DEVELOPING SCHOOL LEADERS WITH THE COMMITMENT AND CAPACITY TO PURSUE THE COMMON GOOD

Paul Carlin & Helga Neidhart, Australian Catholic University

Abstract

In an era of relentless global change and threats of terrorism, communities are struggling with issues related to the public good such as democracy, human rights, equitable distribution of wealth and resources, and a sense of meaning and security. Many writers from various fields argue that education (and therefore schools) must be in the frontline of responding to these opportunities and challenges. As a consequence, more is being asked of schools by all key stakeholders: governments, employers, universities, parents and communities. These demands are being made at a time when successive research reports are confirming that an increasing number of senior leaders in schools, especially women, are reconsidering their decisions on career progression. This paper reports on the implications of a major study of leadership undertaken in Catholic primary and secondary schools in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania (VSAT). It also outlines a Leadership Framework which has been developed to enable the development of leaders with the capacity and commitment to guide schools through these challenging times.

INTRODUCTION

The global world, nations and communities is struggling with issues such as democracy, human rights, equitable distribution of wealth and resources, and a sense of meaning and security. Thus, multiple opportunities and challenges confront governments and citizens of the twenty-first century. How they respond is critical.

... the twenty-first century faces the task of developing a suitable form of government for that single world. It is a daunting moral and intellectual challenge, but one we cannot refuse to take up. The future of the world depends on how well we meet it. (Singer, 2002: 219)

If governments and community leaders are to respond to these challenges and re-establish a public good, then the role of education in developing leaders and citizens is vital to make sense and sound moral judgements in these uncertain circumstances.

This requires that education is seen as much more than a private consumable item, and what Hirsch terms a 'positional good', but rather, as Grace (1994: 214) argues, as 'a public good', developing 'a moral sense, a sense of social and fraternal responsibility for others'. (Bottery, 2004 : 10)

The ways in which state and federal governments, define curriculum through standards frameworks and assessment requirements, and provide resources for education, will be powerful indicators as to how committed they are to education, beyond human capital purposes, as a public good and entitlement for all citizens.

Research from countries across the world indicates that increasing numbers of people in the workforce are revising the criteria they apply in making choices about career progression. Issues such as 'work-life' balance (Ipsos-Reid, 2003; Neidhart and Carlin, 2003), and ‘Downshifting’ (Hamilton and Mail, 2003), are becoming more important factors in the decisions employees make, and in their willingness to take on senior leadership positions. Durant and Morley (2002) suggest that different generations apply different priorities when making decisions about career and life goals. This, together with a prevalent perception that teaching is a high stress occupation, is the key reason why teacher retention rates are of an increasing concern (Manuel, 2003; Graham, 2003; Guerrera, 2003).

All of this has serious implications for the development and retention of school leaders when many claim the challenges are significant. Research from different disciplines confirms that, as the responsibilities of leaders in many walks of life become more complex and demanding, increasing numbers of people are reluctant to apply for senior positions. In relation to leadership succession, Fullan (2202, 3) argues that:

There is no more neglected topic in research, policy or practice. Researchers should investigate the optimum conditions for successful succession as much as we focus on new leaders and start-ups.

We yearn for strong leaders so we can borrow their strength. We want leaders with integrity because we know their example can inspire us and expand our own capacity for honesty and moral clarity. We admire leaders with passion because they radiate the kind of commitment, the charisma, the emotional force and courage we wish we had.

(Mackay, 1999:137-138)
Responding to this challenge, the paper presents a Leadership Framework developed by members of the Flagship for Catholic Educational Leadership at the Australian Catholic University (ACU) to enhance leadership in schools at all levels.

