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What are the professional and personal needs of beginning Western Australian Catholic school principals during the first four years of their appointment?

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Chapter Three: Review of Literature

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the professional and personal needs of newly appointed principals to Catholic schools in Western Australia. It seemed appropriate therefore, to review the literature on beginning principals, dimensions of principalship in Australia, preparation for principalship, and the religious dimension of Catholic school leadership.

In this chapter, literature on beginning principals will concentrate on two main areas, namely a framework of key skills required for principalship and the experiences beginning principals encounter. The key skills that the beginning principals needs to develop are technical and managerial skills, socialisation skills and self-awareness skills (Daresh, 2006a). In addition to the key skills required for effective principalship, literature will be presented on the experiences, challenges and issues beginning principals encounter in the early years (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Daresh, 2006a; Walker & Qian, 2006).

Literature pertaining to dimensions of principalship in Australia focuses on three perspectives, namely gender, locality of the school and school type (Coleman, 2012; Lock, Budgen, Lunay & Oakley, 2012; Murdoch & Schiller, 2002; Oplatka & Tamir, 2009; Robinson, Bendikson & Hattie, 2013; Wallace & Boylan, 2007; Watterson, 2010). Literature in the area of preparation for principalship explores key elements that enable beginning principals to effectively and confidently establish their leadership within the school community (Su, Gamage & Mininberg, 2003; Walker & Qian, 2006; Wright, Siegrist, Pate, Monetti & Raiford, 2009;). The final component of the literature

review will present the religious requirements necessary to lead in a Catholic school (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Nuzzi, Holter & Frabutt, 2013; Sharkey, 2007). The outline of the literature review is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Outline of the literature review

Sub-heading	
3.1	Introduction
3.2	Conceptual framework
3.3	Beginning principals
3.4	Implications for the research
3.5	Summary
3.6	Dimensions of principalship in Australia
3.7	Summary
3.8	Principal preparation
3.9	Summary
3.10	Religious dimension of Catholic school principalship
3.11	Summary
3.12	Conclusion

3.2 Conceptual framework

The interplay between the four themes mentioned in Table 3.1, i.e. beginning principalship, dimensions of principalship in Australia, preparation for principalship and the religious dimension of Catholic school principalship, brings into focus the conceptual framework that underpins the research. The conceptual framework presented

illustrates the components of the literature underpinning the research. These four themes directly influence the subject central to the research: the professional and personal needs of beginning principals. Literature presented on beginning principals draws not only on the professional skills required for principalship, it also highlights the social and self awareness skills that are required by beginning principals in order to effectively lead their schools. Literature on dimensions of principalship in Australia identifies three perspectives, that is, gender issues in school principalship, location of the school, and the type of schooling environment, namely primary and secondary contexts. Literature on the preparation for principalship highlights the skills necessary for successful transition into the role. The final component of the conceptual framework is the religious dimension of Catholic school principalship. Here literature explores the religious nature of Catholic schools and the requirements of the school to lead in a faith based context. The conceptual framework underpinning the literature is presented in Figure 3.1.

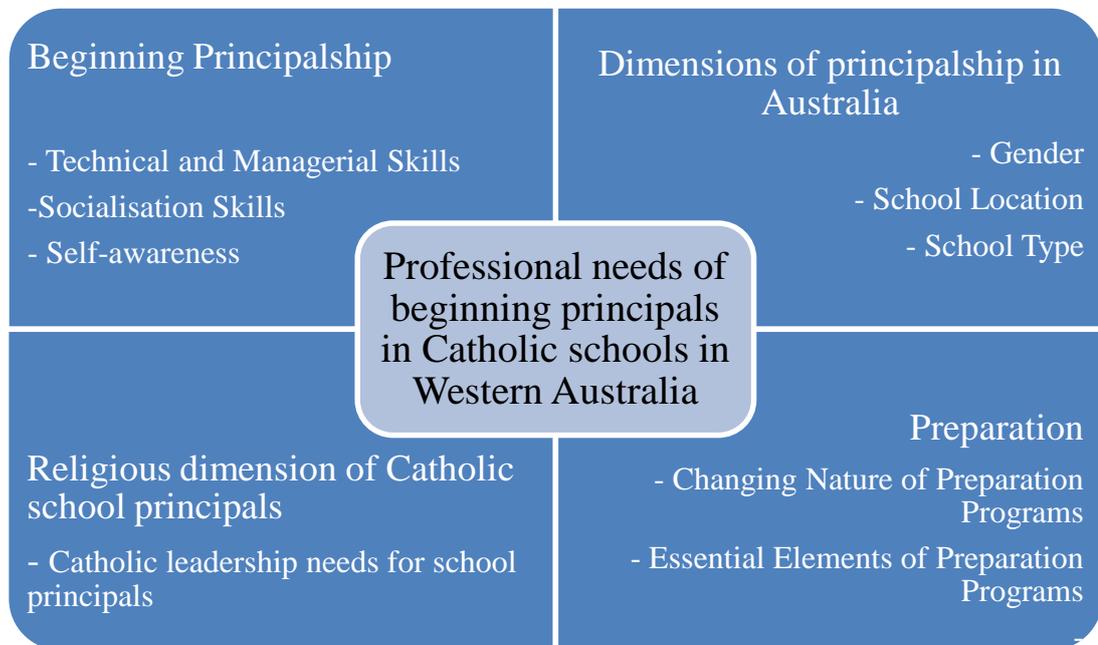


Figure 3.1 *Conceptual framework underpinning the literature on beginning principals*

3.3 Beginning principals

Principals, both in Australia and internationally, have to deal with increasing changes, with higher levels of accountability placed upon them and a reduced time line to implement these changes (Crow, 2006; Darling-Hammond & LaPointe, 2007; Nuzzi et al, 2013; Walker & Qian, 2006;). The beginning principal, in dealing with the rapidity of change and new found levels of accountability to the employer and government, is also challenged on a number of other fronts such as dealing with ineffective staff and the isolation of being the leader. Literature on beginning principalship will concentrate on two main areas: the framework of key skills the new principal needs to develop in order to lead in a time of change; and the challenges and issues experienced in the early years in the role (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Daresh, 2006a; Walker & Qian, 2006; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006).

3.3.1 Framework of key skills

Daresh (2006a) posits a framework of key skills based on problems identified by researchers investigating needs of beginning principals. Daresh crystallises these skills into three areas: technical and managerial skills, socialisation skills, and self-awareness. These three key skill areas whilst inter-related, place specific demands on the new leader. Each will now be explored.

3.3.1.1 Technical and managerial skills

The first key skills area that beginning principals need to address involves technical and managerial skills. These skills broadly cover the management of the operational details that enable a school to function in a clear and orderly manner. These operational details include government and system accountabilities; financial and facilities management;

and educational direction and staffing which includes recruitment, performance management and development (Daresh, 2006a). Nuzzi et al. (2013) stated that “the principal is both the chief executive officer and chief operating officer, ultimately responsible for the formal and informal educational activities of the school” (p. 1). Beginning principals are under constant pressure to account to parents, governments, school boards and staff on all school policies and practices. It requires a managerial style that ensures that schools are seen to be publicly performing in ways that are measurable (Daresh, 2006a; Perry & McWilliam, 2007).

Daresh (2006a) posited three competencies that beginning principals are required to master in this area of managerial leadership. These are organisational, fiscal and political management. Briefly, organisational management ensures that the administrative function of day-to-day operations is carried out efficiently. These include school scheduling, resource and staff allocations and paper work, which must be attended to in a timely fashion and time managed effectively. Fiscal management includes the balancing of school budgets, overseeing capital works and ensuring that facilities are managed appropriately and effectively. Political management is viewed by Daresh as the ability to perceive critical features of the environment, such as political players, special interest groups and awareness of power structures within the school.

