Ethical Decision Making by School Leaders in a Period of Neoliberal Reform

Submitted by

Roderick Arthur Leonarder

BA (Hons), MA (Hons), M.ED, Diploma of Education (University of Sydney)

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Statement of authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text.

I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Signature

Roderick Arthur Leonarder

8 September 2016

Acknowledgements

The journey of a doctoral student is a rich and rewarding experience of multiple pathways and unexpected turns. It is not travelled alone for it is shared with many who offer guidance, encouragement, advice and expertise.

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This doctorate is a record of a professional learning journey shared with numerous committed and exceptional school leaders and teachers working in public education in New South Wales. I am especially grateful to those educators who consented to be interviewed and who were able to share their experiences of leadership with me for the doctorate.

Abstract

School leaders and their leadership teams are involved in the process of decision making on a daily basis. Their work is often complex and arduous as they deal with a range of competing demands from stakeholders who include parents, staff, students, community groups, employing authorities and often other principals.

Researchers in the field of ethical decision making have included metaphors such as 'minefield' and 'battlegrounds' in their writing to describe the complexity and dangerous nature of the work in which principals involve themselves when making decisions. The work is 'dangerous' because stakeholders are often upset with the outcomes of the decision-making processes, which they may not support. Their disquiet can lead to further and continuous conflict.

The difficult situations and ethical dilemmas faced by school leaders are becoming more complex as both state and federal levels of government in Australia seek to exert more direct and indirect influence on schools, their leadership, management and accountability. Australia is not immune from recent major educational trends evident elsewhere in the Western world. The impact of market ideologies and neoliberal reform agendas are explored in the context of moves towards greater localised decision-making and governance in the Australian school sector.

I have undertaken field work throughout this doctoral program to explore the ways in which schools can incorporate professional learning in decision making into their professional practice, the role that ethical decision making can play in nurturing leadership capacity at all levels of the school organisation, and the role that effective ethical decision-making practices can play in building dynamic and transparent school cultures.

To support and nurture ethical decision-making practices in schools, I have provided conference presentations, created an Ethical Decision Making Toolkit of scenarios, designed and implemented an Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders, delivered workshops, created vodcasts, and facilitated Aspiring Leaders Network Meetings. These workshops and presentations have utilised frameworks of ethical practice drawn from the writings which the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) have produced to guide public sector understanding and best practice in transparent and ethical decision making.

For this Professional Practice Doctorate, I have created a portfolio which is in seven parts. The portfolio is introduced by an Overarching Narrative that is followed by three scholarly papers and three professional practice initiatives. The scholarly papers provide an understanding of key issues and research. They address ethical decision making, appropriate professional learning for school leaders and the challenges of leadership in an era of significant generational change. The professional practice initiatives address educational policy making in the context of local decision making and highlight the practical initiatives I have created and implemented to support leaders in their daily leadership practices.

The seven parts of this portfolio reflect my professional journey as a senior departmental officer working with schools in an era which has seen many experienced school leaders retire and younger generations of leaders assume the challenging role of educational leader with its myriad responsibilities. The portfolio raises significant questions which relate to the decision making and problem solving of leaders, the nature of succession planning and the nature of professional learning that best prepares and supports educational leaders for the challenges and dilemmas they face. My research confirms the value of school leaders

and their leadership teams acquiring an understanding of ethical decision-making skills to enhance their decision making and problem solving in an era of greater localised decision making in schools.

Index words

ethical decision making, school leadership, succession planning, generational change

Overarching Narrative

Introduction

School leaders and leadership teams are directly involved in the process of constant decision making to meet the needs of their communities and stakeholders. Their work is often complex and arduous as they deal with a range of competing demands from multiple stakeholders who can include parents, staff, students, unions, community groups, employing authorities, governments and other principals. In this professional practice doctorate, I have explored the rich school environment of decision making and problem solving using the concept of the 'field' as employed by Bourdieu (1998). The concept of the 'field' when applied to education and school leadership is instructive, as it provides a critique to assist in evaluating the nature of the diverse interplays that occur inside a school, as decisions are made and leadership is undertaken on a daily basis.

My research highlights issues dealing with the decision-making strategies and practices which are utilised by school leaders. These practices occur against a backdrop of significant generational change for the teaching workforce[1] and at a time characterised by increased accountabilities driven by neoliberal reform agendas (Connell, 2013; Dinham, 2015; Gobby, 2013; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009). I use the term neoliberal reform agendas to refer to the introduction into the education sector of competitive market-driven practices which have sought to redefine the nature of contemporary schooling and the key accountabilities of school leaders. The focus on decision making throughout my doctorate is an exploration of the interplays between those who exercise power and knowledge, and the way in which they relate to others through this exercise of power. For

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[1] In 2014, the largest age group for NSW government school teachers was the 56–60 years age group. Fifteen per cent of the government schools workforce was in this age group. See *Workforce Profile of the NSW Teaching Profession* – 2014 Update (2016, p. 32).

this reason I draw on the work of French philosopher Foucault and his exploration of power relations and the practice of the self.

This portfolio for the Doctor of Education degree explores the nature of professional learning that can best support leaders, leadership teams and aspiring leaders in their day-to-day professional practice in schools. Of key importance to this professional learning is the role of critical reflection to a leader both in terms of the nature of individual reflection and in subsequent responses to professional interactions with others. In my research I explore how professional learning facilitated skills in leaders and leadership teams that assists them in dealing with the complex and demanding tasks which they face in schools on a daily basis. A key objective of my research had been to bring principals, aspiring leaders and leadership groups together to embrace a model of shared professional practice based on personal reflection and empowerment. This is a model by which participants build the scaffold for their own current and future professional learning.

Ethical decision making and leadership succession planning have been long standing areas of professional interest for me in my senior leadership roles as an education director and school principal. Therefore, I have focused on three main issues. Firstly, the ways that schools can incorporate learning in decision making into their professional practice. Secondly, the role which ethical decision making has played in nurturing leadership capacity at all levels of the school organisation. And thirdly, the role that effective ethical decision-making practices have played in building dynamic and transparent school cultures. To consider these issues, part of my field work has examined the use of scenario-based professional learning in decision making as an appropriate form of professional development for school leaders, leadership teams and aspiring leaders.

I have provided conference presentations, created an Ethical Decision Making Toolkit of professional learning scenarios, designed and implemented an Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders, delivered workshops, created vodcasts, and facilitated Aspiring Leaders Network meetings. All of these educational activities illustrate the development of professional practice initiatives to meet the current and future needs of school communities which fulfil the requirements of this professional practice doctorate.

Underpinning my approach has been the conviction that succession planning and quality induction are key system-level responsibilities for all educational leaders (Bengston, 2010; Fink, 2005, 2010; Groves, 2007; Zepeda, Bengston & Parylo, 2012). As I have worked continuously in the public sector, as a classroom teacher, principal and departmental senior officer since 1978, this study focuses primarily on public education in New South Wales.

The context of the contemporary education terrain

The difficult situations and ethical dilemmas faced by school leaders are becoming more complex as the range of stakeholders, including both state and federal levels of government, seek to exert more direct and indirect influence on schools, their leadership, management and accountability. For Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, school leaders undertake their professional work in an era of 'audit cultures' and associated 'rituals of verification' which are part of the larger age of compliance (2009, p.4). Metaphors of volatility and war including 'battlegrounds' and 'ambush' have been used by one Australian researcher to indicate the unrelenting and often stressful nature of the work in which principals involve themselves when making decisions (Gronn, 2008). Riley and Langan-Fox (2014, p. 183) utilise the metaphor of the 'Front Line' in reporting their research findings on the changing context of school principals' work. The researchers refer to 'increasing scrutiny stress' and comment that it has been 'continuous and relentless over

the last 10–15 years'. One newspaper report used the confronting heading 'NSW principals bullied, stalked and burnt out' in an article by Bagshaw (2016a) that reported the research findings by Riley (2015) from the Principal Health & Wellbeing Survey. These images capture the enormity of the stress and role complexity that school leaders encounter in contemporary Australia.

For these reasons, the 'contemporary education terrain' traversed by principals is akin to an 'ethical minefield' characterised by multiple 'decision-making dangers' as succinctly observed by Dempster and Berry (2003, p. 457). This terrain is complex and multi-faceted, shaped by higher expectations, new relationships and increased workloads. Murphy (2007, p. 9), describing recent public policy shifts in education in Scotland as the need to 'rebalance the relationship between national level and local expertise', captured trends now firmly underway across Australia. As the NSW Minister for Education, Adrian Piccoli wrote in the context of state education funding, 'spending more money doing the same things will not get us improved results ... This greater investment will lead to big changes in schools. We will be expecting more of our principals, teachers and students' (2013, p. 10). The Minister's comments highlighted the increased pressures and heightened expectations being placed on educational leaders, their leadership teams and school communities.

One of the most thought-provoking studies on skill development for leaders, organisational effectiveness and school management I encountered while undertaking my field work was a study by Lunenburg which posed the simple question 'What Do Principals Do?' (2010, p. 5). For Lunenburg, the world of school leadership is a demanding world that does not allow quality time for quiet reflection or discussion, as principals 'engaged in at least 149 different activities per day, half of which took less than five minutes each'. Principals

shifted gears rapidly as if to suggest they were peddling a bicycle continuously up a steep incline. There was no predictability or downturn in their daily work as 'significant crises are interspersed with trivial events in no predictable sequence' (2010, p. 5).

Frick paints a similar picture of the working lives of secondary principals describing their work as a demanding balancing act of 'information overload compounded with a hectic pace' (2008, p. 70). Another revealing research study by Begley and Johansson (2008) details a study of school administration and management with a focus on decision making. Begley and Johansson describe the increased difficulties faced by school leaders and their teams in terms of encountering situations where 'consensus cannot be achieved rendering obsolete the traditional notions of problem solving' (2008, p. 425).

The comments made by Lunenburg, Frick, Begley and Johansson raise significant issues. If principals are involved in so many complex, difficult and different activities, then how are they able to find adequate time to reflect on their decision making, to work collaboratively with their leadership teams, to adequately plan, and to act strategically? This situation illustrates the nature of the research questions that have continued to shape my thinking and judgement about the nature of effective professional learning for school leaders and aspiring leaders.

The two central research questions

The research questions I examine in my research are:

- What kinds of professional learning and leadership development initiatives are needed by substantive and aspiring school leaders to meet their professional needs in an era of increased localised decision making and heightened accountability?

- What role can ethical decision making play in nurturing leadership capacity at all levels of the school organisation and in the building of dynamic and transparent school cultures?

The supplementary research questions derived from these questions include:

- How do leaders sustain themselves and cope with the increasing demands of their professional working lives?

- What kinds of professional learning experiences are needed by leadership teams?

- At a time of significant generational change, how do leaders shape and support the professional practice of the next generation of leaders?

- What are the skills and 'craft knowledge' that need to be shared with new colleagues when someone first becomes an educational leader?

In response to the two central questions, the nature and evolving role of the principal is explored in detail throughout this doctorate. Specific attention is given to the skills sets and attributes needed by contemporary school leaders. For this reason, details of principals' daily work commitments and roles are evaluated in the context of reform agendas influenced by neoliberalism. Strategies that examine how to best provide for the professional learning and leadership development needs of educational leaders and their leadership teams form an underlying focus of this doctorate.

The portfolio structure

The structure and organisation of this portfolio which is in seven parts is determined by the Western Sydney University requirements for this professional practice doctorate. The portfolio is introduced by this Overarching Narrative which is followed by three pairings of scholarly papers with professional practice initiatives. The scholarly papers provide an understanding of significant educational issues and research which include ethical decision

making, scenario-based learning as appropriate professional learning for school leaders, and educational leadership. The three professional practice initiatives explore the practical educational initiatives I have created and implemented to support leaders in their daily leadership practices in an era of major educational reform.

The portfolio raises key questions which relate to the decision making and problem solving of leaders, the nature of succession planning and the nature of professional learning that best prepares and supports educational leaders for the challenges and dilemmas they face.

The three scholarly papers are:

- Scholarly Paper 1 (SP1) – Ethical Decision Making and its Implications for Schools and Educational Leadership

- Scholarly Paper 2 (SP2) – Scenario-based Professional Learning and its Applicability for Educational Leaders

- Scholarly Paper 3 (SP3) – Educational Leadership.

All three of the scholarly papers include a literature review and respond to issues raised by key education research undertaken in Australia, particularly, but not limited to, Dempster and Berry (2003), Dempster et al. (2004a, 2004b), Cranston, Ehrich, & Kimber (2006) and Cranston (2008), all of whom focus on the learning and decision-making practices of school leaders. The three scholarly papers explore why the landscape of principal decision making can be akin to that of a 'minefield' (Dempster & Berry, 2003, p. 457). The three scholarly papers explore the ways in which professional learning for school leaders and their leadership teams can better address the nature of the complex decision making and problem solving of school leaders. Many principals approach this minefield of complex decision making 'blindfolded' as they can be ill prepared for the challenges and complexities which await them when dealing with ethical dilemmas and problem solving.

The three professional practice initiatives are:

- Professional Practice Initiative 1 (PPI 1) – The Development of the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit

- Professional Practice Initiative 2 (PPI 2) – The Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders in the Macquarie Region (a pseudonym[2])

- Professional Practice Initiative 3 (PPI 3) – Practitioner Study: Expectations, Accountability and Professional Learning for Educational Leaders in an Era of Educational Reform.

All three of these initiatives document areas of professional practice that were developed by me. These resources directly address the needs of school leaders in an era of rapid educational change characterised by the implementation by government of more localised decision-making frameworks for the school sector. The first of the three professional practice initiatives documents the development of The Ethical Decision Making Toolkit and the use of scenarios as professional learning for school leaders.

The second professional practice initiative addresses the creation of the Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders and its development in the Macquarie Region during 2012 and 2013. This course was created in response to positive feedback from workshop participants who took part in the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit presentations. School leaders requested more in-depth opportunities for enriched professional learning that addressed ethical decision making. Examples of conference evaluations included 'thought provoking and stimulating', 'interactive and made you think about your own processes and practices' and 'lots of thinking and sharing of ideas'.[3]

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[2] Pseudonyms are used throughout my writing to identity names of schools, people, regions and locations.
[3] Regional Principals Conference, March 2012, Zoomerang Survey Final Report.

The third professional practice initiative examines the professional learning needs of leaders and the specific initiatives I developed in the context of government reform agendas, greater localised decision making and new accountabilities for schools. These three professional practice initiatives have allowed me to explore some of the rich qualitative data which I have collected from individual interviews, focus group interviews and course evaluations.

A more detailed outline is now provided of each of the three pairings of the scholarly papers and the professional practice initiatives in sequence. This is followed by a consideration of a key critical event at Magpie Park Public School[4] which described the damage caused by narcissistic leadership which failed to support a school community. This form of leadership is described as being 'self-serving and self-absorbed' and the opposite to 'service-orientated' leadership that empowers followers and provides moral guidance (Ehrich, L., Ehrich, J. and Knight, 2012, p. 41). This key critical event at Magpie Park Public School was the catalyst for the creation of an Ethical Decision Making Toolkit, the subsequent development of the Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders, and the vodcasts on ethical practice and organisational integrity in schools.

Overview of scholarly papers and professional practice initiatives

Scholarly Paper 1: Ethical Decision Making and its Implications for Schools and Educational Leadership

The first scholarly paper of my portfolio draws on studies from the field of education, nursing and health care professions to outline the significant contributions which can be made to professional practice by listening and reflecting. The scholarly paper views decision making as a fundamental activity of schools and educational leaders. Conflicts,

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[4] This school name is a pseudonym.

tensions and dilemmas are shown to be unavoidable in a workplace culture, necessitating high order authentic professional learning inclusive of leaders, aspiring leaders and leadership teams (Dempster et al., 2004a, 2004b). Models of governance are changing in educational settings. There are new expectations and competing demands that are evidenced by moves towards more localised models of decision making.

The published resources provided by the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC)[5] that explore workplace culture and organisational integrity are examined. These publications advocate the adoption of open and communicative leadership styles by those in positions of leadership across public sector organisations. The model of best practice described by ICAC reflects the public-sector accountability benchmark advocated by public-sector reform advocate and theorist Donald Menzel (1993, 2003, 2012, 2015). Menzel advocates that public sector organisations need to be more open in their governance models, adopt leadership styles that are more inclusive and practice transparency in their decision-making processes. This critique of organisations of integrity has poignancy for schools and their models of leadership, in advocating the significance of capacity building through appropriate professional development and empowerment. Menzel's advocacy is significant in Australia at a time of major generational change within the teaching profession. It is an era characterised by new accountability and governance models across the education sector Australia wide, as evidenced in NSW by the adoption of the *Local Schools, Local Decisions*[6] educational reforms in 2012.

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[5] The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) as part of its charter has a commitment to guide public sector agencies in the development of ethical understanding and ethical decision making.
[6] Under *Local Schools, Local Decisions* (2012), a major restructure of public education was undertaken in NSW. The central bureaucracy was reduced, 10 education regions were abolished, and schools were given increased local autonomy with their decision making. Management of a single school budget was introduced with direct funding through a new resource allocation model (RAM).

The scholarly paper explores ethical leadership, the role of ethical decision-making

principles for public sector agencies, empowerment of employees and potential leaders,

and culture building. It advocates that the empowerment of individuals within a school is a

key factor in the development of a productive workplace culture, key accountabilities and

high performance. This mirrors the stance adopted by the Independent Commission

Against Corruption in their publications for the public sector on ethics and ethical practice.

Professional Practice Initiative 1: The Development of the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit

This first professional practice initiative provides an understanding of the development of

The Ethical Decision Making Toolkit of workplace scenarios that relate to the professional

practice of school leaders and leadership teams in their management of ethical dilemmas.

The subject matter is framed by the leading departmental policy documents governing

principal accountability in NSW schools – *Leading and Managing the School* (2000) and

the revised *Code of Conduct* (2014). In devising and shaping the scenarios, which relate to

the designated leadership accountabilities within the two policy documents, I also drew on

the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* (2012) and the *Australian Charter for

the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders* (2012).[7] The scenarios address

a range of conflicts and dilemmas including management of disgruntled and unsuccessful

applicants for promotion, school community relationships, sponsorship, communication

and the use of school discipline procedures. These scenarios were devised and

subsequently reconfigured between 2010 and 2015 following evaluations from workshops

with school leaders and leadership teams, conference presentations and the use of the

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[7] These two national frameworks were developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School
Leadership (AITSL) to support professional standards and expectations of best practice.

scenarios as course materials in my regionally-based Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders that is discussed in Professional Practice Initiative 2.

Professional Practice Initiative 1 provides a context for understanding the pedagogical framework I have adopted for delivering the resource material through facilitation that canvassed a range of viewpoints and approaches. I explore why the development of an ethical disposition and reflective values cannot occur unless leaders are first able to consider their own values, judgements and understandings. The complexity of providing authentic professional learning that best meets the needs of experienced, novice and aspiring school leaders is also considered.

Scholarly Paper 2: Scenario-based Professional Learning and its Applicability for Educational Leaders

This scholarly paper explores the evolution and use of case-based and problem-based learning in professional practice models first employed in the medical profession in the United States of America in the late twentieth century. The scholarly paper considers the role which could be played in the Australian school sector by refining these forms of professional learning and employing scenario-based learning in professional learning initiatives for school leaders, aspiring leaders and leadership teams. Scenario-based learning as a concept is used in preference to problem-based learning where the pedagogy involves a highly-structured program of activities leading to a designated conclusion which may involve formal assessment. By employing the concept of scenario-based professional learning, the emphasis of the professional learning falls on the importance of the shared reflection and the crucial role of the interactive dialogue between the participants (Cranston, 2008; Sorin, 2013).

Australian educational research undertaken by Cranston et al. (2006), Cranston (2007, 2008) and Dempster et al. (1998, 2001, 2003, 2004a, 2004b) have shown how principals' professional practice is inextricably linked to problem solving and untangling difficult dilemmas. As schools move towards more deregulated models of operation and gain more local autonomy, there is potential for greater conflict with key educational stakeholders including parents, teaching staff, the media and government. This conflict was illustrated by public debates about the unwillingness of the federal coalition government in 2014 to fully implement the *Review of Funding for Schooling Report* (2011)[8] which had been commissioned by the earlier federal Labor government of Julia Gillard. These contested debates became part of the political landscape during the 2016 Australian federal election.

It remains my contention that, in this context of heightened local decision making, professional learning and development programs need to focus more directly on the nature of principals' decision-making practices and on the skills set of those aspiring leaders who seek future leadership roles in schools. This is why an understanding of ethical decision-making frameworks that recognise transparency and shared decision making could be so valuable to leaders and their leadership teams. As Boon explains: 'Ethics understanding underpins the teaching of values, professional standards, and reflective practice … [and is] particularly important in education with its diverse stakeholders' (2011, p. 89).

The last section of the scholarly paper explores the role of collaboration and reflection, and why they are integral to decision making and professional learning. Reference is made to the research of McArdle and Coutts (2010) who, expanding on the earlier work of Schon

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[8] A commissioned review of the national funding arrangements for Australian schools undertaken on behalf of the Australian Labor Government in 2010. The chair of the committee undertaking the review was David Gonski.

(1983), advocate going beyond 'safe' boundaries of comfortable collaboration to reflective practice which shapes change.

Professional Practice Initiative 2: The Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders and its Development in Macquarie Region

Professional Practice Initiative 2 outlines the professional learning course for school leaders on ethical decision making which I developed and delivered in the Macquarie Region between 2012 and 2013. The course was constructed in response to evaluations from presentations and workshops that requested more sustained professional learning that addressed in greater detail the ethical dilemmas that were the focus of professional learning modules from the Toolkit. I was also concerned that decision making, conflict-resolution strategies and understandings of ethical decision making frameworks were not a prominent part of any registered professional learning course that was at the time being provided to principals and aspiring leaders in the Macquarie Region. Hence the course was developed to fill this gap in approved professional learning programs.

The Ethical Decision Making Course was created in six modules, which were delivered over a ten-month time span. This allowed course participants to trial some of the modules in their own schools and report to the group undertaking the course about their personal findings and reflection. The most interesting development for me as a facilitator of the professional learning came with the requests from three schools to have their entire school leadership teams involved in the professional learning as course participants. I had made an assumption that the course and the professional learning scenarios would be of value to existing substantive principals, newly-appointed principals and those aspiring to become principals. I had not considered the way in which three experienced principals had judged that the course would have a direct value to the entire school leadership team. The implications of this finding and the challenges of providing authentic professional learning

for school leadership teams are explored in more detail throughout the different sections of this portfolio.

Scholarly Paper 3: Educational Leadership

This scholarly paper provides a context for understanding how the roles and expectations of educational leaders are changing. Leadership is not an entity that exists in a value-free environment, as educational leaders have a key role to play in shaping any organisation's culture and articulating the values held by the schools which they lead. This scholarly paper explores the way in which leadership is framed and the implications of this framing for the expectations that are held of leaders. The relationships between leaders and followers are explored, and the link between effective organisations and succession planning and management is considered in the context of generational change. Ethical decision making is viewed as a practice that supports leadership succession planning and management by building capacity and trust in the school organisation.

The new accountabilities made apparent by the policy framing undertaken by the Rudd and Gillard Australian Commonwealth governments, as part of their 'Education Revolution', were considered to illustrate how Australia was not immune from the impact of neoliberal reform and market agendas introduced elsewhere in the western world. Integral to this increased accountability has been the contested debates within Australia relating to teacher quality and educational standards. Connell has captured sharply the scope and intensity of these contested debates with the observation that 'ideas about what makes a good teacher are important in thinking about educational reform' (2009, p. 213).

The later sections of this scholarly paper address the research published by Wright (2001, 2003) in exploring public sector reform in the United Kingdom in the early twenty-first century. It was Wright who first coined the term 'bastard leadership' to show how the

world of business, and in particular managerialism as a discourse, is shaping public sector reform in education (2001, p. 278).

This scholarly paper illustrates how the world of education in 2016 is a 'theatre' of human activity that is not immune from the heated debates which govern 'value for money' in the public domain. The last section of the scholarly paper explores Wright's conviction that school leadership is 'at the crossroads'. This section argues against Wright's conclusion and advances the proposition that, while educational leadership is being remodeled through shifts in government public policy, educational leadership continues to display a resilience marked by its ability to evolve and transform itself to meet new challenges and the heightened expectations held by stakeholders.

Professional Practice Initiative 3: Practitioner Study - Expectations, Accountability and Professional Learning for Educational Leaders in an Era of Educational Reform

Professional Practice Initiative 3 explores through practitioner study the professional practice needs and accountabilities of substantive and future school leaders in an era of major educational reform. One of the key questions posed by research on the role of the principal was 'What skills are required of principals in order for them to function effectively?' (Lunenburg, 2010, p. 5). This has been a foundational question for me, at a time of major transition in the public education sector in NSW, as I have shaped professional learning for school leaders through the workshops I have facilitated and the professional learning network that I developed for aspiring leaders. The foundational question asked by Lunenburg has led to other questions for me.

- How do leaders sustain themselves, stay motivated and cope with the 'rapid fire' demands of their professional working life?

- At a time of significant generational change, how do leaders shape and support the professional practice of the next generation of leaders?

- What are the skills and 'craft knowledge' that need to be shared and transferred into the practice of new colleagues when they first become an educational leader?

With moves towards greater local decision making and accountability in the school sector across Australia has come the accompanying need for increased transparency and understandings of the professional practices of schools by stakeholders. Influential groups including parents, local communities, state and federal governments, and businesses have all highlighted the need to have more information and data about key areas of school policy implementation and performance made more transparent and reportable. The requirements for public disclosure that are linked to Commonwealth Government funding for school sectors and state jurisdictions, introduced new additional dimensions to school transparency and reporting, and have heightened the principal's responsibilities as leader for high-order planning, communication, monitoring and evaluation.

Qualitative data relating to leadership movements in the Rosslands Network of Schools, which I led as a Director Public Schools NSW, are explored in the period from 2013 to 2015. It was during this time that the initial implementation phase of *Local Schools, Local Decisions* took place for all public-sector schools in NSW. A consideration of this data has raised significant system-level questions relating to the succession planning and the professional learning needs of the next generation of school leaders. The later sections of this professional practice initiative address issues relating to 'growing' the next generation of school leaders and explore the nature of professional learning opportunities that enhance skill development in problem solving and decision making. The final section of the professional practice initiative raises questions about the changing nature of schools, the

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professional relationships between leaders and their educational communities, and the new accountabilities that will continue to shape leadership practice.

The events at Magpie Park Public School, which I describe in the next section of my Overarching Narrative, provided me with an opportunity for significant reflection on the accountabilities and role of a school principal. This reflection specifically addresses the skills needed to be a school leader, the nature of the principal's working relationship with the school leadership team, the management of leadership succession, and the nature of the professional learning needed to support school leadership teams in building ethical organisational environments for school communities and peers. These matters remain at the heart of contemporary school leadership in the public sector following the advent of the NSW Government's educational reform agenda, *Local Schools, Local Decisions*.

The key critical event

Magpie Park Public School is a central part of my narrative and was in many ways the 'minefield' to which Dempster and Berry (2003) alluded in their research. Magpie Park Public School in 2016 was over sixty years old and many sections of its original student enrolment drawing area had been taken over by large-scale commercial developments and a modern business park. The school had a current enrolment of over 250 students, many of whom were from low socio-economic backgrounds and were highly transient, moving from one locality to another. The current teaching staff were very committed and predominately young. Many of the teachers were temporary and a significant number had been teaching for fewer than six years. Generational change was a stark and visible reality.

I first assumed line management responsibility for Magpie Park Public School during a period of tumultuous change that followed the retirement of a long-serving principal. A significant implosion had occurred at the school following his retirement, as a result of

perceived poor leadership and governance. Many of the school teaching professionals and community members felt that the structures in place were not strong enough to support the school through a period of significant transition. I viewed this implosion as a key critical event, as it exposed the fragility of a professional learning environment where the leadership team and its leader had not provided sustainable transparent organisational structures and practices to support and develop the professionals working in the school. The leadership had an inward focus that had validated the upholding of a moribund school culture and values. This school culture had not illustrated shared responsibility, empowered future leaders, or built the professional capacity of the teaching team. The school culture had been built in such a way that it impeded professional understanding and held teachers in a time warp looking backwards and not forward. Transparent processes, empowerment and accountability were not in evidence.

The situation at Magpie Park Public School reflected the description of an ethically-stressed workplace that Menzel (2003) vividly depicts in a conference research paper on ethics and integrity in governance. Menzel found strong statistical correlation between 'impaired organisational performance' and managers with 'high levels of ethics induced stress'. Menzel summarised his findings in the following way: 'as the level of ethics induced stress increases, job satisfaction decreases, organisational conflict increases, and the level of employee turnover is likely to be greater' (2003, p. 16). Preston has also noted that two key factors in the cultivation of an 'ethical ethos' in any workplace were the 'nature of relationships and the distribution of power' (2014, p. 214).

Magpie Park Public School had a significant imbalance in the distribution and use of power by its leader who failed to build empowered and productive working relationships with the school's professional teaching team. This depiction of an organisational landscape

lacking in governance, transparency and accountability illustrated the inter-related elements that were in evidence at Magpie Park Public School when it imploded.

The main outcome of this dramatic implosion within the workplace for the full-time, part-time and temporary professionals who constituted the teaching staff at Magpie Park Public School was the rebuilding of the professional culture in the school, so that it better addressed the needs of all staff through a shared transparent, collegiate management model. Policies and procedures were rewritten to be more accountable to all sections of the school community inclusive of all teaching staff and parents. A subsequent school review, led by a Chief Education Officer, made significant recommendations that were put into effect by the new substantive school principal following appointment. These recommendations addressed the school's deficient governance systems and practices relating to key areas of accountability including internal communication, programming, whole-school organisation and the dissemination of information to the whole school community. As a result, the daily professional practices of the school community became better understood by its members inclusive of executive staff, classroom teachers and parents. There was a marked shift from a culture of compliance to a culture of empowerment with staff meetings now being minuted, professional development budgets published and all staff being collegially involved in decisions about appropriate professional learning to best support current needs.

The tumultuous events at Magpie Park Public School illustrated for me the negative impact that leadership change could have on a school lacking appropriate governance structures. Without appropriate accountabilities, role statements and procedural systems in place, Magpie Park Public School was inadequately prepared for significant organisational change. One of the most telling factors was the lack of empowerment among the teaching

professionals and the leadership team. As Preston has succinctly observed, a 'democratic work-culture' is more likely to be an ethical culture (2014, p. 214). The shift in cultural practice at Magpie Park Public School continues to evolve under new leadership.

These events at Magpie Park Public School and the reflection that followed were a significant catalyst for me being one of a group of thirteen postgraduate students who undertook initial study in July 2010 for a newly-created doctoral program at Western Sydney University focusing on professional practice.

In the next section of my Overarching Narrative, I comment in more detail on the research process undertaken as part of the doctoral study and the reasons why I became involved in the program.

The research process

A brief overview of the research process is now provided. I have also documented significant aspects of the approval process and protocols that were adopted while undertaking research.

Motivation for undertaking research

In the period between 1997 and 2016, I worked continuously, with one exception, in the Greater Western Sydney[9] geographic area for the NSW Department of Education as a Principal, District Superintendent and Education Director. This is an area rich in educational opportunities and innovation, hallmarked by quality classroom practice and the advent of many early career teachers beginning their professional journeys in public schools as classroom teachers. Greater Western Sydney is a significant geographical

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[9] In the period 2004–2012 over 17 per cent of NSW public school students were taught in schools in the Macquarie Region in which I worked. The region was almost entirely within the boundaries of Greater Western Sydney and covered nearly half of its entire area.

region where many educators have their initial leadership experiences and their first experiences of sitting in the principal's chair as a substantive or relieving school leader. The Greater Western Sydney geographic area has the highest level of cultural diversity in NSW with 38 per cent of the population speaking a language other than English at home.[10] The area is characterised by a range of established middle class communities, urban centres of high transience supporting families from low socio-economic backgrounds, and large cohorts of school students who may not have English as their first language.

Quality professional practice and learning, that meet the diverse needs of school leaders in this context, had been a strong personal commitment in my roles as a principal and as a senior departmental officer. This commitment was a key motivator for me to become involved in the doctoral program for this degree that focused on professional practice. As I have indicated earlier, the events at Magpie Park Public School have had a profound effect on my thinking about school leadership and the nature of appropriate professional learning for school leaders and leadership teams.

Western Sydney University Ethics Approval

Ethics approval to conduct research in schools was sought and given by the Western Sydney University in 2011 in the early stages of my participation in the doctoral program.[11] For this reason I was able to use workshops, conference presentations, modules from the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit and The Ethical Decision Making Course that I created as a means of gathering qualitative data from my field work to support my research.

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[10] 'Western Sydney Profile': .id the population experts, retrieved from blog.id.com.au (16 May, 2016)
[11] Human Ethics Committee Approval Number: H9208.

Department of Education (NSW) Research Application Approval

For my research activities, I sought and obtained approval through the State Education Research Application Process (SERAP) from the NSW Department of Education to carry out research involving departmental personnel.[12] Data collection only involved departmental employees and did not involve the collection of any data which related to students.

Professional learning journal

A personal e-learning journal of my reflections and experiences was kept throughout the doctoral program. Reference is made to this journal and some of my reflections on workshop presentations during the course of my writing.

Confidentiality and research protocols

Safeguards were put in place to support all participants in the professional learning presentations I developed and facilitated. I have always been concerned to support any colleague who may have felt uncomfortable or embarrassed in answering a question that was posed or responding to a scenario that was being explored in a workshop. All professional learning activities I devised were prefaced by advice around the 'pass' protocol that allows participants to opt out of responding or contributing to a discussion if they do not feel comfortable.

Throughout my writing, pseudonyms and abbreviations have been used for individual course participants, schools, names of networks and geographical organisational groupings to avoid the identity of individuals or schools being recognised. This has been illustrated by the use of pseudonyms including Magpie Park Public School, the Macquarie Region,

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[12] SERAP approval number: 2011186.

Rosslands Network and names of those I interviewed inclusive of Anna, Malcolm, Aida, Rondah and Maisy.

All workshop participants were given the option of withdrawing from any workshop presentation which I facilitated if they did not feel comfortable. No pressure was placed on participants in any of my workshops or presentations to complete questionnaires or be part of interviews if this was contrary to their wishes. All interviews were carried out in person. When presenting modules from the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit, workshop participants were provided with a learning log that allowed them to reflect on their learning experiences. Three open questions were used to guide personal reflection and to support shared collaborative dialogue throughout the workshop:

- Did you find the session to be of value?

- How has the professional learning about ethical decision making impacted on your thinking about your professional practice as a school leader/aspiring leader?

- Are there any other comments you would like to make? [13]

Guidance relating to qualitative data

In considering how to best use the extensive data I had collected, I was guided by an insightful comment by Coleman who noted:

… research in educational leadership often relies over much on interviews with leaders, without taking into account the voices of other stakeholders or using other research approaches to complement and validate interview data (2012, p. 263).

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[13] A more detailed discussion of learning logs and their use is found in the section on Field Work in Professional Practice Initiative 1 – The Ethical Decision Making Toolkit.

In the light of these observations, I have used in my writing for this doctorate a range of data from individual interviews, focus group interviews and workshop evaluations that were representative of many voices and not only the voice of the substantive school leader.

The other voices included members of the school executive team, aspiring school leaders, classroom teachers, temporary teachers and educational consultants. For this reason, the interviews of school leaders and workshop evaluations which I have used as a data source represent a range of experience covering principals who have been leaders of more than one school, newly-appointed principals in the role for the first time and acting or relieving leaders who were not substantively appointed. The interviews were inclusive of leaders and aspiring leaders from primary, secondary and special education backgrounds. When using comments from transcripts, references were made where appropriate as to the status and experience of the school leader or staff member who had provided the comment. The list of interviews also outlines the professional relationships within individual schools of the leaders and aspiring leaders who were interviewed.[14]

Data collection protocols

Participants in the Ethical Decision Making Course and workshops I conducted were all informed that I would be using the course and workshops as a means of collecting data for research being undertaken as part of my doctorate in the professional practice of school leaders. All course participants were given the option of being part of individual and focus group interviews or opting out if they wished, as well as contributing to pre- and post-questionnaires relating to the course content. Twenty pre- and post- questionnaires were completed for The Ethical Decision Making Course.[15] The responses to the questionnaires

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[14] A full list of individual and group interviews is documented in Appendix 7.
[15] The pre- and post- questionnaire appears as Appendix 12

provided me with a valuable source of information relating to the professional background and leadership experiences of the course participants. This information assisted me in the design and development of the learning activities for the group during the course. Only five of the course participants were substantive school leaders, with another course participant in a long-term relieving role as a school principal.

All of the participants who took part in individual or focus group interviews volunteered to be interviewed. Individual face-to-face interviews were held with seven participants from The Ethical Decision Making Course and a school principal who was undertaking tertiary study involving ethical practice. Focus group face-to-face interviews were conducted with executive members from three participating schools who took part in The Ethical Decision Making Course and a fourth focus group interview was held with three classroom teachers who were part of a Future Leaders Group. For the focus group interviews between two and six people were interviewed in each interview session.

Conducting interviews

The individual and focus group interviews were semi-structured and a series of general questions was used as a framework to guide the interviews. Johnson and Christensen prefer the use of 'interview guide approach' to 'semi-structured' to describe this process and characterise it as 'specific topics and/or open-ended questions are asked in any order' (2004, p. 183). Coleman has noted that in practice there was 'no hard and fast division' between types of interviews, but rather a 'continuum from highly structured to highly unstructured' (2012, p. 253). By utilising a semi-structured interview approach, I was able to have individuals and groups reflect on their professional practice in the context of their own school environment. The quality of the reflection on personal practice was a key objective. The questions were of a general nature and different questions were used across

each interview to reflect the issues raised by those who participated.[16] All participants of the focus group interviews were known to each other and no participant required support from an interpreter.

The value of the semi-structured approach was that it allowed me a degree of flexibility in being able to reorder the set of questions I had prepared as the need arose and not to be held to a definitive sequence of questions. Freebody, in distinguishing between semi-structured interviews, structured interviews and open-ended interviews, refers to the semi-structured approach as the 'best of both worlds' as it allowed for the flexibility to vary and revisit while working in a 'core of issues to be covered' (2003, p. 133). The other advantage of this approach was that it allowed me to clarify the participants' comments if the meaning or line of thought was unclear. This would have been more difficult had I employed other methodology such as a questionnaire to obtain data.

Interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and a professional transcription service was used to provide written transcripts. Interviews lasted up to 30 minutes and were all conducted in person. An indication is made throughout my writing when a transcript was used to provide data. All transcripts have been numbered. Additional qualitative data was obtained from workshop evaluations and learning logs submitted from professional learning workshops I conducted in individual schools and with groups of schools. When this data from evaluations was used, the pseudonym of the participant has been cited.[17]

As a research assistant at an earlier point in my career, I had previous experience in conducting focus group interviews with small groups of participants. However, I had conducted the earlier focus group interviews using questions provided by the senior

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[16] The list of possible interview questions appears as Appendix 8.
[17] Sources of qualitative data are documented in Appendix 7.

researcher, and had as a result never developed my own interview or focus group questions. Looking back on the responses to questions I had created provided me with an understanding about the complexity of gathering qualitative data, the importance of patience and active listening when conducting interviews, and the multitude of ways in which questions can be framed and interpreted.

To make the interviews as comfortable as possible for all participants, interviews were conducted face to face in the home school in a private space free from interruptions. There was one exception to this pattern of interviewing. An interview with one participant was conducted at the end of a conference in a quiet area of the conference venue free from disturbance.

The other aspect of the process which should be noted is the power relationship I indirectly share with many of the participants from whom I sought written and verbal responses. As a Director and senior officer, I held a senior position in the NSW Department of Education and I was the line manager for a number of principals who took part in the professional learning sessions I convened. While not wishing to overstate my role and power in the relationship as an institutional authority figure, it still needs to be noted as a variant factor, although it has never been raised by any course participant in any workshop or process involving the collection of data. This issue is addressed later in separate sections of this Overarching Narrative where I comment on my intersecting roles as a senior departmental officer, program designer, facilitator, learner and researcher. Some brief comments on Foucault and his observations on power are also made.

Invitation to create specialised workshops

In addition to the workshops for these groups of schools and their leadership teams, I was also invited by the regional Principal Education Officer to create and provide specialised

workshops in the area of student wellbeing for key groups supporting schools who included senior school counsellors and consultants working in the area of student services. The invitation to present to both groups was driven by the premise that these two groups needed to be more involved with professional learning in ethical decision making that directly addressed their specialised areas of practice involving student wellbeing and specifically the duty of care.

Pedagogical practices underpinning my work

In developing sustainable professional learning for school leaders and leadership teams at workshops or in interactive conference presentations during the course of this professional practice doctorate, I have drawn on the concept of 'creative learning conversations' from the research on creativity by Chappell and Craft (2011, pp. 363–364). These two researchers have used the concept of 'creative learning conversations' to describe how shared investigation has the potential to create 'open' learning spaces promoting equality and orientation 'toward action'. For these researchers, one of the key outcomes of creative learning conversations was the movement away from the 'usual hierarchical, top down power conversations'. Integral to this pedagogical approach are personal reflection, mutual respect, shared learning discourses, critical enquiry and shared reflective practice. The pedagogy is described by the two researchers as an 'ongoing process without forced closure' for its participants. Craft has also described creative learning conversations as 'methodological devices for transformational change' (2013, p. 183).

This 'transformational' movement away from a traditional hierarchical model of communication and decision making was integral to the development of an ethical decision-making culture based on shared practice and understanding. This cycle of continuous reflection and relearning was also the focus of research by McArdle and Coutts

(2010) drawing on Schon's (1983) work on the reflective practitioner. McArdle and Coutts have illustrated how engagement with fellow practitioners through reflective conversation relating to practice, facilitated a process enabling 'shared sense-making'. This process had the ability to further 'sustain the professional growth for teachers' (2010, p.212). The cycle of continuous reflection and relearning was integral to my professional practice and has shaped two of the professional practice initiatives which contributed to the portfolio – The Ethical Decision Making Toolkit and The Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders.

This portfolio illustrates the way in which I have embraced the concept of 'continuous learning conversations' and utilised scenarios from professional practice dilemmas to provide professional learning in ethical decision making and problem solving for leaders, aspiring leaders and leadership teams. This exploration of dilemmas 'takes us into the heart of contemporary schooling' (Murphy, 2007, p. 9).

My pedagogy was shaped by the need to find ways to have school leaders reflect on their ethical decision making and the values that shaped the decision making. As Preston has noted, ethics is 'best dealt with through a pedagogy of critical enquiry' (2014, p. 211). Continuous learning conversations were a valuable pedagogy to use to dissect this 'heart of contemporary schooling' (Murphy, 2007, p. 9) and facilitate shared reflection, critical enquiry and increased understanding of professional practice among educational leaders.[18]

The exercise of the power relationship was a key consideration in the multiple roles I adopted as a senior departmental officer, the program designer, the facilitator of workshop

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[18] A full list of the professional learning which I facilitated appears as Appendix 1.

materials I created, a member of a learning cohort sharing insights and a researcher gathering data. My rationale was always driven by the need to create pedagogical frameworks which allowed participants to fully explore complex situations, tease out nuances and see multiple levels of complexity. This was why personal and group reflection remained integral aspects of the workshop presentations I facilitated.

