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The Professional Development of School Principals: a fine balance

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1990 I have taken a special interest in the professional development of school leaders. This particular focus has emerged quite naturally from my involvement in the professional development processes which have always accompanied educational policy and curriculum implementation and with which I have been involved since being appointed as an Advisory Teacher in the Queensland Education Department in 1972. I had been an employee of that department since the early sixties, but from 1972 until 1987, I held a number of positions associated with curriculum or policy implementation in both primary and secondary schools. My role in professional development concentrated on classroom teachers though, at all times, I worked closely with principals without whose support policy implementation is unlikely to succeed.

In late 1987, I took up a position at the then Brisbane College of Advanced Education at a time when the Dawkins Green Paper (Dawkins, 1987) was signalling significant changes in Higher Education. Changes there were being mirrored in school education as well as in other elements of the public sector. In fact, the last few years of the eighties and the first few of the nineties, were characterised by the pressures of a newly emerging style of public sector reform, now called 'New Public Management' (NPM). The hallmarks of NPM (Ferlie, Ashburner and Pettigrew, 1996) are well documented. They involve:

- a reduction in government's role in service provision;
- downsizing and decentralising the public sector;
- deregulation of the labour market;
- the imposition of the strongest feasible framework of competition and accountability on public sector activity;
- explicit standards and measures of performance, clear definition of targets and indicators of success;
- a greater emphasis on output controls – a stress on results, not processes;
- moves to new forms of corporate governance;
- a shift from public funding to private sector provision (the privatisation agenda); and
- a reduction in the self-regulating powers of the professions.

The influence of NPM on school systems in the countries with which Australia usually compares itself, has been extensive since about 1988. In the United Kingdom, NPM influenced changes were initiated in education by the 1988 Education Reform Act, in New Zealand by the 1988 Picot Reforms and even in Queensland, Australia, where the Education Office Gazette of 1989 outlined early moves towards decentralisation through local school development planning and the devolution of greater budget control and accountability to principals and Parents and Citizens Associations. Since the late eighties, under the influence of NPM, the restructuring of public schooling has been characterised by:

- decentralisation through school self-management;
- the injection of competition between schools;
- greater demands for financial accountability;
- an increase in consumer control through school governing councils;
- recentralisation of curriculum and assessment control;
- expanding the powers of school principals;
- increasing pressure for outcomes-based assessment;
- the exposure of school performance to public scrutiny;
- the assessment of teachers against employer defined competencies; and
- tighter regulation of the teaching profession.

It was in this climate of restructuring created by NPM that I first began to see evidence of its impact on school principals, evidence which suggested that they were ill-prepared to lead and manage the kind of changes they were increasingly being required to implement. As a result, I shifted my focus in professional development from teachers to principals, a focus which I retain in my research today and on some of which I report here.

This paper concentrates on the professional development of principals, the kind they get as well as the kind they deserve. It does so in five parts. First, I put forward a theoretical framework describing four different orientations to professional development in education as a background to the examination of recent research related to principals' professional development. Second, I describe some of the outcomes of three research projects in which I have been involved in the last ten years to identify what they say about the kind of

professional development to which principals have been exposed. This is followed by an examination of a wider research literature, scholarly writing and current practice in principals' professional development to identify where the emphases lie. These emphases are charted against the theoretical framework to contrast present realities with other possibilities. The paper concludes with a series of questions principals and their employers might ask of themselves if the kind of balance I argue for is to be achieved in their professional learning over time.

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

I have been developing and refining a framework for analysing professional development in education (see Figure 1) for some time (Logan and Dempster, 1992; Dempster and Beere, 1996). The framework is based on Burrell's and Morgan's (1979) paradigms of social theory. In Figure 1, I use two intersecting continua to define four orientations to professional development: **System Restructuring**, **System Maintenance**, **Professional Sustenance** and **Professional Transformation**. The poles of each continuum identify oppositional positions, the *x-axis* showing a 'people focus' vs a 'system focus' on human activity, the *y axis* showing two views of change, 'reproduction' vs 'reconstruction'.

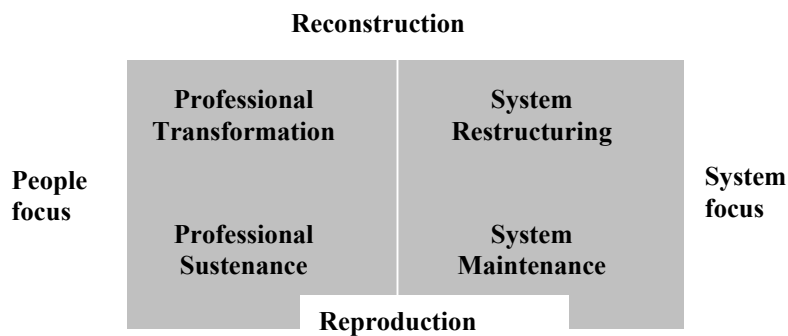


Figure 1. A framework for analysing professional development

A **System Maintenance** orientation towards professional development is based, at worst, on an organisation's view of the learning needed to maintain the status quo, at best, on its acceptance of learning which creates minimal disruption through marginal or incremental change. From this orientation, employers set out expectations for what knowledge and skills are necessary for the roles people play and they then provide training and development programs to ensure that employees are appropriately equipped to carry out their organisational functions. This approach to professional development makes use of didactic pedagogy and positional power relationships to mandate participation. When it succeeds, it enables principals to gain the necessary functional knowledge and skills to carry out their everyday tasks. When it fails, the failure is often attributed to poor in-service education, and/or to the principal's inability to learn or to transfer required knowledge and skills to others. According to a **System Maintenance** approach to professional development, principals' learning should be:

- competency-based, in terms of leadership and management skills;
- linked to enduring educational policies and priorities set by the central authority;
- focused on the authorities, responsibilities and accountabilities of school leadership.

Professional development activity directed towards **System Maintenance** is usually dependent on the initiative and support of system administrators.

A **System Restructuring** orientation towards professional development is grounded in pressures to learn about system change, and is usually demanded by organisational leaders using the human resources available to them to achieve centrally determined restructuring objectives. A relationship between system development, school development and professional development is emphasised (Preston, 1990; Varghese, 2000), along with the benefits of clear goal-setting and the evaluation of productivity against system nominated priorities (Hopkins, 1992). In school education, a **System Restructuring** approach to professional development requires that principals pursue efficiency and effectiveness in implementing both government priorities and values, and system plans and objectives. Principals who participate in **System Restructuring** professional development activities should learn:

- how to develop values and attitudes consistent with those of the parent system;

- how to make changes in the structure and function of their schools in system-determined directions;
- how to work towards system-nominated change outcomes within set budgets; and
- how to gather and use system-stipulated performance data related to the above.

Professional Development activity directed towards **System Restructuring** is usually dependent on the initiative and support of system administrators.

A **Professional Sustenance** orientation towards professional development emphasises learning derived from the individual and collective subjective experience of people in their everyday educational practice. From this perspective, principals' professional development seeks to meet personal and collective professional needs as they are encountered in leading specific communities of students, teachers and parents. Needs tend to arise out of practical, moral and ethical concerns over aspects of daily leadership and management practice. **Professional Sustenance** oriented professional development activities require participants' involvement in determining the topic, direction and means to achieving preferred outcomes which address the needs identified. Self-determination is an essential criterion of this approach while sustaining professional values is its key purpose. Generally, programs for principals consistent with a **Professional Sustenance** orientation should emphasise learning that is:

- based on issues or concerns arising from 'on-the-job' school leadership and management practices;
- linked to principals' personal definitions of professional identity; and
- consonant with ethical professional independence.

