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

Debra Sayce
University of Notre Dame Australia

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Publication Details

Sayce, D. (2014). What are the professional and personal needs of beginning Western Australian Catholic school principals during the first four years of their appointment? (Doctor of Education). University of Notre Dame Australia. <http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses/100>

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Chapter Six: Discussion of Research Findings

6.1 Introduction

The three perspectives of gender, school location and school type provide the overarching organisational structure for the discussion of findings. For each perspective the discussion focuses on three research areas based on the three research sub questions:

1. What are the technical and managerial skills that newly appointed beginning principals need to acquire?
2. What are the socialisation skills that newly appointed beginning principals need to develop?
3. In what ways do newly appointed beginning principals integrate the role of principalship with their own self-awareness?

Three perspectives underpin the instrumental case study research: gender, which distinguished data from female and male participants; location of the school, which presented data describing the experiences of leading in rural, remote and metropolitan locations; and school type, which differentiated data from beginning principals in primary and secondary school settings. Within each perspective, findings were presented in terms of the three aforementioned research questions. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the qualitative data collected through individual semi-structured interviews, researcher field notes and document searches in light of literature in educational leadership. Discussion is organised around the three case study perspectives Table 6.1 outlines the structure of Chapter Six.

Table 6.1 *Outline of Chapter Six: Discussion of Research Findings*

Section	Section Heading
6.1	Introduction
6.2	Perspective one: Gender
6.3	Comparison of female and male beginning principals
6.4	Perspective two: School location
6.5	Comparison of school location and the beginning principals
6.6	Perspective three: School type
6.7	Comparison of primary and secondary Catholic schooling
6.8	Summary
6.9	Conclusion

6.2 Perspective one: Gender

The first perspective, gender, distinguishes data from male and female participants with regards to their issues and challenges as they began their principalship. Of the 13 participants, nine were female and four were male. A discussion of these issues and challenges is now presented within the context of the three research areas: technical and managerial skills; socialisation skills and self-awareness.

6.2.1 Female

Challenges encountered by the female participants relating to technical and managerial skills focused on the administrative requirements of principalship: financial understanding, school board management and transitioning into the role of principalship. In addition, female participants commented on the principal induction program. Data on the socialisation skills area identified the impact of the school

community's culture on the principalship and the importance of collegial, family and CEOWA support. Within the area of self-awareness, key themes included resiliency, confidence and sense of vocation. These themes are now explored in light of the literature related to gender and school leadership.

6.2.1.1 Technical and managerial skills

The female participants identified three administrative challenges relating to the technical and managerial skills, namely, difficulty in understanding the financial management of school budgeting, school board management and transition into the principal's role. The majority of the female participants acknowledged their limited understanding of financial management as a major challenge in their leadership role. Along with managing the school board, whose primary role is financial management of the school resources, the female participants reported that the extra time and energy placed in understanding finances took time from what participants saw as the core work of leading teaching and learning. These identified challenges are reflected in the literature which highlighted the importance of the transactional skills required by principals for the smooth running of the school (Bush & Glover, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005;). The female participants reported sense of being overwhelmed by their limited financial expertise is echoed in the literature (Walker & Qian, 2003). Literature also pointed to the political nature of the principalship, particularly when dealing with the school community and interest groups such as the school board. The challenges reported by the female participants in working with school boards reflected inexperience in the power structures and special interest groups within the school. This is supported by the work of Daresh, (2006a).

The majority of female participants reported three challenges confronting them as they transitioned into the principalship. These challenges were the shift in mindset required in leaving the deputy / assistant principal role to one of overall leader; the quality of the handover experience with the previous principal; and the nature of the leadership preparation programs the participants engaged in prior to their first appointment. The female participants remarked on the enormity of the challenge of moving into the principalship. Their expectations did not match the adjustments required to be the leader of the school community. A common comment by the female participants focused on the complexity of leading a school and its initial toll placed on the new leader. The female participants' reported experiences are supported by the literature, which identified the enormity of the role leading to increased anxiety and sense of being overwhelmed (Bush et al., 2010; Hobson et al., 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

Five of the seven female participants commented on their experiences of the handover from the previous principal. Specifically, they considered their experiences to be negative as their handovers were poorly managed. Key to their negative experiences was their inability to discern what needed to be asked at the handover meetings with their predecessor. The inexperience of beginning leaders in not knowing the operational aspects of principalship created anxiety, frustration and feelings of being overwhelmed at the complexity and perceived magnitude of the role. Such feelings of inadequacy are well reflected in the literature (Bush & Glover, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005; Walker & Qian, 2006;).

All seven of the female participants commented positively on the formal principal induction program presented by the Catholic Education Office Western Australia

[CEOWA]. Their comments highlighted four aspects of their experiences: the sense of collegiality they encountered with their peers who were also in the beginning stages of school principalship; the importance of engaging with key CEOWA personnel whose responsibilities were to serve the schools varied needs; the importance of differentiating between primary and secondary school leadership needs, and the importance of understanding school budgets. These four aspects regarding the induction program for new principals are reflected in the general literature on principal preparation programs. Grogan and Andrews (2002), La Pointe et al. (2007) and Wright et al. (2009) suggested that principal preparation programs need to include collaborative skills sharing and peer problem-solving as these types of skills enhance the leadership attributes of collaboration and capacity building. Daresh (2006a) highlights fiscal management as an important priority in the development of technical and managerial skills of the new principal. Browne-Ferrigno (2003), Daresh (2006a) and Weindling and Dimmock (2006) identify the importance of developing key relationships outside of the school in order for the new leader to be enculturated into the educational environment.

One recommendation the female participants made regarding the CEOWA induction programs was that certain aspects of the program might well occur at relevant times of need. That is, rather than have all the information provided during the designated induction days, the participants suggested that some of the operational information should be provided when required. They referenced this comment to financial presentations needing to occur during the beginning of the school's budgetary processes.

6.2.1.2 Socialisation skills

Underpinning the socialisation skills area are the cultural and personal relationships intrinsic to the role of principalship. The female participants highlighted the importance of knowing the general tenor of the culture of the school community prior to commencing the principalship. Their belief was predicated on the notion that if they were forewarned on challenging issues prior to the commencement of taking up the position, the better prepared they would be to deal with the issues. This desire to be fully prepared for impending challenges and knowing the cultural context of the school is reflected in the literature on women leaders. Spiller (2012) and Watterson (2010) reported female leaders believed that they needed to have the necessary skills and knowledge for principalship prior to applying for principalship.

Female participants reported the importance of family and collegial support as key relationships that sustained them, particularly in challenging times. Literature reiterated the research findings in that the inherent sense of isolation, excessive time demand of the role and the masculine values and management style expected by the school community meant that new female leaders need strong support structures (Crow, 2006; Daresh, 2006b; Watterson, 2010; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). Literature in leadership development points to mentoring and coaching as key support structures for new leaders (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; O'Mahoney & Matthews, 2006; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006;). Highlighted in the literature is the importance of establishing peer mentors and coaches early in the career. These key professional relationships are not only an avenue of practical advice from experienced principals, these relationships also provide clarity of the role, positive modelling and professional interactions amongst colleagues (Chapman, 2005; Orr, 2011; Winton & Pollock, 2012).

6.2.1.3 Self-awareness

Three key themes emerged from the responses of female participants within the area of self-awareness: need for resiliency, lack of self-confidence and sense of vocation. The majority of female participants highlighted the need to be resilient in meeting the demands and challenges of the principalship. Along with this recognition of the need for resilience was the awareness by five of the participants of their lack of confidence in meeting the requirements of principalship. The realisation that final decisions and subsequent consequences lay with the principal created a “high stakes” mindset on all decision-making. Such a realisation contributed significantly to increased levels of anxiety for some of the female participants. The literature identified these two phenomena as key features of why women initially struggle in their leadership roles (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009; Watterson, 2010). Beginning female principals perceived a lack of readiness when commencing their principalship. These perceptions, coupled with a lack of confidence, are highlighted by research as major limitations that hinder female principals flourishing in their new role (Coleman, 2012, Oplatka & Tamir, 2009; Watterson, 2010).

