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Developing tomorrow's school leaders: The Western Australian Catholic education  
Aspiring Principals Program

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## **Chapter Five: Research Results**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Consistent with the recommendation of Yin (2003) regarding reporting formats for research employing collective case study methodology, this chapter is comprised of eight, thickly described case study narratives; one for each aspirant involved in the research. Each narrative is largely comprised of the natural language of aspirants in the form of quotations extracted from the transcripts of three qualitative interviews conducted before, during and upon completion of the Aspiring Principals Program. Aspirant quotations reflect the draft themes and their respective categories identified through stages one and two of the Miles and Huberman (1994) interactive model of data management and analysis: data reduction and data display. Each narrative is organised according to sub-headings representing the four specific research questions used to guide the study, namely:

#### **Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance.**

1. What were aspirant perceptions regarding Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance before, during and upon completion of the Aspiring Principals Program? What influences provoked discernible perception changes?

#### **Factors enhancing interest in principalship.**

2. What were aspirant perceptions regarding the factors enhancing interest in Catholic principalship before, during and upon completion of the Aspiring Principals Program? What influences provoked discernible perception changes?

#### **Factors diminishing interest in principalship.**

3. What were aspirant perceptions regarding the factors diminishing interest in Catholic principalship before, during and upon completion of the Aspiring Principals Program? What influences provoked discernible perception changes?

#### **Self-efficacy to commence principalship.**

4. What were aspirant perceptions regarding self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship before, during and upon completion of the Aspiring Principals Program? What influences provoked discernible perception changes?

Reflecting the recommendations of Gray (2013), this structure was devised to permit reader cross-case comparison of aspirant perceptions associated with each of the specific research questions.

Each case study begins with a description of context, namely an outline of the aspirant's professional history, their role during the program and end-of-program status. An overview of the case study is then provided. Beyond the overview lies the thickly described narrative. As the case studies, aggregated together, represent a dense document, it is recommended that this chapter not be read in one sitting. Rather, it is suggested that time be taken to read each case individually before considering them collectively. The order of case studies, listed alphabetically by aspirant pseudonym, is provided in Table 5.1. To assist reader understanding of context-specific language used within case study narratives, a list of terms, acronyms and brief definitions are provided in Table 5.2. Comprehensive definitions for each term or acronym are available in the Glossary that precedes Chapter One: Research Defined.

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Table 5.1  
*Order of Case Studies*

<b>Case study number and aspirant pseudonym</b>	<b>Aspirant role, school type and location during the research</b>	<b>Aspirant end-of-program status</b>
5.2 Case Study One: Chelsea	Assistant principal at a Kindergarten-Year six Catholic primary school in metropolitan Perth	Applying for principalship vacancies
5.3 Case Study Two: Frances	Assistant principal at a Kindergarten-Year six Catholic primary school in metropolitan Perth	Appointed principal at a Kindergarten-Year seven Catholic primary school in a remote community
5.4 Case Study Three: Helen	Assistant principal at a Kindergarten-Year six Catholic primary school in metropolitan Perth	Appointed principal at a Kindergarten-Year six Catholic primary school in a country town
5.5 Case Study Four: Jason	Assistant principal at a Kindergarten-Year six Catholic primary school in metropolitan Perth	Applying for principalship vacancies
5.6 Case Study Five: Jeff	Deputy principal at a Year seven-12 Catholic secondary school in metropolitan Perth	Appointed principal at a Year seven-12 Catholic secondary school in metropolitan Perth
5.7 Case Study Six: Paula	Assistant principal at a Kindergarten-Year six Catholic primary school in metropolitan Perth	Appointed principal at a Kindergarten-Year seven Catholic primary school in a country town
5.8 Case Study Seven: Riley	Head of junior school at a Kindergarten-Year 12 composite school in a country town	Appointed principal at a Kindergarten-Year seven Catholic primary school in a country town
5.9 Case Study Eight: Sharon	Assistant principal at a Kindergarten-Year six Catholic primary school in metropolitan Perth	Parental leave/applying for principalship vacancies

Table 5.2  
*Case Study Terms and Acronyms*

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<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Acting principalship	An active learning experience whereby an aspirant assumes the role of principal for a period of time, usually as a result of the incumbent principal undertaking a period of leave.
CECWA	The Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA). The governing body for all Western Australian Catholic schools.
CEOWA	The Catholic Education Office of Western Australia (CEOWA). The executive arm of the CECWA that provides principals with advice and support they require to achieve system vision and ensure accountability.
Coach	A practicing principal who works with an aspirant to develop leadership capability improvement goals and achievement strategies based on 360-review data compiled prior to the commencement of the program. To achieve goals, the aspirant implements, evaluates and refines strategies as they enact their leadership role and lead a QCS school improvement project during the program's second year.
'Inside Leadership'	A discussion led by a Western Australian Catholic school principal at the conclusion of each face-to-face program module. During an 'Inside Leadership' session, the principal engages aspirants with tales of leadership success, challenge and resultant learning.
Internship	An active learning experience whereby an aspirant 'shadows' the principal of a school for a period of time.
Leadership Framework	A mandated document of the CECWA that describes the role of the Western Australian Catholic school principal and requisite capabilities.
Leadership vision statement	A program activity whereby aspirants use a series of 10 questions to identify and reflect upon their leadership values. Responses are then synthesised into a statement that encapsulates a vision for their leadership. Structured activities over the course of the program provide opportunities for aspirants to share and refine their statements.
LSI	The Life Styles Inventory (LSI) is the 360-degree review tool administered prior to and upon completion of the program. LSI data is used to identify aspirant leadership capability strengths and weaknesses. LSI data informs coaching goals and strategies.
QCS Framework	The Quality Catholic Schooling (QCS) Framework and school improvement tool are used by all Western Australian Catholic principals to lead the review and improvement of school activities, processes and services.

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## **5.2 Case Study One: Chelsea**

When 'Chelsea' commenced the Aspiring Principals Program in January 2011, she had completed her eighth year as assistant principal. Chelsea trained as a primary school teacher, graduating in 1995. Between 1996 and 2002, she taught at two Catholic primary schools in Perth. In January 2003, Chelsea commenced her first leadership role as assistant principal at a Kindergarten-Year seven Catholic primary school in Perth where she served until December 2006. In January 2007, she commenced her second assistant principalship at another metropolitan Catholic primary school. Upon conclusion of the program, Chelsea was actively applying for Catholic primary school principalship vacancies in Western Australian country towns.

### **5.2.1 Case study overview.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Chelsea expressed moderate self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. She fundamentally considered principalship a managerial occupation requiring knowledge of technical responsibilities such as the administration of school finances and human resource management functions. She also made oblique references to the principalship role components, Catholic identity and community engagement and development. Chelsea was attracted to principalship because of the opportunity to lead the role component, teaching and learning, influence school Catholic identity and develop a school community characterised by relationships based on Gospel values. She considered the adverse impact of role intensification on work-life balance and the requirement of the principal to manage school finances disincentives.

As Chelsea participated in and completed the program, she reported high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. She described principalship through five, interrelated role components: Catholic identity; teaching and learning; stewardship of resources; community engagement and development; and school improvement. Chelsea also cited three capabilities required of principals to effectively lead and manage through each role component: vision and values; knowledge and understanding; and leadership competence. Her attraction to principalship, articulated through a leadership vision statement developed over the course of the program, remained similar to that conveyed pre-program. However,

Chelsea also indicated that she was interested in leading the role component, school improvement and was driven to positively influence the lives of school community members through quality leadership. Chelsea expressed reduced apprehension with regard to previously identified disincentives, but acknowledged several new concerns; the result of reflection inspired by her application for country school principalship vacancies. One concern was her perception that male-dominated principal appointment panels carried a gender bias against female aspirants.

As Chelsea participated in and completed the program, she attributed discernible perception changes to the influence of three program-related features: a well-facilitated, coherent, rigorous and systematic curriculum; development of support networks and interaction with network members; and active learning experiences. Prime amongst these experiences were school board observation and finance and capital development sub-committee participation; development and refinement of a leadership vision statement; LSI, 360-degree data and coaching for leadership capability improvement; leadership of a QCS school improvement project; and a five-week period of acting principalship at her school.

### **5.2.2 Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Chelsea referred the principal as “the managerial glue that holds a school together, especially when it comes to school finances, building programs and ensuring compliance and accountability.” Further, she commented: “The principal is responsible for the development of staff including working with underperformers to improve practice.” She also described the principal as “a Gospel-centric communicator and builder of community.” With regard to the capabilities required for effective performance, she asserted: “The principal must have the knowledge and skill necessary to administrate school finances, build facilities and manage human resources.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Chelsea described four interrelated role components associated with Catholic principalship. When discussing the role component of Catholic identity, she stated: “Because Catholic schools are built on Jesus’ example, the principal must weave His values into all aspects of school life, even when faced with conflict that can stir negative emotions.”

Further, she referred to the principal as “the person responsible for leading the evangelisation of school community members.” Chelsea also identified the principal as “a steward of environmental, financial, capital and human resources who administrates effectively, is transparent and accountable and considers the teachings of Jesus when making decisions.” With regard to the role component of teaching and learning, she commented: “The principal is a school’s educational leader who develops teachers to provide classroom environments that inspire a love of learning and equip students to make wise and moral life choices based on Gospel values.” Finally, Chelsea highlighted the role of the principal as “builder of a caring community, based on the life and example of Jesus, that assists all members to reach their potential.”

When discussing the capabilities required for effective performance, Chelsea commented: “The principal must understand the Church’s evangelising mission and bring this to life at the level of the school by collaboratively forming vision with the members of the school community.” Further, Chelsea emphasised: “The effective principal, in the light of the example of Jesus, models Gospel values in word and deed when interacting with school community members.” With regard to the capability of knowledge and understanding, she stated: “Principals must know how to administer the technical parts of the role including budget management, the building program, CECWA policy application and the employment, development and performance management of staff.” Chelsea also highlighted “the importance of the principal clarifying expectations of staff, setting achievable goals and providing regular, meaningful feedback including praise for good work.”

At this point in the program, Chelsea attributed her changing perceptions to the influence of three program-related features. She commented: “The grounding of the program in the Leadership Framework made learning about role components and capabilities easy.” Additionally, she affirmed the opportunity provided by the program to discuss role components and requisite capabilities with her principal and guest principals invited to facilitate ‘Inside Leadership’ sessions. She asserted: “Listening to guest principals talk about their experience of the role and what it takes to succeed and comparing this against what I had learned in the program assisted my learning.” Finally, Chelsea considered the most important influence on her learning the opportunity to undertake acting principalship for a five-week period whilst her

principal convalesced from surgery. She reflected: “Acting principalship allowed me to experience the role, understand its components and road-test my leadership capabilities that I have refined through the program.”

At the conclusion of the program, in addition to the four components described previously, Chelsea referred to the Catholic principal as leader of the role component, school improvement. She explained: “The principal oversees the QCS process that aims to review all school activity, identify strengths and weaknesses and institute improvement plans.” When leading school improvement, Chelsea asserted: “The principal must understand its purpose, keep up to date with the latest literature on the subject and know how to use the QCS Framework and tool.”

Chelsea also commented on the capabilities required of the Catholic principal to effectively lead school improvement: “The principal must adopt a transcendental style where they take off their principal’s hat, listen to staff comments and suggestions and value the contribution.” She continued: “As Jesus would have done, these conversations must be based on Gospel values; they should also be ‘flat’, collegial, non-judgmental, reflective and completely focused on improvement to achieve school vision and support the Church’s evangelising mission.” In the context of improvement conversations, Chelsea also cited “the importance of the principal applying transformational leadership capabilities to generate enthusiasm for change.” When clarifying her understanding of these capabilities, she discussed the “ability of the principal to use charisma, emotional connection and intellectual stimulation to change people’s thoughts from self-focus to improvement of all facets of the school to achieve its vision.”

Chelsea attributed her end-of-program perceptions to the influence of four program-related features. The first three features reflected those identified at the conclusion of the program’s first year: enhanced comprehension of role components and capabilities as a result of program theory and discussions with her principal and ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals respectively. The final feature, cited by Chelsea as significant, was “the use of LSI data, coaching sessions and the QCS project to understand school improvement and trial strategies to enhance leadership capabilities.”

### **5.2.3 Factors enhancing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Chelsea identified three factors enhancing her interest in Catholic principalship. Firstly, she stated: “I am attracted to principalship because it would allow me to develop teachers, inspire them to work as a team and ultimately assist students to achieve their potential.” She continued: “I want to do this by developing teacher understanding of pedagogy and ways to create stimulating classroom environments to meet student needs.” Secondly, Chelsea commented: “I am attracted by the challenge of evangelisation and want to create opportunities for staff, students and parents to nurture their faith and serve one another as Jesus did.” Thirdly, Chelsea emphasised: “I want to lead a community where Gospel values are modelled through every interaction.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Chelsea reflected: “My original attraction to principalship remains the same, especially when it comes to the opportunity to evangelise and model Gospel values, but has been refined by my experience of the program.” She elaborated:

I want to lead a community of learners; not just students, but their parents, teachers, support staff and the leadership team. We would work together to build a stimulating learning environment to enhance the lives of every member, but especially students. This environment would be based on the example of Jesus, the formal curriculum, quality teaching, learning and assessment and rich co-curricular activities.

Chelsea also detailed her “desire, as principal, to build a culture of improvement to enhance the holistic development of students.” When discussing improvement in the context of educational leadership, she expressed her “interest in developing teachers using shared language and precise talk about teaching and learning with the aim of improving content knowledge, ability to diagnose student needs and enhance teaching practices and classroom quality.”

At this point in the program, Chelsea attributed her changing perceptions to the influence of three program-related features. She remarked: “Reflecting on program theory and activities was a way for me to assess my suitability for the role and prompted me to explore my reasons for seeking principalship.” Further, Chelsea commented:

Formulating my leadership vision statement was an important experience. It allowed me to discern what I stand for as a leader and clarified my attraction to principalship. Sharing my vision statement with colleagues, my principal and 'Inside Leadership' principals and making refinements added to its strength and quality.

Chelsea also affirmed: "The experience of acting principalship was a way to road-test my leadership vision statement and clarify my attraction to the role." She concluded her reflection with the statement: "I'm pleased to say that my vision statement held up and remains true as a result of the experience."

At the conclusion of the program, Chelsea articulated the factors enhancing her interest in Catholic principalship through her leadership vision statement developed and refined over the course of the program:

I want to lead authentically for the benefit of every member of the school community. I want to build partnerships between staff, students, their parents and others connected to the school to establish a learning culture that assists students to reach their potential. The curriculum itself and behaviours within this culture would be based on the Gospel values and subjected to continuous improvement for the benefit of students. I want to encourage and develop our community, especially teachers, to harness new insights into learning, technology, pedagogy and psychology to help our students adjust to a frenetically changing world.

She concluded her leadership vision with the statement: "I am driven by a desire to develop a school community that is faithful to the evangelising mission of the Church and characterised by respectful, flexible and understanding people who serve one another as Jesus did."

Chelsea reiterated the influence of two of the three program-related features identified at the conclusion of the program's first year on her end-of-program perceptions. She stated: "Testing my vision statement against program theory helped me to clarify whether or not my reasons for seeking principalship were valid." Moreover, she asserted: "Explaining my vision statement to my principal, program colleagues and 'Inside Leadership' guest principals before considering their feedback and making refinements were extremely beneficial experiences."

#### **5.2.4 Factors diminishing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Chelsea identified three factors diminishing her interest in Catholic principalship. She stated: “Designing and managing a school’s budget is daunting given my lack of experience.” With regard to her lack of experience, she commented: “I teach four days a week, so getting involved with such aspects is difficult given time restrictions; I feel that I don’t do justice to my class as it is.” Additionally, she reflected: “The increasing accountability demands placed on principals is a disincentive; they are expected to be educators, financiers, human resource specialists, social workers and even nutritionists!” Finally, Chelsea referred to “the time-intensive nature of the role, especially its negative impact on work-life balance.” When discussing disincentive perceptions, she explained: “my opinions are the result of discussion with and observation of my current and previous principals who always seemed stressed about these things.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Chelsea stated: “School finances concerns me less than it did a year ago.” With regard to this perception change, she affirmed the requirement of the program to “design the budget, complete the mid-year budget review and draft monthly board finance reports in collaboration with the principal, business manager and members of the school finance sub-committee.” With regard to principalship accountability requirements and work-life balance concerns, she remarked: “I was initially unrealistic about these responsibilities, but now know that they’re part of the job and acceptance is required if one is to take on the role.”

