Affective Attunement

Emotion and Collaboration:
A Study of Ireland's Voluntary Secondary School Principals

Michael Redmond

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Acknowledgements

'… for all are connected with emotion and place and without sequence'

W.B Yeats (1916) *Reveries over Childhood and Youth*

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Introduction

This book reports on the findings of a major research project undertaken with the support of the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) and carried-out between 2011 and 2015. From a personal perspective, the impetus for undertaking a study of the emotional dynamics of principalship emerged from my practice in two related, though differing fields. My 14-year tenure as principal in two Dublin secondary schools established an in-practice belief in the centrality of emotional adeptness to effective school leadership. My current role as Research & Development Officer with the JMB, has introduced a broader dimension to my leadership practice and confirmed the existence of a gap in understanding at a national level of the role played by emotion in principalship in Ireland.

From the perspective of our principals, the need for an increased awareness of the emotional forces at play in school leadership arises from two sources – a demand from teachers that principals become more aware of, and adept at, navigating the affective landscape of the school and secondly, an emerging imperative from educational policymakers that school transformation be mediated on a collaborative, 'whole-school' basis. The aim of this research project was thus to discover and characterise association, as opposed to direct causality, between the self-identified emotional competencies of a distinct cohort of principals in Ireland and their leadership and management of 'whole-school' change in their schools.

This report sets out to make a significant contribution to the theory and practice of education by:

(a) Carrying-out the first nationwide investigation of the emotional dynamics of principalship within the Irish voluntary secondary school sector, and,

(b) Developing a new conceptual model of applied emotionality in secondary school principalship which supports an enhanced understanding of the affective elements required for collaborative school development.

This research addresses these issues against a backdrop of the deepest and most prolonged recession in Ireland's modern history when Ireland is 'painfully at the epicentre'[1] of global economic turmoil. The psychological impact of the recession on Irish society has been severe[2] and presents the challenge of maintaining a focus on the perennial underlying features of the 'emotional geographies'[3] of school leadership while not ignoring the effects of increasing austerity on both schools and society.

Chapter One, 'Contexts', explains the background of the research, including the voluntary secondary school sector, the impact of austerity and hegemonic

change in Ireland from 2008 to 2015 and the national education policy context. Chapter Two, 'Current Debates', presents a framework drawing on the growing body of literature relating emotional competencies to effective school leadership and, specifically, to change management in schools. (Readers may find it more worthwhile to return to this chapter having first engaged with the findings).

Chapter Three, 'Capturing Principal Voice', describes the specific methods of data collection employed and a profile of the research participants.

Chapters Four and Five, 'Inside-In' and 'Inside-Out', comprise an analysis of the two overarching domains of intrapersonal and interpersonal emotional competencies in the words of the respondents and linked to the literature. Chapters Six and Seven discuss the emergence and applicability of a construct called 'Affective Attunement' and relates the findings to the work of other researchers. Finally, Chapter Eight provides a reflective account of the project and considers the limitations and successes of the study and ideas for further research.

As both the national and policy settings presented a changing and challenging backdrop against which this research project was carried-out, we begin with an examination of the historical and contemporary contexts, presented in Chapter One.

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Introduction: Notes

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Chapter One
Contexts

Chapter One
Contexts

Introduction

The imposition of a national austerity programme, significant hegemonic change in terms of church-people-state relations, a loss of trust in fiscal, ecclesial and political authority and the emergence of a neo-liberal, evidence-based policy framework driving educational reforms[1] have all conspired to produce a 'perfect storm' of unremitting change impacting on the psychological and emotional health of school communities[2]. This state of flux is reflected in the principals' narrative explored in this book and coincides with an already challenging set of factors uniquely impinging on schools within the voluntary secondary sector in Ireland.

This chapter examines the historical background to such voluntary secondary schools and the contemporary societal, fiscal and policy contexts impacting on the emotional landscape of school life in Ireland.

Voluntary secondary schools

There are 730 post-primary schools in the Republic of Ireland. Though ownership of these enterprises is vested not in the State but in a range of bodies such as Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and religious trusts, the Department of Education and Skills does exercise control over curricula, examinations, inspections and teachers' terms and conditions[3]. In broad terms, a post-primary school in Ireland will situate within one of three sectors – voluntary secondary, ETB or Community/Comprehensive.

Vocational schools emerged in the 1930s from a state system of technical schools in place from 1899. This sector, intended to provide for 'continuation education' following-on from primary for pupils up to the age of sixteen, was organised through thirty-eight local and representative Vocational Education Committees[a] (VECs). Up to the introduction of universal free post primary education in 1967 and subsequent legislative and social change leading to

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[a] Subsequently rationalised and reconfigured as Education and Training Boards (ETBs)

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greater homogeneity across the system, the reality was that secondary and vocational provision were characterised by a divisive polarity wherein 'intelligent children continued into a secondary school if their parents could afford the fees and the less academic, or those who could not pay fees, attended the vocational school or 'tech' as it was known locally'[4].

Ireland's fourteen comprehensive schools were established between 1963 and 1987 to open up a geographical spread of possibilities for those who had formerly chosen vocational education by providing free, co-educational education with a curriculum including academic and technical subjects up to the terminal examination, the Leaving Certificate. The comprehensive system never flourished and was overtaken, in terms of model, by the emergence of Community Schools which provided a similar service to students aged 12 – 18 years as the comprehensive schools but also offered adult education and opened-up their facilities to the people of the local community. Management of Community Schools, many of which were established by the amalgamation of local voluntary secondary and (the then) VEC schools, was shared within a Board of Management comprising representatives of parents, teachers, religious authorities and the VEC.

Pre-dating both the ETB and Community/Comprehensive sectors, voluntary (i.e. privately owned) secondary schools were provided with a state funding mechanism by the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act of 1878. These schools were denominational and, reflecting the demographic, overwhelmingly Catholic. Denominational or 'faith' schools were thus in receipt of state funding though it was never adequate and trustees had to find the money for buildings and maintenance[5]. Today, the 365 faith-based voluntary secondary schools in the Republic, 20 Protestant, 1 Jewish and 344 Catholic, continue to receive less state funding per capita than either of the two 'state' sectors and bear a human resources legacy still impacting on modern principals, such as restrictive practices in the area of promotion (until recently, largely by seniority, except in the case of principals and deputies), separate employer (the local Board of Management) and paymaster (the DES) and a range of union and state concessions acceded-to when numbers of professed religious personnel were very high and manpower was not a limiting factor in running such schools.

One impetus for undertaking a study of the emotional dynamics of school enhancement within this sector of Irish education arises from the particularistic character of headship within voluntary secondary schools. History and current events have conspired to place faith-school principals at the vortex of a storm of unanticipated personal and organisational sustainability challenges, many of which apply to leaders within the other sectors, but a significant number of which are uniquely related to this division of post-primary provision. Voluntary secondary school management places a high premium

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on governance autonomy but the price of such separation from the State has been high, particularly in terms of resourcing. Schools within the sector must, uniquely, raise over 30% of their day-to-day operating costs from within their own resources, placing both budgetary and fundraising burdens on local principals[6]; ETB schools have centralised human resource departments, removing much of this function from their principals' workloads; community and comprehensive schools have state-paid chaplains supporting the pastoral and faith development work not provided-for in voluntary secondary schools; ETBs have centralised purchasing, accounting, insurance, industrial relations and education support departments, all of which functions lie within the responsibility of voluntary secondary principals; ETBs make promotion appointments on merit as opposed to the seniority premium, until recently, characterising voluntary secondary appointments and the building stock of state sector schools is younger and better resourced in terms of additional paid caretaking staff than those within the voluntary secondary system.

Such a deficit in resourcing impacts on the day-to-day work-load and worry-load of voluntary secondary principals. Coupled with the systematic dismantling of schools' middle management structures under a moratorium on appointments to posts of responsibility introduced in 2009, voluntary secondary principalship has become an 'impossible proposition'[7] with compliance, performativity and adaptive demands impacting on the psychological and physical health of school leaders. Principalship in voluntary secondary schools can thus be differentiated from its counterpart in the other 50% of Ireland's post-primary schools and scope therefore exists for a comparative study of the affective landscape of school leadership across all three sectors in the future.

Meanwhile, a demand for principals to reclaim their leadership-for-learning role and to re-culture their teaching staff under new pedagogies, methodologies, assessment strategies and models of evaluation has necessitated a consideration of emotionally-engaged and collaboratively-focussed leadership which can account for the competing pressures of policy-driven renewal and recession-driven restrictions.

The impact of austerity and hegemonic change in Ireland

According to Flood[8], the past three decades have witnessed a particularly rapid period of change and transformation in Irish society. O'Sullivan and West-Burnham[9] spell-out these changes as:[b]

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[b] Throughout the book, Roman type is used for presenting quotes from the literature and italics for respondent quotes.

■ The transformation of a mono-cultural Irish society into a multicultural one

■ A global financial collapse with devastating consequences for Ireland

■ Impact of political scandals and professional malpractice

■ The 'catastrophic' fall of the [Catholic] Church, and,

■ The return of mass emigration

At the heart of these 'shakings'[10], the loss of a central and dominant moral clarity may be reflected in a loss of trust and a consequent crisis of leadership across Irish society[11]. School leaders, however, have dealt pragmatically with challenges as they arose and our schools have endured without causing any real concerns about the quality of education[12]. The dramatically changed and changing societal setting within which Irish schools and their leaders operate thus underscores a need for role-clarity and action as earlier argued by Michael Fullan[13]:

> My first conclusion, at this juncture in the Irish Education Reform agenda, is that principalship needs serious attention that it has not yet received. The time is right to change this and to follow through with action that will strengthen the role and impact principals can have in school improvement in the 21st century.

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An interrogation of the literature demonstrates that both trust and values are strongly associated with emotionality[14]. The rejection of a very clear hegemony around core values[15], coupled with unprecedented cuts in capitation and support grants, salaries and staffing conspire to present a set of significant challenges in terms of the emotional dynamics of Irish schools at this time. It is therefore to be expected that feedback from principals on the affective landscape of their role will reflect their coping mechanisms as they grapple with the 'repetitive change injury'[16] affecting today's schools although it is not intended that a recessionary backdrop should dominate the discourse.

The national education policy context

Policy-makers in Ireland view the fiscal context as an opportunity to implement what they see as long-awaited deep change in terms of school patronage, enrolment policy and practice, curricular provision, models of inspection, levels of school funding, school self-evaluation, literacy and numeracy strategies, entry to third level, teacher pay and conditions etc.[17]. The policy-makers' oft-repeated mantra 'never waste a good recession' was explicitly linked to education in the McKinsey report[18] 'How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better':

> Across all the systems we studied, one or more of three circumstances

produced the conditions that triggered reform: a socio-economic crisis; a high profile, critical report of system performance; or a change in leadership.

Ireland has, in the timeframe of this research project, experienced all three of these factors in the form of a deep economic recession beginning in 2008, poor PISA results in literacy and numeracy in 2009 and Minister Quinn in a hurry at the end of his career[19].

My role within the JMB brings me into contact with national-level policy makers and three themes recur at virtually every meeting:

1. Keep within the ECF (Employment Control Framework)
2. Save €474m in current spending, and,
3. Protect the Minister

Parallel to these pressures runs a neo-liberal ideology which has dominated international discourses of reform during the past two decades or more[20]. Key characteristics of this ideology include:

■ maximalisation of assessment factors, by which compliance with a contract is measured
■ reduction of the inter-assessment interval
■ creation of exaggerated or artificial assessment norms ('audit society')[21]

The consequent focus on the rhetoric of accountability is evident in the emphasis on policy as numbers and outcome-accountability as empirical measures[22]. This is particularly apparent in the focus on literacy, numeracy and other outcomes as scaffolded in the (then) new School Self Evaluation (SSE) process, compulsory in Irish schools from 2013:

> By gathering evidence from a range of sources and using the evaluation criteria and quality statements as benchmarks when examining their practice in the selected themes, schools will draw conclusions about the quality of their practice [23].

The SSE prescription[24] (subsequently nuanced in terms of language and expectation) included the implementation of a raft of instrumentalist accountability measures, the majority of which are the responsibility of the principal:

1. School Improvement Plan:
   a. School improvement targets *(e.g. X% of our students are doing higher-level English for Junior Certificate. In Year 1, we will increase this to X+5%, in Year 2 to X +10% and to X + 15 % in Year 3).*
   b. Required actions related to teaching and learning that will help to achieve the targets

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    c. Persons responsible

    d. Timeframe for action

    e. Success criteria

    f. Measurable outcomes

    g. Review date

2. Policy and statutory instrument compliance checklist
3. Teaching and learning review
4. Teaching and learning observation schedule
5. School protocols
6. Questionnaires
7. Interview schedules
8. Focus group schedules
9. Reflection sheets
10. Self-Evaluation Report templates

In noting the significant, formative influence of such an ideology on school leadership, Brennan and McRuairc[25] warn:

> The potential for the field of emotions itself to be appropriated by the prevailing and powerful neo-liberal new managerial approach to school leadership has been identified as a concern ... confining enquiry to a narrow interpretation of the organisational, cultural and social utility of emotions.

Such concerns surrounding the potential for emotionality within school leadership to become transactionalised and added to the performativity-list of principals emerges at several points throughout this study, beginning with our exploration of current debates around emotionality, presented next, in Chapter Two.

Concluding Comments

The porous boundaries of contemporary schools admit successive waves of influence emerging from the external environment. In the case of voluntary secondary schools, a range of such pressures will later be demonstrated by respondents as negatively impacting on the psychological health of both principal and school community. This chapter has identified inequitable resourcing, inapt middle management structures and a shifting commitment to ethos as legacies particular to voluntary secondary schools. Common to all sectors are the performativity demands of a raft of new externally mandated educational policies and the impact of a severe economic recession with associated funding and staffing cutbacks.

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Such contextual factors are not, of course, unique to Ireland except perhaps in degree. A set of perennial human and organisational factors are nonetheless universally intrinsic to school leadership and key dimensions of the affective landscape of principalship as are revealed in contemporary debates on this topic, will be discussed next.

Chapter One: Notes

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Chapter Two
Current Debates

Chapter Two
Current Debates

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to set-out a framework which will underpin subsequent treatment of the topic in this book. This is developed by examining four contemporary debates in the field of emotions in educational leadership and the role played by emotions in change-management in schools. The first section of this chapter presents a set of 'emotional epistemologies' in which rationality is complemented by emotion in the effective leadership of school transformation. The second debate examines the emergence since the mid-1990s of Emotional Intelligence (EI) as the dominant discourse on the mobilisation of the power of emotions and its subsequent impact on the field of school leadership is examined.

The third section explores the association between emotion and collaboratively-mediated change. It explores a set of current debates underpinning linkage between leadership practice and collaborativity; the demand for a new, emotionally engaged 'leaderliness'; the politics and power dynamics of emotionality, and, linking the emotional practice with teacher performance and student outcomes. Finally, the nature-versus-nurture debate around leadership development is explored with a particular focus on the contested question of the 'teachability' of emotional competencies.

Emotional epistemologies

George Bernard Shaw's admonition that 'Reformers have the idea that change can be achieved by brute sanity'[1] represents a call for the enrichment of change-management with factors complementary to rationality and such features were identified by principal respondents in the present study as lying within the domain of emotionality. It thus becomes important to comprehend emotion in school leadership and this section examines definitions of emotion, the emotions-versus-reason debate and emerging theoretical stances.

Given its subjective character, the existence of a spectrum of definitions of emotion is perhaps unsurprising. These range from the goal-linked, action-related focus of Oatley and Jenkins[2]:

An emotion is usually caused by a person consciously or unconsciously evaluating an event as relevant to a concern (a goal) that is important. The core of emotion is readiness to act and the prompting of plans

to Hochschild's[3] interactionist model as an awareness of four elements that we usually experience at the same time:

a. Appraisal of a situation
b. Changes in bodily sensations
c. The free or inhibited display of expressive gestures, and,
d. A cultural label attached to specific constellations of (a) – (c)

While the notion of 'feeling' is frequently linked to emotion, it requires to be differentiated from moods and dispositions as these have distinct relevance in terms of a longer-term impact on both leader and follower. Crawford[4] differentiates her terms as:

■ Feelings (what we experience)
■ Emotions (feelings that we show), and,
■ Moods (feelings that persist over time)

while Hackett & Hortman[5] define dispositions as:

■ Ongoing tendencies that guide intellectual behaviour

Thus, while persistence or duration of emotional experience has supported some clarity of differentiation between experiential states, the most significant separation in terms of thematic impact in the literature is that between emotions and reason or rationality. The virtually universal premise in recent literature is that the continuing notion of emotion as a polar opposite to cognition[6] has outlived its usefulness and that a holistic, reconstituted approach to the person of the leader is required if we are to propose a more dynamic, inclusive and relational stance towards school change[7]. The metaphor of leadership as a pair of binoculars wherein one lens represents the intellectual and the other the emotional is presented by Singh et al[8] and typifies the appeal for a return to what Fineman[9] terms 'cogmotion' as the cognition/emotion distinction is untenable.