All of the seven female participants commented on the centrality of their faith as an important motivator in choosing to lead in a Catholic school. All participants were educated by Catholic education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The participants reported that their religious formation began with their families, and was later supported in their schooling and tertiary experiences. All seven female participants commented on growth of their faith in the role of principalship. Participants also commented on the increasing sense of responsibility for the faith formation of their school community. All participants acknowledged that their leadership role is integral in

promoting the schools Catholic identity. These research findings are consistent with the literature on the vocational call of serving the mission of the Church in the role of Catholic school principal. Belmonte and Cranston (2009), Holter and Frabutt (2012), McLaughlin (2005), Rieckhoff (2014) and Sharkey (2007) describe the need for personal assent to the faith and the vocational service Catholic school principals have in their ministry role of leadership. Belmonte and Cranston (2009), Lennan (2005), Nuzzi et al. (2013), Ranson (2005), Rieckhoff (2014) and Schutloffel (2012) reiterate the need for strong leadership in preserving and growing the Catholic identity of the school.

6.2.2 Male

Data collected from the six male participants highlighted two themes within the area of technical and managerial skills: the bureaucratic nature of the principalship and the importance of delegating appropriate tasks to others. The socialisation skills area drew out three key support areas for the male participants. These were: collegial, family and Catholic Education Office support. Three themes emerged from the responses of the male participants within the area of self-awareness: career aspirations, importance of self-efficacy and the authority of the principal's role. These themes are now discussed in light of the literature related to gender and leadership.

6.2.2.1 Technical and managerial skills

All six male participants expressed concern with the increasing bureaucratic demands of the principalship. Underpinning these bureaucratic demands were the increased accountabilities placed upon them. Compliancy to government and system requirements were consistently reported by the participants as consuming their time. These demands are consistent with research on beginning principals. Bush et al. (2010), Hobson et al.

(2003) and Leithwood et al., (2010) all commented on the high stakes accountability demanded by government. Four of the male participants remarked on the importance of delegation as a key attribute in their leadership role. These participants noted that due to the myriad of responsibilities that lay with the principal, it was necessary to discern what they should do and what they should delegate. Highlighted within this finding was the perception by the male participants that delegating to staff various operational matters of school life built staff capacity and interest. General educational research on new leaders identifies the excessive time spent on operational matters of schooling by the beginning principal (Bush & Glover, 2003; Marzano et al, 2005; Walker & Qian, 2006). The ability to balance the operational aspects of schooling with educational leadership is an important hallmark of successful school principalship (Leithwood et al., 2010; Robinson, 2007).

6.2.2.2 Socialisation skills

The male participants identified the importance of key relationships in supporting them in their principalship. These relationships included: family, colleagues and the Catholic Education Office. The majority of participants strongly associated with the importance of family supporting their role as principal. Two participants noted the self-sacrifice of their wives in uprooting the family thereby enabling the participants to take on a principalship in rural and remote locations. Both participants were mindful of the significant efforts their partners needed to undertake in order to re-establish the family unit. Three male participants highlighted the feelings of isolation they experienced in a new community and the “fishbowl” existence they experienced as newcomers. These findings were consistent with the literature of principal appointments to rural and remote locations. Literature identified the importance of family support structures to

curtail the social and personal isolation experienced by new principals (Clarke & Stevens, 2009; Halsey, 2011; Pietsch & Williamson, 2009; Wallace & Boylan, 2007). Literature also confirmed the experience of the new principal joining into the life of the local community. The parochial nature of the community and the presence of the new principal in local affairs shone a spotlight on the new leader that was unnecessarily demanding and challenging (Clark and Stevens, 2009; Halsey, 2011; Wildy & Clarke, 2012).

All participants noted varying degrees of support from their colleagues. The majority saw collegial support as essential in their development as principals. Most participants experienced positive and helpful relationships amongst their peers. Literature acknowledged the importance of beginning principals forming key relationships amongst their colleagues in order to assist their enculturation and development of their leadership role (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; O'Mahony & Matthews, 2006; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006).

The majority of the male participants acknowledged the support of the CEOWA in their role as principal. Of particular note was the support in the operational functions of the school. This support included advice on human resource issues such as summative appraisals of dysfunctional staff, curriculum development and financial resourcing guidance. These findings are consistent with literature addressing the practical support offered by educational authorities as key in supporting the new principal (Anderson et al., 2010; Lock et al., 2012; Pietsch & Williamson, 2009).

6.2.2.3 Self-awareness

Responses from the six male participants highlighted three key themes within the area of self-awareness: career aspirations, self-efficacy and authority of the principal's role. The majority of the male participants reported a strong aspiration for school principalship early in their careers. This research finding resonated strongly with literature that acknowledged the early career aspirations of male educators (Tarica, 2010; Watterston, 2010). All six male participants commented on the need for self-efficacy or self-belief in order to lead the school community. Each participant identified the importance of being confident in the role. Coupled with self-belief, the majority of male participants recognised the authority of the principalship as being definitive and influential. Both the importance of self-efficacy and the influential nature of the principal roles are recognised in educational leadership literature as key characteristics required for successful principalship (Daresh & Male, 2000; Fullan, 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Sackney & Walker, 2006; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004)

6.3 Comparison of female and male beginning principals

The first perspective explored gender responses within the three research areas of technical and managerial skills, socialisation skills and self-awareness required of beginning principals. Similarities between the female and male participant responses occurred predominantly within the area of socialisation skills. Both genders identified support from family and colleagues as vital in enabling them to operate as a principal. Both genders recognised the essential support role that family played in dealing with the challenges encountered in the principalship. The male participants however, acknowledged the impost of relocating their wives and children to their new school. The female participants did not raise this issue because their personal circumstance did not

warrant comment. Three were not married and the others had grown up families and their husbands were supportive of relocating to country and remote areas. The male and female participants both recognised the value of collegial support. All participants appreciated the practical advice and professional interactions colleagues gave, particularly in challenging times.

The key differences between the female and male participant responses occurred within the areas of technical and managerial skills and self-awareness. Within the area of technical and managerial skills, the seven female participants identified challenges in dealing with the finances, school board and transitioning into the new role. A possible explanation as to why the female participants reported on these challenges may lie in the tendency of women having unrealistically high expectations of the skill levels and experiences needed to lead in these unfamiliar areas (Watterson, 2010). Whilst the female participants felt inadequate in dealing with these operational matters, they in fact managed these areas successfully.

Male participants, however, commented on the bureaucratic nature of the position with excessive accountabilities placed upon them. Male participants also reported on the value of delegation of some responsibilities to key staff. Their view on delegation was twofold: firstly, it built capacity of the staff, and secondly, it enabled the principal to focus on more pressing matters by alleviating them of less important tasks. None of the female participants mentioned the idea of delegating responsibilities to staff. Rather, the female participants reported the tendency of doing the majority of tasks themselves rather than burdening their staff. In attempting to explain the difference in responses between male and female participants in the area of delegation, literature suggests that

women can lack confidence in their ability to lead and therefore find it difficult to ask staff to pick up particular responsibilities (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009; Spiller, 2012; Tarica, 2010; Watterson, 2010).