Professional Development activity directed towards **Professional Sustenance** is usually dependent on personal initiative and the support of colleagues.

A **Professional Transformation** orientation towards professional development is concerned with learning about alternatives to system orthodoxy and the achievement of human goals such as personal growth, social justice and equity. This approach to principals' professional development encourages them to consider the social, institutional and personal constraints on their practice (Hinkson, 1991) and what might be done differently in their own interests, in the interests of the people with whom they work, and in the interests of society at large. It emphasises learning that is collaboratively initiated and supported, and seeks ways to empower staff and school communities to bring about socially constructive, people focused change. Professional development programs from a **Professional Transformation** orientation should concentrate on learning which enables principals to work with others to:

- undertake constructive social, system and organisational critique;
- question taken-for-granted understandings (the 'sacred cows') of leadership, management and schooling;
- analyse and reshape personal and collective professional knowledge; and
- reconstruct schooling and school administration in alternative ways.

Professional development activity directed towards **Professional Transformation** is usually dependent on personal initiative and the support of colleagues.

The framework outlined in Figure 1 implies that **System Maintenance** and **Professional Sustenance** oriented professional development tend to confirm and sustain existing organisational and social relations by emphasising reproductive forms of in-service education, while **System Restructuring** and **Professional Transformation** approaches tend to promote change through reconstructive forms of in-service education.

In terms of pedagogy, **System Maintenance** and **System Restructuring** approaches favour didactic teaching based on the primacy of the system in the lives of learners, while **Professional Sustenance** and **Professional Transformation** approaches favour co-operative learning adopting a people focus that emphasises individual and collective power and action (Logan and Dempster, 1992; Dempster and Beere, 1996).

One clear implication which can be drawn from the framework is that the resources and funding for principals' professional development are more likely to be associated with 'system focused' orientations than they are with 'people focused' orientations. This is understandable as organisations control resources and have every right to expect employees to undertake training and development in their interests. Another implication is that a balanced professional development agenda cannot be achieved by means of allegiance to a single orientation. A third follows from these two – if resources are more likely to be accessible to orientations on the right hand side of the framework, then those on the left are likely to be under-emphasised in professional development provision. Imbalance in professional development opportunities and experience, I argue, is highly probable unless counter measures with a 'people focus' are readily available. This proposition is examined later in the light of information gained from studies

in which I have participated, themes evident in other research literature and in web-searches of the approaches to the professional development of principals taken by present system authorities in Australia and overseas.

I turn first to examine the outcomes of three studies in which I have participated – outcomes which indicate particular leanings in principals' professional development.

THREE RESEARCH STUDIES

A brief description of the purpose, methodology and selected findings of three school-based leadership and management studies in which I have been a chief investigator is provided below. In each case implications for the learning and development of principals are 'plotted' against the four orientations to professional development explained above.

Study 1: The Primary School Planning Project (PSPP)

In 1991, whilst a Visiting Scholar at Cambridge University, I was invited by Professor Peter Mortimore of the London Institute of Education, to participate in the design and development of a study to investigate the impact and effects of school development planning on primary schools in England and Wales. Mortimore's interest in this topic had been aroused because development planning was a requirement placed on self-managing schools following the Education Reform Act of 1988. My experience in the UK resulted in the pursuit of a parallel study, funded by the Department of Employment, Education and Training in Australia, with colleagues Lloyd Logan and Judyth Sachs, in the period 1992-1995. The purpose of the Australian study mirrored the work of our English counterparts. It aimed:

- to document the use and effects of school development planning in primary schools;
- to describe planning practice; and
- to disseminate information to facilitate the critique, evaluation and understanding of policy and practice in school development planning.

The study was conducted in government and Catholic systemic primary schools combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. Data from three questionnaires were used to develop a national overview of school development planning and its perceived effects. The first survey (N=1053) asked principals to indicate the content of their school development plans and authorisation procedures. The second survey collected data from parents (N=678), principals (N=699), associate administrators (N=450) and teachers (N=911) on the nature, processes and benefits of school development planning. The third survey collected data from 96 of the 101 Regional and Diocesan Offices responsible for the administration of 6425 of the government and Catholic systemic schools in Australia.

Qualitative data on school development planning activities were collected by nine independent researchers who conducted case studies in ten schools. The schools were selected on the basis of their current stage in school development planning, school size, location and socio-economic setting. These year-long case studies had two main focuses. In the first, the researchers concentrated on the teaching activities of two of the school's classroom teachers in order to gain insight into how school development planning was affecting classroom activity. The second focus was on the impact of school development planning on the school as a whole.

The key findings of the study are published in a book titled – *Planning for Better Primary Schools* (Logan, Sachs and Dempster, 1996). The outcomes of the English work are reported in the text – *Planning Matters* (MacGilchrist, Mortimore, Savage and Beresford, 1996).

Selected findings of the PSPP

The PSPP showed that school development plans commonly consist of a three-year strategic plan elaborated by annual (budgeted) operational plans. Together these constitute school development plans. They are usually produced through co-operative efforts with groups of parents and teachers working with the principal on planning templates provided by system authorities. Generally, the evidence from the study suggested that where school development planning worked well, it was inclusive, productive and regenerative (Logan, Dempster and Sachs, 1996).

Pertinent to the present paper are the following findings:

- that school development plans are universally used by government and Catholic systemic schools in Australia;
- that development planning must align the school's plans with the goals and priorities of the system authority;
- that strategic plans define the outcomes against which principals are held accountable;
- that the role of the principal is critical to effective strategic and operational planning and implementation;
- that development planning extends and intensifies the working day for principals and teachers;
- that principals are often the 'meat in the sandwich' mediating between system priorities and local demands in planning decisions;
- that development plans provide a focus for professional development for both principals and teachers directing their learning towards school and system priorities;
- that the overwhelming majority of principals feel that the benefits of school development planning outweigh the disadvantages.

Some Implications of the PSPP for the professional development of principals

At the conclusion of the project, we coined the phrase 'plan-linked' professional development in response to what we saw occurring in the twelve case study schools and in the survey data on the influence of school plans on in-service education (see the second last dot point above). There was clear evidence that principals and teachers valued a commitment to professional development by including it as a priority area in their schools' strategic and operational plans and by their willingness to spend money to support staff attendance at in-service education activities directed towards achieving specific objectives in those plans. However, I argue that 'plan-linked' professional development emphasises practical in-service education directed towards immediate school and system goals at the expense of the type of professional development which responds to the personal needs and socio-professional responsibilities of principals and teachers. In terms of the framework outlined earlier, 'plan-linked' professional development seems to favour a system or organisational focus.

Overall, evidence from the PSPP suggests that as far as professional development for school principals is concerned, a considerable tightening of focus towards learning which enables them to better accommodate system and institutional needs and priorities has resulted from its implementation across Australia. This of itself is not a bad thing, but if it is the 'only thing', then their own professional learning and that of their teachers will remain restricted and out of balance. I say this because consciously or unconsciously, plan-linked professional development:

- asks principals and teachers to turn their learning towards organisational priorities;
- down-plays the centrality that personal professional needs and experiences have in adult learning;
- restricts career learning to the organisational conditions shaping principals' and teachers' work;
- avoids learning related to social critique beyond the school; and
- fails to recognise the power of communal critical reflection in learning about present and preferred practices.