At this point in the program, Chelsea attributed her changing perceptions to the influence of three program-related features:

Discussing role intensity with ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals were golden moments. They had survived the challenges of the role and developed strategies to cope with resultant stress. These conversations convinced me that I could do the same. Also, completing a period of acting principalship reassured me that I have what it takes to cope with the role and its demands.

Finally, she discussed “the need for principals to build effective administrative systems and processes to distribute leadership and the importance of recruiting leadership team members and staff with talents to cover deficiencies” as strategies to

manage these disincentives. When discussing the origins of these solutions, Chelsea cited program theory and discussion with program colleagues.

At the conclusion of the program, Chelsea was actively applying for Catholic primary school principalship vacancies in Western Australian country towns. She commented: “There are financial disincentives related to moving from the city to the country including packing, renting or selling my home, transporting my belongings and paying rent in the new town.” Further, Chelsea stated: “As assistant principal in a large city school, I will actually take a pay cut to begin principalship in a small country town.” She also acknowledged concerns associated with “loss of professional and family support networks when moving to country locations, especially during times of stress that will undoubtedly occur.” Finally, Chelsea identified anxiety “arising from the principal appointment process, especially the male-dominated nature of selection panels that silently discriminates against women.”

#### **5.2.5 Self-efficacy to commence principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Chelsea asserted: “I’m ready for a new challenge after working as an assistant principal for eight years.” Nonetheless, she reflected: “I feel moderately ready for principalship, but feel that I need to participate in high-quality professional development such as this program to gain the clarity I need to make this decision.” Chelsea added: “I feel certain that the program will provide me with the knowledge and experience I need to take the next step.” Despite her confidence in the efficacy of the program, she commented: “I feel that acting principalship alongside the program would assist me to determine my level of readiness.” With regard to acting principalship opportunities, Chelsea observed: “It seems strange that acting principalship not part of this program as I believe that such experiences are vital development opportunities.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Chelsea specified high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. She stated: “I have my role as assistant principal ‘down pat’, am supported by my principal, our staff, students and their parents and, as a result, feel ready for the challenge of principalship.” Chelsea also attributed her high self-efficacy perceptions to the influence of four program-related features. She commented:

The focus of the program on principalship role components and capabilities, defining vision and minimising disincentives, especially through school board and sub-committee participation, has increased my confidence. I better understand the role and its demands, my leadership strengths and weaknesses, my reasons for seeking promotion, what I can realistically expect to face and how best to cope with these challenges.

Chelsea also commented on the influence of program delivery on her self-efficacy perceptions:

The way modules were facilitated provided me with opportunities to reflect on content before sharing experiences with my colleagues. These conversations provided a window into their experiences and convinced me that I could achieve as they had, given the opportunity. I always came away from these discussions feeling affirmed and assured of my leadership ability.

Chelsea also stated that her high self-efficacy perceptions were confirmed by a successful five-week period of acting principalship at her school. She affirmed:

Acting principalship was a unique experience that provided me with the opportunity to apply program learning, especially the knowledge and skills I collected as a participant on my school's board and finance and capital development sub-committees. The experience also allowed me to apply my leadership capabilities and 'road test' my leadership vision statement. Perhaps the greatest benefit, though, was the affirmation I received from members of staff and the school community about my leadership. This provided me with the confidence I sought when I first joined the program and convinced me that I am ready for principalship.

Finally, Chelsea commented on the influence of her support network, developed through the program, on her self-efficacy perceptions. She highlighted the effect of her program colleagues:

Our cohort is a group of like-minded professionals united in the search for principalship. However, rather than being competitors, we have formed extremely supportive relationships based on trust and encouragement of one another. The result is enhanced confidence to apply for and begin the role.

Likewise, Chelsea referred to her current principal as an important influence on her readiness. She remarked: "I never considered my potential until I was respected and given leadership responsibility by him." She concluded her affirmation of her principal with the statement: "His belief in my capacity, willingness to support my

development and mentor me has enhanced my confidence.” Finally, she reflected on the influence of ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals: “These people are true professionals who shared their successes and struggles openly and, as a result, I have learned from their experiences; their affirmation of my leadership capabilities has also helped me to realise that I have what it takes to join their ranks.”

At the conclusion of the program, as was the case at the end of the program’s first year, Chelsea specified high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. She reaffirmed the positive influence of the program curriculum; the manner in which modules were facilitated; leadership vision statement development and refinement; school board and sub-committee participation; and her collegial support network on her perceptions. She stated: “These program elements helped me to understand the role of the principal, required leadership capabilities, attractive aspects of the role and how to manage disincentives.” Chelsea also articulated the self-efficacy benefits associated another longitudinal learning experience, coaching sessions linked with leadership of the QCS school improvement project. She asserted: “These experiences assisted my understanding of school improvement, improved my leadership capability strengths and weaknesses and provided me with valuable insight into how my leadership is perceived by others.”

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### **5.3 Case Study Two: Frances**

At the same time that 'Frances' commenced the Aspiring Principals Program in January 2011, she began her first leadership role as assistant principal at a Kindergarten-Year six Catholic primary school in Perth. Frances trained as a primary school teacher, graduating in 1984. Between 1985 and 2010, in addition to working as a teacher at three Catholic primary schools in Perth, she worked as an Aboriginal carer, youth worker and lay missionary at two metropolitan and one regional mission. After completing the program, Frances attended her first principalship interview and was appointed principal at a remote Kindergarten-Year seven Catholic primary school in the Kimberley region of Western Australia commencing January 2013.

#### **5.3.1 Case study overview.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Frances expressed low self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. Although she referred to leadership of the role components: Catholic identity, teaching and learning and community engagement and development when discussing the role of the principal, she predominantly considered principalship a managerial occupation. Specifically, Frances discussed her perception that principalship involved managing school finances and capital development planning. Frances identified principal capacity to lead vision formation and achievement, apply Gospel values, lead transformationally and employ managerial knowledge as the capabilities required for effective performance. Frances was attracted to principalship because of the opportunity to lead a marginalised Aboriginal community in a remote setting. She considered the requirement of the principal to manage school finances and resolve conflict disincentives.

As Frances participated in and completed the program, she reported moderate then high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. She described principalship through five, interrelated role components: Catholic identity; teaching and learning; stewardship of resources; community engagement and development; and school improvement. Frances also cited three capabilities required of principals to effectively lead and manage through each role component: vision and values; knowledge and understanding; and leadership competence. Her attraction to principalship, articulated through a leadership vision statement developed over the

course of the program, remained similar to that conveyed pre-program. However, Frances also indicated that she was attracted by the prospect of leading the role component, teaching and learning and developing school-community partnerships to enhance student educational outcomes. Frances expressed reduced apprehension with regard to previously identified disincentives, but cited new concerns; the result of her appointment as principal of a Catholic primary school in a remote setting. Concerns cited by Frances included anticipated recruitment difficulties in remote areas and the ‘fish bowl effect’, the result of working and living in a remote community.

As Frances participated in and completed the program, she attributed discernible perception changes to the influence of three program-related features: a well-facilitated, coherent, rigorous and systematic curriculum; development of support networks and interaction with network members; and active learning experiences. Foremost amongst these experiences were school board observation and finance and capital development sub-committee participation; development and refinement of a leadership vision statement; and internship where she shadowed the principal of a remote Catholic primary school for a 10-week period.

### **5.3.2 Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Frances identified three role components associated with Catholic principalship. She predominantly focused on the role of the principal as “a manager of finances, building and the business side of schools.” Additionally, she described the principal as “an educational leader, responsible for ensuring that teachers plan, teach and assess students well.” Finally, she referred to the principal as “the guardian of school Catholicity who ensures that staff are appropriate witnesses of the faith and develops positive relationships, based on Gospel values, between the school, community and parish.”

Frances identified four capabilities required for effective performance. She stated: “The principal must ensure that the vision of the school is aligned with the evangelising mission of the Church and have the ability to communicate this clearly to the community.” Related to this capability, Frances commented on the importance of the principal “inspiring staff to think about their attitudes, behaviours and practices and how these contribute to the achievement of school vision.” When

discussing community engagement, she emphasised “the importance of the principal speaking and acting as Jesus would.” Finally, Frances cited “the importance of principal knowledge and skill regarding the management of the school.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Frances mentioned four interrelated role components of Catholic principalship. She discussed the principal as leader of the role component, Catholic identity:

Catholic identity is the defining feature of our schools that involves the principal leading school community evangelisation in response to the call of the Church. The principal is expected to build dynamic relationships between the school, the community and the parish and reflect Gospel values in word and action.

Moreover, she commented: “Principals are stewards of resources who promote care of the school’s natural environment and that of the surrounding community.” She added: “The principal as steward also recruits, develops, appraises staff and caters for their wellbeing, manages the school’s budget, develops and maintains facilities and reports as required to the CEOWA.” Frances then remarked: “The principal is an educational leader who oversees the curriculum, builds a culture of enquiry amongst staff and students and models a love of learning.” With regard to the principal as educational leader, she commented: “It is important that the principal encourage teachers to embed Gospel values into the curriculum, regardless of subject.” Finally, Frances articulated the role of the principal as “a community builder who models and promotes Christ-like relationships, engages in collaborative decision-making with members of the school community and provides a safe and inclusive environment for staff and students.”

When discussing the capabilities required for effective performance, Frances reiterated “the requirement of the principal to form, communicate and drive achievement of school vision and model Gospel values.” She also reflected: “Successful principals have the knowledge and ability to manage aspects of the role such as school finances, capital development planning and CEOWA compliance requirements.” When discussing managerial competence, Frances emphasised the importance of constructive transactional capabilities. She defined these capabilities as “the ability and willingness of a principal to set goals with staff, communicate regularly and offer feedback and advice to improve performance.”

At this point in the program, Frances attributed her changing perceptions to the influence of three program-related features. She commented: “the well-structured and sequenced theoretical program based on the Leadership Framework assisted my understanding of the role and its capabilities.” Further, she stated: “Listening to the experiences of guest principals who hosted ‘Inside Leadership’ sessions was a feature of the program that influenced my understanding of the role and what it takes to succeed.” Finally, she commented: “The willingness of my principal to share his perspective of the role, its demands and capabilities significantly influenced my learning.”

At the conclusion of the program, in addition to previously identified role components, Frances articulated the role of the Catholic principal as leader of role component, school improvement. She defined the purpose of school improvement as “the creation of a culture of collegiality where everyone strives for continual improvement to achieve school vision and, as a result, support the Church’s evangelising mission.” When discussing the capabilities required of the principal to effectively lead school improvement, Frances discussed “the need for a comprehensive understanding of the QCS Framework and use of the school improvement tool.” She also articulated “the need for the principal to be both a transformational and transcendental leader when working to create an appetite for change amongst school community members.” Frances elaborated on her understanding of transformational capabilities with reference to her current principal: “He is compassionate and gathers staff support through active listening and complete one-to-one engagement.” With regard to transcendental leadership capabilities, she stated: “As was the case with Jesus’ leadership, the principal must serve others, have a genuine love for and interest in people and a great deal of patience and understanding.”

Frances specified the influence of three program-related features on her end-of-program perceptions. She reflected: “The use of the QCS Framework and leadership theory within program modules assisted my understanding of school improvement as a role component.” As was the case at the conclusion of the program’s first year, Frances reiterated “the informative nature of discussions regarding role components and capabilities with my principal and guest principals involved in the program.” Finally, she reflected on the influence of an internship experience on her perceptions,

organised during the program's second year. This experience involved Frances shadowing the principal of a remote Kindergarten-Year 10 Catholic primary school in the Kimberley region of Western Australia for a 10-week period. She stated: "The willingness of the principal to share the highs and lows of her role and the opportunity to observe her leadership were invaluable tools that assisted my understanding of the role and its demands."

### **5.3.3 Factors enhancing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Frances identified a single factor enhancing her interest in Catholic principalship. She asserted: "I am completely driven by the possibility of being principal of a small, disadvantaged Catholic school in either the Geraldton or Kimberley regions of Western Australia." Frances expressed a strong desire "to make a long-term commitment to the Gospel-based education of Aboriginal students and their families within such a community" and stated that she had "the compassion and drive necessary to do this work." She reflected: "My previous experiences as a carer, youth worker and lay missionary to Aboriginal students has ignited in me a burning desire to achieve this goal."

At the completion of the program's first year, Frances commented: "My desire to be the principal of a remote Catholic school remains alive." She observed: "The program has raised my awareness of the difficulties of such a role and I feel a growing confidence in my ability to handle these." Frances reiterated her "love for Aboriginal people and desire to lead a school where students could be equipped with Gospel values, knowledge and skill to overcome disadvantage."

At this point in the program, Frances specified the influence of three program-related features on her perceptions. She confirmed "the powerful influence of a well-structured program that clarified the role, its capabilities, positives and challenges." Additionally, she affirmed "development of a leadership vision statement as a way to clarify the appeal of remote school principalship." Finally, she reflected: "Sharing my emerging vision statement with my principal, fellow aspirants and 'Inside Leadership' guest principals allowed me to assess its practicality against my career goal and make appropriate adjustments."

At the conclusion of the program, Frances described the factors enhancing her interest in Catholic principalship through a leadership vision statement formulated and refined over the course the program:

I am motivated to be the principal of a small, remote Catholic school catering for the needs of Aboriginal students and their families using Jesus as my role model. I am driven to understand and use the talents of teachers, support staff, parents and community members for the good of the students and want to build the capacity of each individual and promote happiness, tranquillity and growth. I am motivated to work with staff; to know them as both people and professionals, to tap into their talents, build their skills and support them. I want to inspire them to teach with passion, administrate classrooms effectively and engage with the families of students who feel disconnected from the school. Finally, I am motivated to build a community where parents, staff and students come together and use their collective resources to build an excellent Catholic school.

When discussing her ambitions, Frances specified the influence of two program-related features on her desire to achieve remote school principalship. Firstly, she reaffirmed the “influence of vision statement development and refinement in the light of discussions with my principal, program colleagues and ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals.” Secondly, she stated: “Testing my vision statement, conception of the role and appropriateness of my leadership capabilities through my Kimberley internship confirmed my aspiration.”

#### **5.3.4 Factors diminishing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Frances identified two factors diminishing her interest in Catholic principalship. She stated: “The business side of schools, especially financial management, concerns me because of my lack of leadership experience in general and knowledge about these things specifically.” Further, she discussed concerns associated with “the need for principals to manage conflict arising from and between staff, students and their parents.” Frances also commented on the structure of her assistant principal role as a barrier to her learning: “Even though I have just started as an assistant principal, I can see that learning more about principalship will be difficult because I am tied to the classroom for four days a week.” She lamented: “Because of the time restrictions and demands of my dual teaching and leadership roles, I am concerned about my capacity to deliver quality.”

At the conclusion of the program's first year, Frances remarked: "My first year as an assistant principal and program participant have boosted my confidence to lead." With regard to pre-program disincentives emanating from school financial management, she stated: "I feel more comfortable dealing with school finances because of the program requirement to participate on my school board and sub-committees." With regard to conflict resolution as a disincentive, Frances reflected: "I am now aware that conflict and the need to resolve it is baseline requirement of the job and have accepted the fact that I need to develop strategies to deal with it if I want to be a principal." At this point in the program, Frances identified a new disincentive: the complexity of principalship decision-making. She admitted: "My natural inclination to please people is a significant leadership weakness and I know that I must develop a 'thicker skin' before applying for principalship." She attributed this disincentive to program-inspired reflection, especially as a result of listening to the experiences of 'Inside Leadership' guest principals.

Soon after the conclusion of the program, Frances was appointed principal at a remote Kindergarten-Year seven Catholic primary school in the Kimberley region of Western Australia catering for the needs of Aboriginal students and their families. She commented: "I am less concerned about previously identified disincentives, but more concerned by three new ones." Frances reflected that her higher self-efficacy, the result of a further year of experience as an assistant principal and a successful internship experience in a remote school in the Kimberley, had largely countered her concerns regarding the requirement of the principal to make complex decisions.

The three new disincentives expressed by Frances were the result of her internship experience, subsequent appointment and confirmation by 'Inside Leadership' guest principals. She observed: "When vacancies arise in remote schools, there are usually few suitable applicants meaning that you may have to recruit unsuitable people that you may be lumbered with for a long time." She described the impact of this reality as "demoralising, especially if new staff are not committed to school vision". Frances pronounced the alternative of not appointing unsuitable staff as "just as bad because it means that existing, dedicated staff are forced to take on extra duties." Further, she reflected: "Remote school staff are away from family, friends and professional networks and live in community with one another, including the principal." She explained: "Living in such close proximity to

others can result in conflict over small issues like differences in work ethic and have the potential to cause disharmony.” The reality of the staff and principal not being able to “go home and disconnect physically, mentally and emotionally” was identified by Frances as a disincentive associated with remote school principalship. Finally, she referred to concerns regarding the ‘fish bowl’ effect, a consequence of living and working in remote communities. Frances commented: “You’re on show 24/7, there’s no privacy.” Of particular concern was the prospect of “socialising with parents of at risk or ill-mannered children and then having to engage them in hard conversations when they have welcomed you into their community and consider you a friend.”

