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satisfying student needs and government requirements**

Paper presented at the AARE Annual 2008 International Education Research Conference  
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## The loneliness of the long distance principal: The tension between satisfying student needs and government requirements

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### *Introduction: Background and context*

This paper reports on a current research project that examines the experiences and issues that are of concern to principals of isolated central schools in one Australian state. New South Wales has developed its own model of school-based management which devolved some responsibilities from the state office to schools and advocated greater participation at the school level by staff and local communities. This followed a global trend to decentralisation of public school systems (Bottani, 2000; McGinn & Welsh, 1999; Pascoe & Pascoe, 1998; Sahid, 2004; Sayed, 2002; Wylie, 1995).

The policy of decentralising state school systems has been advanced as one means to remedy the perceived shortcomings in public schools. In Australia 'decentralisation' has often meant the delegation of authority and responsibilities from a central state office of the relevant Department of Education to smaller regional or district offices and then to the schools themselves. The term also has been used in NSW and other jurisdictions to describe a process of delegating decision-making within a school from the principal to the staff and stakeholders in a school community.

The major historical influences for the current decision-making structures in New South Wales schools have followed major decentralisation reforms in New Zealand (Picot, 1988) and Victoria (Directorate of School Education Victoria, 1993). The earlier proponents of decentralisation were concerned about limiting the expenditure in government departments which in the 1970s had been experiencing historically unprecedented growth. Decentralisation was advocated (i) to reduce the expense and restrictions of bureaucratic controls (ii) to improve the economic efficiency of state education departments (Scott, 1989, Aims item 4) and (iii) to improve responsiveness of public schools (Scott, 1989, Aims item 2). The rationales about educational advantages, in some cases, appear to have been written after the initial reforms (Caldwell & Hayward, 1998).

### *Methodology*

Data were gathered from current central school principals to clarify those aspects of decentralisation which were favoured by principals as current stakeholders. The study used a state-wide survey of central school principals in New South Wales in 2006 and a series of case studies of 12 of these principals. A survey questionnaire was distributed to 64 principals in all except two atypical central schools in the NSW public education system and 27

(42%) completed the questionnaires. Interviews were conducted with 12 principals (18% of all central school principals).

The survey asked principals about their perceptions of school-based management, especially about the extent of flexibility in their decision-making and any perceived benefits in the quality of teaching and educational outcomes for students. Principals were asked to give an overall view about the extent and specifics of school-based management and the perceived benefits.

### *Intensification of work: Long hours and stress*

Previous research in various countries has observed that after educational reforms such as the devolution of schools teachers at all levels are working longer hours than in earlier years. In a follow up of The Bristol Stress and Health at Work Report, Smith et al (2000) did an epidemiological survey of 17000 randomly selected people from the Bristol electoral survey. They found that 45.1% of teachers reported high stress levels. This was the highest level of any occupational group and was nearly 10% higher than the next group, nurses. Both these groups could be classified as part of the caring and welfare professions.

Principals have reported increased stress levels and associated medical problems. In a study of 100 schools in England and Wales (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2001) found that:

Headteachers' own workloads are higher than average – by some 300-400 hours a year. The pressures perceived by headteachers relate to the need to support their school through a changing environment. They believe there are high expectations and levels of accountability (in particular through OfSTED inspection reports and school performance tables). They, like teachers, believe that the pace and manner of implementation of change has added significantly to their workload (p. 2)

In a study of Victorian principals and assistant principals, 79% of principals and assistant principals reported high levels of stress at work (Saulwick Muller Social Research, 2004, p. 11). This was considerably higher than the 46% of all white collar workers who reported high levels of stress. The study found that country principals had additional exogenous pressures that could contribute to their high stress levels. The above study found that Victorian principals worked an average of 59.6 hours a week.

Other studies such as those of Hatton (1995) in New South Wales, Sahid (2004) in South Australia and Whittall (2003) in New Zealand have also observed that after devolution of school management, principals in small rural schools increased pressure and worked longer hours. Whittall (2001) reported that for the more isolated schools in particular there were alarming turnover patterns. Hatton found that principals experienced tension in being responsive local leaders and being corporate managers accountable to a central education office.

