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

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Chapter Six: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the themes emanating from the cross-case analysis of aspirant case study narratives presented in the previous chapter and the refined data tables associated with stage two of the Miles and Huberman (1994) interactive model of data management and analysis: data display. Specifically, each section of this chapter discusses aspirant perceptions explored by one specific research question, namely:

Section One: 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?

Section Two: 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?

Section Three: 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?

Section Four: 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?

Discussion throughout this chapter uses a number of tactics recommended by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) for stage three of the Miles and Huberman (1994) interactive model of data management and analysis: drawing and verifying conclusions. These tactics include comparison and contrast of themes and their

respective categories with the established body of knowledge presented in Chapter Three: Literature Review. An overview of this chapter is provided in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1
Overview of Chapter Six: Discussion

6.2 Section One: Catholic Principalship Role Components and the Capabilities Required for Effective Performance

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  6.2.2 Aspirant mid-program perceptions.
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  6.4.2 Aspirant mid-program perceptions.
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  6.4.5 Section three summary.

6.5 Section Four: Self-efficacy to Commence Principalship

  6.5.1 Aspirant pre-program perceptions.
  6.5.2 Aspirant mid-program and end-of-program perceptions.
  6.5.3 Influences provoking discernible perception changes.
  6.5.4 Section four summary.

6.6 Chapter Conclusion

Table 6.2 is provided to assist reader interpretation of the refined data tables provided within this chapter. This table contains details regarding case study numbers and the pseudonym chosen by each aspirant for use during the research; aspirant roles, school types and locations during the program; and the status of each aspirant at the end of the program.

Table 6.2
Case Study Details

Case study number and pseudonym	Aspirant role, school type and location during the program	Aspirant end-of-program status
1. Chelsea	Assistant principal at a Kindergarten-Year six Catholic primary school in metropolitan Perth	Applying for principalship vacancies
2. 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
3. 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
4. Jason	Assistant principal at a Kindergarten-Year six Catholic primary school in metropolitan Perth	Applying for principalship vacancies
5. 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
6. 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
7. 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
8. Sharon	Assistant principal at a Kindergarten-Year six Catholic primary school in metropolitan Perth	Parental leave/applying for principalship vacancies

6.2 Section One: Catholic Principalship Role Components and the Capabilities Required for Effective Performance

Section one discusses the themes associated with aspirant pre-program, mid-program and end-of-program perceptions regarding Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance. Themes

associated with the influences provoking discernible perceptions changes are also examined.

6.2.1 Aspirant pre-program perceptions.

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, aspirants predominantly considered Catholic principalship a managerial occupation dominated by the technical responsibilities associated with the role component, stewardship of resources. Aspirants placed a secondary emphasis on the role components, community engagement and development, teaching and learning and Catholic identity. Absent from aspirant responses were references the role component, school improvement. When referring to the capabilities required for effective performance, few aspirants discussed the capacity of the principal to form, communicate and drive achievement of school vision and, in doing so, support the evangelising mission of the Catholic Church. Likewise, few aspirants identified the need for the principal to model Gospel values in word and action when leading and managing. All aspirants discussed the technical knowledge required of the principal to prudently lead and manage the responsibilities associated with the role component, stewardship of resources. Over half of the aspirants expressed the importance of principal transformational leadership prowess. A summary of aspirant pre-program perceptions is provided in Table 6.3.

When discussing the role of the Catholic principal as a steward of resources, all aspirants identified school financial management as a core responsibility. Moreover, half of the aspirants commented on the requirement of the principal to adhere to systemic compliance and accountability requirements, administrate school-based human resource management functions and resolve legal issues. Aspirants also named a number of other stewardship-related responsibilities including capital development planning; catering for staff wellbeing; managing industrial relations issues; and resolving conflict. Aspirant responses regarding this role component reflect the literature review that defined stewardship of resources as the prudent leadership and management of school-based resources by the principal (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010).

Table 6.3

Aspirant Pre-program Perceptions: Catholic Principalship Role Components and the Capabilities Required for Effective Performance

Themes and categories	Case study number								Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Role components									
1. Catholic Identity									
• Leading school Catholicity using Gospel-based words and actions	✓	✓	✓					✓	4
2. Teaching and Learning									
• Leading instruction, motivating staff and driving performance		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	5
3. Stewardship of Resources									
• Managing school finances	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
• Ensuring accountability	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		5
• Human resource management	✓		✓			✓		✓	4
• Resolving legal issues			✓		✓		✓	✓	4
• Managing capital development	✓	✓		✓					3
• Catering for staff wellbeing						✓		✓	2
• Managing industrial relations					✓				1
• Resolving conflict							✓		1
4. Community Engagement and Development									
• Establishing and nurturing relationships based on Gospel values	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	6
Capabilities									
1. Vision and Values									
• Ability to form, communicate and drive achievement of school vision		✓	✓					✓	3
• Ability to model Gospel values in word and action when leading and managing		✓	✓					✓	3
2. Knowledge and Understanding									
• Ability to understand and apply technical role knowledge (Stewardship of resources)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
3. Leadership Competence									
• Transformational leadership ability		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	5

Although aspirants emphasised the importance of stewardship-related responsibilities, analysis of the data revealed a limited understanding of the four dimensions that comprise this role component. Specifically, the literature review described the principal as a steward of human resources who leads and manages the recruitment, induction, formation and appraisal of staff (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010). Aspirant responses focused primarily on performance management responsibilities. Further, aspirants did not discuss the role of the principal as steward of environmental resources, responsible for school-based preservation projects and promotion of participation in local, national and/or global conservation initiatives (Catholic Earthcare Australia, 2012; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b; Spry & Cunliffe, 2008). With regard to the role of the principal as steward of financial resources, aspirants made generalised references to the requirement of the principal to manage the school budget. However, aspirants did not refer to the expectation placed upon the principal to design, implement and monitor the budget, rectify anomalies and report in a transparent and accountable manner to the school board and governing system (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010; Welsh Assembly Government, 2006). Finally, aspirants used the phrase 'capital development planning' when referring to the role of the principal as steward of capital resources, but did not discuss the use of project management principles when planning, executing and overseeing the construction of new or refurbishment of existing school buildings and facilities (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2010; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010). Further, aspirants did not refer to the need for the principal to supervise the provision, installation and maintenance of capital items housed within these buildings and facilities (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2010; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010).

In addition to articulating the responsibilities associated with stewardship of resources, most aspirants identified a second role component, community engagement and development. Aspirants, when discussing this role component, cited the responsibility of the principal to establish and nurture relationships based on

Gospel values with and between school staff, students, their parents and carers and members of the local parish and diocesan Church. This responsibility was reflected in the literature review (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997; Convey, 2012; Cook & Simonds, 2011; Dobzanski, 2001; Grace, 1996). Beyond this point, however, aspirant responses were scant and did not mirror the literature review.

Specifically, aspirants did not articulate the requirement of the principal to oversee the development and maintenance of structures and processes to facilitate communication and collaboration between these parties (Australian Council for Educational Leaders, 2009; Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Epstein, 2007). Likewise, aspirants did not refer to the expectation that the principal value and promote the principles of inclusion (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; The Ontario Institute for Education Leadership, 2013) or work with relevant agencies to protect and support student attendance and wellbeing (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011). Aspirants were not cognisant of the need for the principal to provide support to marginalised school community members (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b, 2009; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010) or those experiencing crisis (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010). Finally, aspirant responses did not refer to the expectation that the principal encourage and oversee the sharing of teaching and learning facilities, resources and effective practices with staff from neighbouring schools for the purpose of enhancing student learning outcomes across the community (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010; A. Harris, 2008).

Over half of the aspirants also referred to a third role component associated with Catholic principalship, teaching and learning (Dinham et al., 2011; Dinham et al., 2013). Aspirants stated that this role component involved the principal leading instruction, motivating staff and driving performance. However, as was the case with the previous role component, aspirant articulation of the role of the principal as educational leader was underdeveloped when compared with the established body of knowledge presented in the literature review. For example, aspirants did not express

the requirement of the principal to work collegially with staff to create a teaching and learning culture focused on the holistic development of students (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Blase & Blase, 2000; DuFour, 2002; Marzano et al., 2005; The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). Likewise, aspirant responses indicated a limited understanding of the role of the principal in assisting teachers to use assessment frameworks, based on data, benchmarking and observation, to monitor student progress (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010; Department for Education and Skills, 2004; Department of Education Northern Ireland, 2005; Lashway, 2002).

Aspirants did not identify the requirement of the principal to lead and manage the role component, school improvement. This is an interesting finding given that the Quality Catholic Schooling (QCS) Framework and school improvement tool was communicated extensively by the CEOWA to all Western Australian Catholic principals throughout 2009/10 and mandated by the CECWA for use in schools from January 2011. Equally significant was identification of the role component, Catholic identity by four aspirants. The literature review articulated the importance of this role component for achievement of school vision and provision of support for the Church's evangelising mission (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009; Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997). Further, the literature review revealed that this role component permeates all other role components of Catholic principalship (McNamara, 2002). The response rate for this role component was notable because of the assumption of the researcher that all aspirants would have identified and accurately described associated responsibilities. This assumption was based on the requirement of the Western Australian Catholic education system that all staff aspiring to assistant/deputy principalship or principalship complete an 'Accreditation for Leadership' as part of the eligibility requirements for appointment (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2012). This qualification involves the study of school Catholic identity through six university units in Religious Education and/or Theology with at least two units completed at Master of Education level (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2014a).

The aspirants who did identify Catholic identity as a role component emphasised the need for the principal to model Gospel values in word and action

when leading and managing (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997; Convey, 2012; Cook & Simonds, 2011; Dobzanski, 2001; Grace, 1996). However, beyond this point, aspirants did not articulate the four main responsibilities associated with Catholic identity identified through the literature review. Firstly, aspirants did not mention the expectation placed upon the principal to enhance and promote school Catholic identity (Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, 2009; Australian Catholic University, 2004; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b, 2009; Catholic Education Office Hobart, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2004). Secondly, no aspirant referred to the requirement of the principal, where possible, to ensure the integration of Gospel values through the curriculum (Convey, 2012). Thirdly, aspirants did not discuss the responsibility of the principal to develop the school as a faith community by providing opportunities to reflect, pray and participate in sacramental and liturgical celebration (Convey, 2012; DeFiore et al., 2009; Klenke, 2007). Finally, no aspirant identified the requirement of the principal to sustain a commitment to social justice and action (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b, 2009; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010; Grace, 2002; T. H. McLaughlin, 1996).

With regard to the capabilities required for effective performance, aspirant responses were incomplete when compared with the literature review. A minority of aspirants indirectly referred to the first capability, vision and values. These aspirants alluded to the capacity required of the principal to form, communicate and drive achievement of school vision and, in doing so, support the evangelising mission of the Catholic Church (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b, 2009). Likewise, these aspirants obliquely referred to the requirement of the Catholic principal to possess and model Gospel values (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997; Convey, 2012; Cook & Simonds, 2011; Dobzanski, 2001; Grace, 1996) and ensure that words and actions are aligned when leading and managing (Buchanan, 2013a). The second capability identified in the literature review, knowledge and understanding, refers to the capacity of the principal to comprehend the responsibilities associated with role components and apply requisite knowledge and skill when leading and managing (Australian Council for Educational Leaders, 2009; Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011). All aspirants referred to the managerial requirements of the role when describing the knowledge

and understanding required of the principal to effectively administrate school-based resources. For example, aspirants mentioned the knowledge required of the principal to prudently manage school finances, human resources and accountability requirements. However, aspirants did not make the connection between this capability and other role components. For example, when leading teaching and learning, the literature review highlighted the importance of principal knowledge regarding contemporary research and legislative developments influencing curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, reporting and student wellbeing (Australian Council for Educational Leaders, 2009; Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Dinham et al., 2011; Dinham et al., 2013). Finally, when aspirants discussed leadership competence, the third capability identified in the literature review, over half of the aspirants alluded to the importance of transformational leadership. Aspirants defined transformational leadership as the ability of the principal to motivate staff through deep respect for people and use of interpersonal skills. These suppositions, in part, reflect the literature review, specifically principal use of inspirational motivation and idealised influence (Marzano et al., 2005).

6.2.2 Aspirant mid-program perceptions.

At the conclusion of the program's first year, aspirant perceptions regarding Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance had changed in three ways when compared with those tendered pre-program. Firstly, aspirants identified the interrelated nature of role components and provided several illustrative examples, notably principal-led integration of Gospel values (Catholic identity) through the curriculum (teaching and learning). Secondly, aspirant articulation of the role components, Catholic identity and stewardship of resources closely reflected the literature review. Thirdly, aspirants demonstrated improved capacity to express the capabilities required for effective performance as defined through the literature review. These changes were not surprising given that first year program theory was based on the domains and capabilities of the Leadership Framework for Catholic schools in Western Australia. A summary of aspirant mid-program perceptions regarding Catholic principalship role components is provided in Table 6.4. A summary of aspirant perceptions regarding the capabilities required for effective performance is provided in Table 6.5.

Table 6.4

Aspirant Mid-program Perceptions: Catholic Principalship Role Components

	Case study number								
Themes and categories	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**Total**
1. Catholic Identity									
• Leading evangelisation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• Leading school Catholic identity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• Modelling Gospel values in word and action	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• Ensuring provision of Gospel-based curricula	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	**6**
• Building school-parish links		✓			✓			✓	**3**
2. Teaching and Learning									
• Developing teacher capacity	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	**5**
• Leading holistic student development				✓	✓		✓		**3**
• Modelling a love of learning		✓						✓	**2**
• Using data to monitor student progress							✓		**1**
3. Stewardship of Resources									
• Managing human resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• Managing environmental resources	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	**7**
• Managing financial resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• Managing capital resources	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**7**
• Ensuring accountability	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	**5**
• Considering Gospel values when making resource-based decisions	✓					✓			**2**
4. Community Engagement and Development									
• Establishing and nurturing relationships based on Gospel values	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• Supporting marginalised school community members				✓	✓	✓	✓		**4**
• Promoting the principles of inclusion and providing a safe environment for staff/students		✓	✓						**2**
5. Interrelated nature of role components	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**

Table 6.5

Aspirant Mid-program Perceptions: The Capabilities Required for Effective Performance

	Case study number								
Themes and categories	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**Total**
1. Vision and Values									
• Ability to form, communicate and drive achievement of school vision	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• Ability to model Gospel values in word and action when leading and managing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
2. Knowledge and Understanding									
• Ability to understand and apply technical role knowledge (Stewardship of resources)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
3. Leadership Competence									
• Transformational leadership ability			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**6**
• Constructive transactional leadership ability	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		**5**

At this point in the data collection, all aspirants acknowledged Catholic identity as a role component of Catholic principalship. Aspirants emphasised the importance of the principal modelling Gospel values in word and action when discussing leadership and management through this role component (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997; Convey, 2012; Cook & Simonds, 2011; Dobzanski, 2001; Grace, 1996). Aspirants also referred to the expectation that the principal lead evangelisation initiatives (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997) and ensure the provision of teaching and learning programs infused, where possible, with Gospel values (Convey, 2012; Hunt et al., 2000; Krebbs, 2000; The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977). Several aspirants described such a curriculum as vital for the holistic development of students with counter-cultural values systems reflecting that of Jesus (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997; Dobzanski, 2001; Flynn & Mok, 2002; Krebbs, 2000). Moreover, several aspirants commented on the role of the principal as builder of rich school-parish relationships and supporter of diocesan

catechesis programs (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b, 2009).