### **5.3.5 Self-efficacy to commence principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Frances indicated low self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. She attributed her perception to a lack of leadership experience and an absence of exposure to principal-related professional learning. Frances stated: “I feel completely out of my depth and know that I need significant up-skilling such as that offered by this program before I’ll be ready.” She expressed confidence that the program would meet this need and detailed her intention to use the experience to assess her suitability for the role.

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Frances indicated moderate self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship:

I don’t know that I could say I’m totally confident, but I feel far more equipped that I did at the start of the year. I’m ready to have a go and have an open mind about what’s involved.

Frances attributed her improved self-efficacy perceptions to the influence of six program-related factors. Firstly, she affirmed the influence of the program curriculum and related activities: “I feel more confident to lead as a result of an improved understanding of the role and required capabilities; the result of studying the Leadership Framework and applying learning through school board and sub-committee participation.” She also favoured the method of program delivery: “The opportunity to reflect on theory before sharing experiences with colleagues were important learning experiences that boosted my confidence.” Secondly, she reiterated the “importance of forming and refining a leadership vision statement to define

principalship values and motives”. Thirdly, Frances acknowledged the influence of her program colleagues on her perceptions:

Reflecting on my journey in the program so far, I see that I needed trustworthy colleagues who understood the challenges I was facing as an aspiring principal and inexperienced leader. My fellow aspirants met this need. Their collective encouragement provided me with the confidence I needed to seriously consider principalship.

Fourthly, Frances referred to the influence of her current principal on her improved self-efficacy perceptions: “He recognised aspects of my leadership that would work in a remote community and encouraged me to apply for the program.” She elaborated: “He has guided and totally supported me through each program module; I am grateful for his encouragement and owe much of my improved feelings of readiness to him.” Fifthly, Frances discussed the influence of ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals:

Their collective affirmation of our group was encouraging. Their stories resonated with me and confirmed that they had faced the challenges of principalship and survived. I found myself thinking: ‘they were worried about the same things that I am and they managed to overcome and learn from these situations; if they did, so can I.’

Finally, Frances referred to the influence of CEOWA support staff that facilitated program modules on her self-efficacy perceptions. She stated: “It is comforting to know that CEOWA people will be there to assist, support and encourage me, especially when it comes to the management of school finances, legal issues and conflict resolution.”

At the conclusion of the program, Frances indicated that she had experienced significant growth with regard to self-efficacy. She stated: “I can say with pride that I am highly confident and feel well prepared to commence principalship; the program has been a turning point in my career.” In addition to reiterating the positive influence of the six program-related features identified at the conclusion of the program’s first year, she acknowledged the influence of her Kimberley school internship on her self-efficacy perceptions:

I feel energised by the thought of working as principal in a remote community. My intern principal taught me the intricacies of leadership in these settings. I

have a realistic grasp on the role and what is required of me to succeed. I have witnessed the challenging aspects of the role, know how to deal with the things I can change and accept those I can't.

Frances concluded her narration regarding the influence of her internship with the comment: "I felt particularly affirmed by the support I received from community members regarding my leadership potential and consider these relationships essential for success."

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## **5.4 Case Study Three: Helen**

When 'Helen' commenced the Aspiring Principals Program in January 2011, she had completed her sixth year as assistant principal at a Kindergarten-Year six Catholic primary school in Perth. Helen trained as a primary school teacher, graduating in 1996. Between 1997 and 2004, she taught at a Catholic primary school in Perth prior to commencing her assistant principalship at another Catholic primary school in January 2005. Toward the end of the program, in September 2012, Helen attended her first principalship interview and was appointed principal at a Kindergarten-Year seven Catholic primary school in a country town commencing January 2013.

### **5.4.1 Case study overview.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Helen expressed high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. She predominantly considered principalship a managerial occupation and, to a lesser extent, one involving leadership of the role components, teaching and learning and Catholic identity. Helen identified principal capacity to employ managerial knowledge, lead vision formation and achievement, lead transformationally and apply Gospel values when leading and managing as the capabilities required for effective performance. Helen was attracted to principalship because of the opportunity to lead the role components, teaching and learning, community engagement and development and learn from the experiences provided by the role. She considered role intensification and the requirement of the principal to manage school finances, deal with legal issues and cope with threats of litigation disincentives.

As Helen participated in and completed the program, self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship remained high. She described principalship through five, interrelated role components: Catholic identity; teaching and learning; stewardship of resources; community engagement and development; and school improvement. She also cited three capabilities required of principals to effectively lead and manage through each role component: vision and values; knowledge and understanding; and leadership competence. Her attraction to principalship, articulated through a leadership vision statement developed over the course of the program, remained similar to that conveyed pre-program. However, Helen also

conveyed a desire to lead of the role component, Catholic identity and positively influence the lives of school community members through quality leadership. She expressed reduced apprehension with regard to disincentives identified previously, but cited new concerns; the result of her appointment as principal of a Catholic primary school in a country town. Concerns highlighted by Helen included the impending separation from her personal support network; financial disincentives associated with the move from Perth to the country town; and anticipated staff recruitment and retention difficulties in her new setting.

As Helen participated in and completed the program, she attributed discernible perception changes to the influence of three program-related features: a well-facilitated, coherent, rigorous and systematic curriculum; development of support networks and interaction with network members; and active learning experiences. Chief amongst these experiences were school board observation and finance and capital development sub-committee participation; development and refinement of a leadership vision statement; use of LSI 360-degree data within coaching sessions; and leadership of a QCS school improvement project. Helen particularly espoused the benefits associated with two, six-month periods of acting principalship. The first experience took place at her school during the program's first year with the second experience enacted at another metropolitan Catholic primary school during the program's second year.

#### **5.4.2 Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Helen identified three role components associated with Catholic principalship. She focused on the role of the principal as “an accountable manager who ensures that financial and human resources are best used to pursue and achieve school vision and deals with a myriad of matters including the resolution of legal issues.” She also considered the principal “an instructional leader and an active witness of the Catholic faith who builds Gospel values into everyday interactions.” Finally, Helen understood the principal to be “the person responsible for recruiting and developing quality staff.” With regard to the capabilities required for effective performance, Helen identified four competencies. Firstly, she discussed “the need for the principal to have command of technical role

responsibilities such as school finances to ensure that the school remains financially viable and is effectively managed.” Secondly, she acknowledged “the importance of the principal being able to formulate school vision in line with the evangelising mission of the Church before communicating it clearly to the school community.” Thirdly, and related to this capability, she commented on “the capacity of the principal to bring staff together and motivate them to achieve school vision.” Finally, Helen stated: “The principal must be intrinsically driven to model Gospel values when leading and managing.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Helen described Catholic principalship in terms of four interrelated role components studied through the program. Helen identified the principal as “an evangeliser and nurturer of school Catholic identity who emulates the example of Jesus in word and action.” She also commented on the role of the principal as “steward of environmental, financial and human resources who makes decisions to achieve school vision.” Additionally, Helen referred to the principal as “an instructional expert who develops teacher capacity, sets the climate for collaborative curriculum planning, assessment and evaluation and ensures that Gospel values are integrated through the curriculum.” When discussing this role aspect, she reflected: “Effective principals ensure that students are provided with safe learning environments and teachers have access to the resources they require to be the best they can be.” Finally, Helen described the principal as “a community builder who models Gospel values in word and action to develop constructive, trusting and respectful relationships.”

When discussing the capabilities required for effective performance, Helen commented: “Above all, the principal must be committed to the application of Gospel values in every situation.” She added: “Effective principals have command of the managerial aspects of the role, especially school finances, capital development planning and the application of CECWA policies.” Helen also reflected on the importance of the principal “working with stakeholders to form school vision that supports the Church’s evangelising mission before sharing it with the community and driving achievement.” To develop and implement vision effectively, she identified the “need for the principal to have transformational leadership capability to inspire staff to think not only about themselves, but how they can contribute to the achievement of school vision.” When leading transformationally, Helen commented:

“It helps if the principal is charismatic, able to emotionally connect with staff and inspire them intellectually.”

At this point in the program, Helen specified the influence of four program-related features on her perceptions. She reflected: “The use of the Leadership Framework domains and capabilities and contemporary leadership theory within program modules were instrumental in assisting my understanding of the role and its capabilities.” Further, she stated: “Implementing the theory behind the role component, stewardship of resources by participating as a school board observer and sub-committee member were extremely powerful learning experiences.” Helen continued: “Discussing the role and its capabilities with my principal and those who hosted ‘Inside Leadership’ sessions both confirmed and changed my thoughts regarding the role and what it takes to succeed.” Finally, Helen described the experience of acting principalship at her school for a six-month period during the program’s first year as:

...the most valuable learning experience of my career and an excellent way to apply program theory to reality. The experience exponentially enhanced my role knowledge and taught me a great deal about what it takes to succeed.

Helen concluded her affirmation of this learning experience with the comment: “Perhaps the best part of the experience was the opportunity to closely study and refine my leadership capability strengths and limitations.”

At the conclusion of the program, in addition to previously identified role components, Helen discussed the role of the principal as leader of school improvement. She stated: “Done well, school improvement ensures the development and achievement of shared vision, clarity of purpose, high levels of trust, staff empowerment and a focus on continual enhancement of all aspects of the school.” She reflected on the leadership capabilities required of the principal when leading this role component: “The principal must understand the purpose of school improvement generally, the QCS Framework specifically and have the wherewithal to use the QCS tool to effect improvement.” Helen also emphasised “the importance of the principal adopting a Gospel-based, transcendental approach when leading school improvement including placing the needs of others before self and engaging with staff in collaborative, non-hierarchical dialogue.” She observed:

By leading in this way, the principal is able to build a culture of trust. Within such a culture, review and improvement becomes an embedded, accepted practice.

Helen concluded her reflection regarding the importance of transcendental capabilities with the statement: “Leading in this way also allows the principal to form genuine, lasting relationships with staff where talents are acknowledged and developed and staff collectively strive to achieve school vision.”

When discussing her end-of-program perceptions regarding Catholic principalship role components and requisite capabilities, Helen reiterated the influence of the program-related features identified at the conclusion of the program’s first year:

I cannot emphasise enough the positive influence of reflection on program theory, especially that related to school improvement. Also, serving as a school board observer and sub-committee member for two years were important experiences that built my leadership capacity. Likewise, ongoing and reflective collegial discussions with my principal, program colleagues and ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals were highly beneficial aspects of the program.

Helen also emphasised the value of acting principalship on her perceptions: “I was fortunate this year to be invited by the Executive Director to complete a second six-month period of acting principalship at a school other than my own.” The opportunity presented itself when the principal took leave at short notice. Moreover, she reflected: “It’s one thing stepping up to acting principalship at a school where you know the staff, families and the culture, but doing so in a foreign context is more challenging and, in my opinion, the best way to test your knowledge of the role and further develop leadership capabilities.”

With regard to the role component, school improvement, Helen discussed the influence of LSI data, coaching and the QCS project on her perceptions:

The use of LSI data to identify my leadership capability strengths and weaknesses, coaching to develop improvement goals and strategies and putting these into practice by leading a school improvement project were a ‘game-changer’ for me.

Additionally, she stated: “These experiences not only provided me with a greater understanding of the purpose of the QCS Framework and use of the school

improvement tool, they changed my perspective regarding the capabilities required for role success.”

#### **5.4.3 Factors enhancing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Helen identified three factors enhancing her interest in Catholic principalship. She stated: “I am attracted to principalship because of my enthusiasm for learning and passion for leadership.” Helen also described how this disposition inspired her to “develop and lead teachers who are keen to assist students to develop holistically.” Finally, she expressed her “desire to work with staff, parents and students to develop a Gospel-centred community based on pillars of shared leadership, empowerment and trust.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Helen asserted: “My initial attraction to the principalship has not changed, but has been affirmed by the program.” She clarified her perspective:

I remain committed to developing teacher quality. Through the staff, I want students to discover their passions before being assisted to reach their potential within inspiring and challenging classrooms.

With regard to leading the role component, community engagement and development, Helen commented: “I am driven to nurture a school community characterised by positive relationships grounded in the teachings of Jesus.”

At this point in the program, Helen specified the influence of three program-related features on her perceptions. She commented on “the formative influence of the leadership vision statement development framework that prompted reflection on program theory and clarified both non-negotiable leadership values and attraction to principalship.” Further, she stated: “Sharing my emerging vision statement with my program colleagues, my principal and ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals allowed me to make refinements and assess the authenticity of my aspirations.” Finally, Helen asserted: “The real test of my vision statement occurred during my experience of acting principalship where I was constantly called upon to state it publically and reflect upon it privately.” She acknowledged the important role this experience played in endorsing role attraction: “Acting principalship confirmed that I am

committed to being a Gospel-based community builder and educational leader, known for nurturing quality teachers who aim to develop students holistically.”

At the conclusion of the program, Helen articulated the factors enhancing her interest in Catholic principalship through a leadership vision statement developed over the course of the program. She stated:

I am driven to lead like Jesus, to serve the members of our school community and to work with staff, students and their parents to create a Gospel-based curriculum and learning community with a culture of inquiry, reflection and educationally informed risk-taking at its heart. Within this culture, teachers will be nurtured to understand content, student needs, effective pedagogical practices and the use of data-driven interventions to assist the holistic development of students. Parents will be encouraged to participate as fully as possible in the life of our school to ensure that learning is the result of a true partnership.

Helen concluded her vision statement with the assertion: “I want to authentically share my leadership and positively influence staff, student and parent commitment, wellbeing and development.”

When discussing her end-of-program perceptions, Helen reiterated the influence of the program-related features identified at the conclusion of the program’s first year. She stated: “My attraction to principalship has been clarified and confirmed through the development and refinement of my leadership vision statement.” With regard to this process, she expressed three important actions: “deep and sustained reflection on learning regarding the role and its capabilities, discussing the statement with colleagues and ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals, and making refinements before testing its mettle through acting principalship.”

#### **5.4.4 Factors diminishing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Helen identified three factors diminishing her interest in Catholic principalship. She stated: “Managing school finances concerns me because it is foreign and daunting, requiring a whole new skills-set that I haven’t been trained for or exposed to.” Further, she reflected: “There exists potential for principals to be distracted by the ever-increasing intensity of the role, especially completion of administrative tasks, and distance themselves from

staff and students.” Finally, Helen commented: “My lack of knowledge about school-based legal issues and the potential for litigation worries me; as is the case with school finances, I haven’t had the opportunity to experience this aspect of the role.” She confirmed that her disincentive perceptions were “the result of observing current and previous principals stress about these responsibilities.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Helen’s pre-program disincentive perceptions “had decreased as a result of the program, especially the requirement to participate on the school board and its sub-committees and a successful, six-month period as acting principal.” With regard to school financial management, she commented:

I originally thought negatively about the financial responsibilities of principalship, the result of knowing very little about these requirements. The knowledge and awareness drawn from the program was invaluable. Perhaps more so was the opportunity to convert this knowledge into practice through school board and finance sub-committee participation and acting principalship. These experiences confirmed that I have the ability to handle this role aspect.

When discussing the need to balance role intensity and staff and student engagement, Helen affirmed: “One key learning I gleaned from the program is that with the right systems, structures and processes in place to distribute leadership, this doesn’t have to be a problem; it is possible to be both a sound administrator and people leader.”

When reflecting on legal issues as a disincentive, she observed: “Initially, I was overwhelmed by the need to deal with these situations, but now feel less threatened because of the availability of CEOWA support staff who are there to help principals navigate tricky situations.” Finally, Helen discussed the influence of ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals on her perceptions: “Listening to their stories made me realise that my concerns about certain role aspects were not unique; they too had similar fears during the early years of principalship.” Moreover, she reflected: “Their proactive suggestions regarding strategies to manage these aspects were helpful and assured me that I would survive these challenges as they had.”

At the conclusion of the program, Helen’s perceptions regarding Catholic principalship disincentives had changed again. She commented: “My perception changes are the result of reflecting on the experience of acting principalship, discussing the prospect of country principalship with ‘Inside Leadership’ guest

principals and my impending move from Perth to a country town to commence the role.” Specifically, Helen identified three new concerns. She discussed the financial disincentives associated with the relocation from Perth to the country town:

Because I am an assistant principal in a three-stream primary school in Perth, I’m actually taking a pay cut despite my promotion. Also, the cost of living in my new town is significantly higher than Perth. When you add these factors to the costs associated with renting my family home, packing, transportation, paying the non-subsidised portion of rent for my new place and the balance between rental income and my mortgage, I’m significantly out of pocket. Despite this, it’s not all about money and I look forward to the challenges my new role will bring.