On the upside, however, plan-linked professional development makes public a commitment by a principal and his or her teachers to the in-service education necessary to improve their school in the directions set by its planning processes.

Study 2: The Expectations of School Principals Study (ESPS)

The Expectations of School Principals Study, like the study above, ran in parallel with studies conducted by colleagues in Scotland, England and Denmark. It was concerned with investigating how the work of principals is shaped by the expectations of stakeholders both within and beyond their schools at a time when school based management was dominating the policy agenda in all countries.

The design of the study in Queensland rested on a collaborative approach with myself and Lloyd Logan as university researchers working with principals as co-researchers in the project. We used a variety of qualitative and quantitative data gathering techniques including:

- structured group discussion with twelve school principals to ascertain their views of contemporary school leadership, the expectations they perceive people have of them and expectations they have of themselves;
- individual interviews with the twelve principals to identify significant expectations influencing action;
- a survey of students (N=584), parents and teachers (N=472) to extend the interview data, and to follow-up on any trends or emphases evident through interviews; and
- focus group discussions with other stakeholders with interests in school principalship, including educational policy makers, district or regional educational officials, school councillors or governors, parent association members, politicians and particular members of the public.

The findings from the Queensland study as well as the results from the English, Scottish and Danish work are published in the book titled – *Effective School Leadership: Responding to Change* (MacBeath, 1998).

Selected findings from the ESPS

Two sets of results from the ESPS are presented and briefly discussed. The first includes expectations of principals held by students; the second, general expectations of principals held by teachers and parents.

Students' Expectations

From our findings, it is fair to say that students hold many very favourable views of school principals with whom they expect regular, friendly contact and of whom they expect an understanding of the 'real world' of student and classroom life. They expect principals to be visible, accessible and caring, and to hold dear, responsibility for students' safety and protection. Also of concern is the issue of discipline with some ambivalence between students who expect more listening and less punishing and those who expect stronger punishment with swifter action. The latter view figures more prominently in students' expectations of their principals. Students also appear to be concerned about issues of equity – particularly the perception of unfair treatment and bias in the selection of student leadership positions.

In the words of the students themselves:

Students should be allowed to lead even though their culture and religion may be different from the norm.

Principals should take note of the 'pal' in principal and really get to know students as individuals – not just some, but the quiet average achievers as well as all the rebels.

Principals need to be amongst the students, not being merely figure heads. They ought to have close contact with their students and staff in order to have a school in harmony with itself.

These comments emphasise the human concerns of students and point to principals' needs for interpersonal skills that encourage approachability, an understanding of school life from the student's perspective and fairness in decision-making.

Parents' and Teachers' Expectations

Two graphs, Figures 2 and 3, showing the priorities of parents and teachers in the six areas which our questionnaire addressed underline the importance these two groups attach to particular types of expectations. Each of the areas referred to, contained from 12 to 20 items. Figures 2 and 3 use shortened headings to describe the areas, which in the questionnaire, were given descriptions such as: '*Expectations related to staff, parent and community relations*'.

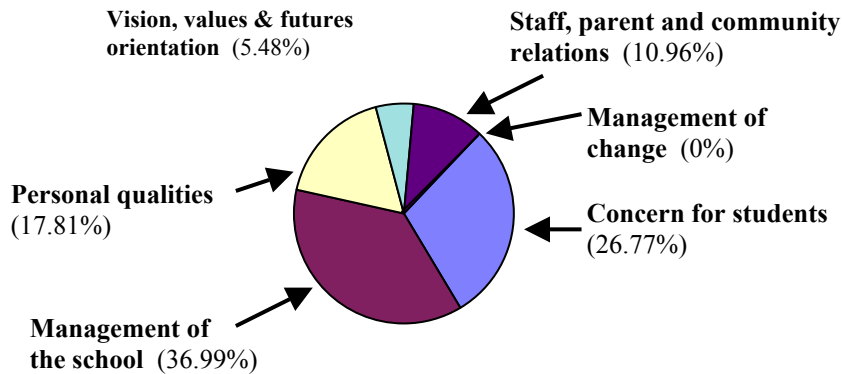


Figure 2. Parents' Expectations of Principals - Order of Importance
(N=250 approx)

Figure 2 shows that of least importance to parents are expectations of their principals related to the management of change in their schools. By contrast, rated highest by them are expectations related to the good everyday management of the school. Expectations of the principal related to concern for students is second in importance to parents, while expectations related to vision, values and a futures orientation are last but one in their view. Expectations related to the personal qualities of the principal are third in importance to parents and expectations related to the principal's relationship with staff and parents takes fourth position.

Figure 3, which illustrates the views of teachers, shows some differences in priority between them and parents.

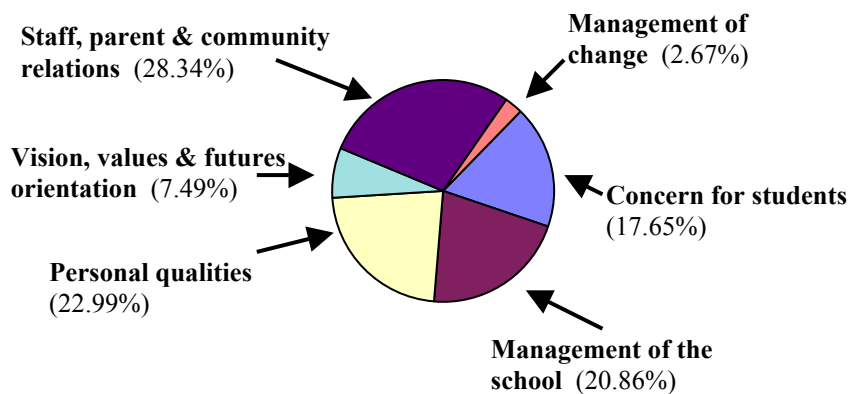


Figure 3. Teachers' Expectations of Principals - Order of Importance
(N=250 approx)

The pieces of the 'pie' in Figure 3 show that highest in priority for teachers are expectations of the principal related to staff, parent and community relations. Second in importance are expectations that principals display sound personal qualities. Of similar significance are expectations for the good management of the school. Teachers place fourth on their list, expectations related to the principal's concern for students. At a long last are expectations related to the principal's vision, values and futures orientation and change management. When a comparison of parents' views from Figure 2 is made with those of teachers' (above), the patterns of priorities are seen to be similar. Fewer people in both groups consider change and a futures orientation to be expectations of significance for school principals. Most favour existing matters internal to the school.

Overall, the distinctive feature of student, parent and teacher responses is the fact that people who are closest to schools hold to fairly predictable micro-political expectations of their school leaders. Continuity in management, demonstrable concern for staff, students and the community are logical, internally felt needs. On the other hand, the expectations which have most to do with a macro-political perspective and with

changing the *status quo* consistently received lowest priority. This outcome stands in stark contrast to the kinds of expectations, which authorities external to the school have of their principals. These expectations, are firmly fixed on the principal as change agent, restructuring advocate, efficient manager and mediator between external demands and local wishes, while the expectations of students, teachers and parents are focused on enhancing the student learning experience and environment, sound and supportive staff relationships and the creation of a well managed, happy school. Such a contrast pinpoints the tensions confronted daily by the principal. It also exposes a dilemma when it comes to enhancing the principal's professional practice. The strength of this dilemma should not be underestimated. When leading locally is framed and constrained by system policies and priorities, school principals can become the 'meat' in an unpalatable sandwich (Dymock, 1996). How principals address this dilemma is a question with immediate and long-term professional development implications.