Despite enhanced capacity to articulate the responsibilities associated with this role component, aspirants did not express the requirement of the principal to lead the development of the school as a faith community (Convey, 2012; The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982). Such leadership occurs when the principal provides school community members with opportunities to participate in reflection, prayer and sacramental and liturgical celebration (Convey, 2012; DeFiore et al., 2009; Klenke, 2007). Likewise, aspirants did not mention the requirement of the principal to demonstrate a commitment of social justice and action. Nonetheless, aspirants did acknowledge this Gospel value when discussing the role component, community engagement and development. Specifically, half of the aspirants referred to the need for the principal to build social justice awareness amongst school community members before encouraging appropriate personal and collective action. These aspirants also highlighted the need for the principal to ensure that school policies and processes are designed and applied in a manner respectful of school community members, especially those who are marginalised or facing crises (Carrington, 1999; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010; Dyson et al., 2002).

The majority of aspirants, when discussing the role component, teaching and learning described the connection between this role component and that of Catholic identity by referring to the requirement of the principal to lead the integration of Gospel values, where possible, through the curriculum (Convey, 2012; Hunt et al., 2000; Krebbs, 2000; The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977). Half of the aspirants also commented on the need for the principal to consult with teachers to ensure that they are appropriately resourced, encouraged and developed through professional learning (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Blase & Blase, 2000; Jenkins, 2009; Marzano et al., 2005; The Ontario Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). Likewise, several aspirants indicated the importance of the principal working collegially with teachers to create an effective, whole-of-school teaching and learning culture (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Blase & Blase, 2000; DuFour, 2002; Marzano et al., 2005; The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008) with holistic student development as its aim (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977).

Despite improvements in aspirant articulation of teaching and learning as a role component compared with pre-program responses, gaps in aspirant knowledge remained. Specifically, a minority of aspirants expressed the importance of the principal modelling a love of learning and encouraging school community members to become independent, enthusiastic and life-long learners (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b, 2009; J. Harris et al., 2013). Likewise, a single aspirant voiced the expectation that the principal work with teachers to improve understanding and use of assessment frameworks, based on data, benchmarking and observation, to monitor student progress (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010; Department for Education and Skills, 2004; Department of Education Northern Ireland, 2005; Lashway, 2002).

Other aspects of this role component, described in the literature review, were completely absent from aspirant responses. One example included the responsibility of the principal to promote the careful and collaborative planning of a diverse and flexible curriculum to meet national (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Marzano et al., 2005; Robinson, 2011; Victory, 2013) and, where appropriate, Church requirements (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009). A second example was the expectation that the principal promote peer observation and collaborative discussion to review and improve the effectiveness of teaching practices and classroom environments (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Childs-Bowen et al., 2000; DuFour, 2002; Jenkins, 2009; Robinson, 2011).

In contrast to these knowledge gaps, aspirants demonstrated a comprehensive understating of the role component, stewardship of resources. Specifically, aspirants accurately articulated the requirement of the principal to prudently lead and manage school-based human, environmental, financial and capital resources (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010). Most aspirants referred to the need for the principal to lead and manage in a transparent and accountable manner when discussing this role component (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b, 2009). Moreover, several aspirants pronounced the need for the

principal to consider Gospel values when making resource-focused decisions (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010).

All aspirants identified the requirement of the principal to lead and manage human resources with several aspirants referring directly to the responsibilities of recruitment, induction, professional formation and formative and summative appraisal of staff (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010). Aspirants also described the need for the principal to lead and manage school environmental resources, in part by promoting participation in local, national and international conservation initiatives (Catholic Earthcare Australia, 2012; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b; Spry & Cunliffe, 2008). All aspirants identified the role of the principal as leader and manager of school financial resources and discussed the responsibilities of setting, implementing and monitoring the budget, identifying and rectifying anomalies and reporting in an accountable manner to the school board and governing system (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010; Welsh Assembly Government, 2006). Likewise, aspirants expressed the duty of the principal to use project management principles when planning and supervising school-based capital development projects including the construction of new and refurbishment of existing buildings and requisite capital fit-out (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2010; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010). However, despite robust understanding of the role of the principal as steward of capital resources, no aspirant described the links between the school infrastructure master plan, the capital development plan and savings plan for both linked to the school budget (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b; Catholic Education Office Hobart, 2005; Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2010; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010).

When discussing their perceptions regarding the role component, community engagement and development, all aspirants identified as imperative the use of Gospel-based words and actions by the principal when building relationships (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997; Convey, 2012; Cook & Simonds, 2011;

Dobzanski, 2001; Grace, 1996). Likewise, aspirants voiced the requirement of the principal to oversee the development and maintenance of processes and structures to facilitate reciprocal communication between the school, home and community (Australian Council for Educational Leaders, 2009; Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Epstein, 2007) when striving to grow a Christ-like community. Half of the aspirants also discussed their perception that the principal is expected to care for marginalised school community members, notably staff, students and parents experiencing crises (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b, 2009; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010).

However, aspirants either poorly articulated or did not mention the three other dimensions of this role component highlighted through the literature review. Firstly, only two aspirants acknowledged the requirement of the Catholic principal to recognise and promote the principles of inclusion amongst school community members (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; The Ontario Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). Examples provided by aspirants included the use of student, parent and community member linguistic and cultural gifts in the classroom to enhance both school diversity and the quality of teaching and learning practices. Secondly, these aspirants identified the expectation placed upon the principal to work proactively with agencies to support student attendance, protect and nurture student wellbeing and create safe and inclusive learning environments (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011). Thirdly, no aspirant mentioned the importance of principal willingness to enhance the educational outcomes of the Western Australian education system by sharing school facilities and internal expertise with staff from neighbouring schools to build teacher capacity (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010; A. Harris, 2008).

When discussing the capabilities required for effective performance, aspirants offered more comprehensive descriptions than those tendered pre-program. Further, the capabilities identified by aspirants at this point in the research reflected the three broad categories identified in the literature review. All aspirants, when referring to the capabilities of vision and values, articulated the importance of principal capacity

to understand the evangelising mission of the Church and use this when working with school community members to form, communicate and drive achievement of school vision (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b, 2009). To support the evangelising mission of the Church, aspirants commented on the need for school vision to focus on the holistic development of students with values systems based on that of Jesus Christ (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997; Dobzanski, 2001; Flynn & Mok, 2002; Krebbs, 2000). Aspirants indicated that achievement of such a vision requires the principal to ensure the provision of Gospel-based teaching and learning programs (Convey, 2012). However, no aspirant referred to the need for the principal to focus all role components and school activities on achievement of this vision (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b; Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2009; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010).

All aspirants identified the importance of the principal modelling Gospel values (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997; Convey, 2012; Cook & Simonds, 2011; Dobzanski, 2001; Grace, 1996) and ensuring that words and actions are aligned when leading and managing (Buchanan, 2013a). When discussing specific values, aspirants cited social justice and action as imperative (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b, 2009; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010). Absent from aspirant responses, however, was the need for the principal to value, model and promote the pursuit of life-long learning and set high standards for themselves and those they lead (Australian Council for Educational Leaders, 2009; Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Scottish Executive Education Department, 2005; Welsh Assembly Government, 2006).

Aspirant responses with regard to knowledge and understanding, the second capability required for effective performance, were concentrated and specific. That is, all aspirants referred to the wherewithal required of the principal to lead and manage the technical responsibilities associated with the role component, stewardship of resources such as school financial management (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010). However, as was the

case pre-program, no aspirant discussed the knowledge and understanding required of the principal to effectively lead and manage through the role components of Catholic identity, teaching and learning or community engagement and development. Further, no aspirant identified principal strategic planning proficiency as a means through which to 'chart the course' for the achievement of school vision (Davies & Ellison, 2013; A. Harris, 2012).

Just over half of the aspirants identified the capacity of the principal to adopt a constructive transactional approach when managing staff when discussing the third capability identified through the literature review, leadership competence (Avolio, 2010; Burns, 1978; Lowe et al., 2013; Walumbwa & Wernsing, 2013). Specifically, aspirants articulated the need for the principal to work with staff to clarify expectations, set appropriate goals, suggest strategies for improvement as they work, provide feedback, praise and recognition when warranted and exchange rewards for accomplishments (Avolio, 2010; Lowe et al., 2013; Marzano et al., 2005). Most aspirants also described the effective principal as one capable of adopting a transformational disposition when leading and managing staff toward the achievement of school vision (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013). Aspirants defined transformational capability as the capacity of the principal to transform or inspire staff to move from a mindset of egocentricity to one that considers the needs of colleagues and achievement of shared organisation vision (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978; Lavery, 2011; Locke & Kirkpatrick, 1991). Aspirant responses identified four possible strategies available for use by the principal when leading and managing in this way. The first strategy was the willingness and capacity of the principal to mentor marginalised staff, referred to in the literature as individual consideration, to encourage a sense of belonging and enhance dedication (Bass, 1990). The second strategy was stimulation of the intellectual capacity of staff by the principal to generate unique solutions to problems without publically criticising the history of the issue or the mistakes of individuals (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass, 1990; Lowe et al., 2013). The third strategy involved the use of charisma by the principal, specifically dynamic presence, confidence and projection of power, to inspire and motivate staff (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass, 1990; Lowe et al., 2013). The final strategy was the capacity of the principal to create a high-trust culture by modelling expected behaviour, using ethical words and actions, encouraging

appropriate risk-taking amongst staff and considering the needs of others before self (Marzano et al., 2005).

6.2.3 Aspirant end-of-program perceptions.

At the conclusion of the program, aspirant perceptions regarding Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance had changed again. Specifically, aspirant responses predominantly focused on the principal as leader and manager of the role component, school improvement. With regard to the capabilities required for effective performance, aspirants discussed the ability of the principal to form, communicate and drive achievement of school vision using knowledge of the QCS Framework and school improvement tool in conjunction with transformational and transcendental leadership capabilities. Given the emphasis of the program's second year on the use of the system-mandated Quality Catholic Schooling (QCS) Framework and school improvement tool and contemporary leadership theory, aspirant identification of this role component and requisite capabilities was unsurprising. A summary of aspirant perceptions is provided in Table 6.6.

With regard to research data, three trends were evident. Firstly, aspirants identified the principal as leader and manager of the role component, school improvement (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2009; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2006). Secondly, aspirants articulated the potential of the QCS Framework and school improvement tool to enhance all aspects of school operations, especially the quality of activities and services offered to the school community (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2009; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2006, 2011; Department of Education and Training, 2014; A. Harris, 2012). Thirdly, aspirants discussed the importance of school improvement for the achievement of school vision and, as a result, provision of support for the evangelising mission of the Church (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2009; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2006). With regard to this trend, more than half of the aspirants emphasised the importance of placing achievement of school vision at the centre of school improvement endeavours (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2009; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2006).

Table 6.6

Aspirant End-of-program Perceptions: Catholic Principalship Role Components and the Capabilities for Effective Performance

				Case study number					
Themes and categories	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**Total**
Role component									
1. School Improvement									
• Leading school improvement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• Using the QCS Framework and school improvement tool to enhance all aspects of school operations	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**6**
• Placing achievement of school vision at the centre of improvement endeavours		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		**5**
• Distributing leadership for school improvement/QCS component reviews						✓	✓		**2**
• Communicating the importance of school improvement to the school community								✓	**1**
Capabilities									
1. Vision and Values									
• Ability to drive achievement of school vision through school improvement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• Ability to lead school improvement using Gospel-based words and actions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
2. Knowledge and Understanding									
• Ability to understand and apply the QCS Framework and school improvement tool	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• Desire to maintain contemporary knowledge of school improvement	✓			✓					**2**
3. Leadership Competence									
• Transcendental leadership ability	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• Transformational leadership ability	✓	✓							**2**

When discussing school improvement as a role component of Catholic principalship, aspirants highlighted the need for the principal to ensure that component review teams reflect the diverse nature of the school community (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2009). Aspirants indicated that such representation is achieved when the principal invites the participation of school community members with interest or expertise in the component due for review (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2009). Aspirants identified leadership team members, teachers, support staff, students, their parents and carers and members from the broader school community as potential component-review participants (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2009). Aspirants also accurately described the QCS school improvement process. Specifically, aspirants stated that the purpose of the component-review team was determination of school performance against QCS component descriptors, the sourcing of evidence to confirm ratings and, where necessary, formulation and implementation of a component improvement plan (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2009). Post-implementation of the component improvement plan, aspirants discussed the importance of periodic review to determine effectiveness of interventions together with the formulation and implementation of modifications as required (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2009).

When compared with the established body of knowledge presented in the literature review, however, responses for this role component revealed three gaps in aspirant knowledge. Firstly, only one aspirant acknowledged the importance of the principal communicating the purpose and significance of school improvement and the outcomes of QCS component reviews to the school community (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2009; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2006; A. Harris, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2008). Secondly, only two aspirants emphasised the importance of the principal distributing leadership for QCS component-review processes to interested staff as a means through which to develop leadership potential (A. Harris, 2008). Thirdly, no aspirant mentioned the importance of the principal incorporating QCS component improvement plans with the school strategic plan (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2009; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2006).

All aspirants referred to vision and values when discussing the capabilities required for effective performance. Specifically, aspirants articulated the importance of principal capacity to drive achievement of school vision through school improvement (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2009; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2006). Aspirants also identified the importance of the principal modelling Gospel values (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997; Convey, 2012; Cook & Simonds, 2011; Dobzanski, 2001; Grace, 1996) and ensuring that words and actions are aligned (Buchanan, 2013a) when leading and managing school improvement.