Helen also acknowledged: “Separation from immediate family with the move to a town where I know no one is a disincentive, especially for my young children who are emotionally connected to their grandparents.” She also lamented the challenge associated with the loss of family support, especially with regard to before and after school care for her children. Finally, she commented: “I anticipate that recruiting and keeping high quality staff in country areas will be problematic and a definite challenge for me as a novice country principal.”

#### **5.4.5 Self-efficacy to commence principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Helen specified high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. She asserted: “I feel very confident to undertake the role, the result of my six years of experience as assistant principal in a very large primary school.” She also attributed her high self-efficacy perceptions to support received from both current and past principals. She stated: “Their willingness to distribute leadership for strategic initiatives such as whole-of-school ICT integration and provide me with the time and resources to do so has greatly assisted my feelings of readiness.” Despite these perceptions, however, she reflected: “I’m expecting that the program will help me build the professional networks I require to excel as a new principal.” Helen also commented: “Program topics including school financial management and dealing with legal issues will equip me with the knowledge and skill required to handle these aspects of the role and further build my leadership capacity.”

At the end of the program's first year, Helen reiterated her high self-efficacy to commence principalship. She attributed her perceptions to "role competence" or "command of responsibilities associated with assistant principalship and the overwhelming feeling of readiness to tackle principalship." Helen also attributed her self-efficacy perceptions to the influence of six program-related features. Firstly, she discussed the influence of "a well structured and facilitated program that provided an improved understanding of the role and its capabilities." Secondly, she commented on "excellent program activities that encouraged the practical application of theory and, as a result, confirmed feelings of readiness." Helen specifically referred to "working with a coach to amplify leadership capability strengths and minimise weaknesses identified by the LSI and participating as a school board observer and sub-committee member." Thirdly, Helen reflected on the influence of a six-month period as acting principal at her school on her self-efficacy perceptions. She confirmed:

Yes, I'm ready! I have handled the financial, school board management, legal and relationship responsibilities that daunted me before I began the program and my leadership vision statement highlights my authenticity; I can do this.

Helen also highlighted as significantly important the "confidence boost associated with the support and affirmation received from staff, students, their parents and community members during the experience." Fourthly, and related to the experience of acting principalship, was the influence of CEOWA networks developed through the program:

The just-in-time technical support provided by CEOWA personnel during my time as acting principal, especially in relation to school finances, industrial disagreements, legal and students with disabilities issues, was incredible. The fact that I already knew many of these staff through the program provided me with a sense of connection and comfort. I never felt alone.

Fifthly, Helen commented on the self-efficacy benefits associated with the collegial nature of her cohort:

In large part, I attribute my feelings of readiness to my incredibly supportive program colleagues. Our network of co-learners is based on trust, encouragement and support and has provided me with the confidence I need to apply for principalship. Because of these people, I am convinced that the journey ahead will not be lonely.

Finally, Helen affirmed the influence of supportive relationships she enjoyed with her principal mentors, coach and 'Inside Leadership' guest principals formed or enhanced through the program. She articulated the "benefits associated with listening to their tales of leadership struggle and triumph including the realisation that, like them, I have the resilience and capacity to thrive." Helen particularly acknowledged the influence of two mentors, both previous principals, on her self-efficacy perceptions. She stated: "Throughout my career, these people have recognised and affirmed my leadership potential and tested my abilities by providing opportunities for personal and professional growth." She described these mentors as: "visionary principals who challenged me to become a highly reflective leader who recognises the potential in others and gives back."

At the conclusion of the program, Helen expressed high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship and attributed her perceptions to the influence of the same six program-related features identified at the conclusion of the program's first year. She also described the influence of another program activity, coaching in conjunction with the QCS school improvement project:

These were excellent means through which to understand school improvement as a role component of Catholic principalship and develop my leadership capabilities and confidence to commence principalship. My coach expertly used my LSI data to guide the formation of improvement goals before working with me to develop strategies to achieve them.

Helen reflected: "The strategies developed within coaching sessions were put to great effect as I led my QCS school improvement project and experienced a second, six-month period of acting principalship in a different school".

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## **5.5 Case Study Four: Jason**

When 'Jason' commenced the Aspiring Principals Program in January 2011, he had completed his seventh year as assistant principal. Jason trained as a primary school teacher, graduating in 1996. Between 1997 and 2003, he taught at one government and one Catholic primary school in Perth. In January 2004, he commenced his first leadership role as assistant principal at a Kindergarten-Year seven Catholic primary school in Perth where he served until December 2009. In January 2010, he commenced his second assistant principalship at another metropolitan Catholic primary school. Upon conclusion of the program, Jason was actively applying for Catholic primary school principalship vacancies in Western Australian country towns.

### **5.5.1 Case study overview.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Jason expressed low self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. He predominantly considered principalship a managerial occupation and, to a lesser extent, one involving leadership of the role components, community engagement and development and teaching and learning. Jason identified principal capacity to employ managerial knowledge when administering responsibilities such as school finances and capital development planning and the ability to lead transformationally as the capabilities required for effective performance. Jason was attracted to principalship because of the opportunity to lead the role components, Catholic identity, teaching and learning and community engagement and development. He considered role intensification and the requirement of the principal to manage school finances and capital development planning disincentives.

As Jason participated in and completed the program, he reported moderate then high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. Jason described principalship through five, interrelated role components: Catholic identity; teaching and learning; stewardship of resources; community engagement and development; and school improvement. He also cited three capabilities required of principals to effectively lead and manage through each role component: vision and values; knowledge and understanding; and leadership competence. His attraction to principalship, articulated through a leadership vision statement developed over the course of the program,

remained similar to that conveyed pre-program. However, Jason indicated greater desire to lead school improvement and positively influence the lives of school community members through quality leadership and reduced interest in leading the role component, community engagement and development. Jason expressed reduced apprehension with regard to disincentives identified previously, but cited a new concern; the result of reflection emanating from his application for country principalship vacancies. Specifically, he voiced anxiety regarding the potential for role intensification to adversely impact work-life balance, important for him as a professional and a father of two young children.

As Jason participated in and completed the program, he attributed discernible perception changes to the influence of three program-related features: a coherent, rigorous and systematic curriculum; development of support networks and interaction with network members; and active learning experiences. Prime amongst these experiences were school board observation and finance and capital development sub-committee participation; development and refinement of a leadership vision statement; and a 10-week period of acting principalship at his school.

### **5.5.2 Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Jason identified three role components associated with Catholic principalship. He focused predominantly on the managerial aspects of the role, notably “administration of school finances, the school building program and policies and procedures.” To a lesser extent, he referred to the principal as “the builder of Gospel-based relationships with staff, students, parents, members of the parish and the wider school community.” Finally, he discussed “the importance of the principal working with teachers to ensure that they provide students with the best possible education.” With regard to the capabilities required for effective performance, Jason stated: “It is imperative that the principal have a comprehensive understanding of managerial role responsibilities.” Additionally, he reflected: “When working with staff and building the community, the principal must be capable of getting people on side, usually through communication prowess and the use of interpersonal skills.”

At the conclusion of the program's first year, Jason expressed Catholic principalship in terms of four interrelated role components studied through the program. He described the principal as "leader of school Catholic identity who ensures that all aspects of the school are infused with the Gospel values." Further, he stated: "One way the principal achieves this aim is by modelling Jesus' example when engaging with others, especially those from the school community who are most in need." He concluded his description of this role component with the comment: "The principal also leads the evangelisation process where staff work to nourish the faith needs of practicing Catholics from the school community, bring baptised, non-practicing Catholics back to the Church and convert non-Catholics to our faith tradition." Jason also referred to the principal as "an accountable steward who effectively manages environmental, financial, capital and human resources to create the best possible learning opportunities for students." When discussing leadership of teaching and learning, Jason described the principal as "an educational leader who works with teachers to ensure that lessons meet the holistic needs of students." Finally, he reflected on the role of the principal "as a servant who models the example of Jesus when building community amongst staff, students, their parents and parish members."

When discussing the capabilities required for effective performance, Jason defined the successful principal as "one capable of forming school vision in the light of the Church's evangelising mission before communicating it effectively to the school community." He also described as a pivotal capability "the ability and willingness of the principal to speak and act with Gospel values when leading, especially when it comes to driving achievement of school vision." Moreover, Jason articulated the "need for the principal to have both managerial and transformational capability." With regard to managerial capability, he commented: "The principal must have the knowledge and skill required to prudently manage the school budget, the building program, human resources and conflict resolution through the application of policy." When discussing transformational capability, he stated: "The effective principal is a 'relationship manager' who uses highly-developed interpersonal skills to work with a range of people, especially staff, to develop professional capacity and cater for wellbeing." Additionally, he reflected: "The tools used by the transformational leader to motivate staff and community members to

embrace and work toward the achievement of school vision are charisma, emotional connection and intellectual stimulation.”

At this point in the program, Jason specified the influence of three program-related features on his perceptions. He commented: “The study of these role components and capabilities through the program assisted my understanding.” He also espoused “the value of applying program learning, especially that relating to the role component of stewardship, through school board observation and finance and capital development sub-committee participation.” Finally, Jason stated: “Discussing the role components and capabilities studied in the program with my principal and guest principals who joined us were great ways to confirm or change my perspectives.”

At the conclusion of the program, Jason added one principalship role component to the four previously described, school improvement. He reflected: “The principal as leader of school improvement aims to advance all aspects of school operations.” When leading and managing this role component, Jason indicated: “The effective principal places achievement of school vision at the heart of improvement endeavours and uses transcendental leadership capabilities to drive the process.” With regard to transcendental capabilities, he stated:

The principal acts transcendently when he or she leads improvement discussions using words and actions reflecting those modelled by Jesus. These leaders do not force their own agenda; they place the needs of others before self, listen deeply and strive to create unity by engaging staff and community members in ‘flat’, collaborative discussions.

Jason also mentioned knowledge of school improvement as a capability required for successful leadership. He commented: “The effective principal remains abreast of contemporary literature in the field of school improvement, understands the philosophical underpinnings and principles of the QCS Framework and knows how to effectively use the QCS school improvement tool.”

Jason reiterated the influence of the three program-related features identified previously on his end-of-program perceptions. He stated: “Program theory, school board and sub-committee participation and collegial discussions with my principal and ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals were features of the program that influenced

my perspectives.” With regard to his understanding of the role component, school improvement Jason identified the influence of two new factors. Firstly, he mentioned the use of LSI data within coaching sessions to frame improvement goals before developing strategies that were subsequently applied when leading the QCS project as an important aspect of the program. He asserted: “These activities improved my understanding of the role of the principal as leader of school improvement and helped me to test and refine my leadership capabilities.” Secondly, he emphasised the experience of acting principalship as a “powerful way to boost knowledge and practice of school improvement, other role components and leadership capabilities.” Jason indicated that the opportunity to experience a 10-week period of acting principalship at his school arose when his principal undertook long service leave.

### **5.5.3 Factors enhancing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Jason identified four factors enhancing his interest in Catholic principalship. He expressed his “motivation to be principal that delivers Gospel-based teaching and learning programs that equip students with a set of values based on those modelled by Jesus.” Additionally, he identified his “passion to develop and support teaching staff to achieve holistic student development.” Jason also commented: “I want to promote the Church’s mission by leading evangelisation initiatives and sharing my faith with others.” Finally, he articulated his “desire to engage with and develop a school community based on Gospel values.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Jason asserted: “The program has confirmed my original attraction to the principalship.” He reiterated “the attraction of the role to grow quality teachers capable of delivering a Gospel-based curriculum and achieving holistic student development.” Further, he reflected: “I want to be known as a principal who nurtures the faith of school community members through quality, Gospel-based leadership.”

At this point in the program, Jason specified the influence of three program-related features on his perceptions. He affirmed “the influence of self-reflection after program modules as an effective way to identify appealing role aspects.” He also revealed “the powerful influence of leadership vision statement development and refinement” on his perceptions. Specifically, he referred to “the clarity the process

delivered regarding leadership values and reasons for seeking appointment as principal.” Finally, and connected to this activity, Jason acknowledged “the positive effect of sharing this statement with program colleagues and ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals.” He commented: “These program aspects were vitally important ways to test the legitimacy of my aspirations.”

At the conclusion of the program, Jason discussed the factors enhancing his interest in Catholic principalship through a leadership vision statement developed over the course of the program. He stated:

I want to develop teachers to be the best they can be and encourage them to achieve the holistic development of students through the delivery of a distinctly Catholic curriculum based on Gospel values. To achieve this aim, we would work together to create a culture of trust where development of professional capacity and wellbeing would take centre stage. I am equally motivated by the prospect of engaging with and developing a positive, Gospel-focused school community where the faith of each member is nurtured and challenges are proactively addressed.

Jason concluded his leadership vision statement with the assertion: “I also aspire to lead a school community through a lens of continuous improvement where we would work together to review and enhance all aspects of our school.”

When discussing the factors influencing his end-of-program perceptions, Jason reiterated those identified at the conclusion of the program’s first year. He stated: “My attraction to principalship has been positively influenced by program-inspired reflection, the process of defining my leadership vision statement and discussing this with my colleagues and guest principals who joined us for the program.” Jason also identified acting principalship as a significantly influential experience. He asserted: “In my opinion, the experience was the ‘golden opportunity’ I was searching for since starting the program.” He justified his perspective with the comment: “It allowed me to test the legitimacy of my vision statement and, as a result, confirmed my reasons for seeking appointment as a Catholic school principal.”

#### **5.5.4 Factors diminishing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Jason identified three factors diminishing his interest in Catholic principalship. He stated: “I am intimidated by the

requirement of the principal to manage school finances and building programs given my lack of experience.” When asked to explain the reasons for his perspective, he commented:

Mainly, I just haven’t been exposed to these aspects. Also, my teaching commitment, four days per week, leaves me with little time to get involved in other leadership duties. Sometimes, being an assistant principal is terrible because I feel that I don’t deliver the quality my students deserve or that expected of me by my principal and our staff.

Jason also referred to concerns regarding his “inadequate professional support network that would be necessary to consult with when trying to navigate difficult situations or make high-stakes decisions as a novice principal.” Finally, he remarked: “The never-ending increase in principalship accountability requirements are daunting and have the potential steal time from leadership of other important role components such as teaching and learning and building community.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Jason reflected: “The program confirmed my original concerns, but limited their scale.” He identified the positive influence of four program-related factors on his perceptions. Firstly, he referred to his “increased knowledge and confidence regarding school financial management and building programs as a result of serving on the school board and finance and capital development sub-committees.” Secondly, Jason commented: “Building relationships with CEOWA support staff through the program expanded my professional network and assured me that expert help will be readily available when I commence the role.” Thirdly, he confirmed: “As I learned during the program, when I become a principal, I plan to distribute my leadership to escape the administrative trap and reclaim time to lead other important role aspects, especially teaching and learning.” Finally, he affirmed: “A very helpful aspect of the program that reduced my apprehension were the leadership success and disaster stories recounted by ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals.” Jason clarified his perspective: “The fact that these principals had struggled with aspects of the role that were of concern to me and, over time, developed strategies to minimise their impacts reassured me that I could do the same.”

At the conclusion of the program, Jason’s disincentive perceptions had changed, the result of three program-related features. He stated: “My thoughts about

aspects of the role that concern me now are the result of deep reflection on my recent experience as acting principal.” Further, he remarked: “Comparing these thoughts against the stories of ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals regarding the challenging aspects of working in country settings was an influential experience.” Finally, Jason exclaimed: “Applying for country primary school principalship vacancies was a major influence on my perceptions!” He elaborated: “My family is my first priority and I am concerned that the intensity of the role will impact quality family time, especially if I am appointed to a country school where I will be considered principal 24/7.” In light of this concern, Jason discussed a contingency plan: “I intend to get to work earlier, stay later, prioritise tasks throughout my day and distribute leadership when I can so that when I get home, I can disconnect from work and spend quality time with family, especially my two young children who miss their dad when he’s at work!”

