boom in commodities that has fuelled exports to Asia; an increasingly well-educated workforce; structural reforms that have opened up the economy to investment and competition, and increased productivity; and macroeconomic stability (OECD, 2006a).

37. Nevertheless, there are substantial economic concerns. The Australian domestic market is only small, and local manufacturers struggle to compete with imports from low-cost countries. The distances and low population density mean that production and distribution costs are high. The economy is highly sensitive to world economic conditions. Overseas debt is high. Unemployment, which has fallen to 5%, the lowest level in 20 years, is concentrated in certain regions and among those with low levels of education. In some sectors and regions there are concerns about a shortage of skilled workers limiting economic growth.

38. The majority of Australian employees work in the service sector (ABS, 2006b). In 2003-04 the largest sectors of employment included retail (15%) property and business services (12%) health and community services (10%), construction (8%) and education (7%). Manufacturing employed 11% of employed persons in 2003-04, a decline of three percentage points since 1993-94. Primary industries (agriculture and mining) employed 5% of employed persons, which is the lowest proportion working in these industries in Australia's history.

39. The overall labour force has increased only slowly over the past 20 years (from 61% in 1984-85 to 64% in 2004-05), but the pattern of change differs markedly between females and males (ABS, 2006b). Labour force participation among women has increased from 46% to 57% over this 20-year period whereas the male participation rate has fallen from 76% to 72% over the same period. Over 70% of women in the 25-34 year age group are now working, although often in a part-time capacity, and, in most households with school-age children, both parents work.

40. The fastest job growth is in industries and occupations with high skill demands and qualifications (Shah & Burke, 2006). Between 1995 and 2005 the number of employees with post-school qualifications increased by 45% compared to 20% growth in employment overall. It is projected that over the 10 years to 2016, the number of employees with post-school qualifications will increase by two million (34%) while the number without post-school qualifications will decline by 0.8 million (20%).

41. Education is seen as critical for economic wellbeing, and there is an increasing emphasis on lifelong learning as an organising framework. Schools and their leaders have had to become innovative in responding to new social and economic demands.

1.5 Implications for schooling

42. Australia has changed substantially over the past 25 years. High levels of immigration have contributed to creating a diverse population, the economy has opened to international competition and has grown strongly, levels of education have risen, and there have been major changes in family structures and ways of living. Schools need to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse range of young people with varying socioeconomic, language and family backgrounds.

43. Economic, social and educational changes have led to more young people completing secondary education. In 2005, the apparent retention rate of commencing secondary students through to Year 12 was 75% compared to 72% in 1995 and only 46% in 1985 (ABS, 2006c). In 2004, 38% of 20-24 year-olds were enrolled in tertiary education (ABS, 2006b). Nevertheless, substantial concerns remain that disadvantaged young people are less likely to complete secondary education and that, overall, Australia needs to continue to expand the provision of education and training places and lift education participation rates.

44. There are strong pressures in school communities to lift educational quality and improve access. Parents are better educated and demand that schools perform well. Parents are increasingly demanding more choices within and across school sectors. Schools are required to better plan their programmes and to report regularly on their performance to state and territory education authorities and parents. The Australian community has become more informed about, involved in and supportive of education, but also more critical and challenging.

45. The individual school is the major focus of efforts to lift educational quality and improve equity. More responsibilities have been devolved to schools, and accountability demands have increased. School leadership is now widely recognised as an important but challenging role.

2. FEATURES OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

2.1 Introduction

46. This chapter outlines the main features of the school system, its goals, trends and key policy issues. The chapter is intended to provide much of the detail that is cross-referenced in the rest of the report.

2.2 Main structural features

47. Australia does not have a single school system. Under the federal political structure, education is a state and territory responsibility. While schooling across the country has many commonalities, there are some differences among states and territories in the structure of primary and secondary education, the ages at which children start and complete school, the curriculum, and assessing student achievement. However, as outlined in Sections 2.4 and 2.6 below, in recent years there have been significant steps towards achieving greater national consistency in schooling across the states and territories.

48. School governance and policy in most states and territories has traditionally been highly centralised in the Minister of Education and the Education Department. Two factors are reducing the degree of centralisation. First, non-government schools are growing rapidly, and in 2005 enrolled 33% of students (compared to 26% in 1985). While all non-government schools receive some public funding and have to meet registration requirements, they have a large measure of operational autonomy. Second, in the government school sector, while some State Education Departments still retain a large measure of central control over the day-to-day operation of schools and staff appointments, there is a growing trend towards devolving such decision making to principals and elected school councils or representative boards. Curriculum, however, remains largely centrally determined, and government schools have to satisfy extensive accountability requirements.

49. The size and composition of the non-government school sector is a function of historical factors and more recent changes in parental aspirations and policies on government funding (Skilbeck & Connell, 2003). The Australian population has always included a large proportion of Catholics, and the Catholic authorities maintained their own schools after the government school systems were founded in the late nineteenth century. Other Christian denominations have also maintained and developed schools, as have the Jewish and Muslim communities, among others. There are also growing numbers of independent non-religious schools focused on particular educational approaches (e.g. Montessori or Steiner) or students with special needs. Non-government schools derive their income from fees, endowments and financial assistance from both the Australian and state/territory governments (see Section 2.8).

50. The government, Catholic and independent sectors of schooling differ in their governance, autonomy and funding, and in the roles and responsibilities of school leaders. Australian schooling is very diverse, and becoming more so.

51. As shown in Table 2, in 2005 Australia had 3.35 million school students, an increase of 8% since 1995 (ABS, 2006c). The total number of students is projected to be fairly static over the next 10 years, but there are very large differences in enrolment growth between different regions. Student numbers are increasing rapidly in outer suburbs of the major cities and in some coastal locations, but declining in inner suburbs and in many rural areas. The unevenness of enrolment change is a challenge for the provision of school facilities and teacher workforce management.

Table 2: Number of schools, students and teaching staff, Australia, 1995 to 2005

	Schools ¹	Students ²	Teaching staff ³
1995	9 648	3 109 337	202 400
2000	9 600	3 247 425	218 050
2005	9 623	3 348 139	235 794

Notes

1. Comprises full-time day primary, secondary and special schools, and primary or secondary distance education providers.

2. Full-time students. In 2005 there were also 25 073 part-time students.

3. Expressed in full-time equivalent terms. 'Teaching staff' includes principals, deputy principals and senior teachers mainly involved in administration.

Source: ABS (2006c).

52. In 2005 there were 9,623 schools in Australia, a figure that has changed little since 1995 (Table 2). However, during that time a number of new schools have opened in areas of population growth in different parts of the country, while other schools have closed in areas of population decline.

53. On average, in 2005 each school enrolled 348 students. However, this average figure obscures the fact that school size varies widely – almost 900 primary schools enrolled fewer than 35 students, and almost 400 secondary schools had more than 1,000 students.

54. The detailed enrolment figures for the government, Catholic and independent school sector are shown in Table 3. In 2005 government schools enrolled 67% of students, Catholic schools enrolled 20%, and independent schools enrolled 13%. Government schools enrol a higher proportion of all primary students (71%) than secondary students (62%).

Table 3: Number of full-time students by category of school and level of schooling, Australia 2005 (% of total enrolments)

	Government	Non-government			All schools
		Catholic	Independent	Total non-government	
Primary	1 370 384 (41%)	368 845 (11%)	192 940 (6%)	561 785 (17%)	1 932 169 (58%)
Secondary	875 703 (26%)	304 137 (9%)	236 130 (7%)	540 267 (16%)	1 415 970 (42%)
Total	2 246 087 (67%)	672 982 (20%)	429 070 (13%)	1 102 052 (33%)	3 348 139 (100%)

Source: ABS (2006c).

2.3 Primary and secondary schools

55. Figure 2 outlines the broad structure of schooling in the six states and two territories. Education is compulsory from ages 6 to 15 or 16 years, and between these ages there is virtually 100% attendance at school. Most children start primary school at 5 years of age (and a majority of 4 year olds attend pre-school on a part-time basis). Primary schooling lasts for either 6 or 7 years, depending on the state/territory concerned. Secondary education normally starts at around 12 years of age and is provided for either five or six years. Some states and territories divide secondary education into high schools (Years 7-8 to 10) and senior secondary colleges (Years 11 and 12). There is increasing interest in restructuring some schools around the concept of the middle years of schooling, which span upper primary and lower secondary education.

Approx. age at mid-year	Year level	NSW, Victoria, Tasmania, ACT	South Australia, Northern Territory, Western Australia	Queensland (a)
17	Year 12	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary
16	Year 11			
15	Year 10			
14	Year 9			
13	Year 8			
12	Year 7			
11	Year 6	Primary	Primary	Primary
10	Year 5			
9	Year 4			
8	Year 3			
7	Year 2			
6	Year 1			
5	Pre-year 1			

(a) since 2003 a Pre-year 1 trial has operated in Queensland

Figure 2: Structure of schooling by state and territory

56. Students in Australian primary schools generally have one teacher for most subjects, and are usually promoted each year. The first one or two years of secondary school typically consist of a general curriculum which is followed by all students, and, in later years, a core of subjects is supplemented by students being able to select additional optional subjects. Students in secondary schools generally have a different teacher for each separate subject.

57. Almost all Australian schools are comprehensive in nature in that they provide a broad general curriculum for all students. In recent years there has been a major initiative to introduce vocational education and training (VET) programmes into secondary schools, and over 90% of secondary schools now deliver some VET subjects (Lamb & Vickers, 2006). Several states have recently introduced a small number of specialist government secondary schools in areas such as mathematics, science, the performing arts and sport. The Australian Government is funding 25 Australian Technical Colleges across Australia for Year 11 and 12 students who wish to study for their Year 12 certificate and start an apprenticeship whilst still at school. Some states are also introducing specialist technical colleges for senior secondary students.

58. Almost all government primary schools are coeducational, as are most government secondary schools. Single sex schooling is more common in the non-government sector, especially at the secondary level, where about one-third of schools are single sex.

59. In Australia, most students with physical or intellectual disabilities attend mainstream schools and receive additional resources, such as teaching aides and learning equipment, to help ensure their active participation in school programmes. For some students, mainstream schooling is not possible and a range of special schools has evolved to cater for these students until they reach early adulthood. A strong feature of programmes in these schools is to provide students with the skills for independent living.

60. Many Australian schools and state and territory education departments actively recruit overseas students, especially at the final two years of secondary school. Most of these students pay full tuition fees for their study, including in government schools, and many go on to enrol in Australian tertiary education.

2.4 Curriculum and learning outcomes

61. There is no single curriculum across the country. Each state and territory determines its own curriculum. However, in practice there are many common elements. Almost all school students study a curriculum that includes English, mathematics, science, social studies, humanities, the creative and performing arts, technology (particularly information technology), physical education and, less frequently, a language other than English. There are currently national initiatives to achieve greater national consistency in school curriculum across the country.

62. Curriculum and assessment is underpinned by the *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century* (MCEETYA, 2001), which provides a framework for national reporting on student achievement. The National Goals identify eight key areas in which students are expected to obtain high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding: the arts; English; health and physical education; languages other than English; mathematics; science; studies of society and environment; and technology. In particular, the National Goals stress the need for students to have obtained numeracy and English literacy skills. During the course of their education, students are also expected to have participated in vocational education and training programmes and in programmes and activities which foster and develop their enterprise skills.

63. Within states, central authorities generally specify broad curriculum guidelines, and schools have considerable autonomy in deciding curriculum detail, textbooks and teaching methodology. At the senior secondary level (Years 11 and 12), the curriculum is more likely to be specified in detail by a state authority responsible for examining and certifying student achievement.

64. In recent years there has been some re-centralisation of curriculum specification within states, and schools are increasingly required to report on their achievements in specified areas. School principals in both the government and non-government sectors are increasingly evaluated in terms of how well their school achieves designated objectives.

65. A number of assessments have been conducted in Australia to investigate student performance, each of which provides an indication of Australian students' knowledge and understanding in at least one of the key areas identified in the National Goals. Some assessments are conducted annually across Australia and provide an indication of the number of students reaching a set standard in a particular area of the curriculum. As part of the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan, national benchmarks of performance in reading, writing and numeracy have been developed for students in Years 3, 5 and 7. Other assessments form part of international studies examining the performance of Australian students within an international context.

2.5 Teaching personnel

66. As Table 2 indicated, in 2005 there were 235,794 full-time equivalent teaching staff in Australian schools, which is an increase of 16% since 1995 (ABS, 2006c). In 2005, the student-teacher ratio in primary schools was 16.2:1 and 12.2:1 in secondary schools (Table 4).¹

Table 4: Student-teacher ratios¹ by category of school and level of schooling, Australia 1995 to 2005

	Government schools		Non-government schools		All schools	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
1995	17.9	12.6	18.9	12.8	18.2	12.7
2000	17.1	12.6	17.9	12.5	17.3	12.6
2005	16.1	12.4	16.6	11.9	16.2	12.2

Note

1. The student-teacher ratio is calculated by dividing the number of full-time equivalent students by the number of full-time equivalent teaching staff. 'Teaching staff' includes principals, deputy principals and senior teachers mainly involved in administration. The student-teacher ratio is lower than the average class size.

Source: ABS (2006c).

67. As teacher numbers have increased more rapidly than student enrolments in recent years, the student-teacher ratio has fallen since 1995 (Table 4). The decline has been larger in primary schools than in secondary schools, which reflects increasing attention to the early

¹ As the teacher numbers underlying the table include some staff who may not have direct class teaching responsibilities (e.g. principals and other senior teachers), caution is needed when comparing the student-teacher ratios in Australia to those in countries that exclude such teachers. It should also be noted that average class sizes are higher than the student-teacher ratios.

years of schooling. The decline in the student-teacher ratio has occurred in both government and non-government schools.

68. The teaching workforce is becoming more feminised: in 2005 68% of teachers were female compared to 64% in 1995 (ABS, 2006c). There are more female teachers in primary schools (80%) than secondary schools (56%). The teacher workforce is ageing: in 2003 the median age was estimated as 45 years (MCEETYA, 2004), and most systems report concerns about replacing the large number of teachers and principals likely to retire in the near future.

69. Teachers and school leaders in government schools are generally employed by a central Education Department in the state or territory concerned, and their salaries and working conditions are fairly standardised within each system. These working conditions are generally an outcome of bargaining between employers and teacher unions. In some states, local school councils are responsible for selecting and employing school leaders in government schools. In the non-government sectors, schools are more autonomous: employment decisions are generally exercised at individual school level, and employment conditions are generally more diverse than in the government school sector.

70. The labour market for teachers and school leaders is largely state and territory based and most teachers remain working in the state or territory where they were first employed.

71. Australia has two national teacher unions. The Australian Education Union (AEU) has a membership of 165,000 educators who work in public schools, colleges, early childhood and vocational settings in all states and territories of Australia. Members include teachers and allied educational staff, principals and administrators mainly in government school and TAFE systems. The Independent Education Union (IEU) has a current membership of over 60,000 and is the federally registered industry union representing all employees working in non-government schools and institutions across Australia. Similar to the AEU, the IEU has a wide membership base, which includes principals, teachers and various categories of clerical and educational support staff in primary and secondary schools, and teachers working in some private pre-school settings.

72. Australia has a large number of professional associations of teachers and leaders at state and territory and national levels. Teachers' professional associations focus on subject areas (e.g. science, English or mathematics education), leadership (e.g. primary and secondary principals' associations), types of schools (e.g. special schools or rural schools), or types of students (e.g. gifted students or students with learning disabilities). The professional associations play an important role in supporting teachers' professional learning and in policy development. As an example, Box 1 describes the structure and role of the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC).

Box 1: Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC)

The APAPDC is the national professional development body owned by the four Australian peak principals' associations: the Australian Secondary Principals Association, the Australian Primary Principals Association, the Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools of Australia, and the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia. While it does not represent these organisations, it does deliver a range of professional development programmes and initiatives on their behalf. APAPDC is governed by a Board comprising nominees of these four associations, and managed by a secretariat.

APAPDC has a national perspective. It works within the context of the national education agenda and seeks to support the peak associations and their affiliates. APAPDC collaborates, directly or indirectly, with Australian education, health and justice systems and sectors, and appropriate professional organisations and associations, and university and community groups. APAPDC is funded through the cost recovery services it offers to the profession and through funded projects that it manages, such as the *Dare to Lead* project, funded by the Australian Government, which focuses on improved outcomes in Indigenous education and school wellbeing (see Chapter 6).

2.6 Policy development at national level

73. As noted in Section 2.2, Australia does not have a single school system, but different state and territory arrangements that govern schooling. However, compared to some other federal systems, the differences in schooling across the country are not great and are becoming less so.

74. Strategic policy development and delivery of programme services at the national level are coordinated through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). This includes Ministers from the Australian Government and all state and territory governments. Functions of MCEETYA include:

...co-ordination of strategic policy at the national level, negotiation and development of national agreements on shared objectives and interests (including principles for Australian Government/state relations) in the Council's areas of responsibility, negotiations on scope and format of national reporting on areas of responsibility, sharing of information and collaborative use of resources towards agreed objectives and priorities, and coordination of communication with, and collaboration between, related national structures. (MCEETYA, 2006)

75. MCEETYA coordinates and publishes the annual *National Report on Schooling*.

76. As noted earlier, key common elements of schooling nationally are: the 1999 agreement on the *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*; and national reporting of student achievement, by state and territory, against agreed benchmarks in some of the areas in the National Goals (the intention is to eventually report on them all).