All aspirants, when discussing the capability of knowledge and understanding, considered principal comprehension of the QCS Framework important for the success of the school improvement process (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2009; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2006). Likewise, aspirants highlighted principal prowess with regard to the use of the school improvement tool as an important capability (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2009; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2006). A minority of aspirants, however, discussed the need for the principal to maintain contemporary knowledge of school improvement literature and developments in the field (Ainscow et al., 2013; Davies & Ellison, 2013; Department of Education and Training, 2014).

With regard to the capability of leadership competence, several aspirants discussed the strategic use of individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and idealised influence by the principal (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Bass, 1990; Lowe et al., 2013; Marzano et al., 2005) when leading school improvement. In contrast, all aspirants referred to the need for the principal to utilise transcendental leadership capabilities (Beckwith, 2011; Kishore & Nair, 2013; Lavery, 2012) when working with school community members in general and component-review group members specifically. Aspirants identified three specific traits when discussing transcendental capabilities. Firstly, aspirants expressed the ability and willingness of the transcendental principal to reflect upon their leadership and management strengths and deficiencies before proactively determining and implementing improvement strategies (Beckwith, 2011; Gardiner, 2006; Kishore & Nair, 2013; Lavery, 2012; Liu, 2007). Secondly, aspirants referred to the ability of the transcendental principal to engage with others in genuine, non-

hierarchical and collaborative discussion, supported by unconditional listening and the application of Gospel values (Beckwith, 2011; Gardiner, 2006; Kishore & Nair, 2013; Lavery, 2012; Liu, 2007). Thirdly, aspirants discussed the overarching motivation of the transcendental principal to serve others before self (Beckwith, 2011; Gardiner, 2006; Kishore & Nair, 2013; Lavery, 2012; Liu, 2007; Rebore & Walmsley, 2009). Aspirants also described the outcomes of transcendental capabilities as values-based, high-trust workplace cultures where staff serve one another and focus on the continual improvement of school activities and processes to achieve school vision (Cardona, 2000; Gardiner, 2006; Lavery, 2012; Liu, 2007).

6.2.4 Influences provoking discernible perception changes.

As aspirants participated in and completed the program, they attributed discernible perception changes regarding Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance to the influence of three program-related features. These features were the program curriculum; active learning experiences; and collegial support networks. Summaries of mid-program and end-of-program influences provoking discernible perception changes are provided in Tables 6.7 and 6.8 respectively.

The first influence provoking discernible perception changes was the program curriculum. All aspirants commented that the use of the Leadership Framework to structure first year program modules assisted understanding of Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance. Specifically, aspirants affirmed explicit study of Leadership Framework domains (Catholic identity, stewardship, education and community) and capabilities (personal, professional, relational and organisational). Similarly, six aspirants indicated that study of the QCS Framework and school improvement tool and leadership of a school improvement project throughout the program's second year enhanced their knowledge of the role component, school improvement. Moreover, all aspirants indicated that program modules based on contemporary leadership theory positively influenced perceptions regarding the capabilities required for effective performance. Aspirants cited the exploration of constructive transactional leadership during the program's first year and transformational and transcendental models of leadership during second year 'Transforming leadership' modules as examples.

Table 6.7

Catholic Principalship Role Components and the Capabilities Required for Effective Performance: Mid-program Influences Provoking Discernible Perception Changes

Themes and categories	Case study number								Total
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	
1. Program Curriculum									
• Understanding role components and requisite capabilities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
2. Active Learning Experiences									
• Experiencing role components and capabilities through school board and sub-committee participation		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	**5**
• Experiencing role components and applying capabilities during periods of acting principalship or internship	✓		✓		✓				**3**
3. Collegial Support Networks									
• Discussing role components and requisite capabilities with aspirant principals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		**7**
• Discussing role components and requisite capabilities with 'Inside Leadership' guest principals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	**7**

These findings reflect the literature review. Specifically, several researchers posited that exemplary principal preparation programs have the potential to enhance participant understanding of role components and requisite capabilities through the provision of a rigorous, coherent and systematic curriculum aligned to national professionals standards and a well-defined process for school improvement (Davis et al., 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; McCarthy, 1999; Orr, 2006; Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Young et al., 2009). The focus of the program's second year on the use of the QCS Framework and school improvement tool also reflected the conclusions of several researchers who asserted that exemplary principal preparation programs address strategies for organisational development and change leadership (Davis et al., 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; McCarthy, 1999; Orr, 2006; Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Young et al., 2009)

Table 6.8

Catholic Principalship Role Components and the Capabilities Required for Effective Performance: End-of-program Influences Provoking Discernible Perception Changes

	Case study number								
Themes and categories	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**Total**
1. Program Curriculum									
• Understanding role components and requisite capabilities	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		6
2. Active Learning Experiences									
• LSI/coaching/QCS project: Understanding school improvement and refining leadership capabilities	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	6
• Experiencing role components and applying capabilities during periods of acting principalship or internship		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		5
3. Collegial Support Networks									
• Discussing role components and requisite capabilities with aspirant principals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
• Discussing role components and requisite capabilities with 'Inside Leadership' guest principals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
• Discussing role components and requisite capabilities with program-appointed coaches	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	5

The literature review also indicated that effective principal preparation programs provide participants with opportunities to apply program theory to reality through well-planned, active learning experiences (Orr & Orphanos, 2011). Thus, aspirants cited active learning experiences as the second influence provoking discernible perception changes. Specifically, aspirants highlighted the positive influence of four program-related experiences on their perceptions: school board observation and finance and capital development sub-committee participation; use of LSI, 360-degree review data and coaching sessions for leadership capability improvement; leadership of a QCS school improvement project; and acting principalship or internship.

During the interview conducted at the end of the program's first year, over half of the aspirants asserted that their perceptions regarding role components and capabilities changed as a result of school board observation and finance and capital development sub-committee participation. Specifically, aspirants highlighted the influence of these program features on their understanding of the principalship responsibilities associated with the role component, stewardship of resources. Moreover, aspirants indicated that these experiences enhanced their capacity to collaborate effectively with school board personnel, manage school finances and plan and supervise capital development projects.

During the interview conducted at the end of the program, the majority of aspirants reflected on the positive influence of the LSI psychometric tool and coaching sessions on their capability perceptions. Aspirants indicated that these program features enhanced their understanding of the importance of the principal reflecting on his/her leadership capability strengths and weaknesses before enacting improvement strategies. Aspirants also commented on the benefits of these tools for personal leadership capability development. Likewise, aspirants discussed the positive influence associated with leading a QCS school improvement project during the program's second year. Specifically, aspirants considered the QCS project a means through which to implement, evaluate and refine strategies for leadership capability improvement generated during coaching sessions. Aspirants also observed that the project provided a unique opportunity to understand the philosophical underpinnings of the QCS Framework and develop proficiency with regard to the use of the school improvement tool.

Several researchers also recommended the use of the internship as a means through which to provide program participants with an authentic experience of principalship (Leithwood et al., 1996). The internship not only provides aspirants with a 'window' through which to experience role components and apply requisite capabilities, it has the potential to expose aspirants to three important self-efficacy sources. The first source is mastery experiences or opportunities to repeat effort in an attempt to overcome challenging situations and experience success (Bandura, 1986). The second source is control of physical and emotional states, such as stress reactions, that often arise during mastery experiences (Bandura, 1986). The third source is social persuasion (Bandura, 1986). In a school context, social persuasion

takes the form of affirmation of aspirant leadership capabilities by his or her principal and/or, staff, students, their parents and carers and members of the broader school community (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005; Versland, 2009). These three self-efficacy sources have the potential to enhance aspirant belief in ability to commence principalship (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005; Versland, 2009).

The three aspirants who experienced acting principalship or internship during the program's first year commented on the value of the experience as a means through which to comprehend and experience principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance. Aspirants also expressed the self-efficacy benefits associated with these experiences (see 6.5 Self-efficacy to Commence Principalship). One aspirant completed a five-week period of acting principalship at her school whilst her principal recovered from surgery. A second aspirant completed a six-month period of acting principalship at her school, the opportunity created by the sudden departure of her principal to undertake the lead role at another school. The third aspirant participated in a two-week internship organised and funded by his school. This aspirant visited five Australian east-coast schools where he shadowed each principal. Likewise, the five aspirants who experienced acting principalship or internship during the program's second year commented on the positive influence of the experience on their perceptions. The first aspirant completed a 10-week internship at a remote primary school in the Kimberley region of the Broome diocese where she shadowed the principal. A second aspirant completed a six-month period of acting principalship at a large metropolitan primary school. This opportunity arose when the substantive principal was appointed to the lead role at another school. The third and fourth aspirants completed 10-week periods of acting principalship at their schools, replacing their principals as they undertook leave. The final aspirant undertook a three-week period as acting principal of a country primary school in the Geraldton diocese whilst the principal recovered from illness.

Over the course of the data collection, all aspirants nominated a final influence provoking discernible perception changes, interaction and discussion with the members of collegial support networks established and developed through the program. Aspirants identified their principals, coaches and guest principals encountered during 'Inside Leadership' sessions as valued network members. Not

only did these colleagues provide aspirants with perspectives regarding role components and requisite capabilities, they served as sources of vicarious experiences and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986). Aspirants were exposed to vicarious experiences when they observed network members achieving goals through perseverance and, as a result, formed the belief that they too had the capacity to succeed in comparable situations (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005; Versland, 2009). Aspirants experienced social persuasion when they received praise from network members and, as a result, formed the belief that they had the capability to commence Catholic principalship (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005; Versland, 2009).

6.2.5 Section one summary.

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, aspirants largely perceived Catholic principalship to be a managerial occupation, dominated by the technical responsibilities associated with the role component, stewardship of resources. To a lesser extent, aspirants discussed aspects of role components of community engagement and development, teaching and learning and Catholic identity. When considering the capabilities required for effective performance, aspirants focused on the knowledge required of the principal to prudently manage technical role responsibilities such as the management of school finances in addition to transformational leadership prowess. As aspirants participated in and completed the program, they expressed Catholic principalship through five, interrelated role components studied through the program: Catholic identity; teaching and learning; stewardship of resources (human, environmental, financial and capital resources); community engagement and development; and school improvement. Aspirants also identified three capabilities required for effective performance when leading and managing through each role component: vision and values; knowledge and understanding; and leadership competence.

Despite enhanced understanding of role components and requisite capabilities, the research identified six 'gaps' in aspirant knowledge, indicating program deficiencies. Firstly, aspirants did not discuss the requirement of the principal, as leader of the role component, Catholic identity to develop the school as a faith community by providing opportunities to reflect, pray and participate in sacramental

and liturgical celebrations. Secondly and thirdly, aspirant responses indicated a cursory understanding of the role components, teaching and learning and community engagement and development when compared with the established body of knowledge presented in the literature review. Fourthly, aspirants omitted to emphasise vital responsibilities associated with the role component, school improvement such as the need for the principal to distribute leadership to develop the leadership capacity of interested staff. Fifthly, aspirants discussed the knowledge and understanding required of the principal to effectively lead and manage the role components, stewardship of resources and school improvement, but ignored that pertaining to Catholic identity, teaching and learning and community engagement and development. Finally, aspirants did not refer to the need for the principal to have strategic planning proficiency, important when 'charting the course' for the achievement of school vision.

Aspirants confirmed the influence of three program-related features when discussing perception changes pertaining to Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance. These features were the program curriculum; active learning experiences; and interaction and discussion with the members of collegial support networks developed through the program.

6.3 Section Two: Factors Enhancing Interest in Principalship

Section two discusses the themes associated with aspirant pre-program, mid-program and end-of-program perceptions regarding the factors enhancing interest in Catholic principalship. Themes associated with the influences provoking discernible perceptions changes are also examined.

6.3.1 Aspirant pre-program perceptions.

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, aspirants identified two primary factors enhancing their interest in Catholic principalship: the opportunity lead the role components, teaching and learning; and community engagement and development. To a lesser extent, aspirants cited five other factors enhancing role interest. Specifically, aspirant interest was driven by a desire to: lead the role component, Catholic identity; form a leadership team capable of the prudent stewardship of resources; apply leadership theory studied and advice received from

advisors; mentor aspiring female leaders; and learn from the experience of principalship. A summary of aspirant perceptions is provided in Table 6.9.

Table 6.9

Aspirant Pre-program Perceptions: Factors Enhancing Interest in Principalship

	Case study number								
Themes and categories	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
1. Catholic Identity									
• Lead evangelisation initiatives	✓			✓					2
• Ensure provision of Gospel-based curricula				✓					1
• Form, communicate and drive achievement of school vision							✓		1
2. Teaching and Learning									
• Lead holistic student development	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	6
• Develop teacher capacity	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		5
3. Stewardship of Resources									
• Form a leadership team and develop managerial capability								✓	1
4. Community Engagement and Development									
• Establish and nurture a Catholic school community with relationships based on Gospel values	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	7
• Build school-community partnerships to enhance student educational outcomes						✓		✓	2
• Support marginalised school community members		✓			✓				2
5. Personal Motives									
• Apply leadership theory studied and advice received from advisors								✓	1
• Mentor aspiring female leaders								✓	1
• Passion for leadership and learning				✓					1

When discussing the opportunity provided by Catholic principalship to lead the role component, teaching and learning the majority of aspirants articulated their desire to work with staff to holistically develop students. To accomplish this aim,

aspirants expressed their drive to develop staff through the continuous improvement of teacher pedagogical practices and the quality of classroom environments. These desires reflect the conclusions of d'Arbon, Duignan and Duncan (2002) who considered the opportunity to lead instruction and enhance student learning an internal reward with the potential to enhance aspirant interest in principalship. Other researchers asserted that aspirants with a passion for developing people, especially teaching staff they lead, are attracted to principalship because of the opportunity provided by the role to fulfil this need (Day & Leithwood, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2008).

The second factor driving aspirant interest in Catholic principalship was the opportunity to lead the role component, community engagement and development. Most aspirants discussed their desire to establish and nurture a Catholic school community characterised by relationships based on Gospel values. Aspirants also expressed their motivation to build reputations amongst the members of their school communities as trustworthy, genuine, present and accessible leaders. Two aspirants made a direct link with the role component, teaching and learning by expressing their interest in building effective school-community partnerships to enhance student educational outcomes. Both aspirants cited direct parent involvement in classrooms and use of school community cultural knowledge in the teaching and learning process as practical strategies that could be applied to achieve this aim. Finally, when discussing their attraction to leading community engagement and development, several aspirants reflected an inclination to care for marginalised school community members.