#### **5.5.5 Self-efficacy to commence principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Jason asserted: “When it comes to leading as assistant principal, I am very confident and in many respects feel that I have conquered the role and am ready for a new challenge.” Nonetheless, he stated: “I feel woefully inadequate to begin principalship.” He explained the origins of his low self-efficacy beliefs: “To feel ready, I need principal-specific knowledge and skill and the experience of acting principalship to road-test my learning.” With regard to acting principalship, Jason expressed frustration “that the program doesn’t have an in-built component as this is an essential part of an aspiring principal’s formation.” Despite this reservation, he reflected: “I anticipate that the program will thoroughly prepare me for principalship and I intend to use the experience to assess my suitability for the role.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Jason described his self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship as “moderate; a definite improvement from the start of the year.” Further, he stated: “I have an gnawing feeling inside me that I have gone as far as I can as an assistant principal and am ready for a new challenge.” Jason identified the influence of five program-related features on his self-efficacy perceptions. Firstly, he discussed “increased confidence as a result of program theory that has provided an improved understanding of the role and required capabilities.”

Secondly, he commented: “Identifying disincentives and working to minimise their impact through activities such as school board and sub-committee participation has greatly increased my confidence.” Thirdly, he reflected: “Developing a leadership vision statement was a vitally important activity.” Jason indicated that this activity helped him to clarify his values and validated his principalship motivations.

Fourthly, he stated:

Developing relationships with my principal, program colleagues and ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals who hosted program modules was a great way to expand my professional network and increase my self-confidence. These people served as a rich source of information, support and affirmation and I highly valued the discussions we had about the role, my desire for principalship, disincentives and a range of other topics.

Finally, Jason affirmed the influence of his CEOWA support network, developed through the program, on his self-efficacy perceptions. He remarked: “I’m excited that I’m getting to know CEOWA support staff really well and find that I’m learning a lot from their expertise and stories of success and failure.” Additionally, he commented: “They are very affirming of the leadership capabilities of our group and I feel comforted by their assurances that we will not be left alone when we’re finally in the ‘big chair’ and in the middle of a crisis.”

At the conclusion of the program, Jason specified “high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship.” He reiterated the influence of several program-related features on his perceptions: reflection on program theory; development, sharing and ongoing refinement of a leadership vision statement; and school board and sub-committee participation. Further, Jason articulated the positive influence of a 10-week period of acting principalship at his school on his perceptions. He stated:

I was lucky that my principal took such a long period of leave, opening the door for me. The experience allowed me to develop a greater understanding of the role and its required capabilities. It also allowed me to confront and deal with disincentives, test the authenticity of my leadership vision statement and my leadership capabilities that I had been working on with my coach. The experience also inspired a mindset shift. Previously, I viewed the role managerially, but now realise it’s far more than that. Principals must be capable of building community through relationships. As a result of this experience, I know that I can do both well.

Related to this experience, Jason commented on “the uplifting effect of affirmation received from the staff, students and their parents” on his self-efficacy perceptions. He reflected: “For me, affirmation of my leadership by these stakeholders is the thing that most propels me toward principalship.”

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## **5.6 Case Study Five: Jeff**

When ‘Jeff’ commenced the Aspiring Principals Program in January 2011, he had completed his eighth year as deputy principal at a Year seven-Year 12 Catholic secondary school in Perth. Jeff trained as a physical education teacher, graduating in 1987. Between 1988 and 1992, he taught at three government secondary schools in Perth. Jeff commenced his first Catholic school leadership role in January 1993 as head of year at a secondary school in Perth where he served until December 2002. In January 2003, he began his tenure as deputy principal. Toward the end of the program, in August 2012, Jeff attended his second principalship interview and was appointed principal at a Year seven-Year 12 Catholic secondary school in Perth commencing January 2013.

### **5.6.1 Case study overview.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Jeff expressed high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. He predominantly considered principalship a managerial occupation and, to a lesser extent, one involving leadership of the role component, community engagement and development. Jeff cited knowledge of technical role responsibilities such as the management of school finances as the sole capability required for effective performance. Jeff was attracted to principalship because of the opportunity to lead the role components, teaching and learning and community engagement and development. He identified the difficult nature of principalship decision-making and the requirement of the principal to manage school finances, resolve legal issues and cope with threats of litigation as disincentives.

As Jeff participated in and completed the program, his self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship remained high. He described principalship through five, interrelated role components: Catholic identity; teaching and learning; stewardship of resources; community engagement and development; and school improvement. Jeff also cited three capabilities required of principals to effectively lead and manage through each role component: vision and values; knowledge and understanding; and leadership competence. His attraction to principalship, articulated through a leadership vision statement developed over the course of the program, remained similar to that conveyed pre-program. However, Jeff also flagged his interest in leading the role components, Catholic identity and school improvement.

Jeff expressed reduced apprehension with regard to disincentives identified previously, but cited a new concern; the result of his appointment as principal of a metropolitan Catholic secondary school. Specifically, he indicated reluctance to leave his highly satisfactory deputy principalship for an unknown, complicated and challenging role.

As Jeff participated in and completed the program, he attributed discernible perception changes to the influence of three program-related features: a well-facilitated, coherent, rigorous and systematic curriculum; development of support networks and interaction with network members; and active learning experiences. Chief amongst these experiences were development and refinement of a leadership vision statement; use of the LSI 360-degree tool and coaching for leadership capability improvement; and a two-week internship where he shadowed five, east coast Catholic secondary school principals.

### **5.6.2 Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Jeff identified three role components associated with Catholic principalship. He primarily focused on the role of the principal as “manager of school finances, industrial relations and legal issue resolution.” He also remarked: “The principal is accountable to multiple masters including students, their parents, the CEOWA and government agencies.” Finally, Jeff asserted: “Even though it’s challenging, the principal must use the example of Jesus to build positive relationships with community members to allow the school to understand and respond appropriately to their needs.” With regard to the capabilities required for effective performance, Jeff specified: “a high degree of knowledge and skill associated with the managerial aspects of the role.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Jeff discussed Catholic principalship through the four interrelated role components studied through the program. Specifically, he described the principal as:

A Catholic leader, an evangeliser of the school community and teacher of Religious Education who strives to model Jesus’ actions in word and deed and establishes links between the school and parishes to provide a tangible connection to the Church.

Further, Jeff identified the principal as “a steward of resources or efficient manager of school finances, building plans and staff recruitment, selection, development and wellbeing.” He also referred to the principal as “an educational leader responsible for leading the school’s curriculum to achieve the holistic development of students.” Finally, he defined the principal as “a community builder who ensures that the school expresses its Catholic ethos through respectful and caring relationships and service to others, especially the marginalised.”

When discussing the capabilities required for effective performance, Jeff considered a successful principal to be one with transformational leadership capability. He stated: “This is the ability of the principal to generate school vision and get people on board with it by being relational and inspiring trust through displays of genuine honesty and support.” When striving to lead community in this way, Jeff emphasised the “importance of the principal modelling Gospel values such as justice, inclusivity, respect and care for the marginalised.” He also articulated the need for the principal to have “knowledge and understanding of the managerial aspects of the role including school financial management, facilities construction and the resolution of legal issues.” Additionally, Jeff acknowledged the importance of the principal “understanding and accurately applying CECWA policy statements necessary for the smooth operation of schools.” When discussing managerial capabilities, he identified the need for the principal to “set appropriate goals with staff, be a source of quality feedback for them as they perform their roles and celebrate achievements when appropriate.”

At this point in the program, Jeff attributed his changing perceptions to the influence of three program-related features. He reflected: “My understanding of the role and capabilities was assisted by the delivery of program theory based on the Leadership Framework and established models of leadership.” He also affirmed the influence of two support network members on his perceptions, his current principal and ‘Inside Leadership’ principals. Jeff stated:

These people really ‘nailed’ the nature of role components and capabilities for me. My principal, in particular, has been incredibly supportive and a valuable source of learning. He regularly volunteers his experiences and perspectives that, for me, are pure gold!

Finally, Jeff reiterated the importance of a two-week internship, organised and funded by his school, on his perceptions. He commented: “During my internship, I visited five Catholic secondary schools on the east coast and observed five very different principals in action before engage them in discussion regarding the highs and lows of the role and what it takes to flourish.”

At the conclusion of the program, in addition to the role components identified previously, Jeff articulated the role of the Catholic principal as leader of school improvement. He defined school improvement as “a way to enhance all aspects of the school to achieve its vision and, in doing so, support the mission of the Church.” Jeff reflected on the leadership capabilities required of the principal when leading this role component. He highlighted as imperative: “principal knowledge of school improvement generally and the philosophy of the QCS Framework and use of the school improvement tool specifically.” He also remarked: “The QCS Framework and tool are vehicles for transcendental leadership because they encourage the principal to engage in collaborative dialogue on the same level as the staff for the purpose of cultural analysis and improvement.” When clarifying his understanding of transcendental leadership capabilities, Jeff commented: “Such principals care less about themselves and their needs than they do about those of others, especially staff and the students and families they serve.” He continued: “They are highly reflective individuals who model Gospel values and engage in discussion in a genuine, peaceful and non-hierarchical way.”

Jeff specified the positive influence of two program-related features on his end-of-program perceptions. He cited the influence of his LSI, 360-degree profile and coaching sessions:

My coach was brilliant at assisting me to dissect my leadership strengths and weaknesses and guided the process of improvement with precision. As a principal, his understanding of the role and what it takes to succeed was a bonus for my learning and development.

Additionally, he reiterated the influence of ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals and his principal: “Their willingness to openly share their experiences of the role, positive and negative, and what it takes to succeed greatly assisted my learning.”

### **5.6.3 Factors enhancing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Jeff identified three factors enhancing his interest in Catholic principalship. He reflected: “I am attracted to the principalship because of the opportunity provided by the role to do good, to benefit others as Jesus did, especially the marginalised.” He also articulated his “desire to work with staff to develop students in the holistic sense and encourage them to be self-responsible, strive for excellence and display leadership.” Finally, he identified as significantly important his “desire to inspire all members of the school community to live according to the Gospel values of faith, justice and service.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Jeff stated: “My original attraction to principalship has not changed, but has become more focused as a result of the program.” He expressed his “desire, as principal, to build a distinctively Catholic school community focused on school improvement where areas of weakness are identified before working to create positive change for the benefit of students.” Jeff discussed the result of this focus as “a Catholic curriculum used to holistically develop students who are responsible for self, strive for excellence, display leadership and live out the Gospel values of faith, justice and service to others, especially the marginalised.”

At this point in the program, Jeff specified the influence of three program-related features on his perceptions. He discussed the importance of “reflecting on the content of program modules and using the vision statement development framework to clarify leadership values and principalship motives.” Linked to this program feature was a second influence: “Sharing this vision statement with my fellow aspirants, my principal and guest principals from the program and modifying it as a result of these discussions.” Finally, Jeff asserted: “Testing the authenticity and validity of my vision statement with the five principals I shadowed during my internship experience was a very affirming experience.”

At the conclusion of the program, Jeff described the factors enhancing his interest in Catholic principalship through a leadership vision statement developed over the course of the program:

I value Catholic education and the important role it plays in Australian society. I also believe in the need for schools to establish sound fundamentals including

high expectations and a consistent approach to teaching and learning. I am motivated to lead a vibrant Catholic school where teachers are developed to use Gospel-based curricula and modern technology to facilitate holistic student development. I want to work with staff who challenge and support our students to be self-responsible, to strive for excellence, to display leadership and live the Gospel values of faith, justice and service to others, especially the marginalised.

He concluded his vision statement with the declaration: “I am keen to develop educative partnerships between the school and its community, especially parents, to bring this vision to life and use a process of improvement to continually assess and develop our effectiveness.” As was the case at the conclusion of the program’s first year, Jeff identified vision statement development and discussion with program colleagues, his principal and ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals as significant influences on his perceptions.

#### **5.6.4 Factors diminishing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Jeff identified three factors diminishing his interest in Catholic principalship. He stated: “I have significant concerns regarding the requirement of the principal to manage school finances; an unfamiliar area that I have gained little exposure to during my time as deputy principal.” Further, Jeff acknowledged the disincentive associated with “having to deal with legal issues and the possibility of litigation” given his “background as a teacher, not a lawyer.” With regard to these disincentives, he commented: “observing my principals struggle with these role aspects has rubbed off on me in a negative way.” Jeff also discussed the “uncomfortable nature of making certain decisions, especially expelling students.” When elaborating on decision-making concerns, he identified his poorly developed professional support network as a problem because he anticipated the need to “call upon the experience of wise people when making these decisions.” Jeff conceded: “The thought of being professionally alone when doing so is not attractive.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Jeff’s apprehension with regard to disincentives identified pre-program: managing school finances, dealing with legal issues/potential litigation and the difficult nature of decision-making, had decreased.

He noted the positive influence of three program-related features on his perceptions.

Firstly, he observed:

Listening to the stories recounted by 'Inside Leadership' guest principals made me realise that my original concerns were a natural part of the role that everyone struggles with at some point. The fact that they have survived assures me that I will too.

Secondly, he stated: "The program has allowed me to develop relationships with CEOWA support staff who provided pearls of wisdom, practical advice and assurances that significant assistance will be available to me as a new principal as required." Finally, Jeff affirmed the influence of his internship experience on his perceptions:

Discussions with my internship principals highlighted that, as beginning principals, these people were as worried as I was about things like managing school finances and resolving legal issues. The reality is that they experienced these aspects of the role, sought advice and survived. As a result, I know that I have the capacity to do so too.

Despite minimisation of his initial concerns, Jeff identified a new disincentive, the result of program-inspired reflection: "Reduced student contact because of role intensity, the result of accountability requirements and the time taken to deal with student, staff and parent issues."

At the conclusion of the program, the disincentive associated with role intensification and reduced student contact had abated. Jeff remarked:

I have reflected on program theory and discussed my concerns with my principal, 'Inside Leadership' guest principals and CEOWA support staff I met through the program. What I have learned is that effectively distributing leadership actually releases you to make meaningful contact with students. It is possible to put the pen down and free oneself from administrivia.

As the program neared completion, however, Jeff expressed a new disincentive, the result of his recent appointment as principal. He commented: "I am torn between leaving my deputy principal role, one that is thoroughly enjoyable and fulfilling, a pristine position, and assuming one that will undoubtedly involve unknown, complicated challenges."

### **5.6.5 Self-efficacy to commence principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Jeff nominated high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. He believed that his eight years as deputy principal “had provided the necessary on-the-job training and experience required to handle the rigors of principalship.” Further, Jeff’s experience as acting principal at his school for a six-month period during 2009 convinced him that he had “an excellent working knowledge of the role and the necessary faith, skills, vision and energy to lead a Catholic school.” Linked to this experience, he discussed the “strong endorsement and support of past and present principals, staff, students, their parents and other members of the school community as significant factors” contributing to his self-efficacy perceptions. Finally, he stated: “being trusted to lead strategic initiatives by my principal and being provided with the time and resources to do so has provided me with the confidence to take on the role.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Jeff reiterated his high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. He attributed his perceptions to “proficiency as a deputy principal and an overwhelming sense of readiness for promotion.” Jeff also affirmed the positive influence of four program-related features on his self-efficacy perceptions. He stated:

The use of program theory to understand the role and required capabilities; developing a leadership vision statement to clarify motivations; and opportunities to identify, reflect upon and minimise disincentives were interrelated program features that positively influenced my perspectives.

Jeff also reflected on the positive effect of LSI, 360-degree data and coaching sessions:

The way my coach used the data to assist my understanding of leadership strengths and weaknesses and guided the design of goals and improvement strategies was impressive. I consider this element of the program a vital preparatory step in my development.

Additionally, he commented positively on the influence of program facilitation and collegial interactions on his perceptions:

The way each program module was facilitated was superb. We were given opportunities to think about theory presented before interacting with a range of people to share our perspectives and experiences. Listening to the stories of

colleagues, guest principals, my coach and, when back at school, my principal, provided me with confidence that I have what it takes to lead. Likewise, when I told my stories, I felt affirmed regarding my potential as a future Catholic principal.

Finally, Jeff discussed the self-efficacy benefits associated with “knowing that CEOWA support staff, especially those who facilitated program modules, would be there to render assistance during times of need.” He concluded his affirmation of CEOWA staff with the comment: “Their stories of success, failure and learning and belief in my capacity to lead not only provided me with confidence, it assured me that failure is not only acceptable, it’s expected!”

At the conclusion of the program, Jeff had attained his first principalship. He commented: “I couldn’t be more ready to begin the principalship and feel confident that I can bring experience and ideas that will enhance the excellent reputation of my new school.” As was the case at the conclusion of the program’s first year, he reiterated the positive influence of three support network members on his high self-efficacy perceptions. Jeff discussed the influence of his coach and use of LSI data:

His experience as a principal from our system benefited me greatly. He knew my context and was able to relate to my experiences. He also intimately knew my LSI profile and used the data to guide me through some serious improvement goals by encouraging me to develop and use effective strategies.

Jeff reaffirmed the positive influence of his fellow aspirants on his perceptions:

One of the greatest benefits was the very deliberate manner in which our convenor and developed group collegiality. In this high-trust environment, we freely shared experiences, concerns, triumphs and failures that assisted our learning and allowed us to gauge our readiness for principalship.