77. These developments have helped to raise the political profile of schooling. The annual assessments are reported and debated extensively. In some states, individual schools are required to report their comparative performance to parents, and the results are used to guide state programmes. Although the main reference point for schools, principals and teachers is still the state and territory level, national developments and frameworks are becoming increasingly important in the work of schools.

2.7 Establishment of Teaching Australia

78. In 2003, the Australian Government announced that it would establish a national institute for quality teaching and school leadership. After operating for a year on an interim basis, Teaching Australia – Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership was launched in 2005. Teaching Australia has been set up with funding from the Australian Government as an independent national body for the teaching profession, with the objective of raising the status, quality and professionalism of teachers and school leaders. Activities underway include:

- the development of a voluntary system for Australia-wide accreditation of pre-service teacher education programmes;
- the development of national professional standards for accomplished teaching and school leadership;
- delivery of a national professional learning programme for principals;
- analysis and dissemination of research on quality teaching and school leadership;
- scenario building exploring the future of teaching; and
- organising the Australian Government National Awards for Quality Schooling.

79. Teaching Australia is a new player in a complex network of government, employer, regulatory, industrial and professional bodies involved in the teaching and leadership areas. It remains to be seen what the particular contribution of a national body of this kind will be.

2.8 Funding for schools

80. Australia has a mixed model of school funding, with funds provided by different levels of government, and by parents and non-government organisations. The current funding responsibilities are a result of historical decisions regarding funding to schools.

81. States and territories have the primary responsibility for funding government schools. They also provide supplementary assistance to non-government schools. The Australian Government is the primary source of public funding for non-government schools, while also providing supplementary assistance to government schools. Most non-government schools have some religious affiliation, with approximately two-thirds of non-government school students enrolled in Catholic schools.

82. There are no tuition fees for government schooling² although most government schools ask parents for financial contributions towards specific activities or facilities. Government schools are funded mainly from public sources (90% from state/territory governments and 10% from the Australian Government) and a portion from private sources such as voluntary parent contributions. In 2003-04, government recurrent expenditure per student in government schools was A\$10,000 (Productivity Commission, 2006). Per student expenditure in government secondary schools was 28% higher than in primary schools.

83. In the Catholic education system, Catholic Education Commissions in each state and territory coordinate the organisation and provision of Catholic Education. Australian and state/territory government funding is provided to the commissions and allocated to schools within government guidelines and according to specific needs within the system.

84. All non-government schools receive some public funding, with the largest proportion (from the Australian Government) based on the socioeconomic status (SES) of each non-

² Some overseas residents with a student visa to study in Australia pay full-cost fees at government schools.

government school's community. The level of tuition fees varies widely: the fees may be virtually nil in some non-government schools serving low-SES areas, and over A\$15,000 per year in schools in high demand for enrolments. On average, Catholic schools receive about 75% of their income from public sources, and 25% from private sources, mainly tuition fees (MCEETYA, 2004). Independent schools receive about 60% of their income from private sources. In 2004, recurrent per student expenditure averaged A\$8,300 in Catholic schools and A\$12,100 in independent schools.

85. Between 1999 and 2004, there has been a steady increase in funding for both government and non-government schooling. This indicates widespread community support for schooling, but is associated with increased demands for accountability and improved school performance.

3. SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

3.1 Introduction

86. This chapter describes the roles and responsibilities of school leaders under the different school governance structures and operating environments outlined in Chapter 2. It examines changing conceptions of the role of school leaders and the regulatory framework under which they operate. The chapter outlines the main challenges that school leadership faces in Australia (some of which are discussed in more detail in Chapters 4-6), and summarises research findings on the relationships between governance and leaders' core competencies.

87. The term 'governance' is used here in a broad way. As Caldwell (2005) notes, governance is concerned with notions of legitimacy, representativeness and accountability, and how educational institutions interact with 'civil society', which he describes as: 'the network of mutually supporting relationships between government, business and industry, education and other public and private sector services, community, home and voluntary agencies and institutions' (p. 26). While the direct accountability of school leaders is to their employer, it is clear that schools and school leaders are part of a wider civil society. The chapter also tries to capture this more diffuse set of relationships between schools and their external environment.

3.2 Changing conceptualisation of school leadership

88. Principals are vested with overall operational authority for the school. They have substantial responsibilities for management, educational leadership, and accountability to education authorities, parents, and the wider community. The dimensions of principals' work are detailed in this chapter. Policy development, supported by research findings, emphasises the critical role that the principal plays in school improvement initiatives.

89. The critical and central role played by the school principal does not necessarily mean that they monopolise site-level leadership. Increasingly, school leadership tends to be shared or distributed, and there is an expectation that the most effective school principals are those who are able to facilitate and work effectively with others with significant leadership roles.

90. Shared school leadership is manifest in a number of ways. First, it may be position based and exercised as part of formal roles. Thus, such leadership may be hierarchical and provided at a number of levels by experienced mid-level and senior teachers (e.g. as coordinator of a year level or head of a subject department), and by deputy or assistant principals. Second, as in most organisations, leadership in and of schools may also be non-position based and exercised informally. Knowledgeable, enthusiastic and motivated teachers will often exercise leadership although they may not have a formal leadership position or extensive experience. Finally, be it formal or informal, leadership expertise may be both specialised, as in the example of timetabling, and more general (Gronn, 2003c).

91. The trends towards devolved school management in government schools that were noted in Chapter 2 open up new leadership opportunities for schools and impose new constraints. Schools have responded to these new challenges by diversifying their patterns of leadership.

92. The advantages that may accrue from distributing leadership include complementarity of skills, broadened overall skills bases, enhanced role interdependence and improved co-ordination for problem solving. These advantages help to reinforce the need for, and to sustain, having a number of people with leadership capacity in schools. The need for a greater breadth and depth of leadership capacity arises out of increasing organisational complexity,

and the intended consequences (e.g. resourcing and planning) and unintended consequences (e.g. managing environments of risk and uncertainty) of greater school-level autonomy. This helps to expand the pool of potential leaders, and provides experience and role models for aspiring leaders.

93. Despite the increasing emphasis on shared or distributed leadership in Australian schools and the variety of patterns that are now emerging, the principal retains overall operational responsibility for the school. In some government school systems and in most non-government schools, such responsibilities can be very extensive. The next section outlines the regulatory and policy frameworks that govern school principals' roles.

3.3 Regulatory and policy framework

94. As was outlined in Chapter 2, Australian schools are the direct responsibility of the relevant state or territory Minister for Education. Their non-government counterparts function according to the conditions determined by registration boards, which operate in each state or territory. Curriculum decision making is the responsibility of the chief executive of education departments or, in some states and territories, is made through the Minister and Curriculum Councils or Boards of Study.

95. The degree to which individual school leaders and schools approach the content and delivery of curriculum varies from state to state though most require accountability around student learning outcomes. In the final years of schooling, curriculum is generally mandated and boards of study are responsible for a common assessment regime which includes school and centrally completed assessment elements.

96. As indicated in Chapter 2, while developments at the national level are becoming more important for schools, the main reference point for schools, principals and teachers is still the state/territory level, especially in the government school sector.

3.3.1 Devolution of responsibility to school level

97. Within the states and territories there is a growing trend towards devolving responsibilities to school leaders and elected or representative boards. For example, the *Schools of the Future* initiative in the 1990s in Victoria was driven by a belief that schools were best placed to make decisions around the selection of staff, the determination of budget priorities and the particular organisational arrangements that would best meet student learning needs (Caldwell, 1998).

98. In conjunction with increased decision-making authority, individual schools are held accountable for achieving student learning outcomes that meet agreed benchmarks, and for other forms of reporting on outcomes. In some states and territories, feedback is required on an annual basis from students, teachers and parents by way of annual surveys and individual government schools are provided with their results relative to the system as a whole and to schools serving similar catchment areas.

99. Tensions are still evident over the extent to which systems centralise or decentralise decision making to school leaders, schools and their communities. In some parts of Australia, central control is still a strong feature. Even in the states and territories where large measures of local autonomy have been granted, high levels of accountability mean that the area of discretionary decision making for school leaders is somewhat circumscribed.

100. Most state and territory education authorities require school leaders to work with their staff and community to develop strategic plans with clearly articulated outcome targets. In addition, most require the preparation of annual reports (usually public documents) that detail

progress towards achievement of these targets. For example, in Queensland (Queensland DEA, 2006) government school leaders are expected to develop performance targets around the three objectives that are system priorities for schools, and report upon them annually:

- learning - examples of data and matters to be reported are: (1) performance on systemic and school level assessment in key learning areas with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy; and (2) parent and student satisfaction with the effectiveness and responsiveness of teaching and learning;
- school outcomes - examples of data and matters to be reported are: (1) student attendance rates; and (2) Year 8-12 retention rates; and
- school workforce - examples of data and matters to be reported are: (1) staff satisfaction in schools; and (2) the match between staff skills and school system priorities.

101. An important change in some government school systems concerns the local selection of principals and staff. In a longitudinal study of the reforms that occurred in Victoria as part of the Schools of the Future programme there was strong support from principals for their new capacity to select staff on merit and in terms of meeting school needs, rather than having them appointed by the central bureaucracy (Cooperative Research Project, 1996).

102. In 2004, the Australian Government embedded the priority of 'more power to school principals over teacher appointments' in the *Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004* (the Act). MCEETYA endorsed these priorities in 2005. The Act includes:

a commitment by the State to give the principal, and the governing body, of each government school in the State strengthened autonomy over, and responsibility for, education programmes, staffing, budget and other aspects of the school's operations within a supportive framework of broad systemic policies; and

...a commitment by the State that appointments of staff in each government school in the State will be made with the approval of the principal, or the governing body, of the school.

103. Following the April 2007 MCEETYA meeting, state and territory Ministers agreed to report on strategies they are undertaking, or propose to undertake, to strengthen local autonomy of schools and their principals.

104. In May 2007, the Australian Government announced that from 2009, Australian Government funding for government and non-government schools will be tied to reforms that focus on improving school standards and quality, including enhancing principal autonomy in school management and around teacher recruitment and employment.

105. The relationship between school autonomy and learning outcomes has also been investigated by a number of writers. Ainley and McKenzie (2000) suggest that while site based management may have great potential to impact positively on learning outcomes, its success is dependent upon 'the whole package of arrangements that constitute the framework within which teaching and learning occur' (p. 139). These include matters concerned with how the curriculum is organised, financial management, personnel management and resource allocation.

106. While further research may make clearer the links between school autonomy and student learning outcomes, much of the literature on school effectiveness points to the critical importance of school-level variables for student learning outcomes. Education authorities

have generally seen value in extending the autonomy of individual sites so that they can make the most appropriate arrangements for the delivery of learning programmes for their particular student mix and staffing profile.

107. In most states, decentralisation of decision making to school level is located within a framework drawn from the research on effective schools and school improvement. In New South Wales, for example, the *Public Schools - Quality Education in Every Classroom* (2006) paper identifies the following as key elements in developing quality schools:

- effective leadership;
- culture that supports continuous learning;
- shared vision, clear expectations, high standards;
- commitment to and support for school improvement; and
- support for continuous school improvement.

108. The school is increasingly the focus of efforts to improve teachers' professional learning, and of evaluation of teachers' performance against agreed school and system goals.

109. Evidence on the relationship between school-level factors, particularly school leadership, and student outcomes is discussed in Chapter 4.

3.3.2 Accountability for student learning

110. Accountability at the individual school level is usually measured against 'like school' and state benchmarks, though there is a growing interest by school leaders in measuring their school against international benchmarks of one kind or another.

111. The notion of 'value adding' is becoming a more important concept. Using the School Measurement Assessment and Reporting Toolkit (SMART) software provided to schools in NSW, for example, principals are able to discover 'important information on the overall progress of students within the school ... compared to the rest of the State in value added terms. Individual student performance can be compared to all other students of similar prior ability' (Smith, 2005, p. 42). The school targets are linked to professional learning strategies, with funding of A\$36 million annually, in schools and evaluated by school evaluation teams.

112. There is a growing awareness by school leaders of international studies of student achievement, such as PISA, and a growing interest in the broadened range of benchmarks which it utilises, such as student attitudes to school, engagement, participation and self-concept. Principals are also increasingly aware of the results of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). Both TIMSS and PISA data sets form an important backdrop for school and system leaders in their thinking about improving student learning.

113. Australian schools are required to provide data about student performance and receive in turn increasingly sophisticated analyses of individual and aggregated data. For example, The Data Club overview outlines the following for Western Australia:

The Data Club supports school leaders in making performance judgements based on their school's Western Australian Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (WALNA) data. (It)... provides additional analyses of the Year 3, 5 and 7 testing programme in government schools and an associated state-wide professional development programme and support for school leaders. Longitudinal, comparative and value-added analyses are presented on individualised school CDs via a graphical software package (Western Australian DET, 2006, p 1).

114. Government, Catholic and independent schools are being drawn into an increasingly demanding accountability framework. As noted by Daniels (2005), to a significant degree the demand for educational accountability is now expressed as a condition of government funding for independent schools.

115. The increased pressure for accountability and public reporting is one of the factors that have led to an intensification of work for school leaders (Gronn, 2003a). The impact of a more demanding accountability environment is discussed in the final section of this chapter and in Chapter 5.

3.4 School Councils and Boards

116. In most states and territories, School Councils or representative Boards have been developed to provide a community input at the local government school level. The principal is usually an ex officio member of the Council. In some states, Councils were initially given powers to offer 'advice' to the principal and staff, but in more recent periods they have been given far wider powers. In Western Australia, for example, councils drawn from parents, teachers, staff and the community have responsibilities for 'establishing and reviewing from time to time, the school's objectives, priorities and general policy directions ... the planning of financial arrangements necessary to fund those objectives ... (and) evaluating the school's performance in achieving them' (Western Australian DET, 2004, pp 30-31).

117. In the Catholic school sector, governance of schools operates within a policy and accountability framework provided by the Diocese and/or the Religious orders, and there is generally a close, day-to-day relationship between the school principal and the parish priest, especially in primary schools. A School Board generally advises Catholic schools.

118. Among independent schools there is a diversity of governance arrangements. The majority of schools are incorporated and, while their governance structure must address the requirements of the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC), these structures vary significantly depending on the nature of the school. For a significant number of schools the governance structure reflects that of a corporation. However, for others the structure is linked to the basis of the school's foundation for example, community or parent controlled schools. In all independent schools, principals are employed directly by, and are accountable to, the school's governing body.

119. In Victoria, which has perhaps the most devolved schooling government school system, the powers of School Councils are generally wider than in other states and territories. School Councils are given the responsibility to locally select principals and recommend their appointment to the Department of Education and Training. Principals are appointed for fixed-term contracts, normally five years in length, and advice is sought from the School Council when the principal's contract is due for renewal.

120. After a recent review of governance arrangements in Victorian schools the following functions (Table 5) were identified in the new Education and Training Reform Act 2006:

Table 5: Roles and responsibilities of School Councils in Victorian government schools

<p><i>School Councils have a number of roles and responsibilities arising out of their designated powers and functions under the Act. In summary these roles and responsibilities are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • determining the general educational policy, goals and targets of the school within the framework of the school strategic plan and the Blueprint for Victorian Government Schools • developing the school strategic plan • monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school in relation to the goals and targets in the school strategic plan, including participation in the four-year planning and review cycle • entering contracts for purposes consistent with the school strategic plan • providing for necessary cleaning and sanitation services • generally stimulating interest in the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing the student code of conduct, which may include a student dress code • employing non-teaching staff and any casual relief teachers or contracting for the provision of those services • exercising a general oversight of the buildings and grounds and ensuring that they are kept in good order and condition • reporting annually to the school community and to the Department • approving and monitoring the school budget (including school-generated funds) which needs to be consistent with the school strategic plan • ensuring that all monies coming into the hands of the council are expended for proper purposes • making recommendations to the Secretary on the appointment of the school principal
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Source: Victoria, *Government Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, pp 34-50.

121. In decentralised school systems, School Councils or Boards are key bodies in the accountability chain from government to principals, teachers and schools. Governance in such an environment is highly complex and often contested. The most often cited tension revolves around the respective roles of the principal and School Council in the day-to-day operation of the school. While the Council has a clear role in policy development, and the principal and teachers are responsible for implementation and operations, the boundaries are often blurred.

122. From the principal’s viewpoint, there are key issues around professional expertise that need to be recognised by the Council. Council members, on the other hand, are wary of not being consulted, or of being used as a ‘rubber stamp’ for decision that have already been made by the principal and staff. The reality tends to be that ‘when relationships breakdown between principal and council, then usually it is the principal who must go’ (Payne, 2003, p. 3).

123. In Diocesan or systemic Catholic schools, the role of principals has a further layer of complexity due to their additional obligations under canon law. An important element of the principal’s role is to provide ‘faith leadership’ within the community. They generally work closely with the parish priest, who is also an ex officio member of the School Board. A recent study of Catholic principals points to the tensions that exist in the relationship of principals

with their priest. They note that many principals 'are aware of the power of the priest in the employment process and ... are loath to challenge (his) authority' (Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association, 2005, p 23).

124. The role and responsibility of principals in independent schools is spelt out in their contract of employment. The governing body in turn has its powers defined by its constitution or legislation.