Within the area of self-awareness, both male and female participants identified the issue of self-confidence and self-efficacy. However, the female participants reported a lack of confidence in not only seeking principalship but also when first appointed. Female participants reported low levels of confidence, particularly when dealing with challenging matters. There are two possible reasons why the female participants expressed a lack of confidence, particularly in seeking principalship. The first includes the under-representation of female principals as role models, which promotes the socialised norm that underpins the assumptions, beliefs and values that men could be and should be principals (Trinidad & Normore, 2005). The second is a lack of career strategies early in the women’s career (McLay, 2008). On the other hand, male participants reported self-efficacy and self-belief as important attributes in the leadership role. The male participants acknowledged that it was important to be confident in their role as they saw their authority as being definitive and influential. The summary of common and divergent themes by the seven female and six male beginning principals to the three research areas are presented in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2

Summary of common and divergent themes by gender (perspective 1)

Skills	Common themes	Divergent themes
Technical and managerial skills	There were no common themes across perspective 1, gender.	Financial understanding Management of school board Transition into

		principalship Bureaucratic demands Delegation skills
Socialisation skills	Collegial support CEOWA support Family support	Culture of the community
Self-awareness	There were no common themes across perspective 1, gender.	Need for resiliency Need for self-efficacy Principalship as a vocation Career aspirations Position of authority

6.4 Perspective two: School location

The participants worked in three different schooling locations: remote, rural and metropolitan. Each location presented various challenges and issues that the participants needed to deal with in their new leadership role as school principal. A discussion of these challenges and issues is now presented within the context of the research areas: technical and managerial skills, socialisation skills, and self-awareness.

6.4.1 Remote

6.4.1.1 Technical and managerial Skills

Responses from the data of the three remote participants indicated two key themes related to the area of technical and managerial skills area: staffing and concern for the low educational outcomes for Aboriginal students in the remote school context. Staffing issues were related to the recruitment of suitable teachers to teach in remote locations. Typically, staff were inexperienced in both the classroom and working in a remote setting. In addition, retaining staff was problematic as there was high annual staff turnover in these schools. These issues of staffing are reflected in the literature whereby

inexperienced leaders and teachers are typically found in staff remote schools (Lock et al., 2012; Pietsch & Williamson, 2009). Literature also substantiates the difficulties of retaining staff in the remote school (Pietsch & Williamson, 2009).

Participants in the remote regions were very concerned about the poor educational outcomes of the Aboriginal students. All three of the remote participants reported poor attendance and a high transitory nature of the Aboriginal students between schools and found that this situation created limited learning opportunities. The research is supported by the literature. The Australian Government has coined the term ‘closing the gap’ to deal with a variety of Aboriginal issues, including health, housing, welfare and education that are brought about through living remotely and in impoverished conditions (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013b). There is a plethora of literature that identifies the issue of poor academic achievement, poor school attendance and low graduation rates of students living remotely (Anderson et al., 2010; Pietsch & Williamson, 2009; Western Australian Department of Education, 2011; Wildy & Clarke, 2012).

6.4.1.2 Socialisation skills

The data from the three remote participants identified three themes within the area of socialisation skills: collegial support, support from the Catholic Education Office of, and remote community issues *per se*. All of the participants recognised the importance and need for collegial support; however, due to the remote location of the school, support was typically through telephone conversations and email contact. Research literature recognises the importance of mentoring and coaching in building the professional capacity of new leaders (Crow, 2006; O’Mahoney & Matthews, 2006; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). In particular, O’Mahoney and Matthews (2006)

identified key benefits of mentoring and coaching as reducing feelings of isolation, frustration and stress. They highlighted the need for contextual awareness of the mentoring relationship and the importance of ‘face to face’ meetings at the school site. The second area identified by the remote participants concerned the support offered by the CEOWA. The three participants noted the important role the regional office in the Broome Diocese played in providing support *in situ*. They also acknowledged the diocesan office as accessible and aware of the contextual needs of the remote school. Highlighted in the data, however, was the disparity of support from the metropolitan office. Participants noted that the support offered from the metropolitan office did not always take into account the needs of remote school’s, suggesting that the regional office had a better appreciation of the schools cultural and community contexts. Literature identified the importance of contextual awareness in the provision of support to remote schools (Anderson et al., 2010; Murdoch & Schiller, 2002; Wallace & Boylan, 2007; Wildy & Clark, 2012;). In particular, Wallace and Boylan (2007) reported on the need for a “remote lens” when providing support to remote contexts thus ensuring that support is appropriate, differentiated and contextual.

The final theme within the socialisation skills area is that of leading in a remote community *per se*. The three participants recognised the key role the school has within the remote community and the importance of sustaining positive relationships with the community. Highlighted by the research were the school’s Catholic identity and its positive contribution to the community. The Catholic school was viewed as an important focal point in the spirituality of the community. General literature in the area of schools in rural and remote areas recognise the positive influence and presence the school has within the community (Anderson et al., 2010; Starr & White, 2008; Wildy &

Clarke, 2012). Literature reiterated the tendency of the community to look towards the school for support, especially when there is a particular need within the community (Clarke & Stevens, 2009; Halsey, 2011; Wallace & Boylan, 2007). Pietsch and Williamson (2009) noted that the beginning principals experienced an “intensification of workload” (p.3) due to the challenges of leading a remote school and the demands of supporting the remote community. Wildy and Clarke (2012) reported that remote Indigenous communities tend to have chronic social and economic disadvantage which impact significantly on both school life and the principals. Wildy and Clarke noted that the disadvantage include high levels of unemployment, significant health, justice and social welfare issues and limited resources to support community development. Thus, school principals dealt with a culture of accepting low student achievement, lack of parent engagement and low expectations.

6.4.1.3 Self-awareness

In the area of self-awareness, data from the three remote participants generated three themes: vocation, loneliness and resiliency. Within the theme of vocation, all three participants identified strongly with a desire to serve as school principal of a Catholic school community. The inclusive nature of the Catholic school and its mandate to serve the marginalised were strong motivations for the participants to seek school principalship in remote locations. In addition, the participants recognised the importance of personal faith formation and the provision of faith formation opportunities to the community as key aspects of their leadership role. Literature in the area of the religious dimension of Catholic school principalship reflects the research findings. Literature identified the importance of the principal in leading and growing the faith of the community through active engagement with the mission and vision of the

school (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Nuzzi et al., 2013; Rieckhoff, 2014; Schutloffel, 2012). The vocational emphasis reported by the participants strongly resonated with the literature (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Fraser & Brock, 2006; Holter & Frabutt, 2012; McLaughlin, 2005; Nuzzi et al., 2013; Rieckhoff, 2014; Sharkey, 2007). In addition, literature identified the importance of the school principal having knowledge of the faith tradition and in the proclaiming of their personal assent to the Catholic Church (Nuzzi et al., 2013; Rieckhoff, 2014; Sharkey, 2007). One remote participant highlighted his relationship with the local parish priest as being nurturing and supportive. He reported that this particular relationship supported him personally and spiritually in dealing with the demands of remote school principalship.

Remote school participants reported on the demanding nature of the work and the toll it placed on their personal lives. In particular, the isolation they experienced professionally, socially and personally was extremely challenging and difficult to overcome. The challenges were further exacerbated by the inexperienced staff who tended to begin their teaching careers in remote schools. Coupled with the demands of working with inexperienced staff, the participants expressed concern about dealing with matters of a confidential nature. The inability to work through issues with other staff *in situ*, and therefore the need to rely on oneself, created an intensified sense of isolation. These feelings of being overwhelmed by the nature of the work and the consequences of geographical and social isolation are mirrored in literature on the remote school principalship. Literature identified multi-age classes, limited resources and funding, inexperienced teachers, access to timely advice and community demands as intensifying the new principals workload (Anderson et al., 2010; Clarke & Stevens, 2009; Murdoch & Schiller, 2002). Literature also highlighted the importance of having peer mentors to

alleviate the professional and personal loneliness encountered by new leaders. The ability to discuss a broad range of issues with mentors within a confidential context provides the new leader with support and opportunities to seek clarity and confirm direction (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; O'Mahoney & Matthews, 2006; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006).