Some Implications of the ESPS for principals' professional development

Space permits only brief comment on some of the implications of the dilemma for the professional development of principals. I mention three matters.

First, the findings from our study indicate that principals need to concentrate some of their learning on immediate functional issues affecting the smooth running of schools: developing knowledge and skills about ways to create the right kind of climate in which learning can take place; learning more about students themselves, their needs and aspirations; pursuing personal improvement in communication within the school community; and acquiring the micro-political skills to ensure that the interests of stakeholders are accommodated in what the school does; these are all important elements in the professional development of school leaders.

Second, it is clear from the tenets of NPM outlined earlier and the directions in which Australian school system authorities are heading that principals face competing expectations in the way they lead and manage schools. There is evidence in our study to suggest that the principal will be drawn towards the expectations of his or her employer as the motivation for professional development rather than towards the expectations of parents, teachers and students. This pull towards corporate interest may take the principal's mind off professional development related to the core business of the school, namely, meeting the learning needs and expectations of students and the expectations of their parents. Both of these matters are at the heart of the professional values which underpin school leadership.

Third, notwithstanding the low priority attached to change and a futures orientation by parents and teachers in our survey results, principals must address their attitudes to these matters during times of organisational restructuring. External expectations on schools from governments, educational policy makers and members of the wider worlds of business, industry and commerce will always be with us and principals have no way of making their schools immune from their influences. As a consequence, school leaders must not allow their professional development to be seduced by the functional issues I referred to above. Life is easier when the *status quo* is undisturbed but leading schools is about creating the circumstances to achieve preferred goals – and to do so requires a concern for doing many things differently, sometimes reconstructing the school in ways unanticipated by the system. Principals' learning must embrace the vision and values inherent in innovation and the requirements of mandated change. More than this, principals should be committed to the expansion of professional theoretical and practical knowledge about how to bring new ideas to fruition in their schools.

These comments suggest that there are powerful forces at work that tip the balance of professional development towards the systems focus outlined in the framework presented earlier in this paper. These forces, consciously or unconsciously, reduce the attention given to learning about the immediate personal and professional needs of the people in school settings and on learning about alternative ways of working which challenge system requirements. Again, I would argue, the findings of the ESPS suggest that the professional development of principals is in danger of being skewed in two directions: (a) learning that stays within known organisational comfort zones; and (b) learning which is necessary when employers make changes in what is required in the system or institution.

Study 3: The Principals' Ethical Decision-making Study (PEDMS)

One area of interest which arose during the 'expectations' study concerned the types of issues principals were expected to resolve at the school level. In fact, we found that principals were troubled by ethical dilemmas in all four countries and most reported an increase in the frequency with which they have been confronted with difficult situations in recent years.

With these indicative outcomes from the Expectations of School Principals Study and the Queensland Education Department's interest in ethics in school leadership as a backdrop, I was motivated with colleagues Mark Freakley and Lindsay Parry to approach Education Queensland over the development of a collaborative research project funded through an ARC Strategic Partnerships with Industry Research and Training (SPIRT) grant designed to achieve the following purpose:

- to identify and describe situations in which school principals face ethical dilemmas, to record the decisions they make, to explain their reasoning and why they take the action they do.

The Principals' Ethical Decision Making Study was developed around a series of intensive interviews with principals (N=25) from a range of metropolitan, provincial and rural schools to identify what they regard as ethical issues and how they go about their resolution. The results of the interviews provided data from which a survey was produced. This was administered to all government school principals in Queensland producing returns from 552.

The outcomes of the study will be a book using case accounts involving the resolution of ethical issues in practical approaches to principals' professional development within a framework which theorises different approaches to ethical decision-making in leadership practice.

Selected findings of the PEDMS

Among the key findings of the PEDMS are those pertaining to principals' professional development needs in ethical decision-making. The survey found that there was considerable scope for improving principals' access to and participation in professional development programs that focus on their ethical responsibilities and decision-making roles. For example, as Figure 4 shows, less than one third (28%) of those surveyed indicated that they had undertaken any training or professional development that was specifically related to ethical decision-making.

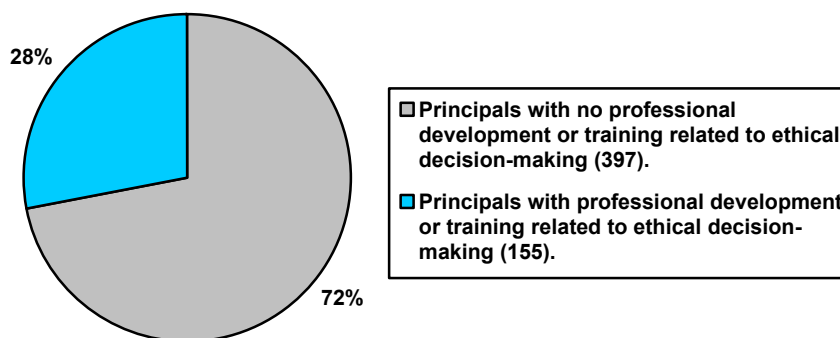


Figure 4. Principals with professional development and training related to ethical decision-making

Of the 155 principals who had experienced professional development in ethical decision-making:

- 12% indicated that their pre-service teacher education had included training in ethical decision-making;
- 4% indicated that they had undertaken other undergraduate studies that had incorporated such training; and
- 35% claimed to have undertaken postgraduate studies in which ethical decision-making was specifically addressed.

Thus, as many as half of the 155 school principals who claimed to have gained some training or professional development in ethical decision-making had done so through university studies. It should be noted, however, that survey respondents could have participated in more than one of the three kinds of university-based training in ethical decision-making. Hence, those who had undertaken such training constituted no more than 14% of the entire survey sample, but possibly as little as 10%.

The 155 principals who said that they had undertaken some training or professional development in ethical decision-making also included those who had participated in relevant professional development programs offered by their employing authority (note that participation in such programs, in at least some cases, would have been additional to relevant university-based studies). The survey results show that principals had participated in such programs as follows:

- 6% had undertaken departmental professional development programs on ethical decision-making that were targeted on teachers;
- 9% had undertaken programs of this kind that were targeted on middle managers; and
- 56% had undertaken programs targeted on principals.

Again, it is possible that respondents had participated in more than one of the above types of programs. Hence, while it may be that as many as 71% of the principals who claimed to have gained some training or professional development in ethical decision-making had done so by means of departmental programs, the figure may be as low as 56%. In other words, of the survey sample of 552 principals, somewhere between 16% and 20% had undertaken departmental professional development programs that specifically addressed the issue of ethical decision-making.

Attributes necessary for ethical decision-making

The study also found strong agreement among principals regarding the personal attributes they considered to be most important for ethical decision-making (see Figure 5).