Transformative adult learning has a democratic participatory dimension (Mezirow, 1991, p.199). For educators to succeed in creating transformative adult learning experiences there is a need to 'actively encourage reflective discourse through which learners can examine the justification for their meaning schemes and perspectives' (Mezirow, 1991, p.201). In acknowledging my multiple roles to the other participants and encouraging continuous reflective practice among all the participants, I set out to create a learning climate built on trust and respect. Shared collaborative practice, enquiry and the exchange of alternative points of view were foundational to the learning.

Tsahuridu (2006) has examined the operation of an ethic of power and distinguished between the operation of 'power over' by a leader and the process of 'power to' an individual or group. The operation of 'power over' is controlling and 'disrespects people' while 'power to' is ethical and enables 'autonomy and responsibility of persons' (Tsahuridu, 2006, p. 385). This distinction in the operation of an ethic of power was integral to my professional practice, course design and the juggling of multiple roles. In light of an earlier observation that ethics is 'best dealt with through a pedagogy of critical enquiry' (Preston, 2014, p. 211), one of the key roles I adopted was that of a fellow learner who was also part of the learning journey. The pedagogical approach I adopted when I utilised scenarios was to draw out and explore all of the aspects of an ethical dilemma, rather than to simply pass judgement and suggest there was one right answer. An essential

dimension of the ethical decision making workshops was in raising awareness of the multiple pathways and options that were open to the decision maker in resolving complex situations.

The decision to design the Ethical Decision Making Course so that it took place across a twelve-month period was also significant as it allowed participants to share their learning in their own schools with colleagues, to receive feedback from colleagues and to reflect on those experiences over an extensive period of time. One of the key challenges for facilitators of professional learning is to ensure 'emotionally safe spaces for learning and growing together' (Beatty, 2007, p. 328). Professional learning experiences which I designed and facilitated were built on this foundation of sharing, collaboration and trust. A key aspect of the process involved all participants being non-judgemental, engaging in reflection, being active listeners and asking questions of other participants. In an era of significant generational change educational leadership practices need to embrace shared learning and inclusive social interactions. Connectivity is a key as the emphasis is placed on how 'the agent is connected with others in their own and other's learning (Gunter, 2006, p.263). The social experiences of collaborating, actively listening to others, reflecting and sharing were integral aspects of the professional learning I developed and facilitated.

The relational approach to leadership (Hosking, 2011) provides further insight into the value of this interconnected social dimension to leadership and the sharing of knowledge. Dialogical practices 'open up to relationality and to possibilities, and open up space for self and others to co-emerge' (Hosking, 2011, p. 461). A situation described in an interview by Alma, a young primary school leader, who commented *'...you need to see the perspectives from more than one person, not just from yourself. You need to be open-*

minded and to listen to the different perceptions of other people before you make a decision' (Transcript, WS750072, p. 4). The relational approach to leadership repositions understandings of knowledge and power. Dialogical practices illustrate an ethic of power in operation that empowers the participant who is part of the sharing, as knowledge is now viewed as 'social-relational, constructed in action, situated and moving, and intimately interconnected with power' (Hosking, 2011, p.459). This is why Craft has described creative learning conversations as 'methodological devices for transformational change' (2013, p. 183). Knowledge growth is organic. Through continuous sharing and reflecting, participants engaged in learning conversations will build their understandings and skills. Power is derived from the learning that is integral to the sharing and participation.

In this context I wish to make a few brief comments on quality leadership, power relationships and Foucault.

Foucault and power

The work of Foucault on ethics, (cited in *Ethics: subjectivity and truth*, edited by Rabinow, P., 1997), has provided fertile ground for my personal reflection on ethics, the shaping of school cultures and the exercise of power and leadership within a public education system.

Foucault's writing is valuable for the way it examines the interplay between 'power relations' and the 'practice of the self' by exploring questions relating to 'knowledge', 'truth' and 'communication'. Foucault observed that in exploring the notion of truth, 'there is ultimately a problem of communication, of the transparency of the words of a discourse' (1997, pp. 297–298). As Foucault also noted in relation to the power of an individual who has the capacity to 'formulate truths', an individual has the 'power of being able to speak the truth and to express it in the way he wants'.

The focus on decision making in this portfolio of professional practice is an exploration of the interplays between those who exercise power and knowledge, and the way in which they relate and link to others. In exploring these interplays, I explore the ethical frameworks that inform the relationships, the decision-making processes and the values which are demonstrated. For Foucault, the role of reflection is integral to the care of self and the use of power (1997, p. 284). Foucault uses the concept of sexuality to illustrate how 'liberation' from a power relationship does not necessarily produce a utopian state of bliss, but instead ushers in 'new power relationships' which need, in turn, to be 'controlled by practices of freedom'.

Foucault's depiction of 'power' and the formation of 'new power relationships' implies the regenerative nature of the process and the energy that is continuously released by these continual interplays. This energy has a positive and creative dimension. Foucault offered the concept of 'governmentality' to illustrate the practices that 'constitute, define, organise, and instrumentalise the strategies that individuals in their freedom can employ when linking with others' (1997, p. 300). The concept of 'governmentality' implies the breadth, and not the limitations, of the strategies that are available to those who are involved in these interplays as the power relationships continue to be contested and reshaped. These strategies are also inclusive of the formal and the informal, the documented and the undocumented, and are shaped by success as well as failure.

As Foucault declared, power relations as a concept is not 'something that is bad in itself, that we have to break free of' (1997, p. 298). The key to understanding is located in the ability to 'acquire the rules of law, the management techniques, and also the morality. The ethos, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible' (1997, p. 298). Foucault's comments have strong resonance for

designers of professional learning and leaders working with school teams. Both groups need to demonstrate an awareness of power relationships and be cognisant of the ways in which they exercise authority when relating to others in their personal and professional interactions.

In this context, I offer a few brief comments about my own professional learning journey as a doctoral student and reflect on my professional practices as a facilitator of professional learning for school leaders.

Critical reflection on the impact and contributions of my field work

Meeting the complex and challenging needs of school leaders and their leadership teams was a strong catalyst that contributed to my decision to undertake doctoral study. My professional practice initiatives highlight the importance of appropriate professional learning in ethical decision making which builds capacity through reflection and sharing. These practices were inclusive of all participants who wished to attend and led to improved understandings of how policy and procedures operated in a school environment. My research has addressed the needs of existing school leaders, aspiring leaders and their leadership teams. My field work had specifically focused on issues dealing with the decision-making strategies and practices that are utilised by principals and school leaders in an age of significant generational change for the teaching workforce in New South Wales as the baby boomer generation retires in great numbers. Implicit in this focus were issues that related to principal wellbeing, the induction of new colleagues, coping mechanisms and the need for shared collegial activities.

My research and practice had explored the value of having ethical decision-making frameworks in place to guide professional practice and ongoing professional learning for school principals and leadership teams. One of my key commitments, undertaken as part of

this doctoral program, was to bring principals, aspiring leaders and leadership groups together to discuss, share and reflect on the practice of being a school leader. Menzel (1993 2003, 2012) and others, including Dempster and Berry (2003), Shacklock and Lewis (2007) and Buskey and Pitts (2013), have all shown through their research that ethical skills and ethical perspectives need to be developed, nurtured and cannot be taken for granted. The challenge for school leaders is the promotion of workplace environments that rest on the values of 'autonomy and empowerment rather than compliance or control' (Preston, 2014, p. 214). As a director working with a diverse network of schools, this had been a guiding principle of my own practice. This challenge is especially significant at a time of major generational change when many principals are accepting leadership roles in schools for the first time.

Kegan and Lahey pose a rhetorical question about the nature of leadership and what it means to those who will lead in the future (2009, p. 11). In posing the question, Kegan and Lahey provide a response which resonates with me as it parallels my own journey in conceptualising and developing professional learning about ethical decision making for school leaders. The authors ask the simple question 'What will distinguish your leadership from others in the years ahead?' and provide the response that they believe 'it will be your ability to develop yourself, your people and your teams' (2009, p. 11).

As a developer and facilitator of professional learning, I have undoubtedly grown in my own professional understanding and learning from the rich personal experience of shaping and delivering the ethical decision-making scenarios and the accredited course in six modules I subsequently developed. Qualitative data encompassing verbal comments made by participants during The Ethical Decision Making Course and comments made in interviews have all confirmed that professional learning had strong resonance for

participants. But the factor that has shaped my thinking and critical reflection the most is the impact on the teams who have taken part in the professional learning.

The evaluations which referred to 'team learning' and sharing 'reflection as a team' made by workshop participants have opened a doorway into an area of professional learning I had previously passed over and not fully considered. My intention for any future professional learning on ethical decision making which I create will be to include modules designed for whole school leadership teams in addition to modules for individual leaders or aspiring leaders. Effective teams require 'training and development and ongoing reflection' (Cranston & Ehrich, 2009b, p. 357). The challenge posed by Cranston and Ehrich in their study on enhancing leadership through senior management teams was how to make senior teams accountable in terms of their ability to 'evaluate their performance' as they learned together (2009b, p.357). For Mockler, a way forward lies in the nature of 'transformational leadership' and the ability of leaders and teachers to 'take charge of the process of evaluation and development themselves' (2015, p. 126). This remains a key challenge that has continued to resonate for me as I consider appropriate professional learning for the next generation of school leaders.

A foundational aspect of this professional learning for workshop participants was the need for reflection on personal understandings of the language of ethical decision making and the language of the workplace cultures which decision-making practices helped shape. The role of communication as practiced by leaders, and leaders' understanding of the power of communication within their organisations, were fundamental aspects of a powerful dialogue that needed to occur in schools in response to workplace culture and values. In designing the modules for professional learning presentations, more focus could have been given to the language of the workplace and how ethical decision making brought with it a

rich vocabulary that denoted the nature of ethical practice in the workplace. This is an area that I will address in more detail when designing and developing future professional learning and scenarios for use in schools.

Leadership as a relationship

Some years after the key critical event took place at Magpie Park Public School, I have continued to critically reflect on the impact of poor leadership practice and the outcomes that resulted for staff, parents and students. My reflection was not just about the mechanics of leadership succession and generational change, it concerned more intangible issues such as school culture and daily climate, transparency, leadership styles and decision making processes. My reflection was also about the nature of the dynamic between those who lead and those who follow, and how other potential leaders can be given the confidence and the ability to step forward at a key moment in time and assume the leader's role.

Leadership is a 'relationship' according to Zander and Zander (2000, p. 162). At its core, leadership is a social process involving human interactions, shared understandings and communication. In an Australian study on ethical leadership titled *Leading with Integrity*, Shacklock and Lewis (2007) pose the foundational question of an ethical system's value if there is no commitment to developing the people who are at the heart of the practices and beliefs of the organisation. This reality has been at the heart of my professional practice as the following scholarly papers and professional practice initiatives will illustrate.

Scholarly Paper 1: Ethical Decision Making and its Implications for Schools and Educational Leadership

Introduction

The professional practices of school leaders and their leadership teams are the focus of the narrative that has shaped this doctorate in professional practice. This scholarly paper reviews the research in education and related human service professions including nursing and social work, that has explored ethics, ethical decision making, and the nature of decision-making processes. The research, from studies undertaken within and outside Australia, provides insights into the leadership and management of schools at a time of significant change in Australia for all schools, but particularly for those in the public sector. My argument is that principals and school leaders need to build more effective leadership density within their professional workplaces to empower and upskill leadership teams and aspiring leaders. This is crucial given the momentous educational and structural change that is occurring in contemporary Australia and around the world. To understand the nature of the interplay between leadership practice, workplace climates, ethics and decision making, I draw on research in ethics, workplace governance and decision making within schools. For this reason, the complexity and demanding nature of the principal's role is examined in detail in this scholarly paper. To provide an accurate backdrop for these complex interplays, it is important to firstly explore the recent Australian context to which I now turn.

The challenges impacting on many educational leaders' roles are starkly illustrated by Dempster and Berry in seminal Australian research on principals' ethical decision making, where they liken the 'contemporary educational terrain' traversed by principals to a 'minefield' (2003, p. 457). The authors suggest that many principals approach this minefield 'blindfolded' as they (the principals) are ill prepared for the challenges and

complexities that await them. This research by Dempster and Berry (2003) also demonstrates the crucial role professional learning plays in better preparing leaders and aspiring leaders to meet the challenges posed by the demanding role of an educational leader. The nature and form of appropriate professional learning for contemporary Australian school leaders is a significant strand within my overall narrative and this scholarly paper. The nature and delivery of appropriate professional learning for school leaders raises pivotal systemic questions about leadership preparation, succession planning, role understanding and skills acquisition which are explored throughout my three scholarly papers. Integral to skills acquisition are understandings of critical enquiry and ethical thinking.

Critical enquiry and ethical thinking

The ancient civilisations of Greece and Rome viewed critical enquiry as central to an understanding of the role of the individual, the physical world and the nature of the relationship between the individual and the state. Discourses addressing the nature of self, goodness, truth, justice and morality were all part of the continuing dialogue about what it was to be human, how individuals made sense of the world around them and their relationships with others. Plato's *Republic* written in 380BC remains an important part of the critical enquiry that continues to shape our modern world today.

The *Republic* opens with an exchange between Socrates and Cephalus (Book 1, Section 328b–331d). The opening words of the dialogue allude to the age and status of the two men, and the reality that they have not met for some time. The words of the opening dialogue capture the importance of sharing conversation, exchanging ideas and discussing points of interest in the company of others, especially the younger generation. There is a clear sense of the need for the younger generation to observe and be part of the dialogue as

it unfolds. This is because the dialogue represented the wisdom and thoughts of the older generation. The dialogue was inclusive and embraced a wide range of viewpoints. The *Republic* has remained a significant marker of the evolution of critical enquiry, of the need to share knowledge and the need to engage in reflection to develop a fuller understanding of the human condition. The discourse addresses not only the nature of the dialogue that unfolds, but also the role of the audience as active participants who listen and reflect.

These principles of sharing knowledge, engaging in reflective practice and listening to others as part of a journey in learning, are integral to ethical practice and the professional practice initiatives which I have developed during the course of my doctoral studies.

In the twenty-first century, modern understandings of ethical thinking and decision making are also shaped by the two broad modern philosophical frameworks of teleology and deontology. Both these frameworks grew out of significant philosophical debates and enquiries in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Birsch, 2014; Preston, 2014; Tschudin, 2003). Teleology addresses consequences and outcomes. The other significant philosophical tradition, deontology, is associated with rights, obligations and duties. In this context, professional duties and obligations of an individual are shaped by practices that recognise others and reflect degrees of commonality. Modern statutory requirements relating to child protection, anti-discrimination and occupational health and safety have been shaped by this sense of professional responsibility.

In public sector organisations such as the NSW Department of Education, professional learning in these areas is referred to as mandatory training. Principals and staff in their school communities are required to implement these statutory requirements and sanctions, including dismissal, apply if these professional responsibilities are not discharged. These obligations are viewed by the Department of Education as non-negotiable core values.

A duty of care recognises these core values and has remained the central organising principle around which schools frame their teaching and learning, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of students in their care. Duty of care has strong resonance in other human service professions. It illustrates how school wellbeing practices have been shaped by the application of an ethic of care. The word 'ethics' was derived from the Greek word *ethos* denoting character. For this reason, as in ancient Greece, ethical practice is fundamentally about the application of values and the nature of the judgements that are made. Ethical decision making encompasses the transparency of these practices, the application of values and the empowerment of individuals by leaders. Underpinning all of these activities are the ways in which the cultural practices of an organisation or school are built, nurtured and celebrated. These factors reflect the values held by the organisation and its leadership team.

The literature of ethics, governance and ethical practice

In the literature on ethics, governance and ethical practice, the writings of Menzel (2015) are useful for the insights they provide into best practice in the public sector. Menzel defines ethical leadership as having three integral aspects which are 'being an ethical role model to others, treating people fairly and actively managing ethics' (2015, p. 316). He also acknowledges that behaviours which could be described as 'leading with integrity' are another way of defining ethical leadership. The empirical research of Menzel conducted primarily in the United States contends that a workplace environment characterised by transparent and ethical decision-making practices is better able to demonstrate performance values inclusive of 'efficiency, effectiveness, teamwork, excellence and quality' (2003, p. 15). Menzel's conclusion is similar to that reached more recently by Lunenburg who links effective leadership and values with culture building; and who describes 'effective school leaders' as those who not only lead, but whose actions build

'cultural as well as managerial linkages' (2010, p. 8). Starratt uses the term 'cultural capital' to explain how leaders can build 'nurturing ethical dispositions and attitudes' (1994, p. 27).

Reflection and reflective practice are also significant attributes which research on ethical decision making has revealed as being essential for quality decision making among school leaders and the building of ethical frameworks (Boon, 2011; Cranston et al., 2006; Cranston, 2008; McArdle & Coutts 2010; Rebore, 2001; Strike, 2007; Wagner & Simpson 2009). Individual members who are part of workplaces where ethical leadership was practiced are more likely to be empowered by their experiences, having higher self-esteem, more highly developed ethical values and enhanced skill acquisition (Tsahuridu, 2006). With increased moves towards greater localised decision making in schools it is imperative that school leaders develop their decision-making skills and build reflective practice on their school site.

An Australian context – greater local leadership autonomy and contested interplays

In Australia, as the 'baby boomer generation' of teachers has retired there are increasingly new expectations of schools and their leadership. Of most significance are the expectations which relate to the role of the education sector in relation to Australia's future on both a national and global stage. Successive Australian governments in the early years of the twenty-first century have adopted a more centralised approach defining their expectations of the Australian schooling system and setting benchmarks for success. These expectations in both a national and global context have been clearly outlined in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008).[19]

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[19] The report was produced by the federal Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (2008).

This redefined set of expectations relating to educational performance and student achievement comes with increased funding from the Commonwealth Government. However, this also entails increased accountabilities for state governments. They are required to deliver targeted educational programs, boost teacher professional learning, define standards of professional practice and levels of professional accreditation, and deliver increased accountability. This new heightened accountability was clearly illustrated by the creation of the My School national website listing every school and its educational performance data, and in the operation of the Commonwealth Government's annual *National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy* (NAPLAN) for all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. The intention of these initiatives, in the view of one researcher, is to produce 'students with the knowledge, skills and dispositions relevant to a globally-competitive labour market' (Down, 2009, p. 60).

Large-scale systemic change has been experienced by all public schools in New South Wales as a result of the state government's education policy reforms first introduced in 2012 under the title of *Local Schools, Local Decisions*. These reforms, including resource management, staffing, red tape reduction, working locally and increased principal decision making, have produced significant deregulation within the NSW public education system. With deregulation has come an accompanying range of increased ethical dilemmas and challenges for school leaders and their leadership teams, as leaders began to implement new policy directions free of some of the previous statewide control mechanisms.

Adding more complexity to this situation is the significant level of generational change within the education sector across Australia as school leaders retire in large numbers. With these retirements have come the appointment of many new leaders. Inevitably these appointments have raised key systemic issues relating to succession management such as

leadership preparedness, competencies and skills, and the value sets and cultural practices which new leaders bring to their professional lives.[20]

Eacott (2009, 2011), Gunter (2004) and Thomson (2005) have all cited Bourdieu's concept of 'field' to explain the dynamic, evolving nature of the operational space where educational activity takes place (the school) and is contested by players or agents. The use of field as employed by Bourdieu (1998) provides a theoretical framework to evaluate the diverse interplays that occur in a school as decisions are made and leadership is shaped and reshaped on a daily basis. Field, as employed by Bourdieu in his writing, defines both the constraining nature of the environment as a 'field of forces' which imposes certain behaviours or constraints on constituent members, and as a 'field of struggles' or a stage where the constituents interact with each other in response to the positions and values they hold. Bourdieu argues that the structure of the field is not 'immutable' and that the contested nature of activities means that some constituent members are engaged in 'conserving' the structure while others are seeking to adapt, transform or evolve the structure.

Bourdieu's critique is valuable for the way it provides insight into the increasingly complex and shifting interplays that are part of a negotiated model of educational service delivery to support local contexts and various needs, at a systemic and individual school level. Understanding leadership and models of leadership is not static as practices are continually modified and adjusted. Leaders and the ways in which they conduct their leadership do not exist in isolation. The context, personnel, relationships, history and

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[20] Succession planning and management are addressed in detail in Scholarly Paper 3 – Educational Leadership.

evolution of an educational setting all have a marked impact on the leadership models that can be adopted and crafted over a period of time.

In 2016, the highly contested political–education landscape within Australia continues to be driven by government reform agendas, reactions to global debates relating to skills and the purpose of schooling, and unique national debates. These national debates have addressed the role of state governments and the federal government under the Australian Constitution, in continuing to provide funding for all the elements within the diverse education sector. This has particular poignancy for public education systems, their governance, cultural practices and financial wellbeing.

The education marketplace

The nature of the public dimension of the contested interplays is starkly illustrated by evocative imagery of the field of schooling as a 'new form of media blood sport' (Gronn, 2008, p. 174). This visual image of contestation starkly highlights the ways in which the competing ideologies, media interests and tensions of the different levels of government can propel issues from the world of a suburban school yard onto the front pages of newspapers or into the lead items on a television news bulletin with relative ease.

A recent example of this process at work was the escalating political controversy in Australia surrounding the nature and continued implementation of the Australian Government's National School Chaplaincy Program 2015–2018. As reported online by Alexandra Smith (2014a), requests by schools to have secular youth workers employed by the program were quashed by the Australian Government, even though the requests were supported by the NSW Education Minister.

Another example of tension relates to the continuing debates about the role of government in providing preschools on a cost recovery or subsidised basis for disadvantaged

communities. This situation was reported online by Bagshaw (2016c) under the heading 'NSW preschools most expensive and least attended in Australia'.

In an earlier study, Dempster, Freakley and Parry depict this complexity in the education marketplace as the 'ethical climate of public schooling under new public management' and describe its main feature as the 'movement of public services into direct competition with their private enterprise counterparts' (2001, p. 1). Dinham views this movement as now being more fully realised by the advent of mechanisms for 'alternative school establishment and funding, teacher quality, school governance and leadership, and school accountability' (2015, p. 4).

What is highlighted here by Dempster et al. (2001) and Dinham (2015) is the way in which education has become a contested policy and political space. It is here that advocates of neoliberalism have sought to exert increasingly more influence on the funding and direction of schools in both the private and public sectors, but primarily in the public education sector with respect to agendas relating to quality, value for money and values. Dempster et al. articulate that 'quasi-privatisation' has been best illustrated by individual schools further differentiating themselves in response to the 'demands of the education marketplace' (2001, p. 1).

The concept of the 'education marketplace' being a field constructed from contested and combative interplays, is now made even more complex by public education providers turning themselves 'quasi-private' to survive. This is a depiction with added poignancy in Australia from 2009 with the creation of the federally-supported *Independent Public Schools* initiatives within state jurisdictions including Western Australia, Queensland and Tasmania. The public school sector as a collective entity has been replaced effectively by new models of public education that now directly compete with each other. One

commentator on this model of education delivery has likened the principal's role to that of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) working closely with an elected school board, as distinct from an educational leader immersed in the world of teaching and learning (Savage, 2014). In the eyes of Gobby, school leaders in Western Australia have been repositioned as 'potential entrepreneurs of their selves and their schools' (2013, p. 279).[21]

The field of education has never been static; rather it is constantly fluid and dynamic. As such, within this complex political–education landscape, there are now further subtle policy shifts occurring. Traditional directions in government policy formulation shaped by neoliberal ideologies of the late twentieth century are now being challenged by even more recent complexities of the modern global world of the twenty-first century.

Graefe has captured this metamorphosis in policy formulation with his reference to a growing sense that 'social policies are taking new directions' as key 'policy debates move from an earlier embrace of privatisation and marketisation, to the task of retooling the state to face new social risks' (2005, p. 1). The concept of 'retooling the state' is a stark assessment of the challenges and expectations that school leaders face as they seek to provide appropriate schooling and educational reform measures to meet the needs of all young Australians. School leaders work in a politically-complex landscape, continually reshaped by often competing demands from both national and new global agendas which advocate the primacy of student skills enhancement, performance-driven accountability and value for money.

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[21] Neoliberal reform agendas and new public management are explored in more detail in Scholarly Paper 3 – Educational Leadership, and in Professional Practice Initiative 3 – Practitioner Study: Expectations, Accountabilities and Professional Learning for Educational Leaders in an Era of Educational Reform.

The complexities of the principal's role and changing expectations of schools

Against this background of educational reform, heightened accountability, new models of leadership, and the continuing international debate about the nature of schooling for the twenty-first century (Apple, 2001, 2012; Connell, 2009, 2011, 2013; Down, 2009; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009), educational leadership practices in schools and expectations held by others of school leaders continue to be questioned, contested and modified in contemporary Australia. New practices, relationships and synergies are being formed to meet higher expectations and new models of leadership continue to evolve. Education has become a crowded contested space continually reframed by society's changing expectations of schools, market-driven agendas and new forms of leadership practice. These new leadership practices have been created and shaped to fit the redefinitions and new accountabilities of the leadership roles imposed from within and outside the education sector. Dempster et al. refer to one aspect of this 'enveloping' process as the way in which 'school-based management had expanded the constituency of people with an influence on the principal's work' (2004b, p. 173).

In a similar vein, in their comparative research on the professional values of school administrators in Sweden and Canada, Begley and Johansson (2008) describe the complexity and blurred dimensions of modern administrative environments where many school principals and educational administrators practice. They describe a field where the 'frequency of value-conflict situations to which administrators must respond has increased significantly' (2008, p. 423). This increase in difficult conflicts and dilemmas becomes 'particularly apparent as administrator perspectives begin to run across the organisational boundaries that traditionally separated community from school, school from district office, and district from department or ministry' (2008, p. 423).

The blurring of 'traditional boundaries' is a sharp reminder of the complexities and challenges facing the school leader and the way in which governance structures may no longer simply be able to accommodate all the viewpoints articulated by the key stakeholders with whom the school interacts on a daily basis. The concept of 'blurring' also conveys the sense in which educational and political decisions have the propensity to intersect and impact upon each other. The consequences can be that the decision maker's intentions are challenged, and the values that inform decision making declared open to question. This was recently evidenced when after-school care provision at Haberfield Public School in New South Wales was awarded to a private company against the wishes of a parent-run committee. The national news coverage from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) in 2016 reported on the reasons why the 'anti-corruption watchdog may be asked to investigate' the contract as well as other contracts[22]. The matter was later referred to the NSW Supreme Court.

Models of governance are changing within schools, as are the clearly-defined pathways by which problems can be addressed and solutions found. For Eacott, the purpose of schooling itself is a 'highly contested domain with many different points of view' (2010, p. 58). There are now more stakeholders who are seeking directly and indirectly to be involved in the administration of an issue within a school and its resolution. As Bourdieu (1998) has commented, the structure of the field is not 'immutable'. Heightened accountability, the skilling of an internal workforce, the development of leadership teams, and the building of knowledge and best practice are all core components of the juggling undertaken by leaders in a field of contested activities, inevitable administrative overload and boundary blurring.

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[22] Malone, U. (Updated, 7 April 2016), 'Calls for investigation into after-school care as contracts awarded to private companies'. Retrieved from abc.net.au

As a result of heightened accountability, the role of school leaders, their decision-making practices and the values that accompany the practice of their leadership are now, on a daily basis, increasingly under the spotlight of public scrutiny. Conflict is often a natural adjunct to the many decisions that are made. In an era of heightened expectations and increased stakeholder demands, ethical dilemmas are seldom removed from the constant contested interplays occurring in the education workplace. One research study by Cranston et al. on the work of educational leaders in seven independent schools had cited the comment by a school leader that ethical dilemmas are the 'bread and butter' of educational leaders' lives (2006, p. 111). If this is true of ethical dilemmas then it is crucial to explore the ways in which leaders and aspiring leaders have been prepared and skilled to meet the challenges which they will encounter, when undertaking their professional responsibilities as leaders of school communities.

Research on the challenges faced by school leaders

The enormity of challenges facing school leaders and principals in their day-to-day working lives is starkly illustrated in research about schools and leadership. In choosing to use the title 'Blindfolded in a Minefield' for their published research, Dempster and Berry indicate a clear intention to speak with some bluntness about the preparedness of principals to carry out their designated responsibilities. After surveying principals in relation to their decision-making choices and approaches, the authors conclude that many principals lack 'the skills necessary to confidently discharge their duties' (2003, p. 457). Ten years after this Australian research was first published, Buskey and Pitts advocate that contemporary school leadership programs need to provide 'aspiring school leaders' with a practical array of resources to support them with their 'decision making in conflicted milieus' (2013, p. 79). With these comments, Buskey and Pitts echo an earlier 'call for action' from Dempster et al. that there exists a 'real need for principals to be supported and informed

about the macro-contextual influences on their decision-making processes' (2004b, p. 173). The authors reveal that schools are complex, often frenetic and multi-layered work environments in which leaders craft their skills on a daily basis, as they interact formally and informally, with a large and diversified group of stakeholders who are an integral part of the school community. The research by Dempster et al. describes succinctly the way principals' workloads have intensified, the increased complexities faced in reaching decisions and the demanding pressures from 'competing constituencies' (2004b, p. 163). The nature of the challenge raised by these 'competing constituencies' is described by one author as a process where the management and leadership of educational activity has created a widening circle of 'interpersonal activity, opening up yet more options for ethical action or potential minefields' (Kerry, 2005, p. 253).

The work of school leaders and leadership teams has grown in complexity and is seldom without conflict as leaders are entwined by heightened expectations. Begley and Johansson describe the work of contemporary educational leaders as becoming 'much less predictable, less structured and more conflict-laden' (2008, pp. 414–425). Other research studies on the nature of decision making by principals use concepts inclusive of 'climates of contestation' (Dempster, Freakley & Parry, 2002), 'minefield' (Dempster & Berry, 2003), and 'war', 'battlegrounds' and 'ambush' (Gronn, 2008). These terms are confronting and may even be viewed as rhetorical, but they nevertheless underline the nature of the ongoing tensions, contested ideological stances, and sharply competing demands faced by leaders of schools. They also capture the need for appropriate levels of professional learning to allow existing and aspiring leaders to develop skills to meet the multitude of demands, expectations and challenges that they face personally and with their leadership teams, as their decision making is contested.

In light of the intensity of this contested decision making, Cranston et al. cite a response from a principal in one of their Australian research studies, who comments on the level of aggression that a school leader could face when dealing with a difficult situation such as a school suspension, especially when families choose to contest the school's decision making (2006, p. 113). These complexities are not unique as Gronn (2008) reveals in his depiction of the 'school wars' research. Gronn cites an example of a principal who spoke of the personal cost of the role, describing its impact on his life as, 'I do love my job but it is killing me. I cannot sleep and [am] feeling really unwell' (2008, p. 174). In a similar way, Lunenburg describes principal workload as 'hectic and taxing' and notes further that 'free time was scarce' with a significant dimension of time of 'between 70–80%' spent on 'interpersonal communication' as principals responded to stakeholders from within and outside their workplace (2010, p. 5). For Frick, contemporary school leaders led in a workplace environment that was akin to a treadmill as they 'take on a pace of work that is highly accelerated' (2008, pp. 69–70).

All of these images from the published literature directly comment on the impact of the contested leadership role on the principal's wellbeing, and on the ways in which the educational workplace is often a frenetically-contested environment with a multitude of competing interests and demands (Gronn, 2008; Riley & Langan-Fox, 2014). This reality indicates the crucial importance of decision-making activities undertaken by school leaders and their teams, and raises significant questions about the mechanisms that leaders employ to support, guide and inform their decision-making processes. For leaders, as well as their team members, decision making is often accompanied by highly stressful situations. For this reason, I want to explore in detail two specific challenges for school leaders – principal welfare and the development of human capital.

Principal welfare and the development of human capital – two specific challenges for leaders

Researchers on school leadership, succession management and leadership development (Fink, 2010; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Hargreaves, 2009; Lunenburg, 2010; Zepeda, et al., 2012) illustrate how principal welfare, sustainability and personal growth are key dimensions of the leader's role and longevity in that role. Significantly, sustainability and principal welfare need to be fostered and nurtured for the next generation of leaders. Lunenburg describes how 'human skills were important to school leaders at all levels' and characterises school environments provided by excellent schools and excellent leaders as 'warm, nurturing, caring, trusting and challenging' (2010, p. 7). For Lunenburg, effective principals are people-orientated who fulfil roles aimed at developing human capital, and are 'cheerleaders, facilitators, coaches and nurturers of champions' (2010, p. 7).

As Lunenburg reveals, leaders' values are intrinsically linked to the building of human capital within their organisation. Zepeda et al. (2012) comment on the importance played by mentoring, both formal and informal, in the building of human capital, through effective succession management and planning. As one principal who participated in their research succinctly commented, 'Anybody in a leadership position should consider themselves a mentor to other people' (Zepeda et al., 2012, p. 147). Mentoring is seen as intrinsic to new ways of thinking about the nature of professional development for school leaders which now has a much greater focus on being 'more purposeful and connected to the real work' (Zepeda et al., 2012, p. 147).

Mentoring, coaching and shadowing are all key facets of the practice of leadership and the skilling of the next generation of leaders. Personal commitment and strong relations are foundational to building leadership within an organisation, as Cranston et al. recognise with their observation that 'school leadership is about relationships' The authors describe

how the 'care and development of students and staff' are central to a leader's 'personal values and professional ethics' (2006, p. 116). As Lunenburg has noted 'excellent principals have excellent people skills' (2010, p. 11). Zepeda et al. attest further that a significant issue for school organisations impacted by succession management is the recruitment and selection of leaders that ensures the 'sustainability of quality leadership over time' (2012, p. 153). This last statement about quality is at the heart of an organisation's commitment to capacity building and renewal.

The value of teamwork, collegial practice and community are also factors described in other studies such as that of Dufreze and McKenzie (2009) whose research describes the culture of ethical leadership. Dufreze and McKenzie reveal how the practice of ethical leadership involves the whole school community, not one or two selected individuals. This is characterised by ethical leaders creating environments or spaces where individual members listen to each other and 'have their ideas and insights valued and heard' (Dufresne and McKenzie, 2009, p. 39). Such leadership is informed by the development of human capital as it 'encourages people to work together to envision and construct a common good' (Dufresne and McKenzie, 2009, p. 37). This depiction affirms the call by Furman (2004) for an ethic of community that celebrates communal processes within the widest sense of school community. Furman strongly links this ethic of community with the moral purpose of school leadership.

The literature, which addresses principal welfare, teamwork and the development of human capital, illustrates how both individual skills acquisition and team building are major leadership imperatives for an ethical organisation. However, these imperatives come under significant threat or stress, as leaders make decisions against a background of fundamental reform. Shapiro and Stefkovich have shown how leaders share important

responsibilities, as change agents, for moving an organisation forward by adopting new paradigms that reflect different codes or values (2011, p. 2). These codes and values are ones which the leadership team advocate as being necessary to embrace if the organisation is to evolve and embrace change. Heifetz (1994) in his study of adaptive leaders outlines the tensions that arise in workplaces through reform agendas. He uses the concept of 'brutal work' to describe how leaders go about the process of 'challenging people to face harsh realities' (Heifetz, 1994, p. 241). Heifetz also declares that leadership is 'dangerous with or without authority, because the stresses of adaptive work can be severe … People who lead frequently bear scars' (Heifetz, 1994, p. 235). The imagery of 'brutal work' and 'bearing scars' has strong resonance in the current political-education landscape in Australia. A recent online newspaper article in *The Mercury* with the headline 'Call for calm as principal and teacher attacks escalate in Tasmania' captures the extent of the recent contested terrain for school leaders in that state, of whom one in three, have 'been threatened with violence' (Crawley, 2015).

Riley and Langan-Fox (2014) have argued that 'workplace interventions' need to be developed for school leaders that reflect a 'full understanding of occupational health and safety theory' drawing on evidence from other professions especially the 'helping professions'. The two authors articulate how the building of skills sets and self-understanding through conflict management can build system level leadership and management capability. Crucially such a leadership style develops 'people to become fully self-actualised' (Riley & Langan-Fox, 2014, p. 196). One of their key research findings addresses the wellbeing needs of leaders in remote and isolated communities who may not be able to access local support networks. This remains an urgent systems-level issue, which needs to be addressed by all levels of the education profession. One researcher has used the metaphor of the 'glacier of professional isolation' to succinctly capture the

dimensions of the predicament of professional isolation for educators (Hord, 2008, p. 10).[23] The concept of developing self-actualisation of leaders can be addressed by looking into the relationship between leadership and the empowerment of others in the workplace.

Leadership and empowerment

Leadership can be a complex entity viewed from a widely different set of perspectives. As I indicate at the beginning of Scholarly Paper 3, educational leaders are a diverse group, inclusive of classroom teacher, instructional leaders, executive staff, school principals, educational administrators, university academics, researchers and accrediting authorities. Paul Terry has employed the apt metaphor of the school principal as the 'building leader', to describe effective and ennobling school leadership which 'structures the climate to empower both teachers and students at the site' (1998, p. 2). For Terry, the key role for school leaders is to facilitate significant paradigm shifts in school organisations and workplaces through empowerment. This process is in evidence as school leaders move away from an historical 'authoritarian' model of leadership to formulate a new role that seeks to empower others by building teacher leadership capability. This empowerment is multi-layered and is illustrated by a principal who can 'create an environment conducive to empowerment, demonstrates empowerment ideals, encourages all endeavours towards empowerment, and applauds all empowerment successes' (Terry, 1998, p. 2).

Terry's findings on the positive outcomes of empowerment remain a useful preface to insights that Shacklock and Lewis (2007) provide in an Australian study on ethical leadership, 'Leading with Integrity'. The authors question an ethical system's value, if there is no commitment to developing the people who are part of the practices and beliefs of the organisation. Shacklock and Lewis comment that 'in the final analysis it is the

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[23] This issue is explored in more detail in Scholarly Paper 2 which addresses scenario-based professional learning.

people who work within the organisation who provide the key delivery element' (2007, p. 23). They suggest that it is pointless to attempt to build best practice in an organisation or workplace, if the structures do not value the worth of the constituent members who are foundational to the workplace culture and daily climate. Human capital is intrinsic to success, as leaders through their behaviours and values, 'create and sustain an ethical climate' and thus 'provide major incentives or disincentives for organisational and employee ethical behavior (Shacklock & Lewis, 2007, p. 22).

Incentives, motivation and empowerment are the focus of a review by Parsons and Harding (2011) of four significant research projects that address school effectiveness across a five-year timeframe. This review describes how teachers who worked in a school culture of shared leadership were empowered to grow and develop to become critical thinkers and problem solvers. The two researchers argue that this type of leadership is about 'learning not management', as these teachers saw themselves undertaking challenges which led to growth and empowerment through their professional practice (Parsons & Harding, 2011, p. 105). In describing this process of empowerment through accepting challenges and developing critical-thinking skills, the authors also articulate how successful schools work hard to develop and build leadership teams. They conclude that 'members of specific teams worked to become site-based experts – taking responsibility and accountability … leadership was teamwork and good schools shared the leadership load' (Parsons & Harding, 2011, p. 105). Such comments about teams and shared leadership illustrate how schools can build leadership density and plan effectively for succession management at a time of major generational change.

Shared leadership and decision making

Site-based expertise, shared leadership and accountability are significant themes explored by Senge et al. (2000). The authors advocate that the responsible stewardship of schools is an enterprise shared by teachers along with principals. They articulate this dynamic by employing the metaphor of a steward.

> Being a steward involves more than talking together about improving schools;
> it requires reflecting, studying, inventing and rethinking, and always in a
> context that is morally explicit (Senge et al., p. 281).

The metaphor of the 'steward' is discerning in that it encapsulates the duty of care that is the prime responsibility of all teachers and their school leaders. At the same time, the idea of stewardship conveys the key dimensions of an ethic of care which involves a commitment to shared reflection and problem solving by education professionals, as they seek to solve any problem or redress a situation.

The sharing of leadership, through site-based activities which include shared thinking, problem solving, inventing and rethinking, illustrates a model of leadership far removed from the top-down hierarchical leadership model that was dominated by the leader's sole voice. As Neck and Moorehead have shown in their research on 'groupthink', diversity of opinion and thinking within an organisation, warded off 'pressure towards uniformity' (1995, p. 549). They argue that the uniformity needs to be replaced by 'constructive criticism, non-conformity, and open mindedness within the decision-making group' (Neck & Moorehead, 1995, p. 549). What they describe and advocate is the promotion of a culture of leadership that is inclusive and that celebrates diversity. This stance is similar to the findings of Australian research by Duignan, Burford, Collins and Cresp who advocated the promotion of 'authentic leadership, mentoring within organisations and building a

culture of leadership' (2003, p. 118). Advocating a team approach, the researchers believe that this revised leadership model would challenge the more traditional 'hierarchical and market models of governance' (2003, p.118). They argue that ultimately this new more inclusive model of governance involves 'more empowered citizens and their leaders' who were able to resolve dilemmas in an ethical manner and promote a 'stronger democratic discourse [that would] develop and embed such an approach to leadership' (Duignan et al. 2003, p. 118).

Cranston et al. (2006) observe that with the use of a leadership team there:

> appeared to be a greater collaborative approach to decision making. It appeared that sharing the dilemmas helped the leaders deal more effectively with the ethical dilemmas (p. 117).

The benefits of this process exist on more than one level. The leader benefits from the contribution of others; there is an individual benefit for those who participate; and there is a benefit or positive endorsement for the culture that promoted the participation. Picucci, Brownson, Kahlert and Sobel (2002) report a similar finding in describing how a culture of high achievement in a school shaped the way staff members professionally contributed in a positive manner to their workplace. Participants in a research study carried out by Cranston et al. indicated 'the need not only for ethical organisational cultures but also the importance of having clear personal ethical values and professional ethics' (2006, p. 114). One participant in the research study indicated that 'ethical decisions are not difficult to make if you are values based', and another noted that 'the best solutions came from taking a situational perspective and from having a leadership team' (Cranston et al., 2006).[24]

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[24]The notions of 'a situational perspective' and the role of a leadership team are explored in detail in Professional Practice Initiative 1 – The Ethical Decision Making Toolkit and in Professional Practice

Research on reflection and listening, and its strong relationship to ethical practice, is the focus of the next issue I will address.

The roles of reflection, listening and shared practice in ethical decision making

There is a large body of published literature that relates to ethics and ethical decision making in both the corporate world and the public sector (Berglund, 2006; Cooper & Menzel, 2013; Fredrickson & Ghere, 2013; Menzel, 2012; Tschudin, 2003). Within this body of work, there is significant research that addresses the role of ethics and shared leadership practice in professions of care, including nursing, medicine, counselling, social work and community services. Schools and educational leaders can gain valuable understanding and insights into professional learning from the values frameworks and shared practice employed in these associated professions of care. Integral to the critical practice of these health care professions are the roles of individual reflection and shared reflection. Reflection recognises the significance of considering information and processes, and conferring with colleagues rather than merely acting on impulse. Quality reflective practice, by its very nature, also involves evaluation, analysis, further reflection and discussion with others.

One definition of reflection that is particularly valuable came from a commentary provided by Payne (2002) on social work and reflective practice. Payne explores reflection in the context of observing, imagining and reframing situations as an individual who seeks to come to an understanding of a situation. He identifies two key phases: 'reflection-in-action' as an individual first acted; and afterwards 'reflection-on-action' as an individual

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Initiative 2 – The Ethical Decision Making Course. Integral to both of these explorations of my professional practice are important considerations of the role of reflection and the growth of reflective practice in ethical decision making.

sought to understand and clarify (Payne, 2002, p. 126). The term 'reflexivity' that Payne uses, explains the continuous process by which an individual acts, evaluates and carries out further actions as that person seeks to understand the situation as it unfolded (Payne, 2002, p. 126). Payne's analysis is useful in pin pointing how reflection allows individuals to make their own determinations in consultation with others, while continually assessing and reimagining the range of factors that are playing out as a situation unfolds.