Aspirant perceptions reflect the conclusions of several researchers. Specifically, aspirants who indicated desire to build a school community based on Gospel values reflect the findings of d'Arbon, Duignan and Duncan (2002), McNeese, Robertson and Haines (2008) and Pritchard (2003). These researchers asserted the influence of internal rewards associated with principalship on aspiration such as the need to fulfil a divine calling. Further, aspirants directly or indirectly referred to the appeal of contributing to Catholic education and the evangelising mission of the Church, a factor identified in the literature review as another internal reward with the potential to enhance aspirant interest in principalship (d'Arbon et al., 2002; Fraser & Brock, 2013; Neidhart & Carlin, 2003b; Pritchard, 2003). Aspirant

desires also reflect the findings of several researchers, notably those of Buchanan (2013a), Day and Leithwood (2007) and Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) who described successful principals as reflective, genuine leaders who align their words with actions that, in turn, mirror the values of the school and its context. Additionally, aspirant desires to develop school-community partnerships for the purpose of enhancing student educational outcomes reflect the assertions of several researchers including those from The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2011) and Harrison and Greenfield (2011). Finally, Day and Leithwood (2007) and Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) concluded that successful principals were effective because of their willingness to be visible and accessible to staff, students and their parents during times of need.

With regard to other factors enhancing interest in principalship, several aspirants referred to the opportunity provided by the role to lead school Catholic identity. Specifically, two aspirants considered the prospect of leading school-based evangelisation initiatives an attractive aspect of principalship. One aspirant cited attraction to the opportunity presented by principalship to lead the provision of Gospel-based teaching and learning programs. As explained previously, the purpose of Gospel-based teaching and learning programs is the development of students with a set of values based on those modelled by Jesus Christ (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997; Dobzanski, 2001; Flynn & Mok, 2002; Krebbs, 2000). Equipped with such values, students are encouraged to think and act counter-culturally when confronted with situations that oppose these ideals (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b, 2009; Grace, 2002; Groome, 2002). Likewise, a single aspirant articulated a desire to work with the school community to form, communicate and drive achievement of school vision and, by doing so, support the evangelising mission of the Catholic Church. All three categories reflect aspirant motivation to contribute to Catholic education and the evangelising mission of the Church, an internal reward driving interest in principalship identified by d'Arbon, Duignan and Duncan (2002), Fraser and Brock (2013), Neidhart and Carlin (2003b) and Pritchard (2003).

Another internal reward highlighted by several researchers in the literature review (Neidhart & Carlin, 2003b; Pritchard, 2003; Tekleselassie & Villarreal III, 2011) was the authority of the principal to form a competent and committed

leadership team capable of inspiring staff, student and parent achievement of school vision. One aspirant reflected this finding when she identified the opportunity to form a managerially competent leadership team as an appealing aspect of principalship. Although the aspirant did not specifically identify achievement of school vision as her purpose, it was inferred because the prudent stewardship of resources creates the conditions required for achievement of school vision that, in turn, ensures provision of support for the Church's evangelising mission (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010).

The same aspirant nominated the opportunity to apply learning acquired through formal study and advice received from advisors as a factor enhancing interest in principalship. In part, this perception reflects the conclusions of Bezzina (2012) and Walker and Kwan (2009) who determined strong correlation between aspirant involvement in professional learning and enhanced interest in principalship. These researchers surmised that that involvement in professional learning has the potential to enhance aspirant confidence to apply for vacancies. Further, the researchers concluded that such aspirants are attracted to principalship because it represents a means through which to apply theoretical learning to real-world settings. The same aspirant also considered the opportunity offered by principalship to mentor aspiring female leaders a factor enhancing interest in the role. She reflected that male mentors, all excellent in terms of quality, had nurtured her entire leadership career. In the context of the Western Australian Catholic education system, this situation is common and a reflection of the male-dominated nature of the senior leadership tier, a conclusion reached by Bezzina (2012) and Neidhart and Carlin (2003a). The aspirant indicated that she longed for exposure to a significant female role model to provide her with another perspective on leadership. In return, the aspirant cited her desire to assume this mantle for aspiring female leaders in the future.

Finally, another aspirant cited the opportunity to fulfil her passion for leadership and learning through the role as a factor enhancing interest in principalship. This perception reflects the conclusions of Bezzina (2012), Bickmore, Bickmore and Raines (2013), Fraser and Brock (2013), Lacey (2003), Tekleselassir and Villarreal III (2011) and Walker and Kwan (2009) who considered the developmental promise of the principalship an important external reward. That is,

aspirants who perceive that the principalship will provide challenging and interesting experiences and contribute to knowledge and skills are likely to seek promotion.

6.3.2 Aspirant mid-program perceptions.

At the conclusion of the program's first year, aspirants commented that participation in the program had confirmed their pre-program perceptions regarding the factors enhancing interest in Catholic principalship. Although aspirant perceptions were similar to those identified pre-program, analysis of mid-program data revealed four new factors. Firstly, several aspirants expressed enthusiasm at the prospect of leading the role component, school improvement as principal. Secondly, one aspirant considered improved self-efficacy a factor enhancing desire for promotion. Thirdly, one aspirant was attracted by the opportunity provided by principalship to develop and lead a community of learners dedicated to improving the lives of staff, students and their family members. Finally, one aspirant expressed interest in promotion, driven by the feeling that he had outgrown his current role. A summary of aspirant perceptions is provided in Table 6.10.

At this point in the program, just over half of the aspirants considered the opportunity to lead and manage the role component, Catholic identity a factor enhancing interest in principalship. Specifically, three aspirants articulated their desire to lead the provision of Gospel-based curricula compared with one aspirant who expressed the same aspiration pre-program. In concert with pre-program perceptions, two aspirants cited opportunities to lead school-based evangelisation initiatives as an attractive aspect of principalship. Likewise, one aspirant discussed the appeal of the role to form, communicate and drive achievement of school vision.

As was the case pre-program, aspirant attraction to leadership of the role component, teaching and learning remained at the program's mid-point. Specifically, most aspirants considered the opportunity to influence the holistic development of students an attractive role aspect. Likewise, aspirants who expressed attraction to educational leadership expressed their desire to lead staff development. These aspirants cited teacher pedagogical improvements and the collaborative development of stimulating classroom environments as key focus areas.

Table 6.10

Aspirant Mid-program Perceptions: Factors Enhancing Interest in Principalship

Themes and categories	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
1. Catholic Identity									
• Ensure provision of Gospel-based curricula		✓		✓	✓				3
• Lead evangelisation initiatives	✓			✓					2
• Form, communicate and drive achievement of school vision							✓		1
2. Teaching and Learning									
• Lead holistic student development	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	6
• Develop teacher capacity	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		5
3. Stewardship of Resources									
• Form a leadership team and develop managerial capability								✓	1
4. Community Engagement and Development									
• Establish and nurture a Catholic school community with relationships based on Gospel values	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	6
• Build school-community partnerships to enhance student educational outcomes						✓		✓	2
• Support marginalised school community members		✓			✓				2
5. School Improvement									
• Lead school improvement to enhance student educational outcomes	✓				✓				2
6. Personal Motives									
• Improved self-efficacy		✓							1
• Develop and lead a community of learners to improve the lives of staff, students and their family members	✓								1
• Mentor aspiring female leaders								✓	1
• Outgrown current role							✓		1

Most aspirants also remained committed to leading the role component, community engagement and development. Aspirants reiterated their desire to establish and nurture a Catholic school community characterised by relationships based on Gospel values. Several aspirants also expressed their motivation, as principal, to develop collaborative community partnerships to enhance student educational outcomes. Moreover, several aspirants considered the opportunity to care for marginalised community members an attractive aspect of this role component.

One aspirant considered the opportunity to lead the role component, stewardship of resources a factor enhancing interest in principalship. As was the case pre-program, this aspirant expressed her desire, as principal, to form a competent and committed leadership team capable of the prudent management of school resources. Specifically, the aspirant discussed the essential role the leadership team plays in managing school human, environmental, financial and capital resources (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2013; Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008b; Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2010) to influence student educational outcomes and achievement of school vision.

With regard to newly identified factors enhancing interest in Catholic principalship, several aspirants expressed interest in leading the role component, school improvement. One aspirant discussed the appeal associated with overseeing the analysis and improvement of all facets of school operations to enhance student educational outcomes. Another aspirant voiced a desire to use the school improvement process to enhance teacher effectiveness, thereby assisting students to achieve their potential. This aspirant specifically referred to the possibility of using the system-mandated QCS Framework and school improvement tool to engage teachers in a continuous cycle of improvement, especially with regard to content knowledge, student needs analysis and pedagogical effectiveness. These findings reflect the literature review, notably the conclusions of several researchers who asserted that aspirants may be intrinsically driven to achieve principalship because of the opportunity offered by the role to influence school improvement (d'Arbon et al., 2002; Fraser & Brock, 2013; McKenzie et al., 2011; McNeese et al., 2008).

At this point in the data collection, four aspirants identified personal motives driving their interest in principalship. Reflecting pre-program data, one aspirant

reiterated her ambition to mentor aspiring female leaders as principal. Another aspirant attributed her interest in principalship to enhanced self-efficacy perceptions, the result of a year of experience as an assistant principal and program participant. This finding reflects the conclusions of several researchers who asserted that high self-efficacy is a factor with the potential to enhance aspirant interest in principalship (Bezzina, 2012; McKenzie et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005; Versland, 2009). A third aspirant regarded the opportunity provided by the principalship to lead the development of a community of learners an attractive role aspect. This aspirant discussed her desire to encourage collaboration between the school and community members to build stimulating learning environments for all based on the example of Jesus, the formal curriculum, quality teaching, learning and assessment and rich co-curricular activities. In the literature review, several researchers referred to this attractive role aspect as an internal reward rooted in desire to improve the lives of staff and life chances of students and their families (Bickmore et al., 2013; d'Arbon et al., 2002; Neidhart & Carlin, 2003b; Pritchard, 2003; Tekleselassie & Villarreal III, 2011). A final aspirant attributed enhanced interest in principalship to the feeling that he had outgrown his current leadership role and considered progression to the principalship a logical career step. d'Arbon, Duignan & Duncan (2002) labelled this factor an external or extrinsic reward driving aspirant interest in principalship.

6.3.3 Aspirant end-of-program perceptions.

At the conclusion of the program, aspirant perceptions regarding the factors enhancing interest in Catholic principalship had developed further. The most discernible change was the manner in which aspirants expressed their ambitions. In every case, aspirants conveyed their attraction to principalship through a leadership vision statement developed and refined over the course of the program. Aspirant vision statements reflected a combination of five drivers: desire to develop school Catholic identity; aspiration to lead teaching and learning; drive to lead community engagement and development; motivation to lead school improvement; and ambition to positively influence the lives of school community members through quality leadership. A summary of aspirant perceptions is provided in Table 6.11.

Table 6.11

Aspirant End-of-program Perceptions: Factors Enhancing Interest in Principalship

	Case study number								
Themes and categories	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**Total**
1. Catholic Identity									
• Ensure provision of Gospel-based curricula	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			**5**
• Lead evangelisation initiatives	✓			✓					**2**
• Form, communicate and drive achievement of school vision							✓		**1**
2. Teaching and Learning									
• Develop teacher capacity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• Lead holistic student development	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**7**
• Encourage students to apply learning to benefit others (Christian service learning)						✓			**1**
• Establish high expectations for teaching and student learning					✓				**1**
3. Community Engagement and Development									
• Establish and nurture a Catholic school community with relationships based on Gospel values	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	**6**
• Build school-community partnerships to enhance student educational outcomes	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		**5**
• Support marginalised school community members					✓				**1**
4. School Improvement									
• Lead school improvement to enhance student educational outcomes	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	**5**
5. Personal Motives									
• Desire to use leadership strengths to positively influence the lives of school community members	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	**6**

The majority of aspirants expressed attraction to principalship because of the opportunity provided by the role to lead school Catholic identity, specifically through

the provision of Gospel-based teaching and learning programs. Reflecting mid-program findings were the perceptions of two aspirants who considered opportunities to lead school-based evangelisation initiatives an attractive aspect of principalship. Likewise, one aspirant conveyed a desire to form, communicate and drive achievement of school vision and, in doing so, support the evangelising mission of the Catholic Church.

Aspirant responses continued to highlight the appeal of leading instruction through the role component, teaching and learning. Specifically, aspirants cited their desire to lead the development of teaching staff to enhance their ability to nurture the intellectual, spiritual, social, physical and emotional dimensions of students. Aspirants, when discussing teacher development, expressed enthusiasm at the prospect of leading professional learning in areas such as contemporary technology, pedagogy, psychology and stimulating classroom environments. Additionally, two new teaching and learning insights appeared at this point in the data collection. Firstly, one aspirant conveyed attraction to the principalship because of the potential of the role to establish Christian service learning opportunities for students where classroom learning could be applied to benefit others, especially marginalised school community members. This aspirant cited her intention to establish close links with the parish to create these opportunities, reflecting the conclusions of Miller and Engel (2011) who emphasised the role of the principal in building such relationships to successfully convert social justice intentions to action. Secondly, one aspirant discussed his ambition to work with the school community to establish and communicate clear expectations for teaching and student learning, reflecting the conclusions of a number of researchers cited in the literature review (Blase & Blase, 2000; Marzano et al., 2005; The Ontario Institute for Education Leadership, 2013; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012; Victory, 2013).

As was the case at the program's mid-point, most aspirants expressed attraction to the opportunity provided by principalship to establish and nurture a Catholic school community characterised by relationships based on Gospel values. Aspirants articulated their desire to proactively build school-community partnerships and, by doing so, enhancing the capacity of teachers to achieve the holistic development of students. One aspirant, a decrease from two aspirants at the program's mid-point,

identified the opportunity to care for marginalised community members as an attractive feature of the community-building aspect of Catholic principalship.

Slightly more than half of the aspirants indicated the appeal of the role component, school improvement compared with two aspirants at the program's mid-point. Four aspirants discussed this role component in a generic manner as a means through which to enhance school capacity to achieve student educational outcomes. One aspirant specifically referred to the attractiveness of school improvement as a way to enhance the quality of teaching and student learning.