As figure 5 shows, two thirds (65%) of survey respondents identified interpersonal skills as being among the three most important attributes; one half (51%) perceived empathy to be one of the top three attributes; 44% ranked the ability to recognise the ethical features of a situation among the top three; and 41% included reasoning and logical skills among their three most important attributes. All four of these attributes were perceived by at least 40% of those surveyed to be very important for ethical decision-making. In addition, knowledge of relevant laws, organisational rules and procedures was rated as important or very important by two thirds (66%) of respondents.

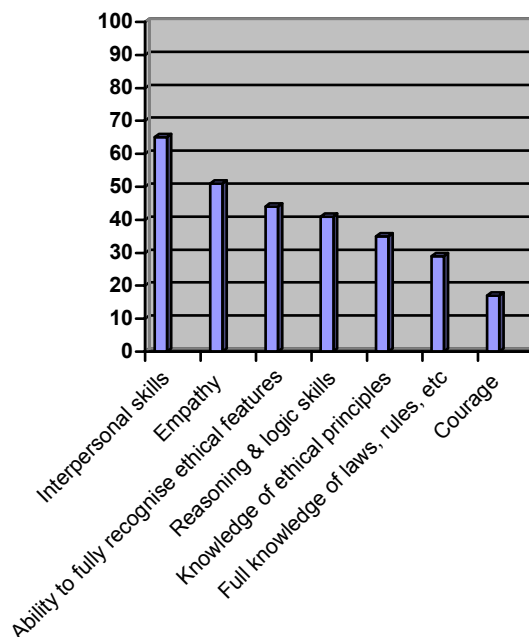


Figure 5. Principals' ranking of the attributes involved in their ethical decision-making (N=552)

At the same time, the study found that one quarter (24%) of survey respondents had little or only moderate confidence in their own interpersonal skills and abilities in situations requiring ethical decision-making. A slightly smaller proportion (21%) had little or only moderate confidence in their capacity to empathise in such situations. Forty percent of respondents had only moderate confidence in their ability to recognise fully the ethical features of a situation, while another 9% had little or no confidence in this area. In regard to their reasoning and logical thinking skills in ethical decision-making situations, one third (33%) of the principals surveyed felt little or only moderate confidence. Furthermore, only 30% were confident or very confident of their own knowledge of laws, organisational rules and procedures relevant to their ethical decision-making

Interest in professional development opportunities

Accordingly, the principals who responded to the survey displayed considerable interest in being provided with opportunities to improve their ability to recognise fully the ethical features of a situation (32% recorded great interest), their knowledge of relevant laws, organisational rules and procedures (30% were greatly interested), their reasoning and logical thinking skills (24% were greatly interested), and their interpersonal skills (23% indicated great interest).

Delivery mode of professional development programs

Figure 6 shows that the most strongly preferred modes of delivery for professional development in ethical decision-making were those that involve interaction with others in face-to-face settings.

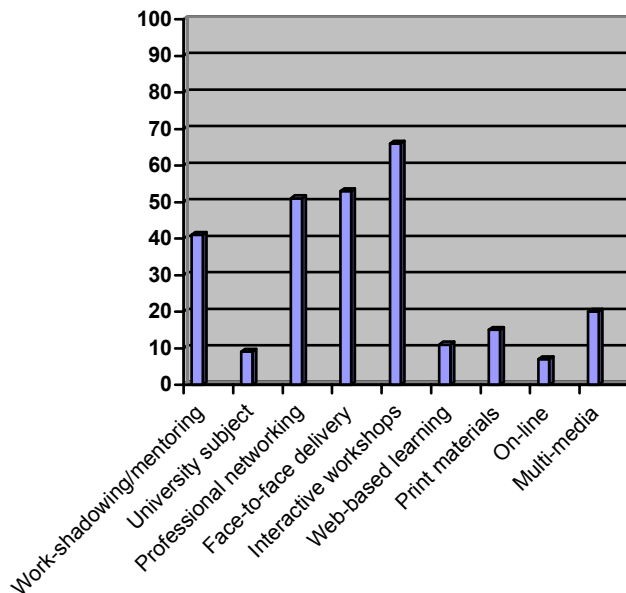


Figure 6. Preferred delivery modes for professional development on ethical decision-making (N=552)

Interactive workshops were favoured by 66% of the principals, face-to-face delivery (53%), professional networking (51%) and mentoring (41%). Technology-based modes of delivery (eg, on-line learning – 7%, web-based delivery – 11%, and multimedia packages – 20%) were favoured by considerably fewer of the principals surveyed for the study. Studying a university subject was favoured by only 9% of principals.

Some implications from the PEDMS for principals’ professional development

In tying this section of the paper together, it must be emphasised that principals, through the PEDMS have sent at least three messages with clear implications for professional development: (i) they have recognised their lack of training and development in ethical decision-making and the need for it; (ii) they have identified some of the areas in which they are keen to improve practice, particularly the interpersonal skills which are so essential to resolving difficult ethical issues; and (iii) they have stated clear preferences for the kinds of learning from which they believe they are likely to benefit and these are essentially interactive in nature. Indeed, there is a key message in the data that professional learning in ethical decision-making should centre on contact and

engagement with other principals during their service. These implications are all consonant with a **Professional Sustenance** orientation to professional development programs which, by and large, they report they have not experienced whilst in employment.

The three studies in which I have had direct experience give me the confidence to say that the 'system focused' orientations to professional development defined in the framework in Figure 1 command the attention of principals. There is little evidence that the 'other side of the coin', the people side, is receiving similar attention. This position is put under further scrutiny through an examination of some of the literature from the last decade on professional development as well as an examination of professional development policies which employing authorities in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia apply to principals.

A REVIEW OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE ON PRINCIPALS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A brief examination of the professional development policies and practices current in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia will serve to illustrate the kinds of influences that are presently driving principals' professional development experiences and where, in terms of the framework presented above, the emphasis currently lies.

The United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom there is strong evidence that centrally developed policies determine the kinds of professional learning with which principals are engaging. According to Williams (1993), there has been a fundamental shift from a loosely regulated, decentralised system to one that is tightly centralised. Paradoxically, principals and teachers have been obliged to come to terms with a corresponding shift in emphasis away from traditional educational and public service values to business and market values (Bolam, 1993; Dempster, Kruchov & Distant, 1994). These values apply in part to the marketisation of professional development provision in the United Kingdom – provision which has the government in control of the direction of professional development but which leaves delivery open to any agency able to meet government requirements and consumer needs.

Concerns in the United Kingdom with teacher competence are reflected in both pre-service and in-service education. MacGilchrist (1994, p.22) has observed a new emphasis, in initial teacher training, on *practical competences as opposed to the traditional theory and practice approach previously adopted*, and notes that beginning teachers are advised to set out their professional strengths and weaknesses in competency profiles that can then set the agenda for their ongoing professional development. In in-service education, emphasis has been placed on the functional learning associated with the implementation of a national curriculum and national assessment practices. Principals have been expected to play a leading professional development role in their schools in this regard, and consequently their own learning has been tied to national policies.

Together with the expansion of school development planning in the United Kingdom, amendments to funding arrangements for professional development activities have meant that both teachers and principals are struggling to retain control of their own professional learning. Principals, says MacGilchrist, are feeling caught between government policy and school practice, and devoting considerable time to keeping pace with externally initiated change (MacGilchrist, 1994).