The study of ethics in the nursing profession by Tschudin (2003) articulates the importance of listening as a foundation of ethical thinking and decision making. As the author explains:

> All ethics means that listening and hearing is essential … it is too easy to make policies that are useless or even harmful. Listening is the very basic skill of communication; at the basis of ethics therefore is communication (Tschudin, 2003, p. 44).

Tschudin also puts into context the practical everyday implementation of ethics in the workplace and explains a key distinction between ethics and values. Tschudin articulates the distinction between ethics and values in this way:

> We make ethical decisions every day, but we usually do not think if we make decisions of a particular theory or principle. We choose, prize and act upon our values, but ethics involves more reflection and argument … ethics implies transparency, public accountability, or taking a stand for or against certain public issues (2003, p. 45).

In alluding to governance models and accountability as being key components of ethics, she highlights how leaders build ethical cultures through the values they hold and the way in which they shape their organisations.

These comments underline observations made by Menzel (2003) and Lunenburg (2010) which link leadership to the significant responsibility of creating organisational cultures which build human capital. Tschudin also stated unequivocally that every public organisation should have its own code of ethics so that 'people can hold the organisation to account' (2003, p. 45). This was a significant signpost that illustrated the significance of governance and accountability in a workplace culture. The comment highlights why transparent and ethical workplaces invariably have a code of ethics, which can be understood by constituent members of the workplace, as well as by outsiders who interacted with the organisation or profession. Tschudin's comments on the role of reflection in ethics affirmed an earlier stance adopted by Rebore who advocates that educational leaders need to 'incorporate ethical analysis as an organizing way of thinking' and explained that the issues that ethics explored were 'important not only because they provide a framework for decision making, but also because they require reflection upon values' (2001, pp. 7–8).

Ongoing contested debates about schooling and educational leadership have witnessed a sharpened focus on the values of school systems, school leaders and individual schools. Schools are not value-free zones and their daily decision-making practices have become the subject of increased commentary. McArdle and Coutts advocate that one of the key challenges is to help those in education communities establish professional practices that have the ability to 'sustain and deepen' the participant's capacity to 'learn from the experience of practice' (2010, p. 211). For this reason, school values, ethical frameworks

and decision-making practices need to be the subject of shared reflection, transparent practice, evaluation and communication between all stakeholders within school communities.

These studies and observations are all useful in helping to frame an understanding of how ethics, ethical frameworks and ethical decision making play a significant role in education and specifically in the workplace culture of a school. Every day in a school there will be competing priorities and interests. Tensions and conflicts inevitably involve cross sections of the key stakeholders who have an interest in the contested space or field which constitutes the school and its decision-making processes. Decision making is an integral component of school life. Professionals including the principal, the school executive team, teachers and non-teaching staff all need to make professional decisions and weigh up the consequences of one approach over another as they intersect with diverse stakeholder interests, requests and demands. Communication and requests may be in person, from a telephone conversation, through the receipt of written correspondence, as a result of an email, or in the form of a subpoena for the school principal requiring court attendance with documentation from school files. Stakeholders may include students, parents, teaching staff, cleaners, counsellors, school principals from adjoining schools, officers from other government departments, employers, the local council, unions, and even representatives of state and federal government agencies. This level of constant decision making confirms the importance to all decision makers of appropriate professional learning, mentoring and shared professional discourse[25].

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[25]The NSW Department of Education employee guide: *Pathways to Ethical Decision Making*, a framework of five questions to assist departmental employees with ethical decision making is discussed in detail in Professional Practice Initiative 1 – The Ethical Decision Making Toolkit.

Berglund (2006) in a study on ethics in the health care profession, in the context of remarks on deontological theory and utilitarianism, has commented on the importance of reflection and the significance of shared professional discourse. For Berglund, individual reflection on professional practice and ethics is vital, yet individual reflection alone can be compromising if there is no room for dialogue with others and shared collaboration. For Berglund, it is difficult to act ethically without some guidance. Some of this guidance is 'found in discussion with fellow professionals, and some is found in written form, in professional codes of ethics' (Berglund, 2006, p. 17). Such comments illustrate how ethical decision making and shared dialogue often involve compromise as options are balanced, and alternative points of view put forward that shaped critical thinking and reflection.

Ethical decision making has the potential to demonstrate an intersection of competing ethical stances and ways of thinking. Dialogue with others, shared decision making, peer learning and personal reflection are often foundational to mapping out the intricate nature and complexity of the ethical dilemma as it begins to unfold. Berglund's comments and insights are foundational for understanding the leader's role in building cultural capital and the leadership strengths of others. Negotiation of obstacles, codes of conduct and areas of professional practice can be daunting but, at the same time, they are a foundation stone of quality professional learning within the organisation.

In the next three sections of this scholarly paper, I consider in more detail research and influential publications that have provided guidance to public sector organisations, such as the NSW Department of Education, in promoting ethical practice, good governance and ethical cultures which empower employees. These resources strongly resonate with me as a senior departmental officer providing professional learning and advice to schools, school

leaders and aspiring leaders at a time of significant generational change within the department.

Good governance and ethical practice in the public sector

For this scholarly paper, I draw on understandings of what constitutes best ethical practice from the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption's (ICAC) resource publications for the public sector on ethics and ethical decision making.[26] These ICAC publications were created in New South Wales following reviews of public sector practice to provide guidance in the building of strong ethical cultures. These publications are of critical importance to very large public sector organisations such as the Department of Education, as they have been instrumental in the formulation of key policies and procedures. This was illustrated in the development of policy documents such as the revised Code of Conduct (2014).[27] These policies and procedures provide guidance on key areas of school leadership and management including the financial management of schools, risk management, delegations of authority, conflicts of interest and secondary employment. The professional publications produced by ICAC for public sector agencies in New South Wales represent a foundational signpost to models of good governance and the role of effective communication strategies in relation to the promulgation of ethical behaviour by leaders. For the ICAC, there is a clear orientation to provide information not only on individual conduct, but more specifically on the kinds of cultures that support best practice in the day-to-day activities of the public sector and its employees.

The key ICAC publications, which I use extensively in my professional learning workshops with school leaders, comprise separate but overlapping resource guides: *Ethics;*

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[26]ICAC has as part of its designated role the responsibility to provide resources and advice to public sector agencies in corruption prevention, risk and ethical practice.

[27] For more detail see Appendix 6 – Key Educational Leadership and Policy Documents (2000 - 2015) re Leadership and Accountability for Public Schools in New South Wales.

Ethics the Key to Good Management and *What is an Ethical Culture? – Key Issues to Consider in Building an Ethical Organisation.* Values, management practices, open leadership, empowerment, transparency and culture are some of the key concepts explored in these publications. These publications have as a common foundation; the premise that leaders and their values are foundational to an ethical workplace. Leaders are viewed as the builders of organisational integrity and the nurturers of ethical cultures. In the conclusion to *What is an Ethical Culture?* the people skills of leaders are given prominence, especially in relation to the 'setting of an ethical tone', the clear role modelling of ethical values, inclusive communication styles, the development of staff skills sets, and the building of effective staff relationships (2000, p. 31). In promoting good governance and ethical behaviour, the literature from ICAC details the importance of the empowerment of individual members within an organisation.

In the context of empowerment, a few brief comments on groupthink and governance are useful, as these are key concepts in the literature from the ICAC and the wider published literature which deals with ethics and ethical decision making.

Groupthink and the ethics of power

The publications from the ICAC make use of the research undertaken by Neck and Moorehead (1995) on groupthink and their critiqued responses to the original research undertaken earlier by Janis (1972, 1982). It was Janis who first employed the concept of groupthink to explain group behaviour that had the potential to block necessary critical enquiry and produce poor decision making. The research and re-evaluation by Neck and Moorehead shows how workplaces based on open governance models have less potential to practice 'groupthink' by blindly advocating a set of values and beliefs that are a mirror of the leader's value set. Neck and Moorehead (1995) illustrate the significance of leaders

developing an open leadership style and governance model which increases the potential for ethical decision making in an organisation. Open governance occurs as leaders relinquish control, invite and accept criticism of their own view, encourage objections and doubts to be viewed, and nurture a workplace climate which is conducive to staff feeling comfortable articulating their feelings and ideas.[28]

From this perspective, Neck and Moorehead (1995) view staff participation in decision making – as distinct from mere concurrence and acceptance – to be of critical importance to open governance, the building of a values culture and the ethical health of a workplace. Staff participation is linked to empowerment and a movement away from 'defective decision making' (1995, p. 551). Similar understandings were noted by Tsahuridu (2006) in research exploring knowledge and power. In her study of the ethics of power in organisations, she found that empowerment had positive outcomes for the organisation itself and on the attributes and skills of the employees. Tsahuridu commented that 'empowered employees are more dedicated, motivated, have higher self-esteem, and are more likely to be of greater benefit to the organisation' (2006, p. 384). The nature of empowerment in the description provided by Tsahuridu endorses a transformational model of leadership with employees at the centre whose skills and attribute development remains a high priority within the organisation.

In his research on corporate behaviour and governance, Lantos (1999) notes that skills acquisition and appropriate professional learning are significant building blocks for developing strong organisational cultures which empower their members. He explains that leaders have a significant transformational role to play and need to mentor peers and subordinates by their own words and deeds. They are required to lead by example, not just

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[28]See in particular, pp. 550–551 where Neck and Moorehead explore in detail staff participation in ethical decision making.

'talking the talk', but 'walking the walk'. Terry (1998) concurs with this stance describing leadership as having twin roles to 'develop a vision of what they can be' and then by mobilising the organisational change toward the vision that has been created. He views the operation of a leader's personal values of commitment and credibility as being integral to this transformational process and the building of culture (Terry, 1998, p. 4).

The transformational nature of leadership and ethical practice, and his depiction of organisations of integrity, are integral to the research undertaken by Menzel (2003, 2012, 2015). For Menzel (2012), leadership is about building strong purposeful cultures that develop human skills, ethical values and nurture commitment. The ethic of power is illustrated by the operational practice of leadership which empowers team members (Menzel, 2012, p. 64).

Employees in an ethical workplace culture are viewed as a key factor in the success of the organisation and the realisation of its full potential. Implicit in this model of ongoing empowerment is the recognition that leadership needs to foster the empowerment of individual members to maximise the effectiveness and continued integrity of the organisation.

Organisations of integrity

Some of the most acknowledged international research on public sector accountability, open governance and ethical decision-making practices in the workplace has been conducted by Menzel (1993, 2003, 2012, 2015). 'Leading and building organisations of integrity' was the subtitle of the second edition of his landmark study of public sector ethical management, *Ethics Management for Public Administrators* (2012). It is interesting to note the addition of the word 'leading' to the original subtitle. There is a clear sense that leadership of ethical practice is a continuous active process, not an action merely

highlighted by the initial construction of new ethical practices. In describing a sound ethical environment, the focus is placed on contributing and intertwined factors that operate in a manner which builds a culture that is inclusive and value laden for its constituents.

Menzel argues that the components of a good environment include 'exemplary ethical leadership, a community that cares about its least advantaged citizens, and a management profession that values integrity and demands high standards of performance' (2012, pp. 25–6). He also posits that 'scandal' is unfortunately the 'most common trigger for bringing about ethics reform'. Menzel affirms that the building process or journey is the factor that matters more than the final destination. Compliance, transparency and regulation are all integral parts of the process but they do not in themselves define the intrinsic ethical values that shape decision making which occurs in the workplace during the journey. Menzel also counselled against seeing this process as a 'one shot affair', as the end point of the journey is in many respects aspirational (2012, p. 26). For Menzel, the processes undertaken need continuous attention, reflection and refinement.

In his research on the American public sector, Menzel (2003, 2012) found that organisations are likely to have higher levels of ethical stress when rules are bent or broken, when distrust is prevalent, when promotion and rewards are not based on merit, and when management fails to advocate excellence, efficiency, quality and teamwork. Such a stress-induced working environment is one in which there is scant regard for values generally and the role of a values-based management culture that should govern operational practice. Ethical stress was revealed as a symptom of an organisational culture where trust is not prevalent and teamwork not accentuated. These organisations had the potential to implode, as the workplace culture highlighted disunity rather than unity.

This reality of disharmony is illustrated in schools which implode when the principal or leadership team adopts a management style which is closed and not capable of encompassing the views held by its constituent members. This is the situation I have described in detail in the Overarching Narrative when reflecting on the critical leadership events at Magpie Park Public School. The workplace culture at Magpie Park did not value unity and teamwork. Ethical stress had constantly built over time as a result of the leader's closed management style that was lacking in transparency. One critical element that stood out was the lack of empowerment of the individual members of the teaching staff within the school. This was why, in rebuilding the school culture and in introducing new governance structures, the empowerment of staff was a foundational element of all new workplace practices.

Tsahuridu (2006) has examined the operation of an ethic of power and distinguished between the operation of 'power over' by a leader and the process of 'power to' an individual or group. This provides a most useful distinction that explains the use of power by the leader at Magpie Park Public School and the shift in ethical practice which occurred after new leadership was appointed. The concept of 'power to' represents the new 'ability to be self-determining' in contrast to the previous situation where 'power over' was practised revealing a 'self-centred, egotistic exercise of control over others' (Tsahuridu, 2006, p. 383). Crucially, as has been noted by Tsahuridu, the operation of 'power over' is controlling and 'disrespects people' while 'power to' is ethical and enables 'autonomy and responsibility of persons' (2006, p. 385).

Conclusion

Decision making is a fundamental human activity. Schools, like many other modern organisations, find themselves facing complex dilemmas and challenges on a daily basis.

Research has illustrated that effective ethical decision making is illustrated by school organisations where empowerment of the teaching staff is practiced and where there is an onus on quality induction and mentoring. In these schools, trust is a foundational stone of the culture and climate that has been created and nurtured. Schools are not static entities and, by their very nature, can be a 'minefield' as has been illustrated by Dempster and Berry (2003).

Conflicts and dilemmas are unavoidable in many modern educational workplaces and can often be multi-layered involving key constituents – students, staff, parents, community members, unions – and the multiple intersections of their competing demands. For this reason, the use of field as employed by Bourdieu (1998) is instructive in providing a pathway from which to observe and understand the nature of the diverse and fluctuating interplays that occur as relationships are formed and reformed, decisions made and leadership shaped and reshaped on a daily basis. Empowerment and the nurturing of individual members are instrumental factors in the development of ethical understanding as research from Menzel (2012) and key publications from the ICAC in New South Wales have revealed.

In 2016, teacher quality, accreditation, national benchmarks and international educational standards have become the 'educational bread and butter' of reform agendas impacting on all areas of the schooling sector across Australia. The future advent of refined funding models for schools, deregulation of school structures and further differentiation across the school sector will invariably herald more change and additional competing demands.[29] These demands will directly impact on schools, their principals, leadership teams and the

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[29]These issues are addressed in the last section of Professional Practice Initiative 3 entitled 'Signposts to the Future – Further Accountabilities for School Leaders'.

quality of the educational commitment to students in the care of the school. As Buskey and Pitts advocate, contemporary school leadership programs need to provide aspiring school leaders with a practical array of resources to support them with their 'decision making in conflicted milieus' (2013, p. 79). An understanding of ethics and a commitment to ethical decision making by the school's leadership remains a valuable starting point for the journey through these conflicted and often exceedingly demanding milieus.

Professional Practice Initiative 1: The Development of the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit

Introduction

This professional practice initiative outlines the origins and development of the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit. I developed the toolkit as a professional practice initiative to support educational leaders, aspiring leaders and school communities with their decision-making practices and problem solving. The toolkit contains scenarios and practical questions that explore dilemmas and aspects of ethical decision-making practices in schools. The conflicts and dilemmas addressed in the scenarios are as realistic as possible and reflect everyday situations that occur in schools. The toolkit is designed for use in professional learning workshops. The school situations encompass enrolment policy, succession planning, managing disgruntled, unsuccessful applicants for promotion, school community relationships, communication, conflicts of interest, bullying, student wellbeing, suspension policy and student learning

An exemplar scenario, 'Professional Learning: But at What Cost?', is included in this professional practice initiative. This scenario provides an illustration of the pedagogical framework of the scenario and the role of the facilitator who leads the workshop participants through the scenario. One of the fundamental values of scenario-based learning is that it provides feedback to participants at all stages of the learning process. This allows participants in a scenario-based workshop to reflect and consider their decision making continuously as ethical dilemmas and complications unfold around them. The development of reflective practice is a key underpinning of the learning that accompanies the discussion and reflection among participants.

The concept of a dilemma

I have used the term 'dilemma' in a broad sense to include the myriad complex problems, issues, conflicts, situations, and competing demands faced by educational leaders. I have not sought to distinguish between these in terms of scale, or make distinctions in terms of the ease of finding solutions. The distinction made by Cuban (2001) between 'tame' and 'wicked' problems (he views the latter term as a definition for a 'dilemma') I have not found to be helpful. This process of definition has not captured the ways in which a dilemma can have sharply varying threads depending on the site context, the experience of the educational leader and the range of stakeholders seeking to be directly or indirectly involved in the decision making. Neither do all dilemmas necessarily involve 'undesirable choices' as Cuban has asserted when he noted that dilemmas were 'messy, complicated, and conflict filled situations that require undesirable choices' (2001, p. 10). For these reasons, I use 'dilemma' in as broad a sense as possible.

Authentic learning and craft knowledge

I use the word 'authentic' to denote learning that is 'real' and meaningful to the participants. This is learning which is embedded in the nature of individual and shared problem solving that relates directly to work environments. This learning, drawn from experiences in the field, needs to be purposeful and encompass complex situations within schools. Such situations include implosions in workplaces as a result of ethical stress, incorporation of new models of governance reflecting greater local decision making, budgeting, workforce planning, new accountabilities in relation to standards and accreditation, and the need to rebuild workplace culture where there has been significant staff conflict. Authentic lifelong learning remains a significant commitment for the education profession and the roles adopted by its educational leaders, especially in the shaping of the next generation of leaders, their experiences and skills sets. The term

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'authentic' is used by both Cranston (2008, p. 581) and Sorin (2013, p. 40) to denote the nature and power of scenarios as an appropriate form of professional learning for educators.

In research on leadership development initiatives for Queensland school principals, Cranston (2008) highlights the role of case-based learning which utilises scenarios as a key strategy in the development of substantive leaders and aspiring leaders. One key dimension of Cranston's thinking is the recognition that the challenge is 'not only how best to prepare aspirants for the position of principal, but also how to continue the leadership development of those already in principal positions' (2008, p. 582). Another researcher, Ward, describes principals experiencing this form of learning through authentic cases as an 'important affirmation process' and in some cases a motivational force to 'complete actions' which may have been 'sidelined' if the participant had not been involved (2011, pp. 44–45). Scenarios are viewed as a valuable learning resource for professions with 'challenging work situations where there is not one solution, but diverse ways to address problems' (Sorin, 2013, p. 40.)

For Bush and Middlewood, more opportunities are needed to utilise the skills, expertise and experiences of not only current principals but also former principals (2013, p. 257). These experiences and skills were required to support the design, leadership and development of school leadership programs. According to Bush and Middlewood (2013), this approach respects and utilises specialist or 'craft' knowledge. This important responsibility was recognised by Ennes[30], a very experienced school leader at a workshop for a Primary Principals' Association Conference in 2013. All participants on the conference day were aware that I was carrying out research as a doctoral student enquiring

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[30] A pseudonym has been used

into ethical decision making. Ennes commented in her learning log evaluation that the session 'highlighted my responsibility as a leader to contribute to the succession planning of the next generation'. For Ennes, this involved, 'opportunity, guided learning, modelling and unfettered, generous sharing of knowledge' as the essential elements of a 'professional learning program for aspiring leaders'. As an Education Director it was important to find opportunities to facilitate this sharing of best practice and craft knowledge across schools, within individual schools, and with aspirants for the position of school leader.

Craft knowledge, the term employed by Bush and Middlewood (2013), is an appropriate starting point for a consideration of professional learning experiences that accommodate the needs of aspiring leaders, current school leaders and future school leaders. This remains a significant factor in all public and private schools as societal expectations and the professional needs of schools have continued to change and diversify to better meet the needs of students in a rapidly evolving twenty-first century world. The mode of thinking and the skills sets needed to face challenges and ethical dilemmas in 2016 are not the same as those that could have been applied in 2006 or 1996.

The range of stakeholder involvement in schools has expanded and with increased involvement has come greater complexity and time pressure on school leaders (Frick, 2008; Lunenburg 2010). Neoliberal reform agendas in education have witnessed moves towards a greater independence of schools in the public sector across Australia as evidenced by information on the *Students First* website (www.studentsfirst.gov.au). Educational performance data and its availability has changed the playing field further and ushered in a new era of school and system comparisons within the national education sector. This is a trend that Connell has likened to schools operating as independent firms in competition with each other for 'students, marks and money' (2013, p. 103). With

increased stakeholder engagement, higher expectations of leaders, time pressures and comparisons, there are now greater complexities in play for school decision makers and the heightened need to have ethical values that underpin daily leadership practices.

Codes of practice and shared discussion

Decision makers in schools, when determining a course of action related to a dilemma or ethical problem, need to be guided by codes of practice and regulation. Inexperienced decision makers will often need assistance in understanding the nature of the information contained in the codes and regulations that accompany professional and organisational policies. This is why shadowing, mentoring and coaching initiatives are of critical importance to the process of succession planning (Fink, 2010; Zepeda et al., 2012). Negotiating obstacles, codes of conduct and areas of professional practice can be daunting but, at the same time, remain the foundation stone of quality professional learning within an organisation. Leaders build cultural capital in their organisations by guiding others through these processes. Directors need to facilitate similar learning opportunities across their network of schools.

As a senior departmental officer, it was important for me to align my professional practice with guidelines provided by the NSW Department of Education. In 2010, the Department of Education provided guidelines and activities relating to ethical decision making for its employees on its intranet website. These resources have been utilised in my presentations and workshops to help course participants understand ethical perspectives in their decision making. The website provides a number of modules containing scenarios that individual teachers, faculties or whole schools can work through together. Five principles are articulated to help decision making. These principles can be located on the employee-only

departmental intranet under Audit, Corruption Prevention. These principles are identified as the 'Pathway to Ethical Decision Making'.

The departmental framework consists of five questions to guide decision makers:

- Is it legal?

- Have I followed departmental policies and procedures?

- Is it within the departmental Code of Conduct?

- Can it be justified in terms of departmental interests?

- Can it withstand public scrutiny?

The memorandum that heralded the advent of the website was forwarded to all departmental staff. The announcement identified the site as a 'new corruption-prevention intranet site for staff'. The site's purpose was to 'raise awareness and promote ethical behaviour across the department.' A note at the end of the memorandum that was signed by the Director Audit also indicated that the site has a 'facility for the reporting of any suspected corrupt conduct, maladministration, or serious and suspected waste' (Middleton, 2010). This facility provided a reporting channel for employees under the guidelines issued to departmental staff for the reporting of protected disclosures. The website and its approach were in this way firmly part of a deontological tradition which had an onus on duty and responsibility. In this case, it was the departmental requirement to report corrupt conduct, maladministration or waste. The departmental website was created in a context of risk management, audit requirements and statutory obligation.

Designing and developing workplace scenarios for educators

Following the critical event at Magpie Park Public School which I described in the Overarching Narrative, I began to develop professional learning that employed scenarios around various ethical dilemmas and work-shopped these dilemmas with a group of 25

principals for the first time in 2010. My enrolment in the doctoral program at Western Sydney University was the catalyst for me to refine my professional learning further using these workplace scenarios, which were constructed around difficult and complex aspects of professional practice.

I had come to the senior departmental officer roles following extensive leadership experience over eleven years as a senior executive member in three high schools, and in two of these schools, I had held the position of principal. I had gained a detailed, first-hand understanding of the senior leadership roles in schools and the dilemmas, challenges and problems which school leaders, their leadership teams and parent communities at times faced. The pedagogical approach I adopted in facilitating professional learning when I employed scenarios was to draw out and explore all of the aspects of an issue, rather than to simply pass judgement and suggest there was one right answer.

The metaphor of 'messy' has been used by some researchers to capture the intricacy and inter-related complexity of decision making undertaken by educational leaders which may include various combinations of problems, conflicts, challenges, disputes and dilemmas (Cranston, 2008; Fauske, 2000; Murphy, 2007). As Cranston has revealed through his research, one of the advantages of shared professional practice in decision making which is built around collegial discussion and reflection, is that participants have the ability to foster 'new meanings, understandings and learnings' (2008, p. 593). In her research, Fauske (2000) distinguishes between the exploration of a problem and the inter-related nature of a case which may include various combinations of problems, challenges and dilemmas. As Cranston illustrates, the focus of the professional learning is on the 'many nuances that surround, impact on and complexify the problem' (2008, p. 584). Nuances

and areas of complexity remain a key focus for me when I adopt the role of a facilitator in exploring school-based ethical dilemmas with workshop participants.

The other research I have found to be of great value to the development of my professional practice of utilising scenarios in professional learning for school leaders comes from research on ethical decision making in the American military. Kem (2006) articulates the critical importance of military decision makers defining and describing the problem accurately before addressing any possible solutions or determining a way forward. The initial process of shared dialogue, listening and reflection among those addressing the ethical dilemma allows for deeper and more considered understandings to emerge. What Kem describes in his research is the development of a disposition towards open-mindedness among those seeking to solve dilemmas. This may also involve, through further and continuous reflection, a greater realisation of other contributing problems, issues or nuances that need to be addressed or considered. Cranston (2008) and Kem (2006) both confirm the importance of developing a disposition of open-mindedness and reflective practice that facilitates 'moving beyond' an initial response to a dilemma. With the 'moving beyond' comes further enquiry, learning and greater understanding derived from the fuller appreciation of the 'complexities' that surround the particular ethical dilemma, problem or area of dispute.

As I outlined in the Overarching Narrative, conflicts and dilemmas faced by school leaders are becoming more complex and multi-faceted. This has occurred as the range of stakeholders have sought to exert more direct and indirect influence on schools, educational leaders, and their decision making. Dilemmas are diverse and encompass wide ranging and challenging areas across all levels of policy and procedure in schools.

Attempted resolution of dilemmas often involves complex processes and requires high-order listening, mediation, problem solving, negotiation and resolution skills.

Cranston has noted a worldwide trend among education systems seeking new methodologies to 'enhance the leadership capacities of their principals as schools are subjected to increasingly complex demands' (2008, p. 593). Frick has described the journey to school leadership as taking on 'a pace of work that is highly accelerated' (2008, pp. 69–70). The work of contemporary school leaders is 'fraught with paradoxes and tensions' (Cranston & Ehrich, 2009a, p. viii). These 'paradoxes and tensions' in the daily work situations faced by school leaders can be derived from multiple and intertwined complex combinations of problems, challenges and dilemmas as Cranston (2008) has highlighted.

For many principals, their decision making is often not neat and tidy as issues interact in unexpected ways. During my initial ethical decision making workshop in 2010 at Greenfields[31] an interesting response came from Jess, an experienced principal, in the brain-storming session at the start of the workshop. She reflected on the complexity of decision making during a busy school day and used the metaphor of 'the stew' to explain how often issues continued to bubble away in a school context. Another very experienced school leader responded by suggesting the word 'marinate' in place of 'stew'. Martha preferred the use of 'marinate' to describe how differing aspects or ingredients had all become entwined as they interacted with each other adding to the complexity of the decision making. These two metaphors have struck a chord with me and continue to be shared with other workshop participants.

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[31]Greenfields is a pseudonym.

The images intrinsically capture the frenetic and intertwined nature of school life which has been documented by the research of Frick (2008) and Lunenburg (2010). The concept of a marinating stew conveys the complexity governing multiple processes where a range of decisions need to be made at the one time in an often crowded environment. As a facilitator of professional learning, I often moved at a very brisk pace as I unraveled a scenario with participants in a workshop and replicated the crowded 'real world' of leadership decision making with its often frenetic and chaotic nature. It is to this professional learning which I now turn.

The Ethical Decision Making Toolkit and its development

Over the period from 2011 to 2014, I developed an extensive range of scenarios to align the content of the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit I was developing to the accountabilities found in the key NSW departmental policy documents for school leaders – *Leading and Managing the School* (2000) and the revised *Code of Conduct* (2014). These accountabilities included strategic management, planning, financial delegation, leadership styles, parent and community relations, conflict management, school culture building and communication.

The scenarios on average took between 60–90 minutes to explore. I workshopped the scenarios in a wide cross section of forums that included the annual regional principals' conferences, deputy principals' conferences, aspiring leaders' meetings and term conferences for principals in their local school education groups. I also provided afternoon workshops in different local areas to attract a cross section of middle managers drawn from the ranks of school head teachers and assistant principals – two key, but often overlooked, leadership groups.[32]

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[32] An overview of the modules found in the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit is provided in Appendix 2.

The creation of the Ethical Decision Making Course

As a result of the strong positive feedback and requests following conference presentations for a more detailed exploration of the resources I was using, I then created a regionally-based Ethical Decision Making Course for school leaders. I presented this professional learning in six sessions in 2012 and 2013 to school principals and leaders from schools in the Macquarie region.[33]

In the next section of my narrative, I explore the nature of the pedagogy I used when I facilitated a workshop discussion in response to a scenario. This process highlights the role that reflective practice plays in the professional learning that I have devised for educational leaders.

Facilitating a scenario-based professional learning workshop

My underlying intention in using scenarios derived from authentic workplace situations was to create and facilitate shared professional dialogues based on mutual trust about dilemmas and areas of complexity within schools. The approach was inclusive and enabled all participants to be engaged in an active way. This allowed all workshop participants to reflect on their understandings without being concerned that judgements or assessments about their decision-making responses were being made by other participants. For these reasons, I set about creating scenarios with a range of possible developments that could act as a catalyst for a shared professional discourse among participants in areas of high professional need and complexity.

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[33] This course is explored in detail in Professional Practice Initiative 2.

Adult learning principles have been a guide in designing this pedagogy. The process of 'learning to think for oneself' is dependent on 'becoming critically reflective of assumptions and participating in discourse to validate beliefs, intentions, values and feelings' (Mezirow, 1998, p. 197). A key aspect of this process was metacognition. I have used the term metacognition to convey the processes by which a learner develops an understanding of their own learning, critical thinking and self-reflection. In the presentation and facilitation of the scenarios, harder, more complex and uncomfortable conversations were used at times to challenge the comfort zones of all learners once a relationship of trust had been built. These harder conversations often entailed more detailed critical reflection, and ensured greater clarity by forcing all the learners to articulate their beliefs, values and understandings, as a part of the sharing of the knowledge with other learners. Integral to this process was the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills by the learners as they listened, interacted, reflected and shared.

The drivers of the pedagogical framework were reflection, participation in a group discourse, the sharing of knowledge and critical enquiry. The emphasis was not placed on every participant to reach the same conclusion as the development of self -reflection was a key component of the learning which was undertaken. The initial context of a scenario could be the nature of support and guidance for a new staff member who does not wish to be part of a school-based induction program or a staff member who is late to work. After the initial context was explored, a range of developments or tangents were then thrown into the evolving situation that related to other issues. What then became clear to the participants as the scenario unfolded was the complexity and multilayered nature of the issues under consideration.

The mode of presentation was through a PowerPoint presentation of which individual copies were not made available to participants. This was to prevent participants from reading ahead[34], understanding the course of events and prejudging outcomes. The frames were sequenced and projected onto a screen or wall. The process was dependent on the flow of ideas and comments from the participants. I usually shared a brainstorming session as the facilitator with the workshop participants and had an initial set of ideas put on a whiteboard for everyone to see and reference when needed. At the conclusion of the workshop, it was often interesting to see how far the dialogue and peer learning had moved from the initial responses that were gathered in the first session. For this reason, the workshops I facilitated which used the same scenario can be very different in approach, as the participants for each workshop varied and their shared responses, listening and judgements framed the reflective conversations.

As a facilitator, I was primarily interested in exploring the nuances and tensions that arose in a complex case of decision making. My intention was not to promote a fixed narrative which had a predetermined destination. This was why I have responded positively to the use of 'messy' by researchers who are writing in the field of ethical decision making (Cranston, 2008; Fauske, 2000; Murphy, 2007). It was the 'messy' aspects that often explained the tension or best captured the complexity of the decision making where there was not a simple yes or no response that could be made. As a facilitator of the professional learning, the focus needed to be on exploring the 'shades' of the ethical issues as they developed and interacted with each other. For this reason, I concurred strongly with Maisy's assessment from an interview that 'ethics is all about shades of grey' (Transcript, WS750051, p. 6).

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[34]Maisy commented on this as 'flicking ahead' to read the story in the context of participants 'innate interest in that notion of story' (Transcript, WS750051, p. 6).

The role of the facilitator was of central importance in the scenarios I created. The facilitator's role was to generate questions and to provide continuous feedback to the responses from participants. The facilitator was also able to control the pace of the discussion and at times to speed up or slow down the conversations between participants as they shared responses. It was the facilitator's role to work closely with the participants to elicit responses and to test hypotheses and approaches that were being formed by participants. I deliberately adopted the role of the facilitator in the professional practice workshops I convened. The scenarios for the toolkit were designed in such a way that, when used in a school, they could be employed by different staff adopting the role of a facilitator as part of a professional learning session.

A useful understanding of facilitation and the role of the facilitator is provided by Condliffe who defines a facilitator as a person who 'enables groups and organisations to work more effectively' (2008, p. 328). Condliffe acknowledges that an independent facilitator has the ability to challenge the 'underlying beliefs and assumptions' of a group if open and inclusive processes are established. Condliffe further advocates that the processes that are employed need to be flexible and cautions that 'applying too rigid a process to a situation will often be counter-productive' (2008, p. 328). The pedagogical framework I employed in facilitating workplace scenarios strongly endorsed this central aim which was to 'harness a group's intellectual potential, goodwill and energy' (Condliffe, 2008, p. 328).

Exemplar scenario – Professional learning: but at what cost?

As I will show in Scholarly Paper 2 – Scenario-Based Professional Learning and Its Applicability for School Leaders, the non-linear nature of case-based learning is an important component of professional learning on ethical decision making. There is not

necessarily a fixed point at the end of the scenario when all participants arrive at the same conclusion. The pedagogy is designed to stimulate a shared and interactive conversation which facilitates reflection and the consideration of others points of view. It is envisaged that the participants consider the implications of the scenario for their own school context in terms of policies, procedures and systems that they have in place or that need to be developed. The reflection and evaluation of current practice in the home school of the workshop participant was a fundamental element of the learning. In a workshop setting, I was comfortable working with up to 25 participants. I used a large screen and microphones to facilitate this process at a conference with a full auditorium of potential participants.

An abbreviated example of one of the complex ethical dilemmas, which I developed as a professional learning scenario for school leaders, appears below. The numbering relates to the order of the slides in the PowerPoint presentation. The exemplar scenario provides a context for understanding the approach I adopted as a facilitator and the interactive nature of the dialogue that took place with the participants. While the frames of the PowerPoint presentation were numbered there was always room for a degree of flexibility of either jumping forward or back in the sequence of events. On many occasions, it was important to revisit earlier decisions and consider the alternatives.

The scenario is set out below.

1. Mr/s Dawner is overheard complaining loudly near the school photocopier one morning that he/she cannot get school professional learning funding to go to an interstate teachers' conference.

    Facilitator: What would you do as the principal? Would you delegate this matter to a school executive member? Could you choose to ignore the overheard comments? Would you go directly to speak to Mr/s Dawner about the situation?

2. The president of the school parents' association phones you after school following a conversation which Mr/s Dawner has shared with her daughter's class that afternoon about wanting to transfer to another school.

   Facilitator: What would you say to the parent over the phone? What would you do next?

3. Next morning Mr/s Dawner breaks down in the school foyer and is visibly upset. The school counselor who is passing provides assistance.

   Facilitator: Who should deal with this situation and how? If the counselor has been involved, should the principal also be involved?

4. During the afternoon you are made aware of a letter which the local parliamentarian has received from a new parent to the school who is highly critical of the school's 'poor management and support of its staff'.

   Facilitator: How should you respond? Would you convene a meeting with Mr/s Dawner? Why? Would you consider delegating this matter?

5. That night at the school parent meeting, a group of parents propose that the parent body fund Mr/s Dawner up to $999 to attend the conference which is to be held interstate.

   Facilitator: Would you intervene in any way? What would you say to the parents?

6. Peer Learning Questions: When do you as a leader intervene? When should you first delegate? Who do you have at a meeting with you when you meet with Mr/s Dawner? What outcomes would you seek from a meeting? What areas of school policy and procedure would you revisit as a result of this experience? How could you avoid a situation of this nature from developing in your own school?

7.   Personal Reflection: As a participant, what did you learn from this scenario? What aspects of this scenario have allowed you to reflect on current school practice? How would you share this scenario with your school leadership team as a professional learning experience?

My intention as the facilitator was to generate dialogue and to provide continuous feedback. This approach allowed for an exchange of ideas to take place and for participants to develop heightened levels of reflection in regard to their professional practice, values and skills. The scenarios have not been designed with a clear end point in mind, that is, the basis for a formalised assessment, as is the situation with problem-based learning in the medical profession. Reflective practice incorporating elements of self-directed learning, trust, reflection and critical analysis are important to the success of this process and the andragogical model of adult learning I employed (Knowles, Holten & Swanson, 2005; Mezirow, 1991).[35]

As many of my workshops continue to have a diverse cross section of participants from primary, secondary and special education, there is the further benefit of considering and reflecting on points of view from participants who work in different educational settings. The references to 'delegation' are deliberate in the described scenario. One of the issues that I wanted workshop participants to explore was the nature of roles and responsibilities for the leadership team. This is a crucial element for school leadership and management at a time of increased localised decision making.

In an era of increased localised decision making all school leaders need to practice delegation and empower their leadership team through delegation. By asking questions in

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[35] This model of adult learning is discussed in more detail in Professional Practice Initiative 3 in the context of comments on the needs of relieving and acting school leaders.

relation to delegation on a continuous basis, I explored the ways in which course participants viewed strands of the dilemmas as important or minor. I also explored with the participants how strategic and tactical their responses were as they were being developed. Questions that addressed delegation also raised key issues relating to empowerment, the nature of the leader's relationship with the leadership team and the role descriptions that were in place in the school or needed to be put in place. This process also allowed significant discussion to occur as to the level of formality or informality required in dealing with a situation as it developed.

The applicability of this pedagogy to shared collaborative practice between school leaders that is facilitated through the internet as online learning is a future direction for development. I believe this application could have great professional learning benefits for school leaders and their leadership teams in remote and rural locations. Modern technology has provided new opportunities for shared facilitated learning experiences which explore ethical dilemmas over the internet with colleagues across the state.

Reflective practice

As I indicated in Scholarly Paper 1, the capacity for reflection and the development of reflexivity have remained a key foundational block of the skill sets and practices I set out for workshop participants exploring ethical decision making and ethical dilemmas. Larrivee provides a useful description of the capacity for reflection as being embedded in an individual's 'values, assumptions and expectations' (2008, p. 345). Payne employed the term 'reflexivity' to explain the continuous process by which an individual acted, evaluated and carried out further actions as they sought to understand a situation as it unfolded (2002, p. 127). The development of an ethical disposition and reflective values

cannot occur unless participants are first able to consider their own values, judgements and understandings.

Mezirow identifies a significant role for adult educators as being one that helps 'learners look critically at their beliefs and behaviours' (1991, p. 197). He further defines the 'process of perspective transformation' as a 'generic form of adult learning' (Mezirow, 1991, p. 197). Larrivee (2008) provides a useful measuring instrument to explore the attitudes, attributes and stages of development of reflective practice among teaching professionals, identifying different stages or levels as including pre-reflection, surface reflection, pedagogical reflection and critical reflection. This last stage illustrates ongoing reflection and critical enquiry that encapsulates actions as well as thinking processes (Larravee, 2008, pp. 347–56).

The research by Larrivee (2008) on reflective practice was informative and valuable for the insights it provides to designers and facilitators of professional learning, especially in terms of the understandings that relate to intervention strategies. If designers and facilitators can identify aspects of behaviours or dispositions among workshop participants that need development, they can 'more explicitly tailor intervention strategies to promote higher order reflection' (Larrivee, 2008, p. 345). One of the challenges was to ensure that those who facilitated the learning were themselves reflective practitioners capable of 'remaining open' to different viewpoints, letting go of the 'need to be right' and possessing the willingness to acknowledge 'their own limiting assumptions' (Larrivee, 2008, p. 346).

The work of school leaders and scenario-based learning

An insight into the work practices of principals and their decision-making skills was provided by Stella at a primary principals' association district conference in 2013. Stella commented on the value of the opportunity of listening to others and their approaches to

decision making. She then noted in her detailed evaluation that 'reassuring that what I do is consistent with what others do and that we are accessible to each other for advice/guidance'. There were three aspects to the comment that are interesting in terms of scenario-based learning. Stella described the importance of affirming her own practice, the need for consistency of practice and the role of networking as a mechanism to provide advice and guidance. In many ways, the peer-learning process of sharing a scenario provides a quality assurance dimension to the principals and their learning. This is especially important for the way in which it confirms to principals like Stella that the decisions which are being made are appropriate and are of consistent quality. Mezirow refers to this interactive process as 'consensual validation' (1991, p. 198).

Meldrum (2011) provides an overview of an Australian scenario-based learning activity for physical education teachers that highlights how scenario-based learning is often future orientated for the way in which it provides skills for participants to meet not only present situations but future challenges. As Meldrum succinctly notes, 'we need to develop and deliver programs that address future challenges and develop the problem solving imagination of our students' (2011, p. 143). Her words have strong resonance for equipping the skills sets not only of students, but also of educational leaders and aspiring leaders. The phrase 'problem-solving imagination' captures the need for school leaders to think strategically, tactically and creatively when addressing areas of concern, conflict and contested expectations.

The need for future orientation is also captured in an informative study of mentoring by Rowley (1999) who provides valuable insights into the qualities and dispositions needed by effective leaders. In discussing quality mentoring, Rowley described mentors 'capable of communicating hope and optimism' and then noted that 'quality programs take value

mentoring highly and take it seriously, mentoring will attract a caring and committed teacher' (1999, p. 24). Realistically, not all teachers, leaders or aspiring leaders are capable of communicating hope and optimism. Principals will be no different at times to other veteran teachers who may have lost their positive outlook. This was why design elements in a scenario incorporating the nature of collaboration and reflection needs to be carefully considered to maximise the effectiveness of the professional learning.

Quality programs for school leaders must be purposeful to practical needs, skills based and accommodate a reflective dimension which allows participants to be actively involved in their learning. An example of this active involvement was provided by Anna, an experienced principal and participant in an interview I conducted as part of my field work. Anna commented in relation to the use of reflection and the 'frenzied environment' in which she worked at times, of the importance of developing 'personal skills around self-regulation' and strengthening 'your own cognitive patterns when you are under stress' (Transcript, WS750043, p. 3). In the same way Maisy, another experienced principal, referred to the value of using scenarios as being able to 'think about your own thinking' (Transcript, WS750051, p. 5). For this reason, part of my field work has examined scenario-based professional learning in decision making as an appropriate form of professional development for school leaders, their leadership teams and aspiring leaders. Reflective practice incorporating elements of trust, reflection, self-awareness, analysis and the development of active listening skills are important dimensions to the success of this process.