Marzano, Walter and McNulty (2005) described the leadership style required to ensure the operational aspect of running a school as transactional. Transactional leadership draws on management practices with a focus on the importance of the procedural nature of schooling. Bush and Glover (2003) cited the work of Leithwood (1999) who contended that the managerial leadership role assumes that the focus of leaders is on

competently carrying out functions, tasks and behaviours enabling the work of others to be facilitated. Beginning principals, in dealing with the operational aspect of running schools, tend to feel typically overwhelmed due to their limited technical expertise and experience as an administrator (Walker & Qian, 2006). Walker and Qian (2006) commented that the beginning principal's sense of being overwhelmed is caused by the "excessive paper work, high degree of fragmentation and unpredictability, many different unplanned and expected events" (p. 302) that are encountered daily.

Bush, Bell and Middlewood (2010) suggested that the managerial function of the principal's leadership role is necessary to ensure the smooth operation of the school; however, they also distinguish between educational leadership and management. Bush et al. contended that school principalship needs to be viewed differently, particularly as the role since 2000 has involved increased autonomy, high stakes accountability and a distinct shift from managerial to educational leadership. This view was echoed by others who also recognise the significant influence principals have in classroom practices and student outcomes (Leithwood, Pattern & Jantzi, 2010; Robinson, 2007). The challenge confronting new principals is balancing the demands of the managerial requirements of the role with the educational demands of leading and improving the learning and teaching practices within the school (Hobson, Brown, Ashby, Keys, Sharp & Benefield, 2003; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008).

3.3.1.2 Socialisation skills

The second key skills area that beginning principals need to develop is that of socialisation. Daresh (2006a) suggested that there are two facets implicit in the theme of socialisation. Firstly, socialisation involves those skills that enable beginning principals

to understand, contribute, participate and lead in the local school context. These skills also include engaging the local community to be active in the school and leveraging opportunities to broaden student-learning experiences. These skills entail the successful immersion of the beginning principal into the social mores of the school community. Secondly, socialisation skills support the enculturation of the principal into the professional life of the educational leader. Daresh suggested that a socialisation problem faced by many new principals is to discover the culture of principalship as a career. That is, new principals need “to understand the big picture of how principals are supposed to act, what they are supposed to know, and even what they are supposed to do” (p. 11). Many new principals can become so focused on surviving their first years on the job that they often ignore the importance of exploring what is happening in the professional world outside their school (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003).

Crow (2006) and Weindling and Dimmock (2006) suggested that the socialisation of beginning principal’s lay within two categories: professional socialisation and organisational socialisation. Crow (2006) described professional socialisation as the knowledge, skills and disposition “to enact the role” (p. 311). Professional socialisation includes learning to be a principal prior to taking up the appointment and acknowledges a beginning principal’s previous personal experience of school life, the modelling received by previous leaders and the mentoring received from experienced principals. Weindling and Dimmock suggested that as one enters into the school environment, one is taught the knowledge, values and behaviours required in that particular school context. Alternatively, organisational socialisation entails learning the values, knowledge and behaviours required to undertake the specific role. Crow described these skills as necessary “to conduct the role” (p. 311). Weindling and Dimmock stated

that organisational socialisation begins when one enters the school environment in which one is to lead. The uniqueness of the school context shapes this type of socialisation. The interactions with school members are significant in the shaping of beginning principals. An example of organisational socialisation is the active support the school board can provide the new principal in understanding the past and potential contributions the school within the broader community. Weindling and Dimmock suggested that in shaping a new professional identity as principal, the individual needs to form “a new sense of status, image and self-worth in the role and in the career; it means establishing values, priorities and what one stands for – an educational platform” (p. 338). The new principal in assuming the leadership role, comes to the awareness that they are the end point for decision making and direction setting for the school community.

3.3.1.3 Self-awareness

The theme of self-awareness explores the integration of the role of principalship *per se* with one’s own self-identity. An essential element in any integration is to identify important personal and professional values before even walking into the principal’s office (Daresh, 2006a). Beginning principals also need to realise that they have moved from a position of subordination to one of being in charge. Their new position often means that they receive signals from colleagues, staff, parents, students and other community members that they are somehow different because they are in charge (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Linked with this change in status is the fact that irrespective of the size of their school, they are ultimately responsible for its effective running (Daresh, 2006a). Furthermore, as beginning principals assume the leadership role of the school community, they need to appreciate that such leadership has an element of

isolation, and hence, loneliness. The need for personal resilience is required to contend with this isolation, tensions of staff interactions and a variety of problems encountered in the leadership role (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Clarke, Wildy and Pepper, 2007).

Research suggests that newly appointed principals need to develop personal efficacy (Daresh & Male, 2000; Fullan, 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Sackney & Walker, 2006; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The demands of principalship are related to one's sense of self (Daresh & Male, 2000). Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) viewed self-efficacy as "a judgement of his or her capabilities to structure a particular course of action in order to produce desired outcomes in the school he or she leads" (p. 573). They suggest that principalship requires a "robust sense of efficacy" (p. 574) in order to overcome challenges to effect change. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis reported that principals with high efficacy regulate personal expectations to correspond to circumstances, usually remaining confident and calm. They added that the principal's sense of efficacy plays an integral role in meeting the challenges, expectations and demands of the position.

It is within the early years of leading the school that the principal establishes his or her identity as a school leader. Quong (2006) recognised that new principals are not "learner drivers" (p. 377). The beginning principal comes with many years of successful school experience to draw upon. Through valuing and acknowledging these experiences and professionally developing the technical aspects of leadership, the beginning principal's personal efficacy will be strengthened and affirmed (Daresh & Male, 2000; Sackney & Walker, 2006).

Reflective practice is regarded as a key skill for those beginning their principalship (Hall, 2008). Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) defined reflective practice “as a means by which practitioners can develop a greater level of self-awareness about the nature and impact of their performance, an awareness that creates opportunities for professional growth and development” (p. 2). In order to be reflective, Osterman and Kottkamp suggested that the individual needs to come to an understanding of their own behaviour and need to develop a conscious awareness of their own actions. The time taken for reflecting on personal values, ethical stances, and leadership practices assists first time principals as they embark on a “life transforming experience” (Daresh & Male, 2000, p. 99). Daresh and Male (2000) noted that the impact of work on the personal lives of beginning principals is significant and that “isolation, alienation and frustration encountered often mark the work of those who lead” (p. 99). Walker and Qian (2006) and Daresh and Male suggested that timely access to educational authorities and peer support can assist in overcoming challenging circumstances. Daresh and Male also acknowledged the many highlights of leading a school community lead to a sense of pride and satisfaction.

3.3.2 Challenges and issues beginning principals encounter

Newly appointed principals generally follow a developmental career pathway whereby they experience differing levels of responsibility and accountability in various roles (Su et al, 2003; Wright et al., 2009). Typically this pathway in primary education would include classroom teacher, assistant principal and principal. In secondary education the pathway includes classroom teacher, head of learning area or year level coordinator, deputy principal and principal. When a person reaches the position of principal, that person assumes full responsibility for leading the school and full accountability to the

educational employing authority. Whilst this developmental career pathway is typical, there is significant literature surrounding the beginning principal to suggest that these career pathways are inadequate preparation with regards to dealing with the challenges and issues encountered in the early years of principalship (Hobson et al., 2003; Walker & Qian, 2006; Wright et al., 2009). Browne-Ferrigno (2003), however, recognised that the process of becoming a principal commences when the teacher engages in professional learning that requires leadership beyond the classroom. Browne-Ferrigno stated that “such action displays a willingness to take risks, demonstration of self-confidence, and orientation towards change, which are personal qualities of aspiring principals” (p. 494).

Weindling and Dimmock (2006) reported the findings of a 20-year longitudinal study undertaken in the United Kingdom examining perspectives of new principals. Findings from this study suggested a number of challenges encountered by beginning principals. The first is the legacy, practice and style of previous principals. This legacy, depending on the effectiveness of the previous principal, significantly contributed to the culture of the school. Walker and Qian (2006) reiterated this challenge and state that the “ghosts of principals past” (p.301) have an enduring influence on the school. Walker and Qian acknowledged that new principals work in the shadow of their predecessors, where teachers endow “the previous principal with saintly virtues ... even though they noted frailties while in the post” (p.301).