This rejection of a professional demeanour that is primarily rational and carefully controlled emotionally[10] has coincided with a changing school leadership and management landscape in which teachers want leaders to be more caring, connected, supportive and committed to relationship[11]. This demand is coupled with, in Ireland as elsewhere, a policy environment demanding the emergence of a culture of collaboration[12].

This momentum towards a greater emotional enrichment of the hitherto

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largely cognitive and rational basis for school leadership and management is not without its critics however. Morrison and Ecclestone[13] challenge three key 'imperatives' in contemporary education discourse; that transformation is essential; that leadership succession is in crisis, and that leaders must be able to run organisations that address the emotional well-being of staff and students. There also exists a risk that leaping onto the 'emotional bandwagon' may be used to downgrade cognitive and substantive knowledge and skills[14] a perspective shared by a significant number of principal respondents in this book. Morrison and Ecclestone's[15] argument is that this 'zeitgeist of leadership development' requires an examination of the theoretical constructs that underpin various claims for it and some of these are considered next.

In the search for meaning-making around the subject of emotionality, a number of writers draw upon the metaphorical in gaining and communicating understandings of the ideas and phenomena they describe. Hence Singh's[16] 'binoculars', Hargreaves'[17] 'emotional geographies' and Beatty's[18] 'cooked and raw' emotions. There nonetheless exists a range of attempts to circumscribe 'emotional epistemologies' employing thematic approaches as well as more positivistic, neurobiological understandings.

Beatty[19] posits that 'emotional processes too constitute a system of meaning-making that works epistemologically' and goes on to frame a progression of emotional expression:

Emotional silence wherein emotions can be ignored, suppressed, denied or not valued as meaningful;

Emotional absolutism in which organisations set up 'feeling rules' and particular emotions are identified as 'right' or 'wrong';

Transitional emotional relativism acknowledges inner emotional realities but suppresses outward negative displays, leaving deeper levels of significance unexplored, and finally,

Resilient emotional relativism involving a deepened embodied awareness of 'emotional knowings' and an openness to feel what is beneath the surface.

While such a framework has potential for awareness-raising and applicability within a school setting, particularly where intentional efforts are being made in terms of deliberate re-culturing[20], other epistemologies exist which may also support emotional understandings and processes. Goleman's 'hallmarks of the emotional mind'[21] offers a list of the qualities distinguishing emotions from the rest of mental life:

A quick but sloppy response in which the rapid mode of emotional perception

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sacrifices accuracy for speed, making snap judgements while the thinking mind catches up;

First feelings – second thoughts describes a second kind of emotional reaction in which we make a conscious appraisal of a situation that leads quickly to feeling – usually with a more fitting emotional response than the 'quick and dirty' variety;

A symbolic, childlike reality refers to the associativity with which we allow elements that symbolise reality, such as the arts, to be the same as that reality, taking its beliefs to be absolutely true;

The past imposed on the present is where the emotional mind recalls an event similar to the one currently being experienced and triggers a response as it if were the past, and,

State-specific reality, describing how the working of the emotional mind is dictated by the particular feeling ascendant at a given moment.

An appreciation of such processes may have some potential to lend both understanding and deftness to, for example, a principal advocating for whole-school transformational activity as well as the micro-dynamics of a fractious staff meeting. Thus, while definitions, metaphors, themes and models have their limitations, each nonetheless offers scope for supporting a range of qualitative understandings which may, ultimately, be of greater day-to-day benefit to the practitioner leader than the more positivist findings of neurobiology or neurochemistry.

Emotional Intelligence

The argument that emotion is inherent in the practice of leadership rather than separate from it[22] is now established in organisational behaviour literature[23]. This concept can be traced back to Thorndike's[24] contention from the 1920's that social ability is an important component of intelligence.

The popularisation of Emotional Intelligence (EI) by Goleman (1995)[25] has generated a wave of interest in the examination of the affective components of corporate maximisation strategies[26]. In the educational milieu, the popularity of EI is due, at least partially, to the fact that it reminds school leaders of what they already knew; that emotion and thinking *do* work together[27].

Few articles and books concerning the emotional landscape of school leadership since the mid-1990s fail to reflect-upon Goleman's synthesis. Goleman himself immediately acknowledges a fundamental debt to both Gardner's[28] 'multiple

intelligences' framework and to Salovey & Mayer[29] who first proposed a definition and basic model of the emotional intelligence construct. Three influential theories about emotional intelligence have emerged[30]. Salovey and Mayer conceptualise emotional intelligence as an ability; Reuven Bar-On[31] as a set of traits and abilities and Goleman as a combination of skills and personal competencies. A number of writers combine the range of domains encompassed by the various models into a workable definition of emotional intelligence for the purposes of clarity and engagement with their own research requirements. Cooper and Sawaf's[32] framing is perhaps the most concise:

> Emotional intelligence is the ability to sense, understand and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotions as a source of human energy, information, connection and influence.

For perhaps the same reasons - clarity and applicability - Goleman's four-domain model has greater traction in the literature and also attracts attention due to his stated aim of 'understanding what it means – *and how* – to bring intelligence to emotion'[33], and seeing emotional intelligence as a set of learned skills and competencies[34]. Both these features have had an impact on research in education and, according to Humphrey et al[35], 'most of the literature in this area is drawn from work in schools'. Central to Goleman's premise is that it is possible to provide people with a range of tools, techniques and skills for managing emotionality both within oneself and in relating to others. Inevitably, a critique of this capacity-acquiring argument has emerged, focussing along the following lines:

EI is more about intelligence than emotions[36]

Morrison and Ecclestone[37] report the unacknowledged depth of disagreement about whether EI is a distinctive or integral element of 'intelligence' in general. The term emotional intelligence itself is even described by Humphrey et al[38] as 'an oxymoron'. At the heart of the concern is the possibility that EI is essentially founded on processes of thinking and judgement that are targeted and refocused on emotions to enhance control of self and others[39]. Allen[40] asserts that while Salovey and Mayer's and Goleman's views of intelligence differ, they agree that EI is about being able to monitor your own and others' feelings, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide your thinking and actions. Thus, while EI could mature into a construct that is theoretically meaningful, differing definitions and neglected conceptual problems have led to considerable confusion in the literature[41].

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EI crudely captures and simplifies emotion, reducing it to measurement and quantification[42]

Fineman[43] cites a web discussion of emotion researchers:

> Are there any empathy tests out there?
> We are looking for measures of the following:
> 1. Pride 2. Friendship 3. Generosity. Any help will be greatly appreciated

Given that we can 'struggle with the limitations of language to express how we feel' and that emotion is 'wrapped up in the warp and weft of social practices'[44], the key determinant of EI as a construct lies in its measurability. Methods used to quantify EI range from self-report 'trait' questionnaires to ability tests (analogous to IQ tests) and 'informant measures' and each is problematic[45]. Indeed the low correlation between results in self-report and ability EI measures points to the possibility that they are measuring conceptually distinct entities – emotional self-efficacy and cognitive-emotional ability respectively[46].

Criticism of the quantification of emotions however, goes beyond psychometric validity to the moral and value-laden use of outcomes in organisations and society as a whole. The core issue relates to 'experts' ascribing EI values that they regard as desirable or inappropriate in various contexts and individuals whose EI level is deemed low being considered to require counselling and training programmes[47].

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Emotional Absolutism[48]

The 'conceptual sloppiness' attributed to EI's uses and understandings[49] has in part fuelled a reaction against the construct but this has also been reinforced by a fear of its potential unethical use in the hands of the powerful. On an individual level, self-centred leaders or those with a Machiavellian personality are capable of abusing their EI – a warning against manipulation repeatedly made by survey respondents in this study. Similarly at the organisational level, EI may lead to socially acceptable ways of expressing emotions which can be experienced as suppressive[50] and rejecting opposition as negativity. At the political level, EI exposes the instrumental, manipulative intentions behind an apparently personal approach[51], captured in the phrase 'managing *through* relationships'. At the heart of this concern lies the idea that emotions constitute an influential dimension to agency and that to put the emotions on the professional agenda in schools is to enact a powerful transformational potential[52].

Emotions and collaboratively-mediated change

Contemporary educational policy in Ireland repeatedly demands that mandated change be mediated collectively as 'whole school' enterprises. This section examines and relates to the project a set of current debates underpinning linkage between leadership practice and collaborativity; the demand for a new, emotionally engaged 'leaderliness'; the politics and power dynamics of emotionality, and, linking the emotional practice with teacher performance and student outcomes.

The New 'Leaderliness'

For the past two decades, according to McWilliam and Hatcher[53], emotions have been largely regarded as feminine, private and irrational and therefore remaining outside the domain of public, masculinised work. There has since, however, been an endorsement of soft skills achieving hard targets, demanding a new 'leaderliness' in schools – one that replaces distance with empathy, aloofness with warmth and power with partnership[54].

Whereas the risk exists of the emergence of 'leadership by adjective', wherein a new qualifier is added to the term 'leadership' almost annually[55], there remains a strong argument for framing a new image of the principal, required to accommodate the more recent discourse around the diffuse nature of leadership[56]. Perhaps unsurprisingly, characteristics demanded of this new emerging leaderliness include that it be:

Distributive: Sometimes referred-to as 'giving leadership away', Beatty sites distributed, distributive and shared school leadership as 'grounded in notions of collaborative inquiry within dynamic learning communities'[57].

Collaborative: Collaboration is defined as 'working with someone to produce something'[58], and Blackmore asserts that 'the emotional work of school management is to build a positive emotional economy based on collaborative models of professionalism'[59].

Transformational: Often set in opposition to transactional leadership, 'all transformational approaches to leadership emphasise emotions and values with the aim of fostering capacity development and commitment to organisational goals'[60].

Emotionally Intelligent: More broadly defined as 'bringing intelligence to emotion'[61], Singh at al claim that 'interpersonal and intrapersonal emotionally intelligent behaviours of principals are integral to an educator's attainment of job satisfaction and ultimately crucial to the development of a sustainable and

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effective culture of collegiality in our schools'[62].

Collaborative and collegial demands are therefore seen to be at the heart of the transformational leader's demeanour. The principal's role is now being reconstituted as supporter, reinforcer and facilitator[63] of school-wide change efforts, as opposed to the more authoritarian approaches of the transactional leader. Aligning with the broad focus of the present study, Slater[64] set out to uncover the understandings, attitudes and skills required of principals in improving their schools through collaboration. She lists a set of five capacities her focus group participants (parents, teachers and school leaders) identified in answer to her research question, 'How does the principal support collaboration?'

1. Developing healthy relationships

'Collaboration is very emotional work, committed for a considerable period of time'

'Supportive relationships show respect for teachers' competence'

Slater's respondents support Crawford's[65] contention that relationships in schools are built up over long periods, unlike hospitals for example, and are also particularly challenging due to their ever-changing nature, unlike prisons.

2. Modelling

'All members, and particularly principals, need to practice their espoused beliefs about collaboration'

'People are smart and will know whether the principal truly wants collaboration or not'

Modelling is characterised as 'exercising idealised influence' by Leithwood and Beatty[66] and is, they – and this project's respondents – assert, related to authenticity in leadership.

3. Communication Skills

'Listening; Openness; Asking for input'

This particular quote from Slater's respondent emphasizes the listening, 'receiving' aspect of communication rather than the speaking or 'transmitting', a point made succinctly by a participant in the present study: *You have two ears but only one mouth!'*.

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4. *Valuing people*

'Using others' input to solve problems or make decisions – not just listening to them'

'…not being watched or micromanaged but being seen, heard, approved-of and appreciated'

Such commentary aligns with Davies and Brighouse's[67] characterisation of invitational leadership which 'begins and ends with people' and requires a respect for each person's competence and commitment to making the school a good place for everyone to be.

5. *Advocacy*

'Promoting the value of collaboration in itself: Endorsing collaborative activities'

'Effective advocacy puts collaboration on the launch pad for take-off in the school'

The etymology of 'advocacy' reveals its affectively rich origins as the old French verb *advocare,* meaning to 'summon, to call to one's aid'[68], which intersects with both the invitational character of the new leaderliness and also an acknowledgement that the principal cannot do everything.

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Emotion and Politics

Collaboration and collegiality are inherently political. The term 'politic' may be conceived as 'seeking the will and welfare of a polity which involves an authentic concern for group preferences', that is, where right action and right order find their legitimacy not in the individual, but in the group[69]. Thus value structures and behaviour operate simultaneously and inter-connectedly at the twin levels of the predominant societal culture (macropolitics) and that of the school (micropolitics).

Macropolitical

A debate is emerging around the impact of the societal and cultural foundations of the emotions-as-strategy proposition. Western materialist culture locates 'problems' in the person rather than within the social and political sphere and thus feeds into the individualistic thinking not necessarily characteristic of other cultures. The potential for loss of values such as solidarity and other-centred moral responsibility is evident[70] as is the possibility of pathologising

those who express their non-conformity or dissention in a negatively emotional manner.

There appears to be a political agenda behind the tactical deployment of emotionality that emphasises positive psychology, human strengths and potentialities while the attendant suppression of negative emotions may impoverish rather than enrich our understanding of leadership[71]. Negative emotions are just as important as positive ones which may increase conformity and superficiality, eroding organisational effectiveness which must, in the final analysis, be founded on sometimes harsh and threatening realities. Specifically, negative emotions and dissonance may facilitate empowerment and learning processes in the organisation, a facet of leadership practice specifically referred-to by some respondents during this study.

Micropolitical

School leaders are expected, on a daily basis, to balance micropolitical tensions in schools resulting from macropolitical, cultural and structural changes[72]. Specifically, the new political reality in publicly funded organisations, demanding fiscal restraint, accountability and change, creates a new set of challenges for school leaders. Since educational politics, values and emotions are intertwined[73], Hochschild's[74] concept of emotional labour, where individuals modify their actual or displayed emotions to meet the demands of their job, therefore occupies an increasingly central position in the professional life of the principal[75].

Emotion and Power

The subjects of authority, power and control also emerge as significant forces in change-management processes. The central role of the principal in developing school culture is well acknowledged but has been premised on the principal as having positional power in a hierarchical organisation – the sole decision maker in school change efforts[76]. The shift towards a more collaborative approach to leadership generates emotional forces in both the leader and the led as positional power is shared and hitherto 'un-flexed muscles' are awakened by teachers.

The essential moral purpose at the heart of educational leadership is nonetheless vulnerable to those who can abuse their emotional skills in pursuit of their own good:

> In other words, self-centred leaders or those with a Machiavellian personality are capable of abusing their EI, treating followers as

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vehicles for their own good, as well as exhibiting a lack of concern and the moral dimension of empathy[77].

Thus, while it is impossible to eliminate the manipulative and the Machiavellian, one of the purposes of research into the affective forces in headship must surely be to underscore the importance of emotionally mature leadership and enhancing the principal's ability to create a safe and trusting school environment - an emotional capacity in itself[78].

Emotion and Gender and Class

Schools inform the appropriateness of emotional displays in ways that are gendered, racialised and classed[79]. Gender distinctions with emotions impact on intra and interpersonal dynamics across the spectrum of human activity. In particular, the gendered order of caring sets the stage for an important debate in terms of a schooling and leadership that has been overwhelmingly cognitive, calculative and stereotypically masculine in nature[80]. While caricatures of male leaders persist; ('being a man is about being in command and control – it is not about being a carer')[81], sources of resistance to that order also exist. In the Irish context, Lynch's[82] findings that those men whose circumstances placed them in caring positions exhibited a capacity to and an orientation towards care that was similar to that of women, offers enquiry potential for research such as the present exploration of principalship as she concludes that 'gendered order of care is not inevitable'.

Emotions are often the surface response to deeper dissonance issues[83]. Hargreaves'[84] exploration of the emotional politics of school failure offers insights into the impact of both race and class as they demarcate emotionally laden differences between the passionless distinction of elite success and the 'viscerally threatening emotionality of lower classes'. The policy language of failure resonates emotionally with the sensibilities of middle England, Ireland and America. Ability and achievement are defined as 'singular, antiseptically neutral qualities'[85] that disguise their emotional and social bias and allow for seemingly socially neutral labelling ('cruising', 'struggling', 'sinking') of both schools and individuals. Strong external accountability linked to a disciplinary system of judgements and targets for evaluation mean that working class schools, in reality achieving extremely well, become tainted with failure and demoralised[86]. Defining failure in these terms ensures that failing schools in minority settings will always exist. Such schools will require an emotionally engaged leadership capable of both comprehending and mitigating the reality that the basic challenges come not from a lack of strategies for improvement but from having to endure the scourge of impoverishment[87]. Significantly, Hargreaves includes 'make emotions matter' in his list of approaches to sustainably combat school failure and argues that we should treat emotions

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in teaching and learning, standards and achievement, as central and not peripheral to the reform and improvement agenda.

Emotion and School Enhancement

Linking the emotional practice with teacher performance and student outcomes intersects to some degree with the school improvement and school effectiveness movements but has become even more closely aligned with the recent emphasis on school renewal. The effectiveness proposition is that students in effective schools 'make more progress over time than comparable students in comparable institutions' and seeks quantitative measures of student inputs and outcomes[88]. School improvement is about raising student achievement through focussing on the teaching-learning process and the conditions which support it – a 'what works?' discourse. Both traditions however, agree that while schools cannot compensate for society, they can make a difference in determining their students' life chances and that improvement effects, while complex and multilayered, are amplified at the level of the classroom[89].