Experiences incorporating collaboration, reflection and craft knowledge are a key starting point for any consideration of professional learning experiences that accommodate the dual needs of current and future school leaders. Begley and Johansson refer to educational

administrators as having often 'a low tolerance for abstract models and theoretical debate when they stray any distance from the practical problems of the day' (2008, p. 423). In a study on leadership capacity building and succession planning, Fink (2010) describes the need for developing leaders to be part of challenging activities that stretch their skills sets and capacity through appropriate professional learning, mentoring and performance feedback.

One of my firm intentions as a facilitator of professional learning was to show that the learning journey continues beyond the workshop or conference presentation and that the dilemmas discussed in the workshops can be explored in the context of the home school. For this reason, the scenarios I developed were freely available to those who were part of the workshops so that school leaders could share and workshop them in their home schools.

In my approach to professional learning, I am guided by the description given by Darling-Hammond and Richardson for one-off or stand-alone professional learning as the 'ineffective "drive-by" workshop model of the past' (2009, p. 46). Questioning the benefits of the one-off workshop, these two researchers advocate instead for a new research driven model of high quality professional learning. In their comments on professional learning, Darling-Hammond and Richardson warned of models of practice where the content was 'simply providing a forum for teachers to talk' rather than 'enhancing teachers' competence' (2009, p. 47).

Daniella, an aspiring leader who was a participant in the Ethical Decision Making Course, confirmed in an interview this real sense of the danger of teacher talk without a formal scaffold in place to guide discussion. She reflected on the danger posed by 'simply a bunch of people chatting about something' and drew a distinction between being 'too

experiential' and 'not actually critical' (Transcript, WS750045, p. 9). The scenarios that have been developed for inclusion in the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit were governed by Darling-Hammond and Richardson's mantra of 'enhancing teachers' competence'. They have been designed to encourage reflective practice and to develop problem-solving skills guided by ethical considerations.

Daniella, in her final comments as part of the interview I conducted with her, confirmed the validity of peer learning and the shared professional practice which utilises scenarios for professional learning. She concluded:

> And interesting to see the range of thinking and coming up with gosh, I hadn't thought of that. It adds to your own repertoire, hearing people and the way that they think. So it's always, always valuable (Transcript, WS750045, p. 12).

Daniella's comments were endorsed by Anna who commented on her personal engagement. Anna used the phrase 'bringing to the surface' to describe how scenarios drew out from participants 'perceptions, arguments, whatever that you couldn't do in any other way, I don't think' (Transcript, WS750043, p. 6).

In the next section of this professional practice initiative I briefly comment on material published by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This material is a useful resource to assist school leaders in building ethical workplace cultures that empower members.

Leaders as builders of ethical cultures

A valuable resource which I utilise in my professional practice was written by the OECD that was included in an international publication, *Trust in Government* (2000). The resource was valuable as it reaffirmed the significance of the leader's role in building

organisational culture, setting standards and promoting ethical behaviour. Incorporated within the document was the set of *Published Principles for Managing Ethics in the Public Sector*. This document had been previously developed following an international survey which was shared across member countries. Principles 8 and 9 have strong resonance for the role and behaviour of school leaders in the promotion of ethical conduct:

8.   Managers should demonstrate and promote ethical conduct. An organizational environment where high standards of conduct are encouraged … has a direct impact on the daily practice of public service values and ethical standards.

9.   Management policies, procedures and practices should promote ethical conduct. Government policy should … clearly articulate a set of public service values that employees should aspire to (1998, p.3).

The language of the two principles from the OECD has great applicability for wide-ranging shared discussions between school leaders and their communities. Words inclusive of 'values', 'conduct' and 'high standards' deserve to be part of a workplace conversation relating to the organisational climate. In the context of a school site, which is a 'value-rich' environment supporting the maturation of students, these words deserve specific attention in terms of the values that are built and displayed by the school community. These words also highlight the significance of leaders building transparent processes and governance mechanisms that openly display these values.

Strike (2007) has referred to the 'ethics of accountability' (p. xvii) to describe the manner in which school leaders have complied with policy directions that they must implement, which on many occasions may impact in a detrimental way on existing school cultures and the norms of existing accepted practice within the school community. This account of an ethics of accountability has highlighted the presence of conflicting priorities, the

importance of communication and the visibility of workplace values within the school organisation. An ethics of accountability also alludes to the significant role played in an ethical culture by an open leadership style that has practised distributed leadership and the sharing of decision-making processes.

As Strike acknowledges, an open leader is also more approachable if the constituent members experience difficulty or confusion in understanding the direction that a school community may be taking. Distributed leadership and shared decision-making processes cannot be left to chance in the daily working lives of school leaders in an era characterised by major educational reform and increased localised decision making. For these reasons, the role of delegation, role statements, communication and the management of ethical tensions are integral components of the professional practice scenarios developed for the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit.

In the next section, I comment in more detail on some of my field work findings that come from facilitating professional learning in ethical decision making using The Ethical Decision Making Toolkit.

Field work

Between 2010 and 2015, I facilitated many workshops and presentations on ethical decision making for school leaders, their leadership teams and aspiring leaders[36]. Some of these presentations have been at state conferences for groups including the NSW Secondary Deputy Principals. Other presentations were to locally-convened groups of principals and some presentations were conducted at individual schools to support school leadership teams. The two evaluations that follow relate firstly to a workshop held in the

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[36] A comprehensive list of these workshops and presentations appears as Appendix 1.

local government area of Lantos and secondly to a workshop carried out with the whole school education community of a special needs school on a school development day. The workshops have been chosen as they are representative of the professional practice I facilitated. They are also of interest because of the variance in workshop participants.

Many of the workshops I facilitated were for leaders and aspiring leaders, and did not present an opportunity for classroom teachers or school administrative staff to be involved. In hindsight, this was a failing in the design of the professional learning. These other groups from a community of schools, or adjoining schools, catered for diverse cross sections of participants and were able to provide rich understandings of whole-school decision making for all participants, especially of the complexities of the leader's role in a contemporary school setting. The use of the word 'conversationing' by a participant, in a learning log response to the workshop which follows, illustrates the importance of participants engaging in shared dialogue in a non-threatening environment where views and comments can be exchanged irrespective of status or position in a school hierarchy.

The Lantos workshop contained a cross section of primary and secondary leaders, aspiring leaders and some classroom teachers including temporary teachers. The whole school workshop in a special needs school, included both administrative and teaching staff with wide ranging experience, as well as a student teacher undertaking a school practicum experience.

Evaluations of the learning logs provided to the participants in both workshops allowed them to group their responses to the workshops under three open questions.

- Did you find the session to be of value?

- How has the professional learning about ethical decision making impacted on your thinking about your professional practice as a school leader/aspiring leader?

- Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Responses from workshop participants are included in the two evaluations which follow.

Evaluation – Lantos Schools Group Workshop: November 2012

The workshop arose following a request from a principal who had shared a conversation with a member of her school executive about ethical decision making in light of the regional workshops I had presented. The workshop request involved the presentation of Module 12: 'The Unsuccessful Applicant' to a cross section of invited schools from the Lantos local government area that included aspiring school leaders as well as leaders in substantive school positions.

The workshop took place in 2012 and was attended by teachers from primary, secondary and special needs teaching backgrounds.[37] The group included not only substantive and relieving executive teaching staff, but a diverse cross section of teachers as well temporary teachers and teachers new to the profession. The session lasted for 90 minutes and there were over 35 participants in attendance. I explained to participants that I was collecting data for my university research and encouraged those who wished to complete a learning log. The participants submitted thirteen learning log evaluations.

As with other workshop evaluations, there was strong support for the practical and interactive nature of the workshop material. Key words were repeated such as 'transparency', 'policy', 'procedures' and 'expectations' indicated that the participants had engaged with one of the central threads of the scenario about the processes and procedures

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[37] A transcript from an interview with three members of a Future Leaders Group who were part of the workshop is examined in the third Professional Practice Initiative which addressed practitioner research.

that could be put in place to prevent similar conflicts from developing. There are three comments I will focus on briefly that highlight the value of having a shared dialogue with a range of workshop participants that does not exclusively include leaders and aspiring leaders. The three comments are:

- 'As a new temp teacher, [this workshop] helped me to think about what decision making may be happening behind decisions that have been made' (Jima).
- 'As a new scheme teacher[38] this was very informative. It got me thinking about things I may not have thought about had I not attended' (Hilal).
- 'As I am currently a casual teacher, much of the content was aimed at leaders but it gave me an insight as to what I should be thinking about when/if I become a part of a leadership team' (Georges).

All three comments came from teachers at the beginning of their professional careers and illustrated how they have been part of a professional learning activity considering areas of school practice that, in most situations, would remain the domain of experienced practitioners and leaders.

In Scholarly Paper 1 – Ethical Decision Making and its Implications for Schools and School Leadership, I cited the study by Tsahuridu (2006) on the ethics of power in organisations. Tsahuridu found that empowerment as a management tool had positive outcomes for the organisation itself and the employees as its constituent members. Tsahuridu comments that 'empowered employees are more dedicated, motivated, have high self-esteem, and are more likely to be of greater benefit to the organisation' (2006, p. 384).

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[38] A new scheme teacher was appointed in NSW after 30 September 2004 and was required to achieve accreditation at the level of Professional Competence.

The three comments from the early career teachers are about empowerment, the critical role of reflection on professional practice and the value of being included in decision-making processes. This is also the point being made in another response where the level of professional experience of the participant is not clear. 'It is important for everyone in the school community to be informed about the expectations and process of decision making' (Walcha).

I have considered this comment made by Walcha alongside a comment made in a learning log by one of the participants in my regional professional learning course on ethical decision making. The respondent was not a substantive principal but identified as an aspiring leader. When asked to reflect about the parts of the course which had been most valuable, Nevine commented, 'listening to the principals … they have to wear many hats and make decisions that would conflict with their own beliefs'.

This was a comment about reflection and the role played by active listening. But it is also a succinct statement about an individual learning process where a participant has stepped inside the shoes of others, witnessed the complexity of what others face in leadership roles, and have gained rich understanding and empathy as a result.

The comments made by Nevine and Walcha have had a significant impact on my thinking about the importance of this professional learning in making it available to wider school groups than just the substantive principals and the school leadership teams. I had considered that both groups would be the most suitable recipients. My strong sense from these professional learning experiences and feedback was that everyone in a school community benefitted from being part of a professional learning activity that explored ethics, values and ethical decision making.

Evaluation – Special Needs School Workshop: December 2012

The workshop arose from a request from an executive team, who were all participants of my regional Ethical Decision Making Course (2012–2013), to provide a session at a term four school development day which addressed the specific needs of a K–12 special needs school. The workshop request involved the creation and presentation of Module 13: 'The New School' from the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit to a cross section of teaching and administrative staff. The scenario explored issues that would confront a newly-established special school in terms of health plans, duty of care, individual learning plans and interactions between the school and its parent body. By calling the scenario 'The New School' and actively referring to a new local special needs school under construction, I set up a situation where participants could exchange ideas and not feel curtailed in their thinking by being seen to comment on areas of their own school's professional practice.

The session lasted 120 minutes and there were over 30 participants in attendance. As a facilitator, this was not an easy workshop to facilitate as I had not met most of the staff and both the Principal and Deputy Principal were absent on the day. I spent a significant amount of the early part of my presentation building trust and empathy with the audience, and encouraging as wide a range of comments from the workshop participants as was possible. I wanted to give all the participants a sense that I valued their expertise and needed to draw on this experience in terms of the issues that were to be played out in the scenario.

The responses from the workshop presentation were diverse and reflected the many backgrounds and professional experiences of the participants. The interactive nature of the presentation and format were valued by the participants. Data collection, recording of information, consistency of practice, communication and policy evaluation were all issues

which received comments from the workshop participants. It was interesting to note and raise in my role as the Facilitator, the significance of seeking advice from the Department of Education's Legal Services Directorate and the inter-agency linked Child Wellbeing Unit to whom notifications relating to child protection are forwarded.

From the responses at the time, many of the workshop participants revealed that they had no real understanding that school leaders could seek assistance and professional advice from these sources when faced with difficult and complex matters. The value of these two sources of information was recognised in two of the participants' written comments, one of whom also commented on the value of a group discussion in relation to school policy, 'Have had policies but reviewing and discussing as a group clears up the mind' (Zarina).

This response was also echoed in a longer comment made by Mika, another workshop participant. Mika confirmed the importance of transparency of practice, the sharing of ideas and the powerful way in which an open dialogue supported a whole school learning community.

> Yes, it was really good to discuss issues which are occurring at schools, but aren't open to large groups like this one. The many thoughts and ideas which were opened up were good to think about. We deal with many of them day to day but other people's responses were very helpful (Mika).

Both sets of written comments highlighted the significance of an inclusive approach to decision making, so that processes were opened up for everyone who was part of the group. This allowed 'other people's responses' to be heard and considered. For Zarina this group thinking and exploring process also provided clarity as it 'clears up the mind.' The use of 'helpful' in describing the nature of other responses also suggests that Mika felt the group experience enabled the staff through reflection to have greater clarity and focus of

the issues under discussion. In developing further scenarios and in collecting qualitative data on the impact of the professional learning, the aspect of the impact of group thinking on individual reflection is an area that I can explore in more detail.

When designing the scenarios, I endeavoured to provide opportunities for reflection and the development of critical thinking skills. This is a key aspect of ethical decision making, in terms of providing opportunities for exploring and considering a range of options for dealing with dilemmas and conflicts. In this context it was pleasing to read the following comment on the professional learning made by another participant. '[It] made me think about issues in a much broader aspect. Something I think I would have personally done, I realise [there are] many more steps involved' (Nora). Nora highlights how critical thinking and reflection promote a more strategic approach to problem solving that takes into account the broader contextual situation against which the problem needs to be considered and solved.

This greater level of strategic awareness was also recognised by Kaley who commented on being 'more aware of the impact a decision will make on the people involved.' Zarina saw the workshop as being extremely valuable as 'it promoted deep thought on commonly used policies and procedures that we take for granted.' Zarina commented as well on how her experience of the workshop scenario was leading her to rethink aspects of her role as the school Technology Coordinator for the coming new school year.

The use of the phrase 'that we take for granted' by Zarina in reference to the promotion of 'deep thought' on policy and procedures that are in common use within the school, parallels some of the comments from the Lantos Schools presentation where participants commented on school decision-making processes and their empowerment by being part of

the process. The 'taken for granted' comment also highlights an issue I regularly pose in the workshops which addresses how often school policies are reviewed and evaluated.

Much of the material that has been gathered for Module 14: 'Building Strong Purposeful Workplace Cultures' from the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit addresses the significance of regular school policy documentation review and evaluation[39]. In an era of increased localised decision making in schools and increased participation by stakeholders, regular reviewing and evaluation of policies is an indicator of a school embracing community and building a culture of trust.

The observation by Mika on the importance of openly discussing issues that are not normally 'open to large groups' highlights the positive values that can flow to a school community from an open dialogue on aspects of school governance and management that are not restricted to the leadership team or the senior executive alone. In an era of unprecedented generational change, new practices and ways of developing leadership need to be considered. The concept of 'field' as employed by Bourdieu (1998) is useful in understanding how the 'field of struggles' with traditional division between school leaders and classroom practitioners is being broken down and reconfigured. Teachers are viewing themselves as having a critical role in school decision making which is not just restricted to pedagogy and classroom practice. Many teachers are seeking to transform and restructure traditional school structures.

Conclusion

New models and configurations of professional learning are needed that allow for whole school communities to find ways of exploring and evaluating areas of school practice. In an era of greater localised decision making and school reform, this initiative is a sound

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[39] PowerPoint slides from this module can be found in Appendix 11.

future investment. The concept of teacher leaders was one expression of this reconfiguration at work. Tsahuridu has shown through her research that empowered employees are of higher value to an organisation displaying higher levels of a range of attributes including dedication, motivation and self-esteem (2006, p. 384). One of the participants at the Lantos Schools Workshop in November 2012 stated bluntly 'It is important for everyone in the school community to be informed about the expectations and process of decision making' (Walcha). Without these expectations being met, it will be difficult in many schools to lay effective foundations within a school culture to empower individual employees and support constituent members.

Scholarly Paper 2: Scenario-based Professional Learning and its Applicability for Educational Leaders

Introduction

This second scholarly paper will build on key understandings found in the first scholarly paper on ethical decision making. This paper explores in detail the dynamics of professional practice that scenario-based teaching and learning can provide for school leaders and members of their school community. Distinguishing between problem-based learning (PBL) and scenario-based learning (SBL), I advocate in this paper for the importance of a shared model of professional learning, reflection and decision making. This model involves the exploration of a particular issue or dilemma with multiple nuances, where there is an emphasis on collegial interaction and the sharing of professional practice. The model focuses primarily on learning that has been developed to be delivered to leaders, leadership teams and aspiring leaders in a common physical venue where there is face-to-face interaction and small-group collaboration. Reference is also made in this scholarly paper to the applicability of this pedagogy to shared collaborative practices that can be facilitated through online learning.

The practice of ethical leadership in schools needs to be viewed as intrinsically 'part and parcel of educational leadership' (Branson & Gross, 2014, p. 3). Scenario-based professional learning for school leaders is an effective means to support ethical decision making practices in an educational reform era characterised by neoliberalism, with moves towards greater localised decision making and increased principal autonomy. English and Ehrich (2016) identify the dangers posed by a 'reduction in public funding of schools and in the privatisation of education at all levels' (2016, p. 186). They express concerns for the ways that leadership thought and practice has moved away from the needs of the students. The two authors argue for the 'possible re-emergence of a human-centered leadership

practice' as a counterpoint to the 'pervasive domination of business practices in schools and colleges' (English & Ehrich, 2016, p. 186). It is against this background that this second scholarly paper focuses on professional learning practices for school leaders that empower individuals and teams, involve reflection, advocate sharing and foster collegial practice.

This professional practice includes comments and observations on authentic learning, case learning, adult learning, teacher learning, leadership, reflection, critical thinking and empowerment.

Scenario-based learning

Scenario-based learning is a term that is used in literature relating to the professional development of educators to describe professional learning that is based on authentic and actual situations. Scenarios are 'authentic glimpses of everyday issues' (Sorin, 2013, p. 40) As noted previously in Professional Practice Initiative 1, I use the word 'authentic' to denote learning that is 'real' and meaningful to the participants as it is embedded in the nature of their individual and shared problem solving. This learning allows school leaders to use and share their 'craft' knowledge (Bush and Middlewood, 2013).

I employ the term scenario-based learning to cover professional practices as described by Savery (2006) that can include, but are not limited to, integrated case learning, case-based learning, case teaching, case narratives, case management, case method, problem-based learning, scenario-based learning, scenario-based instruction and shared reflection. These terms are often used interchangeably across the research literature of professions of care within various disciplines. For this reason, I utilise ideas and practices not only from within the discipline of education, but also from other helping professions, including medicine, nursing, counseling and social work. In common with education these

professions foster a strong commitment to an ethic of care that is fundamental to the nature and operation of their daily practices.

Problem-based learning and its heritage in medical practice

Problem-based learning, practice-based learning and integrated case-based learning all have a rich heritage in the learning practices of the modern medical profession. Problem-based learning, as Bloomfield and Magney argue is a 'close relative' of scenario-based learning (2009, p. 2). But there remain essential key differences in design and scope, as this brief overview of the evolution of problem-based learning, with specific reference to the medical profession, reveals. The concept of problem-based learning as it is applied to the field of medicine grew out of learning developed in Canada and North America in the late 1960s and 1970s (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980; Barrows, 1988, 1994).

Problem-based medical learning had as its aim the enhancement of undergraduate and graduate doctors' understanding and knowledge of clinical practice in medicine. Howard Barrows was one of the leading architects of this learning, as it applied to clinical practice. Barrows places emphasis on the centrality of the tutorial process, student-centred learning processes, and the development of thinking and reasoning skills. Barrows is also a strong believer in the importance of developing a life-long commitment to learning in medical graduates. This, he believed, would foster commitment to new practices, diagnostic procedures, and increased knowledge in relation to patient care (Barrows & Tamblyn 1980; Barrows 1994). Distinguished medical schools such as the University of Glasgow Medical School now offer, as illustrated on their website, integrated medical teaching, including lecture-based learning, problem-based learning and case-based learning, in their

degree courses which draw on the model established earlier by Barrows in the 1960s and 1970s.[40]

A useful definition of problem-based learning as it is constituted in contemporary medical practice is provided by Wood (2003). For Wood, problem-based learning in medicine is linked to independent and self-directed learning. The use by Wood of the word 'triggers' in her explanation below captures the sense that the problem or dilemma is not the primary focus, but merely a context or vehicle for setting the direction of the self-directed study. As Wood explains:

> in problem-based learning (PBL) students use 'triggers' from the problem case or scenario to define their own learning objectives. Subsequently they do independent, self-directed study before returning to the group to discuss and refine their acquired knowledge. Thus PBL, is not about problem solving per se, but rather it uses appropriate problems to increase knowledge and understanding (2003, p. 328).

The key aspects and value of problem-based learning for Wood include an orientation to group work, independent self-directed study, the role of reflection, and the refinement of knowledge. Wood also believes there is an increase in understanding that directly results from the shared discourses with peers in response to the learning material. Leary, Walker, Fitt and Shelton (2009) draw a distinction between lecturing and medical tutoring. In outlining problem-based learning in medicine, they draw attention to the role of instructors who act as tutors 'encouraging students to obtain the information they need to solve each problem' (Leary et al., 2009, p. 2).

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[40]See www.gla.ac.uk/schools/medicine/ for more information on their course content.

The explanation provided by Leary et al. (2009) affirms the fixed nature of the design of the problem and its designated solution which forms the basis of the problem-based learning activity. Leary et al. (2009) indicate that tutors are an essential non-negotiable component of problem-based learning in the medical profession. The literature of problem-based learning as it applies to medicine, and as outlined in Barrows (1998), Wood (2003) and Leary et al. (2009), describes tutors', facilitators' and instructors' roles in detail. There is a clear link between the design of the problem, its educational delivery, the quality of the tutorial process and the achievement levels that are required of the learners.

Distinguishing problem-based learning from scenario-based learning

In the world of medicine the integrated case-based learning is designed to have students move towards the definitive diagnosis or solution to the problem or case which is being considered. The scope of the learning and the design of the clinical practice being described in a medical context conveys the impression that there is a single problem to solve and, with the problem, a solution. In clinical practice, both problem-based learning and integrated case learning are often designed with the end result in mind – a definitive diagnosis or end point that participants reach as part of their learning journey (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980; Barrows, 1994).

A further distinction is that problem-based learning and case-based learning in medicine are often used in conjunction with ongoing clinical evaluation. This is learning involved with the formal assessment of participants as a result of their professional learning experiences and demonstration of expertise during this learning. For these reasons, I prefer to use scenario-based learning when looking at the application of scenarios or cases in an educational and school context, especially when scenarios are being utilised to support professional learning which explores dilemmas taken from professional practice. These

dilemmas may include conflicts arising from the application of school policies and procedures. These conflicts and contested dialogues with stakeholders can be found in policy areas inclusive of student attendance, student enrolment, a suspension following violence, the provision of medical care following an accident at school and poor academic progress.

In contemporary educational practice within Australia, scenario-based learning is not usually a part of a formal process involving an assessment, peer review, or the issue of a pass or fail grading. This remains a key distinguishing factor which marks a division with some professions of care, such as the medical profession, where problem-based learning has become a formal means of assessing competence. For this reason, in providing a set of useful definitions and distinctions relating to problem-based learning, Savery (2006) draws on Barrows' writing on pedagogy in modern medical practice to describe important key characteristics of problem-based learning. Savery includes among these defining features 'student examinations' which must 'measure student progress towards the goals of problem-based learning' (2006, p. 14).

Within the medical profession, problem-based learning is also synonymous with student-centred learning. The University of Adelaide has produced its own online learning handbook, *Leap into Problem-based Learning*[41] which is aimed at the university teacher who may be considering using problem-based learning as a teaching practice for the first time. The authors explain their pedagogy in these terms. 'In problem-based learning students learn to be self-directed, independent, and interdependent learners motivated to solve a problem' (Kiley, Mullins, Peterson and Rogers, 2000, p. 3). It is this focus on a single definable problem or issue that is the main distinguishing factor separating problem-

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[41] See website, http://hdl.handle.net/2440/71220, accessed February 2014.

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based learning from scenario-based learning models which seek to explore dilemmas or complex intersecting problems.

Another crucial distinguishing factor is identified by Akins and Crichton (2003) when they refer to the way that 'scenario-based instruction allows learners to engage in non-linear activities' thus making possible simultaneous engagement in 'multiple activities, moving back and forth from completing tasks to constructing meaning' (2003, p. 2). This is an important distinction, as it highlights the non-linear manner in which participants approach the scenario as they reflect, confer and weigh up their own experiences in the shared collegial discussion of which they are a part. As Sorin succinctly notes 'there is not one set answer or pathway to a solution' as the scenario-based learning was 'inductive' (2013, p. 41). This means that 'the scope of the learning was not predetermined' for the learner.

This depiction contrasts with the problem-based learning model which Savery describes as:

> an instructional (and curricular) learner-centred approach that empowered
> learners to conduct research, integrate theory and practice, and apply
> knowledge and skills to develop a viable solution to a defined problem (2006,
> p. 12).

What is valuable about the non-linear nature of the scenario-based learning is the manner in which it allows participants to engage with each other and to reflect and tease out aspects of their learning. As a result, this process allows participants to more fully explore and understand the ethical nuances of the dilemmas depicted in the scenario which is being explored.

Shared collaborative learning and ethical challenges

Scenario-based teaching and learning emphasises the shared, collaborative nature of constructing knowledge and understanding in a non-competitive learning environment that is intended to have participants be socially interactive with each other. Cranston depicts one of the key tangible benefits of cases as being a stimulus for 'real life collegiate discussions' with colleagues (2008, p. 593). This depiction affirms a learning environment where listening to other learners is a key feature, and which values personal, as well as shared, reflection. This is an environment ideally suited to educational leaders and aspiring leaders. Cranston describes the use of case learning in leadership workshops for principals in Queensland as representing 'powerful and authentic ways for leadership development among school leaders' (2008, p. 581). In outlining the use of cases in scenario-based teaching and learning, Cranston strongly affirms the value of having rich workshop activities, which produce 'creative and critical discussions' in respect of authentic leadership challenges (2008, p. 581).

At the heart of the case learning model which Cranston (2008) advocates is a focus on the exploration by school leaders and aspiring leaders of authentic aspects of professional practice. The clear intention is that this professional learning does not necessarily result in one designated outcome where all of the participants adopt the same managerial approach to solving a problem or all reach the same conclusion. This form of learning, by its intention, encompasses greater degrees of complexity than models based on a designated problem-solving strategy with a fixed solution. In the often frenetic world of decision making in schools, there is invariably no simple right or wrong answer for many of the ethical dilemmas that are encountered by school leaders and their leadership teams on a daily basis.

The use of the word 'creative' by Cranston (2008, p. 581) strongly implies that one important aspect of the professional learning is to provide a framework that allows for school leaders to think tactically and strategically, as well as logically and creatively. This allows the leaders to develop and weigh up more than one approach that they can apply to the complexities of the dilemma or situation with which they are dealing. The end result may also be that the learning experience provides the participants with a greater sense of clarity regarding the dilemma. This is why individual reflection and shared reflection with colleagues remain integral components of this model of professional learning.

As I noted in Scholarly Paper 1, case-based learning is of particular value in education as a mechanism for the professional learning of leaders and aspiring leaders. The emphasis is not just on the ethical dilemma or problem itself, but on the 'many nuances that surround, impact on and complexify the problem' (Cranston, 2008, p. 584). For this reason, the key focus of the professional learning is on the exploration of the issues and the working through of tactics and strategies in relation to dealing with the cases as they are discussed. Often there are no neat solutions, but what emerges from the professional practice is greater clarity on how to move forward in resolving difficult tensions, conflicts and complex multi-layered ethical dilemmas. For Cranston, this process resonates, as a powerful illustration of how facilitated collegial discussions around cases, can 'generate new meanings, understandings and learnings' (2008, p. 593).

Difficult situations and ethical dilemmas faced by school leaders in Australia have become more complex and multifaceted in an era of heightened expectations on the part of stakeholders. As schools in New South Wales move towards a more devolved mode of operation as a result of the state government's educational reform initiative, *Local Schools, Local Decisions* (2012), and as principals begin to exercise higher levels of local

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autonomy, there is more potential for heightened conflict with key stakeholders in school communities inclusive of parents, staff, community members and external providers. This has clearly been witnessed in New South Wales public schools where conflicts have arisen in response to the application of departmental and school policy making which does not meet parent expectations. One recent example comes from an online newspaper article, 'NSW Department of Education abandons second property deal for overcrowded school' (Bagshaw, 2016b). The article captures the furore by parents from Homebush West Public School when the Department of Education chose not to purchase surplus land from a neighbouring church to increase the existing school site, which was suffering an enrolment surge.

The complexity of this situation for educational leaders and the need for a paradigm shift in traditional models of professional learning for school leaders is illustrated by Branson and Gross with their observation that contemporary leaders were being 'regularly confronted by unusual, complex, and challenging situations, which demanded that they make choices' (2014, p. 3). In a study on leadership capacity building and succession planning, Fink described the need for developing leaders to be part of challenging activities that 'stretched' their skills sets and capacity through appropriate professional learning, mentoring and performance feedback (2010, p. 140).

In some ways, Begley and Johansson best conceptualise the increased difficulty faced by school leaders and their leadership teams in terms of their depiction of leaders encountering situations where 'consensus cannot be achieved, rendering obsolete the traditional notions of problem solving' (2008, p. 425). As the two researchers note, 'traditional notions' for the solving of problems and issues no longer hold true (2008, p. 425). Their comments confirm that a paradigm shift is needed to accommodate the array of

reform and especially the moves towards more localised decision making. Such a shift needs to be inclusive of new governance structures in schools, heightened expectations, increased relationships with stakeholders and ongoing professional learning to support the induction of new and aspiring leaders into the complex role of a school principal.

Belardi views some of the developments delivered through greater localised decision making as evidence of the different ethical spaces in which principals now operate, and the way in which school leaders are pulled 'in seemingly opposite directions' by the 'broad and concurrent policy trends – centralisation at the federal level and increased principal autonomy at the local level' (2010, p. 17). Belardi depicts the impact in terms of an educational playing field bracing for more acute and challenging dilemmas 'including instances of children and teachers cheating and unfair pressure being placed on students to achieve certain benchmarks' (2010, p. 17). This depiction is in response to the specific pressures exerted by reform agendas addressing school performance and accountability. The real challenge for many educational leaders is defined by the manner in which they introduce change-management practices into their school communities to meet the array of new accountabilities without causing schism and discord.

Dempster et al. (2004a) have further captured the confronting nature of this complexity with their research titled, 'Conflicts, confusions and contradictions in principals' ethical decision making'. The more recent research by Belardi is an obvious echo with its title, 'Conflicts, conundrums and the greater moral good' (2010). This innate complexity and level of challenge is clear evidence of the need for transparency in the decision-making process and ethical frameworks to guide the decision making. This is of crucial importance to leaders and their leadership teams as decisions are made, shaped, contested and, in some cases, re-made on the educational playing field.

Transparency in decision making

The words 'conflicts', 'confusions', 'conundrums' and 'contradictions' used by Dempster et al. (2004a) and Belardi (2010), strongly convey the enormous complexity of the tasks faced by school leaders and leadership teams in carrying out their daily responsibilities. The words also highlight the reasons for transparency in decision-making processes. Dempster et al. (1998) report on research which explores the ethical decision making practices of Queensland school principals. The researchers use the term 'values-driven character of school leadership' (1998, p. 3) to articulate their view of leadership operating in a value-rich environment of which leaders need to be cognisant. Dempster et al. qualify their comments on principals' ethical behaviour, values and decision making by noting that the significant issues for principals involve the interplay of 'ethical behaviour, personal value positions, and consistency in decision making action' (1998, p. 2).

The research findings allowed the employing authority of the time, Education Queensland, and other state authorities, to articulate more effectively the directions for future school improvement and especially the kinds of professional development programs needed by school leaders. One of the outcomes of this research project by Dempster et al. was the 'writing of fictionalised, illustrative case studies which highlight the findings of the project, together with an analytic commentary' to improve the quality of the professional learning available to school leaders (1998, p. 4). This process illustrates a key aspect of leadership management and succession planning – namely the manner in which new leaders are acknowledged, supported, developed and inducted into the culture of leadership practice.[42]

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[42] In Professional Practice Initiative 2 – The Ethical Decision Making Course, this process is highlighted with reference to the publication of *Learn; Lead: Succeed* (Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council, 2004) and its influence on the course I developed.

Boon (2011) argues for a 'raising of the bar' in providing more ethics teaching grounded in practices that illustrate high standards of professional ethics to facilitate the growth of quality teachers and leaders. For Boon, 'ethics understanding underpins the teaching of values, professional standards and reflective practice … [and is] particularly important in education with its diverse stakeholders' (2011, p. 89). Boon's comments are very salient, as diversity invariably brings differing viewpoints, priorities and approaches to the resolution of issues. Cranston et al. note that a significant challenge for those providing professional learning for school leaders is to assist principals so they can become 'more reflective practitioners who can reflect upon their practice and context and therefore be in a better position to make defensible decisions' (2006, p. 118).

Professional isolation is another factor that works against the adoption of quality practice in schools, including decision making. Isolation from professional colleagues is a significant welfare issue which has the potential to impact negatively on the professional learning of some school leaders and their teaching staff, particularly those who work long distances from colleagues (Riley & Langan-Fox, 2014). Professional isolation works against collegial practice, the sharing of ideas and the development of a reflective capacity in leaders. This issue of isolation is explored in the next section of this scholarly paper.

Beyond the 'glacier of professional isolation'

Collegial interaction, sharing, listening, evaluation and reflection as part of a professional-learning cycle allows for the exploration of ideas and the receiving of feedback and responses from peers. However, there are many circumstances in which this level of collegial interaction may not be available. The professional isolation of teachers is a significant, continuing area of educational research. One respondent cited in a research study on digital learning communities commented bluntly on the importance of collegial

interaction by noting 'Seeing, comparing and evaluating my work with others helps reduce professional isolation' (cited in Hanewald & Gesthuizen, 2009, p. 38). Hord draws on the theme of professional isolation and uses the metaphor of a 'glacier of isolation' (2008, p. 10) to describe the historical processes begun in the 1980s, including team teaching and open classrooms, whereby teachers came to work alongside each other and share their understandings. Increased collegial interaction is linked by Hord to an 'increase in teacher morale and motivation' as teachers are now 'not alone in their work (2008, p. 10).

Siguroardottir (2010) in describing research on professional learning communities in schools in Iceland raises the issue of isolation as a factor that has the potential to impact negatively on improvements in teaching and learning. Siguroardottir outlines how isolation contributes to a lack of a 'critical reflective dialogue' and that teachers in her study did not challenge each other on 'ethical or professional issues concerning teaching and learning' (2010, p. 407). The teachers preferred instead to be part of 'comfortable collaboration'. This type of collaboration suggests a holding pattern illustrative of a professional learning environment where practices are not being challenged or questioned. It conveys the validity of an observation by Darling-Hammond and Richardson that refers to models of outdated professional practice where the content is 'simply providing a forum for teachers to talk' rather than 'enhancing teachers' competence' (2009, p. 47).

An effective model of scenario-based learning can be applied to the delivery of scenarios using online shared learning. This has been highlighted by research undertaken in New Zealand by Gossman, Stewart, Jaspers and Chapman (2007). Online shared learning as an avenue for future professional learning has the ability to enable access to the authentic professional practice of experienced school leaders in ways that will allow them to reveal their expertise, skills and attributes and not simply seek 'comfortable collaboration'

(Siguroardottir, 2010, p. 407). For this reason, online shared learning has the potential to be of major professional benefit to aspiring leader and new leaders as part of induction programs and to potential leaders whose work can entail constantly fighting the 'glacier of professional isolation'.

The use of online scenarios remains a rich and under-utilised professional learning resource for remote and rural communities. The learning allows for the facilitation of shared reflective practices and discussions of 'craft knowledge' by leaders, their leadership teams and school communities across the traditional dividing line between urban and regionally remote school communities. It is to the concept of adult learning and the sharing of knowledge that I now wish to provide some brief comments.

Adult learning

Transformative adult learning has a democratic participatory dimension according to Mezirow (1991). He explains that adult participation in critical discourse and subsequent action is complex, multifaceted and requires:

> freedom, democratic participation, equality, reciprocity, and prior education
> through which one has learned to assess evidence effectively, make and
> understand relevant arguments, develop critical judgment, and engage in
> critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991, p. 199).

In advocating the use of an andragogical model of adult learning that enhances the adult learner's ability to learn as a self-directed learner, Mezirow advocates the following.

> When learners suffer from tunnel vision, when they encounter troublesome
> issues, when they have difficulty in learning or lack motivation … this means
> that the educator must actively encourage reflective discourse through which

learners can examine the justification for their meaning schemes and

perspectives as well as focusing on the new data presented (1991, p. 201).

Mezirow's analysis and especially his use of 'tunnel vision' and 'encountering troublesome issues' has great relevance to the application of scenario-based learning because the discourses that shape the learning are participant driven and focus on an array of possible options and strategies. At the heart of the practice described by Mezirow is 'reflective discourse' and evaluation of personal perspectives incorporating individual meaning schemes. In this context, the key assumption that governs my professional practice and understanding of adult learning is that learners learn best when they are actively involved in a process that encourages them to draw on their own learning experiences. Collaboration and sharing are essential if learning is to be maximised.

By their very nature, collaboration and sharing introduce different possibilities, points of view and options. When leaders share these collaborative practices, reflect, exchange points of view and actively listen to each other they effectively safeguard against 'tunnel vision' because they assist each other to create alternative pathways and strategies for future action. Reflection is an essential aspect of the participatory nature of the professional learning experience and has more veracity if it is part of a cycle and not simply sitting in isolation. The learning could be further improved if appropriate time is set aside for evaluation and reassessment.

This shared, collaborative practice recognises that the professional experiences of colleagues need to be valued in a respectful manner that is built on trust. Active listening, questioning and reflection are key components of professional learning and need to be acknowledged by all those who participate in the process. Scenario-based learning is an effective form of adult learning for educators as scenarios present problems, situations and

dilemmas for which there are, in many cases, no simple or straightforward correct answers. The adoption of an andragogical model of adult learning means that learners are placed in situations where they have to organise and take responsibility for their own self-directed learning built around reflective discourse shaped by ethical considerations that recognise alternative pathways, options and the need for continual reflection and ongoing dialogue with others.

Creative leadership describes an attribute and skill set that can assist leaders in moving forward when dealing with difficult and complex situations. In exploring models of adult learning, Knowles, Holton and Swanson draw a distinction between controlling and creative leaders. Creative leaders are those who have 'faith in people, offer them challenging opportunities, and delegate responsibility to them' (2005, p. 256). For this reason creative leadership is that form of leadership which 'releases the creative energy of the people being led' (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 256). Another way to view this leadership is to consider it as the leadership of empowerment, as it effectively empowers all those with whom the leader is interacting.

The development of problem-solving and critical-thinking skills remains a key dimension of the adult learning process for all school leaders. Integral to this learning process are the narratives of engagement that are created, told and shared about school practice and the operation of leadership. Noonan captures the interplay of leadership and narrative, stating that:

> stories convey the purposes and desired outcomes of leadership and, when shared in communities, help to establish a bond between and among people, encouraging their participation in the process (2007, p. 54).

As a follow up to these narratives, inclusive of scenarios about areas of leadership practice, opportunities for further mentoring and coaching are able to be facilitated. Peer group discussion of key issues provides greater clarity of focus for participants in the learning which is especially valuable for newly-appointed or aspiring school leaders. A recognition and adoption of the principles of ethical decision making further enhances the quality of shared professional learning experiences and the journey of the leader into deeper transformative adult learning. Integral to this learning are enhanced critical thinking and reflective practice.

The limitations of stand-alone professional learning

Critical thinking, reflection, collaboration and evaluation are integral aspects of an ongoing professional learning cycle and form the core of adult learning experiences. They play a key role in professional learning for all professional educators regardless of experience, skill level, or position held. As noted earlier, one-off or stand-alone professional learning has been described as the 'ineffective drive-by workshop model of the past' (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009, pp. 46–47).

This observation by Darling-Hammond and Richardson reflects an earlier set of research findings by Dempster and Mahoney (1998) which explored and described case learning workshops which addressed key practical dilemmas for educational leaders from Australia, England, Scotland and Denmark. Some of the resource material involved scenarios that addressed problematic school issues including financial management constraints, school closures, parental and student complaints, drugs, and the appraisal of teaching staff. One significant aspect of the research findings was the comments made on the limitations of the research by the researchers themselves in relation to a stand-alone workshop.

Dempster and Mahoney (1998) offer a stark assessment of the perils of stand-alone professional learning and the behaviours that can be exhibited by participants who have concerns about the way they and their thinking may be viewed. Even with solid preparation and valuable content, significant aspects of the professional learning process can go astray as the researchers revealed.

> There are important lessons to be drawn from the workshop which, to put it bluntly, simply did not work as a means of examining how heads go about resolving competing demands ethically. It was too public and heads felt exposed and pressured to present themselves in any way other than morally virtuous. In addition, this workshop approach suffered from being an artificial 'one-off' activity rather than part of a much longer discussion about ethical leadership (Dempster & Mahoney, 1998, p. 136).

Key factors working against success in this professional learning activity were the perceived artificiality of the learning processes that were undertaken. This reflected the stand-alone and one-off nature of the learning. The learning was not authentic in the eyes of the participants and did not adequately allow for effective reflection and engagement to take place. Trust was not present and the workshop participants displayed behaviours that suggested they felt vulnerable to judgement. As Dempster and Mahoney (1998) illustrate, collaboration can be problematic, especially if participants are preoccupied with the presentation of their public personas to other participants.

For effective scenario-based teaching and learning to occur, collaboration of a meaningful nature that builds participants' trust is essential for the process to work, but such trust cannot be taken for granted. Lieberman and Miller see this as part of the evolutionary nature of a learning community, explaining:

as educators identify and solve problems of practice together, they build the

capacity and collective will to move forward the equity agenda of their schools

and districts and enhance the learning and achievement of all students (2011, p.

20).

As Conley, Fauske and Pounder (2004) elaborate, in some situations, impediments to

capacity building may be systemic. Some school districts lack the resources and financial

capacity to provide the necessary support for ongoing professional development initiatives

beyond the initial implementation phase, thereby limiting opportunities to have shared

knowledge and further skills development (2004, p. 670). For these reasons, steps need to

be taken to ensure that there is a reflective dimension to the professional learning and

ongoing personal self-evaluation of practice for all participants.

New cultures of thinking

Collaborative discussions, critical thinking, reflection, problem solving and shared practice

are fundamental to quality leadership practice and professional learning in schools and

across education systems (Mockler, 2013; Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd 2009; Wade,

Fauske & Thompson, 2008). But how can school leaders and their communities best

foster a culture of thinking and reflective practice? Drawing on understandings from

Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Ritchhart and Perkins (2008)

create a picture of thinking in a multi-dimensional context. They argue that good thinking

is more than just a set of skills, describing it instead, in terms of 'dispositions' which

include 'open-mindedness, curiosity, attention to evidence, skepticism, and

imaginativeness' (2008, p. 58). They advocate for the centrality of schools that embrace

'cultures of thinking for teachers' and that 'fostering thinking requires making the thinking

visible' This culture of visible thinking embraces the practice of documenting thinking for

subsequent reflection (Ritchhart and Perkins, 2008, p. 58). Implicit in their overview is a strong sense of the ethical basis for decision making and thinking, and the significance of documentation which allows for the process and the nature of the deliberations to be made transparent and accountable.