Other findings from Weindling and Dimmock’s (2006) study included professional isolation encountered by beginning principals; staffing issues, particularly dealing with ineffective staff; school financial management and oversight of capital development and

maintenance of the school site. Dealing with multiple tasks and time management were further challenges encountered by new principals. Accountabilities to government coupled with curriculum changes and demands added to their list of challenges.

Weindling and Dimmock reported that:

The enduring nature of the processes, challenges and ways of socialisation experienced by the beginning principal (are) almost rites of passage into the role. Loneliness and isolation persist... the exacting demands of the role, managing time and priorities and multiple tasks are prominent challenges confronting heads (principals)...” (p. 338)

Ashton and Duncan (2012) and Walker, Anderson, Sackney and Woolf (2003) described the challenges encountered by beginning principals as typically unanticipated experiences and a belief that they are unprepared for the role. The unanticipated experiences include the amount of work and time required to undertake the role. Here, beginning principals found that they lost their sense of autonomy because of the demands for their time. They found it difficult to balance work, social and family life. The unanticipated staff-related issues challenged beginning principals. These issues included dealing with staff conflict and mediation, the complexity of teacher expectations, the direction and organisation that was required by teachers and the assumption by staff that the principal has assumed knowledge, particularly in the area of instruction (Clarke, et al, 2007; Sorenson, 2005). Another challenge for the beginning principal was their belief that they were unprepared in dealing with staff supervision, particularly underperformance of staff (Ashton & Duncan, 2012). Walker et al (2003) reported that unanticipated parent and school board demands also weighed heavily on the beginning principal. Beginning principals had not anticipated the “tensions, angst, energy that parental issues entail” (p.200). The local “politics” of school boards and

their impact on decision-making were reported as an issue the beginning principal needed to understand.

A further issue confronting new leaders is the sense of isolation that is encountered in the role. Fraser and Brock (2006) reported that isolation is experienced in two forms: isolation from family due to the demands of the position and isolation from the staff of the school due to the position. Campbell, La Forge and Taylor (2006) suggested that the principals' experience of isolation is partially due to the inability to share responsibilities of decision-making and "the tendency to bear the burden of leadership alone" (p. 1). Campbell et al. defined loneliness as the lack of connection to social networks. They cite the work of Herlihy and Herlihy (1980) who suggested that isolation can be described within four ways: isolation from individuals in positions of authority; isolation from those perceived as influential in the organisation; isolation from friends in the organisation; and isolation from respected co-workers. Beginning principal's feelings of loneliness can impact on their leadership development as they can be isolated from their colleagues and access to professional learning opportunities. Within the school, the demanding nature of the position and the confidentiality required around issues and circumstances can limit the interaction with school and community members. These issues around loneliness and isolation further impact on the beginning principal's awareness of self. Not being able to clarify or discuss leadership matters limits the new leader's creative thinking around issues and can limit their confidence (Fraser & Brock, 2006).

3.4. Implications for the research

The research sought to explore the professional and personal needs of beginning principals in Catholic schools in Western Australia. The literature on beginning school principals concentrated on two main areas, namely, framework of key skills required for principalship and the experiences beginning principals encountered. The three specific research questions were devised to elucidate the research question and explore the literature.

The first specific research question sought to identify the technical and managerial skills beginning principals need to acquire. Literature on skills required of beginning principals in the technical and managerial area highlighted the transactional nature of the principal's role. Principals are required to lead, understand and manage the overall operational elements of school life (Daresh, 2006a; Marzano et al., 2005, Nuzzi et al, 2013; Perry & McWilliam, 2007).

The second specific research question sought to identify the cultural and personal relationships beginning principals needed to develop. Literature identified the need for principals to be contextually and relationally perceptive within the school community and its local environment. The socialisation of the principal, both professionally and organizationally, are essential if they are to enact the role successfully (Crow, 2006; Daresh, 2006a; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006).

The third specific research question sought to identify the ways beginning principals integrate the role of principalship with their self-awareness. Literature in the area of

self-identity and its integration into the role of principal highlighted the importance of self-awareness. Browne-Ferrigno (2003), Clarke et al. (2007), Daresh & Male (2000), Sackney and Walker (2006) and Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) strongly identified self-efficacy and resiliency as integral in order for the beginning principal to meet the challenges, expectations and demands of the position.

3.5 Summary

The review of literature on beginning principals focused on key skills required of the leadership role and the challenges and issues confronting new leaders. The key skills that have been identified are technical and managerial skills, socialisation skills and self-awareness (Daresh, 2006a). The technical and managerial skills encompass the operational requirements of running a school. These skills include meeting accountability demands, financial management, staffing and performance management of school staff and policy implementation. Research suggests that whilst the technical and managerial skills are important and necessary in the efficient and effective operation of the school (Bush et al., 2010), it is imperative that the educational focus is not lost in the administration demands placed on the beginning school principal.

Socialisation skills require the principal to be immersed in both the school community and acculturated into the professional life of principalship. Both requirements seek to develop relationships within the community and at collegial and professional levels.

Literature around round self-awareness identified the importance of new principals accepting their influential role as school leader and demonstrating confidence within the role through their interactions and decision-making (Browne-Ferrigno, 2004; Daresh, 2006b). Self-awareness requires the beginning principal to develop self-efficacy and

resilience to meet the inherent leadership challenges in this position (Clarke, et al., 2007). The final aspect of literature on beginning principals explored the challenges and issues experienced by the new leader. Research identifies that the career pathway to principalship is inadequate (Hobson et al., 2003; Walker & Qian, 2006; Wright et al., 2009). The challenges and issues encountered by beginning principals highlight their unpreparedness and inability to anticipate the demands placed upon them (Walker et al., 2003). The key issues identified include the legacy of their predecessor, meeting accountability demands, financial management, staffing conflict and performance management, time management and the politics underpinning relationships (Clarke, et al, 2007; Sorenson, 2005; Wright et al, 2003).

3.6 Dimensions of principalship in Australia

The school principal's role is challenged and burdened by the contemporary Australian educational landscape. The plethora of accountability demands at federal, state and local educational jurisdictional level confronts the principal on a daily basis (Crow, 2006; Fullan, 2004; Moller, 2009). School principals are continually balancing the demands of accountability with the core business of school: leading learning and teaching. Further to these demands of commencing the principalship, beginning principals have to deal with not only the newness of the role, but also the context of their new schooling environment. It is worth noting however, that many of the issues which Australian school principals encounter also are experienced by principals outside of Australia (Chapman, 2005; Crow, 2005). This section draws on literature pertaining to three dimensions that impact on the beginning principal within the Australian context: gender, location of schools and type of school. The literature thus provides the

Australian context for exploring the three specific research questions dealing with technical and managerial skills, socialisation skills and self-awareness.

3.6.1 Gender

Strong school leadership is integral to improving the educational outcomes for young people (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011). It is recognised that first-rate principalship is not gender specific (McLay, 2008; Tarica, 2010; Watterson, 2010). There is a plethora of literature on issues of gender and school leadership; however, the literature focuses on challenges confronting women in attaining leadership positions (Brennan, 2004; Derby, 2013; Coleman, 2012; Marczynski & Gates, 2012; McLay, 2008; Oplatka & Tamir, 2009) rather than issues confronting male leadership. Key issues will be presented pertaining to gender and school leadership, in particular challenges around women in leadership. These issues include recent demographic information on school leadership gender composition, barriers to female principalship, leadership pathway progression for females and males, and opportunities to redress the diminished participation of women in the key school leadership role. There would appear, however, to be a paucity of literature on the female experience of leadership as opposed to the commonly presented challenge to attaining the role.