Since 1997, the Blair government has partly shifted the focus of principals' learning from external change to leadership needs and aspirations through professional development programs offered by a new National College for School Leadership. Funded by the British Government (<http://www.defee.gov.uk/a-z/>), the College provides three major national professional development programs for school leaders; the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), the Leadership and Management Programme for New Head Teachers (HEADLAMP), and the Leadership Programme for Serving Head Teachers (LPSH). Until the National College for School Leadership is completed, the Department for Education and Employment is administering these programs. The programs are aligned with national standards for head teachers, standards approved by the Blair Government. Through these programs, the government of the United Kingdom is clearly 'steering' professional development 'from a distance'.

The NPQH is available for aspiring head teachers and will, in the near future, become a compulsory program for potential head teachers. The program is completed over a three to twenty-four month period depending on previous experience and knowledge. HEADLAMP is designed especially for newly inducted head teachers and concentrates on meeting professional and personal development needs. The LPSH was formed through a

partnership with Hay/McBer, the Open University, the Business in the Community Forum and the National Association for Head Teachers. The program consists of four elements; pre-workshop preparation, workshop, post-workshop activity, and follow-up questionnaire. Pre-workshop preparation involves completing a comprehensive questionnaire designed to assess personal leadership style and professional characteristics. The workshop is a four day program involving networking, one-on-one conferencing with trainers, feedback and analysis of questionnaires, the development of a personal action plan, and information on models of effective leadership. The next step of the program involves a Partners in Leadership scheme where head teachers are given the opportunity to meet with business leaders to discuss common leadership challenges. The final stage of LPSH consists of a follow-up day where participants have the opportunity to receive feedback on their performance, to review personal goals, establish plans for the future, and fill in some final diagnostic questionnaires.

New Zealand

The professional development scene in New Zealand is largely similar. For example, in 1989, a review of the Advisory Service that had delivered in-service education to schools for many years concluded that *a system of self-review, aided by outside consultants, would lead to schools identifying their own needs and buying services to satisfy their demands* (Ramsay, 1994, p.27). However, the proposed 'quasi market economy' in professional development did not eventuate immediately. Instead, the Advisory Service was contracted by the government to help implement its 'second wave' of school reforms. The contract stipulated objectives, outputs and performance indicators related to the achievement of government priorities through in-service education in curriculum leadership, assessment, administrative management and Maori education. Only 10-25% of funds available under the contract were to be reserved for professional development related to local school practices (Ramsay, 1994). Arrangements such as these clearly put professional development to work in the interests of the state, and inevitably subject principals to pressures to shift their own learning to serve these powerful interests.

Just as in the United Kingdom, in recent years the New Zealand Ministry of Education has introduced a *Professional Standards for Principals* framework designed to aid principals in effective school leadership (<http://www.minedu.govt.nz>). These standards form the basis of professional development programs. The standards consist of six core competency categories; (i) professional leadership; (ii) strategic management; (iii) staff management; (iv) relationship management; (v) financial and asset management, and (vi) statutory and reporting requirements. These standards are incorporated into each principal's performance agreement and require principals either to be assessed annually on their performance determined against the standards, or to use the standards to develop performance criteria and achievement indicators for professional development. A School Board may negotiate with its principal on the process of assessment, but all assessment must use the standards as a foundation for professional development. Specialized standards are available for Maori and integrated schools.

Australia

In Australia, while individual states and territories are separately responsible for education, there are many similarities in the ways in which the various governments control the nature and extent of professional learning opportunities available to principals. New South Wales provides an example of what is quite common in the other Australian states and territories. Funding commitments there under the New South Wales Education Reform Act of 1990 tied the bulk of school-based professional development funds to system and institutional policies and priorities (McCulla, 1994, pp.11-12). This indicates the primacy of the system's agenda in that state, and demonstrates that politicians and system leaders are well aware of the power of professional development in putting government restructuring policies into place.

The dominance of central reform initiatives over principals' learning is further highlighted by studies in New South Wales which indicate that schools are 'aligning training and development priorities with school plans and system wide priorities' (McCulla, 1994, p.13). It is through professional development, according to McCulla (1994), that a corporately aligned school culture can be fostered, and furthermore it is the principal's function to lead the process of alignment. Governments in other Australian states and territories have followed a similar line, most by regulation rather than by legislation (Varghese, 2000).

There is also a great deal of similarity in education departments across the country in their more direct approaches to principals' professional development. In what might be regarded as a national 'movement' most school authorities, in the last five years, have produced standards and competencies frameworks which they use to inform the professional development of principals and which some use in selection and promotion as well. Examples from South Australia,

the Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia, Tasmania and Queensland are described to illustrate the similarities.

South Australia

In South Australia, the *Professional Development Pathways Framework* (<http://www.dete.sa.gov.au/schlstaff/>) was developed by a network of universities, unions, employer groups, principal associations, private providers, the Teachers' Registration Board, the Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia and the South Australian Education Department. The framework is linked to a number of learning modules specifically designed to enable educational leaders to gain tertiary qualifications. The modules range from short half-day courses, to intensive face-to-face programs leading to substantial progress towards a Masters Degree. All modules require follow-up activities and do not simply involve attendance at workshops. The modules are designed to enable flexibility in the types of professional development sought and may include lectures, mentoring, collegiate groups, research, workshops, the use of video-conferencing and the Internet, as well as self-paced activities. The framework's focus is primarily on the completion of professional development activities for the purpose of acquiring professional qualifications.

The Australian Capital Territory

The Australian Capital Territory completed its *Leadership and Management Framework* in December 2000 (<http://occ.act.edu.au/staffdev/training.htm>). The framework sets out five leadership and management domains that form a series of guidelines for professional development. These key leadership domains are: (i) strategic management; (ii) self-management; (iii) leading people; (iv) organisational management; and (v) communication. This framework is accessible through the departmental web site which offers a self-assessment inventory and scoring sheet to aid leaders in making judgments about their performance profile in each domain. There are a number of professional development activities related to specific domains available with some requiring compulsory attendance. Annual reports against the performance profile are required at the end of the school year. The Australian Capital Territory Department of Education mandates an annual professional development priority in addition to the priorities principals establish in their performance profiles. For 2001 the priority for all is information technology.

Western Australia

Western Australian school leadership development programs have moved in a new direction in the last five years (<http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/lc/Competencies.html>). The Department of Education's Leadership Centre, in collaboration with Murdoch University and Edith Cowan University has developed a professional development framework based on a set of scenarios involving core leadership themes. The model currently offered for discussion recognizes that typical competency-based frameworks are unrepresentative of leadership roles, are inflexible with regard to different occupational positions and career stages, and do not adequately address ethical and moral issues in leadership. The authors of the framework argue (Wildy and Loudon, 1997) that the use of the term 'competency' in school leadership generally refers to long lists of the skills required, and ignores attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge as essential requirements for effective school leadership. The competency framework currently being trialled explores principals' workplace duties, interpersonal skills, and moral dispositions. The scenarios presented within the framework address issues associated with three major dilemmas in school leadership as identified by Loudon and Wildy (1999). The dilemmas are: (i) exercising power that is strong and shared; (ii) fostering leadership that is both democratic and efficient; and (iii) meeting school needs while complying with externally imposed directives.