This focus on 'cultures of thinking' has increased in significance in an era of increased local decision making for schools and greater levels of local school accountability. Old business models of school organisation are not the way forward in an environment where the work demands on the principal are rapidly intensifying. By utilising shared practice, quality ongoing discussions and reflection, individuals in the team have the potential to grow together as a team in their understanding and decision making.

Critical thinking, reflection, collaboration and evaluation are all significant features of the transformational nature of the professional learning journey that educators undertake. Quality professional learning is not a stand-alone journey as the learning 'constitutes the processes that teachers engage in when they expand, refine and change their practice' (Mockler, 2013, p. 36). For educational reform to take place, the 'learning journeys' involve adjustments and shifts of thinking in both the personal domain of the individual, as well as the corporate domain of the school. The sharing of ethical dilemmas and difficult multi-layered issues among colleagues can bring with it the potential for conflict, resistance, disinterest by some, and possible sabotage, as has been illustrated in the frank assessment by Dempster and Mahoney (1998) to which I have alluded earlier. This can occur if the conversations become too uncomfortable when some professional stances are perceived to be questionable, found to be inadequate or are simply undermined.

Social interaction remains critical and must be ensured as:

> it is through collaborating peers, working with experts, and using tools in an
> authentic learning environment that learners are able to situate their learning
> and develop personal meaning (Akins & Crichton, 2003, p. 2).

Collaboration for some is not a skill that comes easily. Fauske (2002), in a frank assessment of some school leaders, argues that many of these leaders lack sufficient understanding of the skills and experiences needed in understanding, experiencing and implementing collaboration. Fauske's comments are a stark echo of Dempster and Berry who conclude that many principals (who were part of their research study involving decision making) lacked the 'skills necessary to confidently discharge their duties' (2003, p. 457).

As Fauske illustrates in her research on school leadership, 'simply learning about collaborative governance is inadequate'. She draws a distinction between 'single loop' and 'double-loop' learning to advocate that merely learning about collaboration does not 'produce change' (2002, p. 1). It is only through a process of deconstruction and later reconstruction in application to practice, that real understandings of the concept of collaboration and the processes that enable it, can be addressed. This stance reaffirms the reservations stated earlier in relation to 'stand-alone' professional learning which does not adequately allow for sustained quality reflection and evaluation of the professional learning undertaken by teachers and leaders over a period of time.

Reflection, sharing and mentoring

In research on professional development practices in Scotland, McArdle and Coutts (2010) challenge commonly-held perceptions of reflection and argue for a reconceptualisation that takes into account learning theory 'associated with participation in a community of practice' (2010, p. 201). The authors indicate at the beginning of their study that reflection

has a long history within the scope of teacher education and practice. Reflection is also significantly a professional practice that has been shaped by other human service professions, especially medicine and nursing. Reflection is viewed as a social learning experience that needs to be nurtured through sharing with others in a context where it can be heard and reassessed through the interaction with others' voices.

For this reason, the two researchers discuss the viability of communities of practice as a form of professional development for teachers and leaders. They refer to the 'oxygen of reflection' but stress at the same time, that 'opportunities for reflection need to be shared and social and to take account of the realities of the changed nature of practice contexts' (McArdle & Coutts, 2010, p. 208). The model they advocate calls for 'change designed to enhance practice'. The authors argue that such a model of shared practice can help establish a 'developmental rhythm' for practitioners which has the ability to 'sustain and deepen their capacity to learn from the experience of practice' (2010, p. 211).

Integral to the model McArdle and Coutts' research advances is the significance of practitioners having a sense of purpose that allows for engagement with the learning experience through shared sense making in a community of practice. For this model of professional learning to be effective, reflection needs to be accompanied by action. This in turn prompts further reflection on the decisions taken and the outcomes that resulted from those decisions. Effective sharing and collaboration are the music of the 'developmental rhythm' (McArdle & Coutts, 2010 p. 211). This collaboration helps ensure that the discourses, or the complex dilemmas, are explored in a balanced and productive manner with positive outcomes for all participants. As Hargreaves and Fink indicate in their study of leadership sustainability, exposure to diversity can be an important springboard to adapting practice, re-imagining school environments and introducing innovation (2004, pp.

8–13). Diversity, in this sense, is the oxygen that allows leaders to reflect, rethink their practices and values, and be renewed with fresh critical insights.

Utlilising the work of Schon (1993) and the concept of 'reflection-on-action', Herndon and Fauske (1996, p. 41) describe reflection that re-examines and adapts practice. This understanding of reflection recognises why many communities of practice advocate that all participants in the learning process keep a learning log or journal to reflect on their learning, values and understandings as these develop. This understanding illustrates the roles played by motivation and engagement when experienced leaders, novice leaders and aspiring leaders undertake professional development. In their study of mentoring and journal use, Herndon and Fauske comment that 'successful mentors showed more willingness to think about what they were doing instead of simply reacting or behaving automatically' (1996, p. 41). It is this movement away from the automatic or instant response that highlights the significance of a central premise advanced by Coutts and McArdle (2010) that reflection is fundamentally a social learning experience that needs to be nurtured through sharing with others.

The link between reflection, sharing of experiences, options and ethics is explored in detail in a recent study of sexual ethics by Carmody (2015). Reflection is described as allowing individuals to 'experiment with alternative approaches' and provides opportunities to consider 'real life experiences' and 'evaluate their significance' (Carmody 2015, p. 115). These comments are insightful in the context of a process of ethical decision making. The comments capture the nature of the decision maker moving forward, weighing up values from personal experience and considering alternative options before reaching a conclusion. The key element of these processes is in the social learning interaction and in an understanding of the value to be gained by reflecting on and sharing experiences with

others. As Carmody highlights, awareness of self and others and the ability to negotiate, ask questions and reflect on experiences, are all integral aspects of an ethical decision making process at work (2015, pp. 114–117). The asking of questions in an environment of trust is crucial to sustained professional learning experiences which may include a diverse range of school leaders from those beginning their first journey in the role to those about to retire.

Conclusion

Scenario-based teaching and learning has, at its heart, the internal interplay of ideas by participants as they interact, share and consider with their peers the nature of the professional learning scenario. Integral to the unfolding of the scenario and the professional learning for participants are the self-constructed learnings that enable the learner to make sense of the knowledge they are receiving, to make considered judgements and to determine options or ways forward. Sharing in the decision-making narrative with colleagues allows the learner to reflect, create mental models based on their experience and to use the models to determine possible outcomes and points of view.

Scenario-based professional learning remains an effective pedagogy to accommodate the professional learning needs of experienced, novice and aspiring principals through collaborative learning that challenges critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. This pedagogy is explored in more detail in the next Professional Practice Initiative which describes the development and implementation of the Ethical Decision Making Course. Critical issues around workload, wellbeing and resilience for school leaders highlight the importance of collegiality and shared practice. Principal welfare and sustainability cannot be taken for granted and need to be incorporated into the design and development of

professional learning that can best support and guide school leaders as they reflect, critically think and share professional practice with colleagues.

Empowerment, sustainability, succession planning and principal welfare are foundational attributes of creative and ethical leadership. These foundation stones need to be endorsed and passed on to the next generation of leaders by present leaders both at school and at whole of system level. New forms of professional learning and rethinking are needed to create opportunities for enhanced sharing of effective professional practice between experienced, novice and aspiring leaders.

Professional Practice Initiative 2: The Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders in the Macquarie Region

Introduction

In this Professional Practice Initiative, I describe the origins, design and development of the Ethical Decision Making Course I created and facilitated for school leaders, aspiring leaders and leadership teams in the Macquarie Region[43] from 2012 to 2013. The course was designed to support the professional learning needs and practices of school leaders in ethical decision making.

Leadership in contemporary school situations is complex and often involves multiple levels of intersected decision making, which directly and indirectly involve school leaders on a daily basis. The creation of the course coincided with the implementation phase of the educational reform, *Local Schools, Local Decisions*, in New South Wales and the growing movement towards greater local decision making and autonomy within public schools across Australia generally.

The professional practices of school leaders and their leadership teams are the focus of the overall narrative that has shaped this doctorate. Decision making and problem solving are fundamental activities of schools and their educational leaders. At this time of significant educational reform and generational change in Australian schools (highlighted by moves toward greater accountability in the school sector) professional learning for school leaders needs to address more effectively the site-based nature of principals' professional work. Of critical importance are the reflective and critical thinking decision-making skills used in complex problem solving by school leaders and their leadership teams.

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[43]This is a pseudonym for a school region in Sydney.

As Murphy acknowledges, the exploration of decision-making dilemmas 'takes us into the heart of contemporary schooling' (2007, p. 9).

The origins of the Ethical Decision Making Course

The origins of the Ethical Decision Making Course and the earlier development of the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit can be located in the professional learning initiatives I provided for school leaders and aspiring leaders as a School Education Director in the Macquarie Region from 2010 until the region's demise in June 2013 following a major statewide education restructure. During this time, I developed and refined through workshop presentations a range of ethical decision-making scenarios that became the foundation of the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit. The events at Magpie Park Public School[44] which I described in the Overarching Narrative provided me with an opportunity for significant personal reflection. This reflection encompassed the key accountabilities of a principal, the nature of a principal's working relationship with the school leadership team, and the nature of the authentic professional learning needed to support school leadership teams in building quality organisational environments for their school communities.

As a consequence of my own reflective experiences and positive feedback from school leaders, I created and developed the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit and then the Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders. Some of the professional learning scenarios and dilemmas in the toolkit draw on earlier professional learning workshops I developed and facilitated as a senior departmental officer. Some of the new scenarios that were specifically crafted for The Ethical Decision Making Course reflect on complex ethical issues intersecting with mandatory policy guidelines for schools. Examples of these issues

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[44]This is a pseudonym for a school in the Macquarie region.

include the enrolment of non-local students in government schools in New South Wales, the suspension of students and the potential conflicts of interest experienced by teaching staff. All the scenarios reflect difficult and complex situations which I have encountered working with school leaders while fulfilling my professional duties and responsibilities as an Education Director in line managing networks of schools.

In the creation, design and development of the Ethical Decision Making Course, I drew extensively on Australian educational research by, primarily but not limited to, Dempster et al. (2002, 2004a, 2004b), Dempster and Berry (2003), Cranston et al. (2006) and Cranston (2008) who identify the benefits of case-based learning as an appropriate form of professional learning for school leaders. While declaring that cases are not the 'panacea for leadership development of principals', Cranston depicts three key tangible benefits of cases – authenticity, theory-practice linkage, and as stimulus for 'real life collegiate discussions with colleagues' (2008, p. 593). For Begley and Stefkovich, 'values, ethics and valuation processes' have a central role to play in the preparation of leaders and their leadership development (2007, p. 408).

All of this research has been invaluable for the insights it has provided into the role of school leaders, the challenges that leaders face and the critical importance of supporting and sustaining quality leadership practices in schools. School leaders are now more 'directly affected by system policies, having to bear the brunt of local decisions driven by them' (Dempster et al., 2004b, p. 173). The Ethical Decision Making Toolkit and the Ethical Decision Making Course were created against this backdrop to support, enhance and sustain educational leaders in their highly complex work environments.

Course registration

The Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders was written, approved and subsequently registered on the electronic database of the Department of Education's intranet in New South Wales in 2012 as a regionally-based professional learning course for school leaders and aspiring leaders. An introductory module of two hours was provided for interested participants in May 2012. Included in the introductory module was awareness raising of the departmental guidelines, *Pathways to Ethical Decision Making,* an overview of resources from the Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) and an exploration of the opening part of a scenario entitled, 'Lateness to School'.[45] The course was given a registered course code NRO3379 and was able to be accessed through the professional learning portal for public education teachers in New South Wales called, MyPL@Edu. Twenty-four participants signed up for the course, which was delivered face to face, after the preliminary introductory module. This was then delivered through the remaining five modules in two-hourly professional learning sessions during 2012 and 2013 to allow the participants to use learning from the course in their home schools. It was the first time that a course of this nature in six parts with professional learning activities, readings and scenarios had been created and delivered for school principals and aspiring leaders in New South Wales.[46]

Readings and follow-up activities from the discussions held during the professional learning sessions were provided to the course participants between the sessions. The readings were diverse and research based. A regular email distribution list was provided to all course participants and included readings I had used in my doctoral study that encompassed ethics, ethical decision making, case-based learning, succession planning and

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[45]The part scenario 'Lateness to school' and workshop questions can be found in Appendix 9.
[46]This information is based on courses listed in the departmental database: MyPL@Edu

management, group think, workplace cultures and leadership. The research of Neck and Moorehead (1995) on groupthink is especially valuable for the rich dialogue it generates on workplace culture. Email exchanges also provide the benefit of being enriched by schools sharing policies and site-based documentation in response to dilemmas and scenarios that are being explored by the group. Two examples of exchanged site-based documentation include policies relating to the 'Enrolment of Non-Local Students' and 'Expressions of Interest for Vacant Executive Positions'.

As indicated previously in my Overarching Narrative, ethics approval through Western Sydney University was sought and given. I also sought and obtained approval through the State Education Research Application Process (SERAP) from the Department of Education in New South Wales before I started facilitating the course. As a result, participants in the course were all informed that I would be using the course as a means of collecting data for research being undertaken as part of my doctorate in the professional practice of school leaders. All course participants were given the option of being part of individual and focus group interviews or opting out if they wished, as well as contributing to pre- and post-questionnaires relating to the course content.

Course outline

The course was developed as an introductory course for school leaders and aspiring leaders. The modules were designed to be interactive and to facilitate shared dialogue among all course participants who were engaged in practical problem-solving activities that utilise their critical thinking and reflection. The intention was to have all participants sharing professional conversations about their school-based practices, exploring strategic options for solving dilemmas through scenario-based learning and using departmental

policies for guidance in areas with mandated procedures. Mandated procedures were inclusive of policies relating to enrolment, suspension and the wellbeing of students.[47]

Course enrolment

Originally I believed that the Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders would appeal primarily to school principals. They were the target group in two-hour professional learning workshops I had provided from 2010 onwards in the Macquarie region for the Department of Education. Following requests, I also included other school executive team members and aspiring executives who had expressed interest in enrolling in the course. The most surprising request, which I had not envisaged, came from three schools who wished to enrol their entire school leadership teams, including current executive staff and aspiring leaders. The three requests were all accommodated and I was pleased to provide a professional learning experience that catered for an entire leadership group. Aida, the principal of one of these three schools, was very open in her declaration that she viewed the course as an opportunity for team building in her leadership team (Transcript, 750066, p. 33). At a time of major educational reform and generational change team building within a school leadership group was a key priority.

The design of the Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders

In designing the course content, I had drawn on my reading of the Australian Principals' Associations Professional Development Council (2004) publication, *Learn: Lead; Succeed*. This was a valuable resource that addressed the professional learning practice and leadership of principals. The leadership policy document had been created for its combined primary and secondary membership across Australia. The council's aim was to put

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[47]An outline summary of the six modules appears in Appendix 3.

leadership development high on the agenda as a key area of school policy, focus and collegial discussion.

I had first used the publication as a scaffold in 2005, in my role as a director, to foster dialogue in my own principals' network about leadership, succession planning, the skilling of new leaders and the culture of leadership. In posing the question as to how leadership builds professionalism and management capability, I drew on the publication to have principals consider the following questions.

- How are new leaders brought into the culture and real conversations about leadership?
- How is it that you determine what it is that you need to know and be able to do in your leadership role?
- How do you develop a school culture that makes leadership invitational, accessible and inclusive?

It was around these key questions that I framed the construction of the Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders in 2012–2013. The course was designed to engage participants in ongoing shared dialogue and reflection which related to the nature of their professional practice, ethics and the decision making within their schools. *Learn: Lead; Succeed* remained a key document among the professional development literature I had read and utilised during my professional career. It continued to pose the hard questions about the role played by leadership within a school organisation. The document continued to resonate with my professional practice. It addressed, in a meaningful way, leadership succession planning and how educational leaders should build appropriate professional development pathways for aspiring leaders. As *Learn: Lead; Succeed* revealed, such pathways can be traversed through practical experiences and real conversations. This allowed for meaningful reflection on personal practice and understandings. Scenario-based

professional learning places the learning emphasis on the shared collaborative nature of constructing knowledge, reflecting, responding to other points of view and on the development of understanding.

Much of the professional learning currently undertaken by school leaders in public schools is in the form of annual compliance training. This professional learning is designed to pass on large amounts of information that need to be disseminated to members of a school community inclusive of teaching staff, students, parents and organisations with whom the school intersects. This professional learning is primarily designed to meet government policy objectives, statutory responsibilities and legal imperatives. In areas of professional practice, inclusive of child protection, work health and safety, financial planning and teacher accreditation, the professional learning is often designed to support annual audit, compliance and accountability measures. The current era of educational reform within Australia is characterized by heightened levels of verification and accountability as school leaders undertake their demanding professional work in an era of 'audit cultures' (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009, p. 4). [48]

In developing a model of professional learning to support schools, their leaders and the next generation of leaders, I was motivated by the need to use a model that enhanced localised decision making, built skills in problem solving and increased ethical practice in the school community. This model of professional learning was not hierarchical and was removed from links to formal performance appraisal and compliance. The model was driven by principles of transformative adult learning (Mezirow, 1991) and was characterized by collaborative interaction with peers that evidenced sharing, critical thinking and reflection. The key outcome that was sought was building skills within

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[48] A range of key educational leadership and policy documents 2000-2015 re leadership and accountability for public schools in NSW is documented as Appendix 6.

leaders and leadership teams to meet the complex challenges they faced as decision makers. Sally, a relieving primary principal and a participant in the Ethical Decision Making Course, noted in an interview with me how improved decision making skills '*takes the stress away*' and commented on the value to her as a relieving school leader of sharing and reflecting. Sally viewed this as part of a collaborative process of being able to make '*more informed decisions*' (Transcript, WS 750049, p. 5).

The comment by Sally highlights the way in which 'stress' can accompany the decision making processes of school leaders, especially when multiple stakeholders are involved and the issues are complex. The well-being of school leaders and the pressures they face is an area of school welfare that is now receiving more attention from research carried out within Australia (Riley and Langan-Fox, 2014; Riley, 2015). One of the supplementary research questions I posed in my Overarching Narrative was - How do leaders sustain themselves and cope with the increasing demands of their professional working lives? The model of professional learning I utilized in workshops promoted shared collaborative and reflective practices for school leaders as they dealt with complex ethical issues. At a time of significant generational change it was important for new leaders taking up their leadership roles for the first time to be parts of networks, sharing practice, reflecting and listening to experienced colleagues.

Sally's comments about stress also evidence a key aspect of practitioner research in capturing multiple voices, inclusive of those voices who may be unexpected or overlooked. One researcher has refered to this process as 'privileging the voices of those with less power' (Mockler, 2014, p. 154). The interviews conducted with course participants, as part of the professional learning that was undertaken, allowed me to capture the multiple voices of educational leaders at all stages of their leadership journeys.

NSW Department of Education – Pathways to Ethical Decision Making

In developing the course participants' understanding of an ethical framework, I used the NSW Department of Education's employee guide, *Pathways to Ethical Decision Making* (2010), which I discussed earlier in Professional Practice Initiative 1 – The Ethical Decision Making Toolkit. The guide outlined the ethical framework that had been constructed to provide guidance to departmental employees in making decisions relating to policy and procedures. The *Pathways to Ethical Decision Making* framework, which consisted of five questions, was available to departmental employees online and was created originally by the NSW Department of Education's Audit Directorate, as part of its risk management procedures.

From interviews carried out during the delivery of the Ethical Decision Making Course, course participants recognised the value of using the framework as a scaffold in their decision making. Anna, an experienced primary school principal, commented:

> it provides you with some structure. It enables you to consider things that you might not necessarily consider if you're working under a lot pressure … That scaffold, it is really all about … self-examination. It is about reflection (Transcript, WS750043, p. 3).

Riannan, a deputy principal, saw the framework as assisting her thinking and reflection, describing it in terms of 'it sort of re-jigs your memory… so it actually makes you think it through' (Transcript, WS750048, p. 4). Sally, a new relieving principal, commented that the framework allowed her to take decisions 'away from the personal', which made the decision making easier as 'you're not thinking, am I going to upset this person?' (Transcript, WS750049, p. 4).

The intention of the Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders was to explore how professional learning in ethical decision making could support school leaders in building the capacity of schools to deal effectively with ethical dilemmas. The focus was one of shared reflection, cooperative practice and collegial discussion. In framing a course for departmental employees, it was important to recognise and use ethical frameworks that had been created by the public sector employer to guide the decision making of employees. At a time of major generational change and moves towards greater localised decision making within all public schools in New South Wales, it was important to ensure that new leaders and future leaders had an understanding of these ethical frameworks and their appropriate use.

Throughout the Ethical Decision Making Course, as the facilitator I continuously challenged course participants exploring authentic work-related scenarios with the simple question: What would the person sitting on their front verandah down the street think of this decision? My question was a reshaping of a frame from the NSW Department of Education's *Pathways to Ethical Decision Making*. Question five from the framework asked decision makers: 'Can it withstand public scrutiny?'. Public scrutiny is an invaluable concept to explore in a group discussion about ethical practice and especially a discussion that also considers the concept of 'conflict of interest' and whether this is 'perceived' or 'actual'.

The concept of public scrutiny relates to many significant areas of policy implementation for all school leaders, especially the procedures relating to local and non-local enrolments. For this reason, I created a scenario where a student had appealed a non-local enrolment determination on the grounds that he lived one house outside the enrolment boundary that had been drawn for the local school. In framing responses to the issues and dilemmas

which were being explored, I sought to develop for all participants a sense of viewing complex matters from more than one perspective. The facilitation and reflection process allowed course participants to develop at times multiple ethical perspectives that were strategic, involved reflection and were framed not just through their own eyes.

It was important when I designed the course to consider adult-learning principles and the ways in which I could engage learners by building effective links between the theoretical dimensions of an issue and the practical implications of a school context. The nature of the professional working relationship between colleagues, the building of trust, the sharing of ideas, consideration of alternative points of view, active listening and the growth of reflective practice in a workplace context were all integral to the design. At a time of major educational reform and significant movement within the ranks of principals, these skills and attributes assumed greater relevance. For this reason, I was intrigued by research that advocated for a new discourse to be constructed in a workplace through group reflection. Boud, Cressey and Docherty use the term 'productive reflection' to argue for the application of group reflection to build organisational capacity at times of significant change which necessitated new flexible thinking (2006, p. 4). This research has valuable application for schools that employ teams and committee structures to develop policy and procedures in an era of heightened local decision making.

As previously noted the intention of the Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders was to create a series of professional practice scenarios that would involve all course participants in shared conversations, problem solving and reflections on their current professional practice, utilising ethical frameworks to guide their decision making. The consideration of alternative points of view and the nature of the shared decision-making process are integral to the success of the course design. In keeping with the

critical-enquiry model which I adopted, listening, personal reflection and shared reflection are all key attributes required of participants.

Research on 'creative learning conversations' became a strong pedagogical framework around which I had woven the professional learning contained in the course.

Creative learning conversations – a guiding principle

The concept of 'creative learning conversations' is drawn from the research of Chappell and Craft (2011) in dance education at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom. This research explores the relationships between creativity, social spatiality and dialogue. Chappell and Craft (2011) use the concept of 'creative learning conversations' and describe how shared investigation and exploration practice by researchers, teachers and students has the potential to create 'open' learning spaces promoting equality and orientation 'toward action'. For Chappell and Craft (2011), the key outcome of creative learning conversations is a movement away from the usual hierarchical, top-down power conversations into a participatory continuous dialogue shaped by shared understandings. The two researchers describe the role of the conversations as providing opportunities to 'flatten out hierarchies and to open spaces that promote a sense of equality' which in turn allows participants in the learning to become 'researchers orientated toward action' (Chappell & Craft, 2011, p. 364).

This model of shared practice and research is an essential component of the professional-learning pedagogy I employed in the role of facilitator of the course. The model advocates sharing points of view, reporting back on site-based experiences, exploring possibilities, providing feedback and developing reflective practices. Foundational to the learning is the sense that everyone is a co-learner/co-researcher exploring experiences together and sharing reflections. I believe this approach is integral to the development of a site-based,

ethical, decision-making culture which shares practice, reflection and understanding. Empowerment of learners and mutual respect for all learners is foundational to the model advocated by Chappell and Craft (2011).

This model of practice stands in sharp contrast to other models of conventional pedagogy where content is 'simply providing a forum for teachers to talk' rather than 'enhancing teachers' competence' (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009, p. 47). The pedagogical approach articulated by Chappell and Craft is deeply entwined with difference, alternative perspectives and debate. A major driver of this approach is to facilitate 'potential generative change through dialogue', to sharply distinguish between the relative insignificance of 'purely informal exchanges' and the 'potential generative change' made possible by the formal processes that facilitated these 'deepening conversations' (Chappell & Craft, 2011, p. 375).

Another aspect of the process that Chappell and Craft outline is their advocacy that the conversations are not 'packaged into one answer'. They express their concern as a challenge 'to find a way to communicate to the different researchers' peers what is important in a way that is credible and valuable' (2001, p. 376). This aspect of the process reaffirms the dignity of the participant, recognises the validity of the individual participant's 'voice' as a learner and researcher and empowers all those who are part of the extended continuous learning conversation. In allowing all voices to be heard in credible ways and advocating for difference, participatory debate and ongoing dialogue, the two researchers advocate a methodology that is characterised by strong ethical values encompassing empowerment.

In my endorsement of the richness of this pedagogy, I want to consider briefly the comments that relate to creativity, reflective practice and the role of 'deepening

conversations' in the context of remarks made by Malcolm, a member of a large primary school executive team and a course participant in the Ethical Decision Making Course. In a focus group interview, Malcolm viewed his learning as an opportunity to 'creatively think' and significantly, links this form of thinking to empowerment and skill enhancement. The comment from Malcolm that follows comes from his observation on scenario-based learning.

> … what I liked about it was the fact that there were a variety of scenarios. While I don't think that automatically some of them applied to our school, on reflection you go back and you think about them and you think that they actually do apply to your workplace. It allows you to actually creatively think about those opportunities, so that if they do arise, you actually have the skills or the empowerment to be able to deal with them a lot better (Transcript, WS750066, p 21).

What is interesting about this response is the reassessment of the school context in light of further continuous reflection. As Malcolm notes, the original application to the local school context did not seem appropriate. However, following further reflection and reassessment, this situation changed as he recognised the degree of applicability. It is also interesting to note the comment about empowerment and how Malcolm felt confident that he had skill sets to deal with the dilemma as it unfolded. The reference to 'creative thinking' links to the research by Cranston which includes reference to the value of scenarios as 'opportunities for deep thinking and creative responses' (2008, p. 590).

Similarly, Anna, an experienced principal, describes her own response to scenario-based professional learning. She commented on how the scenarios allowed her to 'reflect on the process and to modify the process and keep developing it' (Transcript, WS750043, p. 7).

What is significant across the thread of the three responses outlined above is the role that reflection plays. This is crucial in continually repositioning participants of the professional learning experiences so that they keep evaluating, reflecting and developing their personal understandings as part of a continuous process of reflection and refinement.

I want to also briefly reflect on some comments made by Shannon, a young executive member of the same large primary school as Malcolm. Shannon accompanied all her colleagues in the school leadership team to the course and viewed the collegiality of the process as an area of strength. The comments she made in the same interview to Malcolm are of particular interest. Her comments illustrate the way in which the home school environment shapes decision making and the degree of reflective practice that is in play.

> First and foremost I suppose it was the collegiality of being able to go as a team and further those discussions back at school. I think some of the things didn't seem relevant until you came back to school and something would happen and then that information would click in. I had a conversation just last week about the (enrolment) catchment areas of the school and the first thing I thought of was the thing we had talked about, about making the right decisions about telling parents about what a catchment areas is. So some of the information didn't seem overly relevant until you came back and put it into place at school when a situation arose (Transcript, WS750066, p. 2).

Integral to these comments by Shannon were insights into cohesive and transparent school cultures specifically, the value of shared practice and being part of a team, equity of opportunities and crucially, the teachers' sense of not working in professional isolation. The observations were also interesting in light of the comment made by Chappell and Craft about the dangers of some professional learning conversation being neatly 'packaged

into one answer' (2011, p. 376). The process experienced by Shannon highlights the importance of the local context being an instrumental component of the reflective process and the subsequent learning that occurs as participants from the course are able to interact. What is also clear is the sense of how the learning is not always instantaneous. Shannon's comments describe the gradual development of understanding and the role of shared dialogue in bringing it to the fore so that it can be applied in a meaningful way when an opportunity for implementation arises. As the course designer, the comments strongly affirmed my initial decision to stage the course across 10 months. This duration allowed participants to be constructively engaged with the learning from the course, and most importantly to develop reflective practice through shared ongoing dialogue in their school workplaces.

Sustaining leaders – linking theory and practice

Motivation and engagement are critical factors at play in designing and shaping appropriate professional development experiences for school leaders and leadership teams. One of my key aims, as a facilitator of professional learning for school leaders, is to develop practical material that successfully engages participants at all levels of their professional careers inclusive of experienced, inexperienced and aspiring leaders. The authenticity of the material is paramount. I view my role as facilitator as one that fosters critical professional conversations around the 'grey' areas of practice, work context and policy intersection. As Cranston has observed, cases that involve an exploration of authentic scenarios are effective in 'making the theory-practice links for principals and in facilitating cooperative and collaborative learning' (2008, p. 593). These theory–practice links are also acknowledged by Dempster et al. who use the metaphor of a 'bridge' to explain that 'case studies provided a "reality" bridge between theory and practice' (2002, p. 432).

The nature of the 'reality' bridge has changed for local schools in Australia, as a result of the heightened expectations of schools and their leadership resulting from the global trend in educational reform to provide more localised decision-making capacity in schools. Celine, an experienced principal of a large primary school, observed that there was now an 'expectation that schools are more open … far more accountable than they have been and I think they're going to be a lot more accountable' (Transcript, WS750062, pp. 5–6). The nature of this future accountability is reflected in a later clarification by Celine: 'But I'm starting to think that there's a whole range of other add-ons that are coming … that people are expecting we can do and solve and then, tick' (Transcript, WS750062, p. 6). For Celine, the advent of these accountabilities heralds increased expectations of service delivery by stakeholders, new areas of responsibility and the potential for additional demands on the school principal and leadership team. These comments raise fundamental issues for all school leaders and their leadership teams as to how they communicate the nature of change to their communities and, specifically, the changing nature of the principal's role and responsibilities.

The dimensions of this new 'playing field' are illustrated in three further interviews. Riannan, a deputy principal, reflected on the complexities around the management of a parent-generated issue dealing with the proposed sponsorship of the school's sports uniform by a local company. The complexity, as Riannan noted, lay in balancing the parent initiative and enthusiasm with further reflection and research of the issues before a decision could be reached (Transcript, WS750048, pp. 3–4). In an interview, Anna described a situation where a parent 'didn't get the answer she wanted'. For Anna, the complexity heightened because the parent had expected 'an answer then and there' (Transcript, WS750043, p. 7). The situation became even more complex for Anna when the parent threatened going to the police to resolve the situation.

Anna's situation illustrates why transparent processes, collegial support and mentoring are of value to all school leaders, but especially for inexperienced leaders who may be dealing with threats or harassment for the first time as a result of a decision-making process. In this light, I want to make a brief comment about Gemma, a newly-appointed primary executive member in a large primary school. She reflected during an interview on a difficult conversation with a parent. She then noted the value of being able to show the parent the procedural steps in the decision-making process. For Gemma, transparency of ethical practice was important as:

> it makes it easier for them to understand why some decisions are made … you have to make sure that the (policies and procedures) are fair for everyone concerned, and if you've got clear steps in place, then it's much easier to follow (Transcript, WS750074, p. 3).

While some of these situations and complex, multilayered dilemmas are very confronting, the dilemmas by their very nature also highlight the need to explore and discuss the layers of complexity in appropriate professional learning. It is important that future leaders are coached and supported in ethical practice so that they can deal with these dilemmas to the best of their ability. In the light of these three narratives about heightened expectations, the government reform agenda and the implications that flow for school decision making, I have provided a few brief comments on the significance of framing conversations in the workplace about ethical practice. Greater transparency of professional practice and new inclusive models of governance are now essential organisational components for all schools in an era marked by increased accountability and greater stakeholder engagement.

The language of the workplace – framing conversations about ethical practice

Ethical frameworks, codes of practice and ethical decision-making principles have the potential to provide guidance and ensure accountability when individual members of an organisation seek to work through complex and difficult situations where there are often competing viewpoints. These frameworks and codes are a key aspect of transparency and informed new models of governance. Greater moves towards localised decision making and governance in schools generate significant new areas of professional practice for all schools illustrated by new accountabilities.

Zander and Zander (2000) articulate the need to be alert to situations where there is the 'danger of unseen definitions, assumptions and frameworks' (p. 178) governing practice. The two authors argue for a paradigm shift that recognises the ability to:

> make a conscious use of our own way with words to define new frameworks for possibility that bring out the part of us that is most contributory, most unencumbered, most open to participation' (Zander & Zander, 2000, p. 178).

These comments are insightful, as they illustrate the key role that language plays in communication and comprehension within an organisation. The words highlight the value to be gained by participatory dialogues and open conversations that allow all key stakeholders to consider workplace practices and exchange understandings of contestable concepts such as integrity, values, ethical and public duty. One of my key aims was to build for course participants an understanding of transparent and empowering workplace cultures. For this reason, communication and communication strategies are a focus of many shared dialogues with course participants. One resource of value in providing guidance for educational leaders and leadership teams is a joint training kit for professionals in the NSW Department of Health, which was produced by the ICAC in

conjunction with NSW Health (2007). The training kit was designed as an anti-corruption resource and includes a range of scenarios. These scenarios address complex, authentic ethical dilemmas for participants to explore in group discussion and through reflection.

The introduction to the kit, 'Managing the Risk of Corruption: A Training Kit for the NSW Public Health Sector' (ICAC & NSW Health, 2007, p. 5) identifies the key role of leaders in setting the 'ethical tone of their workplaces' and links anti-corruption with the promotion of integrity within the organisation. The link and use of 'integrity' allowed me as a facilitator to pose blunt questions to the course participants about the nature of integrity and what its characteristics may be in an organisational setting. The kit also contains an excellent section which addresses conflicts of interest and provides definitions of key terms relating to ethical practice which include the concepts of conflict, pecuniary interest and public duty. By exploring the language and terminology of these key concepts, participants in professional learning workshops were given opportunities to share understandings and consider the key roles played by communication and language in establishing ethical frameworks. The concepts of conflict, pecuniary interest and public duty need to be considered carefully in the determination of the nature of the issue or dilemma that is being encountered.

The complexity of the ethical problem

For educational leaders and leadership teams, when dealing with school-based dilemmas, there are often multiple and overlapping problems that develop throughout the process of seeking to resolve the dilemma. This was why the image of the 'messy thick story' (Cranston, 2008; Fauske, 2000; Murphy, 2007) is invaluable as it visualises for course participants the complexity and intertwined nature of the issues being considered for

resolution. One key skill that I sought to develop in participants was the ability to accurately define the issue or problem that was the basis of the dilemma.

Stakeholders from outside the school may not view a situation – for example, a student enrolment following an expulsion – unfolding in a school in the same terms as the school leadership team. Teaching staff in a similar way conceptualise a problem relating to a student's inability to attend an afternoon detention differently from an executive staff member, the school principal, or a parent. The ability to recognise and accommodate alternative points of view are important skills in ethical decision making.

During The Ethical Decision Making Course I found opportunities to highlight dilemmas that had more than one possible solution or course of action. This allowed the course participants to explore the strategic and tactical advantages of different approaches to resolving an issue. This process also allowed the participants to look at courses of action through an ethical lens and to consider if the proposed solution was ethical. Malcolm, a course participant in a focus group interview, describes scenario-based learning as a process which:

> [makes you] think more deeply about things. It makes you think more broadly about things. It makes you think about things that you would never have thought about either. Ah, there's a lot of wow things wow, I didn't know about that (Transcript, WS750066, p. 11).

Malcolm's comment raises some interesting insights from another interview with two young members of a school executive team from another large primary school. Alma, a young executive member, noted that good communication involves being a good listener and explains:

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you need to be able to see the perspectives from more than one person, not just

from yourself. You need to be open-minded and listen to all the different

perceptions of other people before you make a decision (Transcript,

WS750072, p. 4).

The comments by Malcolm and Alma highlight the value of the 'creative learning

conversation', the importance in recognising the validity of other points of view,

alternative solutions and approaches, and the roles played by listening, reflection and

metacognition in the development of individual understanding. For a young school leader

or aspirational leader contemplating a future career as a substantive school leader, the

comments also underline the significance of effective professional learning and

succession-management experiences. These experiences are crucial as they promoted the

sharing of professional practice between experienced, novice and aspiring leaders.

The role of the course facilitator

As the course facilitator, I employed different methodologies in delivering the content of

the scenarios and the ethical questions and dilemmas that were under consideration. On

some occasions, I designed the professional learning scenarios around a common theme

and employed a PowerPoint presentation to unravel the 'messy thick story' (Fauske, 2000;

Murphy, 2007; Cranston, 2008) one frame at a time, so the participants could be fully

immersed in a complex scenario as it developed. On other occasions, as course facilitator, I

posed an ethical question and sought to elicit from the course participants a range of

different ways of considering and responding to the ethical issues which were involved.

An example of this approach can be found in the scenario I developed dealing with

bullying behavior by a student and the questions that I posed for course participants which related to intervention and reporting by teaching staff.[49]

One of the key drivers of my pedagogical approach is to have participants realise the complexity of the situations, dilemmas, and ethical options which school leaders face in making their decisions. My pedagogical understanding endorses an approach outlined by Dempster et al. (2002). In their research, they comment that school principals can be better prepared 'to respond to the challenges of contemporary school leadership through professional development approaches that take account of the ethical complexity of school-based management' (2002, pp. 427–428). Buskey (2013) employs the term 'courageous leadership' to explain the processes where school leaders learn through these new experiences and acquisition of knowledge. For Dempster et al., a significant challenge for principals occurs when they are 'confronted with decisions that are influenced by macro political, social and market driven forces' (2004, p. 163). For this reason, Dempster et al. call for a rethink on the nature of induction for newly-appointed principals so that these novice principals may be more alert to the impact of a 'range of macro-contextual influences' on their decision making (2004b, p. 172). They also note the situation has become even more complicated as 'school-based management has expanded the constituency of people with an influence on the principal's work' (2004b, p. 173).

For Malcolm, the scenarios 'allowed us to be more proactive rather than going into reactive decision making' (Transcript, WS750066, p. 11). For this reason, throughout the course I continuously used complex ethical questions and explored areas of contestable decision making for school leaders. I used a wide range of authentic scenarios to probe and generate discussion about areas of policy implementation and management practice in

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[49]Ethical Decision Making Toolkit, Part 4: 'The Conversation'.

schools. The comprehensive list is a guide to the range of dilemmas which were posed to course participants for reflection and discussion throughout the course.[50] The list is based on authentic situations encountered by principals with whom I have worked as a senior departmental officer. A separate list arose following a discussion at an afternoon workshop session during the Ethical Decision Making Course as to the appropriateness of setting scenario questions in a formal interview for a leadership position in a school.[51]

In working through these possible scenarios, I provided guidance, as a facilitator, to the framing of some of the discourses by asking workshop groups to consider in their deliberations key aspects of policy and policy implementation. This guidance covered key operational issues for school leaders including roles and responsibilities, record keeping, transparency and availability of school policies, the nature of the school professional learning cycle and calendar, disputation and conflict-resolution procedures. Another area discussed at length was the role and form that a school communication policy document could serve in warding off potential areas of conflict.[52]

The Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders– insights from field work

One of the significant moments I experienced in my field work was during a focus-group interview involving an entire school leadership team who had participated in the Ethical Decision Making Course. The moment was profound, as comments from two participants made me sharply rethink some of my key assumptions about the course, and the future professional use and direction of the resources I had developed. The comments from Mary and Malcolm come from a passage of dialogue where all the participants, members of the

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[50] The list can be viewed in Appendix 4.
[51] This list of scenario-based questions for merit selection interviews for principal and executive positions is found in Appendix 5.
[52] This area is explored in more detail in Professional Practice Initiative 3 that focuses on practitioner research.

school executive team, were encouraged to make final comments in relation to the professional learning experiences of which they had been a part.

Mary commented as follows.

> I think the process we went through … increased individual and team knowledge. It allowed for personal growth as well as team growth. I thought all of those aspects made us become better leaders, better workers in the – in our school and in the system in general (Transcript, WS 750066, pp. 31–32).

Malcolm added to the commentary.

> I think it's already been covered … but the ability to basically be able to come back and reflect about what we do and reflect personally and reflect as a team … significant at this time with all of the changes that are coming through … I think if those opportunities are provided … where we have, maybe, your team groups and your aspiring leaders. What it actually does is it allows your staff to actually become engaged in their profession (Transcript, WS 750066, pp. 31–32).

Teaching is a collaborative and collegial profession by its very nature. In creating and developing the professional learning resources, I positioned the learning for leaders and aspiring leaders in isolation. As a result, I failed to understand the value of the resources as professional learning for the leadership group as a team – as an element of collaborative practice that facilitated sharing, discussion and both individual and group reflection. In the focus group interview, both Mary and Malcolm responded to the power of team learning, knowledge and shared reflection. They allude to their personal growth, but they also recognise clearly the increased knowledge and engagement that comes from sharing

professional practice and rich conversations with peers. Malcolm commented on the value of this process and reflection at a time of significant educational change within the profession. Mary acknowledged the value of the learning and reflection for her as a leader, a member of her school professional learning community, and as a public school teacher working in the NSW Department of Education.

The last response in the focus growth interview came from Aida, the school principal who requested that her entire leadership team be part of the professional learning course. Her comments following on from the earlier comments by two of her executive on team knowledge and team growth are illuminating.

> My plan in taking the executive was for a team-building exercise, but it actually surpassed what I was hoping for. It engaged each one of them; it developed a camaraderie between them in a different sense to what we had before … these whole discussions brought out each of their expertises and I think they saw each other in a very different way professionally. It allowed them to support each other in a different way personally. That's where a lot of that resilience and where a lot of that cooperation and where a lot of that confidentiality and team work was actually enhanced by doing this process for my team. (Transcript, WS750066, p. 33).

I find Aida's use of the word 'process' illuminating as it suggests the growth of participants individually and as team members. The principal's initial intention of using the course as a 'team-building exercise' overlapped with the intention of one other principal who commented in an individual interview that she had viewed the course as 'a really good team-building process for us to do it together' (Transcript, WS750062, p. 1).

For Aida, the principal of this large, complex primary school, the benefits went beyond team building. Her comments include a range of benefits that relate to her executive at both an individual and team level, including increased camaraderie, development and recognition of individual expertise, increased professional support for each other, resilience, cooperation, confidentiality and enhanced team work.

The attributes she described centre on empowerment that celebrates the power of the team. These attributes will be needed by all leaders in the future to build workplaces which illustrate and promote ethical practice for all constituent members of the team including students, staff, parents and the community. The comments by Aida also echo the responses of two participants from the whole-school workshop which I facilitated in a special needs school in December 2012 to which I refer in extensive detail in my first Professional Practice Initiative.