3.5 School leadership roles

125. It is generally recognised that the leadership of schools should not rely on one person but should be deeply embedded in the professional learning community of the school. Positional leadership roles usually comprise principal, deputy or assistant principal and teacher leaders who may be responsible for teams, year levels or curriculum areas. Most principals recognise that by distributing leadership they do not abrogate their responsibility and accountability but that they add to the leadership capacity of the whole organisation.

126. In Australia there is a growing consensus that empowering teachers is important and that school leaders have a responsibility to make judgements about the readiness of their organisation and its teachers to take on new professional roles. Building leadership capacity is seen as a key task for school leaders.

127. Notwithstanding this, in all school sectors across Australia, the principal is held accountable for school effectiveness. There is a strong focus at the system level to identify schools that are performing below 'like school and state benchmarks' and a growing awareness that school level improvement requires systematic programmes to support school leaders and their development. Such programmes are discussed in Chapter 6.

128. Many school leaders understand that they can have their biggest impact on student learning by working with teachers and sometimes parents to build the professional learning culture of their schools. Research undertaken on student motivation and engagement points to the important role of school leaders:

Principals play a key role in establishing such cultures which are professionally stimulating for teachers; they increase teachers' sense of efficacy – their belief they have the capacity to make a difference to student learning – and thus raise teacher expectations. They have a positive effect on teacher engagement, learning and pedagogy; as teacher engagement increases, so too does student engagement. There is an upward spiral of engagement for both teachers and students.
(Ainley *et al*, 2005, p. 12)

129. Chapter 4 provides a detailed discussion of research findings on the impact of school leadership practices on student outcomes. In Australia, such research has had a major influence on how school systems and principals conceptualise their roles. In at least one state, Victoria, formal accreditation is available to schools which can demonstrate that they have developed an effective 'performance and development culture' (Victoria DET, 2006c).

3.6 Leadership structures in schools

130. The leadership structure of Australian schools varies according to the level and size of schools. Large secondary schools and large combined primary-secondary schools, for example, tend to have more complex structures, which may include several campuses led by Campus Principals with an overall Principal or Director of the school.

131. Other secondary schools are beginning to explore a leadership configuration that puts a primacy on ‘leadership for learning’ rather than for other administrative purposes.

132. In response to research into the middle years of schooling which identified a plateauing of student attitudes and achievement between Years 5–8, schools are reorganising how they deploy staff and school leaders to better engage students. Many secondary schools have, for example, created Years 7-8 units with a core of staff working as a team. Leadership in these early years of secondary education is often now focused around a more integrated curriculum and small teams of teachers who have more sustained teaching interaction with students.

133. Other secondary schools have organised their schools into a number of mini schools in Years 7-10 to provide a smaller and more socially amenable student learning environment. Others have developed structures that reflect a ‘stages of student learning’ conception. In this case, they might create a Transition Unit for Years 7-8, a Middle Years Unit in Years 9-10 and a Senior Years Unit in Years 11-12.

134. Because of the demands of the final years of schooling, most secondary schools maintain a separate organisational unit for their Years 11-12, with a designated senior school coordinator. As noted in Chapter 2, stand-alone senior secondary colleges are a feature of some states and territories.

135. Typically, primary schools are organised around a grade structure with students of the same age. Some school leaders, however, organise their schools around multi-age grades, which typically incorporate two or more age grade levels.

136. Leadership structures vary in primary schools but are commonly based around an executive leadership team comprising the principal, deputy or assistant principal and a number of more experienced teachers (with classifications such as Leading or Advanced Teacher). These experienced teachers are sometimes responsible for the effective operation of a team of teachers at different grade levels or stages of learning.

137. While no clear patterns have yet emerged, there are growing questions around the lack of a convincing rationale for the persistence of the current provision of separate primary and secondary schools. At a number of sites in the growth corridors of major Australian cities, new kinds of partnerships have been forged between the government, independent and Catholic schools, estate developers and local government authorities.

138. In these new suburbs, schools have become an especially important community hub, and stakeholders are interested in exploring new ways of working together to offer childcare, health services, and sports and recreation in a more seamless ways. The ‘Full Service School’ is emerging as a serious focus of policy discussion.

139. School networks are also becoming increasingly important in devolved school systems, and are broadening the scope of school leaders’ work, as well as providing an additional source of support. In Victoria, for example, cooperative networks of schools and school leaders and teachers have been formed across the state. Each has developed an accord describing its operational arrangements and how it will address:

- improving educational provision, monitoring attendance and retention and support student wellbeing; and
- improving educational opportunities and outcomes for young people in the network area.

140. In advocating new forms of school cooperation it was argued 'that a school that is collaboratively networked with other schools around it and with other agencies and organisations can achieve more than a school operating alone' (Victoria DET, 2002, p. 4).

141. Overall, schools in Australia are becoming more organisationally diverse and complex, in terms of both their internal structures and the range of other schools and groups with which they interact.

3.7 Key issues and challenges

142. Australia has a major challenge in identifying and developing the next generation of school leaders. It is a challenge that is recognised by all states and territories and is the subject of much research (e.g. Gronn & Lacey, 2005; d'Arbon *et al*, 2002). Australia, like most OECD countries, is faced with the imminent retirement of a large proportion of principals and other school leaders from the post war 'baby boomer' generation. This has been linked also to evidence about the apparent reluctance of experienced teachers (particularly women) to apply for leadership positions.

143. In a report prepared by the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia for an Invitational Conference on National School Leadership, the following somewhat stark statistics are provided as an example of a nation-wide trend:

Data indicate that if the average retirement age is taken as 60 years, within 5 years (2011), 43% of current secondary principals will have retired, 32% of current primary principals will have retired, 27% of deputy principals in secondary schools will have retired and 7% of current assistant principals in primary schools will have retired (MCEETYA, 2006, p. 8).

144. In some states, due to the particular incentives built into superannuation schemes, there are financial incentives for school leaders to retire at around 55 years.

145. Responses to this imminent loss of highly experienced school leaders are discussed in detail in Chapter 5. The developmental needs of aspirant and beginning school leaders are discussed in Chapter 6.

146. Gronn *et al* (2003) suggests that the intensification of the work of the principal can be traced 'to devolved school management ... which is likely to be compounded by school systems' adoption of standards based accountability frameworks' (pp.172-73). The publication in 2004 of *The Privilege and the Price- a Study of Principal Class Workload and its Impact on Health and Wellbeing* (Victoria DET, 2004) highlighted a range of issues around the capacity of school leaders to cope with a much enlarged role.

147. Interestingly, despite the report's findings about the negative impact of the job on family life and health 'principals and assistant principals almost universally love their job. They think of themselves as privileged to have such an important and rewarding vocation' (Victoria DET, 2004, p. 21). The Department continues to seek data from principals through the annual *Your Job Your Say* principal survey.

148. What seems to be emerging across Australia is recognition by principals and employers alike that there needs to be greater clarity around the work principals are expected to undertake if they are to be successful in retaining a focus on improving student learning. Recognition of this need for greater clarity also highlights a need to improve the support of school leaders in some of the educational and managerial roles they are expected to undertake.

4 ENHANCING LEARNING AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

4.1 Introduction

149. The previous chapter highlighted the diversity of school governance arrangements in Australia and the breadth of tasks and responsibilities facing school leaders wherever they are working. This chapter focuses on the role of school leadership in enhancing student learning and other schooling outcomes. It draws on Australian research to examine the policies and conditions under which school leaders are likely to be able to exercise this role most effectively.

150. There are formidable conceptual and empirical challenges in establishing the links between school leadership and school outcomes. A wide range of different factors – including resource levels, teachers' knowledge and skills, curriculum structure and student background – are potentially important in shaping student outcomes. It is difficult to conceptualise and measure the influence of school leadership on and by these factors. Nevertheless, an extensive research base supports the view that leadership is of critical importance in effective schooling. This chapter draws on the Australian research literature in reaching this conclusion.

151. In what follows, the discussion starts where it matters most in schools - that is, with evidence on student outcomes and the differences among different groups of students (Section 4.2). Aspects of school leaders' work that shape the extent to which they are able to enhance student learning are then discussed (Section 4.3). Following this discussion, a summary is presented of research on the impact of school leadership on student learning (Section 4.4). Building on these discussions, the chapter concludes by examining the interactions between school leadership and other influences on student learning (Section 4.5). It is in these last multi-dimensional approaches, which reflect the complexity of schools, that we find the strongest grounds for informing policy and practice.

4.2 Student outcomes: levels and differences among students

152. Research detailed in this chapter indicates that the organisation and leadership in individual Australian schools influences students' learning. Student academic achievement, academic self-concept, and engagement and participation in school and then further study and/or work have been shown to be linked to teacher and school practices - that is, practices that that can be influenced by school leadership.

153. Australian students score in the top group of OECD countries in PISA (Thomson *et al*, 2004b), although the spread of scores is 'greater than would be considered desirable in relation to our national aspirations' (Thomson *et al*, 2004a, p. 13). Rothman and McMillan (2003) found that approximately one-sixth of the variation in achievement scores in literacy and numeracy in Australia could be attributed to differences between schools. A little more than half of this between-schools variance could be explained by differences in student composition and the organisational climate of the school.

154. Using the PISA data base, Marks and Creswell (2005) found that state differences in achievement among Australian secondary school students were larger than generally assumed and could not be attributed just to SES and demographic factors (such as Indigenous status, region and grade level).

155. Some studies have explored aspects of these configurations, such as pupil grouping practices, school-average-achievement, support structures and use of family social capital. Using detailed information from the records of 5,500 Tasmanian Year 10 students and multi-level modelling techniques, Lamb *et al* (2001) found large social, gender and school differences in levels of study. Of particular note were that higher SES resulted in being in the

top level English and Mathematics classes, that girls outperformed boys in English and that attendance at private non-Catholic schools resulted in higher performance.

156. Further, Lamb and Fullarton (2002) found that classroom differences accounted for over one-quarter of the variation in Australian student mathematics achievement in TIMSS. Significant differences were found by types of student grouping practices, with students in higher bands or tracks receiving substantial gains in achievement. For students in the bottom band it was found it was better to be in a school that did not stream or track.

157. PISA (OECD, 2001), including the Australian results, has found that on average those students who like school perform better than those who do not. The aspect of student engagement found to be most closely associated with reading performance was their ability to control the learning process. While there was no single factor that explained why some schools or countries had better results, school policies and practices that tended to be associated with success, after taking account of other observed school and home background factors, included teacher expectations of student performance, teacher morale and commitment, school (not teacher) autonomy, positive teacher-student relations, and a good disciplinary climate.

158. ACER's longitudinal surveys of Australian youth (Marks *et al*, 2001; Fullarton, 2002) have also stressed the importance of student engagement with school. They found that a high engagement at the school level even moderates the negative effects of socio-economic status (SES) and Indigenous status. Provision for, and encouraging students to participate in, a broad range of school activities was found to lead to a student's closer connectedness to the school community as well as have flow on effects to more academic parts of the curriculum.

159. From surveys of 5,150 Year 8 and 10 students from all three school sectors in Tasmania, Hogan and Donovan (2005) found significant relationships between students' subjective agency and academic outcomes, as well as a range of social capital outcomes such as sociability, trust in others, collaboration, being a good student, and participation in community groups. Hogan and Donovan (2005) believe that not to measure such broader outcomes of schooling 'underestimates the net contribution that schools make to individual wellbeing and aggregate social utility' (p. 100).

160. Using the representative sample of Australian 15-year-olds in the original PISA data base and multi-level modelling, Marsh (2004) found that academic self-concept depends not only on a student's academic accomplishments but also on the accomplishments of those in the school the student attends. The effect of school-average-achievement was significantly negative and the size of these negative effects did not vary significantly across states and territories. Placement of high achieving students in academically selective schools and academically disadvantaged children in regular classrooms was found to result in lower academic self-concept.

161. Wilson's (2002) qualitative 25 month study of a co-educational, comprehensive high school situated in the western suburbs of Sydney identified 24 cultural dimensions which impacted upon student participation. Only eight of these factors were found to have an enhancing impact, including sympathetic and structured teacher support and school leaders who model behaviours of openness and inclusion. Wilson (2002) concludes that 'only by including students as meaningful participants in the learning community of their school are we likely to resolve issues of decreasing motivation and academic performance amongst young people in the secondary school years' (p. 98).

4.3 The work of school leaders

162. Chapter 3 examined the responsibilities and roles of school leaders in Australia. This section focuses on aspects of their work that shape the extent to which they are able to enhance student learning.

4.3.1 *Workload and job satisfaction*

163. While the majority of Australian school principals say that they suffer role expansion, increasing overload, ambiguity, conflict and stress, they are also highly satisfied. The exception to this high level of satisfaction is in many small rural schools. Contextual pressures are seen to arise from poor funding and limited support from governments.

164. Rapid top down change and accountability pressures also worry principals. Within the school, principals are frustrated by demands that find them spending time on administrative and managerial matters rather than the preferred relationship, strategy and educational matters. Values held by successful principals have been found to include being ethical, authentic and consultative and demonstrating integrity, compassion and an ability to promote staff ownership. Successful principals are also transformational, especially through their ability to show concern for individuals and build relationships, rather than by being visionary and inspirational. Aspects of the principals' role, such as performance management, professional learning, ICT use and position redesign, are more likely to succeed if they are based on a professional and cooperative approach rather than a hierarchical and bureaucratic model.

165. The effects of distributed leadership based on role (heads of department, curriculum middle managers and teachers in model, or 'lighthouse', schools) have been researched in Australia. From interviews with 26 heads of department (HODs) in two government and two non-government NSW secondary schools, Deece (2003) found that, given the ambiguity and time constraints of the role HOD, their leadership needs to be collaborative and facilitative. However, little professional learning support was found, especially for the preferred approach of working with and/or observing others or the development of the required interpersonal and teamwork skills.

166. White's (2001) research involving 46 staff from all levels in three metropolitan Melbourne secondary schools underscores the leadership potential of curriculum area middle managers. He found middle managers draw from a portfolio of four leadership approaches: instructional leader, curriculum strategist, learning area architect and administrative leader. What was most important for success was that middle managers create a learning area culture that is focused on student learning and improvement and which is collaborative in its operations and motivating for teachers and students alike.

167. In a rare longitudinal study, Wildy and Wallace (2002) examined the subsequent leadership effects of 10 teachers who worked in lighthouse schools involved in restructuring reforms. Those who moved to other schools carried their ideas and experience with 'something akin to missionary zeal' (p. 15). However, these researchers conclude that while importing lighthouse teachers into new schools is an important strategy to ensure the spread of educational reform, also needed is a supportive context where there is a critical mass of reform-minded leaders.

168. A recent AEU (2005) survey of principals in all Australian public schools (N = 1,104, which represents a 16% response rate) indicated: a heavy and increasing workload with 85% of principals working between 45 and 65 hours in an average week, and over the past three years the workload was seen to have increased 'a lot' (76%); in terms of funding and resources schools were seen to be 'worse off' by 40% of principals; and, major priorities for

additional funding were more help for individual students (80%), building maintenance and improvement (75%), more teachers (70%), more administrative and support staff (60%), and more welfare support.

169. A number of these results are similar to earlier studies in Queensland and Victoria. In Queensland, Cranston and Ehrich (2002) found that role overload, ambiguity and conflict were characteristic and that principals would prefer to spend more time on strategy and relationships rather than on administrative management, but that 80% were satisfied with their role. The results of the 2004 Victorian study were summarised in Section 3.7.

4.3.2 *Principals in small, rural schools*

170. Small, rural schools bring their own challenges. From extensive interviews with four novice principals in small, rural, WA government schools, Wildy and Clarke (2005) found challenges included the smallness of the school in isolated, conservative communities; heavy teaching responsibilities; and beginning their first appointment as a principal with little preparation for leadership. The researchers concluded that, in a context of high accountability, limited resources and rapid change, there is a serious disjunction between teaching and leadership roles in such schools that will make the role less and less attractive.

171. Through interviews and observation, Lester (2003) examined the situation faced by 12 teaching principals in remote rural Queensland communities. Leadership was found to be a juggling act involving a number of tensions and dilemmas. The tensions included those among management, sole and instructional leadership, and between principal and community educational knowledge. Some principals reported a dilemma between seeking to dismiss under-performing teachers and trying to improve their skills. The school community and professional support mechanisms were found to play a central role in resolving these tensions and dilemmas.

4.3.3 *Values in leadership*

172. Research on values in leadership is well represented in the Australian educational leadership literature. From five case studies of Brisbane Catholic secondary college principals and the values that underscore their leadership behaviour and how these values are formed, Branson (2005) developed and tested an instrument for helping principals to visualise and comprehend relationships between their principalship behaviours and personal values. Use of the instrument resulted in an increased self-confidence in the principalship. Using questionnaires and interviews of staff from an independent Queensland secondary school undergoing change in pastoral care arrangements, Chittenden (2004) found a link between ethical leadership and the success of the pastoral care programme. However, it was also found that there was a need for staff ownership and managerial consultation for any changes in structure and organisation to be accepted.

173. Dempster *et al* (2004) found that even though Queensland principals have well meaning intentions and find their feet in one of three ethical camps (absolutist, relativist and ethic of care), by and large, they exhibit contradictions in their ethical reasoning and conflicts with their own personal and professional values. Employing interviews, observation and document analysis, McGahey (2002) explored school leaders' beliefs and philosophies in the formation of a moral community in nine NSW Catholic schools. Leaders were found to play a key role in this dialogue, especially when they were authentic, a person of integrity and ensured all voices were heard. Swann (2001) reports the results from previous research to argue the importance of leader compassion.