Tasmania

The Tasmanian Education Department has developed a *Principal Competency Profile* with several key stakeholders (<http://www.discover.tases.edu.au/PI/>). The profile establishes a framework for professional development programs and points to activities in Tasmania as well as in collaboration with other national programs. The *Principal Competency Profile* is also used by aspirants wanting to prepare themselves for principalship. Through self-assessment they are able to determine their performance profile and the steps they may need to take to enhance their leadership potential. The profile allows existing leaders to plan for professional accreditation and it can be used as a basis for mentoring or shadowing programs. The *Principal Competency Profile* consists of six units of competence, each containing 5-8 elements. Each of these elements houses a number of performance criteria. The six units of competence are: (i) Educational Leadership; (ii)

Planning; (iii) Accountability; (iv) Interpersonal Relations; (v) Cultural and Ethical Leadership; and (vi) Political Leadership.

New South Wales ¹

Over the last ten years, the New South Wales Department of School Education has augmented the regulated approach to professional development explained earlier, by putting in place a more flexible *School Leadership Strategy* designed for leaders at all levels in the school system (<http://www.tdd.nsw.edu.au/>). A significant component of the strategy is the Principal Development Program. The program consists of a number of professional development activities designed to teach principals the skills and knowledge required for effective leadership. The following list provides examples of the programs offered:

- Principal and School Development Program (collegial support);
- Team Leadership Course (school-based team learning);
- School Leadership Excellence Seminars;
- Certificate of School Leadership and Management (tertiary accreditation);
- Mentoring and Coaching;
- Peer Assisted Leadership (collegial support and work shadowing);
- Certificate of Teaching and Learning/Quality Teaching and Learning Materials (learning modules); and
- Rural Areas Principal Interchange (short-tem principal exchanges).

Support for these programs is provided by the New South Wales Department of School Education through opportunities for study leave, education fellowships, tertiary fee support, and study tours. These individual development opportunities are designed to provide flexible professional development options for principals rather than compulsory attendance at mandated programs.

Victoria ²

The Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training offers two professional leadership programs to Victorian principals in conjunction with the APC and Monash University (<http://sofweb.vic.edu.au/pd/schlead/leader.htm>). The Monash Mt Eliza Business School provides courses throughout the year focusing on leadership and management in a business setting. Internal leadership courses include Leadership in Action and Leadership Development. The school also offers experienced principals an advanced four-week program involving managing strategic changes and team development.

The *Principal and School Development Program* offered by the APC in conjunction with the Victorian Education Department offers principals intensive professional development programs targeting issues and dilemmas encountered in school-based management. The program involves elements of problem solving techniques, collegiality, debate and reflection through exposure to relevant literature and research in school leadership, the use of case studies and problem solving techniques, peer instruction and support, and an emphasis on life-long learning. Successful participation and completion of the program enables the participant to apply for credit towards tertiary qualifications. Each program consists of a work-based project, a portfolio involving competency development, and career development support.

Queensland

Education Queensland provides access to a *Standards Framework for Leaders* through its Learning and Development Foundation (http://education.qld.gov.au/learning_ent/ldf/standards/leaders.html). The framework is available to all educational leaders through an Intranet database site, as a hard copy booklet, and on CD-ROM. It is a competency-based assessment framework providing generic standards for all educational leadership contexts and consists of six key themes: (i) Leadership in Education; (ii) Management; (iii) People and Partnerships; (iv) Change; (v) Outcomes; and (vi) Accountability. These themes are further divided into two types of competencies; Best Practice Competencies, and Personal Performance Competencies. Best Practice Competencies contain twenty-four elements developed with four categories in mind. These are: (i) collective site-based actions; (ii) specific underpinning knowledge and understanding; (iii) context indicators; and (iv) evidence. Similarly, there are twelve Personal Performance Competencies developed around two foundational categories: (i) performance levels; and (ii) personal actions.

Given that Queensland is my home state, an elaboration of the intent of the *Standards Framework* and some of its implications for principals are offered here. Such is the extent of the role change for school leaders over the last decade that attention is being given, somewhat belatedly in my view, to the identification and implementation of a learning and development agenda for them. In Queensland, the agenda is one which sets up both a paradox and a dilemma for principals. I discuss the dilemma in greater detail later but the paradox is this – while principals are being asked to take on greater authority and responsibility through school-based management, their employers are tightening control over them by designing assessment-driven, promotion-linked training and development. Evidence of this is found in the words of the Queensland Department of Education (1997):

The professional development and training agenda for principals will contribute to the Department's goals by:

- *ensuring accountability;*
- *focusing on the implementation of organisational change;*
- *promoting continuous personal and organisational learning; and*
- *certifying and accrediting successful completion.*

These intentions indicate clearly it is the expectations of their employers that principals are expected to meet and that professional learning will be assessed and accredited. Other extracts from official guidelines (Education Queensland, 1997) describing the intended outcomes of the professional development and training agenda for principals underscore the measure of control over professional learning envisaged by Queensland authorities. The professional development guidelines endorse:

- *a structured professional development and training curriculum that remains under the control of the department;*
- *content areas which align with the selection criteria for promotional positions;*
- *sequential development of knowledge, skills and attitudes in leadership and management identified with progression through leadership positions; and*
- *certification of a person's performance and accreditation through the departmentally approved curriculum.*

The departmentally controlled and approved professional development curriculum referred to here is being partly 'outsourced' to 'private' training and development providers. These providers must develop a curriculum which matches the *Standards Framework for Leaders* referred to above. Approved providers operate in a 'free' professional development market. Providers stand or fall on their abilities to attract participants and to maintain their approved status with the Department.

As I understand it, the certification referred to will be awarded to principals by the Department of Education, contingent on satisfactory assessment of the prescribed competencies and standards by a principal's supervisors. Certification will correspond with the levels or 'bands' of promotion in the Queensland system. For example, to be eligible for promotion from Band 7 to Band 8, a principal will need to have undertaken development and training in areas essential for the higher level position.

It is my view that the 'control versus self-management' paradox implicit in these new arrangements carries long-term problems for the continuing development of principals and for the Queensland system as a whole. Space does not allow me to take up this argument. Suffice it to say that there is great danger in assessment-linked approaches to professional development. Words such as *closed-shop* and *inward-looking* spring to mind.

This brief discussion of the *Standards Framework for Leaders* and its possible influences on principals' professional development in Queensland shows a preference for an employer sanctional curriculum as fundamental for effective school leadership and the necessary professional development to improve leadership performance. However, the approach described carries some compliance imperatives. If concern for accreditation is the driving force in the professional development of principals, if performance against predetermined competencies is the basis of professional development programs, if professional development is directed only by those in authority outside the school, then responsiveness to the expectations of those with an immediate stake in the school will not be the primary source of the principal's professional development agenda. The dilemma for Queensland principals is whether to give primacy to professional development based on stakeholders' expectations and the professional values operating inside the school gate, or primacy to an

externally mandated generic standards and competencies framework proscribed by the Department of Education. The resolution of this dilemma will need to balance the micro- and macro-political realities all principals face as they attempt to improve their performance in the interests of their students, their parents and their teachers. I feel that the professional development agenda for Queensland principals will remain contestable ground for quite some time to come.