Zarina, one of the classroom teacher participants, commented in an evaluation on the value of a group discussion in relation to school policy: 'Have had policies but reviewing and discussing as a group clears the mind'. This response was also echoed in a longer comment made in an evaluation by Mika, another classroom teacher participant, who noted in part that the 'many thoughts and ideas which were opened up were good to think about. We deal with many of them day to day but other people's responses were very helpful'.

Building a culture of understanding

In a focus group interview I conducted with Aida and her entire school executive team who had all been participants of the Ethical Decision Making Course, the term 'a culture of understanding' was used by Malcolm to explain the significance of sharing and refining understanding in a workplace. Malcolm explained:

like the attendance scenario … enables us to come back to the school and liaise

with the front office … and liaise with our staff who are at the forefront of

marking rolls … Us sharing a vision about this … these are the expectations. So

there's a clear process that's understood by everybody so that there's a culture

of understanding based around that issue (Transcript, WS750066, p. 26).

These comments by Malcolm about a 'culture of understanding' capture the movement away from a traditional hierarchical model of school operation. Previously, the knowledge and power had resided in the hands of those with traditional authority based on rank. Malcolm's comments relate to a new model of shared practice and reflection built around an ongoing learning conversation. Hierarchies have perpetuated one way of looking at and solving a challenge. Open shared dialogue, reflective in nature and removed from hierarchies, has the potential to consider a much fuller range of approaches, opinions and strategies. The concept of a 'culture of understanding' reveals how Malcolm has involved a range of school staff, including teaching and administrative staff, to explore an issue and find new solutions to a problematic area of school practice. The words 'us sharing a vision' reinforce how the knowledge and solutions come from a model of shared interactive practice.

A model of shared interactive practice does not exist in all schools. In an interview from 2012, Ian, a secondary school head teacher, highlighted the issue for some substantive and aspiring leaders of professional isolation and 'tunnel vision' (Mezirow, 1991, p. 199). It was interesting to listen to and consider Ian's point of view, as the majority of course participants were from primary schools. In commenting on his learning from the course, Ian noted that in 'secondary work, we're quite isolated towards our faculties' (Transcript, WS750047, p. 3). He then drew a comparison with his primary colleagues and

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acknowledged that the majority of his focus was spent on 'what is best for my faculty' in comparison to leaders from a primary setting who he described as 'actually looking more at the whole picture for what's best for the school, rather than just for just the subject area' (Transcript, WS750047, p. 4). The concept of the 'whole picture' perspective is a strong reminder that the learning needs and leadership practices of workshop participants vary enormously. The shared interactive practice which Ian recognised is valuable because of the insights that were provided to him as 'you actually see what's going on in the primary schools as well' (Transcript, WS750047, p. 3).

For Beatty, the real challenge for school leaders in ensuring that this quality practice can occur is in finding 'emotionally safe spaces for learning and growing together' (2007, p. 328). Accordingly, the professional learning scenarios on ethical decision making I facilitated are always prefaced by a short dialogue on valuing the ideas of others, being non-judgemental and sharing. It is in this context that I make some brief comments on principal welfare and sustainability.

Principal welfare and sustainability – an important responsibility

Principal welfare and the sustainability of the present and future generations of school leaders are an integral aspect of the design of The Ethical Decision Making Course. I use the concept of sustainability in its broadest sense to denote the way in which leaders need to be supported to grow and develop their leadership skills and attributes during their principalship. The complexity of the school leader's role calls for 'knowledgeable and politically astute principals' who are able to demonstrate skills in negotiating their way through the 'macro-contextual and micro-contextual influences on them to reach ethically defensible decisions when troublesome matters arise' (Dempster et al., 2004b, p. 173).

The design element of the course is strongly supported by the research undertaken by Riley and Langan-Fox (2014) which examines the impact of bullying and stress-induced pressures on school principals and health professionals. The concept of 'entering the minefield', is a narrative theme of this doctorate that alludes to the dangers posed to school leaders in undertaking the complex work of educational leadership in a milieu of combative decision making. Principal welfare and sustainability are key dimensions to effective leadership practice that need to be endorsed and passed on from one generation of leaders to the next generation of leaders through shared professional practice.

Lunenburg (2010) has explored the welfare, management and leadership of school principals from perspectives including leadership functions, administrative roles, management skills, task dimensions and effectiveness, and human resource operation. In his research, Lunenburg affirms how 'human skills are important to school leaders at all levels' and describes school environments provided by excellent schools and excellent leaders as 'warm, nurturing, caring, trusting (2010, p. 7). As such, he suggests that effective principals are 'cheerleaders, facilitators, coaches and nurturers of champions' (Lunenburg, 2010, p. 7). The earlier comments from Aida and her executive team reveal the way in which participation in the Ethical Decision Making Course facilitates the gaining and sharing of these people skills that assist areas of current and future practice in decision making.

Educational leadership can also be described in terms of productive social interactions, the building of relationships and the fostering of inclusive social practice (Gunter, 2006). Hierarchical models of leadership from the past are in the process of being put aside for new more inclusive models of shared and distributed leadership. The new paradigm requires that positive, productive relationships are a focal point for leadership activity

which drives learning at all levels of the organisational matrix as learners collaboratively interact, share knowledge and gain understanding. Gunter concludes:

> the approach is not so much about controlling relationships through job
> descriptions or team processes but is about how the agent is connected with
> others in their own and other's learning (2006, p. 263).

As new inclusive models of leadership are practised, greater transparency occurs as parents, community stakeholders and school organisations interact with each other.

More opportunities need to be provided to diverse cross sections of a school community to become involved in professional learning about decision making. Whole school professional learning enables all sections of a school community to gain insight into the leadership practices and procedures that are foundational to a school's effective governance and organisation. In an era of increased localised decision making and major reform across the education sector this is a valuable insight to foster, as evidenced by the comments I cited earlier from Zarina and Mika. Communication, the transmission and sharing of knowledge, and the language of a workplace all play significant roles in establishing a productive workplace climate. These areas of human endeavor build the skills of members and define an organisation's identity as research by Menzel (2003, 2012) has illustrated. Communication, knowledge sharing and empowerment remain powerful components of ethical cultures and organisational value systems. They enhance wellbeing and sustainability for leaders, as well as members.

Reflecting on these comments from the interviews using the multiple lenses of a professional learning facilitator, a senior departmental officer, a developer of professional learning for school leaders and a researcher gathering field work data was both illuminating and confronting at the same time. The scenarios that are the foundation of the

course content clearly trigger professional learning experiences that are valued and allow reflection by the participants who were part of the workshops. But at a much deeper level, as revealed by the participant comments, there are real benefits to be derived from professional learning experiences that include a broader group than just the leader. This broader group may include the school leadership team or even an entire school staff. The benefits are the inclusive, shared dialogue and subsequent reflection that the scenarios generate. This process of professional learning for a large, inclusive group allows for rich discussions about areas of practice, policy and ethical outcomes.

As I indicated to Aida and her leadership team at the conclusion of my focus group interview with them in May 2013, a way forward for the professional learning will be to reshape modules of the learning for a leadership team or school group, rather than to continue to provide the scenarios for individual leaders or aspiring leaders only. My intention for future courses on ethical decision making is to include modules designed for school leadership teams and workshops for all teaching and administrative staff. It would also be worthwhile to trial a scenario online facilitating shared dialogue and practice between metropolitan and some geographically remote schools. Countering the 'glacier of isolation' must remain a priority for all members of the education profession.

Scholarly Paper 3: Educational Leadership

Introduction

In this third scholarly paper I explore the nature and framing of educational leadership in contemporary Australia. I consider this against the backdrop of the national education reform agenda implemented by the Rudd and Gillard Commonwealth Labor Governments from 2007 to 2013. With these reforms have come new accountabilities and system-level priorities at both federal and state level. These have included standards frameworks for teachers and principals, rewards payments, the rebadging in some Australian states of public schools as 'independent public schools', the publication of school performance data and financial information on the internet, and national benchmarks for literacy and numeracy.

Accompanying this vast canvas of educational reform are new expectations for school leadership and accountability, new definitions of responsibility for those in leadership roles, and moves towards greater transparency of decision making embracing all elements of the school community including students and parents. The challenges are enormous for schools and their leaders. This situation has led one group of researchers to recently declare that 'effective, ethical school leadership becomes imperative in a context of increasing performance-driven accountability' (Ehrich, Harris, Klenowski, Smeed & Spina, 2015b, p. 197).

A context – neoliberal reforms and education

A useful starting point from which to explore the intersection of educational leadership, policy reform and new market-driven imperatives is a consideration of the impact of neoliberalism provided by Gobby (2013). He describes its impact as being marked by its 'cultivation and normalisation of entrepreneurial and competitive attitudes, dispositions

and capacities' (2013, p. 280). Managerialism, neoliberalism, new public management, productivity and 'competitor countries' are all concepts that traditionally have associations with the world of business, economic markets and competition. These concepts are now given wider coverage in educational research studies, evaluations of government education policy and in media commentaries. The research studies address core aspects of schools and their daily business including student performance levels, curriculum provision, values, financial costs, educational standards, teacher training, teacher quality, leadership and succession planning.

Neoliberalism, new public management and managerialism are concepts that have increasingly been applied to the field of education since the early 2000s.[53] With new directions driven by the education reform movement have come shifts in power, authority, decision making, and redefined accountabilities for the school sector.

Educational reform and change

In exploring managerialism in a South African context, Heystek poses the question as to whether the professional development of school leaders represents 'leadership training or leadership moulding' by government (2007, pp. 499–502). Fitzgerald and Gunter focus on the large-scale educational change in New Zealand 'premised on fiscal efficiency and organisational effectiveness' which they believed had 'shifted responsibility and accountability for the processes and outcomes of schooling from the state to schools' (2006, p. 43). 'Teacher Leadership: a new form of Managerialism?', the title of the study

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[53]The following studies all address neoliberal concepts within the education system: Connell (2009, 2013), Davies and Bansel (2007), Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006), Gobby (2013), Gold, Evans, Earley, Halpin and Collarbone (2003), Gunter (2008), Heystek (2007), Smyth (2008), Wright (2001, 2003) and, Wright and MacNeill (2010).

by Fitzgerald and Gunter, highlights the shift in educational practice and provides evidence of the nature of the changing relationship between government and schools.

Australia is not immune to these recent major educational trends evident elsewhere in the western world with Down commenting that Australian schools are being 'restructured and recultured around the narrowly-conceived and instrumentalist values of neo-liberalism' (2009, p. 51). Connell argues there is now 'the construction of an imposing new apparatus of certification and regulation for teachers' (2009, p. 214). She captures an earlier depiction by two researchers of a worldwide trend of reform in education that has created the 'eruption of a leadership industry to train and certify leaders, leading and leadership in schools' (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008, p. 332)

The use of 'eruption' succinctly conveys both the speed and force of change delivered by the new educational reforms, a theme subsequently taken up by Mockler (2013, 2015) who highlights the specific details of the implications of these reforms for school leadership in the creation and documentation of teacher performance and development frameworks. The evidence of this new 'leadership industry' at a state and national level in Australia has been illustrated by the recent creations of the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) in New South Wales, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

Groundwater-Smith and Mockler describe this era of educational reform as the 'age of compliance' (2009, p. 11). With new models of educational service delivery and new expectations of educational leadership have come increased tensions across the school sector. Connell (2013) refers to this new world order as a 'system of remote control' and describes it as 'operated by funding mechanisms, testing systems, certification, audit and

surveillance mechanisms' (2013, p. 108). Mockler depicts the challenges posed by a neoliberal approach to teacher professional learning as a move towards 'carbon copies' of teacher professional practice which reflects an 'impoverished view of teachers and their work', quite removed from a model that supports agility and 'robust teacher identities' (2013, p. 45). For Mockler, moves towards conformity of practice across state jurisdictions has the potential to undermine the authentic learning of teachers and the innovative nature of their professional practice in the workplace. The ultimate endpoint of such a system, Mockler concludes, is the loss of teacher identity and professional voice.

As previously noted the federal and state governments of Australia have released new policy frameworks for public education with accompanying funding reorientation for empowering local school communities and their decision-making practices.[54]Ball identifies similar processes and expectations in an overview of policy evolution in the United Kingdom. He argues that the processes do not just pertain to the field of education, but indicate evidence of 'a major transformation in the organising principles of social provision right across the public sector' (1997, p. 258). For Ball, this major transformation encompasses 'forms of employment, organisational structures, cultures and values, systems of funding, management roles and styles' (1997, p. 258).

Ball's analysis illustrates why new leadership models, organisational cultures, accountabilities and relationships come into play as a result of shifts in public policy engineered by governments. These processes are further evidence of policy debates in the public sector now occupying a role in a more centralised debate concerned with the 'task

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[54]Examples of this process at work include the initial Commonwealth-funded National Partnership for Schools called *Empowering Local Communities* (2011), the Western Australian Government's *Independent Public Schools Initiative* (2010), the New South Wales Government's *Local Schools, Local Decisions* (2012), the Queensland Government's *Independent Public Schools Initiative* (2013) and Tasmania's *Community Empowered Schools* program (2014).

of retooling the state to face new social risks' (Graefe, 2005, p. 1). As a result of these transformations outlined by Ball (1997) and Graefe (2005), our contemporary understanding of leaders, leadership and leadership processes will not be immune from change, but will continue to be further refined and shaped by these processes at work within our society.

Leadership and educational leadership

The words 'leader' and 'leadership' are subject to a vast number of definitions, interpretations, viewpoints and theories, encompassing all professions and fields of human endeavor. These understandings fall across the workings of all aspects of the field of education, encompassing schools, curriculum development, educational administration, policy formulation and accreditation authorities.

Theories of leadership and leading abound, as Kaser and Halbert note in their referencing of 'distributed, ethical, instructional, strategic, sustainable and transformational theories of leadership' (2009, p. 2). Educational leadership can be seen, not as a constant, but as a complex set of intertwined relationships which reflect a changing world order, noting 'structural reforms in education have been impelled by globalisation and market economy imperatives, which have created corresponding shifts in public administration, including school leadership practice' (Starr, 2009, p. 21). Exploring the nature of successful school leadership in Australia, Gurr links leadership and influence concluding that the 'impact of educational leadership is mainly indirect because leadership is essentially a process of influence where educational leaders are mostly working through, or influencing others to achieve goals' (2009, p. 369). Leadership and change are inexorably linked as Fullan argues. He offers a succinct definition of leadership, taking up this sense of the ability to influence others, as the 'capacity to lead change' (2009, p. 44). Menzel questions whether

creative leadership and ethical leadership can be 'learned as complementary components of effectiveness' (2015, p. 315).

Common to these understandings is the sense that leadership is a dynamic which involves a series of social relationships between a leader and followers built around a framework of decisions and interplays. Leadership is constantly evolving as the relationships between the leader and others develop, expectations are built, followers join and leave the group, and interactions take place across periods of time. Ethical leaders make decisions by utilising ethical frameworks in the workplace and empower others by building their skill sets through shared decision making. This definition of leadership is situated within the framework of 'service-orientated leadership' as described by Ehrich, Ehrich and Knight (2012, pp. 40–42). This framework articulates dimensions inclusive of the empowerment of constituent members, the display of moral authority and the sharing of power to grow the skill sets of constituent members. This transformational model of leadership is also strongly aligned to the model of ethical leadership and empowerment proposed by Menzel (2015), which includes the attributes of 'being an ethical role model to others, treating people fairly and actively managing ethics' (2015, p. 316).

Educational leaders are a diverse multi-layered group and include classroom teachers, executive staff in schools, school principals, educational administrators, researchers, accrediting authorities, the executive of professional teaching associations, and senior officers working within the policy implementation arm of the various ministries of education across Australia. Many educational leaders will fulfill different leadership roles during their careers and juggle at the one time different combinations of these roles. Crucially, as Fitzgerald and Gunter note, 'leadership in schools occurs in multiple ways and is not necessarily bound by hierarchy and the structural organisation of teachers'

labour' (2006, p. 48). Teacher leaders, teacher leadership and distributive leadership are all concepts that are gaining greater prevalence and increased attention in modern educational settings, as there is heightened focus on school classrooms, curriculum choices, student performance, comparative performance, and the expertise of teaching professionals (Beatty, 2007; Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006, 2008).

The motivations and aspirations of 'Gen X' teachers (Neidhart & Carlin, 2005) and 'Gen Y' teachers (Breakspear, 2010) and how best to use their skill sets, are also key aspects of this reconceptualisation of leadership in a teaching and learning context. Educational leadership is about the nature of schooling, and increasingly about policy choices that relate to schools and may involve curriculum considerations, financial priorities or teacher professional learning amid myriad competing priorities. Educational leadership is primarily about students, their teaching and learning, and the policy decisions that need to be implemented to support students in all facets of their schooling. Moves towards heightened performance-driven accountability has the potential to undermine this central relationship as has been noted earlier in the introduction to this scholarly paper.

The focus on students and their needs is what distinguishes educational leadership from other forms of leadership. The duty of care to students remains the critical underpinning element of teachers' lives and school practice. Duty of care towards students remains a fundamental accountability for all school leaders and the education professionals they lead. The Department of Education in New South Wales includes in the policy document *Leading and Managing the School* [55] as one of its key accountabilities for principals, 'addressing the welfare needs of each student in a safe, responsive and harmonious

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[55] Leading and Managing the School' (2000) includes seven key areas of designated accountability for all Principals in New South Wales public schools which include Educational Leadership, Educational Programs, Learning Outcomes, Student Welfare, Staff Welfare, Development and Management, Physical and Financial Resource Management, School and Community Partnerships.

teaching and learning environment' (2000, p. 3). Duty of care and the focus on students

and their needs is also directly linked to values and contested interplays about the nature of

the curriculum and extra curricula activities to which I now turn.

Leadership, values and high stakes

Values displayed by a leader and those in a leadership team play a significant role in

determining the moral climate of a workplace. Begley and Johansson define values as

'conceptions of the desirable that motivate individuals and collective groups to act in

particular ways to achieve particular ends' (2008, p. 421). As they argue, values reflect an

'individual's basic motivations, shape attitudes, and reveal the intentions behind actions'

(2008, p. 421). Leadership style and cultural practices within a school cannot be set apart

from values.

The field of education is dynamic and continues to be shaped by complex contested

interplays from stakeholders, inclusive of government at both federal and state level,

seeking to exert a range of direct and indirect influences. Values, teacher accreditation,

remuneration and quality, the nature of appropriate professional learning, skill sets, and

leadership identification are all parts of this complex educational jigsaw puzzle.

Governments, accreditation authorities and modern school leaders are required to confront

these significant issues as they address educational reform and the increased scrutiny of

school performance by a growing range of stakeholders.

In an analysis of public education policy and its role in Australian society, Smyth argues

that one of the key contested interplays is around values debates – 'whose values are given

prominence and whose are denied or excluded' (2008, p. 229). Smyth refers to these

contested interplays as a 'high-stakes area'. The metaphor of 'high-stakes' is a succinct

reminder that there will be winners and losers from these contested interplays, that

compromises may have to be found, partnerships developed to share resources, and that strategies will need to be adapted and re-adapted if some players are to remain in the game.

The work of schools, educational leaders and school leadership teams is complex and never far from the national spotlight. Leadership practice and decision making are constantly viewed through many critical frames by stakeholders who seek to have influence, both direct and indirect, over the daily practice of schools, school leaders and schooling systems. Educational leaders and schools do not work in isolation or in a vacuum. Their daily practice occurs against a background of competing demands, opinions, contested spaces and shifts in government policy direction. In this context, Gobby views educational policy making at the state level in Western Australian as ushering in an era characterised by 'new regulatory mechanisms' that impact on the 'management of schools' (2013, p. 283). Ball and Olmedo go even further when referring to the impact of neoliberalism on education, by describing its impact as a 'new' moral system which 'subverts and re-orients us to truths and ends' (2013, p. 88). Accountability and public performance have shaped professional practice in a 'field' where the ability to perform or perish is becoming a new mantra.

Australian states, such as New South Wales, with their public emphasis on de-regulation and self-reliance for their public school sector, have reconstituted state-level education into a new playing field. This new field is defined by highly-regulated mechanisms that govern national curriculum implementation, national standards for teachers, commitments to teacher quality linked to salary increments and progression, government registration for public schools and increased public reporting of educational outcomes achieved by students in the school. However local decision making and self-reliance are not inevitable and can become an illusion. This situation was illustrated in March 2016 in relation to

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aspects of the implementation of the national Safe Schools Program which addressed the needs of same-sex attracted, intersex and gender-diverse students. The situation witnessed clashes of 'values' between school communities and government decision makers who controlled the funding sources. The decision-making authority of school principals at a local level was put aside and there was open conflict among members of the federal coalition government.

The intensive media campaigns and national commentary by parliamentarians in relation to the Safe Schools Program is a poignant example of values being played out in a 'high-stakes area' (Smyth, 2008, p. 229). As reported by Ireland (2016), the Prime Minister had to defend the integrity of the program by seeking a review. In effect, some government members of parliament were directly seeking to force their own value perspectives on the education sector and rewrite policy directions as they effectively controlled the 'purse strings'. It is in this context that I will briefly comment on the framing of leadership, before making some comments on the evolution of educational leadership.

Framing leadership

Framing describes the dynamic process through which leadership is constructed, viewed and represented by others. This process provides insight into how leaders shape and create, as they engage with the expectations and value systems of others. In this light, Alvesson (2011) offers for consideration a new way of conceiving leadership and organisational thinking. He describes how leadership needs to be viewed as the 'adaption, mechanical reproduction, reinforcement, creative variation and/or rejuvenation of dominating cultural orientations' in organisations (2011, p. 161). These insights are invaluable as they allow for a framing of leadership which considers more objectively why some leadership models

adapt, while others grow and reassert their authority in line with policy directions which have already been undertaken.

In considering the nature of educational leadership and the role played by a duty of care, I am mindful of Hodginkson (1996) and his observation on modern organisations that 'leadership pervades the organisation. No one can escape leadership acts and responsibilities since no one can evade the administrative–managerial processes' (1996, p. 78). Eacott warns against simplistic definitions and cautions that 'leadership welcomes complexity and ambiguity and cannot be represented in a neat framework' (2009, p. 4).

Eacott's statement is informative for the way it succinctly introduces the concepts of complexity and ambiguity as they apply to myriad understandings about leadership, and raise the issue of how leadership is represented and framed, and by whom. The notion of framing is crucial because it brings to the fore the notion of how leadership is actively constructed, viewed and represented. This framing of leadership not only comes from the leader and the leader's actions, but also, results in how other observers view the leader, the role and the nature of the leadership as it intersects with others' expectations and beliefs on a daily basis in an organisational context.

Leadership is not an entity that exists in a vacuum without values being ascribed to it. Hodgkinson views leadership as a concept where 'power and authority merge' (1978, p. 91), thus referring to leadership as an 'abstraction', but also noting it 'is a convenient slogan word, eulogistic, blurring many levels of meaning, but also connoting many things which in an administrative sense are value-laden and significant' (1978, p. 91). Leaders determine and shape the nature of the learning communities they lead. For this reason, leaders have the ability to build open or closed workplace cultures, to define expectations about the roles of other executive staff and followers and to set directions for the future.

Leaders are also seen to play a crucial role in the determination of organisational values and belief systems (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007; Menzel, 2012; Terry, 1998). Values cannot be separated from the operation of organisational culture and the leader's role in shaping the culture. This is why Evans and Wurster (2000), in articulating an understanding of leadership post the arrival of the internet, suggest that leadership is irrevocably intertwined with organisational culture. In their study of the new information age, they describe the way in which the vision of leaders builds 'unique cultural values' and organisational identity (Evans & Wurster, 2000, p. 228).

The shift from traditional hierarchical models of educational leadership

The concept of 'leading in a culture of change' (Fullan, 2009) and the varying levels of influence that are initiated by leaders demonstrate both the complexity and often fragility of the processes that are put in play. Beatty (2007) shows that the educational playing field has now changed for the key participants. Different discourses are being sought that move away from the old conversations with their focus on 'school improvement and school effectiveness' (2007, p. 328). Beatty introduces the concept of 'holistic school renewal' and, while recognising that 'the legal responsibility continues to rest squarely on the principal's shoulders', she advocates a future that will include new 'visions of school leadership as distributed, distributive and shared', which are located in 'notions of collaborative inquiry within dynamic learning communities' (2007, p. 328). Beatty views this process as illustrating a shift from traditional hierarchical models of educational leadership to a more democratic and shared model that will be practiced in school communities.

The stance adopted by Beatty in arguing for a movement away from traditional hierarchies of leadership echoes Gunter's (2006) observation that educational leadership is about

productive social interactions, the building of relationships and inclusive social practice. Hierarchical models of leadership are in the process of being bypassed as they do not effectively illustrate how the learners at all levels of the learning organisation or educational environment interact, share knowledge and gain understanding. If effective educational leadership is in place, then teachers and school leaders may be involved in practices where they learn from students. This approach is not so much about 'controlling relationships through job descriptions or team processes' but is more about how the individual is 'connected with others in their own and other's learning' (Gunter, 2006, p. 263).

In the next section of this scholarly paper, I address the nature of 'effective educational leadership' and the concepts of 'bastard leadership' and new public management. I explore why, in the opinion of some commentators, independent values-driven educational leadership and real school autonomy are under threat from neoliberal reform agendas.

Bastard leadership, managerialism and new public management

Across the globe education is now a major area of expenditure in government budgets. It is no longer immune from heated debates that rage over 'value for money' or the needs of students who may lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. The ongoing political debates, controversy and continuous media commentary relating to the Review of Funding for Schooling (2011) chaired by David Gonski in Australia, demonstrates clearly that educational leaders are not isolated from these global debates and discourses. Concepts that include 'globalisation', 'global integration', and 'the employment market' have found their way into key policy documents in Australia. These concepts are assuming a prominent role in national discourses and highly-contested debates about the nature, funding and effectiveness of the public education system (Dinham, 2015). One such key

policy document is the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008) which addresses educational values, goals and the future directions of schooling in Australia.

One of the most significant aspects of the Melbourne Declaration is in the policy reviewing role that is outlined for the government sector. The role of governments is viewed as needing 'sound information on school performance to support ongoing improvement for students, schools and school sectors' (p. 17). One of the measures includes the provision of quality data to 'conduct national and international comparisons of approaches and performances' (p.17). The key driver is the reporting on achievement levels and improvement. This reporting allows for the collection of data that would include the performance of individual students, schools, and sectors – public, private, Catholic and Independent, and state. National and international comparisons can thus be made as policy development is linked to market-driven reporting mechanisms. The full impact of this focus on school performance is witnessed by the commitment found in subsequent Commonwealth legislation – *Australian Education Act* (Australian Government, 2013), to have Australia placed in the top five countries world-wide by 2025, based on performance in international standardised tests for reading, mathematics and science.

In further considering the earlier analysis by Ball on the 'transformation in the organising principles of social provision' (1997, p. 258), I want to now make a detailed comment on the concept of 'bastard leadership' as it has been used by Wright to comment on new leadership that emerged in his eyes to meet the reform agenda of the United Kingdom Labor Government under the leadership of Tony Blair from the late 1990s. 'Bastard leadership' represents a form of 'managerialism' where 'leadership as the moral and value basis of schools, seems to have been largely removed' (Wright, 2001, p. 278). For Wright,

leadership that addresses the needs of individual students has been replaced by a new operational culture in schools of performance-driven accountability. This culture is driven by government initiatives that have effectively curtailed the traditional responsibilities of caring educators in providing for students. In exploring the intersection of modern leadership with rapidly evolving government policy shifts within Australia, I felt that a section of my scholarly paper needed to address and comment in detail on the stand adopted by Wright (2001, 2003). Specifically, I want to explore in detail the ways in which Wright and others have framed the dialogue relating to neoliberal reform agendas, managerialism, new public management, and 'bastard leadership'.

In Australia researchers have expressed similar concerns and reservations to those of Wright, in light of moves by governments at national and state levels to introduce more localised models of school decision making and governance. Examples of these reservations, relating specifically to the impact of neoliberal reform agendas on schools and their leadership, can be found in three recent critiques. Smyth describes the functioning of self-managing schools as a 'policy ploy' which gives 'outward democratic appearances, while ensuring that the ends towards which schools work are determined centrally and policed through regimes of performance indicators' (2008, p. 230). In his critique of managerialism, Dinham challenges the notion that 'education needs to be deregulated, privatised and exposed to market forces in order to flourish' (2015, p. 7). He argues that one of the key negative impacts of neoliberal reforms is the apparent gain in momentum by a 'widespread movement to denigrate and dismantle public education' (Dinham, 2015, p. 3). Connell is even more blunt, declaring that the claim by supporters of neoliberal policy that public schools are being 'freed from stifling bureaucracy and heavy-handed state control' amounts to 'essentially a sham' (2013, p. 107).

Wright's writing is, at its core, an exploration of how leadership has changed, evolved and even 'mutated' or been corrupted. A consideration of Wright's work on 'bastard leadership' is instructive for the understandings which it provides of the new directions taken by educational leadership. These directions are best captured in the concept of a 'values-driven' leadership which is viewed by its advocates as a form of transformational leadership which builds leadership capacity across an organisation. Gunter describes transformational leadership as leadership designed to motivate 'individual followers to be cognitively and emotionally committed to government reform' (2004, p. 29). Wright (2001) believes that a sharp reconceptualisation of leadership has taken place driven by public policy change and views the transformation of leadership in these stark terms.

> Leadership as the moral and value underpinning for the direction of schools is
> being removed from those who work there. It is now very substantially located
> at the political level where it is not available for contestation, modification or
> adjustment to local variations. This 'bastard leadership' can also be understood
> as a form of managerialism (Wright, 2001, p. 280).

Wright argues that leadership discourses about schools and schooling have become corrupted by the drive towards managerial compliance with government policy. This compliance has replaced leaders' critical reflexivity and undermined their moral authority and that of the schools which they lead. In describing this move towards managerialism and what they believe is a corruption of leadership, Wright and MacNeill (2010) in a later study, offer a stark assessment of the future, and argue that educational leadership in schools has reached a major cross-roads.

> Anything less than a return to the morally defensible position of leading
> teaching and learning in schools will irreparably damage the credibility of

principals, and the unique position of the principalship in schools and society

(Wright and MacNeill, 2010, p. 2).

What is interesting about these comments is that the centrality of 'leading teaching and learning in schools' is a non-negotiable core moral value of school leaders. It is also interesting to note that the 'principalship', for Wright and MacNeill, is also viewed as having a role that transcends school boundaries into the society as a whole. The key focus on 'teaching and learning' is what, in a traditional sense, distinguishes the leadership of schools, and leadership within the education sector, from other forms of leadership.

Teaching and learning, however, should not be judged as the sole focus of a school principal or offered simply as a descriptor of core business. The daily business of schools remains complex and challenging, and is dependent on a range of accountabilities inclusive of financial planning, problem solving, parent and community partnership building, and succession planning. Accountabilities will vary across education sectors and will also reflect differing school contexts, the composition of leadership teams and enrolment profiles.

Gunter and Forrester (2009) explore how school leadership and educational policy-making in the United Kingdom pose further critical questions relating to knowledge, power and authority as a result of new directions and new forms of thinking on leadership. They describe a significant aspect of their research as including questions relating to the nature of knowledge which drives policy decision making and the identity of those who control and disseminate this knowledge. The two authors explain that, by studying the first decade of 'New Labor's' leadership of schools in the United Kingdom, they have been able to ask questions about 'the type of knowledge being used to frame policy; the ways of knowing that supported this; and the knowers who have developed the knowledge and knowing, and

have been listened to and engaged with' (2009, p. 498). The essence of this comment is crucial, as it asks who has the real authority, power and ability to make decisions. The asking presupposes that the educational leader of the school may not in fact be the key decision maker and that decision making may be impaired as a result of policy being constructed or shaped outside the school perimeter.

In their study titled 'New Pubic Management, Disestablishmentarianism and Bastard Leadership' Wright and MacNeill (2010) focus on the impact in British and Australian contexts of new public management which they describe as being characterised by 'outsourcing, cost management, competition and incentivisation' (2010, p. 1). It is interesting to note how 'accountability' and its relation to managerialism are depicted by Wright and MacNeill as 'managerialism, and its handmaiden, accountability', (2010, p. 2). The use of the term 'accountabalism' is also employed by the authors to denote the way in which the accountabilities of school leaders have become corrupted and cannibalised. For Wright and MacNeill, the most negative area of impact remains the manner in which principals are removed from the core business of teaching and learning. They argue that this is a significant failure in an era characterised by 'instructional and pedagogic leadership' (2010, p. 2).

Wright's comments are valuable in highlighting the link between leaders, their values, decision-making processes and school cultures. Not all principals are visionary leaders (Heysek, 2010, p. 502) or have the capacity to be of that stature. However, principals do continue to have a key role in setting the direction of the school in response to government priorities and the needs of their local school community. Hodgkinson shows that the quality of leadership is 'functionally related to the moral climate of the organisation and this, in turn, to the moral complexity and skills of the leader' (1978, p. 179). It is important

to consider the discourses that surround managerialism and 'bastard leadership', but it is also equally important to consider the ways in which school cultures can be reshaped to their advantage to become more transparent and inclusive of their key constituents, enabling greater synergies to take place.

Deep leadership

As educational leadership is remodeled and refocused through shifts in government public policy, educational leaders adopt new roles. Wright's depiction of 'bastard leadership' has been challenged by Gold et al. (2003). The authors, who carried out research on school leadership in the United Kingdom, present ten case studies in which they critique examples of 'values-driven' leadership. Gold et al. argue for the adoption of new transformational models of leadership which 'emphasise inclusivity and greater teacher participation' (2003, p. 128). The researchers explain the need for this development as an underpinning of models of school leadership which 'stress the important psychological function that communicating positive invitational messages' has for enabling individuals and groups to 'build and act on a shared vision of enhanced learning for pupils' (2003, p. 128).

In the light of this analysis, it is important to briefly consider parents and community members as examples of two groups that are increasingly part of localised decision making in schools, thus further contributing to the shared vision of enhanced learning described by Gold et al. (2003). Leadership, as it is being contested, framed, modified and adjusted at a local level by educational leaders across Australia is increasingly including greater representation of stakeholders in formal relationships, reporting structures and decision making. One example of this inclusivity and reframing of leadership decision making is the involvement of local Aboriginal communities in the framing of school plans that are

part of the Commonwealth's reform agenda for schools funded through the National Partnership for Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities (2010).

Another way of comprehending these discourses relating to managerialism, 'bastard leadership', self-managing schools and transformational leadership is to consider the frames of sustainable leadership and sustainability advanced by Davies (2007). In his writing on 'deep leadership', Davies elicits nine key factors from research on sustainable and strategically successful schools. Distinguishing between outcomes and outputs, Davies argues for processes and not just plans and, in regard to the ninth factor which was sustainability, argues that it is crucial to 'creating an achievement culture that lasts' (2007, p. 18). For Davies, the emphasis should be placed on the ability of individuals and schools to 'continue to improve to meet new challenges and complexity' in a way that 'builds capacity and capability to be successful in new and demanding contexts' (2007, p. 18).

In describing the way leaders build sustainability, Davies (2007) distinguishes between sustainability and maintainability, and outlines why sustainability is integral to his vision of deep leadership for the way it embraces change and complexity. His comments on the operation of 'deep leadership' in a workplace that is shaped by 'new and demanding contexts' is significant as it captures the way in which the education workplace continues to shift, adapt and re-conceptualise itself to meet new challenges. As Branson and Gross (2014) also note, the real defining point for leaders rests with their ability to make choices and reach decisions against this background of constant change and shifting complexities. They sum up the new reality for school leaders by describing the way leaders are 'confronted by unusual, complex and challenging situations, which demand that they make choices' (Branson & Gross, 2014, p. 3). The use of the words 'confronted' and 'demand' provides an insight into the intensity of many of these 'challenging situations'. The

comment on 'choices' illustrates why it is important that educational leaders have clearly demonstrated values and skill sets to assist them in the process of making choices and reaching the right decisions (Rebore, 2001).

For this reason, I will now briefly comment on the role played by ethics and values in the exercise of leadership. While the next section contains references to both ethics and morality in the heading, it should be noted that the two concepts are often used interchangeably by writers in the field (Preston, 2014, p. 16).

Leadership, morality and ethics

Hodgkinson (1978) in exploring organisational morality and responsibility argues that there is a strong correlation between the nature and quality of leadership and the moral character of the organisation. He notes that the 'quality of leadership was functionally related to the moral climate of the organisation and this, in turn, to the moral complexity and skills of the leader' (1978, p. 179). Hodgkinson argues strongly that morality 'that exists within the leader' should be seen as a dimension of leadership. He proposes that this morality can become 'subtly externalised, contributing to the administrative phenomena of legitimacy, credibility and even charisma' (1978, p. 179).

If we accept this point of view that morality should be viewed as a key dimension of leadership, then the development of an ethical workplace and ethical climate need to be viewed as key foundations of an organisation's integrity. For this reason a leader's role in developing these skills within an organisation is paramount, especially in terms of the professional learning which is provided to members of the workplace and its future leaders to build their skills, values and understandings (Menzel, 2012).

Based on research into principals' professional development and skills sets, Dempster et al. (2004a) propose that principals require an 'understanding of moral reasoning and in

particular, some knowledge of common ethical theories [as well as] guidance to formulate processes that lead to sound, ethical decision making' (2004a, p. 459). However, Dempster et al. conclude that many principals do not 'possess the ethical knowledge or skills (and therefore the confidence) to manoeuvre through difficult ethical terrain' (2004a, p. 459). If we accept this premise, that many principals lack the foundations in moral reasoning and ethical understanding, the key question that needs to be faced is whether or not principals have the necessary determination and willingness to acquire a higher level of ethical understanding. This question raises fundamental system-level issues relating to the nature and provision of appropriate and authentic professional learning in 'moral literacy' for school leaders (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007). Leaders also need to be able to demonstrate a sense of emotional intelligence and commitment to the empowerment of others if they are to demonstrate ethical leadership.

Emotional intelligence, incorporating empathy for others, demonstrates a commitment to an ethic of care and an awareness of building a nurturing culture which values responsibility for others. The creation of this culture is a key illustrator of a leadership positioning that identifies the need to place oneself as a leader in a shared relationship with others that is not merely power centric. As Zorn and Boler outline:

> emotion matters in educational leadership, because leaders, teachers and
>
> learners understand and enact their roles of subordination and domination
>
> significantly through learned emotional expressions and silences (2007, p. 148).

For Neidhart and Carlin (2005), leaders require 'extensive skill, empathy and patience' in supporting teachers with differing levels of experience and commitment. They describe the environment in which teachers work as a 'context of continuing change and criticism', and

comment that the 'emotional stamina and goodwill of many leaders and teachers is wearing thin' (2005, p. 61).

As complex and constantly changing environments, with multitudes of competing demands and priorities, Neidhart and Carlin (2005) argue that schools are often operating against a continuous background of criticism and scrutiny from a range of sources that include the media, parents and the wider community. Trust and transparency are key building blocks of ethical cultures. Without these building blocks, leaders will not have the ability to move forward in a way that is supported and enhanced by their constituent members.

The ethical development of aspiring leaders, with accompanying appropriate professional learning in ethical decision making, needs to be considered as a key leadership responsibility and priority for school leaders and members of their leadership teams. Branson and Gross capture this sense of leadership responsibility with a thought-provoking statement, 'if it isn't ethical, it isn't leadership' (2014, p. 439). As Dempster and Berry bluntly note, the challenge in regard to the professional development of principals, is to provide principals 'not only with what they want, but also with what they need in the minefield of contemporary ethical issues' (2003, p. 476). These issues significantly impacted on my work in developing The Ethical Decision Making Toolkit discussed in Professional Practice Initiative 1 and The Ethical Decision Making Course discussed in Professional Practice Initiative 2.

In the next section, I consider in detail the significant role played by succession planning and succession management in the leadership- and culture-building of a school community. In an era characterised by significant generational change and major educational reform that introduces new models of accountability within schools, a key

imperative for the schooling sector must be 'the sustainability of quality leadership over time' (Zepeda et al., 2012, p. 153).

Succession planning and succession management

Succession planning and succession management are key leadership responsibilities that often characterise effective organisations in illustrating the strengths of their strategic thinking and workforce planning. The significance of succession management and planning in modern educational settings is highlighted by a substantive range of research (Bengston, 2010; Dempster, 2007; Fink, 2005, 2010; Gronn & Lacey, 2006; Henning & McIver, 2008; Macpherson, 2009; Wilson, 2006). Fink's 2010 book, *The Succession Challenge*, and his use of the words, 'succession management' emphasises that, while succession planning is recognised as a worthwhile activity, it is a complex process with barriers and competing elements to success, that all require sound management skills and high-order planning. This research on succession management illustrates that succession planning is a key responsibility of leadership that requires sound management and strategic commitment.

The call for educational leaders to become 'obsessed with the attraction, retention and development' of talented leaders is made by Breakspear (2010, p. 28). The use of 'attraction, retention and development' captures the dimensions and complexity of the challenge. While attracting, retaining and sustaining new leadership is recognised as a priority, it will in many ways be difficult for succession-management strategies to be fully realised even with appropriate policy reform and planning. This is a result of the complexity and expectations that surround the role of a school principal. This situation is compounded further by aspiring leaders from Generation X and Generation Y and the dispositions they bring to the role of an educational leader.

Neidhart and Carlin (2005) indicate that Generation Xers – the next generation following the retiring baby boomers – have career and lifestyle aspirations where flexible conditions are viewed as desirable. The authors noted that 'if the organisation is rigid and unyielding, they [Gen Xers] may seek greener pastures' (2005, p. 58). Neidhart and Carlin view the complexity of the Generation X leadership challenge in these terms.

> As the demands of key stakeholders – governments, employers and families – increase, the willingness and capacity of school authorities to offer work environments and flexible structures to meet the aspirations of Gen X are likely to decrease. This poses a significant challenge for future leadership (2005, p. 59).

As Breakspear (2010) illustrates, the situation is made even more complex in current settings by the challenges posed by the generation who followed Generation Xers. Breakspear presents Gen Y's emerging leaders, their skills sets and dispositions in this way, viewing engagement as a key priority.

> Gen Y emerging leaders are often innovative, entrepreneurial, energetic, and technologically native. They are ready and willing to drive change when others in the staff room may be resistant to new ideas. If developed and engaged, emerging leaders will become some of your strongest allies in driving improvements for teaching and learning (2010, p. 28).

In relation to this crucial process of recruitment and the management of principal succession, Zepeda et al. (2012) argue that the key factors raising concern include 'principal shortages, quality of leadership, and sustainability of leadership' (p. 137). They point out that future education research must focus on succession planning as the crucial outcome in the development of better understandings and practices (2012, p. 153).

Quality is the key factor to be enhanced over a significant long-term period, as distinct from a 'quick-fire' solution linked to a succession production line.

In considering how to maximise the sustainability of quality leadership in schools, Gronn and Lacey (2006, p. 23) cite four crucial factors: role perception and understanding; in-house coaching and/or mentoring by a senior leader within their own school; proactive career planning; and professional development experiences such as shadowing. These findings indicate the significance of 'coping with the emotional vulnerability associated with role transition' (Gronn & Lacey 2006, p. 23) and especially the key factor of resilience. As the authors indicate in their conclusion, the most important understanding is to incorporate a 'realistic understanding of the principal role' which could be also demystified 'through principals openly discussing all aspects of their leadership role with other members of the leadership team' (Gronn & Lacey, 2006, p.23).