174. However, using a questionnaire with a stratified sample of 367 (73% response rate) Victorian principals, Collard (2004) concluded that principals were far from a homogenous

group in terms of their self-images. Independent boys' school principals were found to be most attuned to conservative images of themselves as solitary and autonomous leaders. Men from government secondary schools were found to most likely view themselves in traditional bureaucratic terms, whereas female leaders were most attuned to collaborative images, particularly if they came from primary or girls' schools. Identification with images of 'leading learner' or 'advocate for children' was found to decrease with school size.

4.3.4 Transformational leadership

175. Another area of leadership examined in recent Australian educational journals relates to transformational school leadership - that is, leadership involving individual support, building a culture and supporting structure of working with and through others, a school vision, high expectations for performance, and intellectual stimulation. From a questionnaire completed by 19 Victorian government school principals and 192 of their raters, Gurr (2002) confirmed a tendency for principals to use a transformational style. Raters, but not principals themselves, were more likely to perceive women using transformational leadership than men although there were no differences by type and level of school. However, using research from previous studies with 370 principals, Collard (2002) argues that there was a need to recognise that gender is mediated by other factors, such as diverse social, system and institutional cultures.

176. From a questionnaire study of 124 teachers from 12 Sydney metropolitan secondary schools, Barnett *et al* (2001) investigated the relationships between transformational and principal transactional leadership behaviours, and teacher and school learning culture outcomes. It was found that only the transformational characteristic of individual concern was associated with teacher satisfaction, willingness to give extra effort and favourable perception of leader effectiveness. Some teachers in this study indicated that leadership 'vision' distracted them from what they saw as their core work.

177. In a follow up study, Barnett and McCormick (2003) conducted interviews with principals and 11 teachers from schools where the principal has been perceived by teachers to be characterised by the transformational leadership characteristics of individual concern and vision. The results reinforced the importance of principals building relationships.

4.3.5 Other aspects of principals' work

178. Other Australian studies have examined the principal's performance management, role in ICT and role redesign. Employing interviews with 31 Victorian government school principals, Mongan and Ingvarson (2001) found support for performance management. However, to be fully acceptable, a new model would be needed. This model would need to have a strong focus on the professional learning and growth of the principal; school and organisational improvement; cooperation and teamwork rather than competition; emphasis on longer term as well as shorter term goals; regular constructive feedback; and transparent processes.

179. Gurr and Broadbent's (2004) Victorian study of 21 government school principals and 24 Catholic school teachers who held leadership positions found that, although at an early stage of development, ICT had fundamentally changed their work. An example was the use of e-leadership meetings in digital space. More specifically, Schiller (2003) surveyed 217 (62% response rate) Newcastle school principals on their use of, competency with and skills acquisition in ICT. While it was found that many principals now recognise the critical role that they play in facilitating the implementation of ICT in their schools to improve teaching, learning and administrative processes, considerable variation was found in use, competence and skill acquisition. The authors called for greater professional development in the area.

180. Through an analysis of various case studies of the redesign of the principalship, Blackmore *et al* (n.d.) identified five ways in which the processes of redesign were beginning to be undertaken: sharing pedagogical knowledge construction; sharing responsibility and resources to provide greater access and equity; setting up co-principalship for a family friendly workplace; multi-campus restructuring; and developing community based leadership (such as in Indigenous communities). Those that focused firstly on the question of a principal's work were much more limited in their effects than those where it is part of a larger enterprise with a coherent and meaningful ethical and political purpose. They also note the limitations of those redesigns which do not eventually get to a prime focus on students' learning.

4.4 School leadership and student learning

181. In brief, the research shows that the principal has an important role to play in successful Australian schools and how they are run (such as in the approach to decisionmaking and planning). Success is more likely when the schools are collegial, consultative and collaborative when they involve partnerships and when matters are shared and owned by stakeholders. Small, rural schools offer particular challenges in this regard. Finally, schools and their leaders have available an increasing range of quality, publicly available surveys and other data sources to inform their decision making and planning.

182. The principal has been found to be important for a successful school. Employing questionnaires and site visits in 19 new government schools in five states, Collier (2001) found a common need for new schools to quickly establish their credibility. Consultative principals, collaboratively developed foundational documents, and a distinctive identity through innovatory practices were all found to be important for establishing success. Wood's (2005) case study of an outer metropolitan Catholic secondary college in South Australia found that a number of characteristics were important in moving the school from serious decline to strong success. These included a determined planned effort, shared and owned by stakeholders who have identified with and relate reform to their unchangeable core beliefs. The roles of the principal and leadership were found to be pivotal here, especially in the building of relationships and partnerships with the internal and external environments.

183. Dinham (2005) found both positional and distributed leadership to be key factors in 50 successful school sites (departments and teams) in 38 NSW secondary schools. Success was based on standardised test results, public examinations, nominations from various stakeholders, and improvement over time ('value-added' measures). From observation, interviews and document analysis emerged a set of seven principal leadership attributes and practices. Core was a focus on students, learning and teaching. Other categories were: external awareness and engagement; a bias towards innovation and action; a relationship emphasis and personal qualities such as being honest, trustworthy, compassionate, communicative, and a good listener; building expectations and a culture of success; supporting teacher learning; and developing a sense of common purpose and collaboration.

184. More specifically, particular approaches to school decision making and planning have been shown to be related to enhanced learning. At a broad level, an analysis of Australian policy documents on school based management by Lingard *et al* (2002) demonstrated that it is a contested concept. Tensions between centralising and decentralising were found to continue, as did those between the market and equity/social justice objectives. From survey responses from 15 Tasmanian high schools (124 teachers and 1,181 students), Mulford *et al* (2004) found that where decision making is perceived by teachers as collegial, collaborative and consultative and providing adequate opportunities for participation it will more likely to lead to positive student perceptions about their school and teachers, as well as perceptions about relationships and their own performance, than where decision making is top-down, executive or does not foster widespread involvement. Complementing these results, it was

found that where teachers identify the main sources of school stress as lack of support from management, poor leadership and ineffective decisionmaking processes, students are much less favourably disposed towards their teachers or their own engagement and performance.

185. Hatton (2001) provides a case study of school development planning (SDP) in one small rural disadvantaged NSW primary school. It was found that while SDP that is collaborate and genuinely focused on classroom life proved to be a rewarding process for staff and had a positive effect on student outcomes, the link between SDP and increased efficiency was not proven, especially in relation to effective community involvement. Case studies based on observation, document analysis and interviews in four remote and rural WA schools by Clarke and Wildy (2004) further illustrate the cultural complexity of small school leadership and its involvement in decision making and school planning.

186. Increasingly, schools and their leaders have available a range of quality, publicly available surveys to inform their decision making and planning. Silins and Mulford (2005) detail the development of one of the first valid and reliable measures of organisational learning in schools that employed survey results from over 3,700 Tasmania and South Australian teachers and principals. Organisational learning was found to consist of four embedded factors: trusting and collaborative climate; a shared and monitored mission; taking initiatives and risks; and ongoing, relevant professional development.

4.5 Interactions between school leadership and other influences on student learning

187. Other Australian studies have come closer to the reality faced by schools and their leaders by exploring the complexity of links between leadership, school external and internal environments and improved student learning. The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (Queensland DEA, 2001) of 24 schools over a three-year period found that the development of professional learning communities within schools is associated with greater use of more productive classroom pedagogies by teachers. More specifically, the data demonstrated strong links between more frequent use of productive classroom pedagogies and three key variables: the degree of teachers' collective responsibility for student learning, the overall level of professional learning community operating within a school and the strength of leadership on pedagogy. Productive school leadership was also found to include a high focus on a culture of care, a strong commitment to a dispersal of leadership and involved relationships among the school community, and a high focus on supporting professional development and learning community.

188. From a three-year study of 24 Queensland schools involving classroom observations and interviews with teachers and principals, Hayes *et al* (2004) detail three case studies that focus on leadership practices. They found that dispersed, involved, productive leadership supported the achievement of both academic and social outcomes through a focus on pedagogy rather than management, a culture of care, and related organisation processes, including being fully cognisant of Education Department policies and directives whilst not feeling unduly bound by them.

189. A report edited by Cuttance (2001) on school innovation emphasises the importance of principal, teacher and student leaders, developing a culture of sustained innovation from the local or school level and leadership as a focused action, culture building and an organisation-wide process of learning. The lessons from this study included that effective innovations are grounded in learning teams of teachers, are based on whole-school understandings and beliefs, employ distributive leadership, use rigorous data based scrutiny of what is done, and have a principal who focuses on teaching and learning.

190. An Australian whole-school revitalisation initiative, the Innovative Design for Enhancing Achievements in Schools (IDEAS) Project (Andrews & Crowther, 2003) was

underpinned by a framework for enhancing school outcomes (strategic foundations, cohesive community, infrastructure design, school-wide pedagogy, professional supports), an implementation strategy (initiating, discovery, envisioning, actioning, sustaining) and parallel leadership (teacher and administrator). An independent evaluation of a 12 school national trial of IDEAS (Chesterton & Duignan, 2004) found positive impacts on teachers in terms of pedagogical reflections and discussion, collaboration, decision making and morale, some early beginnings to changes in teacher practices and a considerable shift in the leadership paradigm away from power of position, but little in the way of improved learning outcomes for students.

191. Voulalas and Sharpe (2005) conducted interviews with 22 Sydney metropolitan principals who had been identified by District Superintendents as taking action to help their schools become learning organisations. Although leadership was seen as a key factor in transforming schools, respondents lacked a clear understanding of learning organisations. Traditional school structures and cultures, lack of implementation time and difficulty in obtaining the support of staff and parents were seen as the major barriers to implementation.

192. In contrast are the results from a two-year case study and questionnaire study involving 96 South Australian and Tasmanian secondary schools, including over 5,000 students and 3,700 teachers and their principals (see Silins & Mulford, 2004 for a summary). The Leadership for Organisational Learning and Student Outcomes (LOLSO) research found that leadership that makes a difference is both position based (principal) and distributed (administrative team and teachers). But both are only indirectly related to student outcomes. Organisational learning (OL) involving three sequential development stages (trusting and collaborative climate, shared and monitored mission, and taking initiatives and risks) supported by appropriate and ongoing professional development is the important intervening variable between leadership and teacher work and then student outcomes. That is, leadership contributes to OL, which in turn influences what happens in the core business of the school – the teaching and learning. It influences the way students perceive how teachers organise and conduct their instruction, and their educational interactions with, and expectations for, their students.

193. The South Australian and Tasmanian research found that students' positive perceptions of teachers' work directly promote their participation in school, academic self-concept and engagement with school. Student participation is directly, and student engagement indirectly (through retention at school), related to academic achievement. School size is negatively, and socio-economic status and student home educational environment are positively, linked to these relationships. LOLSO has developed a well-defined and stable model accounting for 84% of variance in student engagement, 64% of student academic achievement and 87% of organisational learning.

194. Two recent Australian studies linked to the ongoing eight-country International Successful School Principals (SSP) Project (Gurr *et al*, 2005) reinforce the complexity of the links among leadership, school internal and external environments and a range of improved student learning (see Box 2).

Box 2: Leadership and school success

Based on three in-depth case studies of successful principals leading successful Victorian schools, Gurr *et al* (2003) found that principals have a key role in the success of schools broadly and, in particular, on student outcomes. While each of the principals had different personalities and interpersonal styles, they all were expert at working with and through others to improve their schools. They had a significant impact on student learning through a number of key interventions that focused on teaching and learning and building professional commitment and capacity.

Based on detailed case studies of five Tasmanian successful principals and their schools, Mulford and Johns' (2004) results parallel those of Gurr *et al* (2003). They present a new model for examining successful school principalship (see Figure 3). The interactive and sequential model is set within a context that includes community and system understandings and requirements. It then focuses on the principal's values, which link to individual and school capacity and the development of a school vision. The context and principal's values represent the 'why' and the individual and school capacity and vision represent the 'how' of successful leadership. The model then progresses to the 'what', or outcomes of successful leadership, which include teaching and learning, a range of academic and non-academic student outcomes and community social capital. These three foci are linked by evidence based monitoring and critical reflection, which, if warranted, lead to change and/or transformation of the why, how and/or what.

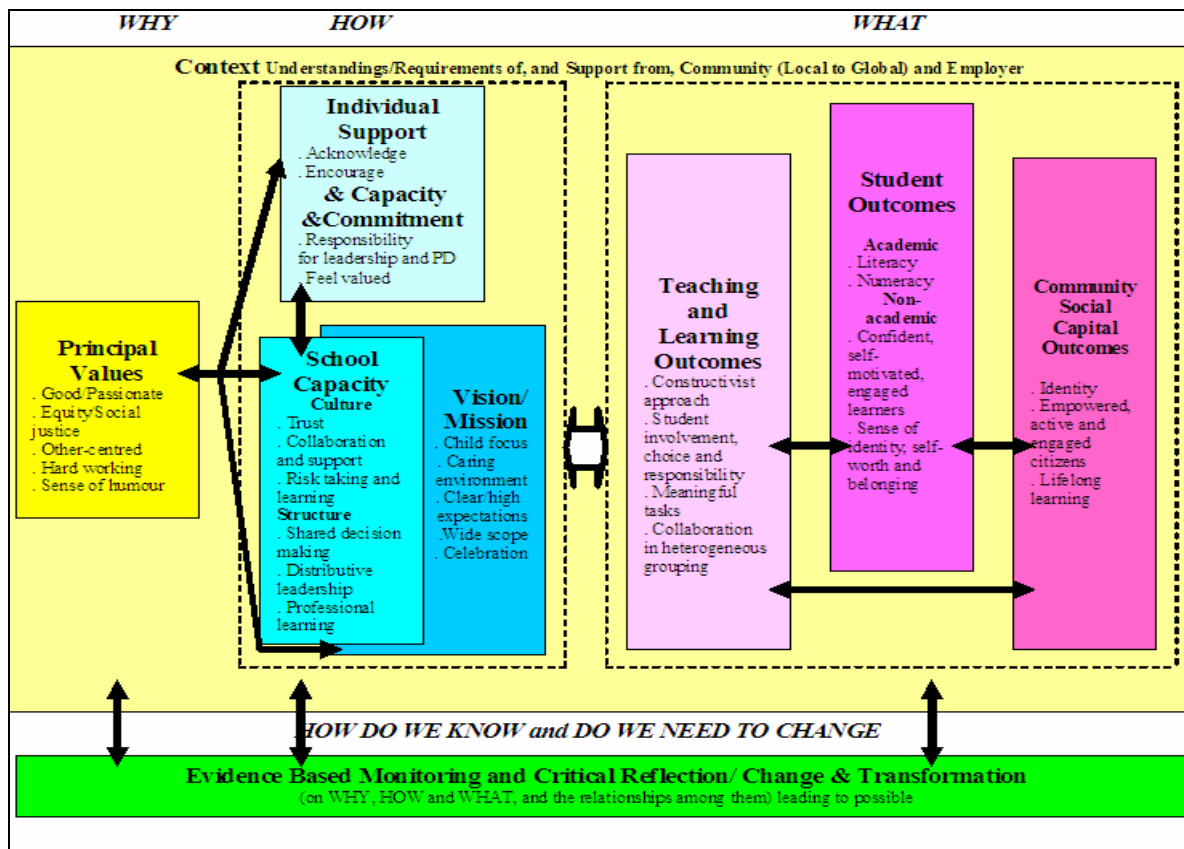


Figure 3: School leadership and student outcomes

4.6 Key issues and challenges

195. What seem to be promising policies and conditions for making school leaders most effective in improving school outcomes? The research on Australian educational leadership reviewed in this chapter suggests that:

- leadership is a key factor in successful schools;
- leaders contribute to student learning indirectly through their influence on other people, organisational capacity and context;
- leadership that enhances staff and student learning takes account of a combination of contextual, individual (self and others), organisational, outcome, and evaluative/accountability factors over time; and
- a great deal depends on which of these areas the leader chooses to spend time and attention on. As a single input by a leader can have multiple outcomes, they need to be able to see the whole as well as the individual factors and the relationships among them over time.

196. The conditions and policies under which school leaders can exercise this role most effectively include:

- an environment that emphasises school leaders' responsibility for educational leadership;
- much less emphasis on the organisational or managerial than has previously been the case - there is very little evidence to link such an emphasis to either improved school or student outcomes;
- avoidance of 'the great man or woman' theory of leadership;
- ongoing, relevant, supportive professional learning; and
- data and other sources of information that provide schools with valid, reliable and easily administered ways of monitoring performance, diagnosing student learning difficulties and implementing appropriate strategies.

197. Particular leadership practices seem to be more effective in promoting improved student outcomes in schools:

- Values held by successful principals include being ethical, authentic and consultative and demonstrating integrity, compassion and an ability to promote staff ownership.
- Successful principals provide individual support, develop organisational culture (working with and through others to build professional commitment and capacity that focuses on teaching and learning), and provide structure, vision, expectations for performance and intellectual stimulation. However, there is a need for staff ownership for any changes in school structure and organisation to be accepted.
- Distributed leadership is vital for school success, especially where it is collaborative, facilitative, focuses on student learning and improvement, is motivating for teachers and students alike, and develops a critical mass of reform-minded staff.