### *Endogenous and exogenous pressures*

In this study, principals were asked two questions, about each of 28 typical tasks performed by principals. The first question about each of 28 typical tasks was designed to get an indication of

the extent of endogenous pressure that principals imposed on themselves. Principals were asked about their perception of an ideal self-managing school and whether they should spend less, the same, or more time on each task. For most of the tasks, a high percentage of the principals had a self-perception that they should be spending more time on the task concerned.

Table 1 *Endogenous pressures: Principals' perception of how much time they thought they should spend*

Principal task	%	%	%
	Less time	Same time	More time
Student welfare	24	28	48
Development of school curriculum	4	19	78 <sup>a</sup>
Development of teaching/learning programs	7	11	82
Development of student assessment procedures	4	19	78
Development of reporting to parents	4	48	48
Supervision of and mentoring of staff	0	11	89
Professional development at school	0	26	74
Professional development off-site	7	33	59
Principal's professional development	0	37	63

*Note.* These tasks are a selection of the 28 tasks listed in the questionnaire. For nearly all tasks, a majority of principals thought more time or at least the same time should be spent on the task.

<sup>a</sup>The percentages may not add to 100 because original percentages have been rounded off.

The second question about each of the typical tasks investigated the extent of exogenous pressures created by principals' perceptions of the expectations of the Department of Education. Again high percentages of principals perceived that the DET expected them to spend more time on nearly all of the typical tasks. Further, the percentages of principals perceiving that the DET expected them to spend more time were even higher than the percentages of principals thinking that in an ideal self-managing school more time should be spent on the typical tasks.

Table 2 *Exogenous pressures: Principals' perceptions of how much time the DET expected principals should spend*

Principal task	%	%	%
	Less time	Same time	More time
Student welfare	4	42	54
Development of school curriculum	8	39	54
Development of teaching/learning programs	0	39	62
Development of student assessment procedures	0	31	69
Development of reporting to parents	4	23	73
Supervision of and mentoring of staff	4	23	73
Professional development at school	8	69	23
Professional development off-site	19	50	31
Principal's professional development	8	42	50

The questionnaire responses indicated that principals' self-perceptions of their duties (endogenous pressures) combined with the principals' perceptions of the DET's expectations (exogenous pressures) would combine to create a total pressure on principals to work significantly longer hours.

Interviewed principals talked about working for 70 to 80 hours a week as if this were the norm and commented on the intensification of their work.

You pay a price for that because it, the time that is devoted to doing the job as well as you possibly can is just almost, you know, unbearable. ... I put in twelve-hour days, every day unless I am out of school for a training day. ... I often, if I can find the energy, do more when I get home late at night and that to me is an unhealthy workload (Principal R1).

I am here at quarter to six in the morning and I do not leave until six at night. People can say that is poor management and I suppose it could be perceived to be that ... (Principal S1)

While some referred to having health regime strategies to maintain their physical and mental fitness to cope with their workload, others mentioned taking periods of long service leave as a way to recover and restore their energy levels.

### *Rural decline*

#### *Population decline*

Most of the central schools in the study served communities of a few hundred people with considerable physical evidence of population decline in the deserted shops and community buildings which used to be centres for the country town's community life. Apart from the small number of larger provincial cities, nearly all of the towns in which central schools were located had experienced rapid declines in population and the services available to this population. In most of the villages, the local central school was the only remaining visible sign of any government or community service and was almost the only non-farm employer. This decline was even greater for school enrolments because of the "greying" of the population, the capitalisation and mechanisation of farms, and a smaller proportion of the remaining adult population having any children of school age.

Enrolments have plummeted as they have in all schools ... We have nearly halved the enrolment in the space of six years (Principal R1)

In one central school, which twenty years ago had full Kindergarten classes, there were no new students entering Kindergarten for several years in a row.

### *Demographic change*

Principals described the change in social composition of their villages that had occurred with increased transience and newer residents, attracted by the very cheap housing, replacing more established families. Principals commented that the school had to deal with dramatically increasing social problems associated with community issues of poverty, drug dependence, violence and child abuse. For many villages, social life was starkly different from that of an earlier generation.

It would appear that many country towns are becoming refuges for the urban poor or the socially displaced. Cheaper property prices are encouraging public housing authorities, as well as the less well off, to move to country towns. This is dramatically changing the demographic, bringing to small and often under-resourced country communities many of the problems traditionally associated with the city: substance abuse, domestic violence, sexual abuse of children, and the consequences of welfare dependency (Saulwick Muller Social Research, 2003, p. 3).