The Staff in Australia's Schools [SiAS] 2010 Report (McKenzie, Rowley, Weldon & Murphy, 2010) highlighted low numbers of female school principals. The statistics reveal that teaching has a high proportion of women in primary schools (81%) and slightly lower proportion in secondary schools (57%). Further, the proportion of women undertaking school leadership positions in primary schools is 59% with half the number

being principals. In secondary schools 40% of leadership positions belong to women with less than half of these being principal positions. Table 3.2 presents the data revealing proportions of male and female leaders, by school sector and school location.

Table 3.2

Proportions of male and female leaders by school sector and school location.

Dimension	Type	Primary Leaders		Secondary Leaders	
		Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
School sector	Government	45	60	56	44
	Catholic	42	58	59	41
	Independent	45	55	71	29
School location	Metropolitan	39	61	60	40
	Provincial	46	54	59	41
	Remote	39	61	60	40
Mean Average	Australia	41	59	60	40

(McKenzie, Rowley, Weldon & Murphy, 2010, p. 27).

Table 3.3 presents the percentage of males and females among principals and deputy principals, thus highlighting the significant difference in gender proportions within Australian school leadership positions.

Table 3.3

Percentage of males and females among Principals and Deputy Principals

School type	Leadership position	Male (%)	Female (%)
Primary	Principals	47	53
	Deputy principals	38	62
	<i>All leaders</i>	43	57
Secondary	Principals	69	32
	Deputy principals	55	45
	<i>All leaders</i>	61	39

(McKenzie, Rowley, Weldon & Murphy, 2010, p. 30)

Research examining the under-representation of female principals in schools suggest that barriers can be considered in two main groupings, namely internal barriers that are within one's own agency or control and external barriers encompass structural impediment (Coleman, 2012; Oplatka & Tamir, 2009; Spiller, 2012; Watterston, 2010). Internal barriers include belief in one's ability to undertake the role of principal. Researchers suggested that women tend to lack the confidence to consider principalship (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009; Spiller, 2012; Tarica, 2010; Watterston, 2010). Watterston (2010) indicated that women tended to "underestimate their own capacity for the position and tended to have unrealistically high expectations of the levels of skills and experiences needed" (p. 3). Watterston suggested that coupled with the lack of confidence to consider the role is the belief that women do not feel ready to apply. Oplatka and Tamir (2009) noted that "cultural scripts that identify feminine attributes as contributing to ineffective leadership" (p. 217) limit aspirations towards leadership.

These scripts are reinforced by the dominance of males in leadership roles who model underpinning masculine values and management styles. Oplatka and Tamir suggested that women's lack of aspiration, fear of failure and lack of competitiveness and readiness also contribute to these internal barriers inhibiting women from aspiring to leadership positions.

External barriers to principalship include the notion of work-life balance. Spiller (2012) reported that some women limit their career aspiration on the basis that they believe their family life becomes vulnerable to the demanding nature of the principalship and the perceived time required to do the job. The Commonwealth, State and Territories Ministerial Conference on the Status of Women [MINCO] (2004) echoed this belief. The report from MINCO highlighted the significant role women play in the primary care for their families. Coleman (2012) and McLay (2008) reiterated these findings and add that women make choices between their careers and domestic life.

Another external barrier resulting in women's reluctance to be school principals is the lack of female role models in the position of principalship. McLay (2008), Tarica, (2010) and Spiller (2012) reported that with diminished numbers of current female school principal's there is a shortage of female role models to inspire women. The lack of female principal role models perpetuates the notion that male dominance in educational leadership roles requires a masculine nature (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). A lack of female school principals maintains the socialised norm that underpins the assumptions, beliefs and values highlighting men could be and should be principals (Trinidad & Normore, 2005).

Researchers report that men tend to aim towards leadership positions early in their career whilst women tend not to have specific career strategies (Tarica, 2010; Watterston, 2010). McLay (2008) suggested that women “lack career strategies” (p. 360) and tend not to aim for principalship at the beginning of their career. Conversely, men are very specific in planning their careers and “do whatever it takes to get there as soon as possible” (Watterston, 2010, p. 2). Watterston (2010) reported that women tend to wait until they believe that they have acquired all of the necessary skills and knowledge that principalship requires before they apply for principalship. Tarica (2010) also added that women tend to be nominated by their principal before they consider themselves in the role of principal. Tarica states “female principals had only thought about leadership roles when it was suggested by someone else or they had been required to fill in for a short period and found that they enjoyed the role” (p.1).

It is recognised that being an excellent principal is not gender specific (McLay, 2008; Tarica, 2010; Watterston, 2010). However, pathways and career development for men and women leading towards principalship can and need to be differentiated in order for there to be a more “even playing field” (Watterston, 2010, p. 4). Spiller (2012) suggested that there needs to be better opportunities for women to prepare for principalship. She noted that this requires a twofold response. Firstly, there needs to be a personal commitment and preparedness of women to better position themselves for the role and seek opportunities to broaden their skill base to include experiences of leadership and enhanced qualifications. Secondly, support and encouragement should be given to women for career planning and mentoring. Spiller argued that the opportunities for mentoring “open doors to memberships and organisations” (p. 29) that will “demystify” the principal’s role.

Trinidad and Normore (2005) reiterated the importance of mentoring and networking in supporting women's desire for principalship. They suggested mentoring provides opportunities, experiences and exposure to leadership that "serves to gain visibility" (p. 582) for women. Coleman (2012) highlighted that making professional connections through associations and organisations can be beneficial for women aspirants to principalship in that they come to realise their own abilities and potential. Watterston (2010) suggested that networking with other like-minded women could assist in building confidence, highlight that other women share similar concerns and determine practical ways of dealing with challenges through shared dialogue.

Preparation programs for school principals need to be more targeted and supportive of gender differences (Coleman, 2012; Watterson, 2010). Transition programs into principalship need to assist with the understanding and context of the principal's role in order to develop leadership strategies. For example, work life balance issues, which are reported to be a major deterrent for women seeking principal appointments, can be addressed and solved (Watterston, 2010).

3.6.2 Location of the school

Australia is regarded as one of the most urbanised countries in the world, with over 69% of the population living in major cities (Baxter, Gray & Hayes, 2011). In Australia, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA] provided four categories of geographic location to describe schools site (Jones, 2004). These four categories are metropolitan (or city), provincial (also termed inner and outer regional), remote and very remote. Metropolitan and provincial locations are considered to be areas in each state or territory within close proximity to

its capital city. Remote and very remote classifications draw upon the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia [ARIA]. The ARIA is an index of remoteness taken from measures of road distance between populated locations and service centres. The road distance measures are used to generate a remoteness score for any location in Australia (Baxter et al., 2011). The ARIA index has values ranging from zero, which defines high level of access to services to 15, which defines high remoteness, with very limited access to core services. The current classification of school locations using the ARIA classification is in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

Remoteness areas and ARIA values

ARIA values	Remoteness area
0 to 0.2	Major cities in Australia
0.2 ≤ 2.4	Inner regional Australia
2.4 ≤ 5.92	Outer regional Australia
5.92 ≤ 10.53	Remote Australia
10.53 +	Very remote Australia

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a)

Baxter et al. (2011) report that 69 % of the Australian population live in a major city; 20% live in inner regional; 9% in outer regional; 1.5% live in remote and 0.8% very remote Australia. Baxter et al, also noted that Aboriginal populations have a much greater concentration in the more remote areas. Wallace and Boylan (2007) commented that smaller school populations tended to be located further from large regional centres and cities. Wallace and Boylan suggested that small schools characterise remote and

very remote regions. Typically, beginning principals commence their new role in outer regional, remote and very remote locations (Clarke, Wildy & Pepper, 2007; Ewington, Mulford, Kendall, Edmunds, Kendal & Silins, 2008; Murdoch & Schiller, 2002). Whilst the small size of the school appears to be manageable for the beginning principal, there are significant challenges confronting remote and very remote regions in which the beginning principal needs to navigate (Clarke, et al., 2007; Murdoch & Schiller, 2002; Starr & White, 2008; Wallace & Boylan).