198. Successful school reform is all about development:

- Leaders' action and professional learning programmes need to first get the personal/interpersonal, distributed leadership, collective teacher efficacy or trusting and collaborative climate 'right'.
- Once the personal/interpersonal is 'right' then it can be used to focus on the educational/instructional, including having a shared and monitored mission.

- Once the educational/instructional is ‘right’ and there is confidence in what the school is doing and why it is doing it, then the leaders and school can move to focus development/learning/change, including working with others schools in a ‘nested’ model.

199. The context for leadership and school reform must be taken more into account, with variables such as Education Department policies and practices, school location, school size, and home educational environment having been shown to have a clear, interactive effect on leadership, the school and student outcomes.

200. A key overall priority is broadening what counts as good schooling. Evidence needs to be collected and evaluated on the social outcomes of schooling as well as on cognitive and academic outcomes.

201. The research and knowledge base on how school leadership interacts with a wide range of other factors to enhance student learning needs to be strengthened. Although this chapter was able to draw on a wide range of Australian research studies, this is a challenging area of work that needs ongoing support, the development of new conceptualisations and empirical approaches, and close interaction with the fields of policy and practice.

5. THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF SCHOOL LEADERS' ROLES

5.1 Introduction

202. The previous two chapters have analysed the increasing emphasis in Australia on the role of school leaders in driving school improvement and reform. For the first time, potentially, Australian government school principals experience an amount and scope of autonomy similar to that experienced historically by their non-government school peers. Paradoxically, however, with leadership and school leadership more prominent than ever, evidence suggests that Australia is experiencing serious leadership supply problems. These problems include the replenishment of role vacancies, the identification of aspirants for vacancies and 'next generation' school leaders, and workplace wellbeing issues associated with leadership.

203. This chapter examines trends and issues concerning the supply of school leaders in Australia. It describes the characteristics of the school leader workforce and reports research on the factors that influence the attractiveness of leadership positions.

204. Despite the trends noted in Chapter 3 towards shared or distributed models of school leadership, the predominant focus of Australian research has been on the principalship. While there is some research into the leadership provided by other people in schools, this assumes much of its significance (e.g. career aspirations and job satisfaction) in relation to principal demand and supply. The research emphasis on school principals is reflected in the discussion in this chapter.

205. At the present time the published data on school leaders is somewhat limited in that it either applies only to particular states and territories or is several years old. In this regard it should be noted that in 2006 DEST commissioned a major new study, the *Australian School Teacher and Leader Survey*, on the teacher and school leader workforces. The project includes a nation-wide survey of large samples of teachers and school leaders, as well as consultations with key stakeholders around Australia on longer term national collaborative approaches to teacher and school leader workforce planning. The study, which is due to report in 2007, should help to fill a number of the information gaps noted in this chapter.

5.2 Characteristics of the school leader workforce

206. Preston (2002, p. 1) estimated that there were about 20,000 principals and deputy principals in Australia, or around two such persons per school on average. In very small primary schools, of which Australia has a relatively large number (see Chapter 2), it is likely there would be no staff member classified as a member of the state-wide principal or deputy principal class, but rather a less senior teacher performing the head teacher role. In large secondary schools there would be a principal and at least several deputy or vice principals with responsibility for different parts of the school.

207. Preston (2002) reported that over 80% of principals were aged 45 or over, with nearly one-third aged 50-54. In Victoria in 2001, for example, the average age of government school principals was 50 years, an increase of one year in the previous decade (Gronn, 2003d, p. 63).

208. The majority of principals are male, with females better represented among primary principals than at secondary level. In Western Australia, for example, 54% of the principals in the smallest primary schools are female, but the female proportion declines significantly with school size to only 12% in the largest schools (Wildy & Clarke, 2005, p. 44).

209. In 2002, DEST conducted a nation-wide telephone survey of 337 government and non-government primary and secondary principals. Nearly 50% of male principals in the sample

were aged 50-59, a figure which 'highlights the potential for significant retirement by *male* principals within the next five years' (MCEETYA, 2003, p. 2, original emphasis).

210. Unlike North America, where Masters level degrees tend to be mandatory for prospective principals and superintendents, eligibility for a principalship appointment in Australia generally requires a regular (four-year) undergraduate qualification and subsequent registration as a teacher by a regulatory authority, followed by evidence of good teaching and experience in school-wide leadership and management responsibilities. Nonetheless, in the DEST study, 20% of the principals were studying or committed to future study (the majority at the Masters level), overwhelmingly for personal development (MCEETYA, 2003, p. 4).

5.3 The labour market for school principals

5.3.1 *Scope and mobility*

211. The labour market for principals in the government sector is generally state-wide in scope, while the Catholic sector tends to be state-wide or diocesan-wide. There is probably more of a national labour market in the case of principals of independent schools, and even an international labour market in the case of high-status independent schools.

212. In practice a series of separate labour markets operates for school principals according to level and type of schooling. It is rare for a primary school principal or deputy principal to move to a leadership position in a secondary school, or vice versa. The concept of a single labour market for independent school principals is even less evident, given the diversity of school types that is the hallmark of the sector (e.g. boys' schools, girls' schools, faith based, secular, 'alternative', low fee and so on).

213. In general there is little mobility of school principals across state borders, especially in the government school sector. State-level superannuation arrangements are generally not fully transferable from one state to another, and the fact that principals usually are aged 45 years and over tends to inhibit mobility due to family and housing factors. Furthermore, in the government school sectors at least, it is unlikely that a principal from another state would be viewed as positively as local candidates due to their lack of experience in that system.

214. In all three sectors, applications to replenish principal vacancies are usually sought by advertisement, followed by local (i.e. school board or parish) selection, and then central or diocesan appointment, with some independent schools also utilising commercial agencies for recruitment.

215. Once appointed, there is some principal mobility between sectors. Of the 66 principals in the DEST sample who had changed schools in the previous two years, for example, 60 had moved from government to non-government schools, overwhelmingly for higher pay or promotion (MCEETYA, 2003, p. 19). There is very little, if any, movement of principals from non-government schools into government schools.

216. Male principals surveyed by DEST had been employed as principals an average of about 11 years and females for an average of seven years. Principals had been employed at their current school for just over six years on average (MCEETYA, 2003, pp. 2-4).

5.3.2 *Principal market forces*

217. In these labour markets for principals, current or actual 'demand' refers to the numerical shortfall of principals required to fill existing vacancies, while 'supply' means 'the number of suitable individuals who are currently not principals who are available for principal positions' (Preston, 2002, p. 1). Factors affecting demand include: changes in numbers of

schools; changes in career and administrative structures; the age profile of principals; principal attrition rates; and the occupational competitiveness of school principal positions. Factors affecting supply include: the size and composition of the senior teacher age cohorts; the professional and workplace experiences of these cohorts; and the comparative appeal and attractiveness of principals' work (Preston, 2002, p. 2).

218. Statistical evidence on Australian principal supply and demand is patchy. For the three school sectors, there is no national-level database of current or previous principal and principal class vacancies, and numbers of applications. Data on principals, other principal class positions and senior or leading teacher positions may be retained centrally in the case of state school systems, or these data may be accessible only to such administrative units as regions or districts, or may even be retained in individual schools.

219. As well as this pattern of varying data availability, the extent of openness of access to such data differs between states and territories. In their investigation of government principal shortages, for example, Barty *et al* (2005) reported that they 'were unable to extract comprehensive data from the State systems under study' (p. 4). In sum, variable record-keeping and data accessibility preclude national-level trend analysis and comparisons between states and territories, and make evidence based generalisations about supply problems difficult.³

5.3.3 *Principal demand*

220. Some idea of future Australian principal demand is obtainable from the age profile of the teaching workforce. An important statistical indicator of projected demand is the net separation rate (NSR). An annual NSR is the positively- or negatively-expressed difference between the numbers of teaching workforce entrants and exits compared by 5- or 10-year age-band cohorts. The behaviour of different cohorts is directly affected by a range of external factors (e.g. the economy, status of teaching, employment policies).

221. Utilising 1996 Census data, Preston (2003) found that, although there were some NSR variations between states and between primary and secondary levels, there were marked overall age profile contrasts between the cohorts of teachers recruited in different decades, with these contrasting patterns likely to have significant implications for future principal demand. Thus, since 1981 the proportion of Australian teachers aged less than 30 years has diminished sharply to range between only 18-21% compared with a much higher 37-48% for the 1954-1981 period. Moreover, the proportion of teachers aged 40-49 is projected to halve from 37% in 1996 to 19% by 2011. Finally, the proportion of teachers aged over 50 is likely to double between 1996 and 2011 from 16% to 33% (Preston, 2003, p. 40).

222. The increase in the cohort of teachers aged over 50 represents the 'greying' of the teaching service. Thus, in Victoria in 1991, 58% of the government teaching service (including principal class members) was aged 35-49. A decade later in 2001, 63% of the service was aged 40-54. Moreover, while 51% of teachers in 1991 were aged less than 40, by 2001 the corresponding figure had fallen to 30% (Gronn, 2003d, p. 63).

223. Nationally, the projected decline of the teacher cohort aged less than 40 years resulted from four factors that converged in the 1990s. This was a decade of teacher education graduate surpluses, low rates of recruitment and some negative public attitudes to teachers.

³ The *Australian School Teacher and Leader Survey* commissioned by DEST in 2006 will go some way to addressing these data concerns. It is intended to collect information on vacancies and turnover in leadership positions, as well as leaders' career intentions. The project's Advisory Committee includes representatives of government and non-government school authorities, principals' associations, and university teacher education faculties.

The four factors were: reduced student enrolments; declining improvements in staffing numbers; detrimental effects of economic recession; and low NSRs among the older cohort, which had been recruited in the 1970s, and which was then (in the 1990s) in its 30s-40s. This is the age band when NSRs are lowest and there is often a net inflow (i.e. entrants exceed exits) due to earlier departing teachers beginning to return to service (Preston, 2003, p. 41). It is also this cohort which (in 2006) includes most current principals who will be retiring over the next few years.

224. From the point of view of future principal demand in Australia, then, the teacher cohort currently in its early 40s is 'very small' numerically due to the low recruitment of the 1990s. Thus, for example, in Victoria in 1991 20% of government school principals were aged 40-44. In 2001, the corresponding proportion had decreased to 14% (Gronn, 2003d, p. 63). This early 40s cohort is the generation whose career advancement has in effect been blocked by the 1970s cohort in front of it (i.e. those aged over 50). Moreover, it is a career mobile cohort, for just below 40% of the 41 teachers considering a career change in the DEST sample of 337 were in the 35-44 age-band (MCEETYA, 2003, p. 20). This means that, as the generation of prospective principals, the members of this younger cohort 'will become precious' (Preston, 2002, pp. 2-3) and will have 'good prospects of becoming educational leaders' (Barty *et al*, 2005, p. 13).

225. The ageing of the teacher workforce is also evident in non-government schools. In NSW Catholic schools, for example, the proportion of teachers with at least 20 years experience increased to 37% in 2005 from 25% in 1996, while in Sydney most of the 148 Catholic systemic school principals were aged in their 50s and 60s, with a third of principals expected to retire in the next 5-10 years and with very few aged less than 45 (Putty, 2006). As a further example, the average age of primary principals in 2000 in Lutheran schools (a system of 33,000 students in 85 primary and secondary schools) was 47 years, and 52 years in secondary schools (Jericho, 2006).

5.3.4 Principal aspirations

226. As was noted in Chapter 3, because of notions of shared or distributed leadership, school leaders are not confined to formal position holders, although teachers aspiring to lead will prefer, and will try to attain, school based positions of authority with expectations of leadership. Such roles are arranged hierarchically and laterally in schools, with senior and experienced incumbents generally earning progressively higher salaries and allowances. Actual and anticipated role vacancies require successors and highlight the need for succession planning. Leadership recruitment, particularly principal recruitment, forms part of leadership succession planning, with recruitment processes designed to replenish individual vacancies and provide future leader cohorts by identifying, selecting and inducting aspirants. Outcomes of succession planning are 'pools' of leaders in waiting (e.g. accredited as eligible and suitable for role appointments) and 'pipelines' (e.g. aspirants with leader potential being progressively groomed through leadership professional development).

227. Teachers' aspirations to lead form part of their career intentions. To aspire to lead requires teachers' willingness to identify themselves as leaders. Aspirant school leaders may self-identify or may be 'tapped on the shoulder' by others (e.g. line managers, mentors). The nature and extent of aspirant identification by Australian school employers is highly variable. Research into teachers' personal identity narratives indicates that self-identification as potential leaders is a gradual process of trial and error during which aspirants experience high emotional vulnerability, and often lack of professional and system support (Gronn & Lacey, 2004).

228. A survey of graduate-entry primary and secondary teachers in three universities in Victoria and NSW (N = 493) revealed three clusters of beginning teachers' aspirations and

career plans (Watt, *et al*, in press): highly engaged persisters (46%), highly engaged switchers (27%) and lower engaged desisters (28%). Persisters planned to teach for the whole of their careers, switchers were unlikely to spend their entire careers in teaching and desisters were unlikely to persist for very long in teaching. Both persisters and switchers aspire to school leadership roles although, amid fluid labour market conditions and if influenced by ‘career consumerism’, the likelihood of switchers realising their leadership ambitions would depend on ‘adequate succession planning and staff management’ and teacher education providers and employers ‘acknowledging this beginning teacher “type”’ (Watt *et al*, in press, p. 14).

229. Teachers’ leadership career aspirations differ. On the basis of survey responses from 1,024 assistant principals, subject coordinators and religious education coordinators in nearly 600 Catholic schools in NSW in 2000-01, d’Arbon *et al* (2002, p. 475) devised six types of principalship aspirants:

1. Unavaileds – have previously applied for vacancies and will not do so in the future.
2. Settlers – have never applied and do not intend to.
3. Unpredictables – have previously applied and are uncertain whether they will again.
4. Potentials – have yet to apply but intend to.
5. Actives – are currently applying.
6. Uncertains – would apply provided a vacancy is suitably located.

230. About 30% of the survey respondents were willing to apply for vacancies (potentials and actives), 16% were unsure (unpredictables and uncertains) and 52% were not applying and would not apply (unavaileds and settlers). These figures represented ‘a cause for concern’, although the fact that 45% of assistant principals were willing to apply for principal vacancies was more reassuring (d’Arbon *et al*, 2002, p. 475).

231. In 2002, this NSW study was extended to Catholic primary and secondary schools in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. The responses of 638 principals and other senior school leaders revealed a slightly more positive set of findings (Carlin *et al*, 2003, p. 25): 35% willing; 25% unsure; and 42% unwilling. This latter percentage was mirrored in a survey of 204 Queensland government secondary deputy principals by Cranston *et al* (2004, pp. 233-4), in which about 40% intended to seek promotion to the principalship and a further 40% were unsure.

232. In Lacey’s (2003, pp. 139-140) survey of over 1,300 Victorian government teachers and principal class members, only 12% of respondents aspired to be principals and a further 12% aspired to be assistant principals. Aspirations for principal class roles were higher among primary than secondary teachers. The study also reported that more males than females aspired to be principals. Nevertheless, more recent data from the Victorian Department of Education indicates that the proportion of females in principal positions has risen from 27% in 1997 to 42% in 2006.

5.3.5 Principal supply

233. An aspiration to lead is not synonymous with an application for a vacancy and need not translate into an application, although having an aspiration is probably a pre-requisite for the submission of an application. The main reasons that Australian teachers (especially secondary and non-government teachers) become principals are to make a difference and because they enjoy leadership and management (MCEETYA, 2003, p. 23). Numerous factors affect these teacher leadership career decisions. One key source of influence is media reporting of principal demand and supply where, in contrast to the above school-level realities of distributed leadership, media representations of leadership often are of ‘heroic leaders going it alone’, and principals as crisis managers ‘in their own lives and in schools’ (Blackmore & Thomson, 2004, pp. 316, 310). The impact of negative media coverage on leadership career

decisions is difficult to gauge, although a frequently encountered mantra in public policy debates is concern with 'sending the wrong message'.

234. Other potential influences on principal supply include: school location; school size; the effect of current incumbency; and local school politics. Singly and in combination, these factors shape teachers' decisions to pursue the principalship, although the effect of each in different systems is not uniform.

235. In relation to size and location, in most Australian states small schools (especially primary schools with enrolments of less than 100 and principals who teach classes) comprise between a quarter and a third of all schools, most of them in remote or rural locations (Clarke & Wildy, 2006, p. 556). Small schools pose unique problems for leader preparation. Thus, in Queensland, few first-time teacher principals have any experience of the multi-age teaching typical of such settings, only 30% of them undergo formal induction to their roles and turnover after one year in the role is high (Clarke & Wildy, 2006, p. 557). In Western Australia, teaching principals (eight months in role) in small rural schools, especially women, often report that they are ill-prepared to deal with conservative values, intrusive pressures to integrate and general lack of community trust (Wildy & Clarke, 2005). Likewise, school remoteness and isolation (but not rurality) were disincentives to potential principal applicants in South Australia, although less so in Victoria (Barty, *et al*, 2005, pp. 5-6).

236. With regard to larger enrolment schools, principal selection panel chairs and senior human resource managers in South Australia and Victoria suggested that it was 'rare' for schools of 200-800 enrolments to experience difficulty attracting applicants for principal vacancies as schools within this range were thought by applicants to be 'safe' choices and to present fewer special challenges (Barty *et al*, 2005, p. 6).