The remote school participants reported on their personal need to be resilient in dealing with the many challenges they encountered. They realised that due to the geographic isolation of their school, their opportunities for socialisation were limited. One participant recognised the importance of being professionally distant from the staff of the school and so tended to be more reserved with staff at social events. Participants also noted the importance of not seeking friendships within the remote community, as they believed that this would be perceived to be establishing an exclusive social group amongst some community members. The participants' responses to establishing a social network in small communities are reflected in the literature. Clarke and Stevens (2009), Halsey (2011) and Wallace and Boylan (2007) reported on the parochial nature of small communities. Halsey (2011) highlights the need for new leaders to develop strategies to navigate and establish boundaries when participating in the broader community. The participants also recognised the importance of talking to other principals, particularly those who were in their diocese as these principals were familiar with the context of remote schooling. In addition, the participants noted that it was important to access the regional officer, mentors, family and friends through phone calls and emails to alleviate their social and professional loneliness. Literature strongly advocates the development of relationships amongst peers to support development into the leadership role (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; O'Mahoney & Matthews, 2006; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006).

6.4.2 *Rural*

6.4.2.1 *Technical and managerial skills*

Data from the five rural participants noted three themes within the technical and managerial skills area: administration requirements of the position, size of the school and the handover from the previous principal. The participants found the demands of the administrative requirements excessive and time consuming. Particular areas in which the participants were challenged included staffing issues, financial management and managing the school board. Staffing concerns centred around recruitment and retaining suitable staff. Participants found that typically, graduate teachers were attracted to rural schools and the time they spent at the school was relatively short. The participants found that supporting graduate teachers required a great deal of attention and reported that the support of graduate teachers consumed an excessive amount of time that took away from other pressing matters. The opportunity to sustain programs at the school was limited due to the staff turnaround. Both the nature of rural staff and issues around retention of staff (Lock et al., 2012; Pietsch & Williamson, 2009; Wildy & Clarke, 2012) and the heavy imposts on the principal's time (Lock et al., 2012; Wallace & Boylan, 2007) are well documented in literature.

Participants reported that the challenges around finances were considerable partly due to their limited knowledge in this area and partly due to the limited funds available in small schools. Literature substantiates the challenges encountered by participants in the financial realm of technical and managerial skills. For example, Daresh (2006b) highlights the challenges encountered by new principals regarding the financial management of the school. He noted that the new principals' inexperience in this area tends to consume their time and focus. Participants reported that they felt intimidated

and inexperienced in leading parochial school boards. Daresh (2006b) and Perry and McWilliam (2007) and reiterated the difficulties working with special interest groups, such as school boards and in particular the politics and power structures and processes that occur. Crow and Weindling (2010) and Winton and Pollock (2012) add that the beginning leader needs to appreciate the importance of understanding the micro politics affiliated with school boards and other parent bodies.

The majority of the rural participants reported the difficulties in leading Catholic schools with low enrolments and small staff size. All of the participants had a teaching component to the principalship because of the small size of the school. Whilst they recognised that it was important to be in the classroom, it limited their administrative time. A number of participants also commented on the absence of having an assistant principal due to the small staff. The one participant who did have an assistant principal commented on this person's lack of experience due to the inability to attract an experienced leader to the rural school. A challenge of leading small rural schools with its limited staffing capacity and leadership support is reflected in the literature. The Australian Catholic Primary Principals Associations' (2005) research into Catholic primary school principals found the workload of leaders is not lessened due to a school being smaller. In addition, Ashton and Duncan (2012), Clarke, Wildy & Pepper (2007), Wallace and Boylan (2007) and Wildy, Clarke and Elkin (2010) highlight the greater time demands placed on rural principals and report that the administrative requirements from government and educational authorities are not differentiated or accommodating with respect to the size of the school. Ashton and Duncan stated, "unlike large schools with sizeable administrative staffs and numerous resources, small school leaders often

face these challenges alone, but are required to meet the same accountability standards as their larger counterparts” (p. 20).

The final emerging theme within the technical and managerial skills area was the experience of handover from the previous principal. The five rural participants commented that in retrospect, the experience was mainly negative. They reported that in their fledgling state, they were unaware of what to ask the exiting principal and the limited time at handover spent at the school did not give a complete picture of the school’s operations and context. Three of the five participants later found out about challenging situations within the school community, however, at the time of handover, the exiting principal did not discuss these issues. General literature on beginning principals recognise the limited understanding of new leaders in the operational areas of running a school (Daresh, 2006b; Marzano et al., 2005; Walker & Qian, 2006) and literature on preparation programs identified the importance of spending time at the school prior to taking up the appointment (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Tucker et al., 2012; Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2012;). In addition, literature points to the legacy of the previous principal as impacting on the new principal’s leadership. This degree of impact is dependent on the legacy the previous principal left. A positive legacy tends to assist the beginning leader, whilst a negative one can be very challenging for the incumbent (Walker & Qian, 2006; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006).

6.4.2.2 Socialisation skills

The data from the five rural participants identified three emerging themes in the area of socialisation skills. These themes were: collegial support, community engagement and Catholic Education Office Western Australia support. All of the participants

acknowledged and appreciated the support from their peers, particularly as mentors and access to experienced principals for advice and guidance was greatly appreciated. The participants, however, commented on the importance of their colleagues being aware of their specific rural context. Their preference was for their mentor to spend time at their school to appreciate and understand their unique context. The participants also expressed varying degrees of disappointment in the support offered by one of the professional associations. They believed that the Catholic Primary Principal's Association (CPPA) did not fully support the beginning principal in the rural school and reported a number of negative experiences. These experiences included not feeling welcomed at Member's Day events conducted by the CPPA; issues such as recruitment of experienced school staff to rural locations not being discussed and lack of consideration for sustained and suitable mentoring at the rural school location by the Association. Literature highlights the importance of collegial support through mentoring, that is, experienced mentors support the beginning principal in enculturation into the leadership role. Mentoring builds capacity and confidence in new leaders, thus enabling them to develop their leadership role (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Crow, 2006; Daresh, 2006a; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). O'Mahoney and Matthews (2006) highlighted the importance of contextual understanding of the mentor for the beginning principals situation and add that personal contact is prized over secondary means such as telephone conversations. Understanding the social mores attached to principal associations is an important facet of the socialisation skills required of the beginning leader (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Daresh, 2006b).

All five rural participants identified the parochial nature of the communities in which their schools are located. They highlighted the relationship between the school and

parish, in particular, the demands of the parish on the school and the principal. The participants felt that there were demands placed upon them by the parish that included having a high profile within the parish, involvement in parish activities and an expectation of tangible support in parish affairs. Whilst the participants acknowledged the importance of engaging with the parish, they felt that in their early years of principalship the demands were excessive. These findings are consistent with the literature on the relationship the Catholic school principal has with the local parish community, particularly in rural settings. The Australian Catholic Primary Principals' Association [ACPPA] (2005) reported on the importance of the cooperative relationship the Catholic school principal should have with the local parish community. The report also highlighted the cumulative demands placed on principals when absorbing additional work from the parish community. These cumulative demands are further intensified in rural settings when principals are expected to worship in the parish affiliated with the school (ACPPA, 2005).

The final theme identified by the rural participants related to CEOWA support of the beginning principal. This support was identified in two forms: the induction programs for new principals and the support provided at the school site. The five participants were positive in their comments about the induction program into principalship and the ongoing support given *in situ*. They highlighted the usefulness of the program with regards to its content, collegial interaction and ongoing support. The importance of such support is echoed in the literature on preparation programs for principalship. Literature identified the need to have principal preparation programs that are adaptive in the leadership skills area and address the changing educational landscape (La Pointe et al., 2007; Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2012). Literature also acknowledged the ongoing nature of

principal preparation programs. Once the principal is at the school, support needs to be offered in a continuing fashion (Chapman, 2005; Crow et al., 2008; Ribbins, 2008). The collaborative emphasis in principal preparation programs is a necessary component in developing new leaders. Grogan and Andrews (2002), Wright et al. (2009) and La Pointe et al., (2007) argue the importance of group work in preparation programs. They highlighted the importance of teamwork, mutual support and building relationships within cohorts of the preparation programs. They also reiterated the importance of working collaboratively as a model for future school leadership teams.