This research by Gronn and Lacey (2006) strongly highlights the roles of leaders in building workplace cultures where transparency of decision making and shared practice are discernible features of the workings of the organisation. Communication, empathy and recognition of alternative viewpoints are key foundation stones. Integral to this communication is the need for a clear focus on role creation, definition and evaluation as Schmidt (2000) has outlined. This clearer focus reduces areas of possible conflict and contradiction around leadership roles and identity.

Leaders and followers

At the beginning of this scholarly paper I proposed that leadership should be viewed as a dynamic involving a series of relationships between a leader and followers, built around a framework of decisions and interplays which exist between group members. I considered that there is a need to focus on the relationships that exist between leaders and followers.

Therefore, I want to explore briefly why it is important for leaders to understand the nature of their relationships with followers and the ways in which they continually frame their leadership identities. As has been shown previously, schools are complex workplaces with myriad competing demands. Unlike other organisations, the core business of schools and educators is to support students through the practice of a duty of care.

Depictions of the relationships between leaders and followers, of their respective workloads and roles, and of the way in which the relationships are framed and choreographed are valuable as they clarify further the individual ways in which leaders, through interaction with their staff or followers, build, nurture and sustain culture. These understandings also pinpoint how leadership is a vibrant dynamic continually adapting itself to tasks, structures, policy demands and relationships. Gunter (2004) captures the complexity of the nuances that surround and envelop modern schooling, educational organisations and their leadership. She observes that schools and educational settings are:

> essentially about activity and are teeming with actions that have been labeled in different ways and over time as: teaching, learning, administration, policy, management, leadership, co-ordination, collaboration, mentoring, collegiality and instruction (Gunter, 2004, p. 22).

The intricacy of the organisational web that is created by these entities and their relationships with one another also captures the complexity of the leader's task in managing and leading all of the disparate elements which comprise a school.

There are clear dangers for workplace environments if leaders fail to nurture these relationships, practice effective communication and demonstrate respect for alternative points of view. In a study of change management and school culture in a large suburban high school, Henstrand (2006) directly addresses issues relating to a breakdown in

communication between the leadership of the school and the teaching staff. The researcher identifies how basic differences in perception of the workplace created a situation where the leader and teachers failed to understand or empathise with the views of each other. Henstrand describes the process in terms of the leader inadvertently violating a 'sacred norm of the teachers', this being the need to have information regarding 'expectations' and 'follow-up on student issues' (2006, p. 4). This predicament highlights how leaders need to be mindful of the needs of all stakeholders within an organisation. Actions by leaders will have greater acceptance if effective communication strategies are put in place.

In light of this example of the effects of a breakdown in communication within schools it is useful to briefly review a leadership model advanced by an experienced, practicing high school principal in a large metropolitan multicultural high school in New South Wales. Dorothy Hoddinott (2007) articulates a leadership model that is shaped by a commitment to participatory decision-making processes across the complex school she leads. Articulating her role as leader, Hoddinott outlines how she had to reform the existing management structure and re-conceptualise her relationships with teachers, students and parents in her school community. Her comments on the 'leadership of ideas' are interesting for the insights they reveal when set alongside the comments put forward by Henstrand (2006):

> As far as I am concerned, ideas can come from anyone, of any age. I try to create a climate at school where ideas can flourish, and where people are not afraid to take risks in putting these ideas forward. Teachers and students and parents all participate in the decision-making processes at Holroyd High School as equals. They all have a say, and their voices are heard, which is as it should be (Hoddinott, 2007, p. 41).

Henstrand (2006) and Hoddinott (2007) both illustrate how leadership models, developed to suit the needs of individual sites, need to be firmly anchored by a leader's sensitive understanding of the needs and expectations that others will have of the leader. From these understandings, strong relationships can be built and nurtured. Trust is an integral component. The school leader firmly links this process of understanding and building relationships to capacity building and leadership development.

> I try to ensure that the way the school is structured gives everyone as many opportunities as possible to develop the confidence in their own capacities and skills to take on leadership roles in both the formal and informal sense … Trust plays a critical part in this process. Leaders have to trust others, and be trusted in return. People will not take risks where there is no trust, and without risks, we don't have innovation, we don't make progress, and we won't have new leaders (Hoddinott, 2007, p. 42).

While there will be thousands of principals across a large public state system, as in New South Wales, all sharing common system-level priorities and accountabilities, a key factor in considering the nature of educational leadership will also be the points of difference, and the individual ways in which workplace cultures and leadership models are shaped, built and nurtured. Hoddinott's comments on trust, risk taking, innovation and new leadership opportunities illustrate the powerful synergies at work between a leader and members of the team. At their heart, Hoddinott's comments are fundamentally about empowerment and building workplace cultures that are inclusive and celebrate diversity.

Hargreaves and Harris see the synergies, as described by Hoddinott, as depicting a leadership factor which they refer to as 'fusion leadership' (2011, p. 7). They suggest that fusion leadership operates in workplace climates where there is evidence of 'performance

beyond expectation' (2011, p. 6). The concept of leadership fusion is characterised by an 'amalgam of personality, acumen, judgment, risk-taking, resilience, purpose, passion and perseverance' (2011, p. 6). In this regard, leaders who possess such characteristics demonstrate the ability to 'acknowledge, embed and evolve these qualities in others throughout the organisation and over time' (2011, p. 6). Therefore, fusion leadership is an investment, not just in leaders, but also in the concept of 'leadership and followership' which raises and rallies 'the performance of the organisation by lifting up its members morally, emotionally and spiritually, through a combination and progression of leadership styles and strategies' (Hargreaves & Harris, 2011, p. 6).

Conclusion – leadership at the crossroads?

All leaders are different and each leader demonstrates his or her skills, attributes and moral characteristics. Leaders and their leadership styles do not exist in isolation. The context, personnel, relationships, history and evolution of an educational setting over time will have a marked impact on the leadership models that can be adapted by leaders, irrespective of whether they are relieving leaders, newly appointed leaders, or experienced leaders. Leaders remodel and re-craft their leadership over time as they learn from new experiences and face tough decisions.

As Gunter (2004) reminds those with an interest in leadership, schools and educational leadership, 'politics and the politics of educational change' will continue to have significant impact on educational leaders and the way they frame and articulate their leadership. The complex dynamic of leadership can be explained in this way.

> Educational leadership is also political, and requires field members from across
> a range of sites to articulate their goals, contested and agreed, so that they

position themselves as being in control of their knowing as primarily policy

makers rather than just policy takers (Gunter, 2004, p. 38).

The juxtaposition of policy maker and policy taker is crucial as it captures succinctly a key

dynamic of leadership – the distinction between an active and shaping leadership model,

compared to that of a passive compliance model which resists change and merely takes

and replicates. In her description, Gunter (2004) captures a key dynamic of effective

transformative leadership which is the nature of the momentum that defines an

organisation moving forward and not standing still.

Educational leadership and the nation's future are being tightly drawn together through

new government initiatives and especially the distribution of government funding, most

noticeably in targeted policy areas through reward payments and incentives. Leadership

within the public education sector and across education systems throughout Australia is

continually being challenged, contested, modified and adjusted, as it should be. New

relationships and synergies are being formed to meet the challenges of leadership that

continue to evolve in complexity and the expectations of others. The challenges remain

enormous for schools, their leaders and education communities across Australia.

In Professional Practice Initiative 3, I explore in more detail the impact of educational

reform agendas and new leadership accountabilities. The need for ethical decision-making

practices and frameworks to assist principals unravel complex and difficult tasks is integral

to the appropriate professional learning needed to support aspiring, new and experienced

school leaders. Underpinning these reforms are issues of empowerment and the roles to be

played by experienced principals and directors in providing collegial support and induction

for newly-appointed colleagues and aspiring leaders at school or district level. Part of this

support will be the ability to 'map the territory ahead' and provide detailed and clear understandings of the work undertaken by educational leaders.

Professional Practice Initiative 3 – Practitioner Study: Expectations, Accountabilities and Professional Learning for Educational Leaders in an Era of Educational Reform

Introduction

In the early years of the twenty-first century, the leadership of public education assumed a central focus in nationally-contested debates relating to the performance of Australian schools and the nation's future. Sustainable educational reform, the nature of teachers' professional practice, the leadership required to drive reform agendas and the measurement of student achievement were all elements of these debates driven by neoliberal reform agendas with an emphasis on competitiveness and market share. The achievements and roles played by Australian schools on the national and international stages were being questioned, challenged and repositioned. This process was occurring through new government educational policy initiatives, redefinitions of accountabilities, and new models of educational service delivery employed to distribute government funding across the public and private education systems (Connell, 2013; Dinham, 2015; Gobby, 2013; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009).

In this third professional practice initiative, I examine how leaders sustain themselves and cope with the increasing demands of their professional working lives at a time of major education reform and transition. In this process of often 'rapid fire' new leadership, there is a significant cascading effect, as relieving and acting deputy principals assume new positions within the school executive. Accompanying these 'rapid fire' shifts in leadership, there is a discernible need for professional learning to cater effectively for the next generation of leaders and, at the same time, to support the learning of established school principals. I am specifically interested in documenting changes that were put in place when

a new model of educational service delivery, *Local Schools, Local Decisions* was introduced in 2012 for all public schools in New South Wales.

Practitioner research

The narrative in this professional practice initiative is personal and reflective as I detail activities of which I was a part as a Director Public Schools NSW. I worked with schools in the Rosslands Network[56] to support the transition process to a new model of localised educational service delivery from 2012 to 2015 following the abolition of a hierarchical regional model that had been in place since 2004. The ontology of practitioner research rests on the belief that we 'can know about our own work through our participation' (Lofthouse, Hall & Wall, 2012, pp. 172–173). The authors noted that in practitioner research we 'own the question because it had been generated by what is currently going on in our practice which is causing some sort of disturbance' (Lofthouse et al., 2012, p.173). The question, in this instance, deals with the nature of how best to provide professional support for colleagues in an era of crucial educational reform that is also characterised by significant generational change and movement within the school leadership team. In articulating this question, I concur with the argument advanced by Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2007, p. 200), that practitioner research should not just be concerned with solutions but with the 'conditions that produced the problems in the first place'.

Strategies that examine how to best provide for the professional learning and leadership development needs of educational leaders and their leadership teams are the underlying focus of this doctorate. From the vantage point of a practitioner what is most intriguing about this focus is that the educational reforms took place when many experienced leaders were not in place in their substantive positions to lead their schools through the complex

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[56]This is a pseudonym.

changes. This was an area of much complexity illustrated by the intertwined nature of the operation of government policy, reform agendas, generational change, the movement of substantive school leaders away from their home schools, and the appointments of relieving and acting school leaders in their places.[57] The role of directors working at a local level with school leaders was an integral element of the complex process but seldom addressed in research within Australia as 'much of the research on executive leaders, superintendents or regional directors has come from the USA and the UK' (Bloxham, Ehrich & Iyer, 2015, p. 355).

In order to fully articulate the nature of this complexity I want to first make some brief comments on principal accountabilities and ethical practice. I then want to reflect on my role as a director working with schools to deliver the educational reform agenda.

Paradigm shift at the local school level

Before examining the paradigm shift that occurred at the local school level a few brief words need to be said in relation to the role of the school principal and the expectations linked to the role. *Leading and Managing the School* (2000), is the key educational policy document created by the NSW Department of Education to provide direction to public schools and their leaders on the key accountabilities of the role of the principal. Implicit in these accountabilities is the recognition of the challenges which principals face as school leaders, and the need for principals to have wide ranging skill sets to meet these complex challenges. Ongoing professional development for school leaders was linked to the need to build their own capacity and that of their leadership teams to manage the complex tasks which they undertake in their positions. *Leading and Managing the School* (2000) remains

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[57] A relieving principal is appointed to a school where there is a substantive school leader in place who may be absent relieving on higher duties in another school or undertaking long service leave. An acting principal is appointed to a school where there is no substantive leader in place – this may occur following a retirement, resignation or a promotion.

the key policy statement for New South Wales school leaders on leadership responsibilities following the publication of the newly created, *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* (2012) by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL).

As a result of the implementation of *Local Schools, Local Decisions* in New South Wales, considerable change took place to the nature of principals' work and their accountabilities. The state office education bureaucracy was substantially reduced, ten education regions were abolished, and schools were given increased local autonomy to make decisions. There were four main areas in which this new autonomy was initially most evident.

- School planning and the use of educational data

- Teacher quality

- Staffing

- New budgeting processes driven by accrual accounting which replaced the traditional cash-based accounting system used in schools

These four elements illustrate the dimensions of role change and the impact of new accountabilities for school leaders in public schools. The removal of rigid state office procedural frameworks heralded the need for all schools to establish their own governance frameworks which accommodated mandated scope for enhanced community engagement in local decision-making reforms.[58] Greater accountability to parents and the local community on the part of school decision makers was a prominent focus of the changes. As Foucault illustrates the distancing of self from one kind of power relationship in turn

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[58] Australian Government, *Students First: Independent Public Schools*, studentsfirst.gov.au

ushers in a different kind of power relationship from which there will need to be further liberation (cited in *Ethics: subjectivity and truth*, edited by Rabinow, P., 1997, p. 284).

A key dimension of the culture change delivered through neoliberal reform agendas at both state and federal level was accountability tied to educational funding. This change required principals to have school plans and annual reports detailing educational performance published annually and available on school websites.[59] Previously the principals' accountabilities involved internal reporting within a school or education sector. A key implication of this new accountability was that schools, as well as different sectors within the 'education marketplace', no longer 'owned' their educational data as it was now collected centrally by government and made available for all to access and use on the internet. An online newspaper article in the Sydney Morning Herald by Smith (2014a), 'Students at public primary schools more likely to be coached after bad NAPLAN results', illustrates how this process of central data collection led to increased public scrutiny of the education sector.

Greater scrutiny of individual school performances, Smith suggests, places more pressure on school leaders to deliver improved national performance data through their educational leadership of schools. Connell argues that the effect is a 'system of remote control' inclusive of 'surveillance mechanisms' (2013, p. 108). Mockler (2015) also uses the concept of 'surveillance' to critique the implementation of teacher performance and development frameworks across state jurisdictions in Australia. Mockler raises concerns in relation to quality and how processes of effective teacher appraisal can be enveloped by rigid performance-management frameworks.

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[59] This process commenced in 2010 with the advent of the federally-funded National Partnership Agreements (NPA) to improve literacy and numeracy in targeted schools across Australia.

A third aspect of the new reform agenda delivered under the NSW *Local Schools, Local Decisions* was staffing. School leaders were given the responsibility for managing the human resource budget for their schools, including leave entitlements and the appointment of permanent, part-time and casual employees. The reform provided the opportunity to employ on a casual, part-time or full-time basis additional discretionary staff, including administration managers and para-professionals who might be engaged in areas such as transition-to-work programs in secondary schools. This 'opportunity' and its implications are addressed in comments made in an interview by Sally, a relieving primary school principal, who acknowledges the impact of devolution by stating that she dealt not only with students, parents and the community, but also 'now with the *Local Schools, Local Decisions* … with contractors where we might be able to employ their services' (Transcript, WS750049).

Sally's comments, relating to these new flexibilities, highlight the importance of establishing transparent work practices and new organisational frameworks to accommodate the different kinds of decision making and budgeting that are now available to schools. Previously, the highly centralised staffing system provided a rigid staffing entitlement based on enrolment numbers. Under the new policies, schools needed new work practices to adapt to the increased workload of selecting staff. Importantly, such practices needed to be undertaken in an ethical manner that did not undermine the confidence of the school community.

The fourth significant reform area for schools and their leadership driven by *Local Schools, Local Decisions* was the management of a single school budget, inclusive of staffing, with direct funding through a new resource allocation model (RAM). Financial allocations resulting from RAM were made available to all school communities in New

South Wales and were published on the internet. The budgeting reform was complex – it heralded the movement away from a traditional system of cash-based accounting used in schools to a new financial model which was based on accrual accounting.[60] The educational reforms in New South Wales were first implemented in a transition phase in 2011 in 229 schools across the state. These reforms are not yet fully completed and are still evolving in 2016. The complexity of the school budgeting reforms involves significant retraining by administration and school executive staff in new financial management procedures.

Comments on how the reforms affect principals and their work practices are addressed in the next section. The need for adopting ethical practices to support the implementation of these reforms, especially the preparation of school budgets and plans, underpins the observations made by school leaders who were interviewed.

Principals' perspectives on local decision making and ethical practice

In an interview in 2012, Maisy, an experienced school leader of a large primary school, captures the dimensions of how the educational terrain has changed. In her interview, she comments on the implementation of *Local Schools, Local Decisions* and the impact of more localised decision-making authority at the school level. She suggests that when 'power and money' are handed over to schools, schools need 'to be more ethical in what we do'. For Maisy and her leadership team 'it comes back to accountability but it's more than – it's accountability, it's responsibility, it's – there's so many bits that you need to consider' (Transcript, WS750051, p. 7).

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[60] Accrual accounting allows the NSW Government to have more detailed and accurate information in relation to the level of government funding held in school accounts.

For Maisy, the terrain had dramatically changed. She was aware of new responsibilities and accountabilities and what these meant for her own decision making. Significantly, she raises the issue of needing to be 'more ethical'. She understands the ways in which school governance, organisational structures, processes and staffing will need to evolve, becoming more transparent and directly accountable to stakeholders. This is the world that awaits the newly-appointed school leader and the school leadership team following the reform process. The use by Maisy of the phrase 'more ethical' also raises significant questions about ethical practice, ethical values and ethical decision making in schools.

The importance of ethical role modelling by school leaders is an issue succinctly captured by Celine, another very experienced principal of a primary school who comments:

> ethics is at the basis of everything we should be doing and if there isn't ethical decision making happening – particularly from the leadership team – then what message does this send to the rest of the staff, to the kids, to the parents?' (Transcript, WS750062, p. 3).

At the heart of Celine's comment is an understanding of the key role that leaders play in decision making and in building ethical cultures in their educational communities. Celine is mindful about the way information is communicated (by the leadership team) and shared within the school community.

For Sally, a relieving primary school principal, the move towards greater local decision making has meant rethinking structures and processes in operation within the school and increasing the sense of ownership by stakeholders. In an interview, Sally notes, 'my first step in the empowering local schools (program) is certainly not to work alone'. She describes how she set up a steering committee to drive whole school planning which has membership from parents, executive staff, school administrative staff and teaching staff

who can self-nominate. Sally depicts these structural changes as illustrating a new school culture built on relationships and increased stakeholder ownership. As she says:

> it's letting all stakeholders having that direction, so even though you are driving it, there's going to be input from a number of people so that it really is owned by all (Transcript, WS750049, p. 5).

What is being articulated by Sally are the foundations for building an ethical culture. As Ehrich, Harris, Klenowski, Smeed and Ainscow acknowledge, leaders need to be role models who demonstrate ethical behaviours but they 'cannot act alone … [they require] the commitment of everyone who makes up the organisation' (2015a, p. 32). Ethical leaders need to lay appropriate foundations – structures, practices, values and shared opportunities. This is needed to gain the participation and commitment of constituent members to build the school organisation in ways that recognise and empower all members. However, this can become problematic at a time of major change when a school may have multiple leaders and differing configurations of leadership teams over a relatively short timeframe.

An understanding of ethics becomes increasingly important in an era of significant educational reform and increased local decision making when new governance frameworks need to be constructed within school communities. It cannot be assumed that all school leaders and school communities understand ethics or the dimensions of ethical practice and its importance to schools.

The reality that ethics is not a priority in professional learning is clearly highlighted by an observation made during a 2012 interview. Anna, an experienced primary principal who had been an educational leader in three schools, comments:

I went to your session at the principals' conference. I'd never really heard of

someone in our profession even bringing up the issue of ethics, to be honest

with you, which always confounds me (Transcript, WS750043, p. 2).

Anna's comments are a powerful incentive in the continued development of the

professional learning which I have provided for school leaders and their leadership teams

in ethical decision making. Her comments are a validation of my decision to create

professional learning workshops utilising scenarios to explore the ethical dilemmas that

school leaders face. Anna's comments are also a further powerful incentive to create the

Ethical Decision Making Toolkit and the Ethical Decision Making Course for School

Leaders. The comments resonate with the research of Dempster and Berry (2003). In their

introduction to 'Blindfolded in a Minefield', the two researchers offer the following

assessment as to why ethical decision making needs to be incorporated in professional

learning for school leaders:

We argue that principals are often ill prepared to deal with the complexities that

attend the ethical issues with which they are increasingly forced to deal. We

suggest that the contemporary ethical educational terrain principals now

traverse is strewn with many decision-making dangers and may be likened to an

ethical minefield. The lack of attention paid to the development of school

leaders in their approach to ethics and its application to decision making

suggests that they are left to navigate this minefield blindfolded (Dempster &

Berry, 2003, p. 457).

My professional learning for school leaders has been driven by the need to lift the

'blindfold' and better prepare school leaders for the ethical challenges and decisions that

await them. As a former school principal and a director supporting groups of schools, I

recognise the importance of school leaders having skills in decision making and ethical frameworks to guide their professional practice. The register of approved professional learning for schools in NSW MyPL@edu when checked in May 2016[61] reveals that I am still the primary author and presenter of approved professional learning workshops for school leaders on ethical decision making in NSW.

It is my contention that the validity of the assessment provided by Dempster and Berry (2003) over a decade ago has a new heightened relevance. The contemporary education terrain is characterised by government reform agendas, changing workloads for school leadership teams, new accountabilities for school leaders and new relationships with key stakeholders. Jensen, Hunter, Lambert and Clark capture this sense of increased expectation and heightened relevance by noting that 'increasing principal autonomy and accountability has broadened the role of school leaders, making their role more challenging' (2015, p. 3). The responsibilities of principals now have 'increased breadth and complexity' as a result of the decentralisation which has come from major education reforms (Jensen et al., 2015, p. 5).

This new education terrain has been depicted as an environment of much complexity in which principals not only have to address new accountabilities, but competing accountabilities, inclusive of 'moral, professional and contractual' that may be 'in tension with one another' (Ehrich et al., 2015b, p. 199). The researchers argue strongly that ethical leadership has a central role to play in the navigation of these tensions and competing demands. In defining the need for ethical leadership and ethical leaders, Ehrich et al. (2015b) strongly affirm the centrality of students to ethical practice and decision making in schools. They argue that ethical leaders support both students and staff through their

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[61]This was confirmed by telephone contact with a departmental officer

promotion of 'values such as inclusion, collaboration and social justice' (Ehrich et al., 2015b, p. 199). This ensures that these leaders critically promote the 'achievement of all students, especially those who are least advantaged and marginalised by the current system' (Ehrich et al., 2015b, p. 199).

Riley and Langan-Fox (2014) view moves towards greater localised decision making and new accountabilities with unease. They note the way in which many 'non-educational tasks' including budgeting and teacher employment add to a principal's work volume and accountability. They put forward the view that this decreases the amount of time which school principals are able to 'spend on appropriate curriculum choice and implementation for their student population' and that the end result for principals is a 'substantial reduction in professional autonomy' (2014, p. 184).

Another dimension to the loss of autonomy and the cost of reconfigured relationships with students is captured by Gobby. He uses the language of the commercial world to describe the impact of neoliberal reforms in Western Australia as facilitating (for one principal) the sense that students are a 'captive market' and an 'attractive commercial opportunity' (2013, p. 282).

Underlying the new expectations of the school sector are market-driven questions which relate specifically to the calculation of education costs, the 'value for money' of schooling, and the cost benefits of public education compared to private education. The 'My School' website[62] illustrates these factors at work in 2016 with its updated features which now

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[62]The My School website is managed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and provides information on all Australian schools which is updated on an annual basis: www.myschool.edu.au

include 'latest financial figures on each school, including capital expenditure and sources of funding' (www.myschool.gov.au).

The increased breadth and complexity of the principal's role is one that I addressed in 2012 with the creation of a set of vodcasts to support schools across New South Wales in their decision making and strategic-planning processes. Enhanced community engagement and transparency of the decision making processes were key objectives of the resources that I was asked to develop.

Creating vodcasts on ethical decision making

In 2012, I was approached by departmental officers from the state office of the NSW Department of Education to create vodcasts on ethical decision making that could be accessed by schools using the department's intranet. This request was in response to the professional learning I had facilitated on ethical decision making and conference presentations I had provided to a diverse cross section of leadership groups. Specifically, I was asked to contribute resources to support schools which were part of the newly-implemented Commonwealth Government-funded National Partnership for Schools entitled 'Empowering Local Schools' (2011).[63] This initiative attracted 229 primary and secondary schools from across the state, and was the prototype model of service delivery that was used to facilitate the introduction of *Local Schools, Local Decisions* from 2012 to all schools in the state.

The process of making the vodcasts involved writing scripts that explored aspects of principal and school decision making in the context of the new *Local Schools, Local Decisions* model. The scripts, filmed in a television studio, were subsequently edited and

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[63] A key element is the implementation of new financial planning and reporting systems, including staffing budgets, using the newly-introduced Resource Allocation Model (RAM).

made available to schools as four separate vodcasts with accompanying questions, which I wrote for use with school communities exploring aspects of school decision making processes.[64] My primary script-writing focus was on the building of strong and transparent workplace cultures that demonstrated organisational integrity.[65] My intention was to have school leadership teams explore – with teaching staff and community members – areas of school policy and procedure which, after the reforms, needed to reflect increased input from stakeholders as a result of the move towards a more localised model of school decision making. As a result, the initial material addressed policy areas including record keeping, school staffing, student enrolment, secondary employment, community user agreements, career development, expression of interest processes for relieving positions within the school, and professional learning. A large cross section of this material has been included in the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit as Part 14 – Organisational Integrity: Building Strong, Purposeful Workplace Cultures.[66]

The creation and choice of this resource material for the vodcasts was strongly informed by research carried out by Dempster and Berry that identified ethical issues relating to students, staff, finance and resources, and external relations as the 'most frequent and troublesome ethical issues faced by principals' (2003, p. 464–467). These are the general areas of policy and procedure for which the two researchers employ the metaphor of 'navigating this minefield blindfolded' to explore the enormity of the challenges faced by principals. I also utilised an array of rich ideas on ethics, governance and accountability from the research of Menzel (1997, 2003, 2012), which addressed workplace culture and empowerment.

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[64]The draft script and questions are included as Appendix 10.
[65]Organisational integrity was a concept in frequent use in the research literature relating to governance.
[66] This resource can be found in Appendix 11.

My intention from this professional learning in the form of vodcasts was to help shape the building of stronger and more inclusive workplace cultures in schools which better illustrated shared decision making with key stakeholders. As Lunenburg has succinctly illustrated in his research, effective principals create 'more effective schools by deliberately designing their actions so that those actions build cultural as well as managerial links' (2010, p. 8). In an era of major generational change, these actions need to be viewed as a priority. It is my strong contention that communication, succession management and workforce planning need to be the three high-order components of quality strategic planning undertaken in all schools in an era of decentralised decision making in schools. All three components facilitate the building of strong effective school cultures. These are explored in the next sections of this professional practice initiative. As Shacklock and Lewis note:

> it is people, primarily leaders at all levels, who drive organisational direction, create and sustain an ethical climate and provide major incentives or disincentives for organisational and employee ethical behavior (2007, p. 22).

Communication highlights the impact of effective cultural and managerial links that leaders develop with members of their school communities. Quality communication enhances and empowers individuals within a school community. It is to communication that I now turn.

Communication

Communication remains a significant issue for school leaders in addressing expectations of the school by its stakeholders and in building strong inclusive workplace cultures that value and utilise the skills of constituent members. The realities of this observation are evidenced by comments in my personal e-learning journal in 2013 in response to issues

which had arisen in a primary school. These issues involved ongoing negative social media commentary by parents that addressed perceived flaws in school decision-making protocols. This was a significant situation for a school teaching community and had been explored at length in a whole school workshop I led on ethical decision making. In my e-learning journal I reflected:

> One of the interesting subsets from the workshop has been social media and how you deal with it as a principal/school leader and hopefully use it to your advantage. It was interesting to hear how a group of kindergarten parents had set up their own Facebook page, with no communication with the school until after it had occurred. The policy document on 'What staff need to know about social media & technology' continues to fly under the radar.

The kindergarten parents Facebook group illustrates that the use of social media and new forms of digital media have the potential to overwhelm more traditional forms of communication which have been in place in school communities. 'Flying under the radar' conveys how the realities of communication issues have the potential not to attract attention until it becomes a problematic area of concern for school leaders.

Communication strategies are an integral aspect of the daily operation of every school. Communication includes the role of the official school website, apps for disseminating information about school activities, the use of class and school Twitter accounts, Facebook protocols for parents and the possible use of a school Facebook page, complaint management procedures, protocols for responding to emails forwarded by parents and the procedural rules that govern the use of mobile technology for students and staff on the school site.

It is my strong contention that effective decision making must be augmented by continual quality professional learning and communication that reaches all levels of a school's organisation. The parent community needs to be part of this process and to share in the decision making and writing of school policy. Communication was a strong focus of professional discussions I held with school leaders and leadership teams when visiting schools in my role as director. In many schools with new leaders and leadership teams, it became a central part of the mentoring I provided. Integral to communication are key ethical values of trust, transparency and empowerment. The manner in which these ethical values are exercised with all the members of a school community is a key determinant of the effectiveness of the school culture.

Rosslands Network – school leadership movement and generational change

In my role as a Director Public Schools NSW which I held from 2013 to 2015, I assumed responsibility for the Rosslands Network. The 35 network schools were drawn from five previous education groups that had been spread across two regions which had been abolished under the *Local Schools, Local Decisions* reform. Not all schools had a leadership team to support the leader in implementing change. Included in the network were two small infants' schools with a teaching principal and no executive staff.

The mentoring and coaching of school leaders in relation to their decision making[67] was a new key accountability of the role I held as a senior departmental officer leading a network of schools. The specific selection criteria, which accompanied each advertised director's position, indicated that the intention of this mentoring was to 'stimulate culture change in a

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[67] One of the seven criteria for the position of Director, Public Schools NSW advertised in May 2013 was 'demonstrated skills in mentoring and coaching at a senior level with the ability to stimulate culture change in a new operating environment', www.dec.nsw.gov.au/about-us/careers-centre/corporate-careers/senior-roles.

new operating environment'. The references to 'culture change' and 'new operating environment' illustrate the way in which school leaders' roles had been redefined and their professional responsibilities adjusted to accommodate working in an operational environment of greater localised decision making with its extended range of new accountabilities.

At the conclusion of ten school terms of the network's operation in December 2015, there were over ninety separate leaders – substantive, acting and relieving – who had been the school principal.[68] For these leaders, time in the leadership position may have lasted for only a week, for others it was between one and two years. Some of these relieving and acting principals were well prepared for the challenges which lay ahead; other aspiring leaders never expected to assume the leadership responsibilities when they first sat in the principal's chair and thus required extensive coaching and mentoring support.

One of the major consequences of educational reform and the restructuring of educational systems is the impact on people whose positions were abolished or reconfigured. As a result, many experienced departmental employees in leadership roles transitioned to retirement, took redundancy packages or sought opportunities in newly-created or reconfigured roles. Some substantive leaders also embraced opportunities to seek promotion to larger schools or schools closer to home. At the same time, this fluidity provided opportunities for other aspiring leaders to be appointed to substantive and relieving leadership roles, or to undertake opportunities of working in the education bureaucracy in newly created roles, or in project teams facilitating the education reforms.

Meeting the expectations of the school community at this time of change was very complex. This was especially the case with one school where five different leaders

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[68]Time period: July 2013 until December 2015.

occupied the principal's chair in the period from 2013 to 2015. The leadership complexity included the substantive principal who accepted a state office deployment and four relieving principals, two of whom were appointed through merit selection processes from outside the school. In another case, a substantive principal accepted an instructional leader's position in another larger school and retained the right to return to the original school at the end of an extended contract period. During that contract period, there were two relieving principals and much community disquiet at the substantive principal accepting a position in another school.

Another major impact of the changes was in the movement of the replacement school leaders within the first year of the network's operation. Nine replacement leaders in acting or relieving leadership roles left their substantive schools, ensuring a further cascading effect leading to the appointment of another tier of replacement school leaders. While one relieving leader left the school and entered retirement, the others were successful at gaining promotion to substantive or acting roles or taking up positions in the education bureaucracy. The cascading effect of new leadership at a time of major educational reform is considerable and often impacts in a range of detrimental ways which I now illustrate.

One medium-sized primary school had the substantive school leader take a position as director and the relieving leader then take a new position in a larger school for a year. Another executive member became a relieving school leader for two years outside the school. This left only one substantive member of the leadership team of four on duty in the school at the conclusion of the 2014 school year.

One of the major factors which created considerable concern to staff and parents, was the uncertainty relating to the extent of time that members of the leadership team may be relieving outside the school in school based or non-school based positions. It was not

uncommon for some relieving and acting positions to take leaders away from their home school for periods of up to two years or more. For this reason, active engagement and communication with school communities was a significant feature of the director's role that I fulfilled in the Rosslands Network. Active engagement and communication are important skills for the relieving and new leaders who had taken up appointments in schools in combatting community concerns and their frustration that a substantive leader was not in place.

As a practitioner in the field, the issue of the appointment of relieving and acting school leaders was a crucial factor that ran parallel to the implementation of the new educational reforms and an area I address below. The issue was significant in that it highlighted the manner in which I actively engaged and supported local communities in the process of leadership renewal.

Leading effective schools – appointing relieving and acting school leaders

School communities expect to have substantive leaders in place to lead their schools but this is not always possible. As I have shown, major educational reform in the Rosslands Network overlapped with school leaders undertaking transition to retirement often following extensive leave, promotion and acceptance of other departmental positions outside their home school. While the Rosslands Network may have been more affected initially than other networks by these changes, the pattern was repeated in other networks across the state. This was acknowledged in conversations with peers who convened selection panels and was still occurring against the background of the reforms underway in schools in 2016.

As director from 2013 to 2015, I managed a range of processes to appoint new substantive leaders and to fill vacant relieving and acting leadership positions for periods of between

one month and two years. While having received delegated responsibility to directly appoint relieving and acting leaders, I strategically chose instead to run merit selection processes for these positions in the great majority of cases. This allowed me to lead panels to select the best applicants on merit. The panels had the additional benefit of including a staff representative, a parent representative and a local principal, so that parents and teaching staff, through their representatives, had a visible presence and a voice in the process. By having a local principal, I had for the successful applicant a source of local expertise and support when the appointment was confirmed. Building mentoring support through peer leaders was a priority of my practice.

The aim was to build a new culture within the network that saw the process for the appointment of school leaders as being a quality adult learning and educational experience. In this light, I actively encouraged applications for leadership positions, respected confidentiality and provided feedback on applications and interviews. Integral to this model was the provision of a 'climate conducive to learning' which respected the applicant as a learner growing in understanding.

My design utilised aspects of the andragogical process model for adult learning which is concerned with 'providing procedures and resources for helping learners acquire information and skills' (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 115). My intention was to not simply manage the process of filling a vacancy but also to strategically lead in a way that ensured the next generation of leaders received a significant professional learning experience which would support their leadership journey.[69] Integral to this future development work

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[69]Directors have traditionally used a range of methods to appoint relieving and acting principals including choosing the most senior person in the school, inviting written applications, 'tapping someone of the shoulder' or convening a panel. In many cases, the panel may have only included two members, the director and a neighbouring principal, who read applications and contacted referees but did not necessarily convene interview panels to select the best applicant on merit.

was 'the sustainability of quality leadership over time' (Zepeda et al., 2012, p. 153). Consequently, quality feedback in a prompt timeframe was an integral aspect of the application processes I established for both successful and unsuccessful applicants. This approach allowed applicants to reflect on their interview and written application processes, and to ask questions of me as the panel convener about aspects of the process while the experiences were still fresh in their minds.

At times there were significant difficulties with implementation as some schools wanted to internally appoint leaders from within their own school and not select on merit as has been the accepted school practice. By allowing parents and staff to be represented on selection panels for relieving and acting leaders, over time many of the complaints were minimised. The management of the process was complex, especially in one school term with large numbers of selection panels for substantive principals, relieving principals and the new position of instructional leader occurring at the same time.[70] On more than one occasion, this led to multiple panels being run on the same day to ensure new school leaders could be appointed from the first day of the new school year.

Leading or managing? This was the question posed by Bloxham et al. (2015) in their research undertaken in Queensland to examine the role of the Assistant Regional Directors School Performance (ARD-SP) and their relationships with school principals in delivering reform agendas relating to school educational performance. The three researchers illustrated the important role to be played by supervisors of principals in 'leading effective schools' (2015, p. 355). The conundrum for those who supervised principals was to ensure that there was quality leadership in schools to allow the schools to operate as effectively as possible, but this became extremely difficult at a time of fluid leadership as leaders moved

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[70]An Instructional Leader is an expert in early years' education from Kindergarten to Year 2.

across schools. Subsequently, a key strategic role of those who supervised principals was to focus on the enhancement of leadership succession strategies in the widest possible manner. In this context, I now address the work of a Future Leaders Group and my reflections from a group interview (Transcript, WS 750057) I conducted with three of its members. This group of young leaders had been created in a large primary school in New South Wales by an astute principal to build leadership capacity across the school.

The work of a future leaders group

The edited transcript which follows comes from a 30 minute interview with three younger members of the teaching staff in a large primary school. The school's diverse student enrolment was drawn from over thirty different cultural backgrounds, including many newly arrived students who required extensive 'English as a second language' support. The interview participants were Nancy who held a position as teacher mentor and had seven years' experience, Rondah, a classroom teacher with three years' experience and Jason a temporary teacher with two years' experience. The participants were all selected by the school principal. The interview followed the participation of the three staff members in an ethical decision making workshop for school leaders inclusive of principals and executive staff. Surprisingly, none of these future leaders held a substantive leadership role in the school, but they all saw themselves as having begun the leadership journey through initiatives that had occurred in their home school. As Rondah, one of the future leaders noted, 'Even though I'm not in an AP[71] position I feel that I'm a leader at this school because I'm given that voice' (Transcript, WS750057, p. 5)

In the interview, I was interested in exploring two questions.

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[71] Assistant Principal.

1. At a time of significant generational change, how do leaders shape and support the professional practice of the next generation of leaders?[72]

2. What benefits are to be gained from the operation of a Future Leaders Group?

The interview was semi structured and an opportunity for the three future leaders to share reflections and viewpoints. Key concepts and ideas were collated and coded. This process allowed for emerging themes to be identified, reflection to occur and findings to be made.

Transcript: Future Leaders Group

The following is an edited extract from the transcript of the interview with the three future leaders.

> Nancy: Through our Future Leaders group we've been talking about having courageous conversations with people, some of the challenges that you may face as a future leader or an upcoming leader ... That was really the start of the process of utilising your skills, your specialty, to try and really make us think more, challenge us more, about those ethical decisions that we inevitably are going to have to make in our teaching careers, our leading careers.

> Rod: So what are some of the things that you thought about more as a result of being part of that workshop?

> Rondah: For me it was thinking about the bigger picture. Something that we talked a lot about through the Future Leaders group was the step from being a leader is not just being aware of your class, but what happens in the class next door, the class down the hallway, the entire school. This is that step past that,

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[72]This is one of the supplementary research questions to my two main research questions identified in the Overarching Narrative.

where you're thinking about the greater implications of decisions that you make, not just about yourself, or your immediate class, but about your school or on the community around. So it's that leap that you need to take as a leader of being aware of what happens in a greater circle of influence …

Rondah: That course really opened my eyes to the bigger picture of what it involves to be a leader because … I'm actually new. I've only been teaching for three years. It actually opened my eyes to 'wow', how complicated it can be and how complex it can be, especially the decisions you can make and the consequences of those decisions and how you really have to think those decisions out in the long term.

Rod: Jason, what about yourself?

Jason: … Then when you asked the question – you brought in the scenario about the parent meeting with the P&C and explaining –
I think it was why a teacher got a promotion over another teacher.
I suppose I really took that in because I've never been in that situation before. I've only had to deal with parents of one student in my classroom. I've never had to deal with a whole room of parents and having to explain that kind of a decision. The way that different opinions by different people in the group, and of yourself, it was really, really interesting to see how other people have dealt with it; not just a theory … but real life experience. It was a great learning experience ...

Nancy: Yes. Being a leader – again, with those skills and experiences that you have and the knowledge that you have and the – not certainty, but like a surety that you're on the right track – gives you that comfort that you've got things to

share, you've got knowledge to share. Through that, I think, comes leadership. So that's that natural progression, I guess, as well as that natural affinity that some people have for the leading.

Jason: You're able to have a more professional conversation with the people around you, and not just talk about your classroom, but talk about issues, as you said, outside the classroom; so talk about different policies and different external influences that are affecting your school, your community and, eventually, your classroom and the way that you're teaching. I think if you understand and take all those external influences and everything that comes into what a teacher does and how a teacher operates and how a school operates it just makes you more rounded as a teacher, a more holistic teacher and a better teacher …

Rod: Rondah?

Rondah: … as a teacher I've got so many ideas, so many things that I implement in my classroom, and being given an opportunity – for example, to be in the Future Leaders team – allows me to share those ideas so I can get them out there. I think it will affect me personally if I had all these ideas I had to shut them into my room. I feel like I need to express my ideas. At this school, it's really good … we're encouraged to critically talk about things and share our ideas. It really helps the team to grow. Even though I'm not in an AP [Assistant Principal] position, I feel that I'm a leader at this school because I'm given that voice'. (Edited Transcript, WS750057, pp. 2–5).

Leadership in schools 'occurs in multiple ways and is not necessarily bound by hierarchy and the structural organisation of teachers' labour' (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006, p. 48). The

interview highlights the leadership vision and understanding of the substantive school leader who set up the Future Leaders Group in her school to build leadership capacity on her school site. Strategically, the substantive leader was fast tracking leadership development for a younger cohort of leaders. The transcript reveals the way in which the future leaders illustrate key ethical values of trust, empowerment, sharing and teamwork. This is a school with a 'democratic work-culture' fostered by growth of individual members which reflected 'autonomy and empowerment' and not 'compliance or control' (Preston, 2014, p. 214).

The interview transcript is dense with references relating to 'leading' and being a 'leader'. A subset of this theme was the linking of leadership with words such as 'team' and 'group'. This captures how these future leaders feel part of the school and its leadership team. They reveal the importance for young leaders in having opportunities to share their knowledge, to test understanding and to participate in professional learning that extends their knowledge. It is interesting to see how Rondah linked sharing to the concept of helping 'the team to grow' and, in this way, she recognised both the personal, as well as a collective benefit, to leadership growth.

The initial comments by Nancy reveal that she was projecting into the role of a leader and leading. She is aware that there will be 'challenges' and comments on the importance of process and skills, and employs the phrase 'our leading careers' as distinguished from 'our teaching careers'. Her comments are affirmed by Rondah's observations about the 'bigger picture' and the use of the metaphor of the steps. This illustrates how a greater understanding occurs for those on a leadership journey as they move away from their own classroom and observe a range of additional features of school life which provide a more holistic picture.

This is linked to another metaphor of the 'leap' which implies a significant decisive moving away and distancing. Rondah's comments on the complexity, the consequences and the long term illustrate how she is conscious of the decision-making process and that she is thinking strategically rather than just operating from a short-term vantage point.

Jason in comparison to Rondah has only just commenced this journey of early leadership understanding as he acknowledges that he as only has had to deal with parents of 'one student in my classroom' as opposed to a 'whole room of parents'. Jason acknowledges the value of being part of a larger group of experienced learners and sharing in a dialogue that is peer driven and shaped by 'real life experience'. He emphasises the value of the authentic learning experience which utilises a scenario based on an actual situation in a school. He validates the sharing of a professional conversation, reflecting on practice and learning from peers when he notes it is 'really interesting to see how other people have dealt with it [an issue]; not just a theory or anything like that, but real life experience' (Transcript, WS750057, pp. 3–4).