**CONTEXT**

In a world characterised by intense market competition, instant communication and financial transactions, a widening gap between rich and poor, and the growing scourge of terrorism, many writers (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Caldwell, 2003; Marginson, 2002;) assert that education is a critical element of any purposeful response. In addition to these tensions, there is evidence of increasing fragmentation and hardship within families and communities. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (Australian Social Trends 2003) reports one-parent families have increased by 53 per cent between 1986 and 2001. As a consequence of these factors, many families are struggling:

They find themselves running out of coping strategies: sending two people into the labour market instead of one; getting more education; delaying fertility; moving in search of a better job; and then, when all that runs out of steam, going into too much debt. (Pusey, 2003: 6)

Consequently, various stakeholders place different, and sometimes conflicting, expectations on schools. Governments require improved learning outcomes to develop a smarter workforce to take advantage of international markets, “Australia needs a culture of continuous innovation to be competitive in a ‘new knowledge’ global economy” (Graham, 2003: 1). Parents, on the other hand, look to schools to instil discipline and responsibility, as well as provide an education that will meet their children’s needs and provide the best opportunities for them to enter preferred university courses. Finally, social welfare groups assert that poor education, high unemployment, and minimal levels of social capital are consigning to “No Go Zones” an increasing number of families living in urban, rural and remote communities (Vinson, 2004). The priority and scope of these demands were summarised as follows:

Adapting to the changing environment is not only a matter of reshaping institutions and applying new technologies. It is equally vital to ensure that students are equipped with the core values necessary to live as responsible citizens in complex democratic societies. A meaningful education for the Twenty-first Century should stimulate all aspects of human intellectual potential. (World Bank, 2001b: 18)

Writers including Fullan (2002) have argued that waves of educational reform have done little to redress key concerns. Others such as Sirotnik (1999: 607) argue that important differences exist between reform and renewal, and claim that it is renewal that is required:

Renewal is about the process of individual and organizational change, about nurturing the spiritual, affective, and intellectual connections in the lives of educators working together to understand and improve their practice. **Renewal** is not about a point in time; it is about all points in time – it is about continuous, critical inquiry into current practices and principled innovation that might improve education. (Italics in original)

As a result, the agenda for teachers and school leaders has become very demanding, complex and constant. Schools are places where national and state policies and priorities meet local expectations, needs and values. It is in schools therefore, that leaders have the responsibility and the challenge of responding to these requirements. As Hallinger (1997: 29) points out however, “A fundamental pre-requisite to developing the capacity for change in individuals, institutions, or societies is a healthy sense of community”. It is in this context that teachers and school leaders are expected to be sources of strength and knowledge that sustain these communities with their diverse and often chronic needs.

Another factor that has become prevalent over the past decade is the readiness of parents and former students to bring legal actions against schools for such matters as alleged child abuse or unsatisfactory results, which they claim, have impaired their life chances.

These circumstances require better prepared leaders if schools are to respond to these expectations in a coherent and effective way. But succession processes need to be clear about the attributes and competencies required of leaders faced with these challenges. According to Heifetz (2004: 39), leadership competencies are insufficient:

Leadership couples emotional intelligence with the courage to raise the tough questions, challenge people’s assumptions about strategy and operations – and risk losing their goodwill. It demands a commitment to serving others: skill at diagnostic, strategic and tactical reasoning; the guts to get beneath the surface of tough realities; and the heart to take the heat and grief.

As leaders experience these expectations and reflect on their likely impact on professional and personal lives, increasing numbers are revising key life and career decisions by giving preference to career choices that enable them to better manage their life preferences.
THE VSAT STUDY

The VSAT project Leadership Succession for Catholic Schools in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania (2003) was a major study, which included all Catholic primary and secondary schools across three states. Questionnaire and interview data were analysed from approximately 400 senior leaders (deputy principals, religious education co-ordinators and curriculum co-ordinators) focusing on:

- pathways to principalship of current principals;
- intentions of senior leaders regarding application for principalship of Catholic schools;
- identification of factors which encourage or discourage senior leaders in decisions regarding application for principalship; and
- programs provided by Catholic education authorities to support the continuing development of principals.

This paper focuses on the intentions of senior leaders regarding application for principalship, and the factors they nominated as encouraging or discouraging them to apply.

Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from male and female senior leaders in Catholic primary and secondary schools across the three states, using a questionnaire, and follow-up focus interviews. Data on career aspirations of the respondents were obtained using one salient item on the questionnaire. Six categories were used for data collection:

- I have applied for a principalship in the past but will not do so in the future.
- I have never applied for a principalship and do not envisage doing so in the future.
- I have applied for a principalship in the past, but am unsure if I will do so again.
- I have not yet applied for a principalship, but envisage doing so in the future.
- I am actively seeking a principalship.
- I would only apply for a principalship if the school were in a suitable location.

In addition, senior leaders were asked: What are the most significant factors, which encourage or discourage you from actively applying for principal positions?

A set of fixed-response items was developed to identify the disincentives to applying for principalship, and a five-point response format was used for each item: Strongly Discourage, Discourage, No Influence, Encourage, Strongly Encourage. Responses were factor analysed using the SPSS statistical package. Eight internally consistent scales were identified, based on item groupings. Each scale was named to reflect the items in that group, and comprised eight items. Negatively worded items were reverse scored. Table 1 shows these scales, their descriptions and corresponding questionnaire items.

In addition to these disincentives to principalship scales, data were collected on the reward structure of senior leaders. Scales to assess internal and external rewards formed part of the questionnaire (see Table 1).

<p>| TABLE 1: Descriptive information for eight disincentives to principalship and two reward scales |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Questionnaire Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal and Family Impact</td>
<td>The extent to which the role of principal impacts on personal and family life.</td>
<td>1,10,19, 28, 37, 46, 55, 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive External Environment</td>
<td>The extent to which the external school environment is unsupportive of the school.</td>
<td>2,11, 20, 29, 38, 47, 56, 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Identity Demands</td>
<td>The extent to which the principal is expected to be the faith leader of the school</td>
<td>4,13, 22, 31, 40, 49, 58, 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment Problems</td>
<td>The extent to which the interview process is perceived to be fair.</td>
<td>5, 14, 23, 32, 41, 50, 59, 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Accountability</td>
<td>The extent to which schools are held accountable by external systems of administration</td>
<td>6, 15, 24, 33, 42, 51, 60, 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Expertise</td>
<td>The extent to which the principal lacks expertise on school matters.</td>
<td>7,16, 25, 34, 43, 52, 61, 70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceived Male Bias  The extent to which women are perceived to have a lesser chance of principalship.  8, 17, 26, 35, 44, 53, 62, 71

Loss of Close Relationships  The extent to which the role of principal is lonely with limited future prospects.  9, 18, 27, 36, 45, 54, 63, 72

Internal Rewards  The extent to which internal rewards encourage career aspirations.  80, 82, 84, 86, 88, 90, 92, 93, 94

External Rewards  The extent to which external rewards encourage career aspirations.  81, 83, 85, 87, 89, 91

All scales had very sound internal consistency, with Cronbach coefficient alpha ranging from .74 for Recruitment Problems to .91 for Perceived Male Bias. Accordingly, aggregated scale scores, rather than individual items, were used in subsequent analyses.

Structure of Focus Interviews

Focus interviews were conducted with 8-12 senior leaders in each of the seven dioceses in the three states. Their purpose was to:
1. validate the findings derived from questionnaires;
2. extend and deepen data obtained from questionnaires; and
3. invite participants to recommend preferred solutions to the issues raised in questionnaires.

The recommendation by Kreuger & Casey (2000) that two people conduct the interviews was adopted: one to lead the questions, and the other to record responses and note interactions and non-verbal responses. Data from interviews were analysed to identify where they:
1. reinforced the findings,
2. contradicted them, and/or,
3. added new insights.

Population

Questionnaires were distributed to 1380 to senior leadership staff, and 390 returns were received – a response rate of 29 per cent. Of these, 234 (60 per cent) were female, 147 (39 per cent), and 9 were incomplete. The demographic data from respondents included location of current school, current position, other leadership experience, gender, and school type (primary/secondary).

Findings/Reflections

Data were analysed and interpreted in relation to:
1. the intentions of staff in senior leadership positions with regard to applying for principalship; and
2. the factors identified by senior leaders, which encourage or discourage them from applying for principalship.