### *Increasing problems at a time of disappearing government agencies and services to deal with them*

Longer-established residents sometimes resented the extra programs initiated by a principal to ameliorate the social problems of the newer residents.

There is a perspective in the community that they do not really belong and that they should not have full access ... that these kids do not deserve the same treatment that the fifth generation farmers' kids do. (Principal R1)

The phenomenon of local resentment when the principal or school provided extra programs and support for disadvantaged groups has been observed in other studies of principals in rural schools such as the study by Lake and Williamson (1986). They found that when the female principal of a small rural school in Western Australia increased activities in the school's program of transition education for Aboriginal students the principal had less approval in the general community and when the school reduced its activities in the transition program the principal had more approval.

Principals reported that they often had difficulty in getting their superordinates to understand the social context of isolated schools or empathise with the principal living in a village experiencing physical and social decline. One could speculate that perhaps the rural appointments that senior Departmental officers may have experienced a generation ago were much more congenial than current rural appointments.

### *Violence and child protection*

The researchers in the study of Victorian principals were surprised at the frequency with which principals in country areas described violent situations (Saulwick Muller Social Research, 2003).

The expectations are that I am the policeman. I set the rules for parents, the children, even the standards for their household discipline. I've had my life threatened. I've had to lock myself and staff and children away against departmental regulations, because it is my duty of care to save their lives (p. 15).

A mother rang up and said the father was coming to take the children and kill them. I rang the regional office and told them I was going to prevent the children from leaving. Where do I stand? They went into a long legal rigmarole and I said I'm sorry, he's here. Bye. I met the father at the front gate and told him I was not letting him on the premises. I managed to calm him down at the gate. Regional office has not, to this day, rung me back to see if I'm alive. The closest policeman came at 185km/h and said I now know it takes me 18 minutes to get here, so always give me 18 minutes' notice! (p. 20)

Interviewees in the current study also described how they had to deal with violence in their communities.

The worry is the volatility of the community ... and the extreme violence ... even more extreme than what we'd been used to (Principal W1).

I can remember going home at Recess one day scared that this guy was going to come around to my house .... In a small town you don't have the luxury of going elsewhere, he knows where you live, your phone number and everything about you (Principal T1).

I bought a house and had my house torched last year, and I've had threats issued and it just happens to be one of our parents and I think, "Am I going to have the house torched again if I report [a known local paedophile]" ... [The staff] know it's quite life threatening at the moment (Principal S3).

The reference above was not the only comment about the incidence of sexual abuse and the vulnerability of principals in reporting such incidents. One principal (Principal S4) of a medium-sized central school expressed the belief that every child in the school had suffered from sexual abuse. Principals commented that, in a very small community member with no other remaining government professional people, locals would assume that any reporting of child sexual abuse would have been initiated by the school. Principals expressed the fear that they would suffer reprisals when the Department of Community Services followed up on reports about sexual abuse.

### *The principal seen as "the Department"*

One aspect of the decentralisation reforms has been a repeated reduction of staffing in State and Regional offices; administrative structures have become flatter. In principals' meetings with Departmental directors, they were advised that the principals are the site managers of their schools and that principals should regard themselves as being "the Department" in their

communities. For example, when a member of the public rings the NSW DET, the answering message advises the caller to contact the principal of their local school if they have any enquiries that need answering.

I have a big issue with what I call devolution of responsibility and work load. There are not the people in the corporate side to deal with things anymore and it has to be done at the school level so the work load at the school level has increased inordinately (Principal S1).

Interviewees referred to their surprise in discovering some unexpected responsibilities when they started as a principal. In some cases, they described feelings of insecurity when they were not sure when or from where the next crisis would come.

In very small centres, the school may be the only visible government service in the town and the principal is perceived not only as the spokesperson for the DET but also as a ‘public servant’ representing the government in general. For remote townships dependent almost entirely on the fortunes of the local farming economy, governments based in Sydney were often perceived as being unsympathetic to their interests. During the hardship years of the prolonged drought, farming communities can feel some distance from public servants who have guaranteed incomes and relationships between the community and the school principal were frequently reported as being strained.