6.4.2.3 Self-awareness

The data from the five rural participants identified three emerging themes within the area of self-awareness. These were, feelings of isolation, loneliness and the need for resiliency. The participants acknowledged the geographical isolation of their school contributed to their feeling of loneliness in the role as principal. The five rural participants recognised two forms of loneliness: professional isolation and personal loneliness. The participants reported feeling disconnected from the wider professional life outside of the school. The inaccessibility of professional development, the excessive costs to participate in these events and the limited opportunities to build networks amongst their peers compounded their feelings of professional isolation. The rural participants highlighted personal loneliness as a challenge that needed to be overcome. The limited interactions with others, particularly at the end of the school day, confronted the “single” participants. Coupled with the personal feeling of loneliness was the importance of being resilient in addressing the challenges. Participants acknowledged the importance of being resilient in adapting to particular circumstances. They expressed the need to look after themselves and to seek support as they

encountered challenging situations. All participants acknowledged the vital role of peer networks and regional CEOWA staff in supporting the new leader. Literature stresses the importance of being personally resilient (Daresh, 2000a; Fullan, 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Sackney & Walker, 2006) in meeting challenges encountered in the role (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The feelings of isolation, both professionally and personally are also reflected in the literature (Ashton & Duncan, 2012; Campbell et al., 2006; Fraser & Brock, 2006; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). Literature points to peer mentoring as an important means of building capacity of beginning principals and alleviating the professional isolation encountered, particularly in the early years of leadership (Ashton & Duncan, 2012; Campbell et al., 2006; Crow, 2006; O'Mahoney & Matthews, 2006).

6.4.3 Metropolitan

6.4.3.1 Technical and managerial skills

The data from the five metropolitan principals indicated three themes in the area of technical and managerial skills. These were, the bureaucratic demands, communication and staffing issues. The bureaucratic demands related to balancing time in dealing with burdensome administrative requirements from government and educational authorities. The second theme reported by the metropolitan participants was concerned with the demanding level of electronic communication from both internal and external sources. Responding to the excessive number of communications consumed a great deal of time. These themes are consistent with literature on beginning principals. Daresh (2006b) and Walker and Qian (2006) acknowledge that beginning leaders can easily become overwhelmed by the administrative demands placed upon them by external sources.

The third theme concerned staffing issues. Here, participants reported on challenges such as recruitment of quality educators, particularly in leadership roles and dealing with recalcitrant staff. Three of the five participants were seeking to appoint deputy principals; however, all applicants had no senior leadership experience. This situation left the two participants with completely new leadership teams. The participants felt that not only did they have to deal with a new role and school context, they had to support the new leaders into their role and environment, thus adding to their workload. This concern highlighted the issues regarding recruitment of quality teachers and leaders. Literature concerned with successful student outcomes highlighted the importance of the classroom teacher in the teaching and learning process (Hattie, 2009; Timperley, 2013; Zammit et al., 2007) which in turn is to quality school leadership (Robinson et al., 2013; Zammit et al., 2007). Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) highlight the centrality of school leaders in improving staff performance through the influencing staff motivation, commitment and work conditions.

6.4.3.2 Socialisation skills

The five metropolitan participants identified two themes within the socialisation skills area. These were, collegial support and CEOWA support. All five participants acknowledged the support of their peers with three joining leadership positions within their respective principal's associations. Their motivation for actively participating in the association early in their principalship was to assist them in understanding their role as leader and to increase their networking relationships amongst their colleagues. The importance of working with peers is strongly encouraged in the literature on beginning principals (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; O'Mahoney & Matthews, 2006; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). Daresh (2006b) acknowledges that the relationship which beginning

principals have with their peers facilitates the enculturation process into the leadership role. All but one of the metropolitan participants were generally positive about the support provided by the CEOWA. They acknowledged the support as being appropriate, timely and of a good standard. One participant, however, had a negative relationship with a key support person from the CEOWA. The participant felt that the CEOWA person did not offer tangible support when needed at the time and the participant reported that she was left to resolve a significant issue on her own.

6.4.3.3 Self-awareness

Two key themes emerged from the responses of metropolitan participants within the area of self-awareness: the importance of personal vocation and work-life balance. All five participants reported on their personal desire to serve in Catholic education in a leadership capacity. The participants recognised the vocational basis to their role as principal in a Catholic school and all five of the participants reflected on the evangelising purpose of the Catholic school and how important it was for them to lead and support the school community in faith formation. The participants also reflected on the importance of sustaining their own faith in order to be authentic witness to their Christian identity as leaders in a Catholic school. These findings are consistent with the literature on the religious leadership required of Catholic school principalship. Catholic school principals are required to embody the values and mission of the Catholic school through personal witness (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Brownbridge, 2009; Hickey et al., 2009; McLaughlin, 2005; Nuzzi et al., 2013; Rieckhoff, 2014; Schutloffel, 2009). Catholic school principals are also required to lead the faith community and ensure that its religious purpose permeates all aspects of school life (Congregation for Catholic

Education, 1997; McLaughlin, 2005; Nuzzi et al., 2013; Rieckhoff, 2014; Robinson & Ciriello, 1994).

The second theme rising from the data acknowledged the challenges of balancing the demanding role of principalship with the personal lives of the participants. The five metropolitan participants reported that the role of principal can be all-consuming. When participants were not at school, they thought a great deal about school business. The participants recognised that this preoccupation on the school impacted significantly on their personal time. Literature on the demands placed on principals to lead learning and teaching, meet internal and external accountabilities, process high stakes external assessments and deal with the operational issues of running a school are plentiful (Bush et al., 2010; Clarke & Wildy, 2010; Crow, 2006; Day, 2013; Fullan, 2004; Moller, 2009; Robinson, 2007). Literature on beginning principals reflects the intensification of workload that is experienced by new leaders and calls for a redress to this issue (Bush et al., 2010; Hobson et al., 2003; Pietsch & Williamson, 2009; Walker & Qian, 2006).

6.5 Comparison school location and the beginning principalship

The second perspective explored the impact of the school's location on the beginning school principal's leadership within the three research areas of technical and managerial skills, socialisation skills and self-awareness skills. Responses from the beginning principals indicated certain common experiences across all three locales such as dealing with staff issues. The responses from the participants also suggested divergent needs and challenges from each of the three locales such as dealing with Aboriginal student outcomes in remote schools, the feelings isolation and loneliness from rural and remote participants.

A major technical and managerial concern for all participants was the issue of staffing in their schools. All reported issues on attracting quality staff. For example, the remote and rural participants described concerns about staffing their schools with mainly graduate teachers. They commented that these were the only applicants for the advertised positions. The new graduates inexperience in the classroom combined with working in remote and rural locations for the first time placed increased demands on the new principal. This issue was coupled with high annual staff turnover, which created problems in sustaining programs. Metropolitan participants, on the other hand, conveyed their concerns about dealing with recalcitrant teachers. In particular, these participants were dealing with some teachers who were below standard in their teaching performance with some even breaching professional practices. Three of the five metropolitan participants were seeking to fill deputy principal positions. These participants reported that all applicants were inexperienced in this leadership role and consequently they found themselves supporting the newly appointed deputy, which further compounded the challenges of their own fledgling status.

All three of the remote participants were concerned about the poor educational outcomes of Aboriginal students. They reflected on the transitory nature of the students, the students' limited attendance rates and the poor living standards within remote communities. The rural participants also reported on the challenges of leading a small school. Apart from supporting new graduates, they reported on the limitations of small budgets in resourcing projects and the inability to appoint staff to leadership positions because of school size. In particular, due to small student populations, participants were required to have a teaching load combined with their leadership role. Metropolitan participants found the excessive time spent on bureaucratic demands of the position.