Challenges facing regional and remote Australia include the economic and social decline of communities. Coupled with extreme weather patterns of flood and drought, many living in rural and remote areas face lowering of living standards, few educational and employment opportunities and poorer health outcomes (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013b; Wallace & Boylan, 2010). These challenges are further compounded in very remote locations with high Aboriginal populations. Remote locations are typically characterised by low life expectancy, high mortality rates of Aboriginal children, poor educational outcomes and low employment opportunities (Council of Australian Governments, 2009). Wildy and Clarke (2012) described these challenges as “chronic social and economic disadvantage” (p. 2). The Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] (2009) states that disadvantage of remote and very remote Aboriginal communities have necessitated the need to ‘close the gap’ (2009). The Australian Government, through its peak intergovernmental council, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), has coined the term “closing the gap” to reflect its strategy to improve the lives of Aboriginal Australians, particularly seeking to improve the lives and futures of Aboriginal children (Council of Australian Governments, 2009).

With regard to specific issues in education, the ABS (2013b) suggested that the key issues concerning regional and remote schooling include low student retention rates, low high school completion rates, and low participation in post-school education and attainment of post-school qualifications. The trend in student results from rural and remote locations from the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 reflect the disparity of the socio-economic issues. According to the 2012 NAPLAN data, results indicated that rural and remote schools consistently performed below their metropolitan counterparts (ACARA, 2012). These results reflect the trend since national testing first started in 2008 (Anderson, Davis, Douglas, Lloyd, Niven & Thiele, 2010; Wildy & Clark, 2012). In addition, where there are high Aboriginal student populations, on average, “students experience lower participation, attainment and learning outcomes compared to students in non-remote locations” (Western Australian Department of Education, 2011, p. iv).

Other educational issues confronting rural and remote schooling include the recruitment and retention of suitable staff, particularly those with leadership experience. New leaders are also confronted with staff who have had limited training in the use of information and communication technologies for digital educational purposes and staff who are not cognisant and practiced in contemporary pedagogies, cultural and community awareness (Pietsch & Williamson, 2009). Also in rural and remote schooling contexts issues such as student attendance and ageing school facilities are evident (ABS, 2013b; Lock et al, 2012; Pietsch & Williamson, 2009).

The influence of the community on the school, and in particular on the principalship, is an important aspect for the principal to consider. Literature suggests that there are tacit

expectations placed upon the school principal thus requiring the principal to be contextually literate (Clarke & Stevens, 2009; Halsey, 2011; Wallace & Boylan, 2007). Evidence portrays small communities, such as rural and remote areas, as being parochial and conservative by nature and thus requiring a degree of sensitivity by the school principal in understanding community participation and communal responsibilities (Halsey, 2011; Wallace & Boylan, 2007). Halsey (2011) suggested that the high visibility of the school principal in understanding community affairs needs careful consideration. Halsey advised that the demand that can be placed on the principal's time could over burden the new leader as these demands compete with the burgeoning workload of leading the school. Halsey highlighted the need for the principal to develop strategies to deal with community demands, which include creating boundaries of what the principal should and should not participate in.

3.6.3 School type

Australian society values the central role of education in building a democratic, equitable and just society (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008). Successive Australian governments, both state and federal, have endorsed national statements on schooling, setting broad educational priorities. The current statement is the Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008). The Declaration strengthens the focus on the developmental years, highlighting early years education, middle years and senior years of schooling including youth transitioning into post school destinations such as work, vocational and tertiary opportunities (ACARA, 2009). The Australian schooling structure is reflective of the developmental progression. Schools consist of primary

education, which educates children from the ages of five to eleven years, and secondary education from twelve to eighteen years of age (ACARA, 2009).

Hattie's (2009) seminal work on factors influencing student achievement, acknowledges the significant role that the school principal plays in orchestrating school improvement. Hattie stated that instructional leadership provided by the school principal creates the environmental conditions that are optimal for student learning. Hattie suggested that the principal's high expectations of staff and students provide the foundation for improved learning. In addition, Hattie highlighted the specific dimensions of instructional leadership that have the greatest effect on student outcomes. These dimensions include the participatory action of principals in the professional development of teachers, planning, coordinating and assessing teaching practices; regular classroom visits; strategic resourcing; and establishing goals and expectations.

Robinson, Bendikson and Hattie (2013,) utilising the work of Hattie, defined instructional leadership as both the engagement with classroom teachers about their teaching, known as direct instructional leadership, and the development of the organisational conditions that enable such direct engagement, described as indirect instructional leadership. The differences and similarities of primary and secondary school principalship in light of their key responsibilities in contributing to the role education plays in Australian society are discussed below.

Primary education lays the foundation skills of literacy and numeracy for young people. In addition, primary school teachers assist the child in developing a natural curiosity and love of learning (Australian Primary Principals Association, 2011). Robinson et al.

(2013) suggested that primary school principals provide direct instructional leadership as they are in frequent direct contact with the classroom teacher. Primary school principals tend to be more involved with curriculum delivery and pedagogical oversight. Typically, primary schools are smaller in size and the principal tends to have a more intimate knowledge of what is occurring in each classroom. Smaller primary schools have fewer staff, including limited leadership roles and specialist teachers. The smaller staff size has tended to lead to workload intensification for the principal and his or her staff (Angus, Olney & Ainley, 2007). Principals leading primary schools tend to have limited staff and resources to assist in the administrative area leaving them to do most of the administrative work. Angus et al. (2007) noted that the primary school principal is required to meet the same accountability standards as their secondary school counterpart.

The primary school teacher teaches across all eight learning areas (ACARA, 2009). Angus et al, (2007) reported that there are practical limits to the breadth of specialised curriculum and expertise that regular primary classroom teachers demonstrate. The primary school principal tends to have more generalist knowledge in order to support staff across the breadth of the curriculum.

Secondary schools need to provide students with learning environments that engage diverse interests, learning styles and provide numerous pathways for post schooling destinations (Robinson et al., 2013). In order to meet these varied requirements, the secondary school principal is called upon to provide a broad and all encompassing educational experience for adolescent learners. Hattie (2009) highlighted the importance of the school principal's role as instructional leader as a significant component to

student achievement. Robinson et al. argued that secondary school principals play more of an indirect instructional leadership role than their primary school counterparts.

Robinson et al., highlighted three underpinning areas that define the secondary principal's instructional role. These are size of the school, departmental organisation and adolescent learners.

The larger the size of the school the more students and therefore more teaching and support staff. By the very nature of the secondary school, the diverse curriculum offerings preparing the adolescent for post school destinations require more elaborate organisational structures. These include layers of leadership roles such as deputy principals, heads of learning areas and middle leaders that oversee student well being, pastoral matters and discipline (Robinson, et al., 2013). Secondary principals tend to delegate key positions within the school's organisational structure to manage and lead specific curriculum areas and pastoral matters. Departmental organisation requires specialist teachers and heads of department to provide "credible instructional leadership to classroom teachers" (Robinson, et al., 2013, p. 135). The principal's oversight of subject departments tends to be limited to monitoring of results rather than involvement with instructional practices.

The secondary school principal exercises indirect instructional leadership through areas such as student management, resource allocation and community and external agency relationships, thus providing the context for learning. Robinson et al. (2013) suggested that the role of principal in educating adolescent learners needs to meet multiple educational goals in order to cater for diverse ages, needs and transition to post school destinations. Robinson et al. reported that the secondary school principal's challenge is

“attaining a whole school focus” (p. 135). They likened the secondary school principal as a conductor of an orchestra, whereby they coordinate the instructional practices in the classroom.

3.7 Summary

This section drew on literature pertaining to the three dimensions highlighted in this research that impact on the beginning principal, that is, gender, school location and school type. Literature on gender predominately addressed the disparity between men and women in leadership positions. The under-representation of women in principalship suggests that there are barriers to women seeking principalship. These barriers have been identified as internal and external (Spiller, 2012; Tarica, 2010; Watterson, 2010). The internal barriers included issues regarding poor self-belief and cultural scripts (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009; Watterson, 2010). External barriers included the notion that women limit their career aspirations due to the perceived work-life imbalance (Coleman, 2012; McLay, 2008; Spiller, 2012).