At the conclusion of the program, the majority of aspirants cited desire to positively influence the lives of school community members through quality leadership as a factor enhancing their interest in principalship. One aspirant identified the opportunity provided by the role to lead authentically and develop a school community characterised by sensitivity to the needs of others, respectful action, flexibility and understanding. A second aspirant expressed her desire to lead honestly, non-hierarchically and in an uncomplicated manner for the benefit of staff, students and their family members. A third aspirant reflected her aspiration to authentically share leadership and positively influence staff wellbeing, development and commitment. A further two aspirants discussed their drive to create a culture of trust, characterised by development of staff capacity and wellbeing. Finally, one aspirant commented on her intention to effectively distribute leadership, engage in subsidiarity and source and/or provide professional learning to meet staff needs. In the literature review, Bickmore, Bickmore and Raines (2013), d'Arbon, Duignan and Duncan (2002) and Tekleselassie and Villarreal III (2011) described such motivations as internal rewards with the potential to enhance aspiration.

6.3.4 Influences provoking discernible perception changes.

As aspirants participated in and completed the program, they attributed discernible perception changes regarding the factors enhancing interest in Catholic principalship to the influence of one active learning experience supported by three program-related features. The active learning experience was the development and longitudinal refinement of a leadership vision statement. The three supporting program features were: the program curriculum; acting principalship or internship; and collegial support networks. Summaries of mid-program and end-of-program

influences provoking discernible perception changes are provided in Tables 6.12 and 6.13 respectively.

Table 6.12

Factors Enhancing Interest in Principalship: Mid-program Influences Provoking Discernible Perception Changes

Themes and categories	Case study number								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
1. Program Curriculum									
• Reflection on program theory and related activities	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
2. Active Learning Experiences									
• Leadership vision statement development and refinement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
• Testing leadership vision statement and confirming the authenticity of ambition through acting principalship/internship	✓		✓		✓				3
3. Collegial Support Networks									
• Sharing leadership vision statement with program colleagues	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
• Sharing leadership vision statement with 'Inside Leadership' guest principals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	7
• Sharing leadership vision statement with aspirant principals	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		6

All aspirants, at some point in the data collection, confirmed reflection on program theory and related activities as a program-related feature that influenced their capacity to formulate leadership vision statements and clarify attraction to principalship. This finding reflects the conclusions of several researchers presented in the literature review (Davis et al., 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; McCarthy, 1999; Orr, 2006; Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Young et al., 2009). These researchers recommended the use of a rigorous, coherent and systematic curriculum within

principal preparation programs to assist aspirants to understand the role of the principal, clarify role attraction and develop healthy self-efficacy perceptions.

Table 6.13

Factors Enhancing Interest in Principalship: End-of-program Influences Provoking Discernible Perception Changes

	Case study number								
Themes and categories	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**Total**
1. Program Curriculum									
• Reflection on program theory and related activities	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	5
2. Active Learning Experiences									
• Leadership vision statement development and refinement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
• Testing leadership vision statement and confirming the authenticity of ambition through acting principalship/internship		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		5
3. Collegial Support Networks									
• Sharing leadership vision statement with 'Inside Leadership' guest principals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
• Sharing leadership vision statement with program colleagues	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
• Sharing leadership vision statement with aspirant principals	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		5

Aspirants also identified the influence of the active learning experience of acting principalship or internship on their perceptions. The three aspirants who experienced acting principalship or internship during the program's first year commented on the value of these experiences as means through which to test the veracity of their leadership vision statements and confirm the authenticity of their promotional motives. Likewise, the five aspirants who experienced acting principalship or internship during the program's second year commented on the formative influence of these experiences on their perceptions. Aspirant perceptions

regarding the value of acting principalship or internship reflect the conclusions of several researchers identified in the literature review (Davis et al., 2005; Leithwood et al., 1996; Orr & Orphanos, 2011). These researchers collectively asserted that a feature common to exemplary principal preparation programs are active learning experiences that provide aspirants with opportunities to apply program learning and acquire an authentic experience of principalship.

The final program-related feature exerting a positive influence on aspirant perceptions regarding the appeal of Catholic principalship was development of collegial support networks and interaction with network members. Aspirants cited continuous interaction with program colleagues, their principals and 'Inside Leadership' guest principal as influential experiences. Specifically, aspirants commented that these interactions enabled them to confirm their attraction to principalship and refine leadership vision statements. Aspirants indicated that interaction with network members occurred in three ways. Firstly, at the commencement of each face-to-face program module, aspirants were paired with a colleague. Aspirants were then invited by the program convenor to discuss their emerging leadership vision statements, changes that had occurred since the last module, reasons for changes and perceptions regarding the appeal of principalship. Secondly, between program modules, aspirants were asked to share their evolving leadership vision statements and perceptions regarding the appealing aspects of the role with their principals. Thirdly, aspirants were exposed to the experiences of guest principals during 'Inside Leadership' sessions at the conclusion of each face-to-face program module. Moreover, during these sessions, aspirants were provided with opportunities to share their emerging leadership vision statements and perceptions regarding the attractive aspects of the role with guest principals.

In the literature review, program colleagues, aspirant principals and guest principals involved in principal preparation programs were identified as members of collegial support networks (Davis et al., 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; McCarthy, 1999; Orr, 2006; Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Young et al., 2009). The literature review also highlighted the connection between the strength of collegial support networks and aspirant self-efficacy to commence principalship. Specifically, network members have the potential to expose aspirants to the self-efficacy sources of vicarious experiences and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986) that, in turn, encourage belief in

ability and aspiration (Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005). However, there appears to be little published literature concerning the influence of collegial support network members on aspirant perceptions regarding the appeal of Catholic principalship.

6.3.5 Section two summary.

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, aspirants identified two primary factors enhancing their interest in Catholic principalship. The first factor was the opportunity provided by the principalship to lead the role component, teaching and learning. The second factor was a desire to lead the role component, community engagement and development. As aspirants participated in and completed the program, the most discernible change was the manner in which aspirants expressed their ambitions. That is, aspirants conveyed their attraction to principalship through a leadership vision statement formulated and refined over the course of the program. Aspirant vision statements reflected five drivers: desire to develop school Catholic identity; aspiration to lead teaching and learning; drive to lead community engagement and development; motivation to lead school improvement; and ambition to positively influence the lives of school community members through quality leadership. When discussing the influences provoking perception changes, aspirants identified the influence of one active learning experience supported by three program-related features. The active learning experience was the formulation and ongoing refinement of a leadership vision statement, considered a crucial means through which to identify leadership values and clarify role attraction. Aspirants then refined and tested the veracity of their vision statements and the authenticity of their principalship motives through three program-related features: reflection on the program curriculum and related activities; acting principalship or internship; and interaction with the members of collegial support networks established through the program.

6.4 Section Three: Factors Diminishing Interest in Principalship

Section three discusses the themes associated with aspirant pre-program, mid-program and end-of-program perceptions regarding the factors diminishing interest

in Catholic principalship. Themes associated with the influences provoking discernible perceptions changes are also examined.

6.4.1 Aspirant pre-program perceptions.

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, aspirant perceptions regarding the factors diminishing interest in Catholic principalship, referred to as 'disincentives' in the literature (Bezzina, 2012; Cranston, 2005b; d'Arbon, 2006), centred on the technical responsibilities associated with the role component, stewardship of resources. To a lesser extent, aspirants discussed concerns related to the detrimental impacts of role intensification; principalship decision-making complexity and underdeveloped support networks to assist decision-making; and low self-efficacy to commence the role. A summary of aspirant perceptions is provided in Table 6.14.

When discussing disincentives associated with the role component, stewardship of resources, all aspirants raised concerns with regard to their capacity to prudently manage school finances. Moreover, half of the aspirants considered the demanding nature of systemic compliance and accountability requirements a distasteful aspect of principalship. Likewise, aspirants expressed anxiety related to the requirement of the principal to mediate legal issues, notably the potential for litigation. Aspirants also cited four other stewardship-related disincentives associated with Catholic principalship: resolving conflict; managing the school board; managing facilities construction/refurbishment (capital development planning); and administering complex human resource management functions such as employment contract administration and conducting appraisals.

Aspirant perceptions regarding stewardship-related disincentives reflect the conclusions of numerous researchers presented in the literature review. Specifically, a number of researchers confirmed that principals are required to manage an array of technical and administrative tasks in time and resource-poor environments (Chapman, 2005; Draper & McMichael, 2003; Fraser & Brock, 2013; A. Harris, Muijs, et al., 2003; Pounder et al., 2003; Tekleselassie & Villarreal III, 2011). Other researchers concluded that, as a result of these role demands, some aspirants perceive principalship to be highly stressful and are deterred by the resultant detrimental effects on health and wellbeing and personal and professional relationships (Bezzina,

2012; Chapman, 2005; Cooley & Shen, 2000; Draper & McMichael, 2003; Fraser & Brock, 2013; Neidhart & Carlin, 2003a; Riley, 2014).

Table 6.14

Aspirant Pre-program Perceptions: Factors Diminishing Interest in Principalship

	Case study number								
Themes and categories	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
1. Stewardship of Resources									
• School financial management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
• Compliance and accountability	✓		✓	✓		✓			4
• Legal issues/litigation potential			✓		✓		✓	✓	4
• Conflict resolution		✓					✓		2
• School board management						✓			1
• Managing capital development				✓					1
• Human resource management								✓	1
2. Role Intensification									
• Role intensification: Reduced time for leadership of important role components and staff and student contact			✓	✓					2
• Role intensification: Adverse impact on work-life balance	✓								1
3. Principalship Decision-making Complexity									
• Uncomfortable nature of principal-level decision making				✓	✓				2
• Underdeveloped networks to support high-stakes decision-making				✓	✓				2
4. Self-efficacy to Commence Principalship									
• Low self-efficacy		✓							1
Perception origin									
• Foreign nature of role component	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
• Poor principal distributed leadership practices		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
• Structural role barriers to learning	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	5
• Principal observation	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	5

Aspirants who expressed concerns regarding the need for the principal to resolve conflict and legal issues whilst coping with litigation potential reflect the conclusions of several researchers. Specifically, Bezzina (2012) termed these concerns 'community and society disincentives.' He, along with Cusick (2003), Fraser and Brock (2013) and Tekleselassie and Villarreal (2011) resolved that increased demands from parents together with threats of litigation, poor support for school programs and abuse of staff have the potential to deter aspiration.

Connected with the disincentives emanating from leadership and management of the role component, stewardship of resources, several aspirants considered principalship intensification an unappealing aspect of the role. Specifically, two aspirants expressed concerns regarding the expansion of the role from an initial focus on educational leadership to one involving multiple, time-intensive administrative responsibilities such as those associated with occupational health and safety compliance and capital development planning. Both aspirants expressed the negative impact of role intensification in terms of the erosion of time available to the principal to lead other role components such as teaching and learning and interact in meaningful ways with staff and students. A third aspirant focused on the detrimental impact of role intensification on principal capacity to achieve work-life balance. Aspirant perceptions reflect the conclusions of researchers including Gronn (1999) who coined the phrase 'greedy work' to encapsulate the constantly changing nature of principalship in terms of breadth, depth and intensity. As stated previously, other researchers confirmed the highly stressful nature of principalship and the detrimental effects of role intensification on principal health and wellbeing, personal and professional relationships and capacity to achieve work-life balance (Bezzina, 2012; Chapman, 2005; Cooley & Shen, 2000; Draper & McMichael, 2003; Fraser & Brock, 2013; Neidhart & Carlin, 2003a; Riley, 2014). Bezzina (2012) concluded that aspirants who observe their principals struggling to cope with these realities and subsequent impacts may experience diminish appetite for promotion.

Several aspirants also expressed consternation emanating from their poorly developed support networks and cited the need to form relationships with practicing principals to mitigate their concerns. These aspirants discussed the crucial role network members would play, especially during their novice years as principals when they would face an array of challenging technical role aspects and the

complexities associated with making high-stakes decisions. Aspirant perceptions reflect the conclusions of a number of researchers (Davis et al., 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; McCarthy, 1999; Orr, 2006; Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Young et al., 2009) who asserted the value of support network members as sources of role-specific knowledge, vicarious experiences and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986), crucial for the formation of healthy self-efficacy perceptions.

With regard to self-efficacy as a disincentive, several researchers cited in the literature review asserted that aspirants who doubt their experience, expertise and capability cope with the demands of principalship are less likely to apply for vacancies (Bezzina, 2012; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2006). Further, several researchers concluded that low self-efficacy most often finds a home in female aspirants (Bezzina, 2012; Neidhart & Carlin, 2003b; Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). These conclusions applied to the sole female aspirant who identified low self-efficacy as a disincentive. At the time this aspirant commenced the program, she was also promoted to her first assistant principalship and expressed feelings of ineptitude as a result of her lack of experience.

All aspirants, when discussing the origins of their disincentive perceptions, commented on the 'foreign' nature of stewardship-related role responsibilities to their initial training as teachers and subsequent experiences of leadership. In the literature review, several researchers asserted that this reality is the result of principal failure to distribute leadership (Bezzina, 2012; Draper & McMichael, 2003; A. Harris, Muijs, et al., 2003). These researchers concluded that aspirants who are not exposed to quality, shared leadership are more likely to feel ill prepared for principalship and, consequently, may experience diminished aspiration. Although five aspirants inferred this point, one aspirant explicitly named it when discussing feelings of ineptitude with regard to the management of school finances. The aspirant considered the tendency of his principal to "jealously guard" this area of school operations a significant factor limiting his capability.

Even if effective distributed leadership practices were characteristic of the Western Australian Catholic education system, the structure of the majority of assistant principal roles presents a barrier for aspirant exposure to and mastery of 'foreign' role aspects. Specifically, in Western Australian Catholic schools, most

assistant principals teach in the classroom for the equivalent of four days per week with one day dedicated to the discharge of their leadership duties. Consequently, five primary school aspirants from the seven involved in the research cited concerns regarding the time arrangement associated with their roles. All five aspirants expressed the belief that they underperformed as both teacher and assistant principal and had little time to invest in additional leadership duties with the potential to prepare them for principalship.

In contrast, the remaining two primary school aspirants involved in the research did not raise structural role concerns when discussing the origins of their disincentive perceptions. In both cases, aspirant schools had large student enrolments and their principals were willing and financially able to employ additional personnel to cover the majority of the teaching load associated with each role. Specifically, both aspirants taught in the classroom for the equivalent of one day per week. Likewise, the secondary school aspirant involved in the research, a beneficiary of a role structure similar to both primary school aspirants, did not raise structural role concerns when discussing the origins of his disincentive perceptions.