Whilst all three groups had varied concerns in the technical and managerial skills area, the common challenge confronting the new principals was the excessive time spent in operational requirements of school principalship.

All participants identified collegial and CEOWA support as key in dealing with challenges and issues in their new roles. Remote and rural participants acknowledged the importance of connecting with peers in their principal association; however, they found there was a limited understanding of their different contexts by association members. Collectively, these participants wanted a greater understanding of their unique locations by their peers and a differentiated support structure to meet their needs. Metropolitan participants also appreciated the support the associations provided. They found that there were greater opportunities to participate in the varied roles the principal association offered, thereby enhancing their own professional growth.

All participants, irrespective of location identified the support of the CEOWA as an important means in enabling them to lead their schools. Overall, all 13 participants found the support timely, *in situ*, appropriate and essential in dealing with challenges in their schools. Remote and rural participants appreciated the regional support from the local office. They reported that the support they received took into account the context of the school's location, its cultural context, and the unique circumstances of small school issues within a rural or remote community. Remote participants reported on the limited understanding of the metropolitan office to the unique context of remote schooling highlighting the need for differentiated and bespoke services. Rural participants commented positively on the induction program for beginning principals

conducted by the CEOWA. They appreciated its focus, collegial interactions and the ongoing support once the participant began their principalship.

Remote and rural participants highlighted the impact and importance of the community in which their school is located. Rural participants commented on the parochial nature of the community and the community's perceived need of the principal to actively contribute to community activities. They reported that the demand was mainly made from local parish community. Remote principals saw that an important feature of their leadership was to provide support to the remote community, particularly in its faith development and parish life. Literature identifies the important role the Catholic school principal has within the local parish community. The ACPPA (2005), Belmonte and Cranston (2009) and Fraser and Brock (2006) highlight the significance of the role the principal has with the local parish in assisting the faith life of the parish and their professional expertise. The research also highlights the excessive demand placed on the principal can be detrimental to the principals wellbeing, including the time required of the principal and their personal spiritual growth (ACPPA, 2005; Belmonte & Cranston, 2009).

Within the area of self-awareness, participants from remote and metropolitan localities identified the vocational element of their role as an important basis of their principalship. Inexplicably the rural participants did not comment on their sense of vocation. This omission by the rural participants would be worth following up in further research. The majority of participants across all three localities reported that the religious purpose of leading a Catholic school was a strong feature in seeking principalship. This acceptance and understanding of the religious nature of Catholic

school principalship is highlighted in literature. Belmonte and Cranston (2009), Lennan (2005), McLaughlin (2005), Nuzzi, et al. (2013), Ranson (2005) and Rieckhoff (2014) report on the vocational call to lead a Catholic school community as an almost pre-requisite requirement for leadership. Coupled with personal assent and public witness to the Catholic faith, Catholic school principals need to ascribe to their “ecclesial responsibilities” (Ranson, 2005, p.9). Remote and rural participants found the professional and social isolation encountered in their respective locations as key challenges to overcome and both groups recognised the loneliness of the principalship. This experience was partly due to the geographical isolation of their school’s location and also the loneliness attributed to the role. These participants identified that in order to maintain confidentiality when dealing with staffing, student and community issues, they needed to work through solutions outside of the school with their peer mentors or CEOWA staff.

Both rural and remote locale groups recognised the need to be resilient in order to overcome the burgeoning challenges that they encountered in the principalship. Participants reported the need to work through situations with support from colleagues and CEOWA personnel and to look after themselves. On a slightly different note, the metropolitan participants reported the need to develop a work life balance and acknowledged the all-consuming nature of the principalship. Research is replete in the excessive workload of beginning principals. Clarke et al., (2007), Sorenson (2005) and Walker et al., (2003) suggest that beginning principals are typically overwhelmed by the variety of issues that they need to deal with. They add that their lack of preparedness coupled with unanticipated issues generally consume the time of new principals. The

summary of common and divergent themes from the three remote, five rural and five metropolitan beginning principals to the three research areas are presented in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3

Summary of common and divergent themes by school location (perspective 2)

Skills	Common themes	Divergent themes
Technical and managerial skills	Staffing	Financial management School board management School size Handover Educational outcomes of Aboriginal students Bureaucratic demands Communication issues
Socialisation skills	Collegial support CEOWA support	Remote community issues Community issues
Self-awareness	There were no common themes across perspective 2, school location	Feelings of isolation Feelings of loneliness Need for resiliency Principalship as a vocation Work-life balance

6.6 Perspective three: School type

The third perspective in the case study looks at the needs, concerns and challenges of beginning principals in primary and secondary school settings. Of the 13 participants, nine were beginning their principalship in primary schools and four in secondary schools. Both primary and secondary school settings presented various challenges and issues with which the participants needed to deal with. A discussion of these challenges and issues is now presented within the context of the three research areas: technical and managerial skills; socialisation skills; and self-awareness.

6.6.1 Primary schooling

6.6.1.1 Technical and managerial skills

The data from the nine primary school participants highlighted two key themes within the technical and managerial skills area: challenges of dealing with the many accountability demands placed upon them and staffing issues. The reported accountability demands expressed by the participants were to do with managing their time with the many operational aspects of school leadership. Highlighted areas include management of data, leading curriculum development, coordinating staff development and meeting externally imposed deadlines. The participants collectively described the administrative demands as “paper work” which consumed their time both in and outside of school hours. Literature on the beginning principal strongly resonates with the participant’s sense of being overwhelmed in dealing with the operational demands of leading a school. Marzano et al. (2005) describe the operational demands requiring transactional leadership skills. The focus on the operational demands in the early years of principalship tends to both preoccupy and overwhelm the new leader (Daresh & Male, 2000; Walker & Qian, 2006). Literature also identifies the excessive accountability demands that are placed upon principals, both within the school and externally (Angus et al., 2007; Bush et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2010; Robinson, 2007).

The second theme concerned staffing issues. Participants recognised the vital role teachers have in ensuring quality educational outcomes for the students and all nine primary participants identified that recruitment of quality staff was extremely important. However, due to reasons such as location of the school, attracting experienced quality teachers was often problematic. Literature suggests that in order for teachers to provide

students the learning conditions to thrive, it is essential that school leadership provide quality learning environments (Robinson, et al., 2013). There has been a definite shift of focus from managerial leadership to instructional leadership in the principal's role over the last decade (Bush et al., 2010; Hattie, 2009; Hobson et al., 2003; Robinson et al., 2013). This focus on instructional leadership requires the school principal to be active in leading the teaching and learning within the school. The concern expressed by the primary participants in the area of quality teaching staff resounds with the literature on the principal's role as chief teacher. Robinson et al. (2013) contend that primary school principals have a more direct instructional leadership influence in the school and tend to be more aware of what happens in the classroom.

6.6.1.2 Socialisation skills

Within the area of socialisation skills, the data from the primary school participants revealed two main themes: relationships with the local community, in particular the parish community and collegial networks. All nine participants highlighted the importance of the relationship the school has with the local community. The participants reported that the principal occupies a key leadership role within the community and is expected to be an important resource in growing the community. Literature addressing the relationships with the local school and the broader community reiterates the participants' comments on community life and the interaction with the school (Anderson et al., 2010; Ashton & Duncan, 2012; Starr & White, 2008; Wildy & Clarke, 2012). Halsey (2011) notes that the principal needs to be contextually aware of the community's needs, as there are tacit rules and expectations placed upon the school principal.