Literature addressing the impact of school location on the beginning principal highlighted the challenges of leading in rural communities. Some of the challenges identified in rural and remote communities emphasise the economic and social decline of communities resulting at times in lower living standards, limited educational and employment opportunities and poorer health outcomes (ABS, 2013b; Wallace & Boylan, 2010). The living conditions are further exacerbated in remote communities where conditions are sub-standard resulting in chronic social and economic disadvantage. These poor living conditions have led to governments focusing efforts on closing the health and educational gap of remote Aboriginal communities. The impact

on the location of the school places the beginning principal in challenging circumstances. Rural and remote principals face lower student performance in national literacy and numeracy testing (ACARA, 2012), experience difficulty in finding experienced and suitable staff (Lock et al., 2012; Pietsch & Williamson, 2009) and live in communities that may be parochial and demanding.

The Australian school setting includes both primary and secondary environs for student learning. Primary school principals educate children aged between four and eleven years old. Primary education focuses predominantly in establishing literacy and numeracy skills for the students. Primary schools often have small school staff and student populations enabling the principal to offer more direct instructional leadership.

Secondary school principals tend to have large student populations, multi-disciplinary staff and a variety of facilities that cater for a broad curriculum. Secondary schools have multiple layers of leadership positions that engage with a variety of areas, including the curriculum. Secondary principals are considered to be indirect instructional leaders as they have specialist heads of department who are responsible for specialist areas.

3.8 Principal preparation

Since early 2000, there has been a noticeable decline in the number of suitable applicants for principalship within Australia and outside of Australia and an increasing average age of principals (Collins, 2006; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hargreaves, 2008).

Educational systems and authorities are concerned about the impending principal shortages (Bezzina, 2012; Canavan, 2007; Collins, 2006; Cowie & Crawford, 2007).

Research has highlighted the need for preparation programs to attract, retain and develop suitable aspirants to take on this significant leadership role (Chapman, 2005;

LaPointe, Darling-Hammond & Meyerson, 2007). Literature on the preparation for principalship will concentrate on two main areas, namely research surrounding the changing nature of preparation programs and the essential elements required to ensure successful transition into the role of school principal. The literature thus provides an understanding of leadership preparation as a backdrop to exploring the three specific research questions dealing with technical and managerial skills, socialisation skills and self-awareness.

3.8.1 Changing nature of preparation programs

The changing nature of principal preparation programs highlights the complexity of leadership skills required for principalship (Clarke, Wildy & Styles, 2011; Huber & Pashiardis, 2008). The complexity and the demand of the principal's role in current times require significant consideration in the preparation of leaders. Chapman (2005) highlighted the breadth of the school principal's role where she noted that "those involved in the provision of leadership training need to take into account the diverse nature of the role that includes the conception of the principal as pedagogical, administrative and community leader" (p. 2). Huber and Pashiardis (2008) recognised this diversity. They described this diversity during times of increased accountabilities to government, educational authorities and community combined with increased autonomy to manage change "is a coloured patchwork of many different aspects" (p.179).

Since the 1980s, principal preparation programs have shifted from a managerial emphasis of leadership skill development to one that is more transformational and instructional in nature (Balyer, 2012; Hallinger, 2007; Leithwood & Slegers, 2006). From an historical perspective, programs tended to focus on a "top-down managerial

roles created around management concepts” (Huber & Pashiardis, 2008, p. 237). Huber and Pashiardis suggested that the managerial aspect of the principal’s role encompasses administrative and organisational tasks. Grogan and Andrews (2002) and Beatty (2008) confirmed this view highlighting that managerial leadership emphasised the functions, tasks and behaviours. Hallinger (2007) noted gradual changes in conceptual models of leadership development programs from a managerial emphasis to that of instructional and transformational models. Hallinger noted “these approaches (instructional and transformational) focus explicitly on educational leadership... they seek to explain the means by which leaders bring about improvement in school conditions and student outcomes” (p. 2). Clarke, Wildy and Styles (2011) reiterated the importance of delineating the managerial training models from the core of principalship that they surmise to be equipping aspirants in the areas of building relationships.

Increasingly, research has highlighted the need for school principals to lead the vision for schooling, innovation and creativity (Huber & Pashiardis, 2008). La Pointe et al. (2007) added to the burgeoning requirements of school principalship by noting that in addition to being educational visionaries, principals need to be organisational change-agents and community builders. More recent times has seen the evolving nature of principal preparation programs focusing on the need to ensure that graduates of such programs have adaptive leadership skills training that address educational trends, policies, changing demographics and political shifts (Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2013). Preparation for principalship is regarded as an ongoing process (Chapman, 2005; Crow, Lumby & Pashiardis, 2008; Ribbins, 2008). Crow et al. (2008) explained that learning to be a school leader “is not a one-time event but a career long process” (p. 3). They reported that both the preparation prior to principalship and developing the skills after

being appointed into the school leadership position have different emphases in preparing and supporting principals throughout his/her career.

Principal preparation programs are diverse in nature across countries. This diversity according to Wildy, Clarke and Slater (2007) has attributed to the variety of contexts in which the principalship serves. Wildy et al. argued that differing political, social and professional contexts require tailor-made programs to meet the needs of that particular educational jurisdiction or context. Overall, it appears that principal preparation programs tend to be based along a continuum: apprenticeship style programs at one end and highly organised certificated programs that include placements into school at the other (Anderson, Kleinhenz, Mulford & Gurr, 2008; Su, Gamage & Mininberg, 2003; Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2013). Figure 3.2 graphically illustrates the leadership preparation continuum developed by Ylimaki and Jacobson (2013).



Figure 3.2 *Leadership learning continuum*

(Adapted from Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2013, p. 21)

Researchers reported that countries such as Australia, Britain and China utilise the traditional model of “apprenticeship” as the means for aspirant principal development (Su et al., 2003; Wildy et al., 2007). Future leaders are prepared throughout their educational career by gaining leadership experiences from classroom practitioner to middle management roles to deputy principalship (Su et al., 2003; Wildy et al., 2007). Countries such as Norway, Denmark and Sweden take the “middle ground” in the

leadership continuum (Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2013). Ylimaki and Jacobson reported that these Scandinavian countries ensure that school leaders are prepared to deal with managerial aspects of being a leader; however, the programs are not mandatory prerequisites. Ylimaki and Jacobson also noted that formal professional learning occurs after the principal is appointed.

Countries such as Canada and the United States tend to use the model of on-the-job training or internships with formal mandatory preparation programs for leadership preparation. Included in the requirements is a prerequisite Master-degree level of study before being given a licence to become principals. Typically, aspirant principals participate in a one-year internship with a successful and experienced principal. This on-the-job training provides the aspirant with experiences in developing an educational leader's perspective on school improvement, collaborative problem solving and leading the decision making processes (Perez, Uline, Johnson, James-Ward & Bansom, 2011; Pounder, 2011). Perez et al. (2011) found that the on the job training engaged the aspirants in authentic tasks and increased their confidence in their capacity to deal with the uncertain elements and complexities of principalship.

Some researchers suggested that preparation programs for aspirant leaders have been deficient in equipping principals to deal with the burgeoning demands and challenging contexts of schooling (Beatty, 2008; Chapman, 2005; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Walker, Anderson, Sackney & Woolf, 2003; Wright et al., 2009). Su et al., (2003) suggested that programs which make theory distinct from practice fail in the preparation of aspirants to principalship. They stated: "in making recommendations for improving existing in-service training programs, there needs to be more practical (experiences)

with actual school situations... more nut and bolts of site organisational structure and change and better connections between theory and practice” (p. 54). Wright et al. (2009) reiterated this criticism and added, “the induction or orientation of new principals is not well organised and often non-existent” (p. 2).