Fullan declared the school improvement and school effectiveness movements to be 'politically and philosophically at odds'[90], but predicted the factions would lead to combinations of the two approaches as a function of 'the politics of strange bedfellows'. It is into this space that the concept of 'school renewal' emerges. The assertion by Beatty[91] that holistic school renewal demands a qualitatively different discourse from the 'turf wars' of school improvement and school effectiveness drivers resonates with the views of other writers. This is particularly true of researchers and theorists from the many Anglophone countries (e.g. Australia (Blackmore, 2004) and Canada (Slater, 2005)) adopting a devolved 'government to governance' restructuring policy for their schools, yet to emerge in Ireland. The resulting new set of accountabilities has been accompanied by a changed state of relations in site-based, self-managed schools, wherein a sense of alienation and anger has emerged resulting from the dissonance between teachers' and leaders' 'real work' and the type of performative work demanded by the new systems[92]. Management of such affective complexities requires a new image of the principal, more in keeping with new visions of schools[93].

For Beatty school renewal is a reaction against depersonalising performativity and contrived collegiality of the current 'intensification era'. At its heart lies a process of re-invigorating, re-energising and in effect, re-inventing the whole school as a dynamic learning community. The key to such renewal, she argues, lies not in going through the motions of a sterile professional discourse rooted in the standardised testing and continuous data-gathering of school effectiveness drivers but in 'going through the emotions' with the aim of re-culturing the school as an authentically collaborative and holistic community.

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Recent research has sought to link leadership factors with teacher performance. Taking altered teacher practices and consequent student assessment gains as key outcomes, Leithwood and Jantzi[94] examine the specific leader practices impacting on such transformations. Their aim was to generate theory identifying a plausible chain of variables linking leadership effects to organisational conditions and, eventually, to student outcomes. The large scale study, based on a 4-year evaluation of England's National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, led to three important conclusions:

1. School leadership has an important influence on the likelihood that teachers will change their classroom practices.

2. Transformational approaches to school leadership seem to hold considerable promise for this purpose.

3. There is a significant gulf between classroom practices that are 'changed' and practices that actually lead to greater pupil learning; the potency of leadership for increasing student learning hinges on the specific classroom practices which leaders stimulate, encourage, and promote.

Thus Leithwood and Jantzi identify a set of transformational leadership practices as 'Setting Directions', 'Developing People' and 'Redesigning the Organisation' and later adding 'Improving the Instructional Programme'[95]. These dimensions are underpinned by an emphasis on emotions and values and share in common the fundamental aim of fostering capacity development and higher levels of commitment to organisational goals on the part of leaders' colleagues[96].

As if to underline the significance of the emotional foundations of these specific principal behaviours, Leithwood collaborated with Brenda Beatty, researcher and much-cited author on emotions and school leadership, in the production of '*Leading with Teacher Emotions in Mind*' (Leithwood and Beatty, 2008). Their objective was, in a 'decidedly instrumental' way, to clarify how those providing leadership in schools can help nurture and maintain positive emotions among individual teachers and a positive emotional climate across the school as a whole. They use as their 'conceptual glue' the four-point framework of core leadership practices above, even crystallising Leithwood and Jantzi's model into a mathematical function expressing workplace performance as a function of the motivations, abilities and situations in which teachers work[97]:

$$P = f(a, m, s)$$

where P = teacher performance

            a = teacher ability

            m = teacher motivation, and,

            s = the setting in which teachers work

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The nature versus nurture debate

An extension of the discourse around the identification of leadership factors introduces the question of 'nature versus nurture' in the development of particular competencies. Logically, if emotional competencies can be learned through awareness and practice, then leadership dispositions can be assessed and growth experiences can be designed to facilitate the emotional competency growth of leadership candidates[98]. Such claim and consequence are, of course, deeply contested and form a core question for principal respondents in this study.

Proponents of the nurture argument, essentially a Golemanite perspective, argue for a range of interventions fostering emotional awareness, empathic understanding and emotional management for prospective school leaders, at selection and induction, for continuous professional development and remediation and even in preparation for retirement. Typical of such interventions is the set offered by Johnson et al[99]:

1. Education leaders must learn to be responsible for knowing their emotional selves supported by, for example, narrative writing and safe-dialogue with peers

2. University educational administrative curriculums require reform, to embed emotional awareness in certain courses or as 'stand-alones'

3. Professional development with the support of mentors is required as leaders will benefit from being with others who have experienced or are experiencing emotionally charged situations

4. Scholars in the field of education should consider conducting research on this important topic to extend the existing body of literature and ultimately enhance development programmes

More recently, an expansion in the number of books on emotion in school leadership is noteworthy with such titles as:

- *Getting to the Heart of Leadership: Emotion and Educational Leadership* (Crawford, 2009)
- *Leading with Teacher Emotions in Mind* (Leithwood and Beatty, 2008)
- *Supporting the Emotional Work of School Leaders* (Harris, 2007)
- *Passionate Leadership in Education* (Davies and Brighouse, 2008), and,
- *Passionate Principalship: Learning from the life histories of school leaders* (Sugrue, 2005)

A common approach throughout the book genre is a consideration of principal voice, rich in interview and other extracts and with an emphasis on uncovering themes from life histories, in-school scenarios and the

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recounting of critical incidents. Harris is typical in not pretending to offer 'a set of techniques aimed at short term solutions'[100] but invites readers, as does Crawford (2009), to undertake an 'emotional journey', surfacing cognition and exploring experiences with the aim of enabling principals to 'engage in trusting, collaborative relationships that are necessary for leadership success'[101].

Challenging the view that the role of the headteacher is grounded in emotion, shaped by emotion and acted-out in an emotional context[102], McWilliam and Hatcher[103] argue that passion, emotion and caring do not let anyone off the hook of, for example, effective financial management – rather it nestles beside it. It is troubling, they assert, that 'gurus like Goleman' know what the right emotions are and how to experience them and that these ought to be understood as skills that are teachable through formal programmes of learning. Pointedly, they remind us that the recent inventories of emotional competence that are being made available to educational leaders do not emanate from communities of educators, resonating with O'Connor's warning that handling our emotions and using them to manage others has become another in a long list of work competencies to be quantified and judged by external standards[104].

In Summary

■ The practice of school leadership that is primarily rational and carefully controlled emotionally is widely challenged in contemporary literature. This development coincides with a changing school leadership and management landscape in which teachers want leaders to be more caring, connected, supportive and committed to relationship. Such a requirement is coupled with, in Ireland as elsewhere, a policy environment demanding 'whole-school' approaches and the emergence of a culture of collaboration.

■ In the search for meaning-making around the subject of emotionality, epistemologies have emerged which employ metaphor and measurement as well as incorporating the more positivist findings of neurobiology.

■ The popularisation of Emotional Intelligence by Goleman reminds school leaders of what they already knew; that emotion and thinking do work together, but the question of whether linkage has been conclusively demonstrated between Emotional Intelligence as a construct and school leadership domains remains a contested area.

■ Collaborative and collegial demands are now seen to be at the heart of the transformational leader's demeanour with the principal's role newly reconstituted as supporter, reinforcer and facilitator of whole-school mediated change. There exists a demand for an emotionally engaged 'leaderliness' which is underpinned by values and which can comprehend the politics and power dynamics of school life while linking the emotional dimensions of practice with teacher performance and student outcomes.

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■ There exists deep contestation around the 'teachability', through awareness and practice, of emotional competencies and whether growth experiences can be designed which can promote the development of emotional competencies.

A Conceptual Framework

Reflecting both the literature and the principals' discourse, emotions in this study are primarily conceptualised as 'heuristics-of-value' in which they act as an important and useful source of information about values[105].

While 'groundbreaking' in its framing of the adaptive processing of emotions and the relevant information that one can apply toward solving personal and organizational problems[106], the EI construct may serve to highlight the broader set of phenomena relating to the affective domain of school leadership rather than fully circumscribing it. The present exploration thus adopts the qualitative approach articulated in Fineman's[107] conclusion:

> 'It is certainly possible to research emotion without measuring it. In doing so, the researcher's sovereignty and tools give way to more interactional, context-focussed inquiry. The understandings so produced are inherently less precise than the simplifications of measurement but they are likely to be abundant in insight, plausibility and texture'.

It is now beyond argument that collaborative approaches to organisational development are, and will remain, integral to the implementation of contemporary educational policy for schools in Ireland as elsewhere. This book is aimed at enhancing understanding and action in service of affective capacity-building for principals in creating such collaborative communities.

The following conceptual framework will now inform subsequent treatment of the data in this book:

> 'Emotions are primarily conceptualised as 'heuristics-of-value' in which they act as an important and useful source of information about values influencing school leaders' behaviour'.

> 'Emotion may be researched without measuring it and this study adopts a qualitative approach which is contextually aware and aimed at achieving an empathic understanding of respondents' experience'.

> 'An enhanced understanding of school leaders' emotional competencies offers applicability, complementing cognitive/rational approaches in principals' management of collaboratively-mediated change'.

Emotionality in school leadership is now firmly on the agenda in terms of its

relationship with the change strategies demanded by emerging education policy. That such a conversation has reached reflective practitioner level has, as we shall see from participants in this study, become a reality. That emotionality is central to the successful navigation of the collaborativity challenges demanded of contemporary principalship is contested by many within the same cohort of respondents.

Capturing and synthesising principal perspective has thus become an important tool in uncovering the story of modern school leadership and Chapter Three now presents an account of the data-gathering methods and subsequent initial analysis of principal narrative as were adopted in this study.

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Chapter Three
Capturing 'Principal Voice'

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Capturing 'Principal Voice'

Introduction

This chapter describes the focus group, online survey and interview methods used to capture the respondent principals' experience and a brief account of how the data were initially analysed. A profile of the respondents is also presented.

In treating the emotional dimension within educational settings, a significant increase in scholarship and literature is notable from 1990 onwards[1], generally of a theoretical nature though occasionally supported by empirical data. The majority of empirical research studies adopt one or more of three data-gathering approaches employed in this research; focus groups, surveys and interviewing.

1. The Focus Group

Concerns for practicality and appropriateness led to the consideration of a focus group as an initial foray into data-gathering and analysis. The rationale for such an approach emerged from a paper by Johnson *et al*[2] and their list of purposes for their own 'preliminary self-study' mirrored my own:

1. Surface our own cognition about 'emotionality'
2. Create a language around which we could better shape our interview questions
3. Sharing our own critical incidents
4. Improve engagement with our participants
5. Develop a level of respect around potentially sensitive revelations
6. Learn how to sustain a rapport with participants

A focus group study comprises a small, informal group of selected people, managed with skill and with prepared questions and with the goal of eliciting feelings, attitudes and ideas about a selected topic. Slater[3] points to a key limitation of the focus group as the possibility that participants may censor or conform what they say in spite of the skill of the moderator and that the presence of the group may affect what some participants say about the topic, as well as how

they say it. The potential, however, to 'brainstorm' ideas made the focus group an attractive proposition for an initial attempt at reconnaissance. Questions were framed beforehand with the objective of exploring a specific range of areas while leaving scope for exploration of surprises and new avenues of relevant experience. The focus group conversation was digitally audio-recorded and fully transcribed. Initial analysis involved sentence-by-sentence coding of the transcript using the qualitative data analysis programme NVivo as a scaffold and this procedure elicited 292 codes, subsequently condensed into eight themes. The richness of the data led to a decision to use a set of extracts from the focus group transcript as a foundation for the online survey questionnaire.

2. The Survey

It is almost axiomatic that researchers call for further investigation to support or challenge the as yet limited set of empirical findings in this area. Research by Ginsberg & Davies[4] and by James & Vince[5] utilized a sample-base with 23 and 40 subjects respectively and Leithwood and Jantzi[6] point out that 'it is unusual for educational leadership research to be based on national samples'. This study attempted a remediation of this gap in the literature by undertaking a large scale survey of the entire cohort of (the then) 380 voluntary secondary school principals in Ireland.

An online questionnaire was used as a data-gathering tool for three reasons:
1. To expand on the set of themes uncovered thus far
2. To collect relevant data quickly and electronically, and,
3. Surveying the entire national cohort of principals on this topic had not been attempted in Ireland before

I relied on 'principal-voice' as the medium of enquiry and asked respondents to react to verbatim statements. Each of the themed categories of principal-voice extracts underpinning the survey was developed from the eight themes emerging from the focus group. Four principal-voice quotations, representing thematically strong outcomes from within each of the selected categories, gave a total of 32 quotes for the wider cohort of principals to engage-with. In addition to Likert-type Scales to record levels of agreement with the quotations, a 'reflection box' was provided after each statement to allow for development of the participants' thinking and a concluding commentary space offered in advance of submitting.

The draft survey was piloted with five principals in January 2011 and reviewed in light of their feedback. The final instrument was electronically distributed using the *SurveyMonkey* platform to the wider population of 380 principals in late January 2011. The questionnaire design matrix is presented as an Appendix.

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3. Individual Interviews

The focussed reflective conversation in one form or another has provided a rich source of data to researchers in this still emerging field. The choice of individual interviewing as a data-gathering technique was to allow for in-depth probing of issues and immediacy of follow-on questioning, neither of which features were realistically achievable in the group or distance modes. The interviews, which were carried-out in November and December 2011, took around an hour each and were held in the principals' offices, then digitally recorded and fully transcribed. Field notes supported subsequent reflection and analysis.

Analysis of the Narrative

Combined, the survey and subsequent interviews generated a significant quantity of narrative data of over 72,000 words. Beginning with the survey reflection-box commentaries and subsequently the interview transcripts, the processes of data-reduction and thematic analysis were undertaken and led to the emergence of a set of themes which provide a framework for findings outlined in subsequent chapters.

By examining the narrative and looking for conceptual links, I identified the consequences of 'Influence of Life Story', 'Values as Foundational' and 'Possessing Emotional Self-Regulation' as providing fundamental affective outcomes associated with ethical, self-directed living which I grouped together in a theme entitled 'Foundations'. The term 'Foundations' was chosen to reflect a set of competencies acting as a basis for behaviour and action founded on principles, for, as Fullan[7] points out, 'you cannot move toward systems thinking and sustainability in the absence of a widely shared moral purpose'.

Next, the consequences of the sub-themes 'Capacity to Build Trust', 'Problem-Solving' and 'Developing Resilience' can be conceived of as presenting a bridge between vision and action and were related together under the theme 'Agency'. Harris[8] describes 'agency' as the innate and natural tendency of people to engage with their environment in personally and socially constructive ways. It is unlikely that the social world of the school community will engage in realising the leader's moral purpose without, for example, shared trust or the capacity to resolve and sustain through difficulties.

The third theme, 'Connection' emphasises the human side of organisational life, the centrality of relationships and the pivotal importance of a sense of community to co-operative, as opposed to competitive, action[9]. At the heart of this theme lies the 'holy grail of change' which Fullan[10] identifies as teacher motivation. The three sub-themes 'Relationship-Building', 'Communicating

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Effectively' and 'Managing Conflict' are thus vital to motivating people for collaborative action within the school.

Ultimately, creation and maintenance of 'Synergy', the final theme, at staff level require the deployment of appropriate, contextualised and artful leadership strategies in bringing a particular initiative to completion. Each of the competencies 'Impact of Leadership Style', 'Contextualising Decision-Making' and 'Artful Change-Management' is required for successful, collaborative change management as implied by Hargreaves[11]:

> Frustration with unwanted or unclear purposes and poor implementation can quickly spiral into intense emotional responses. If inexperienced or inappropriate school leaders cannot help teachers weave a path through the mosaic of mandated change, it is they who will become the target of teachers' internalised negative emotions.

The overarching thematic framework is presented in Table 3.1, and sets the stage for an exploration of the data.

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Table 3.1: The domains, themes and sub-themes

Domains	Intrapersonal Domain		Interpersonal Domain	
Themes	**Foundations**	**Agency**	**Connection**	**Synergy**
Sub-themes	• Influence of life-story • Values as Foundational • Possessing Emotional Self-Regulation	• Capacity to build trust • Problem solving • Developing Resilience	• Relationship-Building • Communicating Effectively • Managing Conflict	• Impact of Leadership Style • Contextualising Decision-Making • Artful Change-Management

Profile of the Respondents

The focus group participants

Identification of focus group participants was non-random and purposive. While such a selective approach would not support any degree of generalisability to the wider population, I prioritised a set of purposes such as surfacing cognition, developing a language around emotionality and improving engagement with participants, while leaving the achievement of representativeness to the census approach of the online survey.

It was nonetheless important to incorporate a degree of diversity to allow for a spectrum of perspectives and experience and I therefore invited four distinctive principals, selecting for the factors outlined in Table 3.2:

Table 3.2: Characteristics of the focus group participants

Pseudonym	Gender	School Type	Social Context	Experience
Yvonne	Female	All Girls	Middle-Class, City	14 years
Patricia	Female	Co-Ed	Middle-Class, Provincial Town	8 years
Paul	Male	All Girls	Working-Class, City, with Disadvantaged Status	6 years
James	Male	All Boys	Working-Class, City, with Disadvantaged Status	1 year

The survey respondents

By late February 2011, 175 principals out of 380 contacted had completed the survey. Given the nature and length of the questionnaire, the reported extent of 'survey fatigue' among principals and the pressures of seasonal workload (staffing allocations and spring examinations), this response rate of 46% was very gratifying, particularly when it is appreciated that up to 40 of the 'reflection boxes' at *each* of the 32 extracts were completed, sometimes at length. Respondent numbers in tables presented throughout this account do not total 175 in each instance as not all participants provided an answer to every question.