The primary school participants noted the key role they have within the community interacting with the local Catholic parish. The majority of the participants viewed their particular participation within parish life as integral to their role as a Catholic primary school principal. Others reported that it was the expectation of the parish that the principal would be a key member of the parish council and participate in activities of the parish. Literature in the area of religious leadership highlights the important relationship the Catholic school has with the local parish church. Hickey et al., (2009) recommend that the Catholic school and parish leadership work together in promoting the faith dimension of both school and parish communities. The ACPA (2005) report into the participation of primary school principals in parish life found that whilst there was recognition of the positive dynamic between the two, there was also an acknowledgement of the increasing impost of time the principal spends in supporting the parish. The report highlighted that not only was the principal's time taken away from his or her core work of leading the school, there was also concern regarding the detrimental impact on the personal spirituality of the principal and the impact on family life. Here, excessive participation in the local parish life took time away from spending with the family. In addition, the varied roles the primary school principal was called upon to fulfil, particularly during Mass drew away the time for personal prayer and reflection to more public and active roles.

The second socialisation theme that the primary participants reported on concerned their relationships with their principal colleagues. All nine participants recognised the importance of networking with their peers. They saw networking as an important support mechanism as they developed their leadership capabilities and mature in their role as school principal. Five of the participants commented on the Catholic Primary

Principal's Association [CPPA]. There were mixed feelings with regards to the overall support the CPPA provided. One participant commented favourably on the support he received, particularly in the professional role the association provided through its annual conference. However, the majority regarded the association as unhelpful, particularly in understanding their needs as principals in rural locations. Literature highlights the importance of collegial support in assisting the beginning principals understanding his/her roles and responsibilities (Chapman, 2005; Orr, 2011; Winton & Pollock, 2012;). Literature also acknowledges the challenges confronting beginning primary principals accessing their peer networks (Clarke & Stevens, 2009). Compounding the challenge of accessing peers is the need expressed by beginning principals for peers to be contextually aware of the particular circumstances in which the new principal operates (O'Mahoney & Matthews, 2006; Wallace & Boylan, 2007).

6.6.1.3 Self-awareness

The responses from the nine primary school participants in the area of self-awareness resulted in two themes: realisation of their role as principal and the diverse demands placed upon them as school leader. Five of the primary participants commented on the realisation that the principalship redefines their role as educator. The participants recognised that the reality of leading the school takes them out of the classroom and into other tasks required of leadership. Whilst they reported that they sought active ways of getting back into the classroom, such as relieving for classroom teachers, they realised that their sustained teaching of a class of students had effectively ended. Weindling and Dimmock (2006) highlighted that an important milestone in the beginning principals journey of principalship is the awareness of transitioning from the classroom to the administrative role of school leader with its increased accountability. They report that as

the beginning principal transitions into the leadership role, the realisation of the positions status, image and requirements of the principal becomes clearer for the individual.

The second theme that the primary school participants identified was their growing appreciation of the diverse demands of the principalship and the need to be knowledgeable across a variety of areas. Their comments were underpinned by a sense of being overwhelmed by the varied demands placed upon them that they did not always understand the nature of the demands. Ashton and Duncan (2012), Browne-Ferrigno (2003), Clarke et al., (2007) and Daresh (2006a) reiterate these sentiments and acknowledge that beginning principals feel overwhelmed by the diversity and enormity of the role.

6.6.2 Secondary schooling

6.6.2.1 Technical and managerial skills

The data from the four secondary school participants identified three key themes that were related to the technical and managerial skills area. These were the demand and pace required of the leadership position, the size of the school and the importance of prior leadership experience. All four participants commented on the demanding pace of the principalship. They remarked on the constant volume of work that needed to be attended to by the principal and the recognition that the principal had full responsibility to get the job done. Literature is replete on the demands placed upon principals (Crow, 2006; Darling-Hammond & La Pointe, 2007; Day, 2013; Walker & Qian, 2006). The literature also acknowledges the challenges in keeping up with the rapidity of change,

public accountability and increased autonomy (Bush et al., 2010; Robinson, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2010; Walker et al., 2003).

The four secondary school participants reported on the demands associated with the large size of their schools. They felt the weight of responsibility of the principalship given the sizeable populations of students and staff at their respective schools. They experienced the high stakes pressure involved with student achievement, the responsibility of leading and managing a large and multi-disciplinary staff, and the accountability of a multi-million dollar budget and school plant site. Literature reports that the role of secondary school principals is distinct from their primary principal colleagues. Key differences include secondary schools being greater in size, having a more diverse staff due to the specialist subjects and catering for an older age group of the students (Robinson et al., 2013). Literature on beginning principals reiterates the demands of high stakes accountability, particularly in the public scrutineering of student achievement (Bush et al., 2010; Garcia-Garduno et al., 2011; Hobson et al., 2003; Leithwood et al., 2008). Hobson et al. (2003) identify the challenges of beginning principals in their interpersonal relationships with and among staff, particularly in their dealings with staff who are ineffective.

The final theme reported by the four secondary school participants related to the importance of their various leadership experiences and opportunities that formed their career pathway. All participants appreciated the diverse leadership journeys that they had undertaken in secondary schools. They collectively commented that these opportunities gave them a breadth of experiences that held them in good stead for when they began their principalship. Literature on beginning principalship identifies the

importance of varied leadership experiences as necessary preparation for school principalship (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Robinson et al., 2013; Su et al., 2003; Wright et al., 2000).

6.6.2.2 Socialisation skills

The data from the four secondary school participants highlighted three dominant themes within the area of socialisation skills: collegial relationships, CEOWA support and parish-school relationships.

All four participants acknowledged and valued the support of their colleagues. They found their peers to be openly supportive of them as new principals and typically they would seek the help from particular colleagues. Further, they believed that it was important to be proactive in asking for assistance and advice. The majority of the participants found the Catholic Secondary Principals Association [CSPA] to be very supportive of new principals. The organisational structure of the Association encouraged all secondary principals to be part of the leadership structure and actively participate in varying activities. One participant did remark that she found the Association was not meeting her needs with regards to allocating her a mentor. However, she suggested that this situation was more to do with the Association being distracted with its negotiation of the principal contract with the CEOWA than neglecting her needs. Literature identifies the significance of collegial support for the beginning principal (Chapman, 2005; Orr, 2011; Winton & Pollock, 2012) support that includes modelling, role clarification and advice in order to navigate challenges (Orr, 2011; Winton & Pollock, 2012).

The second identified theme acknowledged the support provided by the CEOWA. The four secondary school participants found the personnel, accessibility, timeliness of support and personal interest in them as people very positive. For example, two of the secondary school principals were facing significant staffing issues and were very appreciative of the advice and direction offered by CEOWA personnel. Specifically, the participants commented on the CEOWA consultant's particular concern for them as new leaders as they confronted difficult circumstances. That beginning principals gain confidence and skills to lead their school community more effectively when educational authorities are supportive of their particular needs is identified in the literature (Anderson et al., 2010; Lock et al., 2012; Pietsch & Williamson, 2009).

The third theme reflected the concerns that the four secondary school participants had with school and parish relationship. The secondary participants were anxious about the large number of parishes from which their school drew enrolments, citing upwards of ten parishes. The participants recognised the importance of parish school relationships in order to enhance the efforts of faith formation of students and their families. In practice, the participants tended to have closer relationships with the local parish in which the school was positioned. The importance of the Catholic school linking with the students' local parishes is well supported in the literature (Ciriello, 1996; Hickey et al., 2009; Rieckhoff, 2014). The desire of the secondary school participants to have stronger links with the local parish is necessary and important; however, they found it difficult to work with all parishes with the same level of interaction. Literature highlights the impost the parish community can have on the workload of the principal, and that principals need to be safeguarded from overcommitting themselves to parish life, other than for their own faith nurturing purposes (ACPPA, 2005).

6.6.2.3 Self-awareness skills

Two key themes emerged from the responses of the secondary school participants within the area of self-awareness. These were to do with the vocational call to lead a Catholic school and the need for reflective practice in the leadership role. The four secondary school participants reported on the importance of their aspiration to lead within Catholic education and their desire to nurture and grow the faith of the Catholic school community was very strong. Participants had close affiliations with Catholic education having been educated within the system and brought up by their families as Catholic. Literature examining the reasons underpinning the motivation as to why people pursue Catholic school principalship identified the importance of their vocational call to lead (Belmonte & Cranston, 2007; Fraser & Brock, 2006; Holter & Frabutt, 2012; Nuzzi et al., 2013; Sharkey, 2007). Personal assent to the Catholic faith and a sense of mission and commitment to Catholic education are important motivational factors underpinning the desire to lead in Catholic schools (Lennan, 2005; Nuzzi et al., 2013; Sharkey, 2007).