The positive and negative perception of factors, which influenced leaders in their decisions, was derived from the literature and questionnaires, and was explored further in focus interviews. The researchers attempted to ensure there was a reasonable balance between the numbers of negative and positive items in the questionnaire. Participants responded to each item using a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Very strongly). Table 2 provides data on the breakdown of percentages of senior leaders regarding their intention to apply or not to apply for principalship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) I have applied in the past, but will <strong>not</strong> do so in the future</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) I have never applied, and <strong>do not intend applying</strong></td>
<td>141</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I have applied in the past, but <strong>am not sure</strong> if I will in the future</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
d) I have not applied yet, but I do envisage applying in the future 109 27.9

e) I am actively seeking principalship 26 6.6

f) I will apply for principalship, but only if it is in a suitable location 63 16.1

Data were then categorised as: ‘Willing’, ‘Unwilling’ and ‘Unsure’ by combining two similar categories in Table 2 above, to facilitate the reporting of the results in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3: Senior Leaders Aspirations for Principalship (Combined Categories)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have not applied previously, OR, do not intend to apply in the future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(UNWILLING)</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have applied previously, but not sure if I will in the future, OR, I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intend to apply but only in preferred locations (UNSURE)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have not applied yet, but I do intend to do so in the future, OR, I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>am actively applying for principal positions (WILLING)</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis employing cross-tabulations revealed further insights into leadership intentions. Table 4 shows the results of a ‘gender-by-leadership intention’ cross-tabulation. This indicates that the proportion of females unwilling to apply for a principalship (56 per cent) is much higher than that of males (25 per cent). In addition, Table 9 shows that females are much more polarised in their leadership aspirations than males.

TABLE 4: Gender by Leadership Aspiration Cross-Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Leadership Aspiration (row percentage)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unwilling to apply</td>
<td>Unsure about applying</td>
<td>Willing to apply</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sample</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This was followed by a cross-tabulation ‘gender by school-type by leadership aspiration’, see Table 5.

TABLE 5: Gender by School Type by Leadership Aspiration Cross-Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender &amp; School Type</th>
<th>Leadership Aspiration (row percentage)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unwilling to apply</td>
<td>Unsure about applying</td>
<td>Willing to apply</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male total sample</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These findings highlight critical differences between the genders. In the category ‘Unwilling to Apply’ (Table 5), the percentage of women was more than twice that of males. Conversely, in the category ‘Willing to Apply’, nearly 20 per cent more males were willing to apply. The contrast is even more stark when ‘school-type’ is added, particularly in Catholic primary schools, where the percentage of females unwilling to apply is nearly five times that of males. Some explanation for these differences is offered in the findings for the second research question.

Disincentives

The second question referred to data on factors, which encourage or discourage applicants from applying for principalship. Table 6 shows data relating to the ten scales developed for the VSAT study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Name</th>
<th>Rank by Scale Mean (full sample)</th>
<th>Rank by School Type</th>
<th>Rank by Intention to Apply for Principalship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal and Family Impact</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prim 1  1  1  1</td>
<td>Unwilling 1  1  1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment Problems</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sec  2  2  2  5</td>
<td>Unsure  2  2  2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive External Environment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>P-12  3  5  5  2</td>
<td>Willing  4  5  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Close Relationships</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Unwilling  4  4  3  4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Accountability</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Unsure  3  3  3  6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Bias</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Willing  6  6  6  6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Expertise</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7  7  7  7  7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Identity Demands</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8  8  8  8  8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the exception of the ‘Unwilling’ respondents, there is unanimous agreement from all other respondents (male and female), that ‘personal and family impact’ and ‘recruitment problems’ are ranked first and second as disincentives. ‘Lack of expertise’ and ‘religious identity demands’ received the lowest rankings.

Incentives: Perceptions of Reward Structures for Senior Leaders

The following sections report the result of three analyses involving the internal and external rewards scales: the relationship between rewards and disincentives to leadership succession, and the influence of position, school type and gender on rewards.