He also attributed his perceptions to “the opportunity to develop and refine a leadership vision statement and test it through discussion with colleagues, ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals and my principal.” Jeff concluded his discussion with two statements. Firstly, he commented: “These people affirmed and encouraged me to believe in my leadership abilities.” Secondly, he remarked: “They also openly shared their stories of triumph, failure and the learning that flowed from both. I often found myself thinking, if they survived and thrived, there is every chance that I will too!”

## **5.7 Case Study Six: Paula**

When 'Paula' commenced the Aspiring Principals Program in January 2011, she had completed her eighth year as assistant principal. Paula trained as a primary school teacher, graduating in 1980. Between 1980 and 2002, she taught at two Catholic primary schools in Western Australian country towns. In January 2003, Paula commenced her first leadership role as assistant principal at a Kindergarten-Year seven Catholic primary school in Perth where she served until December 2008. In January 2009, she commenced her second assistant principalship at another metropolitan Catholic primary school. Toward the end of the program, in September 2012, Paula attended her first principalship interview and was appointed principal at a Kindergarten-Year seven Catholic primary school in a country town commencing January 2013.

### **5.7.1 Case study overview.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Paula expressed moderate self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. She fundamentally considered principalship a managerial occupation requiring knowledge of technical role responsibilities such as the administration of school finances. To a lesser extent, Paula described the principal as leader of the role component, teaching and learning and provider of staff and student pastoral care. She was attracted to principalship because of the opportunity to lead the role components, teaching and learning and community engagement and development. Paula considered the requirement of the principal to manage school finances and the school board and adhere to compliance and accountability requirements disincentives.

As Paula participated in and completed the program, she reported high self-efficacy to commence principalship. Paula described principalship through five, interrelated role components: Catholic identity; teaching and learning; stewardship of resources; community engagement and development; and school improvement. She also cited three capabilities required of principals to effectively lead and manage through each role component: vision and values; knowledge and understanding; and leadership competence. Her attraction to principalship, articulated through a leadership vision statement developed over the course of the program, remained similar to that conveyed pre-program, but expanded to include leadership of the role

components, Catholic identity and school improvement. She expressed reduced apprehension with regard to previously identified disincentives, but cited several new concerns; the result of reflection inspired by her appointment as principal of a country Catholic primary school. One concern cited by Paula was impending separation from her family support network.

As Paula participated in and completed the program, she attributed discernible perception changes to the influence of three program-related features: a coherent, rigorous and systematic curriculum; development of support networks and interaction with network members; and active learning experiences. Paramount amongst these experiences were school board observation and finance and capital development sub-committee participation; development and refinement of a leadership vision statement; use of the LSI 360-degree tool and coaching for leadership capability improvement; and a three-week period of acting principalship in a country Catholic primary school.

### **5.7.2 Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Paula identified three role components associated with Catholic principalship. Above all, she considered the Catholic principal “a manager of school finances.” She also described the principal as “a pseudo human resource manager responsible for the recruitment, development, appraisal and wellbeing of staff.” Further, she referred to the principal as “an educational leader who motivates teachers and support staff to perform to the best of their ability when striving to meet the holistic needs of students.” With regard to the capabilities required for effective performance, Paula asserted: “The principal requires knowledge and skill to manage these functions along with strong organisation and time management skills and a willingness to delegate.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Paula articulated Catholic principalship through four interrelated role components studied through the program. Specifically, she referred to the principal as “leader of school Catholic identity; responsible for the evangelisation of school community members through exposure to Catholic traditions and the development of positive relationships based on Gospel values.” Additionally, she discussed the role of the principal as “a steward who,

using Gospel-based, accountable leadership, plans and manages environmental, financial, capital and human resources to achieve school vision.” Paula also articulated the role of the principal as community builder:

Effective principals model the love of Jesus through the relationships they develop with school community members. Done well, positive and respectful relationships form between teachers, students and parents and staff and families are supported, especially during times of need.

Finally, she described the principal as “an educational leader who promotes the development and delivery of a Gospel-based curriculum and classrooms and empowers teachers to know subject content, student needs and effective teaching practices.”

When discussing the capabilities required for effective performance, Paula highlighted as essential “principal knowledge regarding the management of school finances, construction of school facilities, application of CECWA policy statements and industrial agreements and the resolution of legal and human resource management issues.” Further, she stated: “When managing people, the principal must be capable of adopting a constructive transactional disposition.” Paula also referred to the successful principal as “a leader with transformational capability necessary to form a distinctively Catholic vision for the school, communicate it clearly to the community and drive efforts to achieve it.” With regard to leading vision achievement, she commented: “The principal must think, speak and act through the lens of Gospel values and be able to empower others to think beyond themselves and act in ways appropriate for the achievement of school vision.” Finally, Paula reiterated the “importance of interpersonal skills to ensure that relationships between staff, students and their parents are healthy and reflect Gospel values.”

At this point in the program, Paula attributed her changing perceptions to the influence of three program-related features. She commented: “The use of the Leadership Framework and leadership theory to frame program modules made role components and capabilities explicit and assisted my learning.” Moreover, she reflected:

My knowledge of stewardship responsibilities and constructive transactional capabilities came directly from the program requirement to work with my principal, school board chair and colleagues from our finance and capital development sub-committees. These experiences helped me to learn about and apply these important managerial role aspects.

Finally, she stated: “My principal’s willingness to engage with me in critical discussion regarding the role and its demands after each program module was a significant factor influencing my perceptions.”

At the conclusion of the program, in addition to the role components previously described, Paula discussed the Catholic principal as leader of the role component, school improvement. She specified: “The purpose of QCS in our system is improvement of school structures and activities to achieve school vision and, as a result, ensure provision of support the Church’s evangelising mission.” Paula also commented on the capabilities required of the principal when leading school improvement: “The principal must have the knowledge and skill necessary to use the QCS Framework and tool to identify outstanding aspects of the school as well as its flaws before developing and implementing improvement plans.” When leading school improvement, she referred to the need for the principal “to model Gospel values through a transcendental approach to leadership by engaging with staff and community members in honest, collaborative dialogue, not as the principal, but as a colleague focused on improvement.” Paula also reflected on the need for the principal to distribute leadership for school improvement to develop staff capacity. She stated: “It is important that the principal identify and encourage interested staff to lead QCS component-reviews; these are opportunities for them to develop and showcase their leadership potential.”

Paula attributed her end-of-program perceptions to the influence of four program-related features. She commented: “The delivery of content relating to the QCS Framework and school improvement tool alongside leadership theory throughout the program’s second year assisted my understanding of the nature of this role component and the capabilities required to lead it effectively.” Additionally, she reiterated the influence of her “supportive principal who shared his experience of the QCS process and its challenges.” Paula also described the positive effect of “discussions regarding school improvement benefits and challenges with ‘Inside

Leadership’ guest principals” on her perceptions. Finally, she asserted: “Taking the reins as acting principal for three weeks in a country school was an overwhelmingly positive experience that assisted my understanding of school improvement, other role components and the capabilities principals require to lead and manage effectively.”

### **5.7.3 Factors enhancing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Paula identified three factors enhancing her interest in Catholic principalship. She declared: “I am attracted to the role because it would allow me to achieve my goal of leading a school where staff and parents work together to develop the spiritual, emotional, social, academic and physical dimensions of students.” Paula also referred to her “commitment to lead the development of teachers through a professional learning community dedicated to the improvement of pedagogical practices and student learning.” Finally, she remarked: “I am driven by a strong belief in the value of Catholic Education, especially the potential for Gospel values to be integrated into all facets of the school and its community.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Paula asserted: “My original attraction to principalship has not changed, but has been strengthened by participation in the program.” Specifically, she expressed her “drive to develop and lead a school community that overtly demonstrates Gospel values and considers the holistic development of students its highest priority.” To achieve this aim, Paula clarified the importance of “nurturing effective school-community partnerships and developing teachers who constantly review and improve the quality of their practices and classroom environments.”

At this point in the program, Paula attributed her changing perceptions to the influence of three program-related features. She referred to the “effect of the program, especially modules and activities that prompted deep reflection on the role and its appealing features.” Moreover, she reflected: “The process of moulding my thoughts about leadership into a vision statement was a defining moment that clarified my motivations for seeking principalship.” Finally, Paula asserted: “Constantly sharing my vision statement with my program colleagues and my principal were affirming experiences that allowed me to test its authenticity and make appropriate refinements.”

At the conclusion of the program, Paula described the factors enhancing her interest in Catholic principalship through a leadership vision statement developed over the course of the program:

I am drawn to the possibility of leading a distinctly Catholic school that focuses on the holistic development of students; where individual gifts and talents are recognised and opportunities are provided for students to engage in acts of collective good through Christian service learning. I am driven to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the Catholic curriculum and meet student learning needs in highly pastoral, Gospel-infused, classroom environments.

Paula concluded her vision statement with the declaration: “To assist students to reach their potential, I want to lead a school where community members model Gospel values and work as a team to review and improve all aspects of the school.”

Paula discussed the influence of two program-related features on her end-of-program perceptions. She stated: “As was the case at the end of last year, sharing my emerging leadership vision statement with my program colleagues and my principal were tremendously affirming experiences that helped me to mould it further and clarify my drive.” Paula also considered sharing her emerging vision statement with “guest principals during ‘Inside Leadership’ sessions and testing it with the community” during her acting principalship experience important perception influences.

#### **5.7.4 Factors diminishing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Paula identified three factors diminishing her interest in Catholic principalship. She described the requirement of the principal to manage school finances as a “daunting part of the role.” Additionally, Paula considered school board management a disincentive because she perceived it would “involve trying to cater for a diverse group of people, all vying for favourable treatment.” Finally, she commented: “The requirement of the principal to be constantly accountable to the CEOWA and government authorities is an unattractive part of the role.” When explaining her reasons for identifying these concerns, Paula stated: “My current principal is challenged by these role aspects and they are alien to my training and leadership experiences.” She also commented on the learning barrier presented by the current structure of her assistant principal role:

“I am an assistant principal for 0.2 FTE and I teach 0.8 FTE and, as such, I struggle to do justice to either role and know that I would need more time to dedicate to these aspects of principalship to master them.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Paula remarked: “My original concerns regarding the principalship have decreased as a result of program participation.” She noted the influence of two program-related features on her perceptions:

Being an observer on my school board and a participant on the finance sub-committee has reduced my concerns regarding school financial management. Also, the realisation that CEOWA support staff, many of whom I met through the program, are available to assist principals with compliance and accountability tasks is a huge relief.

Instead, Paula identified a new disincentive: “the impact of role demands on principal health and wellbeing.” She cited two specific role aspects responsible for this impact: “the need for the principal to constantly mediate between conflicting parties, especially parents and staff members” and “demands placed on the principal to support school community members experiencing crisis.” Paula commented that her conclusions regarding this disincentive were the result of observing her principal “suffer physical and emotional exhaustion as a result of these demands.”

At the conclusion of the program, Paula reflected a change in perspective with regard to the potential for the role to adversely impact principal health and wellbeing:

Meeting principals through the program and hearing their stories have taught me two things. Firstly, it is important to have a confidential, professional network to debrief with and lean on during difficult times. Secondly, an interest beyond school, something to engage in as a ‘pressure release’ to counter role negativity, is a non-negotiable.

Further, she stated: “As I said last year, I feel relieved and comforted that there are CEOWA specialist staff, many of whom I met through the program, who will be available to support me as a beginning principal when confronted with tricky conflict and crisis situations.” The willingness of these staff to render assistance was confirmed for Paula during her acting principalship experience where she “used their knowledge and skills to navigate these very situations with great success.”

At the conclusion of the program, Paula had been appointed principal at a Kindergarten-Year seven Catholic primary school in a country town and was preparing to undertake the role. As a result of her appointment, she reflected that her disincentive perceptions had changed:

Now that the reality of my appointment has hit me, I think more about the impact of the role on my family and me. My husband is a successful professional in Perth and my children are at university, so it's not possible for them to join me in the new town. Even though I will only be an hour from Perth and will come home regularly on weekends and holidays, not having them with me to provide face-to-face support and advice is daunting.

Paula also identified a concern specific to her new school: "The old-fashioned priest with his negative attitude toward female leaders has the potential to thwart attempts to build a positive school-parish relationship." Finally, Paula expressed the disincentive associated with country principals having to be "Jacks of all trades." She clarified this statement when discussing a handover meeting with her predecessor. During the meeting, the incumbent principal informed her that she would not only be responsible for the usual principalship duties and responsibilities, she would be expected to "clean gutters, fix roof leaks, mow the school oval on weekends, be the parish council chairperson and possibly coach the town football team!"

#### **5.7.5 Self-efficacy to commence principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Paula remarked: "After working effectively as an assistant principal for eight years, I feel ready for a new challenge and am moderately confident in my ability to begin principalship." She expressed "excitement at the prospect of participating in a program that focuses on identification and improvement of leadership strengths and weaknesses." Additionally, she stated: "I am sure that this program will provide me with the knowledge, skills and confidence I need to apply for and start my first principalship."

At the conclusion of the program's first year, Paula nominated high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. Specifically, she asserted: "I feel highly ready for principalship and am in a great place personally and professionally to do so; it's now just a matter of opportunity." In part, Paula attributed her high self-efficacy perceptions to mastery of her current leadership role and positive support

she received from her principal, staff, students and their parents. She stated: “These factors compel me to seek a new challenge in the form of principalship.” Paula also discussed the influence of four program-related features on her perceptions. Firstly, she commented favourably on “the confidence provided by the program to take on the challenge of the role.” She referred to “self-assuredness that comes with an improved understanding of the role and its required capabilities, working to clarify the reasons for seeking appointment and identifying and managing disincentives.” Secondly, Paula identified as important influences on her self-efficacy perceptions:

Program activities including the use of LSI and coaching sessions to improve my leadership capabilities; developing and refining my leadership vision statement to clarify my leadership values and reasons for seeking appointment; and participating on my school board and sub-committees to master parts of the role that initially terrified me.

Thirdly, and related to disincentive mitigation, she discussed the influence of CEOWA specialist staff, facilitators of program modules, on her self-efficacy perceptions:

Meeting and getting to know these people, especially those who delivered school finance, human resource, industrial relations and legal content, has provided me with a sense of comfort. I don’t have to have all the answers when facing difficult situations, support is available and I’ll not be left to go it alone.

Finally, Paula reflected on the influence of support, encouragement and affirmation received from her fellow aspirants, coach and principal on her confidence to commence principalship. She stated: “Listening to their stories of triumph, failure and the learning that resulted from both have inspired the belief in me that I am capable of achieving as they have; their collective encouragement has provided me with confidence to lead that I lacked a year ago.”

At the conclusion of the program, as was the case at the end of the program’s first year, Paula specified high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. She confirmed: “I am keen to continue my leadership journey as a principal and feel that I have the skills, knowledge, dedication and personality required to make a positive contribution to a country school community.” Paula indicated that her high self-efficacy perceptions were, in part, due to program-related features identified at the conclusion of the program’s first year, notably vision statement development and

refinement, school board and sub-committee participation and use of LSI data and coaching sessions. She also emphasised the positive influence of support network members on her self-efficacy perceptions, especially her program colleagues:

For me, my colleagues are more than supportive professional connections. They are life-long friends and confidants who will be there for me regardless of the challenges I face in the role. It is reassuring to know that I have a group of like-minded people traveling the principalship road with me.

She concluded her affirmation of support network members with the comment: “My principal and coach have also been instrumental to the feelings of confidence I have to commence principalship.”

Paula also identified three new influences on her end-of-program self-efficacy perceptions. She reflected:

‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals were a source of encouragement and support for me this year. Their stories of leadership success, failure and learning were encouraging because I am aware that I will experience the same as a beginning principal. They survived and so will I!

Moreover, she commented on the positive influence of a successful three-week stint as acting principal at a country primary school on her confidence to lead. Paula described the experience as “imperative for road-testing program learning, my leadership vision statement, my ability to deal with challenging role aspects and develop positive and productive relationships with school community members.” Finally, and related to this experience, was the influence of affirmation received from the school community. Paula confirmed: “the support and encouragement received from staff, students and their parents with regard to my leadership provided me with a confidence boost and prompted me to apply for and achieve my first principalship.”

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## **5.8 Case Study Seven: Riley**

When 'Riley' commenced the Aspiring Principals Program in January 2011, he had completed his sixth year as head of junior school at a Catholic, Kindergarten-Year 12 school in a Western Australian country town. Riley trained as a primary school teacher, graduating in 1994. Between 1995 and 2004, he taught at three Catholic primary schools in Western Australian country towns before undertaking his first leadership role as head of junior school in January 2005. Toward the end of the program, in November 2012, Riley attended his first principalship interview and was appointed principal at a Kindergarten-Year seven Catholic primary school in a country town commencing January 2013.