Summary

To sum up, the use of standards and competency frameworks for school leaders is in its early stages in Australia. There is little research evidence about the impact and effects of these frameworks on leadership development though there is criticism of some of their limitations. For example, West and Burnham (1997, p.141) are less than enthusiastic about them. They say:

The current emphasis on competencies might be seen as creating a technology of leadership with the balance of opinion moving towards specific components of the role which can be defined, assessed or measured ... technical competency may help us to stay afloat but it will not necessarily give us the will to struggle through. There is no doubt that leaders need knowledge (or access to knowledge) and a range of skills in order to be effective. However, these have to be contextualised in terms of personal values, self-awareness, emotional and moral capability. This is not to produce another set of formulations but rather to argue for leaders who have self-knowledge and are able to learn and so grow personally.

This view suggests that developing leadership around competency profiles is more likely to concentrate on role definitions acceptable to employers than on professional self-development in fields of interest to individuals working in atypical contexts – contexts which generic standards frameworks are unable to include.

Wildy and Louden (1997) reinforce this view. They argue that competency-based performance standards currently employed in professional development frameworks in Australia and overseas typically have involved the identification of a number of core responsibilities identified and divided into six to eight key competencies using performance indicators to illustrate the competencies in action. These key competencies are further elaborated as long lists consisting of dispositions, knowledge, and skills. Wildy and Louden argue that these conventional competency-based standards frameworks exhibit three significant problems. Firstly, *long hierarchical lists tend to fragment professional performance*. They go on to say (p.4):

Within a single incident, principals may demonstrate a whole range of competencies which appear as separate items on separate lists: for example, principals exercise people management skills at the same time as they exercise curriculum development skills at the same time as they exercise educational leadership.

Listing competencies as if they are enacted in isolation divorces knowledge and skills from particular contexts. Secondly, typical competency-based frameworks *separate (a principal's) performance from the circumstances within which it occurs* (p.4). Leadership performance requires different approaches in different contexts and uses different sets of skills and knowledge.

A third objection which may be made to standards based on long lists of dispositions, knowledge or skills is that the wording of items on the lists implies a degree of precision difficult to realise in real professional settings (p.5). When criticism like this is aired, it is answered by the creation of more minute and detailed specification of the conditions under which a particular leadership behaviour may be performed (p.5).

Wildy and Louden (1997) have been influential in Western Australia in producing a standards framework that responds to their own criticism. In doing so, they have used the professional knowledge and values of principals themselves to focus judgments about leadership on the issues and dilemmas principals face in their work settings. In doing so, they have taken professional development towards the **Professional Sustenance** and **Professional Transformation** orientations outlined in the framework with which I commenced this paper. Most other standards frameworks for leaders, both here and overseas, keep professional development firmly fixed on employer produced and approved definitions of what it is to be a school leader.

Taken as a whole, the examples of professional development provision described from the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia serve to illustrate how most recent approaches to professional development continue to lean towards government and system imperatives. Furthermore, they suggest that these imperatives are being met at the expense of both principals' autonomy and their engagement with the moral and ethical values associated with the profession. In-service education has become a matter of having principals learn how to implement either government policies designed to achieve corporate educational goals or school goals and objectives derived from those policies. As they attempt to juggle their roles as mediators between their employers, their teaching staff, and their school communities, it is not difficult to understand how principals' own professional learning experiences may have become skewed towards meeting priorities that are generally 'system focused' in nature.

CONCLUSION

In drawing this paper to a close, I want to emphasise the point that principals' professional development requires a 'fine balance' between learning what the system requires of individual leaders and what practising professionals require of themselves and their colleagues. Achieving this balance is not easy when the demands of day-by-day administration coupled with loyalty to employers draws principals' learning towards system initiatives, priorities and policies and the certainty of effective routines. I would suggest two courses of action which might help individuals to address this difficult balancing act. First, I put forward a series of questions which principals can discuss with colleagues to ascertain the directions their professional development is or has been taking. Second, I suggest that balancing system interests with personal interests and the interests of students, staff and parents, can be achieved by groups of principals or professional collectives and alliances setting and delivering their own professional development agendas.

1. Questions about the balance in principals' professional development

The questions I pose are derived directly from the framework for professional development which established the base for the discussion presented in this paper. I put these in conversational terms to provide a spur to personal contemplation.

As a principal has your professional learning and development included activities, programs or processes which enhance:

- the leadership and management knowledge and skills related to carrying out your role as principal (System Maintenance)?
- your knowledge and understanding of system restructuring initiatives and how you can align school policies and programs with them (System Restructuring)?
- your knowledge and understanding of the values implicated in school leadership and the enduring moral and ethical imperatives in professional life (Professional Sustenance)?
- your knowledge, understanding and ability to carry out productive social and system critique and to develop alternative professional practices (Professional Transformation)?

With these questions in mind, I suggest reflection on the following:

1. Where does the emphasis presently lie in your professional development?
2. How do you account for this emphasis?
3. In which area of your professional learning is provision or action particularly short of your expectations?
4. What are the reasons for the shortfall?
5. What are you going to do about it?

2. Collective action on principal's professional development

There is no doubt that much is already being done to counterbalance the professional learning and development opportunities provided or approved by system authorities. There are principals' and other professional associations which foster a range of activities from which principals choose learning programs not available through their employment. I want to comment here, however, on a particular approach to the creation of professional development opportunities which draws together school leaders and university academics concerned with meeting professional needs not otherwise met by system arrangements. I refer to the 'Professional Development Network', a collective made up of principals and deputy principals from the Education Queensland school districts, by and large surrounding Griffith University's city to Logan campuses. I see this as a particularly important collective, because it approaches its mission from the 'people focus' side of the framework I have outlined.

The network is self-funding through membership contributions, allowing it a sense of independence about its purposes and the agenda of professional activities it runs. That agenda is constructed out of the results of a needs and priorities survey conducted by fax poll each year. **System Maintenance** and **System Restructuring** matters are not excluded from the agenda but these are complemented by matters related to **Professional Sustenance** and **Professional Transformation**. In particular, the Network's annual conference deliberately brings together both advocates and critics of the directions being taken by Education Queensland enabling members of the network to confront sometimes unpalatable research information as well as new ways of dealing with emerging situations. Without a network such as this which brings principals into partnership with a system outsider (a university), the 'fine balance' which I argue is necessary in career long professional learning would be more difficult to achieve. The fact that this network has survived and thrived on its merits for the last five years is a testimony to principals' support for the injection of alternatives into their learning and development. I believe that there are strong signals that initiatives such as the PDN will grow and prosper in the future. The 'fine balance' I would hope to see being achieved by principals in their professional development will be more likely to occur if they do.

As I conclude this paper, I would like to acknowledge the assistance given to me by my colleagues in the Faculty of Education, my School and, in particular, the Centre for Leadership and Management in Education, in the pursuit of my research and professional interests over the last decade. Their friendship and professional support have been invaluable to me and I thank them, every one.

ENDNOTES

1. The New South Wales Department of Education and Training, through its Training and Development Directorate, has produced a collaborative leadership analysis against a statement of leadership capabilities for aspirants to qualify for entry to the Leadership Preparation Program. The statement of capabilities has yet to be taken into a full blown leadership standards framework, a course of action recommended by the Ramsey Review of Teacher Education (Quality Matters: Revitalising Teacher Education: Critical Times, Critical Choice, Department of Education and Training, New South Wales, November 2000).
1. The Victorian Ministry of Education employs a standards framework for school leadership, in association with the Australian Principals' Centre at Melbourne University, for accreditation purposes.

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