3.8.2 Essential elements of principal preparation programs

There has been extensive international commentary on the diverse nature of principal preparation programs and their effectiveness in preparing new leaders for the challenges of school leadership (Clarke, Wildy & Styles, 2011; Kottkamp, 2010; La Pointe et al, 2007; Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2013). Chapman (2005) argued that there are foundational approaches in leadership preparation programs: “Quality leadership cannot be assumed or acquired without a coherent, integrated, consequential and systematic approach to leadership development” (p. 1). Research has identified a number of key features that are integral to contemporary principal preparation programs in order to ensure quality educational outcomes are afforded to young people (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, La Pointe & Orr, 2009; Tucker, Young & Koschoreck, 2012; Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2012).

These features include:

1. A focus on instructional leadership that embrace 21st century learning practices and school improvement as core components.
2. Problem and field-based learning approaches to real issues.
3. Social and professional support from cohort models and networks.
4. Skills in reading the macro and micro political environments of schooling.
5. Recruitment of suitable aspirants who are committed to improved student educational outcomes and continual improvement.

These features will now be briefly explored.

Instructional leadership that embraces 21st century learning practices

Principal preparation programs that enable aspirants to meet the challenges of 21st century schooling better ensure that the young people experience contemporary pedagogical practices thereby improving their post schooling opportunities (Clarke, Wildy & Styles, 2011; Darling-Hammond & LaPointe, 2007; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008). Grogan and Andrews (2002) identified the need for strong instructional leaders who emphasise curriculum and instruction as the highest priorities. They stated that instructional leaders “create a climate of high expectations for academic achievement and respect for all students” (p. 239). They added, “educational leaders must attend to what is known about learning and to advance professional practice so that both children and adults grow academically and socially” (p. 242).

La Pointe, et al. (2007) stated that preparation programs need to have as a guiding philosophy the concept of the principal as instructional leader. They added that preparation programs needed to focus on the ability to diagnose the learning needs of students and teachers and then plan for professional development in order to differentiate the curriculum to cater for diverse learners. Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas (2006) and Ylimaki and Jacobson (2013) added to the discourse of 21st century schooling by suggesting that an important element in leading instruction is the establishment of a professional learning community. Ylimaki and Jacobson described professional learning communities as schools that “possess a collective purpose, share norms and values, de-privatize teaching practices, have high trust and experience transformational leadership” (p. 240).

Problem and field based learning approaches to real issues

Leadership preparation programs need to emphasise the important relationship between theory of leadership and practical experiences. The combination of both theory and practice exemplify leadership in action thus enabling the aspirant to understand the complexities and demands required of principals. A number of researchers suggest that program content with more emphasis on practical skilling with realistic issues and problems greatly assist in equipping aspirants for principalship (La Pointe et al, 2007). La Pointe et al., (2007) and Su et al., (2003) reported “adults learn best when exposed to situations requiring the application of acquired skills, knowledge and problem solving strategies within authentic settings” (p. 8). In addition to catering for adult learning, Chapman (2005) noted, “field based learning guided by leadership practitioners begins initial socialisation, increases role clarification and technical expertise, and develops skills and professional behaviours” (p. 16).

Social and professional support from cohort models and networks;

Research findings in the area of preparation programs for principalship recommend that collaborative skills sharing and peer group problem-solving enhance the leadership attributes of collaboration and capacity building (Chapman, 2005). Wright et al. (2009) found that peer group problem solving and idea sharing are necessary experiences for aspirants, encouraging collaborative skills to be developed. Grogan and Andrews (2002) and La Pointe et al. (2007) reiterated these requirements and commented on the importance of building relationships within cohorts of the preparation program. These researchers suggested that the opportunities for collaborating with peers strengthen the skills of teamwork and mutual support, thus highlighting this important feature for future school leadership teams. La Pointe et al. added that these natural opportunities for

collaboration encourage the exchange of knowledge and collective reflections on leadership development. In addition to working with peers undertaking the leadership preparation program is the professional interaction aspirants have with experienced and successful principals. Researchers highlight the benefit of working with current principals as important modelling and role clarifying opportunities (Chapman, 2005; O'Mahoney & Matthews, 2006; Orr, 2011; Winton & Pollock, 2012).

Skills in reading the macro and micro political environments of schooling

Research suggested that principal preparation programs need to assist aspirants in recognising the political roles of principals; the political skills to strategically navigate through demands and policies and understand the principal's role in influencing pedagogy, governance, relationships and reform (Cheung & Walker, 2006; Crow & Weindling, 2010; Winton & Pollock, 2012; Wright et al. 2009). The micro politics of the school's life require principals to operate with a political acumen (Winton & Pollock, 2012). Winton and Pollock cite the work of Young, Levin and Wallin (2008) who suggest that "politics, broadly conceived, may be defined as the way each of us, whether individually or working with others, tries to make the kind of school, community, or society we want to have" (p. 41). Winton and Pollock added that politics "involves choices (often conflicts) about how to distribute power, opportunities, wealth and other social goods based on values and the processes used to determine those outcomes" (p. 41). Crow and Weindling (2010), described politics as "power and influence" (p. 138), thus suggesting that if leadership preparation programs ignore the political nature of school principalship, it will "leave the school, its staff, pupils and parents vulnerable to competing social forces" (p. 138). They also recognised that within the school's micro politics, the influence of the school principal in agenda

setting, negotiating and aligning school personnel to the educational direction of the school are important political activities for instructional improvement and creating professional learning communities (p. 141). Winton and Pollock reiterated that the influence of the school's micro political culture "affects teaching, learning, relationships and change efforts" (p. 49).

The ability to navigate the politics of schooling requires targeted preparation and learning opportunities. Crow and Weindling (2010) suggested that learning political knowledge and skills from others is foundational in building personal capacity. They viewed mentors and role models as valuable sources for learning and noted that "being deliberate and intentional about the use of mentors and role models who can help new school leaders be critically reflective about their political roles is also important for the effective socialisation of (aspirants) and school leaders" (p. 155).

Recruitment of suitable aspirants who are committed to improved student educational outcomes and continual improvement

Researchers noted the paramount importance of attracting and recruiting quality educators to lead the school who already demonstrate skills focusing on student learning, possess strong commitment to instructional improvement and who are dynamic teachers (Chapman, 2005; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Huber & Pashiardis, 2008; La Pointe et al., 2007; Wildy, Clarke & Slater, 2007). Wright et al. (2009) reiterated this requirement and nuanced their comments by suggesting that educational authorities need to identify, recruit and develop aspirants with proven track records for raising student performance. Early identification and preparation of future leaders is

essential in ensuring a cadre of future leaders is on hand. Canavan (2007) stressed the importance of focused attention on future leaders and their development.

3.9 Summary

Literature points to the importance of principal preparation programs as an essential means of equipping aspiring principals with the skills required to lead a school community (Leithwood, Pattern & Jantzi, 2010; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008; Pounder, 2011). With the decreasing numbers of suitable applicants for principalship, educational authorities need to focus on attracting, retaining and developing suitable aspirants for principalship. Principal preparation programs have shifted from managerial skilling to leadership skill development.

Equipping aspirants to focus on building relationships and lead the school community focuses more on the transformational skills rather than managerial transactional skilling. Vision, creativity and innovation are skills that leadership programs are seeking to develop in leaders of contemporary schooling. In addition, the ability to lead during times of educational change is a core skill required of principals.

The focus of the principal as instructional leader is increasingly being emphasised in leadership preparation programs. Underpinning leadership programs is the matching of the theory of leadership with practice. Problem solving strategies combined with field based learning are considered necessary elements of preparation programs. In addition, preparation programs that are collaborative in nature endow aspirants and new leaders with essential skills for leading a school community. Research strongly suggests that mentoring by experienced and capable principals provides important modelling and role clarification opportunities (Chapman, 2005; Winton & Pollock, 2012).