Just over half of the aspirants also attributed their pre-program disincentive perceptions to daily surveillance of their principals as they struggled to cope with the demands of the role. Aspirants described the detrimental influence of resultant stress on principal health and wellbeing and the quality of personal and professional relationships. Aspirant perceptions reflect the findings of several researchers who asserted that daily observation of principals experiencing role stress has the potential to diminish aspiration (Bezzina, 2012; Chapman, 2005; Cooley & Shen, 2000; Draper & McMichael, 2003; Fraser & Brock, 2013; Neidhart & Carlin, 2003a; Riley, 2014). Further, numerous researchers concluded that stress is the result of a demanding role discharged in highly accountable, yet time and resource-poor environments (Chapman, 2005; Draper & McMichael, 2003; Fraser & Brock, 2013; A. Harris, Muijs, et al., 2003; Pounder et al., 2003; Tekleselassie & Villarreal III, 2011).

6.4.2 Aspirant mid-program perceptions.
At the conclusion of the program's first year, aspirant perceptions regarding the factors diminishing interest in Catholic principalship had changed. Specifically,

all aspirants reported diminished apprehension with regard to disincentives identified pre-program. The influences responsible for these perception changes are examined in section 6.4.4 of this chapter. Four aspirants, however, expressed additional concerns. A summary of aspirant perceptions is provided in Table 6.15.

Table 6.15

Aspirant Mid-program Perceptions: Factors Diminishing Interest in Principalship

		Case study number								
Themes and categories	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**Total**
1. Pre-program perceptions: Reduced apprehension	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
2. Principalship Decision-making Complexity									
• Anxiety associated with principal-level decision making		✓							1
3. Role Intensification									
• Adverse impact on principal health and wellbeing						✓			1
• Reduced capacity for educational leadership							✓		1
• Reduced student contact					✓				1

When discussing new disincentives at this point in the research, one aspirant raised a personal leadership weakness as a concern, the result of program-inspired reflection. This aspirant, appointed to her first assistant principalship at the start of the year, acknowledged that principalship requires the capacity to make tough, potentially unpopular decisions. The aspirant admitted that her natural inclination to please people conflicted with this reality. This observation reflects the findings of Fraser and Brock (2013) and Wildy, Clarke and Slater (2007) who asserted that commencing principalship requires adjustment from a comfortable, familiar role to one that is uncertain and demands the ability and willingness to make difficult decisions that may not engender the admiration of others. Likewise, Bezzina (2012) and Daresh and Male (2000) observed that some aspirants find such decision-making unpleasant and, as a result, may experience reduced appetite for promotion.

Another aspirant raised concerns regarding the adverse health and wellbeing outcomes associated with role intensification. This aspirant referred to two specific examples when discussing the origins of adverse health and wellbeing outcomes: the need for the principal to constantly mediate between conflicting parties; and the expectation that the principal will provide support for school community members experiencing crisis. The aspirant cited her principal's poor principal physical health and emotional exhaustion as symptoms of imbalance emanating from these role aspects. This observation reflects the findings of several researchers who asserted that the stressful nature of the role has the potential to adversely impact principal health and wellbeing, harm personal and professional relationships and convey a negative impression of the role to aspiring principals (Bezzina, 2012; Chapman, 2005; Cooley & Shen, 2000; Draper & McMichael, 2003; Fraser & Brock, 2013; Neidhart & Carlin, 2003a; Riley, 2014).

Another aspirant raised a second disincentive created by role intensification, reduced time available to the principal to attend to other role components, notably leadership of teaching and learning. This aspirant discussed his perception of principalship as a role besieged by constant change in terms of breadth, depth and intensity (Gronn, 1999; Riley, 2014). The aspirant referred to conflict resolution and the technical, administrative and compliance tasks associated with capital development planning as examples of time-intensive role aspects. With regard to conflict resolution, the perceptions of this aspirant reflect the findings of Bezzina (2012), Cusick (2003), Fraser and Brock (2013), Riley (2014) and Tekleselassie and Villarreal (2011) who collectively asserted that this role aspect erodes the valuable, limited time available to the principal to lead and manage other role components. Moreover, for this aspirant, there appeared to be a mismatch between his principalship ideals and the reality of the role. Bezzina (2012) categorised this incongruous situation as a personal disincentive with the potential to diminish aspiration.

Similarly, the final aspirant expressed a third disincentive emanating from role intensification, reduced student contact. When discussing time-intensive role demands, this aspirant referred to the requirement of the principal to meet growing systemic accountability requirements and the time-intensive nature of conflict resolution. As discussed previously, these concerns are the result of both 'greedy

work' (Gronn, 1999) or role intensification (Riley, 2014) and the clash between the values of the aspirant and the reality of the role, a personal disincentive described by Bezzina (2012).

6.4.3 Aspirant end-of-program perceptions.

At the conclusion of the program, aspirant perceptions regarding the factors diminishing interest in Catholic principalship had changed when compared with those offered at the program's mid-point. Specifically, the four aspirants who identified new disincentives at the conclusion of the program's first year reported diminished apprehension with regard to their concerns at the end of the program. The influences responsible for these perception changes are examined in section 6.4.4 of this chapter. New disincentives identified by all aspirants at this point in the research were notably personal, the result of five from eight aspirants achieving principalship with the remainder actively applying for vacancies. That is, as the reality of principal appointment set in, aspirants focused on concerns associated with relocation to their new contexts to commence principalship. Four primary school aspirants involved in the research were preparing to leave Perth to commence principalship in country or remote schools. The secondary aspirant involved in the research was preparing to undertake principalship in Perth. A summary of aspirant perceptions is provided in Table 6.16.

All four primary school aspirants who had achieved principalship and another who was actively applying for vacancies lamented the impending separation from their personal support networks. Two aspirants from this group were parents of young children. Both expressed concerns regarding the loss of regular, face-to-face contact between their children and family members, especially grandparents. Further, both aspirants anticipated difficulties associated with a loss of practical support provided by these people, chiefly before and after school care for their children. A third aspirant with adult children at university and a husband with a career in Perth made the decision to relocate alone to her country town and commute back to the city periodically. This aspirant was unsettled by the impending loss of face-to-face contact with her family support network. The remaining two aspirants, both unmarried and without children, discussed anxiety related to the geographical

separation between themselves and their emotional support bases in the form of family and friends.

Table 6.16
Aspirant End-of-program Perceptions: Factors Diminishing Interest in Principalship

Themes and categories	Case study number								Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1. **Mid-program perceptions: Reduced apprehension**		✓			✓	✓	✓		4
2. **Principal Application and/or Appointment**									
• Separation from personal support networks	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		5
• Separation from collegial support networks	✓	✓					✓		3
• Financial disincentives	✓		✓						2
• Recruitment issues		✓	✓						2
• Work-life imbalance				✓				✓	2
• 'Fish-bowl' effect		✓							1
• Parish priest issues						✓			1
• Principal appointment issues	✓								1
• Relinquishing highly-satisfying current role for principalship					✓				1
• Unrealistic role demands						✓			1
• Working with difficult, unreasonable people								✓	1

Three of the five aspirants also articulated concerns that movement from their existing schools to commence principalship in different locations would diminish the quality of contact with the members of their established collegial support networks. These networks were comprised of fellow program aspirants, assistant principal colleagues and current and former principals. Additionally, these aspirants anticipated difficulty establishing fresh networks in their new contexts, the result of geographical isolation combined with the demands of novice principalship. These findings reflect the conclusions of several researchers who considered the loss of personal and collegial support networks as a result of commencing principalship in

country and remote settings disincentives (Clarke et al., 2007; d'Arbon et al., 2002; d'Arbon et al., 2001; Dorman & d'Arbon, 2003a, 2003b; Fraser & Brock, 2013).

Two aspirants also raised financial concerns associated with relocation from Perth to their respective country towns to commence principalship. Firstly, both aspirants expressed disappointment at the financial burden associated with packing and renting their homes in Perth and transporting belongings to inferior CEOWA-subsidised accommodation in their new settings, a finding highlighted by Pritchard (2003). Secondly, both aspirants discussed financial hardship emanating from reduced disposable income, the result of having to pay the shortfall between the rental income received from their family homes and existing mortgages in addition to paying the non-subsidised rental costs for CEOWA accommodation. There appears to be little published literature concerning this finding. Thirdly, both aspirants commented on the financial disadvantage created by the negative difference between their existing assistant principal salaries and those they were due to receive as principals. Specifically, remuneration for Western Australian Catholic school principals is determined by student enrolments: the higher the number of students, the higher the salary. As assistant/deputy principals are paid at a rate of 80% of a principal's salary (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2014b, 2014c), there exists potential for income loss as aspirants from large metropolitan schools migrate to smaller regional or remote schools to commence principalship. There appears to be little published literature concerning this finding. Finally, one of the aspirants, a mother of two young children, anticipated complications emanating from the withdrawal of her children from their existing school in Perth before enrolling them at a new school where she would be both parent and principal. In addition to the potential for social unrest and resultant emotional distress, the aspirant expressed concerns with regard to the costs associated with purchase of new uniforms and sundry materials. There appears to be little published literature concerning the former complication whilst the latter financial disincentive reflects the findings of Pritchard (2003).

One aspirant raised a concern regarding perceived bias against female aspirants by male-dominated appointment panels, a finding highlighted by Bezzina (2012), McLay (2008) and Neidhart and Carlin (2003b). With regard to gender-based disincentives, another aspirant discussed the issue of 'old-fashioned' parish priests

with bias against female principals. This aspirant attended a handover meeting with her predecessor soon after achieving appointment as principal of a Catholic primary school in a country town. At the meeting, the parish priest made several sexist and disparaging comments regarding the capacity of female principals to lead and manage effectively. The aspirant speculated that a poor relationship between her and the priest had the potential to thwart attempts to develop a fruitful school-parish relationship. This finding reflects the conclusions of both The Australian Catholic Primary Principals' Association (2005) and Pascoe (2007) who highlighted the need for some Catholic principals to navigate complex school-parish relationships and acknowledged the potential of this reality to diminish aspiration.

For this aspirant, the handover meeting also generated a second concern, unrealistic role demands. Specifically, the former principal made it clear to the aspirant that her new role would not only involve leadership and management through the five Catholic principalship role components identified in the literature review, it would require her to be a 'Jack of all trades.' The aspirant cited several examples of unrealistic role demands including unblocking school toilets; cleaning gutters; mowing the school oval; chairing the local parish council and potentially acting as coach for the town football team. In the literature, this disincentive represents principalship 'greedy work' (Gronn, 1999) or role intensification (Riley, 2014). Further, aspirant perceptions are confirmed by other researchers who assert that principalship is becoming increasingly complex, the result of pressure to complete a range of tasks in time and resource-poor environments (Chapman, 2005; Draper & McMichael, 2003; Fraser & Brock, 2013; A. Harris, Muijs, et al., 2003; Pounder et al., 2003; Tekleselassie & Villarreal III, 2011). In accord with the recommendations of Halsey (2011), this aspirant expressed her intention to clearly delineate the boundary between her personal and professional commitments to prevent being inundated by community demands and expectations.

The secondary school aspirant involved in the research, a deputy principal, considered leaving his current, highly satisfactory role to commence principalship a disincentive. For this aspirant, one source of contentment was the willingness of his recently appointed principal to provide him with the time and opportunity to lead strategic initiatives and the positive influence of both on his leadership capacity. Unlike the majority of his assistant principal counterparts from the program, in a

typical week, the aspirant taught for the equivalent of one day with the balance expended on leadership and management duties without the end-of-line responsibilities borne by his principal. In his words, leaving a "pristine" role to commence the principalship was disconcerting, because he was aware that the role would be daunting and filled with unknown challenges. This perception reflects the findings of Bezzina (2012) and James and Whiting (1998). Both researchers concluded that highly satisfied assistant/deputy principals who have gained exposure to meaningful levels of influence and decision-making without the need to take the final step to principalship might experience diminished aspiration.

Another aspirant raised concerns regarding the requirement of the principal to work with difficult, unreasonable people. This concern was the result of program-inspired reflection. Specifically, the aspirant reached the conclusion that she could master the technical aspects of principalship, such as school financial management, with time and experience. The aspirant, however, considered the requirement of the principal to diplomatically work with emotional, unreasonable and unpredictable people challenging, even traumatic. This perception reflects the findings of a number of researchers who concluded that some aspirants perceive the role of principal to be highly stressful and, consequently, may experience diminished interest in promotion (Bezzina, 2012; Chapman, 2005; Cooley & Shen, 2000; Draper & McMichael, 2003; Fraser & Brock, 2013; Neidhart & Carlin, 2003a; Riley, 2014). This aspirant also became a first-time mother during the program and, as a result, raised concerns regarding her capacity to effectively balance the intensity of the principalship and parenthood. A second aspirant, the father of two young children, also expressed anxiety with regard to this issue. Bezzina (2012) asserted that for aspirants considering starting a family or for those who already have young children, the complexity of the role, associated time-demands and subsequent stress do little to encourage aspiration.

Two aspirants, due to commence principalship in a country town and remote community respectively, anticipated challenges associated with the attraction and retention of quality staff in their new contexts. Specifically, both aspirants expressed concerns that the geographically isolated nature of their schools would attract few suitable applicants for vacancies, possibly forcing the employment of sub-standard staff. The aspirants speculated that recruitment of unsuitable recruits might adversely

affect staff morale and diminish the quality of teaching and student learning. Further, both aspirants were concerned about their capacity in this situation to muster the collective effort of staff to achieve school vision and, in doing so, provide support for the evangelising mission of the Church. The aspirants also expressed anxiety with regard to making a non-appointment decision, the result of which could place additional pressure on existing staff to cover the vacancy and produce similar adverse outcomes. Aspirant concerns reflect the conclusions of Pietsch and Williamson (2009) who confirmed that recruitment and selection of suitable staff in country and remote locations, particularly those with leadership experience, is problematic. Further, Pietsch and Williamson (2009) and Clarke, Wildy and Pepper (2007) asserted that beginning principals in these settings may be confronted by staff with limited knowledge regarding the use of educational technologies, contemporary teaching practices and/or cultural and community awareness.

The aspirant due to commence principalship of a remote school raised a second disincentive connected with her new context, the so-called 'fish bowl effect.' This effect, described by Clarke and Stevens (2009), Halsey (2011) and Wallace and Boylan (2007), is the result of working and residing in remote settings and refers to the constant, albeit unintentional, surveillance of the principal and staff by members of the school community. The aspirant described herself as an introverted, reflective individual requiring personal space to process the events of the day and discharge role-related stress. Consequently, the prospect of high levels of community scrutiny associated with her new reality was a cause for concern. Further, the aspirant considered the high probability of having to discipline poorly behaved students whilst living amongst and socialising with their parents and family members a disincentive.