The following account presents a summary of the demographic information provided by survey respondents.

Table 3.3: Gender of survey respondents

	n	%
Male	89	52.0
Female	82	48.0
N	171	100.0

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The JMB database of principals provided the actual gender balance at the time of the survey and allows for a comparison:

Table 3.4: Respondent v actual gender balance

	Survey		JMB Database	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**
Male	89	52	157	41
Female	82	48	223	59
N	171	100	380	100

As can be seen from Table 3.4, the initial expectation that women may be more likely than men to respond to a survey on emotions was not borne-out as females were under represented by 11% and males responded by an equivalent 11% greater than their ratio within the principal population. One possible explanation for this phenomenon was expressed by a male interviewee who, when asked about the high levels of engagement in this research by principals in general, said 'Who else do we talk to about this stuff?' The survey offered a safe and anonymous space for principals to reflect-upon and express their feelings and, though speculative and stereotypical, it is possible that male principals have (or take) fewer such opportunities for emotional self-expression and thus found the online format attractive.

Table 3.5: Age category of survey respondents

Age Range (years)	n	%
25 - 35	1	0.6
36 - 45	35	20.2
46 - 55	91	52.6
56 - 65	46	26.6
N	173	100.0

Although departmental regulations allow for appointment to principalship following five years' permanent service, the age-range distribution illustrated in Table 3.5, if reflective of the whole, points to a pattern of both mid-to-late career and mid-life tenure in the role and a possible concurrence of both significant professional and life-stage expectation and demand.

As longevity in the position as principal could have a bearing on emotionality – positive in terms of acquired resilience or negative in terms of erosion – years' experience data was also sought and is presented in Table 3.6:

Table 3.6: Years as principal (Total years if more than one school)

Years Experience	n	%
3 years or fewer	50	29.1
Between 4 and 6 (inclusive)	41	23.8
Between 7 and 9 (inc.)	24	14.0
Between 10 and 12 (inc.)	20	11.6
Between 13 and 15 (inc.)	14	8.1
Between 16 and 18 (inc.)	9	5.2
Between 19 and 21 (inc.)	7	4.1
More than 21	7	4.1
N	172	100.0

Post primary students in Ireland typically complete a six-year cycle from ages 12 to 18 years. The JMB has calculated that over 70% of contemporary secondary principals have yet to complete one such cycle, which is evidence of both the high levels of attrition in principalship in recent years and also a significant experience-deficit across the cohort – each factor presenting challenges in terms of sustainability and in negotiating the emotional demands of the role.

As the insider-outsider status of a newly appointed or settling-in principal may have an impact on factors such as their relationship history, levels of acceptance within the staff or their appreciation of the nuances of some of the unique micro-political dynamics within the voluntary secondary sector, two queries addressed respondents' origins:

Table 3.7: School origin on appointment

	n	%
Within the school staff	102	59.6
From outside the school	69	40.4
N	171	100.0

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Table 3.8: Sectoral origin on appointment

	n	%
Voluntary Secondary	153	88.4
Community/Comprehensive	10	5.8
VEC (now ETB)	8	4.6
Other (e.g. from abroad)	2	1.2
N	173	100.0

The preponderance of appointees from within the sector and indeed the school itself, as illustrated in Tables 3.7 and 3.8, may be attributed to factors within the selection process, such as familiarity with ethos, or may also be due to a scarcity of applicants from the other two sectors seeking principalship in voluntary secondary schools.

Other information sought included school-context factors such as size, gender-mix and status in terms of designated disadvantage or fee-paying:

Table 3.9: School student population

	n	%
Less than 200	10	5.8
200 - 350	35	20.2
351 - 499	37	21.4
500 - 699	54	31.2
700 - 850	26	15.0
851 - 999	7	4.0
Over 1000	4	2.3
N	173	100.0

Post-primary school size in Ireland demonstrates a predominance of medium-sized schools clustered around a norm of approximately 500 - 600 students, as may be inferred from Table 3.9. Although referring to the American setting, Leithwood and Jantzi[12] argue that secondary schools serving largely diverse and/or disadvantaged students should be limited in size to 600 or fewer. They cite small-school effects as including teachers' and students' sense of community, students' sense of identification with the school, and more personalised relationships providing teachers with opportunities to know their students well.

Table 3.10: School type

	n	%
All Boys	50	28.7
All Girls	74	42.5
Co-Educational	50	28.7
N	174	100.0

The predominance of single-sex schools in the voluntary secondary sector evident from Table 3.10 is a historical legacy of institutions being operated in provincial towns and urban communities by either nuns or religious brothers while virtually every school in both the ETB and Community/Comprehensive sectors is co-educational.

Table 3.11: Is your school in the DEIS Programme?

	n	%
Yes	25	14.5
No	147	85.5
N	172	100.0

46 voluntary secondary schools (12% of the total) are participants in the DEIS programme, described by the DES as an 'action plan for social inclusion'. Such schools typically serve communities experiencing severe social-economic disadvantage and are supported with a range of enhancement measures aimed at improving rates of attendance, retention, achievement and progression.

Table 3.12: Is your school fee-paying?

	n	%
Yes	24	14.0
No	148	86.0
N	172	100.0

The Republic's 54 (at the time of the survey) fee-charging voluntary secondary schools (15% of the total) opted, for a variety of reasons, not to enter the 'free scheme' in 1967. Catholic fee-charging schools, for which families generally have a Catholic free-scheme alternative, offer smaller class sizes and enhanced facilities and attract students from financially secure families. Fee-charging

schools in the geographically dispersed Protestant tradition are more likely to be boarding schools and provide grant-aid to many families who wish their children to be educated in that ethos.

The individual interview participants

Criteria for the selection of interview participants were based on demographic balance (gender, age-range, school type and context) and also on a judgement of their leadership style. The demographic characteristics of the interviewees are presented in Table 3.13:

Table 3.13: Characteristics of the individual interviewees

Pseudonym	Gender	School Type	Social Context	Age-Range	Experience
Martin	Male	All Boys	Middle-Class, Provincial Town	36-45	3 years
Christine	Female	All Girls	Mixed Social Intake, Rural	36-45	4 years
Denis	Male	All Girls	Working-Class, City Suburb	56-65	21 years

Identification of principals I considered would reflect a spectrum of leadership styles was made on the basis of information from Whole School Evaluation (WSE) reports generated by the Inspectorate and which were available from the Department's website. An analysis of WSE Report commentary supported the discovery of a range of styles among the interview subjects but inclusion of relevant extracts in this book would allow for respondent identification and have thus been omitted.

In the event, the conclusions arrived-at by the Inspectorate's external, independent evaluators aligned with significant aspects of the interviewees' responses and this exercise thus provided a diversity of stances and perspectives enriching the overall narrative.

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Concluding Comments

In summary,

- Identification of focus group participants was non-random and purposive and prioritised a set of purposes such as surfacing cognition, developing a language around emotionality and improving engagement with participants.

- The census approach to whole-population sampling for the questionnaire survey was undertaken (a) because a nationwide study of principals' emotional competencies had not previously been undertaken and (b) because of the practical features of electronic dissemination, data-collection, storage and initial analysis offered by the *SurveyMonkey* platform.

- Sampling of interview subjects was purposive or judgemental and was based on demographic balance (gender, age-range, school type and social context) and also on a judgement of their leadership style.

While their personal, professional and school profiles present as wide-ranging and diverse, there nonetheless exists a remarkable homogeneity amongst the 182 research participants in this project. They are almost universally white, Irish, lay, Christians while the greatest distinctions, as this study will reveal, lie in their individual personal and professional encounter with principalship.

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CHAPTER THREE: Notes

1 BRENNAN, J. & MAC RUAIRC, G. (2011) Taking it personally: examining patterns of emotional practice in leading primary schools in the Republic of Ireland. *International Journal of Leadership in Education,* 14, 129-150.

2 JOHNSON, R. G., III, AIKEN, J. A. & STEGGERDA, R. (2005) Emotions and Educational Leadership: Narratives from the Inside. *Planning and Changing,* 36, 235-253.

3 SLATER, L. (2005) Leadership for collaboration: An affective process. *International Journal of Leadership in Education,* 8, 321-333.

4 GINSBERG, R. & DAVIES, T. G. (2003) The Emotional Side of Leadership. IN BENNETT, N., CRAWFORD, M. & CARTWRIGHT, M. (Eds.) *Effective Educational Leadership.* London, Paul Chapman.

5 JAMES, C. & VINCE, R. (2001) Developing the Leadership Capability of Headteachers. *Educational Management & Administration,* 29, 307.

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7 FULLAN, M. (2005) *Education in Motion - Leading in a Culture of Change,* UK and Ireland Workshop Tour, www.michaelfullan.ca.

8 HARRIS, B. (2007) *Supporting the Emotional Work of School Leaders,* London, Paul Chapman.

9 WEST-BURNHAM, J. (2011) Rethinking Educational Leadership. IN O'SULLIVAN, H. & WEST-BURNHAM, J. (Eds.) Leading and Managing Schools. London, SAGE.

10 FULLAN, M. (2007) *The New Meaning of Educational Change,* London, Routledge.

11 HARGREAVES, A. (2004) Inclusive and exclusive educational change: emotional responses of teachers and implications for leadership. *School Leadership & Management,* 24, 287-309.

12 LEITHWOOD, J. & JANTZI, D. (2009) A Review of Empirical Evidence about School Size Effects: A Policy Perspective. *Review of Educational Research,* 79, 464-490.

Chapter Four
Inside-In

Chapter Four
Inside-In

Intrapersonal emotional competencies

Successful leadership of change requires an acknowledgement that 'people learn not by doing per se but by *thinking* about their new doing'[1]. Understanding educational change thus requires an appreciation of meaning as much as process and in the first section, we examine respondents' insights into their meaning-making in terms of what they value, how they came to have these values and in appreciating the link between values and emotionality. Each sub-theme is examined in light of both respondent-voice and the literature and the three sub-themes identified as providing a foundation for subsequent positive transformational activity are:

- Influence of Life Story
- Values as Foundational, and,
- Possessing Emotional Self-Regulation

The second section examines those emotional competencies which act as a bridge between the personal, inner-world of the principal and the social world of the school. The principal's capacity to engender trust, ability to discover solutions to problems and to develop resilience are examined and identified as setting the stage for the interpersonal affective competencies discussed in Chapter Five. The sub-themes examined in this section are:

- Capacity to Build Trust
- Problem-Solving, and,
- Developing Resilience

Foundations

The term 'Foundations' is intended to comprehend affectively-embedded competencies which are associated with ethical, self-directed living.

Influence of Life Story

In order to interrogate our beliefs, values and commitments, Sugrue[2] argues that it is first necessary that we 'take on the more painful process of interrogating our own

substantial self' and, although not sought directly, a surfacing of insights rooted in participants' biographies nonetheless emerged as an element of both face-to-face and survey commentary. Goodson[3] points out that in very few instances have school reforms or change theories been promulgated which place personal development and change as central building blocks in the process. Sugrue[4] argues that this personal insider perspective has been seen as a 'stumbling block' rather than a 'building block' and that a life-history approach has much potential to provide insight into principals' identities, values and capacities.

Interviewees were candid in their sharing of life stories and personal development reflections, frequently linking life experiences to their work as school head-teacher. For example at various points in her interview, Christine connected her family experiences, and particularly motherhood, with her role as principal:

> *And I had a 'eureka moment' about ten years ago when I had my son and I was off on a long maternity leave and I realised that I was projecting too far forward or back and that I need to be present now. You've only one chance to do this, be it with the conversation I'm having with you now or my engagement with the students and to be present while I'm doing it rather than racing ahead. It challenges me all the time but I do find it makes a difference for me.* [Christine]

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Such a demonstration of the profound connection between identity and practice[5] also elicited examples of dissonance between both:

> *That's the burden between the job as principal and the job of being mother. My husband works abroad and that's why my daughter in Leaving Cert. said to me 'Mammy, give up the job of being principal' because we'd a blow-out one night but when I broke it down, her big problem was she feels I'm there for her friends and not for her.* [Christine]

This association between identity and practice was also evidenced by Martin who worked outside Ireland for much of his career and found the transition difficult:

> *It gets my goat, you know, there's been an enormous personal cost to moving to Ireland. I suppose for the first two years I haven't had a sounding board. There's nobody, or at least I felt there was nobody in my corner – not one person, so I found that incredibly difficult.* [Martin]

A focus group member specifically linked her childhood to her management of staff and students:

> *It's the way I was brought up, I don't allow any shouting in the school, I don't shout myself, so therefore if some member of staff has a row with somebody outside the school or inside the classroom, then I would talk to them about it... I don't believe in it, in running a school. The same with*

the students – some of them are far taller and far louder than I ever was growing up, so I have difficulties with people standing up to me, invading my personal space when I am talking to them [Yvonne].

Sugrue[6] makes the distinction that 'life stories are transformed into life histories by adequate and appropriate contextualisation', and hence we are, strictly speaking, dealing with life story vignettes in these extracts. They nonetheless demonstrate that principals 'are not cardboard cut-outs but real flesh and blood individuals with motives and emotions that are influenced by the past as well as contemporary events'[7]. Such extracts present as emotionally rich life-segments. Crawford[8] broadens the scope of influence by arguing that 'life history provides some evidence of the way that headteachers negotiate their identities and make sense of the social context'. This point was illustrated by Denis who spoke about social class:

A lot of teachers themselves mightn't have come out of middle class backgrounds, okay? Including myself, but we might have come out of hungry backgrounds... not so much hungry-hungry but hungry to get on and do well enough like, and that's different. [Denis]

At several points during his interview, he related his advocacy on behalf of challenged and challenging students to this background:

Okay, there's an old saying in schools; 'schools are middle class institutions, run by the middle classes, for the middle classes' and anybody who doesn't fit that model really... 'she's troublesome or she's up to no good'. If you look at the pupils who cause most trouble here – I figure it's about two and a half percent out of 650, so what's that? About fifteen kids, not even that, it's about eight now this year... what have they all in common? They're all needy. [Denis]

Although no questions directly linked to life history were presented in the survey, the narrative occasionally revealed an association between biography and practice. As with the interviewee Christine, a number of commentaries reflected the tensions between principalship and motherhood:

I was fortunate that my family had moved on from second level. I became deputy principal when my youngest child was in 1st year. I would say that she definitely suffered as a result. I was approached to apply for the job of Principal when the last religious was retiring but would not consider it at the time due to my family being still young. I feel a lot of women will sacrifice promotion opportunities because of family responsibilities. [F, 46-55, 4-6] [c]

[c] Survey respondents are assigned a three-component identifier of gender, age category and years' experience.

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Men equally reported on the tension between family life and principalship but were more inclined to use humour in articulating this:

I noticed my kids getting older as their vocabulary on the phone to me improved! This is my biggest regret. [M, 46-55, 13-15]

Early on in my first principalship I would mention school a lot in conversation but I stopped because my children told me to shut-up. I'm now principal of my daughters' school so I have not made the same mistake a second time! [M, 56-65, 13-15]

Pays to have a small family! [M, 56-65, >21]

Finally, one participant associated life experience with values, the subject of the next sub-theme;

A lot depends on one's own life experience, outlook and values. Reflection on experience is the greatest teacher. [F, 46-55, 13-15]

In summary, respondents provided evidence of a meaningful connection between identity and practice and of principals' biographies informing ways in which they negotiate the ethical and social landscape of their school.

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Values as Foundational

Values emerge from the commentary as internal moral and ethical referencing. The capacity to translate values into action was repeatedly identified by principals as foundational to their leadership and management of the school as well as connecting to emotionality within themselves and with members of the school community.

Throughout their narrative, principals associated values such as 'the good of the school', 'people first' and 'students at the centre' with their treatment of people and with their own emotionality:

You have to be value-driven, I think. You need to be able to return loyalty and be close to people, yet you have to constantly work for the good of the school. [M, 46-55, 1-3]

In claiming that 'educational politics, values and emotions are intertwined', Boler[9] echoes the essentially ethical point being made by respondent principals:

Education aims in part to help us understand our values and priorities, how we come to believe in what we do, and define ethical ways of living with others. Emotions function in part as moral and ethical evaluations: they give us the information about what we care about and why.

Sergiovanni[10] goes even further in identifying the leader as 'primarily an expert in the promotion and protection of values' and asserts that:

When the school places the values domain at the centre as the driving force for what goes on and the technical-instrumental domain at the periphery, it becomes transformed from a run-of-the-mill organisation to a unique, vibrant, and generally more successful institution.