5.3.6 Principal shortages

237. Expressed numerically, a 'shortage' in relation to principal and other school leader appointments means a shortfall of applicants for vacancies. Thus, an 'actual' shortfall is the excess of vacancies over applications for a set appointment period (e.g. a calendar year). In the event that such a shortfall is not merely a one-off aberration but persists over time, the description 'projected' shortfall is warranted: an estimated or anticipated excess of vacancies over potential applications for a given period (e.g. 5-10 years).

238. The earlier summary of aspirants' intentions (Section 5.3.4) highlights the low percentages of teachers willing to apply for a principalship. These numbers suggest that recent media messages of crisis or decline should be treated with caution for, as expressions of intention and aspiration (rather than firm applications), they are not evidence of shortages (in either the actual or projected sense just defined), let alone of shortages experienced universally and uniformly across states and systems. If there are shortages, these (as suggested by recent international research: see Gronn & Lacey, 2006, p. 104) are more likely to exist in pockets. That is, a 'mosaic of supply issues' is likely to 'produce shortages in applicants in particular schools at particular times' (Barty *et al*, 2005, p. 10).

239. While the available data on applications are incomplete and several years out of date, they are indicative of a broad trend of low and, in some instances, diminishing applications. In Victoria, the average number of applications for government school principal vacancies per school was 7.3, 6.7 and 7.4 for the years 1999, 2000 and 2001 respectively (Gronn & Lacey, 2006, p. 105). In Tasmania, average application numbers for government school principal vacancies per school fell from 14 in 1985 to eight in 1999, and for assistant principalships from an average of 45 to seven for the same period, while in Queensland in 2001, 13% of 170 primary principal positions were unfilled (Gronn & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003, p. 175). Seventy-one principal vacancies in NSW Catholic schools in 2004 attracted a total of just over 200

applications, an average of about three per school (d'Arbon, *et al* 2004, p. 4) while in the Catholic archdiocese of Sydney vacancies for principals 'were often readvertised' (Putty, 2006). In the Lutheran sector, where there is 'a sense' that the number of applicants for principal positions 'has declined in recent years', some rural, remote and provincial schools have had no applicants or, as in the case of one very high profile and prestigious school in a capital city in 2005, just one application for principal vacancies (Jericho, 2006). On the other hand, the NSW government school system reports an increase in recent years in the number of applicants for principal positions.

5.4 The explanation for recruitment difficulties

240. A range of factors influence principal supply, whether diminishing supply becomes a shortage and, especially, whether potential principals' aspirations to lead translate into applications for advertised vacancies. Provided incentives exist for teachers to seek to realise their career aspirations and provided these incentives are not outweighed by the disincentives they encounter, there is a greater likelihood that such aspirations will translate into applications. Current evidence suggests that the number and strength of the disincentives have a significant impact on aspirants.

5.4.1 *Principal incumbency*

241. Aspirants' future leadership decisions are influenced by the presumed intentions of current holders of principal positions. These intentions circulate as part of the 'secret business' of professional career networks (Barty *et al*, 2005, p. 8). Their main effect is on the rate of applications for vacancies and the effect is generally negative. The known or rumoured decision of incumbents to re-apply for their jobs (e.g. after temporarily acting in a role, following regrading of a position or due to mandatory renewal of contract) is sufficient to deter their peers from applying for vacancies, mainly because 'incumbents are, most commonly, successful in regaining their positions' (Barty *et al*, 2005, p. 9).

5.4.2 *Principal appointment and selection*

242. Another key consideration, arguably the factor with the most powerful negative influence on applications for principal class vacancies in state and Catholic systems, is the process of principal selection. Teacher confidence in the merit based principal class selection and appointment processes adopted by employers during the 1990s appears to have fallen. Confirmation that school based selection processes are seen as flawed has been established by d'Arbon *et al* (2002) for NSW Catholic schools, by Carlin *et al* (2003) for South Australian, Victorian and Tasmanian Catholic schools, by Gronn & Lacey (2006) for government schools in Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland, and by Barty *et al* (2006) for government and Catholic schools in Victoria and South Australia. Moreover, in Western Australia, nearly half of the government school respondents in Pritchard's (2003) survey of all three school sectors cited the selection process as the biggest deterrent to potential applicants.

243. Recent research with principal aspirants (Blackmore *et al*, 2006; Gronn & Lacey, 2006) suggests that government school employing authorities need to pay closer attention to the selection process for school principals. Matters to be addressed include:

- system and employer requirements that applications be written in what some see as a restrictive length and format;
- perceived higher weighting by some school based selection panels of applicant experience ahead of applicant potential;
- perceived higher weighting of applicant interview performance ahead of other sources of evidence; and

- perceptions of uninformative post-interview feedback for unsuccessful applicants.

244. Such concerns have focused attention on reviewing selection processes and assuring potential applicants about the procedures. For example, the Victorian government school system has recently instituted a review of the school based selection process for principals to ensure transparent merit based selection. It is likely to result in changes in the composition, training and operations of panels, and preparation and debriefing of applicants.

5.4.3 *Principals' intensified work*

245. Work intensification refers to the increased number and complexity of tasks for which principals are responsible, the rapidity with which they arise and the condensed time frames for their completion. As was outlined in Chapter 3, intensification emerges due to role expansion (e.g. task add-ons), heightened productivity expectations and diminished resources. Principals and other school leaders perceive their work as highly intensified (Gronn, 2003a, pp. 65-6). The DEST sample of principals, for example, cited 'lack of resources or time' exacerbated by 'problems with central bodies' as the two highest categories of issues that bothered them, 41% and 25% respectively (MCEETYA, 2003, p. 30). Lack of resources included overly demanding and tiring work, and stress, too much paperwork and lack of administrative support, while problems with central bodies included lack of autonomy, poor central leadership, poor central financial support and excessive bureaucracy. Non-government principals were more troubled by lack of time and resources than their government counterparts (46% and 39% respectively), with government principals more troubled by relations with central bodies (MCEETYA, 2003, pp. 32-3).

246. Principals also report that they experience role overload. This takes a number of forms. Thus, when Cranston & Ehrich (2002, p. 25) surveyed 108 Queensland government secondary principals, 63% of respondents indicated that the hours worked in their role had increased, 85% suggested that their experience of pressure was high, and 72% reported that pressures had increased in recent years. Another indicator of overload is the number of hours in the working week. Almost all (93%) of Cranston & Ehrich's sample said they worked more than 50 hours per week and about half claimed 60 hours or more. These workloads are consistent with those reported by Queensland primary principals (Cranston, 2000, p. 225) and by the recent Principal Class Workload Study in Victoria (Victoria, DET, 2004, p. 8) in which the average hours worked per week by principals was 60 and 58 by assistant principals.

5.4.4 *Principal stress*

247. Approximately 80% of the 743 respondents in the Principal Class Workload Study also reported experiencing 'high levels of stress', a percentage that was consistent among male and female principals and assistant principals, and with those aged less than 50 reporting slightly higher rates of stress than those aged more than 50 (Victoria, DET, 2004, p. 10). Cranston (2000, p. 226) found medium to high self-reported stress in his interview sample of Queensland primary principals. Nearly 900 principal class on-line survey respondents to the ASPA 'National Survey of School Leader Welfare' identified a number of sources of stress reported by principals, the most frequent of which were either 'imposed directly' by state and territory government regulations or were 'strongly influenced' by state bureaucracies (Australian Secondary Principals' Association, 2004, p. 4). Paradoxically, as noted earlier, the Principal Class Workload Study also found that principals approach their work with a strong sense of vocationalism and about 90% say that their job gives them 'great satisfaction' (Victoria, DET, 2004, p. 22).

5.4.5 *Principal disengagement*

248. The mechanisms by which these factors exert their influence on leadership aspirants are unclear. Gronn & Lacey's (2005) interviews with 27 teachers suggest that a key determinant of the willingness of teachers unsure about applying for principal vacancies to follow through on their aspirations is their perceptions of the role. For this reason, principals' positive modelling is crucial. When teachers' views of principals are negative, they believe principals experience little work satisfaction, spend lots of time with difficult people, have lost touch with students and project the image of managing a business. For these reasons, ex-principals, when interviewed, were acutely conscious of their need to talk more positively about their role. As one said: 'Maybe that's our fault as principals. We have moaned and bitched too much to the point where we have made the job sound so unattractive' (Gronn & Lacey, 2005, p. 29).

249. Another mechanism which influences aspirants is their assessment of risks (Gronn & Lacey, 2006, pp. 117-9). Here, factors related to lifestyle choices assume importance, such as the impact on spouses, partners, children, and elderly and immobile parents of a possible job relocation, impact of a new position on lifestyle, and the possibility of being unable to extricate oneself from an appointment that goes awry (Barty *et al*, 2005, p. 12). To the extent that, for some or all of the possible reasons identified, increasing numbers of teachers are experiencing second thoughts about leadership (particularly principal positions) as a future career possibility, their unwillingness to become candidates for roles constitutes disengagement from (or non-engagement with) leadership.

5.5 Employer responses

250. Systemic and employer responses to some or all the dimensions of leader supply and demand identified in this chapter have varied. There are examples of specifically targeted programmes, such as Western Australia's Rural Aspirant Programme designed to encourage leadership aspirations and preparation in rural areas (Wildy & Clarke, 2005, pp. 44, 46). There are examples of more comprehensive strategies, such as Victoria's 'Flagship' initiatives that form part of the Minister's 'Blueprint' (Victoria, DET, 2003). These include measures to address leadership capacity-building, such as new university based specialist professional Masters degrees, first-time and experienced principal mentoring and shadowing programmes, and professional learning programmes for leading teachers and assistant principals. Chapter 6 provides further examples of systemic approaches to leaders' career structures and professional development that are now underway in various states and territories.

251. In NSW, the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney has established a 'Leaders for the Future Programme'. This is targeted at teachers in their 20s and is designed to encourage their interest in senior school level positions, with a view to fast-tracking their promotion. This programme commenced in late 2005 with 300 teachers identified as having leadership potential (Putty, 2006). To address its system's leadership succession requirements, in particular the 'urgent need' to increase its leadership pool, Lutheran Education Australia has introduced the Leadership Development Project. This programme caters for 60-70 participants and in late 2005 began with a profiling process designed to identify self-selected and nominated aspirants. Programme participants complete a portfolio of experiences and achievements, and respond to two case studies, following which aspirants may be offered scholarships to undertake postgraduate study and provided with 12 months system support through mentoring (Jericho, 2006).

5.6 Key issues and challenges

252. From the review in this chapter, six key issues for both policy and research have emerged. As the discussion has indicated, such issues are being addressed in various ways by different employers and researchers, but it is probably fair to say that there is not yet a systematic and widely available body of knowledge about the nature of the concerns or effective responses.

5.6.1 Incidence of disengagement

253. Two aspects of disengagement demand attention. First, additional understanding is required of the nature and genesis of this phenomenon. In government schools at least, it appears to have emerged as an unintended consequence of the introduction of greater school self-management, and may represent a reaction to the accountability load now shouldered by principals, in addition to the other manifold pressures on principals identified in Section 5.4. If so, then leadership is being perceived by teachers as too burdensome. To the extent that disengagement is evident in principal lead-up roles (e.g. leading and senior teachers), as is evident from Gronn's (2003d, pp. 53-60) interviews with experienced principals, then disengagement may also represent a changed view of teachers' occupational commitment. Second, pending further investigation, the incidence and extent of disengagement are unclear.

5.6.2 Identification of aspirants

254. It is evident that schools and systems have had mixed success in identifying leader aspirants. This patchiness is complicated by a lack of clear guidelines due to an absence in the leadership literature of a sizeable and credible evidence base for the identification of leadership potential. An additional factor is that, once identified, aspirants require nurturing. This requirement suggests that teachers' possible engagement with roles associated with leadership cannot be assumed to be automatic or 'natural'. Rather, the case is strong for carefully designed and targeted school leader preparation initiatives, which include the identification (and perhaps fast-tracking) of aspirants, and which are linked to the career developmental needs and professional identities of teachers. A number of recent developments in these areas are discussed in Chapter 6.

5.6.3 School leaders' career paths

255. In general, employers, policy-makers and researchers lack clear and detailed knowledge of identifiable and typical teacher and leader career mobility and progression pathways, along with such key influences on aspirations as sense of self-efficacy, capability and motivation. Chapter 6 outlines some recent initiatives to promote leadership development in response to this concern. On this point, Barty *et al* (2005, p. 4) suggest that 'statistical data related to school leadership not only ought to be collected and aggregated, but also ought to be made public' by governments committed to information transparency and as part of their annual accountability requirements.⁴ These difficulties with identifying potential school leaders and their pathways are exacerbated by the relative dearth of research into school leadership roles other than principals. Such roles should be an increasing focus of policy attention and research.

⁴ See the previous footnote for a recent DEST initiative to fill some of these data gaps.

5.6.4 *Principal role redesign*

256. The role expansion that has occurred as part of principals' work intensification highlights the need for a review and possible re-design of the principal role and other senior leadership roles. When role expansion is coupled with the concentration of entire site-level accountability on one individual, the result is not only to provide a potential recruitment disincentive but also to reinforce an heroic view of leadership in the guise of a 'super-principal' prototype. There are other options besides 'the power of one'. One possibility, utilised as an option in some Australian Catholic schools, is co-principalship (Gronn & Hamilton, 2004).

5.6.5 *Principal diversity*

257. A closely associated point concerns the tendency of principal recruitment processes, and leader recruitment processes more generally, to reproduce a 'type' (Blackmore *et al*, 2006). It is not clear whether such narrowing is inherent in recruitment and selection as a result of deliberate or inadvertent filtering of applicants' backgrounds and skills, or whether these outcomes are artefacts of the selection processes adopted. The effect, however, is to reduce the overall diversity of appointment cohorts – for example, the relatively low proportion of female principals, especially in secondary schools (Blackmore *et al*, 2006, pp. 309-313; Neidhart & Carlin, 2003).

5.6.6 *Principal wellbeing*

258. A growing concern is evident with occupational 'wellbeing', particularly the wellbeing of principals and aspirant principals. Wellbeing is a complex phenomenon that is closely related to the experience of stress and role complexity. It refers to the self-perceived awareness of one's overall capacity to be challenged and extended in one's role, to experience role discretion and latitude without feeling overwhelmed and unable to control one's workflow, and to achieve overall balance in one's life. Additional data and research on this phenomenon, including its incidence, seems warranted if its impact on current and potential school leaders is to be properly understood and its consequences addressed.

6. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OF SCHOOL LEADERS

6.1 Introduction

259. This chapter is concerned with the professional learning of school leaders in Australia.⁵ It explores issues relating to the structure, processes and effectiveness of existing preparation and development programmes, recent initiatives that have been adopted, and the areas where more support appears to be needed.

260. A key challenge for developers of school leadership programmes is to identify those factors that are of central importance in the preparation of school leaders, including the capacity to take on a broad range of responsibilities and facilitate shared leadership (see Chapter 3) and the relationship between leadership and student outcomes (Chapter 4). As highlighted in Chapter 5, attention needs to be given to the recruitment and selection of school leaders who have the qualities and capacities that lead teachers and schools to improve student learning. Stakeholders have also drawn attention to the need to establish working conditions and support structures that will improve the retention of effective leaders.

261. In light of the discussions from the previous chapters, this chapter considers how providers of professional learning in Australia are reconsidering what counts as quality professional leadership learning. There are now heightened expectations of school leaders, and the professional knowledge and skills they require are now seen as much more extensive and complex than ever before. These changing expectations and requirements call for preparation and ongoing learning that extend well beyond management training programmes designed to meet earlier and narrower conceptions of school leaders' roles.

262. While investment in school leadership professional learning is difficult to quantify, the expanding range of leadership learning activities – more than this report has space to mention – is testament to the growing interest and investment in school leadership in Australia. With increases in investment, employers, policy makers and practitioners are asking for evidence of the effects of professional learning on school leadership practice and student outcomes (see Chapter 4).

263. Despite an abundance of discussion and literature relating to school leadership, the professional learning of school leaders remains a relatively under-examined area. Research and evaluation efforts in this aspect of school leadership tend to be small-scale and fragmented. It seems the investment in and pace of developments in leadership learning have outstripped those of research and evaluation.

6.2 Pathways to becoming a school leader

264. Despite the number and variety of leadership learning programmes available in Australia, a four-year teaching qualification and registration remain the only formal requirements for school leaders. As outlined in Chapter 5, higher qualifications in leadership are not mandatory, although possession of such qualifications may well enhance applicants' prospects of gaining and retaining leadership positions. Many aspiring leaders choose to pursue higher studies in educational leadership, such as Masters degrees. For example, Gamage and Ueyama (2004) found that 34% of principals and deputy principals in 130 New South Wales schools across three school districts had Masters degrees in educational administration and management.

⁵ In this chapter and throughout the report we have generally used the term 'professional learning' rather than the term 'training and professional development', which was used in the OECD Guidelines. The former term encompasses a potentially broader range of activities – both formal and informal – than the latter, and probably comes closer to reflecting thinking about this area in Australia.

265. There are some specific requirements for becoming a school leader in some sectors. For example, in the Catholic system in Western Australia, school principals also require specific Religious Education Accreditation and, once appointed, must continue to work towards a Masters degree in either Theology or Religious Education.

266. Su *et al* (2003) characterise the approach in Australia as an ‘apprenticeship’ model whereby teachers gradually gain experience on-the-job and move up the ranks to principalship. However, there are now examples of moves to formalise principal preparation in the states and territories (e.g. Western Australia’s Introductory Leadership programme is outlined below). Also, many individuals who aspire to leadership positions in schools are choosing to avail themselves of higher degrees and other opportunities offered by different providers.