The second theme focused on the importance of reflective practice in the demanding role. Participants acknowledged the importance of separating work from personal life and the need to adopt strategies to alleviate the pressures and demand of leadership. Literature identifies the skill of reflective practice as essential for the new leader in order to process the demands of the role (Daresh & Male, 2000). Branson (2007) and Hall (2008) argue that reflective practice skills are essential for school leaders. Both authors base their premise on the fact that reflective skills assist school principals to become more aware of themselves which in turn, enables them to understand the “tacit truths that govern their choices” (Branson, 2007, p. 239). In addition, Hall (2008)

suggests that reflective skills provide an internal mechanism to debrief decision making and consider the leaders actions and consequences.

6.7 Comparison of primary and secondary Catholic schooling

The third perspective explored the beginning principals' responses according to school type as they related the three areas of technical and managerial skills, socialisation skills and self-awareness. Responses from the 13 participants indicated common experiences across both types of schooling. Within the area of technical and managerial skills, all participants identified the excessive workload demands and accountabilities placed upon them in leading their schools. Collectively, they noted the excessive volume of work and fast pace in which they were required to deal with the responsibilities of principalship.

The noticeable differences underpinning the operational demands placed upon both primary and secondary school principals were the size of the school, the age of the students and the nature of the curriculum. The secondary schools participants typically led secondary schools that had large student populations catering for students aged between 12 and 17 years. Such large student populations exacerbated the need for differentiated curriculum catering for varied needs that included high stakes testing which ultimately established career paths for students leaving school and entering the work force. The size of the school impacted significantly on the management and leadership of large multi-disciplinary staff, accountability of a multi-million dollar budget and large school site with specialist areas. As the primary schools were smaller in scale, the primary school principals did not experience the issues to the same extent as their secondary school colleagues. However, the primary school participants were

still required to meet all obligatory requirements of government and educational authorities. The primary principal did not have the personnel to delegate any managerial tasks and was therefore required to undertake all bureaucratic requirements by themselves.

Within the socialisation skills area, all participants reported on the importance of good working relationships with both their colleagues and the parish community. Collegial support was recognised by all participants, irrespective of school type, as an important factor in building their leadership capabilities. Whilst both groups reported on their relationships with their respective principal associations, the secondary participants tended to be more interactive and proactive in their participation within the Association. The primary participants tended to be more passive and less demanding of their Association and were critical of the lack of differentiated support they were subsequently offered. A possible explanation for this difference may lie in the actual size of membership of the respective associations. The Catholic Secondary School Principals' Association [CSPA] has 40 members, whilst the Catholic Primary School Principals' Association [CPPA] has over 110 members (CECWA, 2013). The smaller, more intimate secondary association would provide greater familiarity, collegiality and support amongst principals; whereas the CPPA's larger membership could be daunting for beginning principals.

A noticeable difference between primary and secondary school participants was found within the area of self-awareness. The primary participants reported on how they regretted leaving the classroom as a consequence of moving into the leadership role. This lament expressed by the primary participants could be explained by the educational

journey of primary principals. Primary principals tend to move from being a classroom teacher to an assistant principals role, which has a significant teaching component, to principalship. The movement to principalship is the first time that primary school principals move out of the classroom. The primary school participants also reported on an overwhelming sense of the diverse demands placed upon them as principal. On the other hand, the secondary school participants reported on their desire to serve as leader and acknowledged their vocational call to principalship. A possible explanation for this difference may lie in the fact that secondary participants acknowledged that their diverse leadership pathway to principalship enabled them to deal with the varied demands the position required. Whereas their primary counterparts tended to have a limited career path leading from classroom teaching to assistant principal and onto principalship. This linear pathway from classroom teacher to assistant principal to principal could limit leadership experiences. The summary of common and divergent themes from the nine primary and four secondary beginning principals to the three research areas are presented in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4

Summary of common and divergent themes by school type (perspective 3)

Skills	Common themes	Divergent themes
Technical and managerial skills	There were no common themes across perspective 3, school type.	Accountability demands Staffing issues Demand and pace Size of school Leadership skills
Socialisation skills	Collegial relationships Parish relationships	Community relationships CEOWA support
Self-awareness	There were no common themes across perspective 3, school type.	Classroom teaching Diverse nature of the principalship Need for reflective

6.8 Summary

This research examining the professional and personal needs of beginning principals in Catholic schools in Western Australia identified a number of common and unique themes across the three perspectives of gender, school location and school type. Within the area of socialisation skills, *all* participants commented on the importance of their respective principal's associations in their early career as school principal. The majority of participants across all three perspectives highlighted the influence of community demands, both local and parish on the leadership role. In addition, the majority of participants commented on the role the CEOWA has in supporting them through advice, direction and professional development in their fledging status.

Within the area of technical and managerial skills, participants across the three perspectives reported on the excessive demands the administrative role had on their professional and personal lives. The administrative requirements that participants reported included areas such as financial management; staffing issues, such as recruitment and performance management of staff; attending to external accountabilities from government and educational authorities; and dealing with the day-to-day aspects of the role.

Within the area of self-awareness, the majority of the participants across the three perspectives reported on the importance of their vocational call to serve as leader of a Catholic school. Comments from both gender and locality perspectives highlighted the

professional and personal loneliness experienced by the participants as a school leader, particularly if they lead rural and remote schools.

Unique to the gender perspective, the female and male participants proffered particular views on the issue of confidence. The female participants voiced a lack of confidence in their ability to lead, whilst their male counterparts expressed confidence in their ability to delegate tasks in order to build capacity of others and lessen the more menial tasks of their burgeoning responsibilities. In addition to the males' responses to their leadership ability was their desire to lead early in their teaching career. Conversely, females only considered principalship on the encouragement from their principals. Another unique theme emerging from the type of school setting was offered by the primary school participants. They lamented the loss of their substantive teaching role when they became principals. Table 6.5 details participants' perceptions on their professional and personal needs across the three perspectives.

Table 6.5

Key themes emerging across the three perspectives addressing the three research areas of technical and managerial skills, socialisation skills and self-awareness skills.

Perspective	Technical and managerial skills	Socialisation skills	Self-awareness skills
Gender			
Female	Financial understanding	Culture of the school	Need for resiliency
	Management of the school board	Collegial support Family support	Need for resiliency
	Transition into principalship		Importance of confidence

Male	Bureaucratic demands	Collegial support	Career aspirations
	Importance of delegation		Need for self-efficacy
School location			
Rural	Staffing concerns	Collegial support	Feelings of isolation
	Financial management and school board management	Community issues CEOWA support	Need for resiliency
Remote	Staffing issues	Collegial support	Principalship as a vocation
	Educational outcomes for Aboriginal students	CEOWA support Community issues	Need for resiliency Feelings of loneliness
Metropolitan	Bureaucratic demands	Collegial support	Principalship as a vocation
	Communication issues	CEOWA support	
	Staffing issues		Work-life balance
School type			
Primary	Accountability demands	Community and parish relationships	Classroom teaching
	Staffing issues	Collegial networks	Diversity in the demands of principalship
Secondary	Demand and pace	Collegial relationships	Principalship as a vocation
	Size of school		Need for reflective

Leadership skills	CEOWA support	practices
	Parish-school relationship	

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided an interpretive and analytical discussion of the data provided in Chapter Five. The data presented for each of the three perspectives were analysed alongside relevant literature according to each research question. This chapter provides the basis for the final chapter: Chapter Seven: Review and Conclusions.