The penultimate survey question thus asked principals to 'indicate how important you believe the following emotional competencies are to the practice of principalship' and, as demonstrated in Table 4.1, the element 'Value-driven' was ranked as 'Important' or 'Very Important' by 156 out of 162 respondents (96.2%):

Table 4.1: Principals' ranking of emotional competencies – 'Value-driven'

Please indicate how important you believe the following emotional competencies are to the practice of principalship:

Answer Options	Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Very important	N
Value-driven	1 0.6%	0 0%	5 3.0%	53 32.7%	103 63.5%	162 100%

One comment reflected the essential moral purpose at the heart of school leadership and was also echoed by others:

The great thing about the role is that it is value-driven and has tremendous potential to do some good for young people. This is only possible however if you can manage the other adults in your vicinity, so qualities such as relational management, conflict resolution skills, empathy, emotional self-awareness and resilience are key. [F, 46-55, 4-6]

Interviewees were also asked about the influence of values on the performance of their role and exemplified Beatty's[11] description of the emotional impact when values are challenged:

The cognitive and emotional dissonance that occurs in situations that clash with our 'beliefs' and 'values' about our substantial self demands a strongly protective and sometimes far from optimal change of view or action, a fragmentation of the professional self, which would presumably be associated with some manifestation of emotionality.

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Martin, for example, sought to have an allegedly drug-dealing student expelled from the school and his Board refused:

> *If you take that pupil issue, my own values would be... I would have very high standards for what I do but there comes a point where you have to say 'I'm sorry, I believe in this' and with the pupil issue it's because his behaviour, or his alleged behaviour, was so much at loggerheads with what we are trying to achieve here that for me, the only judgement that I could deliver there was 'I'm sorry, you shouldn't be a part of what we are trying to build here'.*

> *Now, that was thrown back at me so that's where my values are at odds – not at odds, you know, sit quite easily with the emotion that I was feeling at the time, because I felt 'how dare you make a decision like that knowing the state of the nation, knowing what parents, if they got wind of that would think, 'oh you're soft on that or that's okay' you know' – that's where I was coming from.* [Martin]

Values, in the case of some principals, were also related to school ethos – an explicit feature of the voluntary secondary school:

> *One learns to value a staff and affirmation is very important. People do things because they feel they are contributing, you must acknowledge this and if one takes ethos seriously then it comes naturally.* [F, 46-55, 1-3]

Christine similarly rooted her values in faith but avoided overtness:

> *There is a spiritual dimension because I've a strong faith but I don't think it's unique. I think what I do, you can apply to any situation, you know? I happen to have God at the centre of what I do with the students and our mission statement and core values but you could do it without mentioning God in it at all.* [Christine]

Whatever their source, spiritual or secular, values, combined with a personal vision of what makes a good school and clarity about one's own priorities combine to affirm principals in their efforts to enhance the daily work of their schools[12]. An association between values and emotionality is emphasised in the literature and is repeatedly connected with emotional labour – a requirement to be seen to feel an emotion different to what one is experiencing[13] particularly in situations where one's values are challenged. An exploration of findings around emotional self-regulation is therefore warranted as the inner-self connects with the presented-self and this final dimension of the theme 'Foundations' is discussed next.

Possessing Emotional Self-Regulation

The term 'emotional self-regulation' is employed to comprehend a capacity for emotional self-awareness and the consequent capacity for emotional self-control. These abilities relate to principalship in that self-knowledge is fundamental to developing an effective way of being a leader and for making sense of the interconnected web of activity and relationships that make the policies, procedures and tasks of school life run more smoothly[14].

Harris[15] sees emotional self-awareness as essential to school leadership and demanding a coherent and credible 'fit' between the outer presentation of self and the inner world of thoughts and feelings. Awareness of the need to maintain a connection between being and doing was reflected in a number of commentaries:

> I'm not afraid to invest my emotions and my personality, but I can't let that determine everything. There are times for stepping back and being a bit more analytical too. [M, 36-45, 4-6]

> I have to call upon a deep well alright. I try to keep on top of as much as I can, but I don't pretend I am when I'm not. [M, 36-45, 1-3]

Such leaders, according to Harris, have an authority that is based on a deep understanding of self, a strong sense of identity and a degree of self-acceptance that enables them to move beyond their ego and take an overview of the school.

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Two survey questions offered insights into respondents' levels of emotional awareness:

Table 4.2: Principals' response to:

'I mean there's a parent one minute, a staff member the next, then there's a kid the next - there's just such variety and there's so many emotions you're dealing with every day'

	n	%
Never like me	5	3
Seldom like me	17	10
About half of the time like me	43	26
Usually like me	83	50
Always like me	19	11
N	167	100.0

Though linked to workload, the focus group participant's statement in Table 4.2 centred on 'people' and the emotional work of the day and, whether respondents indicated agreement or otherwise, the prompt demanded an awareness of emotionality in daily practice. Representative commentaries, contributed via the 'reflection box' attached to each question, included:

There is a need for "on tap" emotional intelligence! [M, 36-45, 1-3]

No day is ever the same. You range from a confidante to a psychoanalyst to a caretaker within a few hours. [F, 46-55, 1-3]

The next question demonstrated the degree to which emotional self-awareness was associated with principals' reflection on critical incidents:

Table 4.3: Principals' response to:

'The outcome of my reflection on that incident was very sobering for me emotionally and, I suppose, again made me look at all my mechanisms, procedures and responses'

	n	%
Never like me	3	1.8
Seldom like me	36	22.0
About half of the time like me	44	26.8
Usually like me	72	43.9
Always like me	9	5.5
Total	164	100.0

While Table 4.3 demonstrates that a significant majority of respondents agreed that at some point they engaged in reflection on incidents and subsequent change, a polarisation of stance nonetheless emerged within this question's reflection-box commentaries:

I do really try to reflect on how I do things, and even after many years of experience I still find that I could improve my ways of dealing with situations. [F, 56-65, >21]

Very bad to reflect. Move on to the next problem. [F, 56-65, 13-15]

Emotional self-awareness is, of course, a key component of the emotional intelligence construct as framed by Goleman and 'most researchers into EI would agree that the key competence is that of self-awareness'[16]. Crawford[17], however, asserts that self-awareness is more than a competence and that the EI/Competence route in educational leadership has been seen as a short-cut to effectiveness rather than part of a developing and complex affective paradigm

for leadership. There may therefore exist a distinct prospect that life experience enriches and informs such awareness and the data were thus examined for association between age and emotional perspective. Almost uniquely amongst the searches for association between personal and attitudinal variables, a distinction emerged between younger and older principals in their stance on emotionality as the key influencing factor in school life. As illustrated in Table 4.4, younger principals were surer of their responses than the older cohort and also disagreed with this perspective by a ratio of 2.6:1 within their own age-range. Older principals were more equivocal in their responses but nonetheless demonstrated 12% higher levels of agreement with the prompting statement on the centrality of emotions in school life:

Table 4.4: Cross-tabulation:

Age Category x *Your emotional response determines everything*

Age Category	25-45		46-65	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**
Agreement	8	23	46	35
Disagreement	21	60	53	41
Unsure	6	17	32	24
N	**35**	**100**	**131**	**100**

$$\chi^2 = 14.728, df = 2, p = 0.022, \text{Cramer's V} = 0.205^{18}$$

Slater's[19] exploration of the emotional competencies required for effective principalship also surfaced self-awareness as a key factor and identified two of its dimensions – accurate self-assessment, e.g. knowing one's own strengths and weaknesses and having a strong sense of self-worth, e.g. having the courage to speak out. One respondent captured both elements:

> *I've had a few tough weeks with staff recently. I learned a lot from it. Yes, I did get worked up but it caused me to reflect over Christmas and to address the staff when we came back. I consulted books on leadership and reflected on what I might need to do to get people on board without losing my dignity. I can see now that I tend to withhold too much of my personal self and my weaknesses.* [F, 46-55, 4-6]

Such a form of experiencing aligns with Harris's[20] definition of awareness as a learnable state of mind in which the individual is able to genuinely listen to the totality of their experience rather than to focus purely on the rational and intellectual.

Principals also demonstrated that the ability to move beyond awareness and

to control their emotional displays was an equally important element of this competency. In particular, the need to suppress the expression of particular emotions in certain social situations was evident from the commentaries:

> *A principal sometimes needs to hide emotional responses especially in a crisis situation where others are in panic.* [F, 46-55, 4-6]

> *This is where taking time before you react is important. I have a 24 hour rule when it comes to angry people. Leave it sit for 24 hours, unless it's an emergency. It's amazing how it cools down. That's why it's so important for a leader to keep negative emotions in check.* [F, 46-55, 7-9]

One survey question, presented in Table 4.5, addressed emotional self-management directly:

Table 4.5: Principals' response to:

'Don't know if I would normally use the verb 'managing' with emotions – I do try 'containing' emotions, trying to 'segregate' emotions, trying to have a cut-off point'

	n	%
Never like me	13	7.9
Seldom like me	36	22.0
About half of the time like me	43	26.2
Usually like me	62	37.8
Always like me	10	6.1
N	164	100.0

Though the focus group member quoted appears to have some distaste for the word 'manage', 70% of respondents agree that to some extent they employ strategies such as 'containing', 'segregating' and having 'cut-off points' which fall within Hochschild's[21] characterisation of 'emotional labour' as a 'form of emotion regulation that creates a publicly visible facial and bodily display within the workplace'.

Associated commentaries ranged from unqualified acceptance of the term emotional 'management' to its underpinnings in self-understanding and authenticity in the first instance:

> *I would use the word manage* [F, 46-55, 1-3]

> *Managing emotions is exactly what I think I need to be doing* [M, 36-45, 1-3]

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A bit too black and white Michael, self-understanding is important here, when to wait, when to push. It is important that people see you as real also. [F, 46-55, 1-3]

An examination of the narrative uncovered two facets of emotional self-control as employed by respondents; suppression and expression. Inhibition of emotional displays was most commonly linked to a perceived need to revert to a principled or rational response in the face of a challenge:

While your emotional response is often the first response it's important to revert to 'procedure' mode and analyse the situation according to the facts rather than the person. (Sometimes you can rant when you go home!) [F, 36-45, 4-6]

I have learned that I need to distance myself from an immediate response if possible - to allow the emotions to calm down, and look at the situation logically and with a more 'professional' eye. [F, 56-65, >21]

Allowing emotions to surface, although consciously and in a controlled manner, also emerged:

I think planning and understanding the possible emotional responses of others and myself have a big influence on outcomes. So maybe it is more about being emotionally proactive as opposed to responding that counts. [F, 46-55, 4-6]

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Crawford[22] discovered some differentiation between the most and least experienced headteachers in terms of skill in emotional regulation. A cross-tabulation of principalship experience against a claim to contain or segregate emotions indicated lower levels of self-reported regulation in the most experienced category compared to those with 4-12 years' experience. As can be seen from Table 4.6, 48% of those with over 13 years' experience disagreed that they contained or segregated their emotions, with half that percentage (23.4% and 24.7%) disagreeing amongst the two less experienced categories. Less experienced leaders appear to invest more effort in such self-regulation, particularly in the 4-12 years category where the level of agreement is 49.3% while only 24.7% disagreed.

Caveats here include the relatively low numbers of respondents in the >13 years' experience group and significant levels of uncertainty amongst the two less experienced groups.

Table 4.6: Cross-tabulation:

Experience as principal x *I do try 'containing' emotions, trying to 'segregate' emotions, trying to have a cut-off point*

	< 3 years' experience		4-12		> 13	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Agreement	18	38.3	40	49.3	13	39.3
Disagreement	11	23.4	20	24.7	16	48.5
Unsure	18	38.3	21	25.9	4	12.1
N	47		81		33	

$$\chi^2 = 15.14, df = 4, p = 0.056$$

In a comparison with an equivalent age category cross-tabulation, presented in Table 4.7, no significant difference between younger and older principals emerged in terms of their self-reported emotional self-management:

Table 4.7: Cross-tabulation:

Age category x *I do try 'containing' emotions, trying to 'segregate' emotions, trying to have a cut off point*

	25-45		46-65	
	n	%	n	%
Agreement	15	44.1	56	40.8
Disagreement	7	20.5	31	22.6
Unsure	12	35.3	50	36.5
N	34		137	

$$\chi^2 = 10.87, df = 2, p = 0.259$$

In summary, respondent principals demonstrate an awareness of their own and others' emotionality, affirm that they employ conscious expression and suppression of their emotional displays but nonetheless evidence a spectrum of stances on the centrality of emotions to school life.

Agency

Fullan[23] contends that 'moral purpose and change agentry, at first glance, appear to be strange bedfellows. On closer examination they are natural allies'. Thus agency, defined as an 'action or intervention producing a particular effect', represents the acting out of personally held values to respondent

principals and, as will be demonstrated, is identified as being fundamental to their practice. The three sub-themes related to this theme are:

- Capacity to Build Trust
- Problem-Solving, and,
- Resilience

The first sub-theme, 'Capacity to Build Trust', emerges from the narrative as an essentially relational phenomenon for principals and is also seen as being associated with an authentic presentation of self, particularly to teachers.

The second sub-theme, 'Problem-Solving', demonstrates how participants use their affective acumen to inform their management of both difficulties and dissonance in school leadership. Resolution of ill-structured problems and, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, the strategic management of conflict situations emerge as amongst the most emotionally challenging aspects of practice.

The final affectively-informed dimension of Agency, 'Resilience', confirms that principals place the highest premium on their capacity to endure and to discover sources of sustainability in the face of a role characterised by 'hard change, low capacity and plenty of distractions'[24].

Capacity to Build Trust

Leithwood and Seashore-Lewis[25] answer with 'an unqualified *yes*' the question of whether instructional leadership, shared leadership and trust in the principal have the combined potential to increase student learning. They further assert that:

> The emotional side of principal behaviour, which we have assessed by reference to teachers' trust in the principals as ethical, caring and competent, has on its own been shown to have a strong relationship to student outcomes.

The characterisation, by an initial focus group member, of trust as an essentially empathic and emotionally-rooted phenomenon is of interest in this respect:

> *'I think empathy is an inherent part of my school relationships - it's an emotional trust that builds-up between individuals and the principal. I think that that is really an essential dimension'.* [Yvonne]

This statement, which appeared as an early prompt in the survey, received 97% agreement amongst respondents as illustrated in Table 4.8, with 61.1% strongly agreeing and 35.9% agreeing. Such a perspective supports an expansion of

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the Leithwood and Seashore-Lewis trust-components of 'ethical, caring and competent' into a distinctly relational dimension within respondents' settings at least:

Table 4.8: Principals' response to:

I think empathy is an inherent part of my school relationships - it's an emotional trust that builds-up between individuals and the principal. I think that that is really an essential dimension

	n	%
Strongly disagree	1	0.6
Disagree	1	0.6
Neither agree nor disagree	3	1.8
Agree	60	35.9
Strongly agree	102	61.1
N	167	100.0

According to Beatty, trust *is* an emotional phenomenon[26] and Robinson[27] similarly supports its relational character, pointing-out that effective instructional leadership involves building relational trust with staff, parents, and students. Beatty cites the research on relational trust that had its origins in the evaluation of the reform of four hundred Chicago public schools in the 1990s:

> This research provides quantitative and qualitative evidence about the links between teachers' trust of their principal, the leadership practices that build trust, their impact on teacher attitudes and school organization and, finally, the impact of levels of relational trust on student achievement outcomes. In those Chicago schools where trust levels increased over a three-year period, teachers reported a greater willingness to try new things, a greater sense of responsibility for their students, more outreach to parents, and stronger professional community involving more shared work, more conversations about teaching and learning, and a stronger collective focus on student learning[28].

Principals also affirmed the value of trust in their commentaries:

> *As principals, we are trusted and our views/opinions/advice are valued. This can be one of the most rewarding parts of the job.* [M, 46-55, 7-9]

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Delegate, include people in, trust, give responsibility which is huge in staff development; also true for students: try it! What's the worst that can happen - it doesn't work? [F, 36-45, 1-3]

In terms of sequencing, and as if to affirm this last respondent, Beatty[29] asserted that there was a need for the more powerful person in the hierarchy to 'go first' as the teachers wouldn't share until the leaders shared. Leithwood and Seashore-Louis agreed, seeing trust as a precondition for leadership behaviours that will affect instruction and not a direct cause, an observation concurred-with by a number of survey respondents:

Once the school community gain trust and confidence in one then you can relax a little more and let the real person out within reason. [M, 46-55, 10-12]

Your reaction to any information may determine whether a person will continue to trust you with personal information and work with you or not. [F, 46-55, 1-3]

Trust was also seen by respondents as a two-way phenomenon and there was particular emphasis on having a trusting relationship with the deputy principal:

It is essential to have a good working relationship with your deputy and vital that you have one you can trust. [F, 36-45, 1-3]

You can depend on the Deputy for support when there are tricky issues and also to keep you informed about the general feeling on particular issues – your eyes and ears in the staff room. [F, 56-65, 4-6]

Beatty and Brew[30] characterise trust as an 'intra and inter-personal safe space' and assert that:

If authentic emotional meaning-making builds a foundation for authentic disclosure on sensitive matters that presently remain unaddressed, there may be hope for teachers and leaders to participate together in shaping new directions for the future.