To investigate the relationship between rewards and disincentives, simple correlations between the two reward scales, (Internal Rewards and External Rewards and the eight disincentives to principalship) were computed. Table 7 sets out the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Internal Rewards</th>
<th>External Rewards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal and Family Impact</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive External Environment</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Identity Demands</td>
<td>-.32*</td>
<td>-.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Correlations between two reward scales and eight disincentives to principalship scales
Recruitment Problems  .28*  .28*
Systemic Accountability  -.17*  -.02
Lack of Expertise  -.31*  -.12*
Perceived Male Bias  .07  .08
Loss of Close Relationships  -.06  .01

*p<.05

To examine the influence of position (deputy principal, REC, other coordinator), school type (primary, secondary) and gender on rewards, a multivariate analysis of variance was performed. The effects of position and school type were significant (p<.05).

Summary data from focus interviews

The three major factors discouraging application identified by senior leaders (male and female) were:

- perceived negative impact of the role on the quality of life of the principal, and its significant intrusion into family life;
- high levels of uncertainty and diversity of responsibility entailed in the role, for which many feel unprepared and which they consider to be beyond their capacity; and
- disadvantages of an unsuitable location, usually regional or rural areas.

Much of the discussion centred on the negative impact of principalship on personal and family life. Interviewees reported that the pressures and expectations were often excessive. When leaders have school-aged children, a working spouse, and perhaps older parents requiring care, their capacity to fulfil their role as spouse and/or parent, as well as professional duties, is considerably diminished. Senior leaders reported they would be reluctant to apply for principalship because this is too high a price.

DISCUSSION

The findings do not suggest there is a crisis in terms of applications for principalship of Catholic schools at this time. Over 34 per cent of senior leaders were applying or intending to apply, and a further 25 per cent reported they would be likely to apply if the school met specific criteria such as suitable location and size. When this is compared with the percentage who currently hold the position of principal or deputy in Australia, which according to Preston (2002, p.1) is less than 10 per cent, then the 34.5 per cent who responded in the “Willing” category seems a relatively healthy number. However, these data provide no information about the quality of applicants to lead Catholic schools in these uncertain times.

In terms of the major incentives nominated by those willing to apply, the data confirmed that the primary motivators are internal rewards, as evidenced by those with the highest frequencies:

- opportunity to work with staff to make a difference in the life chances of students and families;
- chance to contribute to Catholic education and the mission of the Church;
- opportunity to build a competent and committed leadership team.

The ranking of these incentives indicate that respondents are committed to the common good as they see it. Financial and other external rewards did not rank in the highest frequencies.

With regard to disincentives, it is clear that for both primary and secondary senior leaders, personal and family impact factors and recruitment issues were the two highest disincentives. For those in the Unwilling category, a perceived unsupportive external environment was the second most significant disincentive. The key issues nominated under personal and family impact were:

- consequences for personal time and quality of life issues;
- regular intrusion into family time;
- impact of school location on educational opportunities for children at secondary and tertiary level, employment opportunities for spouses, and the loss of valued social networks.
The issue of recruitment, however, did emerge as a consistent and significant issue. This included, for example, concern about the transparency and fairness of the principal selection process, lack of constructive feedback to unsuccessful candidates, a perception among female senior leaders that males were advantaged, and a concern whether panel members had the appropriate knowledge and qualifications to make recommendations. This was also raised in focus interviews. It was acknowledged that, whilst most dioceses provided varying degrees of training for panels, training was often not compulsory and, for some interviewees, it was not sufficient to inspire confidence in the process.

"Unsupportive External Environment" was ranked as the third highest disincentive overall. It should be noted that the two groups that ranked it highest were primary senior leaders and those who did not intend to apply for principalship. Secondary senior leaders, and those who classified themselves as 'Willing', ranked it fifth. Dimensions of this scale included litigation, industrial relations, and a critical national media.