### **5.8.1 Case study overview.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Riley expressed high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. He predominantly considered principalship a managerial occupation and, to a lesser extent, one involving leadership of the role component, community engagement and development. Riley cited principal knowledge of school financial management, accountability and compliance requirements and the resolution of legal issues together with transformational leadership ability as the capabilities required for effective performance. He was attracted to principalship because of the opportunity to lead the role components, Catholic identity and teaching and learning. Riley considered the requirement of the principal to manage school finances and resolve conflict and legal issues whilst coping with threats of litigation disincentives.

As Riley participated in and completed the program, self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship remained high. He described principalship through five, interrelated role components: Catholic identity; teaching and learning; stewardship of resources; community engagement and development; and school improvement. Riley also cited three capabilities required of principals to effectively lead and manage through each role component: vision and values; knowledge and understanding; and leadership competence. His attraction to principalship, articulated through a leadership vision statement developed over the course of the program, remained similar to that conveyed pre-program. However, Riley indicated that he was also attracted by the prospect of leading the role component, community engagement and

development and positively influencing the lives of school community members through quality leadership. Riley expressed reduced apprehension with regard to previously identified disincentives, but cited new concerns; the result of his appointment as principal of a country Catholic primary school. Concerns highlighted by Riley included separation from personal and professional support networks to commence principalship in a new context.

As Riley participated in and completed the program, he attributed discernible perception changes to the influence of three program-related features: a well-facilitated, coherent, rigorous and systematic curriculum; development of support networks and interaction with network members; and active learning experiences. Foremost amongst these experiences were school board observation and finance and capital development sub-committee participation; development and refinement of a leadership vision statement; coaching for leadership capability improvement; leadership of a QCS school improvement project; and a 10-week period of acting principalship at his school.

### **5.8.2 Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Riley identified two role components associated with Catholic principalship. He predominantly focused on the requirement of the principal to “manage a number of responsibilities including school finances, administrative compliance and dealing with conflict and legal issues.” To a lesser extent, he referred to the role of the principal as “leader of the school community who builds links between staff, parents and the parish using words and behaviours based on those of Jesus Christ.” With regard to the capabilities required for effective performance, Riley commented: “The principal needs knowledge and experience to effectively manage technical role aspects.” Additionally, he reflected: “To build a positive school community, the principal must have strong interpersonal skills, respect for people, be capable of forming meaningful relationships and the ability to motivate staff.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Riley articulated Catholic principalship in terms of leadership and management through four interrelated role components conveyed by the program. He began by describing the role of the

principal as “the driver of school Catholicity who leads the evangelisation of students, staff, parents and members of the wider community using words and actions based on Gospel values.” Additionally, Riley reflected on the role of the principal as “a steward who looks after the school environmental, financial, capital and human resources.” He also described the principal as “a Gospel-driven educational leader who works with teachers to achieve the holistic development of students.” To accomplish this aim, he stated: “The principal must encourage teachers to know subject content, including the integration of Gospel values into the curriculum, use data to interpret student needs and effective pedagogy to enhance student achievement.” Finally, Riley discussed the role of the principal as “a community builder who models Gospel values when working with people, no matter how difficult they are.” He reflected: “Capacity to grow community is especially demonstrated by the way a principal responds to those who are marginalised or most in need.”

When discussing the capabilities required for effective performance, Riley referred to the use of constructive transactional capabilities when managing staff:

Effective principals set crystal-clear expectations for the work they need completed before working with staff to generate mutually acceptable goals. They provide feedback, celebrate when things go well and clarify what needs to change when performance is sub-par.

He also emphasised the importance of principal transformational capabilities:

The principal must be capable of establishing school vision to support the Church’s evangelising mission, communicate it to the school community and motivate all to achieve it. To do this, the principal must have a set of values based on those modelled by Jesus. He or she must speak and act with genuine care for people, especially staff, be capable of connecting with them emotionally, inspiring them intellectually, listening to their opinions and actively involving them in decision-making.

Finally, Riley discussed role-related knowledge and understanding as a capability. He commented: “The principal must have the knowledge necessary to design and manage the school budget including implementing corrective measures when required.” Moreover, he stated: “The principal needs to know how to work with the

school board to plan and oversee the construction of school facilities and apply CECWA policy statements and industrial agreement clauses.”

At this point in the program, Riley specified the influence of three program-related features on his perceptions. He discussed the influence of “the program curriculum, especially understanding the role of the principal and required capabilities as detailed in our Leadership Framework.” Further, he described the influence of school board and sub-committee participation on his role and capability perceptions, notably with regard to “understanding the technical requirements associated with school financial management and capital development planning.” Finally, Riley referred to discussions with his principal and ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals invited to host program sessions as “excellent opportunities to clarify and understand the role and what it takes to succeed.”

At the conclusion of the program, Riley focused specifically on the role of the Catholic principal as leader of the role component, school improvement. He defined school improvement as “the process used by a school to enhance its strengths and minimise its weaknesses for the purpose of achieving its vision and, in doing do, supporting the evangelising mission of the Church.” With regard to the capabilities required of the principal to effectively lead school improvement, he cited “knowledge of the QCS Framework and use of its tool.” Riley also highlighted the importance of principal transcendental capabilities. He remarked: “When leading improvement conversations, the principal must model the example of Jesus by engaging in non-hierarchical, respectful, high-trust and collaborative discussions.” He also stated his belief that “transcendental principals provide opportunities for interested staff to develop their leadership potential by distributing responsibility for school improvement.”

Riley specified the influence of four program-related features on his end-of-program perceptions. He asserted: “In depth study of the QCS Framework and use of the school improvement tool during the program’s second year was an opportunity to understand this role component and required capabilities.” He also affirmed leadership of the QCS school improvement project as “an excellent way to develop an understanding of school improvement and effective ways to apply transcendental capabilities.” Moreover, he reflected that his learning regarding school improvement

was confirmed through discussions with his “coach, current and past principal and ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals who participated in the program.” Finally, he commented: “The 10-week period of acting principalship at my school exerted a powerful influence on my understanding of school improvement and leadership of other role components.” This opening arose when Riley’s principal undertook long service leave, providing him with the opportunity to experience the role, apply program learning and test and refine his leadership capabilities.

### **5.8.3 Factors enhancing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Riley identified two factors enhancing his interest in Catholic principalship. He stated his “desire to be an educational leader who assists teachers to improve their craft.” Riley indicated that he would “achieve this by developing teacher knowledge of content, student needs, effective pedagogical practices and the use of data to make good decisions in the classroom.” Further, he commented: “I am motivated by the prospect of leading a school where vision can be created and staff inspired to share it.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Riley stated: “I am attracted to the role because of the opportunity to lead.” He continued: “Part of my motivation stems from the feeling that I have outgrown my current role and feel compelled to take the next logical career step to principalship.” He also reiterated his “interest in being a principal who places educational leadership at the centre of all school endeavours and drives achievement of this vision through the development of quality teachers.”

At this point in the program, Riley specified the influence of three program-related features on his perceptions. He stated: “Reflecting on the role components and capabilities as they were presented through the program has confirmed my suitability for principalship.” Further, he reflected: “Development of my leadership vision statement has assisted me to clarify my leadership values and identify the appealing aspects of the role.” Finally, Riley discussed the benefits associated with sharing his vision statement with his principal, fellow aspirants and guest principals invited to host ‘Inside Leadership’ sessions. He reflected: “These discussions permitted me to assess whether or not I’m on this path for the right reasons.”

At the conclusion of the program, Riley articulated the factors enhancing his interest in Catholic principalship through his leadership vision statement developed over the course of the program:

I want to create an authentic Catholic school community where the lives of staff, students and parents are enhanced through high quality, caring leadership. Together, we would work to create a passionate community and learning environment based on Gospel values. Within this learning community, teachers would be developed to understand content, the needs of their students, effective teaching practices and the use of data to make good decisions in the classroom. Together, we would work to assist each child to develop holistically: academically, spiritually, socially, physically and emotionally. Parents are important for the realisation of this vision and I am driven to encourage their participation in lessons alongside teachers, the aim of which is to support the development of their children.

Riley believed he had the capacity to implement and achieve his vision because of his “ability to communicate non-hierarchically and in an honest and uncomplicated manner.” He considered his capacity to communicate his “greatest leadership asset”.

Riley specified the influence of three program-related features on his end-of-program perceptions. He discussed “the confidence boost provided by positive self-assessment regarding suitability for principalship against the role components and capabilities presented through the program.” He also reiterated his earlier perspective that “vision statement development and refinement clarified and confirmed the authenticity” of his principalship ambitions. Riley affirmed discussions with his principal, program colleagues and ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals as an “integral part of the vision statement refinement process.” Finally, he stated: “The opportunity to test the authenticity of my vision statement and my understanding of the role and its required capabilities through acting principalship has confirmed my suitability for principalship.”

#### **5.8.4 Factors diminishing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Riley identified three factors diminishing his interest in Catholic principalship. He remarked: “The need for principals to deal with legal issues is daunting given that I’m a teacher, not a

lawyer.” Additionally, he stated: “Conflict with staff and parents troubles me because I am a ‘people pleaser’ and imagine that being tough in these situations will be uncomfortable.” Finally, Riley conceded: “I have no experience with school finances and consider this part of the role most challenging.” With regard to school financial management as an unattractive role aspect, he explained: “My fear is the result of my current principal who expertly administers the budget and viciously guards the process, preventing me from learning the ropes.”

At the end of the program’s first year, Riley reported diminished pre-program concerns. When discussing school financial management as a disincentive, he commented: “The requirement of the program to work with my principal, bursar and school board treasurer to set and manage the school budget was an invaluable experience that boosted my confidence.” With regard to the unappealing nature of conflict management and legal issue resolution, Riley stated:

I fear this aspect of the role less that I did a year ago, partly because I have worked on strategies such as mediation to deal with these situations. Also, the relationships I have formed with CEOWA legal and industrial relations support staff through the program reassures me that expert assistance will be available if the need arises.

He also affirmed the influence of ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals on his disincentive perceptions:

Listening to their stories of the early days of principalship made me realise that they too feared aspects of the role that I do. Their proactive suggestions for coping with these challenges were helpful and I felt reassured by the fact that they had survived to tell their tales!

Riley, however, identified a new concern, the result of direct observation of his principal: “The potential for principalship tasks such as dealing with conflict to distract from leadership of other important role components such as teaching and learning.”

At the end of the program, Riley commented: “I feel less daunted by the need to manage school finances, deal with conflict and legal issues and ‘clearing the decks’ to lead teaching and learning.” He reflected: “The program has taught me that with the right structures in place to distribute leadership, it is possible to create the

time needed to focus on educational leadership.” As was the case at the conclusion of the program’s first year, he also reiterated the influence of ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals on his perceptions regarding disincentives. Riley also cited “the value of acting principalship as a way to experience disincentives and develop strategies to manage them.”

As the program concluded, Riley began applying for Catholic primary school principalship vacancies in country towns and was subsequently appointed. As a result of his appointment, he identified the disincentive associated with being separated from family, friends and colleagues. With regard to loss of established professional networks, comprised of his current principal, former principals and assistant principal colleagues, he commented:

My network is a valuable source of advice and support. Loss of immediate face-to-face contact is a difficult, but a necessary part of role progression. This being said, I am not looking forward to the task of creating a new network in a country setting whilst trying to adjust to a new role and all its demands.

With regard to separation from personal support networks, Riley reflected: “My kids are very close to my wife’s mum and dad who live in our town and they are a great source of support for us, especially when it comes to before and after school care.” Riley indicated that moving from his family support base would be emotionally difficult for his children and logistically difficult for himself and his wife.

#### **5.8.5 Self-efficacy to commence principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Riley described his journey to principalship as a natural, almost expected, part of his career path. He stated: “After six successful years as head of junior school, I would say that my self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship is high.” Nonetheless, he reflected: “I consider participation in the program a necessary preparatory step in my development.” Moreover, Riley commented: “I am strongly supported by my principal with regard to my principalship ambition and am fortunate to have been recently provided with the time, authority and resources to lead several initiatives at my school that I believe will further prepare me for the role.”

At the conclusion of the program's first year, Riley reiterated his high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. He stated: "I can say with confidence that the experience of the program together with my effectiveness as head of junior school has me ready for take-off." He also commented on the self-efficacy boost associated with affirmation of his leadership "received from staff, students, their parents and members of the school community." Riley also referred to the influence of four other program-related features on his perceptions. Firstly, he discussed the influence of the program itself:

The program has given me a comprehensive understanding of the role and what it takes to succeed. Clarifying my motivations through the vision statement activity and identifying and working to minimise disincentives through school board and finance sub-committee participation have also significantly assisted my feelings of readiness.

Secondly, he affirmed the influence of program delivery:

Without exception, the way each module was facilitated was brilliant. Along with delivery of content was time to think before joining with colleagues in discussion. These conversations almost always involved the sharing of stories and affirmation of one another's strengths. I always left these conversations with renewed faith in my ability to lead.

Thirdly, Riley discussed the influence of his principal, 'Inside Leadership' guest principals involved in the program and fellow aspirants. He observed: "Their stories of leadership success and disaster as well as what they learned from both left me with the feeling that I am capable of tackling the role as they have." He specifically affirmed the influence of his program colleagues on his self-efficacy perceptions:

The high-trust, unconditional support and affirmation we offer one another has provided me with a sense of confidence in my ability to begin principalship. I am convinced that I have a ready-made, valuable support network to draw upon when things get tough.

Finally, Riley discussed the influence of CEOWA support staff:

Getting to know CEOWA staff as they presented modules was terrific. Their affirmation of me as a potential future principal was especially encouraging and, like 'Inside Leadership' principals, their stories left me with the feeling that I have what it takes to succeed.

He also expressed “a sense of comfort as a result of assurances provided by CEOWA staff that they will be a phone call or email away and are happy to provide advice and support during rocky times that will undoubtedly occur.”

At the conclusion of the program, as was the case at the end of the program’s first year, Riley specified high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. When discussing the influences affecting his perceptions, he reiterated the positive effect of the program curriculum and method of facilitation; program activities including leadership vision statement development and refinement; and discussion with his program colleagues, his principal and ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals. Further, Riley identified the influence of two new factors on his perceptions. He stated:

This year provided an opportunity for leadership coaching alongside a QCS school improvement project. These experiences provided me with an understanding of the purpose of the QCS Framework and use of the QCS tool. Importantly, through the project, I was also able to identify and work on areas of leadership strength and weakness and, as a result, I feel better prepared to lead.

He also attributed his self-efficacy perceptions to a successful, 10-week period of acting principalship at his school: “In term two, I led the college community and applied many program learnings in the field.” Further, he asserted: “This was an incredibly rewarding and enriching experience that allowed me to reflect on my leadership strengths and weaknesses and continue my journey as an authentic Catholic leader.” Finally, Riley reflected: “As a result of the experience, I have a better understanding of the importance of building community and feel encouraged by the positive, productive relationships I developed with staff, students, their families and community members beyond the school gates.”

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## **5.9 Case Study Eight: Sharon**

When 'Sharon' commenced the Aspiring Principals Program in January 2011, she had completed her third year as assistant principal at a Kindergarten-Year six Catholic primary school in Perth. Sharon trained as a primary school teacher, graduating in 1996. Between 1996 and 2007, she taught at three Catholic primary schools, one in a Western Australian country town and two in Perth. In January 2008, she commenced her first leadership role as assistant principal. During the program's second year, Sharon gave birth to her first child, commenced parental leave and completed the program. Upon conclusion of the program, she was actively applying for Catholic primary school principalship vacancies in Western Australian country towns.

### **5.9.1 Case study overview.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Sharon expressed low self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. She predominantly considered principalship a managerial occupation dominated by responsibilities such as the administration of school finances, adherence to compliance and accountability requirements and human resource management. To a lesser extent, she described principalship through the role components, Catholic identity and community engagement and development. Sharon identified principal capacity to employ managerial knowledge, lead vision formation and achievement, apply Gospel values and lead transformationally as the capabilities required for effective performance. Sharon was attracted to principalship because of the opportunity to lead the role components, teaching and learning and community engagement and development. She also expressed attraction to the opportunity, as principal, to form a managerially competent leadership team, apply leadership theory studied and advice received and mentor aspiring female leaders. Sharon considered the requirement of the principal to manage school finances, resolve human resource management and legal issues and cope with threats of litigation disincentives.