Respondent principals similarly associated authenticity with the capacity to engender trust, and with teachers in particular:

The things that lead to a breakdown of trust between Principals and staff are emotional dishonesty, pretending that you are interested and then not acting on it – thinking that you are smarter than your colleagues, being manipulative. If you are honest with yourself and with others, admit to your mistakes, learn from them, try to discover your weaknesses and reflect on them, it will go a long way to creating a positive workplace. [M, 56-65, 7-9]

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Four key elements of this description are also reflected in the other commentaries and offer a principal's shared view of authenticity as incorporating emotional honesty; not feigning interest; avoiding manipulation and reflection on limitations.

Principals' responses to one particular survey question, presented in Table 4.9, offered insights into their reaction to a prompt displaying a subtle element of manipulation:

> *'It's the smaller things that count - the way I deal with the staff on a day to day basis, because every decision I make has some emotive response to it. And it's only because I facilitated a fundraiser for the gym or a debate and freed them-up - it's not actually about school improvement - that will follow'*

Table 4.9: Principals' response to:

'It's the smaller things that count – School improvement will follow'

	n	%
Strongly disagree	5	3.0
Disagree	10	6.1
Neither agree nor disagree	19	11.5
Agree	82	49.7
Strongly agree	49	29.7
N	165	100.0

While the Likert-type Scale survey responses demonstrated strong agreement with such an approach, the associated commentaries expressed a note of caution recurring within the narrative:

> *Yes small things count everyday for everyone - but there can be element of manipulation in this which I do not like.* [F, 36-45, 1-3]

> *Staff can be brought around but conceding to their requests does not garner respect.* [No identifiers provided]

An expectation that a gender differential may exist in the adoption of such an approach failed to materialise when gender was cross-tabulated against the response, presented in Table 4.10:

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Table 4.10: Cross-tabulation:

Gender x *It's the smaller things that count – School improvement will follow*

	Male		Female	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**
Disagreement	6	7	8	10
Agreement	70	82	60	78
Unsure	9	11	9	12
N	85	100	77	100

$$\chi^2 = 0.881, \; df = 2, \; p = 0.830$$

For those participants who referred to it, authenticity was seen as a permanent influencing factor underpinning concern for individuals, groups and the organisation as a whole:

> *I think authenticity is vital in all our dealings.* [F, 36-45, 1-3]

> *Respecting the concerns of colleagues and attending to them is part of our work, it is not a means to some other end: that would be Machiavellian.* [F, 56-65, 19-21]

Genuineness was also seen as important in influencing the trusting relationships which underpin collaborative action:

> *People are gradually willing to make the significant shift when they feel that you are genuinely on their side and for the good of the pupils.* [M, 46-55, 10-12]

> *EVERYTHING you do as a leader has to be for the better good and deviousness may get the results in the short term but rarely in the long term.* [F, 46-55, 7-9]

> *I always feel that one has to be honest that one is not manipulating human emotions merely for power, but that the common good of the school is the reason.* [F, 36-45, 1-3]

The capacity to build trust thus emerges as an example of the profoundly complex affective nature of the principal's practice and is seen as being essentially relational in character, associated with intrapersonal genuineness and with relationship-building.

Problem-Solving

In seeking to explore links between skill in problem-solving and effective

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leadership, Robinson[31] points out that 'it is widely accepted that the worlds of social science and education are characterised by ill-structured problems' which she defines as problems which lack obvious criteria for solution adequacy, when the means for reaching a solution are unclear, and when there is uncertainty about the nature and availability of the required information.

An acceptance that complex problems are part of school life emerged in the survey commentaries:

> *Yes, the social problems and difficulties you are faced-with are very sad and complex, and yes it does help in trying to find a positive solution to things, however, it shouldn't always be used as a reason for not adhering to the standards you set and work by.* [F, 36-34, 4-6]

> *Pupils and staff want to know that you care even if you make it clear that you cannot solve their problems all of the time.* [M, 46-55, 10-12]

Formulaic solution strategies such as 'IDEAL' (Identify, Define, Explore, Act, Look), a problem solving method devised by Bransford and Stein[32] owe much to a cognitive-rational paradigm. A more affectively-attuned four stage framework is proposed by Kottler and Hecker[33]:

> Creative problem solving involves the four critical steps of *preparation* (chance and opportunity perhaps favouring the prepared mind and heart), *incubation* (periods of rest in which no conscious work is done on the problem), *inspiration* (when lightning hits), and *verification* (confirmatory evidence of movement or change).

Such a sequence was illustrated by Christine in her management of an emerging crisis with her staff, summarised here:

Preparation

> *It's been very difficult around the whole Croke Park Agreement[34] so I met with the assistant principals to come up with a proposal and wrote up a big discussion document but the staff erupted.*

Incubation

> *And when I got feedback on that, I actually left the school – I went for a walk along the beach to try to see how to handle it. I was just thinking things through. I was considering how to manage finding agreement without things getting much worse.*

Inspiration

> *Now, while I was out of the school things did get much worse, because there was a union meeting and they voted 24:8 that they weren't going*

to come back on one of the [prescribed] *days. So I closed the school and we had a well-structured staff meeting with small groups and I put things in a positive light, you know, how at Christmas time you can't remember what it felt like in summertime and all of that.*

Verification

Then it went to a vote again but it was a secret ballot this time and it totally went the other way – 28:5 in favour.

Harris[35] affirms Christine's approach in incorporating an incubation phase as it links awareness with creativity, placing less value on the cognitive/rational and 'more on waking up to what 'is'', allowing one to recognise that other options are possible.

In summary, cognitive/rational approaches to problem-solving can be complemented by affectively-attuned creativity wherein stages of incubation and inspiration can successfully lead to resolution of the often ill-structured problems of school life.

Developing Resilience

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Resilience, the ability to 'bounce back' in the face of adversity, was affirmed by principals with comments such as 'The capacity to renew oneself - resilience I suppose - is vital' [F, 56-65, 4-6], though some faced far greater challenges than most:

This was very true in my case. My husband had died four weeks before I took up my position. I had two children aged 11 and 13 and I feel very guilty that I spend all my time helping other peoples kids and not my own. My case is probably unusual but I still feel very guilty about that. But life deals us all blows. We have to get on with what we must do. [F, 46-55, 7-9]

In asserting that 'passion is useless unless principals have the personal characteristics to stay the course', Davies[36] claims that resilience, strength of character and determination to achieve successful outcomes, amidst considerable pressures and challenges, seems to be a prerequisite for leading a successful school. Respondent principals agreed, and of eleven emotional competencies to be assigned an importance rating in the survey's penultimate question, 'Resilience' received the highest score with 136 of 164 (82.9%) respondents ranking this competence as 'Very Important', as illustrated in Table 4.11:

Table 4.11: Principals' ranking of emotional competencies – 'Resilience'

Please indicate how important you believe the following emotional competencies are to the practice of principalship:					
Answer Options	Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Very important	N
Resilience	0	0	1	27	136	164
	0%	0%	0.6%	16.4%	82.9%	100%

In their commentary on this ranking question, principals explained what resilience meant for them and why it was seen to be so important:

Resilience: The capacity to adapt to a range of emotional demands made in the course of the day. Emotional Olympics!! [M, 46-55, 13-15]

Resilience is high for me. A school Principal can be buffeted from all angles by so many different groupings and agencies… it is really important to pick yourself up, dust yourself down and start all over again. Also mistakes made by a Principal can be quite public, and many are very critical of such mistakes…. It is very important to get over this and be resilient by not letting confidence be knocked. [F, 56-65, >21]

Ability to fight another day; physical wellbeing and mental stability. [F, 56-65, 4-6]

This last reference to physical and mental wellbeing as linked to ones 'ability to fight another day' also surfaced in the initial focus group and was specifically related to sleep. Sleep disturbance, and in particular waking in the small hours and failing to return to sleep, emerged as an issue for three of the four focus group members and was also a feature of 55.4% of the survey respondents' experience who, at least half the time as evidenced in Table 4.12, wake-up at night thinking about school:

Table 4.12: Principals' response to:

I used to wake up at night-time and I'd spend two hours thinking about this, that and the other. I'm thinking about school…

	n	%
Never like me	16	9.5
Seldom like me	59	35.1
About half of the time like me	57	33.9
Usually like me	28	16.7
Always like me	8	4.8
N	168	100.0

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In challenging the adoption of EI 'with lack of reservation' by the school leadership profession, Morrison and Ecclestone[37] describe the imperceptible conversion of emotional intelligence into emotional resilience, 'a kind of 'X Factor'', possessed by leaders capable of successfully navigating the demanding landscape of modern principalship and not possessed by those who 'fall by the wayside'. In particular they warn against the promotion of such learnable competencies increasing our ability to absorb demands and limiting our inclination to question political and structural change. As if to affirm this contention, survey respondents agreed in one survey question that while the administrative demands were all-consuming, their response to a follow-up prompt revealed they equally agreed they had to maintain a public perception that they were coping with everything:

Table 4.13: Principals' response to:

It's just constant…the large burden of administration from the Department, from the Board of Management and now the Trustees - it can actually subsume you and become all-consuming on every level

	n	%
Strongly disagree	6	3.6
Disagree	20	12.0
Neither agree nor disagree	10	6.0
Agree	79	47.6
Strongly agree	51	30.7
N	166	100.0

The noticeably similar rates of agreement and disagreement demonstrated in Tables 4.13 and 4.14 offer evidence of the emotional labour demanded by principalship, wherein 78.3% of school leaders feel 'subsumed' by their workload and 83.8% of the same cohort feel they must act as if they are not.

Table 4.14: Principals' response to:

You've to call upon a deep well from within and try to appear to have this public persona that's dealing with everything – that's perhaps one of the greatest demands emotionally

	n	%
Strongly disagree	4	2.4
Disagree	15	9.0
Neither agree nor disagree	8	4.8
Agree	83	49.7
Strongly agree	57	34.1
N	167	100.0

In a return to governing values and perhaps linking 'Foundations' with 'Agency' however, one respondent described why she prioritised resilience:

Resilience, because empathy and conflict resolution, control and management of emotional displays are very draining, and you will need to call on these skills in very different ways on different levels every day. It's a job about people. The administration and management of the structure of the building are distractions from the essence of the job, which is to form the next generation of citizens and Christians and to provide a happy and healthy workplace. [F, 46-55, 10-12]

The concept of resilience also incorporates a dimension of support-seeking as 'we are so often reminded that principals need to create an environment of emotional support for staff and yet the emotional support is missing for themselves'[38]. School leaders identify this key aspect of resilience as discovering their own support network to acquire appropriate knowledge, understanding and emotional support which will sustain them over time[39].

Identifying sources of support as an adjunct to resilience was deemed an important task by all three interviewees. Denis prioritised peer support within a close-knit group:

The really important thing for me is that I have three or four people who are very good supports. What I'm saying is I would try to look after myself but what I have here as well is three very good principal colleagues... and we would be on the phone a couple of times a day. [Denis]

Christine referred to support-seeking in terms of remediation:

I do think principals need the safety net there of somebody to support them when things go wrong. And it's only when you've been badly burned maybe once, you realise how much you need it. [Christine]

Martin was somewhat more strategic in his sourcing of support:

In recent months, there are people in my corner – people that I've put in my corner myself because I've appointed them so they're reporting to me but they're supportive of me. They can see what I want for the school and they're working towards that. [Martin]

Survey respondents similarly affirmed a need for support, some in strong terms:

The Irish education system is killing its Principals. I know that word is a bit dramatic, but I think the demands of the role, with no resourcing, have become inhuman. The sad part is that I have seen the same issues, problems, pressures and stresses come up almost since the year I was

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> *appointed as Principal - except they have worsened. Trustees, JMB,
> Boards of Management do not take seriously their responsibility for duty
> of care towards Principals.* [F, 56-65, >21]

The survey was conducted in 2011 and the impact of resource and staffing
cutbacks, which began in 2009, challenged even the most resilient:

> *I am a very experienced Principal but I think the stresses and pressures
> over the last couple of years are intolerable.* [F, 56-65, >21]

> *I think I am emotionally balanced and healthy but I am still emotionally
> drained. The pressures from all sides are phenomenal. I think I have been
> and still am a good Principal but the personal cost and isolation make it
> unsustainable. I am going to retire.* [M, 46-55, 7-9]

Analysis of the survey narrative identified six sources of support employed by
respondents, ranked by the number of commentaries in each category:

1. Self-support:

*One needs to be very careful in managing the emotional roller-coaster of Prin-
cipalship. Do it yourself – nobody else will! A principal needs to self-care!!!* [M,
46-55, 13-15]

2. Peer principals:

*The only one who really understands the demands, the toll, (and also the posi-
tive challenge and "buzz" and feeling of achievement) is another Principal.* [F,
56-65, >21]

3. Others, e.g. deputy principal, supportive teachers:

*Support is needed and gotten from your own team you have built up around
you who have a similar love for the school and its wellbeing.* [no identifiers
provided]

4. Spouses and partners:

*My husband understands me better than anyone and I can be brutally hon-
est without fear of it being repeated. He is also a rock of sense and can look at
things from a different perspective.* [F, 56-65, 4-6]

5. Family:

*I'm afraid I still burden the home-front as well...with no real expectation of
assistance...just sharing!* [M, 36-45, 13-15]

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6. Spirituality and ethos:

One's own inner spiritual journey can be of great help but also needs time to be nurtured which is lacking most of the time. [F, 46-55, 4-6]

The predominance of reference to self-support surfaces the question of whether school leaders are emotionally self-reliant because they *can* do so or because they *must* do so. This issue requires further consideration and the question of how to broaden the principal's support-base will be examined later.

Having identified sources, characterising the nature of the support required by survey respondents was illuminated by their overwhelming agreement with the prompt: 'Principals need support with the emotional side of their work from the very beginning', presented in Table 4.15:

Table 4.15: Principals' response to:

'Principals need support with the emotional side of their work from the very beginning'

	n	%
Strongly disagree	1	0.6
Disagree	5	3.0
Neither agree nor disagree	8	4.8
Agree	73	43.7
Strongly agree	80	47.9
N	167	100.0

Such a statement of need cannot be dismissed as an artefact of the impact of the recession or other temporary stressors as evidenced in the commentaries:

One is catapulted into an extremely stressful and demanding job, with great mental and emotional pressures. Support for the emotional toll is essential. [F, 56-65, >21]

Without this support either the school or the Principal will suffer greatly. [M, 56-65, experience not indicated]

That's why we all get burnt out. [M, 46-55, 13-15]

Headteachers as a group tend to put others first and themselves last when it comes to extra support and resources and Southworth[40] claims there is a convincing case for them now needing to have their fair share of the resources if they are to continue to meet societal, community and school challenges.

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One such resource, professional de-briefing, emerged as a potential model of support for principals in both survey and interview:

> *It is worth noting that Guidance Counsellors in schools have recourse to a number of personal counselling sessions due to the nature of their work. Principals are just expected to get on with it.* [M, 46-55, 13-15]

> *All principals should have ongoing access to de-briefers (if such a word exists). I pay for this myself and it is worth every penny.* [F, 46-55, 7-9]

In summary, resilience was prioritised as the foremost affective competence by respondents and the perceived requirement to appear to be coping with high levels of demand was deemed to require attention to physical and mental wellbeing. Principals also affirm a need for support for sustainability and adopt a range of strategies in sourcing emotional and practical help. There is evidence that a broadening of the support base and additional investment in resources are required.

Concluding comments

This chapter offered principals' perspectives on the intrapersonal affective factors fundamental to their leadership and management of collaborative change efforts at their schools.

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In summary, the findings demonstrate that:

- Principals provide evidence of a meaningful connection between identity and practice and of their biographies informing ways in which they negotiate the ethical and social landscape of their school.

- The capacity to translate values into action was repeatedly identified by principals as foundational to their leadership and management of the school as well as connecting to emotionality, especially when their values are threatened.

- Emotional self-regulation is perceived as comprehending a capacity for emotional self-awareness and the consequent capacity for emotional self-control, and principals indicate they employ conscious expression and suppression of their emotional displays.

- The capacity to build trust emerges from the narrative as an essentially relational phenomenon for principals and is underpinned by personal authenticity.

- Cognitive/rational approaches to problem-solving can be complemented by affectively-attuned creativity wherein stages of incubation and inspiration can successfully lead to resolution of the often ill-structured problems of school life.

■ Resilience was prioritised as the foremost affective competence by respondents and principals also affirmed a need for support for sustainability, adopting a range of strategies to source emotional and practical help.

Such claims are supported by Day et al[41] who examined the roles of leaders in twelve 'improving schools' in England:

> Within the study, there was ample evidence that people were trusted to work as powerful professionals within clear collegial value frameworks, which were common to all. Goals were clear and agreed, communications were good and everyone had high expectations of themselves and others.

The sequencing of sub-themes in this account presents as a linear set of interdependent elements. Its linearity will be challenged later in this book when factors such as feedback and learning are discussed in framing applicability of the findings. It is meanwhile intuitively reasonable to claim that without a workable set of intrapersonal affective competencies as explored in this chapter, it is unlikely that the subsequent interpersonal competencies – an effectual connection between the personal and the social – could be fully realised.