The traditional ranks of community leadership have thinned out as banks have closed, country doctors have become less numerous and other professionals have increasingly reduced their attendance to a day basis and no longer reside in a town. [Principals] - Not only are they a long way from help, but they have a sense that the Department neither knows nor – when it is told – cares about this extremely stressful part of their working lives. (Saulwick Muller Social Research, 2003, p. 3)

### *Career vulnerability*

#### *‘Getting rid of the principal’*

While some principals felt confident that their position was secure when they were careful to “follow the book” in every detail of Departmental requirements, other principals were less confident about maintaining the confidence of senior Departmental officials if their decision as principal happened to offend a politically active parent or group of parents.

Interviewees commented that, in the event of any difficulties at the school, some parents resorted very quickly to strategies that were designed to ‘get rid of’ the principal or staff member. Even before any complaints were made to the apparently ready ears of the Department, principals could be subjected to a rapid and complete shutdown of social communications at the local level. In a small community, withdrawal of normal social communication can be a very isolating experience for the principal and would be felt even more keenly by the principal’s family.

They see teachers as fair game, they see people who [they allege] are not doing the right thing by the kids and so, here you are, the sacrificial lamb well, get rid of him (Principal U1).

It is fair to say that the last two principals here were essentially forced out by the community. One had been here a long time, and fell foul of a particular community group and the other suffered from falsely-based allegations, which created a public scandal (Principal S4).

While some described their supervisors' support as being excellent, others felt that the senior officers of the DET undermined their positions. Principals of isolated schools were not at all confident that, in the event of any complaints, their superordinates would ensure procedural fairness or natural justice for the principals. They commented that they would be on their own.

You are by yourself and the pressures are coming from the bottom and the pressures are coming from the top, and you are in the middle. I have a basic philosophy that I think that central schools are the most appallingly treated schools within the department (Principal T1).

It is fair to say that the last two principals here were essentially forced out... [In response to local complaints] most of the important people in the "department" visited this school once and did not come back (Principal S5).

### *The career trap*

In his study of principals of small rural schools in New Zealand, Whittall (2002) found that the more isolated schools have a very high turnover of principals and only a small number of the departing principals were seeking and gaining a promotion. The lack of opportunities for promotion was a major concern for many of the interviewed principals in this study.

Some felt their careers had suffered because of changes to the system of selecting high school principals. Until a few years before the time of the study, most high school principals were appointed after interview by local selection panels. The government changed the appointment system so that many high school principalships were filled by direct transfers between high schools. This had the effect of sharply reducing the number of high school positions that were advertised. Central school principals were not eligible for transfer to principalships of any secondary high schools. This was a source of considerable grievance for central school principals, particularly for those principals with the experience of managing central schools which had bigger enrolments of secondary students than was the case for a number of smaller rural high schools.

Central school principals could transfer without further interviews to another central school of the same size which in practice meant that they could only transfer to another isolated central school. This was because there were only a few central schools anywhere near larger population centres (in the more favoured areas) and these were all much larger than the isolated schools.

The only other transfer option available to central school principals who had served in difficult to staff locations was to satisfy their Superintendent of Schools that they had acquired the necessary range of leadership skills to manage a primary school and then apply for transfer to a primary school of the same status. These skills were not necessarily acquired by principals with secondary background who had been appointed to a central school to help develop its curriculum offerings up to matriculation level and who had delegated much, if not all, of the leadership of the school's primary departments to their primary-trained assistant principal.

As deputy principals of high schools, some had acted on the advice of Superintendents of Schools who had recommended that they apply for the principalship of a (more isolated) central school. They expected that their experience as a deputy principal of a high school combined with the leadership of a central school would make them suitable candidates for later appointments as high school principals. Apart from transferring, principals could apply for advertised positions as principals of high schools but some expressed the perception that selection panels in larger centres did not value the principalship skills they had developed in a remote area school.

When the interviewer asked about career options, Principal R1 replied "Well, zero". Several of the interviewees made the same remark. For some principals there was almost a sense of betrayal that after they had moved to a less favoured location they were now effectively locked out of any form of promotion. (In this context, Principal R1 disclosed an intention to resign in a matter of months.)

### *Gender issues*

Female principals, in particular, have had to work harder to gain the confidence of their communities.