3.10 Religious dimension of Catholic school principalship

As outlined in Chapter Two, the nature and purpose of Catholic schooling is twofold: its evangelising mission and its contribution to the development of the whole child in the school's educational context (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, 1997; Hickey, et al., 2009; McLaughlin, 2005). The integration of the religious nature of the school and broader society, whilst essential, brings the Catholic school at times, into conflict with the demands, values and direction placed upon it by governments and educational authorities (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Holter & Frabutt, 2012; McLaughlin, 2005). It is acknowledged in these contemporary times that the Catholic school principal is constantly challenged in managing this tension between accountabilities to government and its rationalisation of education according to the Catholic Church (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Hutton, 2002; Schutloffel, 2012; Sharkey, 2007;). Belmonte and Cranston (2009) commented that:

...in an era when change is evident in the theory and practice of education, in its funding and accountability to governments... the Catholic education ethos is no longer an unquestioned element of school culture. It is contested from within the Church by shifts in the spirituality of its members and especially the tendency of modern youth to reject formal expressions of religion (p. 15).

This tension is compounded by the conflict of the “technological – secular – consumerist culture... and the *raison d'être* for Catholic education, its Catholic identity” (Schutloffel, 2012, p. 152). The literature thus provides the religious dimension of Catholic school leadership for exploring the three specific research questions dealing with technical and managerial skills, socialisation skills and self-awareness.

In order to lead the Catholic school community, grow its Catholic identity and form young people as Christian men and women, attention needs to be drawn to the religious dimension of leadership required of the principal. The religious dimension of the

Catholic principal's leadership role requires significant faith-based grounding and knowledge about the Catholic Church's tradition in order for the principal to carry out his or her duties and responsibilities (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Hansen, 2001; Nuzzi et al., 2013; Sharkey, 2007). Catholic school leaders are required to have public assent to their faith in order to be public witnesses to the environment they lead (Brownbridge, 2009; Sharkey, 2007). Belmonte and Cranston (2009) reported on research undertaken on the religious dimension of the Catholic school principal's role. They highlighted the "habitus" (p. 202) of the principal's familial background and personal educational experiences as laying the foundation for a vocational call to Catholic school leadership. Grace (2002) reiterated these findings and posits the belief that Catholic school principalship is strengthened when school leaders are well developed in their spiritual and cultural "capital" (p. 237). Grace argues that maintaining and growing Catholic identity is strongly influenced by the vocational call the principal has from within.

Nuzzi et al. (2013) argued that the Catholic school principal needs to interplay the secular demands required of educational authorities with the religious demands of leading a faith based community. They purported that "the Catholic school principal's efforts at managing the building and animating instructional leadership are not devoid of spiritual substance; they are precisely the tool one uses in a school to exercise spiritual leadership" (p. 3). Lennan (2005) reiterated this sentiment and added that it is incumbent of Catholic leaders to be "attuned to the contemporary context" (p. 3) in which they are located and ensure their leadership is integrated with an authentic expression of the Catholic tradition.

Belmonte and Cranston (2009), Lennan (2005), McLaughlin (2005), Ranson (2005) and Rieckhoff (2014) portrayed the religious dimension of leadership required of Catholic leaders as undergoing a transformative period. These authors suggested that Catholic leadership is dealing with changing demographics whereby those assenting and practicing their faith are in decline. The challenges of an increasing secularised and pluralistic society have questioned religious relevancy. There are declining numbers of ordained ministers. Families choosing Catholic education for their children have a desire more for a private education than one that is religiously orientated.

Disconnectedness to parish life, results in declining Mass attendance. To deal with these sociological phenomena, Catholic school principals need to be well grounded in their faith and professionally armed to deal with the secular context of principalship. Ranson suggested that Catholic school principals need to “possess administrative capacity, are grounded in faith, possess spiritual maturity, have a vocational sensibility and be very aware of their ecclesial responsibility” (p. 9).

Belmonte and Cranston (2009), Hickey et al. (2009), Rieckhoff (2014) and Robinson and Ciriello (1994), argued that a key factor of the principal’s role is leading and building the faith community. Belmonte and Cranston viewed Catholic principals as both the symbolic and cultural leaders of the school whereby they “transmit the values, attitudes, philosophy and norms of the school” (p.301). Rieckhoff suggested that “school leaders are required to integrate gospel values and Christian social principles in the curriculum... thus integrating Christian values into the curriculum” (p. 29).

An important relationship for the Catholic school principal is with the parish church and community (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Congregation of Catholic Education, 1988;

Hickey et al., 2009). Roman documents highlighted that the pre-eminent place of the propagation of faith is with the family (Paul VI, 1965a) and is to be nourished within the parish (John Paul II, 1979). A number of authors however, acknowledged the challenge between the vision of these statements and the reality of modern, first-world life. Literature on contemporary Australian Catholic life notes diminishing parish participation and the declining number of clergy (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Pastoral Research Office, 2011; Ranson, 2005). In addition, literature reports that whilst Catholic school enrolments in Australia have increased over a ten-year period, there has been an increase in non-Catholic student enrolments and little growth in Catholic enrolments (National Catholic Education Commission, 2012). Ranson (2005) claimed that the Catholic school principal's religious leadership role is becoming increasingly important in the evangelising mission of the Catholic Church. Ranson stated:

School leadership will, more and more, need to be seen as religious leadership. This will demand persons who are deeply conscious not only of their own vocation for leadership but also highly aware of the vocation of the Catholic school community... and at the same time, of the relative and participative place of the school community in the wider evangelical mission (p. 9).

Ranson acknowledged the importance of the principal and Catholic school community in the role of evangelisation.

Australian research into the parish and Catholic school dynamic highlighted the significant expectations placed on the principal in supporting the parish (Australian Catholic Primary Principal Association [ACPPA], 2005; Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Fraser & Brock, 2006). In particular, research has reported that the relationship between the principal and priest is pivotal in ensuring that a balance is maintained with regards to the principal's workload demands. The research of ACPPA (2005) and Belmonte and Cranston (2009) observed that whilst principals accepted the ministry role within the

parish, the research findings also acknowledged that the consequence of these demands intrude into the personal life and private spirituality of principals. Rieckhoff (2014) highlighted the importance of cultivating the relationship between pastor and principal. She believed that the success of the relationship can support beginning principals in their role as leader of the Catholic school community. Rieckhoff stated, “Pastors are in a position to help new principals understand the prevailing culture and its challenges while providing additional support” (p. 51). In addition, Rieckhoff suggested that the pastor could further assist the new principal by “nurturing the principal’s faith life and faith identity... and be available to discuss with the principal’s opportunities to deepen the faith experiences of the community” (p. 52).

3.11 Summary

The religious dimension of school leadership is integral to the role of Catholic school principal. The Catholic school principal promotes the vision and mission of the school as envisaged by the Catholic Church (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Congregation of Catholic Education, 1988; Hickey, 2009; Ranson, 2005). The leadership required of the Catholic school principal demands a personal assent and public witness to the Catholic tradition and faith. This in turn is modelled through leadership within the school and broader community. In an increasing secularised world marked by pluralism, questioning of religious relevancy, declining numbers of clergy, decline of parish participation and Mass attendance, and an increase in non-Catholic enrolment into Catholic schools, the religious dimension of the principal’s role is more often called upon, thus adding to the complexity of the role. The requisite active participation of the Catholic school principal within the local parish community whilst acknowledged as a foundational relationship (ACPPA, 2005; Congregation of Catholic Education, 1988;

Hickey, et al., 2009), adds increased workload to the already burgeoning requirements. At the same time, the Catholic Church is increasingly looking to the Catholic school and principal for greater participation, support and leadership in its evangelising mission.

3.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, literature was presented to identify the professional and personal needs of beginning principals in Catholic schools in Western Australia. The literature covered the following areas: beginning principals; dimensions of principalship in Western Australia that included gender, school location and school type; preparation of principalship; and the religious dimension of Catholic school principalship. The following chapter presents the research plan that is to be utilised in this inquiry.