Contemporary school leadership is delineated as a mix of clear core values, enduring commitment and contingent and strategic attention to accountability[42]. An examination of principals' intrapersonal competencies revealed their emphasis on ethical foundations and personal agency in the service of the school. In the next chapter, such beliefs and enduring commitment are mobilised as the personal and professional worlds collide[43].

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CHAPTER FOUR: Notes

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12 MOLLER, J. (2005a) Coping with accountability: tensions between reason and emotion. IN SUGRUE, C. (Ed.) *Passionate Principalship: Learning from the life histories of school leaders.* London, Routledge.

13 HOCHSCHILD, A. R. (1983) *The Managed Heart: Commercialisation of Human Feeling,* Berkeley, University of California Press.

14 HARRIS, B. (2007) *Supporting the Emotional Work of School Leaders,* London, Paul Chapman.

15 Ibid

16 CRAWFORD, M. (2007) Emotional Coherence in Primary School Headship. Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 35, 521-534.

17 Ibid

18 For each cross-tabulation table the 'p' value is given an exact figure as the SPSS programme with which the data were statistically analysed offers such specificity. To determine the strength of association in this particular cross-tabulation, Cramér's V coefficient, which indicates an 'effect size', varies from 0, corresponding to no association between the variables, to 1, indicating complete association, was calculated. Cramér's V is a way of calculating correlation and is used as a post-test to determine strengths of association after other tests have determined significance. The Cramér's V value of 0.205, combined with the low p-value, point to a moderate association between the variables of age and attitude to the centrality of emotions in school life.

19 SLATER, L. (2005) Leadership for collaboration: An affective process. International Journal of Leadership in Education, 8, 321-333.

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[34] An agreement between the public service unions and the Government which traded changed work practices for a promise of no further pay cuts. For teachers this meant an extra hour a week for 'whole-school activities' such as planning etc. This meant an additional 33 hours per year. Their use was contested between the union (ASTI) and management (JMB).

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Chapter Five
Inside-Out

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Inside-Out

Introduction

This chapter examines the affective factors identified as bridging vision and transformative action. Analysis of this domain of interpersonal emotional competencies revealed a set of sub-themes rooted in the leader's values and intrapersonal emotional competencies but focussed on 'other' in what Harris[1] explores as the 'I-Thou' relational dynamic, as opposed to the 'I-It' approach of mechanical systematisation. Following O'Connor[2], who asserts that affectively aware leadership demands a 'commitment to connectedness ... which requires emotional connectedness with oneself', this chapter traces the forces that shape and sustain opportunities for connection and synergy emerging from the principals' narrative.

'Connection', the first interpersonal theme, reveals that respectful and empathic understanding of people's situations as well as strategies to energise and empower both self and others are identified as being central to the change-management work of the principal. Such aspirations are primarily founded, according to participants, on the principal's ability to sustain relationships across the school, to communicate successfully and to deal with dissonance, and the sub-themes discussed are:

- Relationship-Building
- Communicating Effectively, and,
- Managing Conflict

The second theme, 'Synergy', examines the affective dimensions identified as ultimately supporting the realisation by principals of collaboratively-mediated change and the sub-themes are:

- Impact of Leadership Style
- Contextualising Decision-Making, and,
- Artful Change-Management

The sub-theme 'Impact of Leadership Style' demonstrates that principals employ a range of leadership approaches in the development of hitherto untapped teacher collaborativity. The culminating sub-themes of 'Contextualising Decision-Making' and 'Artful Change-Management' indicate that respondent

principals possess high levels of awareness of their schools' internal and external environments and that such perspectives support an 'artful' approach to change-management with school leaders providing evidence of their incorporation of emotion as well as rationality in the implementation of positive change.

Relationship-Building

In looking to the forces shaping the evolution of future schools, Leithwood et al[3] refer to 'caring and respect for others' as a key factor and cite Starratt's[4] characterisation of caring as requiring:

> ... fidelity to persons, a willingness to acknowledge their right to be who they are, an openness to encountering them in their authentic individuality, a loyalty to the relationship. This value is grounded in the belief that the integrity of human relationships is sacred.

In Table 5.1, principals almost unanimously affirmed the importance of relationship:

Table 5.1: Principals' response to:

I think relationships are at the heart of what we're doing in life

	n	%
Strongly disagree	2	1.2
Disagree	0	0.0
Neither agree nor disagree	7	4.2
Agree	46	27.7
Strongly agree	111	66.9
N	166	100.0

The associated commentary was similarly unequivocal:

> *Good relationships are what everything is based on* [M, 56-65, 1-3]

> *Relationships are everything. Without good functioning relationships schools are doomed.* [F, 46-55, 7-9]

> *My mantra!* [M, 46-55, 13-15]

In proposing a model of the leadership capabilities required to engage in effective instructional leadership, Robinson[5] claims that 'the more leaders focus their relationships, their work, and their learning on the core business

of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes'. Robinson's model identifies such capabilities as (a) using deep leadership content knowledge to (b) solve complex school-based problems, while (c) building relational trust with staff, parents, and students and argues that these factors are considerably interdependent. This integration of relationship with knowledge and skill, while affirmed by more than one respondent, was also seen as a long-term endeavour:

> *You have to understand and know the people you are working with. It takes time to develop relationships. Fairness, understanding and empathy will get you lots of places. Others may criticise you as not being tough enough or too soft. Know yourself and why you make the decisions you do and this will empower you. It has taken me five years as deputy and six as principal to formulate this!* [F, 46-55, 4-6]

Such deep investment of time and self into the endeavour of relationship-building re-surfaces the earlier concern raised by respondents around authenticity. Akerjordet's[6] unease that emotional intelligence 'prioritises technique (manipulation) over relationships in order to realize personal and organizational goals' is echoed in the participants' narrative:

> *Care for a person and for their wellbeing is important. But do remember that teachers are very clever people not like Pavlov and his dogs! People will soon distinguish between real interest and play-stuff.* [F, 46-55, 1-3]

In contrast to Beatty's[7] assertion that 'professional relationships in schools have been of dubious quality anyway, due to norms of contrived collegiality', respondent principals frequently used the word 'personal' to characterise their relationships:

> *The personal relationship with staff and parents as a principal is key. Respect, understanding, empathy and fairness form a good foundation. Being understanding with staff on a personal basis definitely is the way to go (after all my years I see that). They never forget kindness and understanding on a matter of importance to them.* [F, 56-65, >21]

In terms of relationship-building practice, some principals emphasised the power of 'the little things':

> *People need to get attention and affirmation for even little things. It's what makes life worthwhile.* [F, 46-55, 1-3]

> *Acknowledgement of a person's birthday/success etc. is vitally important in relationship building.* [M, 56-65, 10-12]

In contrast, others adopted a more robust perspective. O'Connor[8] refers to the 'parent-adolescent' relationship between principal and staff in Irish

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voluntary secondary schools - a legacy of the leadership style under religious management, and to some a continuing factor:

Staff members expect the principal to be 'always able to listen patiently and with sympathy'. I believe there is a culture in secondary schools of teachers needing sympathy, understanding and support. I do try to take this approach with the staff, however sometimes I just want to say 'You are paid to do it, so do it!!!' [F, 56-65, >21]

Whatever their perspective or style, a key focus of the relationship-building endeavour for principals is the development of a collaborative professional community, which Fullan[9] defines as 'the quality of ongoing relationships among teachers and between teachers and the principal'. Day[10] argues that caring relationships are fundamental to good leadership and affirms that 'it is difficult to envisage a passionate leader whose first priority is not connectedness with pupils, colleagues and self'. The importance of establishing caring relationships as a key element of the principal's role is similarly reflected across the participants' narrative. Day's distinction between 'caring for' and a deeper and more influential 'caring about' was reflected in interviewee Christine's approach to relationship-building:

I have a passion about being inclusive of everyone and what's really important to me is that open door where people feel they can say something, they're listened-to and that they're seen as real people. It's about identifying people and their needs and maybe directing them on two levels, on a personal level; 'Where are they going?' and perhaps on a career path as well. [Christine]

Thus principals invested their relationship-building with teachers with both personal and professional dimensions. Davies[11] distinguishes between 'soft care' and 'real care', which he describes as looking after the person as an individual but also challenging their performance, attitude and commitment in a move away from the status quo. Christine gave one example:

I've a staff member who is struggling now and I struggle big-time knowing how to support that person. It's taking my head space – you know? I'm putting a lot of thought into it but there's different ways to skin a cat. She was a fantastic teacher but what's going on has affected her teaching and she thinks she's fine.

But I've thought of a new idea now. A new guy is coming in to do his teaching practice and I said 'Would you take him on?' Now she's like a two-year old skipping around the place at the idea of doing that. So that might be the thing that motivates her. [Christine]

In summary, an orientation toward relationship-building for collaborative action is at once a 'doing' and a 'being' for both leader and school, something

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the organisation 'is' and not just something the organisation 'has'[12]. School leaders care *for* and care *about* their students and teachers and they illustrate a distinction between 'soft care' and 'real care' which is seen as more challenging and developmental.

A key factor in the relationship-building endeavour also lies in the principal's capacity to communicate effectively and this sub-theme is discussed next.

Communicating Effectively

Communication plays an important role in the development of trust within an organisation[13]. In their engagement around communication as the purposeful and appropriate conveyance of meaning, principals offered a nuanced perspective:

> *A large percentage of all communication is subjective and in how, not what, you communicate* [F, 36-45, 7-9]

a stance resonating with a quote from a voluntary secondary principal almost two decades earlier: 'On a day to day basis, the most important thing I do is smile!'[14].

Respondents also placed a clear emphasis on the role of listening:

> *You have to look at where people are coming from and put what they are saying into perspective. Listening is very important - people want to feel you are taking them seriously.* [F, 46-55, 4-6]

> *Positive listening in a supportive role is very important. Human interactions and personalities decree that unfortunately a small number get this positive listening and I am always conscious that there are others there who possibly need it more but are reluctant to seek this positive listening.* [M, 46-55, 7-9]

As with Ginsberg and Davies'[15] principal interviewees who held a common belief that shared information benefited the entire organisation and was crucial to everyone's understanding what the decisions were and why they were being made, respondents saw the value of open dialogue where appropriate:

> *You have to work with them. You can't shoot them! Hence the need for discussion. However don't expect miracles - it's a slow movement of views and be prepared to be amazed at how unreasonable people can be!* [F, 46-55, 1-3]

Thus, at the heart of the challenge to communicate effectively lies a concern for authentic collaboration – a bidirectional dimension of leadership articulated by

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Akerjordet and Severinsson[16] in their examination of EI in nursing leadership:

> Today, the role of a leader is evolving from a top-down to a more collaborative humanistic approach, challenging the employees' ability to facilitate constructive work relationships and positive teamwork, which require open communication and mutual understanding.

The case was put somewhat more bluntly by a survey respondent:

> *You can get firmly rapped over the knuckles for not consulting.* [F, 46-55, 4-6]

Akerjordet and Severinsson also captured the twin emotive challenges faced by listening-leaders:

> EI leaders behave in ways that stimulate the creativity of their team such as using self-control to cope with criticism and feeling less threatened by changes inspired by creative ideas on the part of team members.

The art of effective communication thus presents as a competency, more difficult to acquire for some than others. One respondent explicitly referred to his prioritising of communication as a school-enhancing condition but also evidenced real difficulty developing this competency in practice:

> *Communication is the key... I would always have considered myself a good communicator – maybe at the times that I wanted to communicate, if that makes sense.*

And later ...

> *...and here's this guy, thinks he knows it all. So yes, I've taken a step back and the sense of communication is still something that I'm working on and building on and I'm being far more communicative than I've ever been and it irritates me when I hear 'well communication's still so poor' you know? But that's what I have to do.*

The earlier survey respondent's emphasis on 'how, not what, you communicate', perhaps points to a mismatch between this principal's espoused theory in terms of communication and his theory-in-use[17] as evidenced in this scenario:

> *I made a conscious decision that at the staff meeting what I'm going to do here is give them a little bit of a position statement. So I wrote it. And it was around talking about common purpose, talking about the need for collaboration and to understand the challenging context that we find ourselves in, you know? And they probably were all slitting their wrists at that point but I felt if you're bitching to me about the kid who's missed his homework... lads get sight of the bigger picture here, will you?*

> *So, I did it. And if they're always complaining about communication well*

they now know exactly what the playing-field is and you're either with us on the seat on the bus or you're not, but this is the way we're going'.

The risks associated with this 'position statement' approach to communication were framed in Slater's[18] examination of principal behaviours that support collaboration:

> … although principals may often ask for input, they sometimes spend a greater amount of time giving advice and directives. One teacher shared her personal experience: 'My principal never listens. If you tell her something, she'll interrupt you to tell her own story… and not listening and not letting you share. I'm sorry – that's not collaborative'. As evidenced in this story, the futility of a telling, rather than a listening, approach becomes clear when people do not heed directives and the school culture does not move toward embracing collaboration and sharing leadership responsibilities.

In summary, the challenge to communicate effectively underpins a concern for appropriate exchange of information and mutual understanding in supporting authentic collaboration for change. Principals demonstrated an awareness of the affective dimensions of communication in assigning particular weight to listening and to 'how, not what, you communicate'.

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Managing Conflict

Two distinct approaches to the management of conflict emerged from the narrative. Some principals were prepared to 'draw-in' teachers who were seen as negative or antagonistic to developments:

> *You have to work hard with the negative people, affirm them, no matter how hard that is. Usually they are negative because they have had bad experiences in the past. By isolating them and ignoring them you are adding to their sense of justification and reinforcing their negative behaviour. They take up inordinate amounts of time but this time is well spent.* [F, 46-55, 7-9]

Such an approach is affirmed by DiPaola[19] who described this conflict resolution strategy as 'problem-solving' aimed at developing a constructive context which integrates the interests of disputants to achieve mutually satisfying outcomes.

Others, however, adopted what could be called a 'holding-out' strategy:

> *I take perverse pleasure in smiling at negative people and pointing out the positive.*

The fact of dealing with many different emotionally charged conflicts doesn't necessarily mean you have to be "drawn into" them, but you do have to engage with them. [M, 46-55, 7-9]

DiPaola's distinction between cognitive conflict which is task-focussed and affective conflict which is social-emotional may offer an explanation for the respondents' differing approaches. Dissonance around a task-focussed issue may be seen to be more amenable to a 'drawing-in', constructive approach whereas conflict impacting on relationships and affective states appears more difficult to assuage.

The extent to which the respondent cohort of principals employed 'drawing-in' or 'holding-out' strategies was uncovered in a survey question and appears to reflect a bell-curve distribution, as illustrated in Table 5.2:

Table 5.2: Principals' response to:

You can isolate the negative people, you know, where they realise that no matter what they say to you, it doesn't really affect you

	n	%
Never like me	13	7.7
Seldom like me	44	26.2
About half of the time like me	48	28.6
Usually like me	53	31.5
Always like me	10	6.0
N	168	100.0

Contrasting approaches to 'negative people' surface the notion of self-protection as narratives from leaders who have experienced a serious conflict, dilemma, or critical incident in their leadership practice reveal that it can have a profound way of affecting or wounding them[20]. Principals who held their challengers 'out there' may leave themselves less open to wounding than those who 'draw-in'. Such a self-protective approach is referred-to by Johnson et al[21] who found that many of their participants crossed over emotional boundaries in ways that contradict how leaders have been taught to act and perform in a certain way—that is, to be devoid of emotion and to approach matters in a clinical manner.

A participant in Johnson's study described how, in a conflict situation, s/he found s/he was 'removing myself, removing my emotions, stepping back and responding to it as from my position'. This ability to emotionally detach from negativity and conflict situations similarly emerged in the narrative:

Experience has taught me not to allow people's negativity to really get to me. If I am convinced of my own integrity and if my motives are objective, for the good of the students, and within good professional practice I can usually get over negativity quite quickly. [F, 56-65, >21]

One respondent shared her strategic approach to detachment:

A few things help for me:
1. *Don't take it personally*
2. *When it's over, it's over*
3. *Make a point of trying to do something positive towards a person with whom you've had a negative interaction.* [F, 56-65, 16-18]

Denis, the interviewee with most principalship experience, described a tactical approach to conflict which worked for him:

Yeah sometimes the first thing you've to do is grin and bear it and keep your mouth shut – and you'd be better off. You just nod away ... nod away ... 'Yeah, yeah, isn't it terrible?' You know and they know you can do nothing about it. [Denis]

Later in the interview, he gave an example of this self-protective strategy in action:

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I think the most difficult thing I went through was the first week of the supervision and substitution[22] ... we brought in the supervisors and they didn't go well at all.. [laughs].. and ten past nine on the first Monday of supervision, one of the Home Ec. teachers came up to me and she was... [bangs on the table].. 'They're inside there supervising a class and there's cooking going on'. And I just said to her, '... sure it's desperate like – if they think they can come in off the road like that and cook and teach others how to cook – we have to stop it immediately'. [Denis]

Nonetheless, and in spite of the 'rules of leadership demeanour' the surfacing of emotions and of crossing emotional boundaries in conflict situations emerged and was not always seen as unconstructive:

It may affect you but try very hard not to show it. Sometimes it's good to be emotional - but not to be downtrodden. [F, 56-65, 4-6]

And while principals use their emotional acumen to manage conflict situations they don't see this task as theirs alone:

If the principal ceases to care about those who are 'harder to love' on the staff and this is observed, how can there be a collegial team? Colleagues will make up their own minds and deal with negativity. It is not the principal's problem alone. [F, 56-65, 19-21]

Commentary on the survey question above revealed the emotional impact of negativity and conflict on some respondents:

Maybe I'm not thick-skinned enough but the negativity and readiness to believe the worst motives of me slowly breaks my heart. [M, 46-55, 7-9]

Sometimes they get to me...especially when I am exhausted and feel pulled in a hundred different directions. [F, 36-45, 1-3]

This reference to the influence fatigue on emotional self-management during conflict emerged as a significant theme:

I am not good at hiding my emotions when I am tired and sometimes this can be cause me problems when staff see negative responses which they might not see if I am not tired. [F, 56-65, 13-15]

It is conflicting emotions and shredded emotions which can cause the most problems. The effect of tiredness on emotions is a very significant factor. [M, 46-55, 7-9]

In summary, principals employ 'drawing-in' and 'holding-out' strategies in the management of negativity and use their emotional acumen to manage conflict situations, to avoid wounding and for the greater good of the school.