267. Issues to do with succession planning, as discussed in Chapter 5, are fuelling a need for better pathways and processes of support for prospective and established school leaders. Research by the Australian Catholic University and Lacey for APAPDC (2002) suggests that few examples in Australia can be found of strategic succession planning processes for schools and systems. However, education systems recognise this as an issue and are developing strategies that focus on succession planning in the context of overarching planning for improvement and reform. The researchers highlight the work of the Sydney Catholic Education Office and South Australia’s Centre for Leaders in Education as examples of moves towards better processes for leadership succession. The latter offers programmes to self-identified teachers, coordinators and assistant and deputy principals, and provides scholarships for teachers and leaders identified by District Superintendents to attend the *Preparing for the Principalship* programme.

268. Figure 4 illustrates the type of framework now being developed to map school leaders’ pathways and development in Australia. This example from the Queensland government school system is similar to frameworks being used in other systems. It traces the ‘leadership journey’ from aspirations through to beginning in leadership roles, consolidation and growth, high achievement in the role, and transitions to other roles, including preparation for retirement. Such continua are being developed to support the preparation and ongoing professional learning of school leaders by identifying the types of foundation programmes and other activities needed at different stages of their career. While a number of the elements in Figure 4 are not yet implemented, their identification as part of a public strategy document is a promising development.

6.3 Using standards frameworks to guide professional learning

269. The use of standards frameworks to guide the professional learning and development of school leaders is a notable development in recent years. Standards frameworks are starting to have a major role in helping school leaders to learn what it is that they need to know and be able to do in order to develop professionally. They provide leaders and aspiring leaders with a learning continuum that gives long-term direction to professional learning.

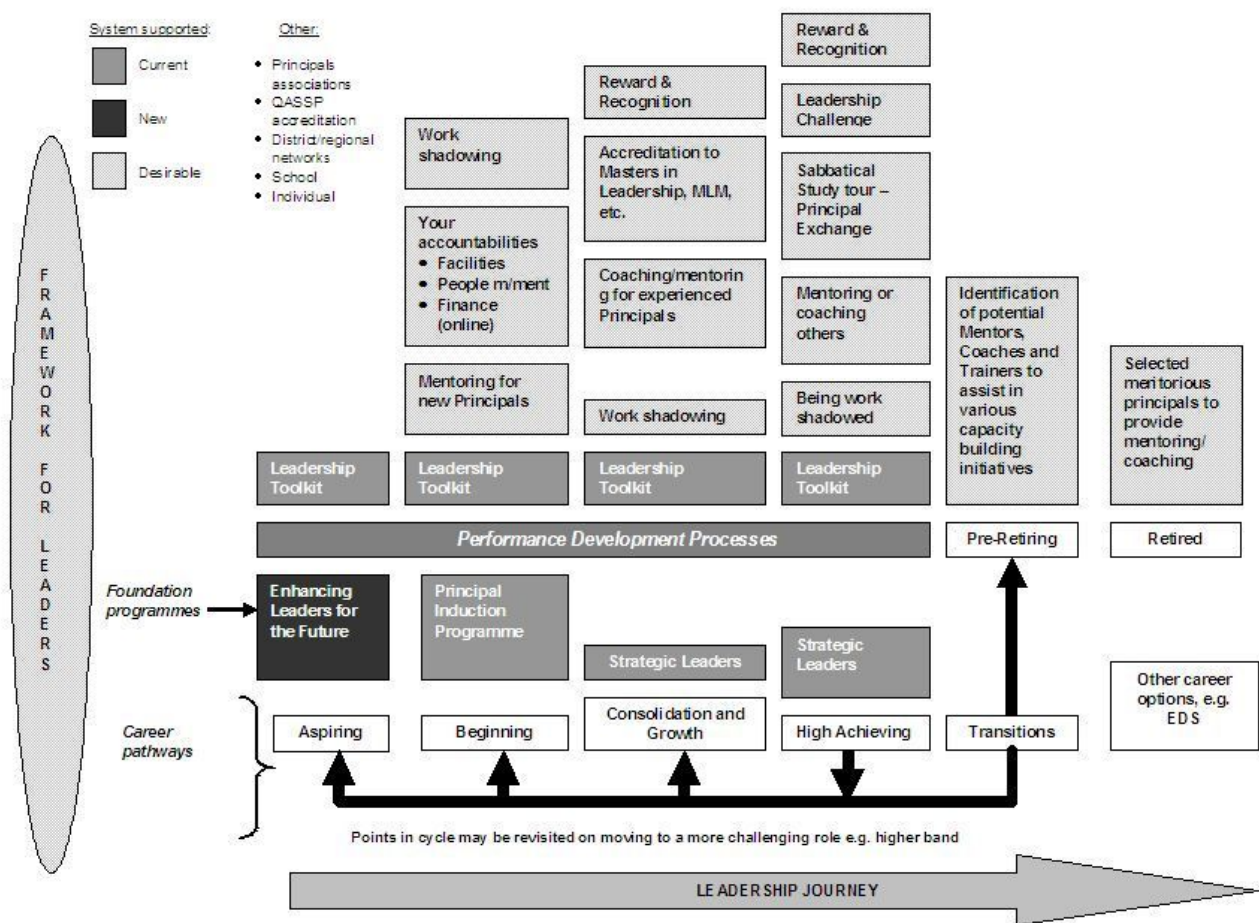


Figure 4: School leadership strategy, Queensland

270. Ingvarson and Kleinhenz (2006) argue that a powerful way of using standards to support leaders’ professional learning is to incorporate them into a standards based professional learning system that requires participants to gather, and present for assessment, evidence of having met the standards. A standards based professional learning system operationalises standards: that is, it indicates how a leader’s performance will be assessed and what level of performance indicates that the standard has been attained. It has four components:

- profession-wide standards that describe the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions of school leaders;
- an infrastructure for professional learning that supports people as they gather evidence of meeting the standards;
- fair, valid, consistent and reliable assessment leading to certification; and
- recognition and reward, such as progression in a career structure or increased financial remuneration.

271. The development of a Leadership Framework by researchers at Edith Cowan and Murdoch universities in collaboration with the Western Australian Department of Education and Training, described in the next section, is one example that shows how leadership standards in Australia are attempting to form a bridge between research and practice.

272. As discussed by Ingvarson and Kleinhenz (2006), the most effective sets of leadership standards are able to indicate not only what leaders should aim to achieve, and the kinds of

professional learning needed to achieve it, but also the kind of evidence they would need to produce to show that the standards have been met. Currently, the latter aspect is not so well developed. Western Australia's *Performance Standards for School Leadership* is possibly the most comprehensive framework to date.

6.4 Standards for school leadership in Australia

273. Every Australian state and territory education system has, or is in the process of developing, some form of standards or standards referenced framework for school leadership. Generally, these standards now look more like profession-wide standards than the lists of competencies and elements of job descriptions which characterised many of the statements about leaders' work in the 1990s. The more recently developed standards are generally broader and deeper, and they reflect a more complex and comprehensive professional knowledge base.

274. There is evidence of states and territories sharing their leadership frameworks and activities through bodies such as MCEETYA, which has developed a Framework of Standards that integrates standards for teachers and school leaders. The Framework provides a key point of reference around which future collaborative work for the development of profession-wide standards could be organised and a 'common and recognisable reference point for professional engagement' (MCEETYA, 2003).

275. The majority of standards frameworks for school leadership in Australia have been developed predominantly by employers in conjunction with school leader professional associations and academics. Examples include the empirically based NSW Department of Education and Training's *Professional Capability Framework* (Scott, 2003), the *Leadership in Catholic Schools* framework developed by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (see Box 3), and the *Leadership Framework for Lutheran Schools* (Lutheran Education Australia, 2005).

276. Sets of school leadership standards have also been developed by school leaders' professional associations. The Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL) has developed a leadership standards framework, which encompasses seven professional elements (e.g. the leader and the learning organisation), and the APAPDC (see Box 1) has developed a set of five propositions (e.g. Proposition 1: 'Leadership starts from within'). These documents have been used by different states in developing their standards frameworks.

277. Teaching Australia, set up to be the national professional body for teachers and school leaders, has also been working on school leadership standards. Teaching Australia released its consultation paper, *National Professional Standards for Advanced Teaching and School Leadership*, in March 2007. The paper proposes a standards model for the teaching profession, comprising a charter, organising categories, encompassing the foundation areas of expertise, generic, high level statements of capabilities and descriptors of accomplishment. The paper proposes a standards model and charter for the teaching profession.

278. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is developing a core set of nationally agreed skills, knowledge and attributes for school principals by the end of 2007. These will increase the effectiveness of school leaders to lead teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy. This is vital to improving student literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students, but particularly those at risk of low achievement in these areas.

Box 3: Leadership in Victorian Catholic schools

In 2003 the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) commissioned ACER to assist in the development of leadership standards. This initiative, funded by the Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme, was influenced by two major trends: the growing recognition that new kinds of school leadership-centred successful student learning are now needed in schools; and the movement towards standards based professional learning and accountability.

The main target group were those practising teachers who aspired to senior leadership roles in schools. The standards were developed to validate the work of teachers who were already leading others to improve students' learning opportunities and outcomes. At the same time they were intended for use as a 'road map' to guide the professional learning and development of aspiring leaders.

The standards cannot be described as fully 'profession-wide' in that they were developed for a particular group of leaders – those who work in Victorian Catholic schools. This is immediately apparent in the five 'key' leadership areas, which form the domains of these standards: the faith community; a vision for the whole school; teaching and learning; people and resources; and pastoral and community.

The developers of the standards faced the dilemma, common to all developers of standards for school leaders, of identifying and distinguishing between understandings about 'leadership' itself, and descriptions of what school leaders actually do. The standards attempt to bring these two together by setting out 'leadership actions' in the five key areas, and showing how every one of these actions is underpinned by all of five 'guiding conceptions' of leadership identified from the literature, chiefly from the work of Fullan (2001). These are: having a clear moral purpose; relationship building; understanding and managing change; knowledge creation and sharing; and ensuring coherence and alignment of structures.

In a pilot project to ascertain how the standards might be used to provide certification and professional development for leaders, six teachers prepared portfolios of evidence that described how they had initiated and led a major programme that resulted in improved student learning in their schools. The pilot was successful, and the teachers reported that they found it valuable for their professional learning.

The standards have proved popular with principals, teachers, leaders and aspiring leaders in Catholic schools. They are being used for a variety of purposes, including professional learning and developing staff appraisal and performance development processes, while others are using the standards to guide the development of personalised plans for their leadership growth.

279. While standards frameworks in Australia may be developed and presented in different ways (see, for example, Box 4), overall there is a striking similarity in the core components, particularly the explicit focus on learning (e.g. Queensland's Department of Education and the Arts *Leadership Matters – leadership capabilities for Education Queensland principals*, 2006 and South Australia's Centre for Leaders in Education, which has drawn on the APAPDC's five leadership propositions to underpin its *Leaders Learning Framework*, 2005). As highlighted in Chapter 4, renewed emphasis on learning has occurred because such outcomes as balancing the potentially competing objectives of quality, equity and efficiency are crucial, and the environment of learning is more complex.

280. Debate over the purposes and principles underpinning the standards frameworks for school leadership presents continuing challenges for developers. The standards can act as an important ethical and research based frame of reference for, among other activities, professional leadership learning and development. This purpose of professional standards is important when considered alongside findings such as those of Duignan (2004): ‘leaders in contemporary organisations require frames of reference that can assist them to manage situations of uncertainty, ambiguity and seeming contradictions and paradox’ (p. 10).

281. Developers of recently published school leadership standards acknowledge there is a need to review the standards, possibly every three to five years, to ensure their ongoing relevance and currency (e.g. Queensland DEA, 2006).

Box 4: Performance standards for school leadership, Western Australia

Western Australia’s *Performance Standards for School Leadership* were developed in a large-scale collaborative project between the Western Australian Department of Education and Training through its Leadership Centre, and Edith Cowan and Murdoch universities. The key responsibility for developing these standards went to a small team of researchers working with principals and other school leaders. The three-stage project involved: a review of existing teaching and principal standards from Australia and overseas; interviews with approximately 1,000 school leaders; and development of brief narratives of various incidents of school leadership and the leaders’ ratings of a set of 74 cases. Workshops were also run by the researchers with school leaders throughout Western Australia (Louden & Wildy, 1999b).

An unusual feature of the *Performance Standards for School Leadership* compared to other school leadership standards in Australia is the inclusion of performance levels on a set of ‘attributes’ of school leaders: fair; supportive; collaborative; decisive; flexible; tactful; innovative; and persistent. These help school leaders and others reflect on their performance and act as a guide to professional learning.

The performance levels for each attribute are an integral part of the Leadership Centre’s standards framework, which has five domains of school leadership: policy and direction; teaching and learning; staff; partnerships; and resources. These domains are the sites for determining the quality of performance and collectively underpin all the Centre’s professional learning offerings and assessment.

6.5 The provision of professional learning for school leaders

282. The diversity and rapid change evident in the Australian context, described in Chapter 2, present key challenges for the provision of professional learning. The diversity of providers and programme offerings for school leaders in Australia is, simultaneously, a valued characteristic of the Australian context and an obstacle to greater coherence. The wide array of professional learning opportunities on offer can meet a diverse range of school leaders’ needs in different settings and stages of career (e.g. see Ingvarson *et al*, 2005). Equally, however, diversity of provision and providers increases the complexities involved in ascertaining and quantifying levels of investment in professional learning, coordinating efforts, and drawing conclusions about impact.

283. The reconceptualisation of what counts as quality school leadership has also forced the providers of professional learning to reconsider what counts as quality professional leadership learning and development. Consistent with a number of other reviews of literature on the critical features of quality professional leadership learning, from overseas (e.g. Davis *et al*, 2005) are Ingvarson *et al*’s (2005) four evaluation studies of AGQTP funded programmes between 2001 to 2003. In total, data for these evaluations was gathered from 3,250 teachers

who had participated in professional learning programmes. The evaluation team drew on a wide body of overseas and Australian research to identify a number of features of effective professional learning. These included: (i) *content focus*, recognising the importance of *what* was to be learned; (ii) *active learning* engagement and reflection on learning; (iii) provision of effective and timely *feedback* from a ‘coach’ or supporting peers; and (iv) giving *follow up* support during the implementation phase of a professional learning programme. The researchers concluded that ‘effective integration of new skills requires programmes to have a clear theoretical foundation supported by research, modelling in real settings, and opportunities to practice the new skills and receive feedback’ (Ingvarson *et al*, 2005, p. 8).

284. These and other generic features of professional learning (e.g. that it should be organised around collaborative problem solving) are frequently identified in the literature as being essential to the development of effective school leaders. Space precludes including full descriptions of each of these features. However, collectively they can be organised into categories about structure, content, methods and measures of success, which can be used to guide research, development and evaluation of professional learning offered by different providers. The remaining sections of this chapter use these categories to frame a discussion about professional learning offered by different school systems in Australia.

6.5.1 Current structural arrangements

285. Principal preparation and other school leadership programmes reflect a variety of structures, collaborations and institutional arrangements. At the state, territory and national levels, Australia has many providers of professional learning for school leaders. These include specially developed leadership centres such as the South Australian Centre for Leaders in Education (SACLE), the Western Australian Leadership Centre, and Queensland’s Indigenous Education Leadership Institute, and the provision of postgraduate courses in educational leadership and administration in universities.

286. Nationally, professional association providers include ACEL, which has a broad membership from all educational sectors, and the APAPDC (see Box 1). Many national professional associations have a broad membership base and offer a range of programmes for different school personnel. For example, the Australian Joint Council of Professional Teaching Associations (AJCPTA) has organisational members in all states and territories that provide leadership programmes for teachers and current holders of leadership positions.

287. The Australian Government has initiated a number of strategies aimed at supporting and improving school leader effectiveness, such as the AGQTP which is currently funding 20 activities that focus on building leadership capacity across the country. A prominent example is provided by the *Dare to Lead* project, which is run through the APAPDC (see Box 5).

Box 5: *Dare to Lead* project

Dare to Lead was conceived in 1999, when the presidents of the national Principals Associations agreed, on the basis of the data emerging on Indigenous student outcomes nationally, that something had to be done. It was agreed that school leaders needed to play a critical role in removing the gap in educational outcomes between Indigenous students and other young Australians.

Dare to Lead forums were held across the country in 2000 and 2001, following which a coalition of school leaders formally signed up to tackle this issue in schools. By mid-2006 almost 4,000 school leaders were members of the *Dare to Lead* coalition. Participation is voluntary and free. All schools on becoming members agree to engage in planning and implementation around the project's goals to support Indigenous students. These goals include improving literacy performance levels in primary schools at Year 5 by at least 10% and improving completion rates of recognised Year 12 courses.

Participants are grouped into Action Areas, with each Action Area having a key contact person who liaises with a State Action Area Coordinator. Access to regular professional learning, newsletters, website and subsidised resources (generated by school leaders and Indigenous educators) is a feature of the support participants receive.

Schools receive a certificate stating they are a *Dare to Lead* school. Exemplary work in schools is profiled for various publications and peer presentations. Since 2004 there have been annual Excellence in Leadership in Indigenous Education award ceremonies. Schools winning such awards have their strategies showcased as models of good practice.