6.4.4 Influences provoking discernible perception changes.

As aspirants participated in and completed the program, they attributed discernible perception changes regarding Catholic principalship disincentives to the influence of four program-related features. These features were the program curriculum; active learning experiences; collegial and top-down support networks; application for principalship vacancies; and, for some aspirants, subsequent appointment. A summary of aspirant perceptions is provided in Table 6.17.

Table 6.17

Factors Diminishing Interest in Principalship: Mid-program and End-of-program Influences Provoking Discernible Perception Changes

	Case study number								
Themes and categories	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**Total**
Mid-program perceptions									
1. Program Curriculum									
• Distributed leadership to mitigate role intensification	✓		✓	✓					**3**
2. Active Learning Experiences									
• School board observation, finance and capital development sub-committee participation	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	**7**
• Acting principalship or internship	✓		✓		✓				**3**
3. Support Networks									
• Collegial support network: 'Inside Leadership' guest principals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	**7**
• Top-down support network: CEOWA support staff that facilitated program modules		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		**6**
End-of-program perceptions									
1. Program Curriculum									
• Distributed leadership to mitigate role intensification				✓	✓		✓		**3**
2. Active Learning Experiences									
• Acting principalship or internship		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		**5**
3. Support Networks									
• Collegial support network: 'Inside Leadership' guest principals		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**7**
• Top-down support network: CEOWA support staff that facilitated program modules						✓	✓		**2**
4. Principal Application and/or Appointment									
• Principal appointment			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	**5**
• Application for principalship vacancies	✓				✓			✓	**3**

Just over half of the aspirants considered reflection on program theory, notably the concept of distributed leadership, a factor influencing their disincentive

perceptions. Distributed leadership refers to the development of staff leadership capabilities by the principal and applies broadly to all personnel, not only those employed as designated leaders (A. Harris, 2008, 2012; A. Harris, Day, et al., 2003). In addition to the benefits associated with staff development, aspirants considered distributed leadership an effective way to reduce principalship role intensity and create time for leadership and management of other role components such as teaching and learning and community engagement and development. This finding reflects the benefits of participation in exemplary principal preparation programs highlighted in the literature review, specifically expansion of aspirant knowledge through the provision of a rigorous, coherent and systematic curriculum (Davis et al., 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; McCarthy, 1999; Orr, 2006; Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Young et al., 2009).

The literature review also indicated that a feature common to effective principal preparation programs is the provision of well-planned, active learning experiences that provide aspirants with opportunities to apply theory and acquire an authentic experience of principalship (Davis et al., 2005; Orr, 2006; Orr & Orphanos, 2011). Most aspirants confirmed this conclusion during the interview conducted at the end of the program's first year when they articulated the benefits associated with school board observation and participation as members of their board's finance and capital development sub-committees. Specifically, aspirants commented that these experiences assisted the minimisation of disincentive perceptions emanating from the requirement of the principal to manage school finances, the school board and capital development projects.

When discussing changing perceptions regarding school financial management, aspirants highlighted the benefits of working with and learning from their principals, business managers and finance sub-committee colleagues. Specifically, aspirants cited the design, implementation and monitoring of the school budget, determination of measures to correct anomalies and reporting in an accountable and transparent manner to the school board and the CEOWA as significant learning experiences. Aspirants also discussed the benefits associated with observing their principals leading and managing the school board and co-planning and overseeing the construction, refurbishment and maintenance of school buildings and facilities.

The seven aspirants who experienced acting principalship or internship over the course of the program also indicated that these learning experiences reduced apprehension generated by disincentive perceptions. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of several researchers who recommended the use of the internship as a way to familiarise aspirants with principalship role components, associated demands and requisite capabilities (Davis et al., 2005; Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Orr et al., 2006). Other researchers highlighted the self-efficacy benefits associated with such experiences (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005; Versland, 2009), the result of exposure to mastery experiences and the real-time control of resultant physical and emotional reactions (Bandura, 1986). That is, periods of acting principalship or internship presented aspirants with multiple opportunities through which to confront, experience and manage concerning role aspects, such as school financial management, whilst controlling ensuing physical and emotional reactions.

All aspirants identified the development of collegial and top-down support networks and interaction with network members as a program-related feature influencing their disincentive perceptions. With regard to collegial support networks, aspirants commented positively on the influence of 'Inside Leadership' guest principals. Through the program, aspirants developed relationships with guest principals who had experienced and survived disconcerting role aspects. Through these interactions, aspirants were exposed to vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1986) and formed the understanding that their disincentive perceptions were natural and, like guest principals, they too had the capacity to manage and overcome them. Guest principals also provided aspirants with formal and informal social persuasion (Bandura, 1986) in the form of verbal encouragement, convincing them of their capacity to cope with the role and its demands. These findings are consistent with the conclusions of several researchers including Orr and Orphanos (2011), Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2005) and Versland (2009).

Most aspirants also attributed disincentive perception changes to the influence of top-down support network members. Development of these networks were defined in the literature review as a feature of exemplary principal preparation programs (Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005). Aspirants forged top-down support networks as they established relationships with expert program facilitators, notably CEOWA support staff with line management authority

or specialist knowledge pertinent to principalship deemed 'foreign' by aspirants. As networks evolved, aspirants were exposed to the vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1986) of facilitators. Specifically, as facilitators discussed career challenges, successes and resultant learning, aspirants formed the belief that they too had the capacity to succeed in similar circumstances. Equally important in the context of these exchanges was the provision of social persuasion (Bandura, 1986) by facilitators as they affirmed aspirant leadership capabilities. Network members also provided aspirants with assurances that they would be available to provide timely advice and support during and beyond the crucial novice years of principalship. Aspirants explained that knowing whom to contact for support and when to do so was an important factor allaying concerns emanating from the requirement of the role to lead and manage the technical responsibilities. These responsibilities included managing school finances, addressing human resource issues, meeting systemic compliance and accountability requirements and resolving conflict and legal issues. This finding reflects the conclusions of Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2005).

Finally, all aspirants identified new concerns emanating from their principalship ambitions as the program neared completion. These disincentives, inspired by self-reflection, were the result of application for principalship vacancies and, for five aspirants, subsequent appointment. As explained previously, aspirants expressed concerns regarding the impending loss of personal and/or collegial support networks prompted by the movement from metropolitan to country or remote settings to commence principalship (Clarke et al., 2007; d'Arbon et al., 2002; d'Arbon et al., 2001; Dorman & d'Arbon, 2003a, 2003b; Fraser & Brock, 2013). Several aspirants also named the related complication of establishing new support networks in geographically isolated contexts whilst attempting to cope with the demands and intensity of novice principalship. Moreover, aspirants raised nine additional appointment-related concerns: principal appointment panel gender bias (Bezzina, 2012; McLay, 2008; Neidhart & Carlin, 2003b); remuneration disadvantage (Pritchard, 2003); parish-priest issues (Australian Catholic Primary Principals' Association, 2005; Pascoe, 2007); unrealistic role demands (Gronn, 1999); people leadership complications (Bezzina, 2012; James & Whiting, 1998); work-life balance concerns (Bezzina, 2012); staff recruitment difficulties in country and remote locations (Clarke et al., 2007; Pietsch & Williamson, 2009); diminished

privacy as a result of community scrutiny (Clarke & Stevens, 2009; Halsey, 2011; Wallace & Boylan, 2007); and role relinquishment (Bezzina, 2012; James & Whiting, 1998).

The prominence of personal disincentives emanating from aspirant application for principalship vacancies and/or appointment highlights an area of program deficiency. That is, whilst the program curriculum, active learning experiences and support networks appear to have effectively alleviated aspirant pre-program and mid-program concerns, the program does not appear to have appropriately prepared aspirants for disincentives associated with the reality of appointment. This is especially the case for aspirants preparing to depart Perth to commence principalship in country and remote areas.

6.4.5 Section three summary.

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, aspirant perceptions regarding Catholic principalship disincentives focused mainly on the technical responsibilities associated with the role component, stewardship of resources such as the requirement of the principal to manage school finances. Aspirants cited two perception origins: the 'foreign' nature of these responsibilities to their initial training and subsequent experiences of leadership; and daily surveillance of their principals as they struggled with role demands. As aspirants participated in and completed the program, they reported reduced apprehension with regard to disincentives previously identified. By the conclusion of the program, disincentives identified by aspirants were notably personal, the result of five from eight aspirants being appointed as principals with the remainder actively applying for vacancies. Aspirants specified the influence of four program-related features on their changing perceptions regarding disincentives: the program curriculum; active learning experiences; collegial and top-down support networks; and application for vacancies and/or achievement of principalship.

6.5 Section Four: Self-efficacy to Commence Principalship

Section four discusses aspirant pre-program, mid-program and end-of-program perceptions regarding self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. Themes associated with the influences provoking discernible perceptions changes are also examined.

6.5.1 Aspirant pre-program perceptions.

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, aspirant perceptions regarding self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship were almost evenly split between those with low, moderate and high belief in their ability to undertake the role. Specifically, three aspirants expressed low self-efficacy, two aspirants articulated moderate self-efficacy and three aspirants conveyed high self-efficacy perceptions. Aspirants provided a number of reasons to account for their perceptions with most pronouncing conviction that the program would appropriately prepare them for the role. A summary of aspirant perceptions is provided in Table 6.18.

Table 6.18

Aspirant Pre-program Perceptions: Self-efficacy to Commence Principalship

	Case study number								
Self-efficacy perception	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**Total**
• Low self-efficacy		✓		✓				✓	**3**
• Moderate self-efficacy	✓					✓			**2**
• High self-efficacy			✓		✓		✓		**3**
Factors influencing perception									
• Mastery of current leadership role, desire for new challenge	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		**6**
• Exposure to principal-specific professional learning required to enhance self-efficacy	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	**5**
• Exposure to acting principalship required to enhance self-efficacy	✓			✓				✓	**3**
• Opportunity, time and resources provided in current role to lead initiatives enhancing self-efficacy				✓		✓	✓		**3**
• Principal support and encouragement enhancing self-efficacy				✓		✓	✓		**3**
• Confidence provided by relational capabilities								✓	**1**
• First leadership appointment: Novice assistant principal		✓							**1**
• Acting principalship: Role/capability comprehension and confirmed role fit					✓				**1**

	Case study number								
Program expectation	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**Total**
• Confidence in capacity of program to prepare for principalship	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	**7**
• Use of program to determine appropriateness and/or readiness for principalship		✓		✓				✓	**3**

With regard to the three aspirants who expressed low self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship, one attributed her perceptions to a lack of leadership experience. That is, at the same time the aspirant commenced the program, she also undertook her first leadership role as a primary school assistant principal. Further, the aspirant ascribed her low self-efficacy perceptions to an absence of exposure to principal-focused professional learning. A second aspirant expressed high self-efficacy to lead as an assistant principal, the result of seven years of experience, but equally low self-efficacy to commence principalship. The aspirant cited a lack of opportunity to experience the role through acting principalship as a confidence-limiting factor. Similarly, the third aspirant attributed her low self-efficacy perceptions to an absence of opportunity to access principal-focused professional learning including acting principalship. Nonetheless, the aspirant indicated confidence with regard to her existing leadership foundations upon which she intended to build her principalship knowledge and skills. This aspirant attributed her confidence to her perceived interpersonal prowess or capacity to relate to and lead others. All three aspirants expressed their intention to use the program to assess their suitability for and readiness to commence principalship. Likewise, each aspirant expressed confidence in the capacity of the program to prepare them for the role and related demands.

Aspirant intentions to access principal-focused professional learning and experience acting principalship to bolster self-efficacy perceptions reflect the conclusions of several researchers cited in the literature review. Specifically, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2005) and Versland (2009) resolved that participation in exemplary principal preparation programs provides aspirants with opportunities to experience Bandura's (1986) four self-efficacy sources: mastery experiences; control

of resultant physical and emotional states; vicarious experiences and social persuasion. Likewise, Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe and Meyerson (2005), Leithwood, Jantzi, Coffin and Wilson (1996), Orr (2006) and Orr and Orphanos (2011) confirmed that periods of acting principalship or internship deliver multiple benefits to aspirants. Benefits include the opportunity to apply program theory; develop an improved understanding of role components and requisite capabilities; and experience self-efficacy sources, especially mastery experiences, the control of resultant physical and emotional states and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986).

Two aspirants, both experienced assistant principals, confirmed moderate self-efficacy to commence principalship. These aspirants attributed their perceptions to mastery of their respective leadership roles and inner drive to seek a new leadership challenge in the form of principalship. However, despite these feelings, both aspirants reflected that to feel truly ready to undertake the role, they required the confidence that comes from participation in a comprehensive principal preparation program. These aspirants, in accord with their low self-efficacy colleagues, expressed confidence that the program would adequately prepare them for the role and associated rigours.

The three aspirants who signalled high self-efficacy perceptions indicated the belief that they had mastered their respective leadership roles and felt well prepared for the challenge of principalship. One aspirant was deputy principal at a Year seven-12 secondary school, the second was head of junior school at a Kindergarten-Year 12 composite school and the third was assistant principal at a large, three-stream Kindergarten-Year six primary school. All three aspirants attributed their perceptions to two factors. Firstly, the aspirants commented that they were the beneficiaries of supportive immediate and/or past principals who nurtured and encouraged their leadership ambitions and created opportunities for them to lead challenging, strategic initiatives such as whole-of-school ICT integration. Secondly, the aspirants acknowledged that their principals had provided the resources necessary for them to lead these initiatives and the time to do so by minimising the teaching component associated with their roles. The two primary school aspirants also expressed confidence that the Aspiring Principals Program would adequately prepare them for the role and associated rigours.

Bickmore, Bickmore and Raines (2013) and Walker and Kwan concluded that aspirants are more likely to seek principalship if they are exposed to positive, encouraging role models. These researchers asserted that role models are usually principals who believe in the leadership capacity of aspirants, develop their talents through shared leadership practices and engagement with professional learning and encourage application for principalship vacancies. Moreover, Bandura (1986), Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2005) and Versland (2009) considered praise from superiors an important source of social persuasion, imperative for the formation of healthy aspirant self-efficacy perceptions. Additionally, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2005) concluded that engagement with leadership opportunities has the potential to expose aspirants to Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy sources, especially mastery experiences and the control of resultant physical and emotional states, and bolster confidence to commence principalship.