The findings also confirm that these three factors in combination are major disincentives for many leaders, but especially women as reflected in the following statistics. In the category 'Willing to apply', the number of primary males is nearly two and a half times the number of females. Conversely, in the category 'Unwilling to apply', for every male there are five females. This is a very unhealthy state of affairs, particularly given that women constitute approximately 70 per cent of the teaching force. It seems reasonable to conclude in light of the findings above, that the complex and demanding nature of the principalship is an important factor. Of more interest is a trend which indicates that an increasing number of women are making career and lifestyle decisions, which enable them to lead more authentic and healthier lives. (Neidhart & Carlin, 2003)

What are the implications of these findings for the capacity of schools to provide an education that goes beyond human capital outcomes, and enables graduates to become informed and enlightened citizens, who can help shape a more just, meaningful and peaceful global world? Because of the uncertainties occurring in most facets of life, especially the employment sector, governments and families are making greater demands on schools in general, and principals and other leaders in particular. As society has become more fragmented resulting in greater levels of stress, schools have become important community centres for all stakeholders. Increasingly governments are using schools for the implementation of major health programs such as harm minimisation, and in areas of disadvantage, many schools are offering breakfast and after-school programs to cater for parent(s) working long hours.

In recognition of the increasing number of students with behavioural and emotional disorders, all education authorities are training and employing more staff with student welfare qualifications and experience. Whilst this is a legitimate response to emerging needs, it is likely to be a process of containment rather than of renewal.

As a consequence, the role of school principal has expanded beyond educational leadership, to encompass increased managerial and accountability functions, as well as more complex legal and compliance responsibilities. Flockton (2001: 20) claims that:

Many of today’s schools feed, counsel, provide health care for body and mind, and protect students, while they also educate and instruct. The principal is expected to be legal expert, health and social services co-ordinator, fundraiser, diplomat, negotiator, adjudicator, public relations consultant, security officer, technological innovator and top notch resource manager, whose most important job is the promotion of teaching and learning. (International Principals' Conference)

In addition to all these responsibilities, principals of Catholic schools have the additional role of being the religious leader of the school community. This has always been a central part of their role, however, with changes occurring in the Church, and in the attitudes and practices of many of students and their families, senior leaders reported that:

a) for an increasing number of students and their families, school has become their greatest, and in some cases, their only experience of Church; and

b) the ageing of priests, and the decline in their numbers, more principals are being expected to be religious leaders not only of the school community, but also that of the parish. One example, cited by several principals in the focused interviews, was that they had conducted more than one funeral during the past twelve months.
In these complex times, concepts of public good and renewal struggle for recognition and sustained action. A recent report, *Community Adversity and Resilience*, argues that for the building of community:

... such building of connections between the residents of disadvantaged areas needs to be accompanied by the creation of new opportunities in education, training and employment that open up life opportunities. (Vinson, 2004: 1)

In many localities schools have become the primary community centre, often with the support of local governments. Whilst such partnerships make sense, they also underline a changing role for schools and their leaders, and consequently require different leadership and management structures for the community. As a result many senior leaders expressed a concern that they felt uncomfortable and unprepared for a re-defined and expanded role.

Recent research is offering other explanations. Hamilton and Mail (2003) describe a relatively recent phenomenon termed “downshifting”, which they define as people making a long-term change to their lifestyle which results in a lower income. Findings suggest that 23 per cent of Australians have downshifted in the last ten years. Durant and Morley (2002: 5) in the Mt Eliza Leadership Index reveal that Generation X leaders across Australia listed their top three leadership challenges as:

- Managing your own career development
- Building positive relationships with others
- Being flexible in responding to new ideas and change.

The extent to which Gen X teachers see school leadership as being attractive in terms of these priorities remains unanswered at this stage.

It is widely acknowledged that this changing context, and a concern to protect the public good, requires not only new leadership structures, such as distributed leadership, (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001), but also the development of new leadership frameworks to better prepare new leaders (leadership succession) and support current school leaders.

LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

An earlier version of this framework (see Appendix) was developed by the Flagship for Catholic Educational Leadership for the Lutheran Church of Australia to assist the development of Lutheran principals. It was later revised and customised for use in Catholic schools (Duignan, Kelleher & Spry, 2003). It has further potential to be adapted for other specific groups or systems, as has been done by the Queensland dioceses (Spry 2004). This framework has three key components:

- Context of Catholic Education
- Leadership Dimensions and
- Key Capabilities of Leaders.

**Context of Catholic Education**

The mission of the Catholic Church provides the ethos and purpose of Catholic schooling, and is the priority focus for the formation of school leaders. The changing context of Catholic education - societal, government policies and church – has important implications for principal preparation.

**Leadership Dimensions**

The framework lists six dimensions as being central to the identity and practices of Catholic schools in the third millennium. It is designed to assist Diocesan education authorities to develop effective leadership succession processes for the preparation of future leaders. The six dimensions are:

- Leading and Developing Self
- Catholic Ethos and Identity
- Teaching and Learning
- School Culture
- Human Management
- Financial Management and Accountability.

It is appropriate that Leading and Developing Self is the first dimension as it emphasises the importance of formation of leaders as being foundational for Catholic schools, and underpins the other dimensions. Leading and Developing Self is a pre-requisite for the second dimension, Catholic Ethos and Identity. These six dimensions are the basis for the claim that Catholic schools are distinctive. The other five dimensions, which apply to all schools, complete the framework for the preparation and continuing development of leaders in Catholic schools.
Key Capabilities
The final component is the three key capabilities of leaders, which enhance the above dimensions. These are:

- Personal - intellectual, intuitive, spiritual
- Relational - ethical, emotional and cultural capabilities of leaders; and
- Professional - strategic, management and professional aspects.

This leadership framework is the product of research conducted by the Flagship for Catholic Educational Leadership (ACU) with Lutheran principals and leaders across Australia. It has been designed to articulate and integrate dimensions and capabilities required by current and future leaders to develop the ethics and competence to lead schools in a context characterised by continuing change, fragmentation, uncertainty and dilemmas. The centrepiece is the dimension “Leading and Developing Self”. It is the person of every leader, with his/her values, vision, integrity and professional knowledge who leads and influences other members of the community, manages crises and resolves disputes. For this to occur, this dimension should have priority in the continuing development and review process. Leaders should model, articulate and promote the purpose and values of the institutions they lead. As Heifitz (2004: 39) reinforces, “Leadership couples emotional intelligence with the courage to ask the tough questions …”, and by inference to take and defend the tough decisions. Leadership has never been easy, and there is mounting evidence that leadership of schools has become more complex, challenging and demanding. This framework has undergone initial trialling in particular contexts. It is being offered with an invitation to trial, with or without adaptation, in order to test it in a wider range of contexts as a basis for further development and improvement.

CONCLUSION

As schools work with their communities to make sense of continuing change and fragmentation, uncertainty and insecurity, governments, employing authorities and leaders in all walks of life will need to come to greater agreement about what constitutes the public good. All will need to work strategically and collectively to develop citizens and leaders to become community advocates and contributors. The current research suggests that, in education, the resources and commitment to pursue the public good in the medium term are diminishing, as are the number of school leaders, especially women, available for the principalship. Already a shortage of teachers exists, and research evidence indicates that, in excess of twenty per cent of new teachers leave teaching in the first five years (Guerrera, 2003). Similarly, increasing numbers of employees in other sectors are giving higher priority to health and lifestyle factors when making decisions about career progression. Where will the critical mass of professional and community leaders be found, who will fight to enhance and protect the public good? Only true servant leadership and real selflessness will point the way.

As you work to become all you can be, you can start to let go of your petty self-interests.
As you give back give back some of what you have been given, you can reconstruct your communities.
As you serve the values of freedom, justice, equality, caring, and dignity, you can constantly renew the foundations of democracy.
As each of us takes individual responsibility for creating the world of our dreams, we can all participate in leading.

John Gardner (Kouzes and Posner, 1995: 338)
Figure 1: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLING (Duignan, Kelleher and Spry, 2003)
REFERENCES