They are harder on the women; they can be really picky about what they do, but they seem to take more from the male principals. And it doesn't matter how good they are in the classroom, either – if they take a dislike, then that's it. (Respondent in Clarke, Stevens, & Wildy, 2006, p. 81)

Several female interviewees raised this issue. One of the female principals, exasperated after dealing with what she described as the prejudices in her community, was in the process of resigning from the Department.

### *Isolation of central school principals*

#### *Professional isolation*

Principals raised issues related to rurality and living in declining rural communities and sometimes talked about how isolated they felt in their current position. Some wished they still enjoyed the collegiality they experienced as curriculum/subject head teachers. Some expressed the disappointment that because they were subject to more direct influence by the DET and the local community, they now had much less autonomy in decision-making as principals than they had had when they were curriculum/subject head teachers. Older principals were less positive in

their responses when asked whether state education policies resulted in positive outcomes in staffing, quality of teaching and student achievement.

Isolation, both professional and personal, was the most commonly raised issue. This was most strongly felt by the 74% of principals who were from a secondary background. They had a perception that they were not well understood either by departmental officers or by their colleagues in high schools.

### *Historical pattern of primary-trained principals*

A number of factors contributed to the heightened sense of isolation experienced by the secondary-trained central school principal. In the historical pattern, primary-trained principals started with appointments to principalship of a small primary school followed by a promotion to principalship of a central school. Most central schools historically included only the junior years of secondary education. Access Programs, which used audiographic technology to allow clusters of central schools to provide common matriculation courses, began only in 1989. Historically, central schools were viewed as extended primary schools catering to isolated rural students who were required to continue their education until they reached the mandated leaving age after three to four years of junior secondary school. Students who aspired to complete a secondary education or to matriculate needed to attend a high school in Sydney or a larger provincial centre. Historically, the overwhelming majority of students in a central school were primary-age students in school years, Kindergarten to Year 6 with a reduced number of Year 6 students continuing into the junior secondary years at the local school.

Geographically, new primary-trained principals may have relocated relatively modest distances from their previous primary schools to take up the new appointment and they had access to the collegial support and understanding of principals or teachers-in-charge of neighbouring primary schools. Although the remote primary schools were much smaller than their urban counterparts, they were still quite numerous in remote areas.

### *Current pattern of secondary-trained principals*

The secondary-trained principals had very limited opportunities for keeping in contact with their colleagues in high schools. They had much greater distances to travel before reaching any nearby high schools. For example, in the inland area of Riverina Region excluding the city areas of Albury, Griffith and Wagga, there is only one public high school for every six public primary schools. In the four Sydney Regions there is one high school for every three primary schools and for the whole state the ratio is one to four (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2006, p. 9). In the non-government sector, the proportion of secondary schools to primary schools in remote rural areas is even smaller. For the secondary-trained central school principals the physical distance in contacting their networks of colleagues in high schools is much greater than is the case for the small minority of central school principals who have come from primary school backgrounds.

Unlike their primary-trained counterparts, only a small number of these secondary-trained principals had previous experience as classroom teachers in central schools and all started their principalship as principal of a central school. Most of the more recently appointed principals from a secondary background had been promoted from the position of head teacher to that of principal of a central school. Generally, head teachers in high schools would not have had any extended periods as a relieving principal. Many of the secondary-trained principals did not have even relieving principal experience before starting in substantive positions as principal of a central school.

I am extremely worried about the number of central school principals in New South Wales who are doing it tough. One of my beliefs is that going from a head teacher into the principal's role does not give you the experience of dealing with the range of attitudes of parents and the different attitudes of primary and secondary staff (Principal T1).

### *Family and social isolation*

Interviewees discussed the family and social isolation of their position in a small township. Most of the secondary-trained principals had moved considerable distances in their relocation to the position of principal of the central school. Usually their previous appointment would have been in a high school in a larger population centre. For some, relocation of their families over long distances to a small township with limited employment opportunities for their spouse also was a concern. For some principals, the solution to this problem was to live on their own in small townships hundreds of kilometres from their family.

### *Corporate managerialism and accountability*

#### *Characterisation of education system, flexibility in school decision-making*

Survey respondents had definite views - either agreeing or disagreeing - on the question that the current education system could be characterised as school-based management. Large majorities (74%, 85% and 78%) agreed with the statements that the school had flexibility respectively in student discipline, student welfare and teaching the core curriculum. However, a large majority (70%) disagreed with the statement that the school had flexibility in properties and maintenance.