The secondary aspirant also highlighted two specific self-efficacy benefits associated with a pre-program period of acting principalship at his school. This six-month opportunity arose when his principal accepted an appointed at another school on the east coast, prompting the need for an immediate replacement. Firstly, in accord with a number of researchers (Davis et al., 2005; Leithwood et al., 1996; Orr, 2006; Orr & Orphanos, 2011), the aspirant commented on the benefits associated with the experience, notably improved understanding of principalship role components and requisite leadership capabilities. Secondly, the aspirant attributed his high self-efficacy perceptions to the encouragement and support he received from staff, students, their parents and carers and members of the broader school community during the experience. These people, referred to by Versland (2009) as members of bottom-up support networks, represent a form of social persuasion, an important self-efficacy source defined by Bandura (1986). Moreover, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2005) and Versland (2009) asserted that principals who feel supported by teaching and support staffs tend to have a robust sense of self-efficacy compared with those who felt the opposite, primarily because support is an indicator of leadership quality.

6.5.2 Aspirant mid-program and end-of-program perceptions.

As aspirants participated in and completed the program, high self-efficacy

perceptions were either confirmed or achieved. Specifically, the three aspirants who nominated low self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship pre-program expressed moderate self-efficacy at the conclusion of the program's first year. Likewise, the two aspirants who perceived moderate self-efficacy before the program indicated high self-efficacy at the program's mid-point. The three aspirants that reported high self-efficacy perceptions prior to the program remained unchanged. By the conclusion of the program, all aspirants indicated high self-efficacy to commence principalship. A summary of aspirant perceptions is provided in Table 6.19.

Table 6.19
Aspirant Pre-program, Mid-program and End-of-program Perceptions: Self-efficacy to Commence Principalship

| | Case study number | | | | | | | | |
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Self-efficacy: Pre-program perception									
• Low self-efficacy		✓		✓				✓	3
• Moderate self-efficacy	✓					✓			2
• High self-efficacy			✓		✓		✓		3
Self-efficacy: Mid-program perception									
• Low self-efficacy									
• Moderate self-efficacy		✓		✓				✓	3
• High self-efficacy	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		5
Self-efficacy: End-of-program perception									
• Low self-efficacy									
• Moderate self-efficacy									
• High self-efficacy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8

6.5.3 Influences provoking discernible perception changes.

As aspirants participated in and completed the program, they attributed self-efficacy perception confirmation or changes to the influence of four program-related features: the program curriculum and method of facilitation; active learning

experiences; support networks; and 'role competence.' Summaries of mid-program and end-of-program influences are provided in Tables 6.20 and 6.21 respectively.

Table 6.20
Self-efficacy to Commence Principalship: Mid-program Influences Provoking Discernible Perception Changes

Themes and categories	Case study number								Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1. Program Curriculum									
• Role component and capability comprehension	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
• Facilitation using adult learning principles	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	6
2. Active Learning Experiences									
• Vision statement development and refinement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
• Reflection on factors diminishing interest in principalship	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
• School board observation and finance and capital development sub-committee participation	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	7
• LSI 360-degree data and coaching for capability improvement			✓		✓	✓		✓	4
• Acting principalship or internship	✓	✓							2
3. Support Networks									
a) Collegial Support Network									
• Program colleagues	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
• 'Inside Leadership' guest principals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	7
• Aspirant principals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		7
• Coaches			✓		✓	✓		✓	4
b) Top-down Support Network									
• CEOWA support staff as program module facilitators		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
c) Bottom-up Support Network									
• School community during periods of acting principalship or internship	✓	✓							2
4. Role Competence									
• Mastery of current leadership role, desire for new challenge	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		6

Table 6.21

Self-efficacy to Commence Principalship: End-of-program Influences Provoking Discernible Perception Changes

Themes and categories	Case study number								Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1. Program Curriculum									
• Facilitation using adult learning principles	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	**6**
• Role component and capability comprehension	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	**6**
2. Active Learning Experiences									
• Vision statement development and refinement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• School board observation and finance and capital development sub-committee participation	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	**7**
• Acting principalship or internship		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		**5**
• LSI 360-degree data and coaching for capability improvement			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	**5**
• QCS school improvement project and coaching	✓		✓				✓	✓	**4**
3. Support Networks									
a) Collegial Support Network									
• 'Inside Leadership' guest principals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• Aspirant principals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• Program colleagues	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**8**
• Coaches			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	**5**
b) Bottom-up Support Network									
• School community during periods of acting principalship or internship	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			**5**

Aspirants indicated that exposure to program theory aided their understanding of Catholic principalship role components and the capabilities required for effective performance and, in doing so, enhanced their self-efficacy to commence the role. As described previously, a number of researchers concluded that a feature common to exemplary principal preparation programs is a rigorous, systematic curriculum that provides aspirants with a well-rounded understanding of the role and requisite capabilities (Davis et al., 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; McCarthy, 1999; Orr, 2006;

Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Young et al., 2009). Other researchers asserted that engagement with such a curriculum has the potential to enhance self-efficacy to commence principalship (Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005; Versland, 2009).

Linked to the curriculum was the manner in which facilitators delivered program theory. Specifically, aspirants valued the use of adult learning principles by facilitators including the use of images and video to compliment the presentation of theory. Likewise, aspirants commented that opportunities to reflect upon theory before discussing perspectives with fellow aspirants were effective ways to access and share past mastery experiences (Bandura, 1986). In some cases, these discussions also exposed aspirants to the self-efficacy sources of vicarious experiences and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986). There appears to be no published literature confirming the link between the use of adult learning principles by facilitators within principal preparation programs and aspirant self-efficacy to commence principalship.

Aspirants also identified the positive influence of five, program-related active learning experiences on their self-efficacy perceptions. These experiences, cited in the literature review as features of exemplary principal preparation programs (Davis et al., 2005; Orr, 2006; Orr & Orphanos, 2011), have the potential to expose aspirants to Bandura's (1986) four self-efficacy sources (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005; Versland, 2009). The first influential experience unanimously mentioned by aspirants was development and refinement of a leadership vision statement. As explained in section two of this chapter, this active learning experience assisted aspirants to clarify their leadership values and, in doing so, identify the factors enhancing their interest in principalship. Aspirant vision statements also underpinned formal and informal discussions between aspirants and the members of their collegial support networks. Discussion with network members exposed aspirants to the self-efficacy sources of vicarious experiences and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986).

The second influential active learning experience identified by most aspirants was identification and management of principalship disincentives. That is, aspirants considered structured reflection on principalship disincentives and the development

of mitigation strategies influential experiences. Post-reflection, aspirants were exposed to aspects of the role deemed distasteful through school board observation and finance and capital development sub-committee participation over the course of the program. Aspirants indicated that this longitudinal program feature assisted minimisation of their pre-program disincentive perceptions. Specifically, aspirants discussed the positive influence of these experiences on their understanding of the technical responsibilities associated with the role component, stewardship of resources, notably the management of school finances, the school board and capital development planning. Through these experiences, aspirants were also exposed to Bandura's (1986) four self-efficacy sources. Specifically, aspirants participated in mastery experiences and controlled resultant physical and emotional states as they worked collegially with personnel to co-lead the management of school finances and the construction and/or refurbishment of school buildings and facilities. Through these experiences, aspirants also received social persuasion in the form of leadership capability affirmation from their principals, board members and/or sub-committee representatives. Aspirants encountered vicarious experiences as they observed their principals working positively and proactively with school board members, enhancing confidence in their capacity to do likewise as novice principals.

The third influential active learning experience, identified by seven of the eight aspirants, was acting principalship or internship. Aspirants, when engaged as acting principals or interns, experienced mastery experiences and engaged in the real-time control of associated physical and emotional states such as stress reactions (Bandura, 1986). Aspirants also used these opportunities to develop top-down and bottom-up support networks and were subsequently exposed to vicarious experiences and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986) from the former group and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986) from the latter. As stated previously, the self-efficacy benefits associated with this program feature reflect the research conclusions of a number of researchers including Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe and Meyerson (2005), Leithwood, Jantzi, Coffin and Wilson (1996), Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2005) and Versland (2009).

Aspirants also identified three additional self-efficacy benefits associated with periods of acing principalship or internship. Firstly, aspirants confirmed the value of these experiences as ways to apply program theory to reality, especially that

pertaining to role components and capabilities. This benefit was emphasised by Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe and Meyerson (2005), Orr (2006) and Orr and Orphanos (2011). Secondly, aspirants affirmed the value of these experiences as means through which to test the validity of their leadership vision statements and assess the authenticity of their promotional motives. Thirdly, aspirants valued the opportunity to confront, experience and manage role-related disincentives.

The fourth influential active learning experience identified by most aspirants was the use of LSI, 360-degree data within coaching sessions. Specifically, aspirants valued the capacity of the LSI to identify their leadership capability strengths and limitations. Aspirants also appreciated the ability of their coaches to use LSI data to guide the generation, implementation, evaluation and ongoing refinement of capability improvement goals and achievement strategies. Moreover, aspirants suggested that coaching sessions provided them with opportunities to access the self-efficacy sources of vicarious experiences and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986). Vicarious experiences occurred in the context of longitudinal coaching sessions as aspirant coaches regaled them with stories of leadership challenge, success and subsequent learning. Social persuasion transpired as coaches affirmed aspirant progress against leadership capability improvement goals.

The final influential active learning experience was leadership of the QCS school improvement project, cited by half of the aspirants as a valuable self-efficacy enhancer. In the first instance, aspirants affirmed the value of the project as a means through which to comprehend the role component of school improvement. Additionally, as aspirants worked with their principals throughout the program's second year to select a QCS component for review and conducted the process at their schools, coaches performed the role of critical friend. As aspirants led the project, their coaches encouraged the implementation of strategies to achieve goals generated within coaching sessions. As was the case for the previous activity, aspirants identified the positive influence of coach-related vicarious experiences and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986) on their self-efficacy perceptions. Further, aspirants considered the mastery experience associated with leadership of the project and the need to manage resultant physical and emotional states (Bandura, 1986) influential self-efficacy sources. Finally, aspirants cited the self-efficacy benefits associated

with receipt of social persuasion (Bandura, 1986) in the form of positive feedback from component-review team members, staff and principals.

All aspirants referred to the positive influence of support network members on their self-efficacy perceptions. Aspirants identified program colleagues, 'Inside Leadership' guest principals, their principals and coaches as important members of their collegial support networks. As aspirants engaged in conversation with these people, they were exposed to vicarious experiences in the form of tales of leadership challenge, success and resultant learning (Bandura, 1986). Consequently, aspirants developed the realisation that they too had the leadership wherewithal to succeed in similar situations. Network members also provided social persuasion (Bandura, 1986) as they affirmed the leadership capabilities of aspirants and encouraged the pursuit of principalship ambitions. These findings reflect the conclusions of a number of researchers who affirmed the positive influence of support networks on aspirant self-efficacy perceptions (Davis et al., 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; McCarthy, 1999; Orr, 2006; Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Young et al., 2009).

Moreover, aspirants articulated the positive influence of top-down support network members on their self-efficacy perceptions, notably CEOWA support staff that facilitated program modules. As explained previously, CEOWA personnel possessed technical knowledge considered 'foreign' to the initial training and leadership experiences of aspirants including that required for the prudent management of school finances, capital development planning and resolution of conflict and legal issues. Aspirants reported two self-efficacy benefits associated with top-down support network members. Firstly, as CEOWA support staff facilitated program modules, not only did they impart principal-specific knowledge, they served as sources of vicarious experiences and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986). Secondly, CEOWA support staff reassured aspirants that they would be available to offer timely advice and support during and beyond their novice years as principals. These findings reflect those of Orr and Orphanos (2011) and Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2005) who emphasised the self-efficacy benefits associated with interaction between central office support staff and aspirants in the context of principal preparation programs. Further, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2005) claimed that knowing whom to contact for support and when to do so is particularly

comforting for novice principals who may experience dislocation from both previous support networks and the established principals' network.

Aspirants also discussed the positive influence of bottom-up support network members on their self-efficacy perceptions. As defined previously, members of this support network sub-group included staff, students, their parents and carers and people from the broader school community (Versland, 2009). Aspirants considered feedback from these people, received during periods of acting principalship or internship, valuable sources of social persuasion (Bandura, 1986). That is, as aspirants enacted the role of principal through these experiences, bottom-up support network members provided verbal encouragement that, in turn, affirmed aspirant leadership capacity and enhanced self-efficacy to commence principalship (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005; Versland, 2009). Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe and Meyerson (2005), and Leithwood, Jantzi, Coffin and Wilson (1996) emphasised the crucial nature of acting principalship or internship as means through which to build bottom-up networks and experience this self-efficacy source.

Finally, most aspirants identified 'role competence' as a final factor influencing their self-efficacy perceptions. Role competence, a phrase coined by one aspirant, refers to mastery of a current leadership role and the urge to experience the unfamiliar and challenging professional territory offered by the principalship. Aspirants, when discussing the link between role competence and self-efficacy perceptions, attributed their promotional urges to three factors. Firstly, aspirants intimated that years of exposure to mastery experiences (Bandura, 1986) through their respective leadership roles and the subsequent monitoring and control of physical and emotional states (Bandura, 1986) confirmed that they could achieve likewise in the context of principalship. Secondly, aspirants considered social persuasion (Bandura, 1986), in the form of leadership affirmation received from the members of their existing bottom-up support networks, a factor enhancing their self-efficacy perceptions (Bandura, 1986; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005; Versland, 2009). Finally, aspirants discussed the self-efficacy benefits associated with constant exposure to the vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1986) of fellow aspirants during the conduct of the Aspiring Principals Program in addition to social persuasion (Bandura, 1986) generated through both formal and informal interactions.

6.5.4 Section four summary.

Before the Aspiring Principals Program, three aspirants expressed low, two aspirants articulated moderate and three aspirants conveyed high self-efficacy to commence Catholic principalship. As aspirants participated in and completed the program, high self-efficacy perceptions were either confirmed or realised. Four program-related features positively influenced aspirant self-efficacy perceptions: the program curriculum and method of facilitation; active learning experiences; support networks; and role competence or aspirant sense that they had mastered their current leadership role and desired the challenge of principalship.

6.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter presented a discussion of the themes emanating from the cross-case analysis of the eight case study narratives provided in Chapter Five: Research Results and the refined data tables associated with stage two of the Miles and Huberman (1994) interactive model of data management and analysis: data display. Discussion throughout this chapter used a number of tactics recommended by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) for stage three of the Miles and Huberman (1994) interactive model of data management and analysis: drawing and verifying conclusions. These tactics included comparison and contrast of themes and their respective categories with the established body of knowledge presented in the literature review. The upcoming chapter, Review and Conclusions, provides a response for each of the four specific research questions used to guide this study. This chapter also presents research conclusions; a proposed integrated model of principal preparation; implications and recommendations for the profession; and potential additions to the existing body of theory pertaining to principal preparation.