As Sharon participated in and completed the program, she reported moderate then high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. She described principalship through five, interrelated role components: Catholic identity; teaching and learning; stewardship of resources; community engagement and development;

and school improvement. Sharon also cited three capabilities required of principals to effectively lead and manage through each role component: vision and values; knowledge and understanding; and leadership competence. Her attraction to the role, articulated through a leadership vision statement developed over the course of the program, became focused on leadership of the role components, teaching and learning, community engagement and development and school improvement. Additionally, Sharon expressed her desire to positively influence the lives of school community members through quality leadership. With regard to previously identified disincentives, Sharon indicated reduced apprehension. However, she cited new concerns, the result of her application for a number of country principalship vacancies and becoming a first-time parent. One concern raised was her capacity to balance spousal and parental responsibilities with the intensity of principalship.

As Sharon participated in and completed the program, she attributed discernible perception changes to the influence of three program-related features: a well-facilitated, coherent, rigorous and systematic curriculum; development of support networks and interaction with network members; and active learning experiences. Prime amongst these experiences were school board observation and finance and capital development sub-committee participation; development and refinement of a leadership vision statement; and leadership capability improvement using LSI, 360-degree data, coaching sessions and the medium of a QCS school improvement project.

### **5.9.2 Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Sharon identified three role components associated with Catholic principalship. She primarily considered the principal “responsible for managing every aspect of a school from finances to human resource management, resolution of legal issues, staff and student pastoral care and teaching and learning.” To a lesser extent, she referred to the principal as “a Christ-centred relationship-builder who is required to form rich relationships with staff, students, their parents and other members of the school community.” Moreover, she commented: “The relationship between the school and parish is crucial for support of the Church’s evangelising mission and it is important that the principal be capable of

bringing the two together.” With regard to the capabilities required for effective performance, Sharon stated: “The principal requires knowledge and skill regarding the managerial dimensions of the role and an ability to inspire staff, students and parents to embrace school vision and work to achieve it.” When discussing vision formulation and achievement, she highlighted the “capacity of the principal to understand the Church’s evangelising mission and its influence on school vision.” Sharon also emphasised the importance of the “principal having a set of values based those of Jesus and the ability and willingness to apply these in word and action.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Sharon discussed the role of the Catholic principal through four interrelated role dimensions addressed by the program. She identified Catholic identity as a role component: “The principal leads the process of evangelisation, reflects Gospel values in school policies and practices and forms effective relationships with members of the local parish.” Additionally, Sharon described the principal as “a steward who cares for the environment, manages the school’s budget and building program, recruits, develops and appraises staff, caters for their wellbeing and is accountable to the CEOWA.” She also defined the principal as “a school’s educational leader who must model a love of learning, professionally develop staff and encourage the provision of high-quality teaching to assist student learning.” When discussing leadership of this role component, Sharon emphasised “the ability of the principal to ensure that teachers embed Gospel values into the curriculum and that staff speak and act with the example of Jesus in mind.” Finally, she asserted: “The principal must grow the school community through Christ-like constructive, respectful and supportive relationships.”

When discussing the capabilities required for effective performance, Sharon reiterated her pre-program observations regarding “the importance of principal capacity to understand, communicate and drive achievement of school vision using words and behaviours based on Gospel values.” Furthermore, she commented: “The effective principal has managerial capability including deep knowledge of school finances, building programs, resolution of conflict and legal issues, policy implementation and the recruitment, appraisal and development of staff.” Sharon also stated: “The principal must be capable leading transformationally through the use charisma, emotional connection and intellectual inspiration if staff are to work as a team to achieve school vision.”

At this point in the program, Sharon specified the influence of three program-related features on her perceptions. She highlighted the role that “program theory, based on Leadership Framework domains and capabilities, played in assisting understanding of the role and what it takes to succeed.” Moreover, she emphasised “the influence of opportunities to apply theory through well-structured activities including school board observation and sub-committee participation” on her perceptions. Finally, Sharon described “being regaled with stories of role success and challenge by ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals” as “significantly influential learning experiences.”

At the conclusion of the program, in addition to the role components previously identified, Sharon discussed Catholic principalship through the lens of school improvement. She described school improvement as “vital for improving the proficiency of other role components: Catholic identity; education; stewardship; and community and the quality of services offered to the school community, especially students.” Sharon made three observations when discussing the capabilities required of principals to successfully lead school improvement. She discussed “the capacity of the principal to understand and communicate the importance of this role component for achievement of school vision to the school community.” She also emphasised as an essential capability, “principal command of school improvement knowledge as it pertains to the QCS Framework and the use of the school improvement tool.” Finally, she expressed the importance of principal transcendental capability when leading school improvement. Sharon clarified her understanding of transcendental capabilities with the statement: “When leading improvement conversations, the principal must be willing and able to take off their ‘principal’s hat’ and engage with others in authentic, collegial, Gospel and trust-based discussions.”

Sharon specified the influence of three program-related features on her end-of-program perceptions. She reaffirmed the influence of “listening to stories of guest principals involved in the program, especially those related to school improvement experiences.” Additionally, she commented: “Productive discussions with my principal regarding school improvement and the use of the QCS Framework and tool were essential for developing my understanding of this role component.” Finally, she identified “coaching using LSI data and the QCS school improvement project” as

“significant tools that enhanced understanding of the QCS Framework, the review process and the capabilities that must be applied when leading school improvement.”

### **5.9.3 Factors enhancing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Sharon identified five factors enhancing her interest in Catholic principalship. She stated: “I am attracted by the prospect of building a diverse and strong leadership team with the capacity to effectively manage school resources.” Further, she commented: “I am attracted by the opportunity provided by the role to lead teaching and learning for the benefit students in the holistic sense.” Sharon also indicated her “motivation to build a close-knit school community, based on Gospel values, where effective partnerships between teachers and parents are developed for the benefit of students.” Moreover, she reflected: “I am keen to put leadership theory learned through my studies and advice received from mentors into practice as principal.” Finally, Sharon expressed her “desire, as principal, to be a role model and mentor for aspiring female leaders.”

At the end of the program’s first year, Sharon noted that participation in the program had confirmed her original reasons for seeking promotion to principalship:

I remain attracted to the principalship because of the prospect of forming an effective leadership team and being a positive role model for aspiring female leaders. The opportunity to lead teaching and learning for the purpose of holistic student development also appeals to me. Most importantly, I remain committed to nurturing a school community, based on Gospel values and authentic partnerships between teachers and parents, to enhance student educational outcomes.

She also cited as an additional appealing aspect of principalship, “the opportunity to work collegially with staff to create a workplace culture where the example of Jesus Christ is authentically lived in word and action.”

At this point in the program, Sharon specified the influence of three program-related features on her perceptions. She considered “journaling after program modules an effective way to sift through thoughts regarding the appeal of the role.” She also emphasised as a potent influence the “development of a vision statement to clarify non-negotiable leadership values and appointment motives.” Finally, she stated: “Sharing my leadership vision statement with my fellow aspirants and ‘Inside

Leadership’ guest principals who regularly joined us were effective activities that assisted me to clarify the allure of the role.”

At the conclusion of the program, Sharon articulated the factors enhancing her interest in Catholic principalship through a leadership vision statement developed over the course of the program:

I am attracted by the prospect of leading a Catholic school community, characterised by Gospel values, authenticity, trust and wellbeing. I want to develop a culture of feedback where staff, students and their parents communicate openly and honestly with one another with the view to improving all aspects of the school. I want to build teacher capacity through distributed leadership, subsidiarity and the provision of professional learning that encourages them to be the best educators and role models they can be.

Sharon concluded her vision statement with the declaration: “When all of this is achieved, I believe that our teachers will be well placed to meet the needs of students and foster within them a life-long passion for learning and achievement of their potential in whatever form this takes.”

When discussing her end-of-program perceptions, Sharon reiterated the influence of the three program-related features identified at the conclusion of the program’s first year. She commented: “The attractive aspects of principalship have been clarified through reflection on program content and activities, defining my leadership vision statement and testing it through discussions with my colleagues and ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals.”

#### **5.9.4 Factors diminishing interest in principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Sharon identified three factors diminishing her interest in Catholic principalship. She stated: “The prospect of having to manage school finances as principal is intimidating because, as an assistant principal, I haven’t been exposed to this aspect of the role.” Further, she remarked: “Having to deal with legal issues is a definite disincentive, again because of my non-existent experience base.” Finally, Sharon cited “concerns regarding the management of staffing issues, especially drafting contracts and dealing with underperforming staff.” With regard to managing underperforming staff, she stated: “Watching my current and previous principals skirt such issues has planted the seed in my mind that

the whole area is a minefield to be avoided.” Sharon also raised the structure of her role as a source of her disincentive perceptions: “Being an assistant principal prevents me learning about principalship; I want to understand the role, but have no time to do so when I consider my large teaching role and existing leadership duties.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Sharon reflected: “I’m less concerned about managing school finances than I was a year ago.” She explained: “My reduced apprehension is the result of the program requirement to work with my principal and bursar to design our school’s budget, conduct the mid-year and end-of-year budget reviews and report monthly to the school board.” With regard to the disincentives associated with the management of legal and human resources issues, Sharon stated: “Meeting and working with CEOWA legal, industrial relations and human resource staff through the program has reduced my apprehension; mainly as a result of their assurances that significant central office support is readily available.” She also considered meeting and listening to the stories of ‘Inside Leadership’ guest principals “an excellent program feature that created a mindset shift regarding distasteful role aspects.” She elaborated: “Every one of these principals, at some point in their careers, had struggled with these aspects of the role and managed to cope with and eventually master their fears; I found myself reflecting, if they could do it, so can I.”

At the conclusion of the program, Sharon’s perspectives regarding disincentives had changed from those “associated with the technical aspects of the role to those connected with people.” She noted:

I was originally worried about mechanical aspects of the role such as managing school finances, understanding policies and drafting contracts, but now know that these can be learned and that significant CEOWA support is available to provide advice and support. What concerns me now is the unpredictable people stuff. It’s easy to work with those who like you and want to follow your vision. It’s another to work with people who, for whatever reason, don’t like you or the decisions you make.

Sharon also identified concerns regarding her “capacity to balance personal and professional obligations as a female leader, wife and first-time mum given the all-consuming nature of the principalship.”

Sharon noted the influence of two program-related features on her end-of-program perceptions. She stated:

Listening to guest principal tales of unreasonable and downright crazy staff members and parents confirmed my perspective regarding the complications associated with people leadership. Also, many discussed the intensity of the role that led me to reflect on the importance of my husband and baby and the need to strike the balance between family and professional obligations.

She also reflected on the ‘reality-check’ that comes with applying for principalship vacancies. Sharon commented: “As was the case with family-work balance concerns prompted by discussions with guest principals, actually submitting applications for vacancies and attending interviews delivered to me a sense of reality; I am torn between my desire for the role and obligations as a wife and first-time mother. Is it possible to balance the two?”

#### **5.9.5 Self-efficacy to commence principalship.**

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, Sharon nominated low self-efficacy to commence principalship: “I’m not even close to feeling ready for principalship and know that I need knowledge, skills and experiences beyond my current role as assistant principal.” However, she expressed confidence in her “strong base upon which to build capacity”, especially her “penchant for relationship building.” She reflected: “I am yet to gain exposure to thorough, principal-specific professional learning, including acting principalship, but feel certain that by the end of this program, I will be better positioned to determine whether or not I am suited to principalship.”

At the conclusion of the program’s first year, Sharon indicated moderate self-efficacy to commence principalship. She asserted: “I’m definitely better placed to begin principalship than I was at the start of the year and feel a growing confidence in my ability to cope with the role, especially the managerial aspects that initially threatened me.” However, she indicated that she was not yet ready to consider applying for principalship vacancies: “I’m not ready to go yet and am even exploring other leadership opportunities such as Religious Education Consultant at the CEOWA before I consider principalship.” Sharon reflected: “Other leadership

opportunities have the potential to add to my skills and experiences that I could then drawn upon as principal.”

At this point in the program, Sharon commented: “My moderate self-efficacy to commence principalship is mainly the result of a better understanding of the role and its required capabilities and the opportunity to clarify my attraction to the role, identify my concerns and develop strategies to manage them.” She attributed her perspectives to the influence of four program-related features. Firstly, Sharon credited her enhanced understanding of the role and requisite capabilities to “participation in a thorough and well-organised program based on the Leadership Framework and contemporary leadership theory.” Secondly, she considered the method of module facilitation a positive influence on her perceptions:

Being given time to consider theory presented before discussing perspectives with colleagues in small groups were vitally important activities. These opportunities developed in me a capacity to reflect on what I was learning and my leadership strengths and weaknesses. Importantly, these activities also prompted the development of fruitful, affirming relationships.

Thirdly, Sharon reflected on the influence of program activities on her confidence to lead. She specifically cited developing a leadership vision statement, the use of LSI data within coaching sessions and school board and sub-committee participation as examples. When discussing the use of the LSI and coaching sessions, she commented:

My coach and I used LSI data to identify my leadership capability strengths and weaknesses before developing improvement goals and strategies. My confidence grew as I put these strategies into action through my role as assistant principal and witnessed their impact.

With regard to influence of leadership vision statement development and refinement on her self-efficacy perceptions, she remarked:

This activity prompted me to reflect deeply on my reasons for seeking principalship and helped me to clarify what I stand for as a leader. As the process unfolded, I was reassured that my drive was authentic.

When discussing the self-efficacy benefits associated with school board observation and sub-committee participation, she commented:

Watching my principal work with school board members led me to reflect on his effectiveness as well as what I would do differently when working with my own board as principal. Probably the most important benefit, however, were comments of support and affirmation I received from him, board members and sub-committee colleagues as I 'learned the ropes' of school finances and capital development planning.

Fourthly, Sharon affirmed the self-efficacy benefits associated with her support network, developed through the program. When discussing the influence of her program colleagues as network members, she emphasised:

My colleagues have definitely contributed to my confidence. Our trusting, frank and affirming relationships allow us to openly share experiences without fear of judgement. The learning resulting from these conversations has confirmed my belief that I am developing in the right direction.

Likewise, she discussed the influence of three other support network members. She stated: "The positive advice, encouragement and support received from CEOWA personnel that facilitated modules, 'Inside Leadership' guest principals involved in the program and my coach have enhanced my leadership confidence." Sharon cited the self-efficacy benefits associated with her "learning that resulted from listening to their stories of leadership success and failure." She commented: "In the midst of these tales, I often found myself thinking: 'What would I do in this situation?' Many times, the answer to my question concurred with the action they had taken; these 'golden moments' did wonders for my confidence."

At the conclusion of the program, Sharon expressed high self-efficacy to commence principalship: "Before the program, I rated myself 20% ready to begin principalship, I now consider myself 90% prepared." Notwithstanding her priority of caring for her newborn child, she described her "readiness to empower, build community, lead with vision and passion and assist children to flourish in every respect." As was the case at the conclusion of the program's first year, Sharon reiterated the positive influence of "the program, the way it was delivered, learning activities and colleague, coach and guest principal support" on her self-efficacy perceptions. She also discussed the positive influence of two additional program-related features on her perceptions: "coaching and the QCS school improvement project and principal support and affirmation." With regard to the first feature, she commented:

My coach was my former principal. This was great because we had a pre-existing relationship; we knew each other well and got on famously. He was able to expertly use my LSI data to work with me to form leadership capability improvement goals and strategies that I implemented as I led my school improvement project. Overall, I was successful at changing aspects of my leadership that needed overhauling.

When discussing the influence of her principal on her self-efficacy perceptions, Sharon reflected:

Last year, our relationship was strained. He was new to our school and had not yet adjusted to the climate of the place or the expectations of the people. As we built our relationship, his support of my development and affirmation of my leadership capabilities came to the fore.

Sharon concluded her affirmation of her principal with the comment: “Our renewed relationship has fostered a spike in my development as an aspiring principal and improved my confidence to lead.”

## **5.10 Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter presented the findings of the research in the form of eight, thickly described case study narratives; one for each aspirant involved in the study. Each narrative reflected the draft themes identified through the data analysis process and highlighted aspirant perceptions of Catholic principalship before, during and upon completion of the Aspiring Principals Program together with the influences provoking discernible perception changes. Specifically, four perceptions were presented: Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance; factors enhancing interest in principalship; factors diminishing interest in principalship; and self-efficacy to commence principalship. The upcoming chapter, Discussion, explores the themes emerging from the cross-case analysis of aspirant case study narratives and data tables generated through the data analysis process. Specifically, each of the four sections of this chapter discusses the themes associated with one set of aspirant perceptions explored by one specific research question. The discussion uses a number of ‘tactics’ recommended by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) including comparison and contrast of themes with the established body of knowledge provided in the literature review.