Nancy also illustrates a theme (which is common in many interviews), namely the value of an experience in confirming for a young leader that 'you are on the right track'. This allows Nancy to feel confident in sharing ideas and reflections. Nancy views this as part of a process or 'natural progression' that reveals her growth as a leader. Her level of comfort and reassurance in a leadership role is made evident by the comment relating to 'that natural affinity' with 'leading'. this was also reinforced by her observation 'you've got knowledge to share'. Nancy feels comfortable with her role and her growing set of skills which are being revealed through the experiences.

This line of thought was later reinforced in May 2013 by Stella, a primary principal, in an evaluation from a conference presentation on Ethical Decision Making. She notes that it

was 'reassuring that what I do is consistent with what others do and that we are all accessible to each other for advice/guidance'. The comments by both Nancy and Stella attest to the important role that both feedback and peer learning can play in the mentoring and supporting young leaders. The comments reaffirm the importance of professional learning, sharing and interaction with a cross section of peers that allows for reflection on leadership practice and decision making.

Kerry addresses the issue for future leaders of 'losing confidence' (2005, pp. 19–20). He explores the important role to be played by self-assessment and reflection in dealing with a situation where things went wrong. Ethical values including honesty, speaking freely and sharing knowledge are viewed as factors in an effective partnership between a leader and an aspiring leader (Kerry, 2005, p. 20). Mezirow (1991, p. 198) suggests that 'consensual validation' is a key aspect of the way in which adult learners establish meaning from their assertions through processes of rational discourse. That Nancy views herself as a leader who wants to share her skills, knowledge and experiences with others as part of her further journey of professional learning suggests that the concept of 'consensual validation' is integral to the way in which she sees herself as a leader.

Jason's responses are interesting in the light of the comments made by Nancy and Rondah. He reaffirms the value of the learning activity but he reframes the experience in terms of his teaching. The experience has allowed him to learn from other teachers, to be more 'holistic' in his understanding and as a result to be a better teacher. The emphasis is placed very strongly on the professional growth that has been derived in his second year as a classroom teacher from the shared learning experience and the reflections on that experience. But Jason, with only two years teaching experience, does not have the same

level of confidence in his leadership 'voice' (as Rondah has) or in actively 'leading' (as Nancy explains).

The future leaders all recognise that leadership is a learning process which involves complexity and challenges. The three leaders convey this by including these very terms and more: 'complex', 'challenges', 'complicated' and 'challenge us more'.
A subset of this theme includes references to thinking and being strategic, illustrated by 'really make us think more', and 'the greater implications of decisions'. Integral to this understanding is the recognition that leadership is a social process of interaction with others, involving communication and decision making. This is conveyed in comments about the 'implications of decisions', 'having to explain that kind of decision' and 'encouraged to critically talk about things'. These comments and understandings illustrate how the future leaders are acquiring 'broader, more strategic perspective' a key aspect of the transition pathway from teacher to school leader (Jensen et al., 2015, p. 5).

Fundamental to these understandings that the three young leaders illustrate, is the sense that leadership is a journey on which they need to be actively involved. This journey involves growth through awareness of what is happening elsewhere and through engagement with different kinds of social interactions. One subset of this theme involves the clarification of 'the bigger picture' through references to 'issues', 'implications of decisions' and 'external influences'. The other subset involves references to the wider contexts in which this leadership will be practiced. This is evident from the references to 'community', 'greater circle of influence' and 'outside the classroom'.

During the interview, the influence of Haley, the school's Deputy Principal, became evident. She had spoken to the three future leaders about their professional learning and the value of attending the workshop on ethical decision making. This example, although

small, reaffirms how positive role modeling and the encouragement of future leaders is valued by aspiring leaders. It remains a key factor in leadership development.

Reflection

It remains my strong contention that the concept of a Future Leaders Group is a model of leadership development that needs wider adoption in an era of educational reform and immense leadership movement. The fundamental understanding that I derived from the interview with members of the Future Leaders Group was that all potential leaders can be grown and nurtured in a multitude of ways. It was refreshing to find in 2013 in a conference evaluation from an experienced principal the following comment: 'My younger staff really valued the professional learning provided by you at Sabnah Bay Public School.[73] The professional learning workshop in this instance included attendees from a cross section of substantive and aspiring leaders, as well as classroom teachers. The comment is affirming in that it supports a key finding from my doctoral research that professional learning for leaders on ethical decision making needs to be as inclusive as possible involving wide representation from within a school community.

One benefit of an inclusive professional learning environment is that, as with the three future leaders, many teachers and leaders develop a confident manner to address their professional practice and discuss their abilities to grow as professionals. It is a strong affirmation of the way in which young leaders can feel valued and empowered by their school leadership experiences. It is a powerful endorsement for the establishment of Future Leaders Groups in other schools to support the leadership development of young leaders from early stages in their respective careers.

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[73]This school name is a pseudonym.

Growing leaders – professional learning for middle managers

Middle managers such as Head Teachers in secondary schools or Assistant Principals in primary schools have key roles in schools but are often overlooked in professional learning directed at principals that address strategic planning, decision making and problem solving. As the education profession faces the enormity of educational reform, generational change and leadership movement across schools, these two leadership groups continue to play a major role in supporting early career teachers, accreditation, succession planning and the fostering of a strong professional culture for future generations of school leaders. Using a metaphor taken from the world of competitive sport, Bengston suggests that 'having *bench strength* for leadership is essential in ensuring smooth transitions' (2010, p. 195).

It was this idea of strengthening leadership, that prompted me to establish the Rosslands Aspiring Leaders Professional Learning Network to specifically target the learning needs of middle managers and aspiring middle managers. The sessions were held each term on a set Monday morning beginning at 8.30 am and concluded by 10.15 am to allow participants to return to school. This scheduling was important as many of these middle managers taught classes. I included both secondary and primary middle managers in the same group because it is beneficial for leaders to think about educational leadership in a P–12[74] configuration and not to approach situations from a purely secondary or primary perspective. The work of all educational leaders involved working in close relationship with other school leaders in local areas. Consequently, all leaders engaged constantly with their peers in decision making in broad areas including enrolment, transition programs,

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[74]P–12: Preschool to Year 12.

enrichment activities and curriculum provision that overlapped both primary and secondary schooling.

As the roles and accountabilities of school leaders are an integral part of the shared dialogue that takes place, I utilise a range of departmental policy documents to facilitate learning.[75] This includes a session on the departmental *Fraud and Corruption Risk Guide* (2009)[76] to explore risk management relating to leave management, recruitment, assets and student academic records. The management of risk in response to the fraudulent use of processes relating to the collection of educational data is a modern reality of contemporary school life as identified by Tomazin (2013) in an online article in *The Age* entitled 'Schools caught cheating on NAPLAN'.

Much of the future development work relating to leadership in schools needs to be 'work based, recognising that leadership practice takes place in schools' (Bush and Middlewood, 2013, p. 257). Hence, workshop sessions began with the 'Problems of the Day' where I presented complex operational ethical dilemmas to the group that were currently being faced by substantive leaders in schools within the Rosslands Network that morning. Confidentiality protocols were put in place so that information about the identity of a school or student was not made available.[77]

Two examples of issues that were raised during the workshops came from a Network Meeting held in 2015. Representatives from primary and secondary schools were in attendance.

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[75] A cross section of key policy documents that address accountabilities for school leaders in NSW is found in Appendix 6**:** Key Educational Leadership and Policy Documents (2000–2015) re Leadership and Accountability for Public Schools in New South Wales.

[76] An internal guide for departmental senior officers and school leaders.

[77] I withdrew any issue from discussion if a member of the school where the issue was taking place was in attendance.

Issue 1

A student in Year 1, who is a chronic 'school refuser', does not wish to attend class and stays at school for only a part of each school day. This situation reflects a transition to school program that was negotiated when the student was in Kindergarten. The student's behavior is deteriorating and he is refusing to accept directions from staff.

Issue 2

A parent has written a letter and requested that a Year 6 student, who does not live in the enrolment area for Woolvene High School[78], be enrolled in that school and not the local high school the following year. The reason for the request is that the school bus for the preferred high school goes past the front door of the family home each morning.

The deliberation and reflection on these two issues was guided by these questions.

- How would you approach these situations?

- Who would you include in your deliberations when finding a solution? Is there more than one solution or set of options?

The sessions involved participants sitting in a circle, sharing ideas and reflections and listening to others. One of the advantages of this approach was that the participants often included middle managers with recent experience of the principal's chair sitting alongside first-time aspiring leaders relieving in a middle management position. In unraveling Issue 2 concerning the enrolment of a future Year 7 student, it was very valuable to have both primary and secondary middle managers sharing responses to a complex problem that involved interaction between a parent and both primary and secondary schools. This approach allowed for a consideration of different ethical perspectives in viewing the

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[78]This is a pseudonym for the school.

situations from the lens of a parent, a student in need and a school leader. The two issues under discussion met criteria advanced by Begley and Stefkovich that school-based ethical dilemmas or problems to be effective as teaching resources 'must have verisimilitude … they must be based in reality. Concurrently, they must respect confidentiality' (2007, p. 408).

One of the key aspects in using these resources is that they were 'live' issues currently being explored and deliberated upon by school leaders in local schools on that day when the network met. This added real poignancy to the discussions that took place with middle managers as the issues were yet to be resolved. The intention of the activity was to build the understanding and skills of the participants in exploring and managing an issue, thinking strategically about a complex matter, reflecting, looking at options for resolution and identifying sources of expertise that may need to be sought such as advice from Legal Services Directorate or the Child Wellbeing Unit.

In the context of this discussion on middle managers and the concept of 'growing' educational leaders, I conclude this professional practice initiative with some brief comments about the role of community and partnerships inclusive of parents, other schools, clubs, universities, government agencies and local councils.

Signposts to the future – further accountabilities for school leaders

New accountabilities for educational leadership will continue to be shaped by moves towards further localised decision making. Community partnerships are becoming more critical to school operations, further increasing the complexity of the principal's role. The partnerships are also heightening the expectations of stakeholders in regard to school leadership. Schools in 2016 were very different to their forebears from 2006 that existed under a regional model, or schools from 1996 that were parts of an integrated district

model. Some secondary schools such as Eldridge Heights Senior College[79] in New South Wales have a four-day school week and enrol mature age students over the age of twenty. Other schools such as Merren Park High School[80] have an extended school day with different starting and finishing times for senior and junior students.

The Department of Education in New South Wales is now no longer the sole government agency on many school sites for which it has operational responsibility. Recent innovation in service delivery is illustrated by schools in many low socioeconomic communities that have become new focal points for concerted across government support to sectors of the community in need. This is best illustrated by the Network Specialist Centres initiative which was introduced into selected New South Wales schools in the second semester of 2015 to harness designated school sites as facilities for sharing complex case work involving multiple government partners in targeted communities of need. This may include, for example, the transition needs of students beginning school for the first time who require extensive interagency support. Centrelink and other government agencies in 2016 operate from school sites and continue to provide case conferences for 'at risk' students and other family members on site within the school. Students under the care of the Department of Juvenile Justice undertake transition programs back into mainstream schooling on a part-time basis, attending both mainstream and specialist settings. Senior students of post compulsory age are often absent one or two days a week working in industry. Some of these students will also be undertaking a traineeship. Many external organisations across the state regularly access specialist facilities in schools, such as hydrotherapy pools, kitchens, school halls, computer rooms and sporting fields after hours, to support their members and the local community.

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[79]This is a pseudonym.
[80]This is a pseudonym.

Educational policy is evolving to meet these new intricacies within the school setting that are well outside the traditional operating times: five days a week and standardised daily hours of operation from 9 am –3.15 am. Key policy areas including duty of care, enrolment, attendance and supervision are being rewritten to meet these new needs as they evolve. Aspiring leaders need to be aware of how the field is continually evolving to cater for these new relationships and partnerships.

Newly-opened schools such as Chatswoden Park (2015)[81] established from land provided from resources held by the local government authority sharply illustrate the nature of the complexity and challenges awaiting its new leadership team. Chatswoden Park School does not stand alone as an educational setting on land for its primary use only, but as part of a multi-campus, multi-agency precinct that has become a community centre outside the traditional Monday–Friday school week. The school website describes the educational and multi-agency precinct in these terms.

> (Chatswoden Park) Public School is part of an innovative, integrated community precinct partnership between the NSW Department of Education, City of Queen's Bay Council and Davistown Local Health District. The precinct includes a 47-place Child Care Centre catering for children from birth to school age, early childhood health services, Outside School Hours Health Care, shared use of the playing fields and a communal hall … Students, parents, staff and the community … by working in partnership to create authentic links with local and global communities. (School Website)

The use of the concept of educational 'precinct' in preference to 'school' illustrates how the principal and school leadership teams' role in many schools is rapidly changing and

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[81]This is a pseudonym.

evolving. In many circumstances, the principal and the leadership team are no longer the sole decision makers, as they interact with others and exercise shared authority with other agencies in carrying out decision making and exercising their authority. Effectively, the principal has become a leadership 'broker' and is no longer the sole authority or arbitrator of all decisions. Many of these new key stakeholders from other agencies and government departments, either in groups or as individuals, will have priorities and raised expectations of the school and the school leadership team when the school becomes reframed as an educational 'precinct'.

In New South Wales, other government bodies, such as the Ombudsman's Office and the Audit Office, possess the legislative ability to enquire directly into aspects of school decision-making processes and record keeping. This may, for example, follow a request initiated by a parent that relates to the procedural fairness of a student suspension for misbehaviour or the issue of an enclosed lands act notification to a parent which precludes them from entering school grounds. In 2015, the Audit Office in New South Wales chose 12 schools at random across the state to enquire into 'Learning and Support for Students with a Disability' to evaluate the use of government funding for students with special needs. [82]

These new accountabilities and expectations highlight the continuing critical importance of skilled decision making, critical reflection, ethical practice and quality communication in the professional lives of all educational leaders. These complexities and expectations cannot be left to chance and need to be strategically incorporated into appropriate professional learning for school leadership teams and future generations of school leaders.

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[82]Details can be found on the website of the Audit Office NSW – www.audit.nsw.gov.au

Concluding Remarks

I went to your session at the principals' conference. I'd never really heard of someone in our profession even bringing up the issue of ethics, to be honest with you, which confounds me. (Transcript, WS750043, p. 2).

These comments came from an interview with Anna, an experienced primary school principal and a wonderful educator. As I noted in Professional Practice Initiative 3, Anna's comments have continued to resonate with me. Her comments raised significant questions about education and ethical practice and, unfortunately, the limited role played by professional learning in ethics and ethical decision making. The key critical event at Magpie Park Public School which I have discussed earlier, reflected an environment where professional learning about ethical practice was not considered a priority and where staff were not empowered and valued.

Duty of care towards students remains a fundamental accountability for all school leaders and the communities they lead. As the education sector has moved with increased speed to new models of localised decision making and new accountabilities for school leaders, ethical practice must be given a greater priority in school governance. Schools are not valueless communities. Ethics and ethical decision making are about values and how these values shape the culture of the school environment and empower individual members, inclusive of staff, students and parents. Ethical practice and leadership are inseparable entities – 'if it isn't ethical, it isn't leadership (Branson & Gross, 2014, p. 439).

In a recent report developed for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), principals were described as playing a 'pivotal role in making schools more effective' in an operational environment where 'decentralising education decisions to the school level means increased breadth and complexity of school principals'

responsibilities' (Jensen et al., 2015, p. 5). My research has confirmed the significant impact of neoliberal reforms and the influence of the competitive market economy globally. It is crucial therefore that students and their needs continue to be placed at the centre of the daily educational practices of all schools.

For principals to effectively play their pivotal role in a work environment of continuing increased complexity, new work practices and models of governance need to be adopted. My research findings suggest more professional learning courses about ethics and values need to be developed and provided to both substantive and aspiring leaders, as well as leadership teams. Such learning needs to explore the way in which school communities and their leaders can engage in robust and meaningful conversations about ethical practice, educational reform, values and governance.

The two central research questions I examined in my research are:

- What kinds of professional learning and leadership development initiatives are needed by substantive and aspiring school leaders to meet their professional needs in an era of increased localised decision making and heightened accountability?
- What role can ethical decision making play in nurturing leadership capacity at all levels of the school organisation and in the building of dynamic and transparent school cultures?

The supplementary research questions derived from these questions are:

- How do leaders sustain themselves and cope with the increasing demands of their professional working lives?
- What kinds of professional learning experiences are needed by leadership teams?

- At a time of significant generational change, how do leaders shape and support the professional practice of the next generation of leaders?

- What are the skills and 'craft knowledge' that need to be shared with new colleagues when someone first becomes an educational leader?

In response to the research questions the nature of the principalship and the evolving roles of school leaders were explored in detail throughout this doctorate. Practitioner research was utilized as it allowed me to explore this evolution of leadership from a range of roles throughout the doctoral program. These roles encompassed – a senior departmental officer, a program designer of professional learning, a facilitator, an adult learner and a researcher. Qualitative methodology was used to address the research questions. Data was collected from a series of semi-structured individual and focus group interviews and from learning logs that were completed by participants as part of workshops I facilitated on ethical decision making. Participation was voluntary. A personal e-learning journal of my reflections was also kept throughout the doctoral program.

Details of school leaders' daily work commitments, roles and professional learning were examined within the broader context of reform agendas characterized by increased localized decision making and greater stakeholder engagement in schools. A model of scenario based learning dealing with workplace decision making was utilized as the foundation of the professional learning which I facilitated.

My research findings confirmed the value of professional learning for leaders that was collaborative and allowed for reflection at both an individual and group level. Mary, a participant in the Ethical Decision Making Course, linked increased '*knowledge*' from her participation in the professional learning with '*personal growth as well as team growth*' (Transcript, WS750066, pp. 31-32). In the same interview, Malcolm a colleague,

commented on personal and team reflection and concluded that the professional learning scenarios involving ethical decision making fostered team dynamics and allowed staff to '*actually become engaged in their profession*' (Transcript, WS750066, pp 31-32). The comments by Mary and Malcolm illustrate that professional learning in ethical decision making for a team or leadership group is empowering and has benefits in building team dynamics, commitment and professional understandings.

The comments by Mary and Malcolm support an observation from Celine, a primary school principal, that the shared professional learning using scenarios made her executive team members '*feel valued*' (Transcript, 750062, p. 2). School environments can be hierarchical and daunting places for future leaders. Celine's observation about her team members being '*valued*' affirms the need to design and deliver professional learning that supports leaders at the different stages of their leadership journey. At a time of significant generational change within the profession craft knowledge needs to be shared in professional learning forums that are inclusive and open to all leaders.

Evaluations from learning logs revealed that workshop participants valued the interactive nature of the presentations I facilitated and enjoyed the professional learning. The use of 'relevance', 'reaffirming' and 'reassurance' in comments by workshop participants, at a Primary Principals Conference in May 2013, highlighted the way in which ethical decision making was valued as an area of professional learning for school leaders. The comments also evidence the ways in which leaders need reassurance that they were on the right track. This was revealed by Stella's observation that it was '*reassuring that what I do is consistent with what others do and that we are all accessible to each other for advice/guidance*'. This response provides insight into the second research question that

addressed how leaders sustain themselves and cope with workload pressures. In seeking guidance and reassurance collegial support was viewed as invaluable.

A key finding in relation to the second research question was that professional learning opportunities should be provided to young teachers and future leaders that enhance their understandings of how a school operates and educational procedures are implemented. This finding was illustrated by Zarina who commented in a workshop learning log on the value of sharing a large group discussion with peers in relation to school policy - '*Have had policies but reviewing and discussing as a group clears up the mind'*. This was an enlightening comment about the value of peer learning, feedback, the value of transparency in decision making, and the purposeful empowerment of teacher leaders and aspiring leaders within a school community.

The comments by Zarina illustrate how transformative adult learning which is grounded in collaboration and shared experiences enhances the development of participants, as dialogical practices 'open up to relationality and to possibilities, and open up space for self and others to co-emerge' (Hosking, 2011, p. 461). These opportunities can also be afforded across groups of local schools ensuring further capacity building opportunities for young aspirational leaders outside their home school through mechanisms such as a Middle Managers Network, a Leadership Cluster, or a Future Leaders Group.

Integral to these opportunities was the strong finding that early career teachers benefit from shared conversations with older experienced peers in growing their knowledge of leadership. This included potential future leaders who may at the time be temporary or casually employed classrooms teachers at the early stages of their careers. Exposure to the viewpoints and learning of other teachers from outside the comfort zone of a home school

has advantages for classroom teachers and especially aspiring leaders in growing skills and understandings.

The nurturing of decision making, problem solving and critical thinking skills are integral to the journey that these future leaders need to take 'in steps' away from the home classroom. Understandings of how a school operates and how educational policies work are crucial for the development of young teachers and future leaders. As Malcolm attests, leadership learning experiences which affirm the role of the team and the value of shared professional practice, assist in building a strong, positive school culture. His use of the concept of '*building a culture of understanding*' (Transcript, WS750066, p. 26) with his peers is a description of a leadership model built on shared purpose and not a hierarchical matrix. Increased localised decision making in schools means that effective principals need to be more strategic in the ways in which they build and harness the skills of their leadership teams.

The complexity and busy nature of school leaders' lives has indicated that opportunities need to be provided to assist skill development in ethical decision making, problem solving and critical thinking. The sharing of craft knowledge, through initiatives including mentoring, coaching and shadowing programs, is integral to supporting the 'sustainability of quality leadership' practices in the transition of new leaders into their demanding roles (Zepeda et al., 2012, p. 153).

Bengston (2010) writing from an American context acknowledges that research on 'the process of principal succession has been severely lacking to date' and provides an understanding of why this had occurred. He explains how principals experience succession and how central office leaders experience the management of the succession process in an

era of accountability that has not been a focus for educational leadership agendas (Bengston, 2010, p. 54).

The research I undertook as part of this doctorate confirms that this situation needs to be addressed by future research especially in an Australian context. Bengston's words highlight the need to explore the work practices of current principals and their supervisors in an era of greater localised decision making. The comments also allude to the need for future educational research to explore the different ways in which education systems accommodate and support future leaders through specific initiatives including succession management planning, induction and mentoring.

The profound changes that the Australian education system is experiencing suggest there is much more to be learnt about how best to equip school leaders and their leadership teams to meet these challenges. My research found that an understanding of ethical decision making skills is one strategy which has proved useful when adopted by school leaders and their teams in an Australian regional setting. More research is needed to explore this approach further and to consider other strategies to complement this approach.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Professional Learning Facilitated 2010–2015

1. Principals Conference: EHB School Education Groups Presentation – 3 August 2010

2. Workshop Executive Staff: L Public School – 5 August 2010

3. Regional Principals Professional Practice Workshop – 10 September 2010

4. Regional Deputy Principals Conference 2010

5. Regional Head Teacher Conference 2010

6. Ethical Decision Making and Suspension Policy: A Workshop for EHB Principals – 17 May 2011

7. Principals Conference: S School Education Group – 22 June 2011

8. Regional Principals Conference – March 2012

9. Department of Education Vodcasts for Empowering Local Schools – 21 August 2012

10. Ethical Decision Making Course for Principals – 7 May 2012 to 25 February 2013

11. Western Sydney University Higher Degree Research Conference – September 2012

12. Lantos Schools Workshop – 28 November 2012

13. B School Development Day: Whole School Workshop – 20 December 2012

14. G Public Schools Workshop – 18 February 2013

15. S Public Schools Workshop – 4 March 2013

16. Regional Principals Conference – 14/15 March 2013

17. Regional Student Services Portfolio Workshop – 4 April 2013

18. Regional District Guidance Officer Network – 6 May 2013

19. F Primary Principals Association Conference – 10 May 2013

20. Regional Deputy Principals Conference – 24 May 2013

21. G Principals Conference – 24 June 2013

22. NSW State Conference: Deputy Principals Secondary – 30 August 2013

23. F High School Executive Conference – 13 September 2013

24. Aspiring Leaders Greenfields Conference – 24 October 2013

25. Public Schools NSW, Directors Conference Roundtable – 23 January 2014

26. Public Schools NSW, Directors Conference Roundtable – 28 April 2014

27. Aspiring Leaders Network – 26 May 2014

28. Deputy Principals Secondary: Professional Learning Day – 5 September 2014

29. Aspiring Leaders Network – 8 September 2014

30. H Executive Conference – 15 September 2014

31. Aspiring Leaders Network – 20 October 2014

32. G R Secondary Executive Conference – 30 October 2014

33. Middle Managers Conference – 3 March 2015

34. Aspiring Leaders Network – 30 March 2015

35. Aspiring Leaders Network – 22 June 2015

36. North W Principals Conference Workshop – 15 October 2015

37. CHS Executive Conference – 27 October 2015

38. Public Schools NSW, Directors Conference Roundtable – 26 November 2015

39. Newly-appointed Principals and Deputy Principals Professional Learning Course –
    10 December 2015

Note. Pseudonyms and abbreviations have been used to ensure confidentiality in relation to individual schools and participants.

Appendix 2

The Ethical Decision Making Toolkit – overview of modules.

The content modules of the toolkit are set out below.

1.   Introduction

2.   Induction of New Staff

3.   The Committee

4.   The Conversation (Student Welfare)

5.   The Enrolment

6.   Workplace Culture

7.   Community Partnerships

8.   The Suspension

9.   Parental Expectations and Student Learning

10.   Professional Learning Funds

11.   The Selection Panel

12.   The Unsuccessful Applicant

13.   The New School – Student Welfare in a Special School

14.   Organisational Integrity

Note

Module 14 of the Ethical Decision Making Toolkit is designed to have school leadership teams and senior executive work through a series of questions to evaluate current school practice. The sections address significant areas of leadership management and school administration including record keeping, staffing, enrolment, records of minutes, secondary employment, community user agreements, expression of interest processes, career development planning and financial management. This module appears as Appendix 11. Portions of this module have been adapted and used in a series of vodcasts for the NSW Department of Education on Ethical Decision Making and the Development of Transparent Workplace Cultures.

Appendix 3

Outline – The Ethical Decision Making Course for School Leaders

1. Introduction to Ethical Decision Making

   Consideration of the NSW Department of Education Guidelines

   Pathways to Ethical Decision Making

   Professional learning for new leaders and aspiring leaders – Learn, Lead, Succeed

   Discussion of ethical issues in scenarios. Exploring Professional Practice Part 1

2. Independent Commission Against Corruption Professional Learning and Publication

    - What is an Ethical Culture?

   Open and Closed Leadership Models

   Introduction to the work of Donald Menzel

   Research by Neck and Moorehead on Groupthink.

   Discussion of ethical issues in scenarios. Exploring Professional Practice Part 2

3. Conflicts of Interest and Ethical Decision Making Principles for Schools

   Research by Cranston and Dempster on Leadership Development of Principals,

   Case-based Learning, Groupthink and Conflicts of Interest

   Key Accountabilities of school leaders, *Leading and Managing the School*

4. Scenarios – Parental Expectations and Student Learning

                   The Conversation: Student Wellbeing

5. Scenario – The Enrolment; Transparency in Decision Making

6. Organisational Integrity, Governance and Local Decision Making

Appendix 4

Possible Scenarios for School Leaders and Leadership Teams to Explore

1. Repeated lateness to work by a classroom teacher who has attempted to have colleagues cover for her/his lateness on a regular basis.

2. Continuous absences from the workplace by a part-time teacher who is not coping with a return to work plan following leave for a stress-related illness.

3. The intrusion onto a school site of a personal conflict which involves a staff member and a partner, and a subsequent verbal altercation between the two parties on the school site.

4. Potential 'interference' by a parent or parents in the practice of a classroom teacher, or the administrative practices of the school e.g. continued arrivals at the teacher's classroom door, or principal's office, without an appointment.

5. Conflict of interest experienced by a staff member who has secondary employment.

6. Potential conflict of interest with an executive member of the school parent body who wants to provide through their family business free infrastructure in the form of a concrete pathway and landscaping to the school.

7. Poor academic performance in a secondary faculty or primary stage team where the executive member responsible is not demonstrating leadership.

8. Inappropriate displays of anger and frustration by a staff member at school who has been overlooked for promotion on a number of occasions and was an unsuccessful applicant for an executive position at the school.

9. Conflict in a faculty or stage team where a zealous executive member is placing too many administrative demands on the staff.

10. Lack of respect and open conflict between two deputy principals or other members of the executive team within a school.

11. Conflict over the fee structure being charged to external groups who have used the school hall on a regular basis after hours for many years.

12. Consistently poor quality school report writing and low-level performance by a teacher at parent teacher nights that has produced a delegation in the front office to see the principal.

13. Perceived inconsistent application of school policy in a range of areas – sport uniform, lateness to school, suspensions, homework, fee exemptions.

14. Out of area enrolments and claims of preferential treatment for some parents, including staff members with children at the school.

15. Negative comments by some members of the school community about the image of the school in the wider community, its reputation and the quality of its teaching professionals including the principal and deputy principal.

16. Disputation between two parent groups regarding the tender process for the school canteen.

17. Rosters for exam or sport or playground duty that are deemed to advantage some staff and disadvantage others.

18. Perceptions that professional learning funds are not being applied on a consistent and fair basis to all staff inclusive of part-time staff.

19. Perceptions that details of an examination are being unfairly revealed by some teachers to students prior to the end of year final exams.

20. Parents wanting to have their own children coached by a teacher at the school who is not currently the class teacher of any of the children.

21. Community conflict involving the updating of a new school uniform.

22. Conflicts involving perceptions that the school 'up the road' has received favourable treatment following the announcement of a new building program for six additional classrooms.

23. Parental concerns re the texts being studied for the HSC English Course.

24. Moves by the local council to change the street signage around the school and restrict parking for non-local residents.

25. The retention of the Annual School Fete on a Saturday and the expectation that all staff will be involved on the day.

26. Buying a 12-year-old surplus school bus from a local council auction.

Appendix 5

Scenario Based Questions for School Principal and Executive Interviews

1. A serious incident occurs at 2.45 pm when an electricity power line falls on the school front fence in a storm. Traffic is stopped on the roads around the school by the police. How would you deal with this situation? Who are the key individuals and groups with whom you would need to liaise? Would you call the radio media's traffic reporter?

2. On an excursion a student becomes violently ill. Emergency medical care is provided to the student. A teacher subsequently accompanies the student to hospital in an ambulance. With only one teacher left to supervise students on the excursion, what should happen? As principal would you cancel the excursion? Why?

3. How would you approach a situation where a parent with a 5-year-old kindergarten student requested the student repeat kindergarten? What would be your professional advice to the parent? Alternatively, a parent insists that a student repeat Year 7.

4. Outline what you would include in a presentation to parents on the subject of homework? How would you accommodate parents who insisted that homework should be set every night?

5. What strategies would you adopt to support a colleague who was unsuccessful at interview for promotions positions, despite writing quality applications and having strong referee endorsement?

6. What would be the strategy that you would employ when having a difficult conversation with a staff member whose (often negative) comments are upsetting colleagues and parents? If the initial strategy did not work what would be your next step?

Appendix 6

Key Educational Leadership and Policy Documents (2000–2015) re Leadership and Accountability for Public Schools in New South Wales.

1. Leading and Managing the School (2000) – incorporates elements from the superseded policy on the 'Role of the Principal'. Clear accountabilities for principals are set out in areas including developing the school's vision, priorities and targets; evaluating teaching and learning programs; analysis of assessment data; and the development of school planning.

2. Professional Learning Policy (2004) – a professional learning section must be included in the school plan which is to be endorsed by the School Education Director.

3. Teacher Assessment Review Schedule (2004) – this schedule is known by its acronym as the TARS and was undertaken on an annual basis in all schools across the state to provide an appraisal and feedback to every teacher on their performance. The schedule was closely linked to the Principal Assessment Review Schedule – PARS – where the School Education Director reports annually on the performance of each principal in a School Education Group and provides written feedback to each of the principals. School principals from 2010 were also asked to carry out an annual review of executive staff and provide written feedback. The Executive Annual Review Schedule is known as EARS. All three forms of appraisal and feedback were replaced by the Performance and Development Framework for Principals, Executives and Teachers in NSW Public Schools (2014).

4. Guidelines for the Management of Conduct and Performance (2006). These guidelines were written following the passing by parliament of the Education Legislation Amendment (Staff) Act in 2006 and applied to teaching staff, administrative staff and departmental officers.

5. Fraud and Corruption Risk Guide – a guide for managers and school leaders in the assessment of risks (2009). Thirteen modules were in the guide covering areas including leave management, asset management, procurement, payments, student academic records, information technology and recruitment.

6. Department of Education – Five-Year Strategic Plan 2012–2017 (2012). The section titled 'Our Priorities in Detail' links Quality Teaching and Leadership and states 'Leaders must have the ability to inspire and work with others to address complex challenges'. Leadership development is also seen as a means of increasing the capacity of leaders 'to deliver on our outcomes'.

7. Great Teaching, Inspired Learning (2013) – a blueprint to raise the quality of professional practice in classrooms with a strong emphasis on early career teacher

induction and development. Incorporates new strengthened guidelines for school principals to address teacher and executive staff underperformance.

8.   Code of Conduct (2014). This is a revised and updated edition which provides departmental employees with a common understanding of standards of professional behaviour, and incorporates specific advice in appendixes which deal with the use of departmental equipment and conflict of interest.

9.   Performance and Development Framework for Principals, Executives and Teachers in NSW Public Schools (2014). This framework is part of the new Salaries and Conditions Award for Teachers in NSW 2014–2016. The Framework replaces the Teacher Assessment Review Schedule (TARS), and separate schedules for principals (PARS) and executive staff in schools (EARS).

Appendix 7

Sources of Qualitative Data

Individual and Group Interviews

1. Transcript, WS750043: Anna, an experienced primary school principal.

2. Transcript, WS750045: Daniella, a classroom teacher and aspiring school leader.

3. Transcript, WS750047: Ian, a head teacher in a secondary school.

4. Transcript, WS750048: Riannan, a special school K-12 deputy principal.

5. Transcript, WS750049: Sally, a relieving primary school principal.

6. Transcript, WS750051: Maisy, an experienced primary school principal.

7. Transcript, WS750057: Jason, Nancy and Rondah (Future Leaders Group).

8. Transcript, WS750062: Celine, an experienced primary school principal. Alma, Blanche and Gemma are from the same school.

9. Transcript, WS750066: Aida, Malcolm, Mary and Shannon (Members of the executive team from Alderton Primary School).

10. Transcript, WS750072: Alma and Blanche, young executive members from a primary school.

11. Transcript, WS750074: Gemma, a young executive member from the same primary school as Alma, Blanche and Celine.

Workshop and Course Evaluations

1. Lantos Workshop – 28 November 2012.

2. School Development Day Workshop – 20 December 2012.

3. F Primary Principals Association Conference – 10 May 2013.

4. Ethical Decision Making Course – 2012 to 2013.

Note: Pseudonyms have been used for school names and to identify those participants who were interviewed or contributed evaluations.

Appendix 8

Focus Group and Interview Questions

1. What are three things you gained from being part of the professional learning on ethical decision making?

2. Have your expectations been met by the professional learning?

3. How will you be able to apply this professional learning in your workplace?

4. With whom will you share this professional learning in your school?

5. Were there any aspects of the professional learning that you found puzzling?

6. What connections do you see between school culture and ethical decision making?

7. Have you previously been involved in professional learning on ethical decision making?

8. In future workshops are there areas of school practice that you believe need to be considered in more detail?

9. Have you previously undertaken professional learning that was scenario based? What advantages do you see in this kind of professional learning?

10. What do you think are the key personal attributes that are most important for ethical decision making in schools?

11. How important to ethical decision making is a knowledge and understanding of Departmental policy and procedures?

12. Are there any other comments which you would like to make about the professional learning on ethical decision making?

Appendix 9

Part Scenario – Lateness to School

The slides are set out below

Slide One

- One of your staff is often late to school by up to 10 minutes in the morning.

- As the school principal you are not aware of this situation.

- Should you be aware?

Slide Two

- The staff member who is late is being 'covered' by two or three colleagues.

- Do you have a discussion with someone about this? When?

- With whom would you discuss the matter?

- What kinds of documentation would you use? Seek?

Slide Three

- In the lunch queue at a district Equity Conference the following day you overhear a conversation that concerns the staff member who is late and issues that relate to the previous school in which he/she worked.

- Do you join the conversation?

- Do you keep on listening?

Slide Four

- What options do you have on your return to school the next day?

- Is the matter just about staff lateness or are other issues involved?

- What is the best way forward? Why?

Key questions for participants at the conclusion of the scenario

1. When do you directly intervene in a matter of this nature?

2. As a principal, would you delegate a matter of this nature to one of your executive team or deal with it directly?

3. How formal or informal should the intervention be?

4. Would you consider issuing directions in writing to the staff member?

As the designer of the scenario my interest is also in how all the participants who are part of the learning experience would reflect on the situation and respond to the final question.

Final question

From a school leader's perspective what are the two key issues for you? Why?

Appendix 10

Discussion Points – Empowering Local Schools Vodcasts

1.   Records of Meetings

Effective communication is a key component of ethical decision making. Record keeping, minutes of meetings and committee structures are all important avenues for communication in a school community.

The organisation of committees, annual reviews of committee effectiveness, and the keeping of records are all areas of school management that can be overlooked and at times taken for granted.

Effective record keeping supports transparency of school decision making and is an invaluable part of school organisational culture not only for the school executive team but for all staff members and parents as well.

The following are some key questions for reflection by school leaders. These questions could also be shared with members of the school executive, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and parents.

Are minutes kept for all staff and committee meetings? Are there uniform procedures?

- How are the minutes kept?

- How are key decisions made by committees communicated?

- Are electronic versions available on a shared drive for all staff?

- Are historical records available?

- How is information made available to part time staff?

- How is information made available to parents?

- How is the school website used to disseminate information?

Your response to these questions will reflect in part the context and complexity of your school site. A large high school for example will have in place procedures and structures to support a student body of over 1,000 students and 100 staff. A small primary school may have a teaching principal and a school community of less than 100 students. It is important to be aware of context when planning and evaluating as best practice solutions need to be nurtured and developed in the context of school needs.

2.   School Enrolment and Record Keeping

Enrolment is a key management responsibility of the principal. Decisions relating to enrolment, the implementation of school procedures and the communication of these procedures are an important aspect of school accountability.

Parents have a key role to play in decisions relating to the implementation of school procedures that relate to enrolment.

Decisions relating to key aspects of the school enrolment can be enhanced by a representative committee that includes the principal, a representative of the school administration staff and members of the parent body.

The following are some key questions for reflection by the principal on current practices that relate to enrolment.

- Who is involved in determining anticipated enrolment numbers?

- What happens on census day?

- Does the school have an enrolment committee that monitors enrolment data and makes decisions about non-local enrolments?

- What role does the School Administration Manager have in record keeping that relates to enrolment data?

- What use is made of historical records and data?

- How are decisions made in relation to non-local enrolment applications?

- What kinds of communication are held on an annual basis with the parent community in relation to enrolment?

3.   Supporting Career Development

Career development and the preparation of the next generation of school leaders are important aspects of school management and leadership.

Generational change is having a significant impact on school communities as many teachers born in the baby boomer years will be retiring in the near future. School communities need to support the next generation of school leaders.

The following are some key questions that principals need to be sharing with their school executive team.

- How is career development incorporated into professional learning for all staff?

- What expectations are staff given in regard to seeking promotion?

- Are shadowing and mentoring opportunities provided?

- Are school roles and responsibilities reviewed on an annual basis? Shared?

4. Expression of Interest Processes for Relieving Positions

One key aspect for school leaders is the management of EOI or Expression of Interest processes for relieving staff and relieving executive staff. These processes need to be clearly planned and reviewed on an annual basis.

Here are some key questions for the school principal and the school executive team to consider.

- Are there school policy guidelines in place for relieving positions at executive level?

- Who is involved in the writing of role statements for school positions or newly created positions that may arise during a school year?

- Does the selection panel include an external representative?

- What role should parents play as part of an EOI process?

Appendix 11

The PowerPoint slides address issues of school governance and ethical management. The questions on the slides are designed to be shared by school communities to assist them in making decision-making processes more transparent and accountable.

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING TOOLKIT

Part 14 – Organisational Integrity:
Building Strong Purposeful
Workplace Cultures

How Transparent is School Record Keeping? : Part 1

Staffing
- What processes are used on an annual basis to make decisions about the mix of staffing? Changes to staffing?
- How are these decisions made?
- Who is involved?
- Where are the records and working documents kept?

How Transparent is School Record Keeping? : Part 2

Enrolment
- Who is involved in determining anticipated enrolment numbers?
- What happens on census day?
- Does the school have an enrolment committee that monitors enrolment data?
- What role does the School Administration Manager have?

How Transparent is School Record Keeping? : Part 3

Records of Meetings
- Are minutes kept for all staff and committee meetings? Are there uniform procedures?
- How are the minutes kept?
- Are electronic versions available on a shared drive for all staff?
- Are historical records available?
- How is information made available to part time staff?

How Transparent is School Record Keeping? : Part 4

Secondary Employment
- How are staff made aware of secondary employment guidelines?
- Is an annual update provided to all staff ?
- Is a register kept on the school site?
- What procedures are put in place for situations which may involve a conflict of interest?

How Transparent is School Record Keeping? : Part 5

Community User Agreements
- Who is involved in decision making about Community User Agreements?
- Do parents have a role to play?
- How are financial contributions reviewed?
- What procedures are put in place for community users who fall behind in their contributions?
- Are there dispute resolution procedures?

Supporting Career Development Part 1

Expression of Interest Relieving Procedures
- Are there school policy guidelines in place for relieving positions at executive level?
- Who is involved in the writing of role statements for school positions?
- Does the selection panel include an external representative? Parent representative?
- How are these positions advertised?

Supporting Career Development Part 2

- How is career development incorporated into professional learning for all staff ?
- What expectations are staff given in regard to seeking promotion?
- Are school roles and responsibilities reviewed on an annual basis? Shared?
- How does the school address the wellbeing needs of unsuccessful applicants for promotion?

Professional Learning

- Do all staff have their own professional learning plans?
- What does this involve for part time staff?
- What systems are in place for staff to receive written feedback?
- How are records kept in the school?
- How is confidentiality ensured?

Professional Learning Funds

- How does school planning cater for staff who wish to access professional learning funds? Part time staff – are they covered?
- Do individual staff, stage teams or faculties receive an annual entitlement?
- Is there a school committee who considers staff requests for funded professional learning outside the school?
- Are parents involved in the process?

Appendix 12

Participant Questionnaire – The Ethical Decision Making Course

1 Are you a leader in a substantive position?

- Yes

- No

2 What is your gender?

- Male

- Female

3 For how many years have you been a leader?

- My first year as a principal.

- Two - Five Years

- Six - Ten Years

- Over Ten Years

4 Have you been a leader in more than one school?

- Yes

- No

5 Are you the leader of a

- Primary School?

- High School?

- Special School?

6 Have you previously taken part in professional learning on ethical decision making?

- Yes

- No

7 What are three things you gained from being part of the professional learning on ethical decision making?

8 Will you be able to share your professional learning in the workplace with colleagues?

- Yes

- No

9 Have you previously undertaken professional learning that was scenario based?

- Yes

- No

10 What do you think are the key personal attributes that are most important for ethical decision making in schools?

11 How important to ethical decision making is a knowledge and understanding of Departmental policy and procedures?

- Not important at all

- Of minor importance only

- Limited importance

- Important

- Very important

12 Are there any other comments which you would like to make about the professional learning on ethical decision making?

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