#### *Benefits of current level of school-based management*

Principals were evenly divided about agreeing or disagreeing on the benefits of the current system for efficient management of resources, staff morale, student achievement and encouraging teachers to think and act as professionals. A small majority (59%) of the central school principals disagreed with the proposition that the current structures had benefits in staffing of schools. The terms 'staff' or 'staffing' include the tasks of securing permanent or casual staff and supervision of staff. In subsequent interviews, principals raised the issue of staffing in their schools as being one of their biggest concerns.

To sum up the role of principal, it's interesting, this is the most difficult job I've done, and in a school this size the biggest problem that I have is staff, and staff issues. They would be taking 95% of my time (Principal T1).

Principals were asked about the extent of their agreement with three statements about achievement levels namely: "The principal has more influence than the DET's state and regional offices on the school's success"; "Satisfying Departmental requirements means that the school is also providing a quality education for students"; and "The school has a major say in decisions which most affect student achievement". Significant majorities (89%, 63% and 74%) of respondents agreed respectively with the above three statements.

### *Benefits of mandatory testing and accountability*

Most principals (74% and 78% respectively) agreed that the mandated school management plan was school-based and was a useful guide in school planning. Respondents had definite views about whether the mandated standardised tests were a benefit for students. Very few chose the neutral option with most indicating strong agreement or strong disagreement. Survey responses indicated a high level of disagreement (30% disagreed and 30% strongly disagreed) with the proposition that the mandated school self evaluation process and annual school report were useful for the school and its community. The annual school report is in a standard format with prescribed sections for principals to complete. Interviewees also referred to the preparation of the annual school report as a time-consuming chore, which did not improve outcomes for the school or the students.

### *Tension between exogenous and endogenous stressors*

Saulwick Muller (2004) in their report on the health and wellbeing of Victorian principals suggested that the values of principals were primarily those of the carer, not those of the manager and that endogenous pressures inherent in the principals themselves could add to their levels of stress. Although 35 % of the Victorian principals regarded the volume of work as the biggest source of stress, a further 37% of the interviewees talked about dealing with nonperforming staff or with student welfare issues as their biggest sources of stress.

Principal class people just seem to find it difficult to deal with non-performers, and we believe that this is a manifestation of the pastoral approach they bring to their work. They tend to lack, and even despise, managerial ruthlessness. So instead of warning or sacking a non-performer - standard procedure in many organisations - they go to some trouble to try to turn the person's performance around.

Rural principals in particular, while willing to shoulder the essentially extra-mural social welfare responsibilities in small towns

found themselves ill-prepared to provide advice, and in some cases felt seriously insecure as a result of threats of violence or actual violence from those in whose lives they had been called upon to intervene (pp. 31-2).

In this study, most of the central school principals in reflecting on their motivations and values also listed values which were primarily those of a carer, not those of a manager. They frequently raised the issue of experiencing tension between competing exogenous and endogenous pressures. They described the endogenous pressures arising from their desire to provide professional care for their students, staff and communities. Although they usually accepted the need to respond to the exogenous pressures such as accountability and other mandates of the Department, they experienced tension in deciding on priorities. They described an acute conflict when the Department expected some form of documentation urgently and at the same time, a critical school incident required their immediate attention. In small villages with high welfare needs, the principal was expected to be a leader in responding to a wide range of community-based crises as well as dealing with any school-based crises.

During interviews, several principals expressed appreciation for the opportunity to talk about the more emotive issues associated with their view of themselves as being part of a caring profession. Principals felt that central schools were often overlooked because they were few in number (66 out of over 2200 government schools in NSW) and remote from state and regional offices. Despite the perceived lack of interest shown by some DET officers, the central school principals commented about the heavy workload of providing documentation to the DET for both primary and secondary departments. Often they would be supplying double the documentation required of their primary or secondary school colleagues.

### *Conclusion*

Although interviewed principals acknowledged difficulties such as coping with professional and social isolation, dealing with social difficulties in their communities and meeting the mandatory policy and accountability requirements of Staff Office (DET), they also conveyed a determined and confident attitude about the effectiveness and achievements of their school. Almost without exception the interviewees described significant changes they had introduced when they started at their schools and they were optimistic that they could solve school-level problems, maintain high professional standards in teaching and improve the achievement levels of students at their school.

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