6.5.2 Who are the programmes for?

288. Professional learning is available to different school leaders, as evident through the 20 AGQTP funded programmes (e.g. the AGQTP NSW *Strengthening Leadership* for assistant principals and teachers who hold coordinator positions in primary and secondary schools). The most widely established are probably those for newly appointed principals (e.g. induction programmes). More recently, attention is being paid to the provision of professional learning programmes for prospective school leaders – especially aspirant principals.

289. A number of school leadership programmes specifically target women, who are currently under-represented among Australian school principals. An important example is the Victorian Department of Education's *Eleanor Davis* programme. Another is the programme of activities organised by the Western Australian Leadership Centre as part of its Women in Leadership Strategy. These activities include opportunities for women to participate in a virtual learning website, networking, mentoring, study tours and focused professional learning.

290. Indigenous leadership is also a current key area of development in Australia. Amid growing concerns about the relatively low educational outcomes of Indigenous children, different providers are implementing leadership development activities. Examples include the *Dare to Lead* project (see Box 5) and the *Stronger Smarter Principals Leadership Programme* for current and aspiring school leaders serving Indigenous communities throughout Australia. This programme is offered by the Indigenous Education Leadership Institute in Queensland and includes an intensive week-long programme and follow-up review and school mentoring support. The Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) has also embarked on an *Indigenous Leaders Network* project (see Box 6).

Box 6: Indigenous Leaders Network project, Northern Territory

By 2020, the Indigenous student population in the Northern Territory (NT) is projected to rise from 30% to 50% of all students. This projected increase in Indigenous student numbers has created a major impetus for recruiting and supporting more Indigenous school leaders. In response, the Northern Territory DEET has developed and delivered a number of leadership forums that specifically target Indigenous school leaders. The forums aim to impact on student learning in the NT through bridging the home culture to school/agency culture divide by: enhancing participants' capacity to lead in bi-cultural educational contexts and collectively advocating and working towards appropriate shifts in worksite cultures and practices.

To date, some 30 Indigenous leaders working in urban or remote school settings in the NT have participated in three face-to-face forums. Participants identified that inter-cultural communication and negotiation are critical challenges for leadership in NT schools. These challenges led to further discussions about underlying cultural assumptions, as part of the forum programme. As a result of the forum discussions, recommendations for more bi-culturally competent workplaces were developed. These recommendations are informing a six-day bi-cultural leadership module phase for the Indigenous leader participants, which will involve shadowing a leader in another community school, and seminar sessions. The programme developers envisage using the feedback from participants to develop a suite of pilot programmes that will lead to the development of a bi-cultural leadership module for the NT more broadly.

291. As with many of the current wave of leadership learning developments in Australia, Indigenous leadership programmes are still in their infancy. Specific research in Indigenous educational leadership is rare (d'Arbon *et al*, 2004). A promising development is the recent Australian Research Council funded longitudinal research project, *Linking Worlds: Strengthening the leadership capacity of Indigenous educational leaders in remote education settings*. d'Arbon *et al* (2004) outline the key features of the research, which include the involvement of principals in the study's design, methodologies and decision making. A key aim of the research project will be to review and enhance current professional learning offered by different providers on the specific issue of Indigenous leadership in remote educational contexts.

292. Chapter 2 outlined the establishment in 2005 of Teaching Australia – Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. Among Teaching Australia's activities is the *Leading Australia's Schools* programme focused on mid-career principals (see Box 7). The programme is intended for school principals who are in the formative years of their principalship and who are likely to make an ongoing contribution for a considerable period.

Box 7: *Leading Australia's Schools* programme, Teaching Australia

The programme is designed to meet the needs of mid-career principals and is nation-wide in its coverage. The programme is currently designed for up to 80 principals per year in two cohorts. The intention is to develop a critical mass of high performing school leaders, who in turn can take on responsibility for school improvement at school and system levels.

The first cohort commenced in June 2006. Developed and delivered by the Hay Group and the University of Melbourne, the programme includes two face-to-face residential sessions, of five and two days respectively, and a field based project. The themes guiding the course are: the nature and challenge of leadership; myself as leader; leading a learning organisation; myself as a leader in education; and myself as a leader of the future. Participants also undertake a diagnostic analysis of their leadership qualities. Having completed the programme, participants may apply for advanced standing of 25 points toward a Master of School Leadership at the University of Melbourne. The programme is provided at no cost to participants.

293. The increasing emphasis on shared leadership models in schools (see Chapter 3) has prompted the need for professional learning for leadership teams. The provision of professional learning for leadership teams is not a new concept, and there are examples from the 1990s (e.g. Berry, 1997). A range of programmes for building the capacity of school teams is now either underway or in development in most state and territory school systems. In light of calls for a need to spread the leadership load in schools and to develop schools as professional learning communities, the professional learning of leadership teams seems set to increase in importance.

6.5.3 *Support and recognition for school leaders*

294. There is no consistent, coordinated state or national approaches to the support and recognition for school leaders undertaking professional leadership learning activities. Information about programmes for professional learning for school leaders, such as details about the costs, resources, and support provided to school leaders is not readily available in the public domain, although the relevant school system authorities are using such information in planning their programmes. One form of support that appears to be in common use is the partial or full financial subsidy of the professional learning. Generally, this kind of financial assistance is used to pay for attendance at the programme or to pay for time release of individuals from schools.

295. There is a variety of award schemes for giving recognition to successful principals and other school leaders. These schemes are operated by a number of professional associations, such as ACEL, the Australian College of Educators and Teaching Australia. Teaching Australia manages and takes a leading role in the Australian Government's National Awards for Quality Schooling (AGNAQS). In a number of states and territories, an individual's participation in specific leadership programmes is recognised through the award of a certificate in, for example, school leadership and management. Other leadership learning providers have negotiated for their programmes to be recognised by universities, typically in the form of credit towards a higher qualification.

296. Support for school leaders in rural and remote areas is another significant issue, particularly the provision of preparation programmes that take into account the social and cultural context of small schools (Wildy & Clarke, 2005). The large distances that separate many schools from professional learning providers is a feature of Australia and presents a challenge for the provision of quality professional learning. Most school systems now have

programmes in place to assist the professional learning of principals and leadership teams of small schools.

6.5.4 Content of professional learning for school leaders

297. As described earlier in this chapter, research clearly shows that *content* is a critical factor in any programme of professional learning. Examination of content is a critical point of reference for what school leadership means and for the purposes it serves.

298. The content of school leaders' professional learning in Australia appears increasingly to be linked to how school leadership is conceived in standards frameworks. The various domains of leadership set out in standards frameworks indicate current emphases. These include a strong focus on enhancing learning for students and teachers. In most, if not all, standards for school leaders, there is a particularly strong emphasis on creating the conditions for the learning of others in schools – for example, NSW's *Leadership Capability Framework* explicitly encompasses the dimensions 'personal' and 'interpersonal'.

299. Programme content commonly includes areas such as financial management, human resources management, and school accountability and planning. Such components are particularly common in programmes geared toward the preparation of aspirant principal leaders or induction into the principalship (see Box 8).

Box 8: Introductory school leadership programme, Western Australia

Research in Western Australia had indicated an urgent need to support principal induction, particularly new principals in rural locations (Wren & Watterson, 2003). A response to this issue, linked to the Leadership Centre's *Leadership Framework* (see Box 4) has been the establishment of an introductory programme for aspiring principals. The Centre's Introductory School Leadership Programme covers five modules spanning six days during school holidays. A school leader's role in finance, human resources management, curriculum development, and school planning and accountability are key areas of focus. The modules are organised so that aspirant principals can choose to attend one or more blocks of the programme. Completion of each module helps participants gather evidence on their development in one or more domains of school leadership. For example, a candidate completing the module Leading Curriculum is able to gather evidence against the 'policy and direction' and 'teaching and learning' areas of the *Leadership Framework*. The Centre's focus is more on developing leadership and leadership potential than on operational management.

A trained facilitator, usually an experienced school leader, and a content expert deliver each module. Rural districts can seek approval from the Leadership Centre to deliver the modules. In collaboration with academics and school leaders, the Centre has developed scenario items grounded in schools contexts. Responses from prospective school leaders are used to assess the degree to which aspiring principals possess the attributes, values and knowledge identified in the Centre's *Leadership Framework*. Approximately 400 individuals each year complete all five modules.

300. Another emerging, important content area is that of ICT, which was also discussed in Chapter 4. In a recent study, published by Teaching Australia, Moyle (2006) showed how changing expectations and contexts of school leaders' work have implications for how they support the integration of ICT into teaching and learning, and the day-to-day running and accountability processes of the school. Moyle used 40 focus groups of educational leaders from all states and territories and across sectors to review leadership learning with ICT. She reported that most of the focus groups' experience of professional learning in this area was school based and often self-directed, in part because of the different starting points of

individuals. It was not surprising then to find that participants noted the need for skills development prior to understanding the possible uses of ICT in improving teaching and learning. Moyle's research showed how leaders can play a pivotal role in using ICT to help make the shift from teacher centred to learner centred learning. The importance of a whole school 'strategic focus' in integrating ICT into teaching and learning was emphasised, as was leading and establishing processes to create the conditions for effective, learner centred ICT use.

301. Moyle's (2006) review found that the breadth and depth of the changes required for effective integration of ICT into school learning programmes made heavy demands on school leaders. These demands went well beyond knowledge of the technologies, and called for highly developed levels of pedagogical and curriculum skills. This finding has obvious significance for the development of professional learning programmes for school leaders.

302. A number of Australian studies have investigated school leaders' perceptions of their professional learning and development and areas they see as priorities. Drawing on the findings from several research projects, mainly in Queensland, Dempster (2001) concludes that professional learning, 'requires a fine balance between learning what the system requires of individual school leaders and what practising professionals require of themselves and their colleagues' (p. 20). Dempster's research suggests that, from the perspective of the participants, the former has tended to take precedence over the latter in what is commonly provided.

6.5.5 *Methods of professional learning for school leaders*

303. Active modes of learning are becoming more prominent in leadership development programmes. Examples of this form of learning include lengthy structured and mentor supported internships, induction programmes, shadowing, problem based simulations, case study tasks and journal and portfolio entries (see, for example, Cranston *et al*, 2004). These activities are intended to place the individual in as authentic a situation as possible, and to model effective leadership.

304. There is an increasing emphasis on mentoring, coaching and shadowing type programmes and approaches to professional leadership learning (e.g. O'Mahony & Matthews, 2003). Use of these modes of learning are consistent with the earlier mentioned features of quality professional learning and calls from practitioners in such studies as Su *et al*'s (2003) study of 102 principals and deputy principals across three NSW school districts. In this study practitioners recommended they wanted, for example, 'more mentoring by experienced site administrators, more emphasis on practical skills and realistic issues and problems that principals may face ... [and] longer commitment to fieldwork' (p. 52). Formal mentoring programmes for principal development have been in existence in Australia since the 1990s but there are now more systematic attempts to better coordinate the design and provision of such programmes (Hansford & Ehrich, 2006). Box 9 outlines a mentoring programme operated by the Australian Principals Centre and Deakin University.

Box 9: SAGE Mentoring Programme

The SAGE programme (supporting, accomplishing, guiding and enriching) involves a partnership between the Australian Principals Centre (since 2005 a subsidiary of ACER) and Deakin University. It is an *accredited* mentor training programme that was developed in response to requests from a group of government school principals. Barnett and O'Mahony (2005) report that the programme is underpinned by five elements of effective mentoring: teaching, sponsoring, encouraging, counselling and befriending. Mentors complete a learning styles inventory in order to increase their own awareness of how they learn. Over 750 principals, assistant principals and teachers throughout Australia have been trained through the SAGE programme. In 2004-05 the programme was applied to a beginning principal programme, which involved 32 mentor pairs in 64 schools located in one Victorian government school region. The formal component of the programme consists of three face-to-face sessions over a 12 month period, designed to complement the ongoing contact between mentors and mentees.

305. Research generally reports that participants value leadership mentoring and coaching programmes (see, for example, the review of 40 studies by Hansford & Ehrich, 2005, including five studies from Australia). Using interviews with a new district director and six of her principals in rural Queensland, Healy *et al* (2001) found that well-led conversations via coaching can be an effective professional development strategy for learning, growth and change in educational leaders. The importance of developing trust in these conversations and of making hidden values and feelings overt was stressed.

306. A survey of 233 primary and 180 secondary school principals and deputy school principals in Western Australia (Harrison *et al*, 1998), found that school leaders were motivated by extended professional learning opportunities that enabled networking and the sharing of ideas and experiences among colleagues. The authors, however, noted differences between men and women in their preferences for modes of professional learning: for example, women rated peer coaching and work-shadowing higher than did men. Differences were also noted between rural and urban school leaders: rural school leaders rated conferences and peer-assisted learning such as mentoring and work shadowing more highly than did urban school leaders. The authors interpreted the latter finding as indicating that urban school leaders have more opportunities for informal interaction than their rural counterparts.

6.5.6 Determining the success of professional learning offerings

307. As yet there is little research evidence in Australia about how specific programme components affect school leaders' development and performance on the job, or which attempt to assess the benefits relative to programme costs. Such research gaps are not unique to Australia but reflect more general challenges in research on educational leadership internationally (e.g. Davis *et al*, 2005).

308. In a promising development, Victoria's Department of Education and Training has commissioned Roy Morgan Research to undertake a longitudinal evaluation of the government's leadership development initiatives, including an accelerated development programme for high potential leaders; mentoring for new principals; coaching to enhance the capabilities of experienced principals; and a development programme for high performing principals. The evaluation is looking at the short-term and long-term impacts of the programmes in a range of outcome areas. The Victorian Department will also undertake evaluations of other programmes for school leadership teams, assistant principals and other aspiring leaders.

6.6 Key issues and challenges

309. A key challenge for developers of school leadership programmes is to identify those factors that are of central importance in the preparation of school leaders. The development and use of leadership standards frameworks can play a significant role in this regard so long as the frameworks draw on a strong evidence base and are subject to ongoing monitoring and evaluation of impact.

310. The pressure on school leaders in an era of significant school based responsibilities has implications for the content and process of professional learning programmes. Effective school leadership requires high-level intellectual and personal capabilities, and technical competencies. Striking an appropriate balance between developing these aspects, and meeting individual and school system needs, is a continuing challenge.

311. Despite the increasing emphasis on more on-the-job active professional learning methods, it is not yet clear how this is translating into more effective schooling. The relatively small scale and fragmented nature of much of the research and evaluation studies makes it difficult to develop knowledge and understanding of quality professional leadership learning. In particular, there has been relatively little attention to learning activities designed to support models of shared leadership.

7. CONCLUSION

312. The preparation of this report has provided a timely opportunity to document and reflect on school leadership issues in Australia. Over the last decade or so, and particularly in more recent years, the pace of change in Australian schooling has accelerated. The inherent heterogeneous nature of schooling in a federal political structure, with a long tradition of different types of school sectors, has become even more marked. The expectations of schools are higher than ever before, and their performance is subject to extensive scrutiny and debate. High quality leadership at school level is now widely recognised and supported by research, as critically important for improving student outcomes.

313. However, as this review has documented, there are major concerns in regard to attracting, developing and retaining effective school leaders. Although caution is needed in making broad generalisations across the diversity of Australian schooling, several key issues have become evident.

314. First, while the majority of Australian school principals generally report that they experience high job satisfaction, they also express concern about role expansion, increasing overload, ambiguity, conflict and stress. Such perceptions about the school leadership role are also reported among potential leadership aspirants. The main reasons that Australian teachers indicate that they want to become principals are to make a difference to students and to improve schools. However, it would seem that the excitement and reward from this aspect of the job is not being communicated clearly enough to the teacher workforce as a whole or the public at large.

315. Second, the research confirms that success is more likely when schools are collegial, consultative and collaborative when they involve partnerships and when matters are shared and owned by stakeholders. Creating the conditions for effective school leadership requires a strong sense of partnership and support from the school systems within which most leaders work. Key ingredients in this partnership include: greater support for leaders' professional role with less emphasis on organisational or managerial aspects of the role; encouragement of shared leadership approaches and capacity-building; and having information that provides schools with effective ways of monitoring performance, diagnosing student learning difficulties and implementing appropriate school development strategies.

316. Third, in a related sense, the role expansion that has occurred as part of principals' work intensification highlights the need for a review and possible re-design of the principal role and other senior leadership roles, especially in the context of greater school decision-making responsibility and accountability.

317. Fourth, while it is clear that there is an expanding range of leadership learning activities underway in Australia, the professional learning of school leaders remains a relatively under-examined area, and the pace of developments in leadership learning has outstripped those of research and evaluation. Standards frameworks for school leaders are starting to play a major role, and some of these initiatives have been developed collaboratively and shared across different school systems. Nationwide, there is no consistent or coordinated framework for providing professional learning for school leaders or recognising the learning that has occurred.

318. Fifth, while this report has been able to draw together a substantial information and research base, it is clear that many gaps in understanding remain. Much of the research is small-scale and localised, and the findings are difficult to generalise. The available research is largely focused on the principalship and pays limited attention to prospective leaders and to those who exercise school leadership in a variety of formal and informal ways. Finally, research to date has paid little attention to the cost and impact of different leadership policies and strategies – especially with regard to student outcomes. Challenging though such research is to plan and conduct, it is necessary to strengthen the knowledge base about this critical aspect of Australian schooling.

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