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Synergy

The production of a 'combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects'[23] lies at the heart of 'Synergy' and is centred on what policy-makers call 'whole school approaches' to transformation. Such collaboratively mediated change-management requires being artful in that, while it may be scaffolded by process, it nonetheless requires contextually-conscious leadership and deft decision-making as articulated throughout the narrative by respondents. Grint[24] suggests that leadership might better be considered as an art rather than a science, or, more specifically, as 'an ensemble of arts'. He considers four such arts as the invention of an identity; the design of a strategic vision; the deployment of persuasive communication and the construction of organisational tactics. Such an ensemble is reflected in the sub-themes emerging from our principals' discourse and presently under discussion such as personal story and values, communication and connection. This section now concentrates on Grint's final 'art', organisational tactics, in this case the emotionally-informed dimensions of strategies aimed at generating synergy; impact of leadership style, contextualising decision-making and artful change-management.

Impact of Leadership Style

When presented with the National College for School Leadership[25] leadership style typology, self-identification proved problematic for some interviewees:

> *I thought you'd ask that question and I find that very, very difficult to do. I'm definitely not coercive. Of the two I'm very much torn between, and I think which more includes me, is democratic, and the firm-but-fair – the authoritative, but I think more the democratic one would be where I would be. Or mmm, no – Oh!, it's so difficult!* [Christine]

> *I'd say the middle two, democratic and affiliative Michael … but you see it isn't black or white, there's a lot of grey there. And even during a single school day; I did that already… we did that at eleven o'clock and here we are at half eleven like…* [Denis]

Such resistance to identifying with a single leadership style does not mean the interviewees did not present with a predominant disposition – they both settled on democratic, combined with either authoritative or affiliative. Denis's pointing to his ability to migrate between styles indicates a degree of eclecticism in terms of leadership approach and perhaps reflects his longer experience in which he has developed the facility to match demand with technique on a moment-by-moment basis.

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Survey respondents were asked to make a forced-choice (no multiples allowed) selection of their leadership style as framed by the NCSL's Learning Programme for Serving Headteachers. Cross-tabulating gender, age and experience against the responses elicited the following tables [the single 'coercive' respondent [F, 46-55, 7-9] was excluded as it presented with the only cell frequency less than 5 and would, if retained, have required a 'continuity correction' in calculating the chi-square[26]].

Table 5.3 presents a cross-tabulation of gender with leadership style:

Table 5.3: Cross-tabulation: Gender x leadership style

	Male		Female	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**
Democratic	32	37%	29	38%
Affiliative	25	29%	13	17%
Authoritative	15	17%	10	13%
Coaching	7	8%	18	23%
Pacesetting	7	8%	7	9%
N	86		77	

$$\chi^2 = 9.308, \ df = 4, \ p = 0.054$$

The probability value of $p = 0.054$ indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in self-identified leadership style between males and females. This apparent lack of correlation between style and gender was not absolute however. The highest proportion for both genders was for Democratic but the second highest ranking elicited the perhaps counterintuitive finding that males selected Affiliative at 29% and females self-identified in the Coaching category at 23%. This finding perhaps resonates with a conclusion from a study on leadership style and gender by Coleman[27] in which her survey results 'tempered the picture of a pure feminine paradigm of management style amongst the female headteachers of England and Wales and indicates a more androgynous style of management'.

In examining the relationship between leadership style and age, the 25 – 35 category contained a single entry and to preserve the age gap between intervals, the categories were collapsed into two: 25 – 45 and 46 – 65 years of age.

As with gender, there existed no statistically significant overall variation between the younger and older age groups, as presented in Table 5.4. While the predominance of the democratic model of school leadership was maintained in this cross-tabulation, there nonetheless emerged an interesting distinction in that younger principals demonstrated a greater tendency toward the affiliative and democratic while, in percentage terms, older school leaders were twice as likely to self-identify as being authoritative.

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Table 5.4: Cross-tabulation: Age category x leadership style

	25-45		46-65	
	n	%	n	%
Democratic	15	42	46	36
Affiliative	10	29	28	22
Coaching	5	14	20	15
Authoritative	3	9	23	18
Pacesetting	2	6	12	9
N	35		129	

$$\chi^2 = 6.128,\ df = 4,\ p = 0.633$$

Of particular interest in the experience continuum is a move away from the democratic style as tenure in principalship increases, as shown in Table 5.5. Parallel to this is a trend, in percentage terms at least, towards the authoritative and affiliative, though the case numbers are small. The emerging picture from the survey is one of a cohort of school leaders inhabiting the complete spectrum of styles with, as we have seen, interview evidence demonstrating a facility to migrate among them as their experience dictates:

Table 5.5: Cross-tabulation: Experience x leadership style

	< 3 years' experience		4-12		> 13	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Democratic	25	51	29	36	7	21
Affiliative	9	18	20	25	8	24
Authoritative	7	14	10	12	9	27
Pacesetting	4	8	6	7	4	12
Coaching	4	8	16	20	5	15
N	49		81		33	

$$\chi^2 = 12.070, df = 8, p = 0.148$$

The preponderance of 'affiliative' and 'democratic' styles was also evident when change-management was discussed by respondents:

> *You have to be 'tuned-in' to what is going on in the school. Change is such an emotional and emotive issue that processing my own and others' emotions is central to that.* [M, 36-45, 13-15]

> *It is all about changing the culture here and many colleagues are more than ready to step up to the plate and get involved in decision making and policy.* [F, 46-55, 4-6].

This call for teachers to 'step up to the plate' [or, as Beatty[28] puts it 'to come out of the stands and on to the court'] is driven by a concurrence of three government policies; a moratorium on promotion appointments, an early retirement scheme removing senior (promotion post-holding) staff and, as discussed earlier, a raft of compliance-driven initiatives demanding 'whole school approaches'. Principals were aware of the affectively complex nature of this context:

> *But this is a culture and it will take time to change. Think most understand this. There has been a very clear division between staff and management and each have become isolated in their own areas.* [F, 36-45, 4-6]

Thus, whatever its style, respondents were acutely conscious of the need for the principal to show leadership at this time:

> *This is what leaders must do. That's why we need leaders. They lead for the good.* [F, 46-55, 7-9]

> *One has to try to lead rather than manage. Managing can be seductive - all those lovely ticked boxes!* [F, 46-55, 1-3]

Such leadership, according to Linsky and Lawrence[29] will require different behaviours than those we have practised and perfected as 'we are in a period

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that feels unique' and the reality is that none of us have been here before.

Change is linked to emotionality and 'to put the emotions on the table within schools is to enact a powerful transformational potential'[30]. One particularly emotive challenge linked to the principal's leadership style related to their stance on teacher performance management. Although rarely-used formal procedures for dealing with underperforming teachers are in place, performance management and accountability measures remain an unstructured facet of teacher professionalism in Ireland and evaluation by principals is largely tacit and informal. Discussion of performance management of teachers emerged largely in the interview settings. Participants were at ease in discussing their own performance standards but found delegating challenging and expressed a preference for modelling:

> *I wouldn't be a great delegator you know? I delegate to people who I know will do it and in that regard I will do it. I would expect a certain standard because that's the standard that I set and often people don't necessarily measure up to that – now I know I should be supportive and encouraging empowering them to be able to do that better but I mean we're all professionals here, we're all doing the job.* [Martin]

> *I would avoid performance-related confrontation... I don't like that, you know? I have high standards and I model the work but I don't knock people for not reaching the same high standards ... and I do find it difficult. I am apprehensive about delegating.* [Christine]

Martin, who was the only participant with experience of normed performance management from his experience abroad, found its translation to the Irish context problematic:

> *It took me so long to park all the other stuff that I had been used to and almost reinvent my brain to 'this is how it works here'. Do I set standards and monitor performance in relation to the larger vision? Yes, but monitoring of performance is a challenge because, you know, I'm monitoring my own performance, I'm monitoring the performance of the school but I'm not necessarily monitoring the performance of my teachers down the corridor. I don't consider myself a pushover, but I do consider how my leadership style has evolved to become more accommodating for the job that I currently do. It wasn't like that four years ago, because I was able to say to Joe Smith and Annie Smith, 'That's performance management my friend, there are your targets and you're not living up to them'.* [Martin]

Blackmore[31] describes the linking of school performance indicators to those of individual staff as 'disciplinary technologies of accountability', more related to managerialism than professionalism. Martin's experience of the language of

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accountability being 'more fluid and more open [in Ireland] than elsewhere'[32] may explain why, at national policy level, the emphasis on 'self-evaluation has been promulgated as an antidote to creeping performativity'. The hesitation expressed by participants around formalising performance management may point to teachers' perception of such technologies as indicative of a loss of trust and 'being seen to do good' as opposed to 'doing good'[33]. The tension between reluctance and inclination in terms of monitoring teacher performance also emerged in the survey:

> *It is very difficult to find yourself attempting to defend the indefensible. This often happens because teachers are not really accountable in any meaningful way. This is very hard especially when it's out of step with practices in most other work environments.* [F, 46-55, 7-9]

Both Martin and this last survey respondent characterised the impact of Ireland's 'fluid and open' teacher performance management regime as 'very hard' or 'a challenge' and points to staff accountability as a particularly problematic demand in term of management style.

In summary, respondent principals display a preponderance of 'democratic' and 'affiliative' leadership styles and are learning to adapt their leadership approaches to develop hitherto untapped teacher collegiality and to cope with mitigating the impact of policy and recession-linked change on their schools. Performance management remains an unstructured facet of teacher professionalism in Ireland and voluntary secondary principals' caution on performance management therefore sends simultaneous messages of high trust but low accountability to their teachers.

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Contextualising Decision-Making

The term 'contextualising decision-making' here refers to the principal's capacity to incorporate an awareness of background factors, empirical and affective, into their choices for action at the level of the school. The task of realigning school culture with a set of new social realities and with significant policy change begins with contextual awareness:

> There was a time when educational institutions were almost like 'islands', relatively separate from their communities and able to manage their day-to-day work without interference from outside influences. This situation no longer exists[34].

While just one principal specifically referred to context (*'context is so important'*), school leaders nonetheless demonstrated an acute awareness of the porous nature of the boundary between the school and its environment. National contextual factors concentrated on the country's economy:

Current financial happenings, both on a personal and national level, together with the political occurrences have had a very negative impact on some people in the staff room. Their reaction to this has created a lot of tension in the staff room particularly for those who accept the current situation but want to get on and do the best possible job without listening to negativity. [M, 46-55, 7-9]

Commentary on local-community environmental factors also largely centred on the socio-economic context of the school:

Schools are increasingly dealing with issues related to general lifestyles and are expected to search for the resources to do the work of other agencies such as HSE[35] etc. Doing nothing is not an option. [M, 46-55, 10-12]

The school's internal context largely focussed on staff:

Teachers feel 'unloved' by the outside world and tend to look inward. Not helped by salary cuts and job insecurity for young, enthusiastic teachers. [M, 46-55, 10-12]

Many respondents thus see their national, local and internal school contexts as being both interconnected and challenging at this time and this has had an impact on their sense of control around decision-making:

Making decisions that affect a person's livelihood can be stressful e.g. letting staff go. Dealing with issues that occur outside of school but yet impact on your school is difficult as you have very little power to change these issues. [F, 46-55, 1-3]

O'Connor's[36] finding that principals referred to the importance of 'gut reaction', 'what feels right' and 'values' in making situationally aware decisions similarly emerged in this study:

My gut feeling does influence a lot of things. [F, 46-55, 1-3]

Over the past six years, I've come to the conclusion that most people live in the immediate present of their own issues. Sometimes you just have to make decisions for the greater good of all. [F, 46-55, 4-6]

Such subjectivities or 'arts' particularly surface when, as one survey respondent put it, *'big decisions must be made; when there is new ground, new directives, new demands etc.'*. For example, the demand for inclusivity in decision-making was articulated by Martin:

I'm very conscious that I always have to go one step further ... that I almost have to – not apologise for my actions, that's the wrong word – ehm, to just as best I can to involve everybody in the decision making process, and

not justify the decisions I make, but rather to explain the decisions that I have made or make sure that people understand this is decision that we have come to. The simplest of things, you know? It's around putting a notice on the staffroom board – stuff that I would never have thought of three years ago, but making sure 'Have you put up a notice about that? Have you informed people of that? And so now, I'm trying to think one step ahead in dealing with people. [Martin]

Alignment with the in-school context therefore emerges as the principal consideration in decision-making and its attendant imperatives. The imperative to change the internal context, where it was negative, also surfaced:

We all started out as idealists. Let's put that to the top of our agenda and try to get away from the culture of negativity that is so destructive. [F, 46-55, 7-9]

In summary, principals demonstrate an acute awareness of the porous nature of the boundary between the school and its environment. Participants thus agree that 'people technology is just as necessary as thing technology'[37] in the change-management process and demonstrate an ability to use contextually informed approaches in their decision-making.

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Artful Change-Management

The term 'artful change-management' describes the principal's capacity to move beyond the technical or structural and towards a reflective integration of the social and emotional nuances at play in the lifeworld of the school as they lead and manage transformational activity.

Fullan[38] contrasts re-structuring (changes in the formal structure of schooling) with re-culturing (changing the norms, values, incentives, skills and relationships) and asserts that while re-culturing makes a difference in teaching and learning, it nonetheless requires strong emotional involvement from principals and others. Reculturing a school, according to Stoll[39], 'is not for the faint-hearted' as it amounts to inventing what amounts to a new way of life.

Empirical-rational change strategies externally imposed by policy-makers are based on the fundamental assumption that schools are rational places:

What is going on below the surface, however, is the real essence of school culture – people's beliefs, values ... as well as micropolitical issues and the emotions people bring to their work[40]

Principals demonstrate a high degree of affective awareness in relation to change-management in their schools:

> *This is a time of great change in my school. Therefore emotions are somewhat fragile. People are grieving for a way of life that is gone and have not fully dealt with the emotions of change.* [F, 46-55, 1-3]

Incorporating such awareness into change management and renewal is challenging but essential as 'change and emotion are inseparable'[41]. Hargreaves discovered that the majority of his respondent teachers associated educational change with external, government-imposed policies and referred to such in disapproving terms, contrasting with self-initiated change. Respondent principals in the present study similarly expressed frustrations with externally-mandated change and distinguished between 'the national and the local':

> *These are situations outside my control, and yet situations that I am expected to manage within DES procedures - without the resources from the same DES!! Aagh.... even thinking about it annoys me!!!* [F, 56-65, >21]

> *I put a great deal of emphasis on the local (positives in our school) rather than the national.* [M, 46-55, 7-9]

The effects of repetitive change also surfaced in the survey:

> *DES expectations - usually at short notice with 'goalposts changed' constantly is very frustrating.* [F, 56-65, >21]

> *The constancy of change and demands on time never ends for all staff. This creates tensions and people need time-out to allow themselves to regenerate.* [M, 56-65, 10-12]

Thus, with both principal and teachers adopting a deficit perspective on externally mandated change, the stage is set for what Beatty[42] calls holistic school renewal, and characterises as a 'shift from political structures of traditional hegemonic bureaucratic hierarchy to something far more egalitarian, democratic and openly discursive'. Beatty asserts that leaders who seek to lead change and renew their schools, wisely begin with their own personal and professional renewal or, as one survey participant put it: *'the Principal must be willing to learn and to 'get out of his or her head''*. Such inner work demands reflection and a survey question exploring reflection on critical incidents indicated that while principals agree in the narrative that they reflect on outcomes, it remains an unstructured facet of their practice, with just 12% of principals indicating they engage in written reflection 'always' or 'usually' as can be seen from Table 5.6:

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Table 5.6: Principals' response to:

On a bad day I have written it down, when I've had a really bad day I would write it down, because it helps me to reflect on it and see how could I do better? … what was it here that made me feel so terrible? … and how I can look at it in a different perspective?

	n	%
Never like me	57	34.1
Seldom like me	66	39.5
About half of the time like me	24	14.4
Usually like me	17	10.2
Always like me	3	1.8
N	167	100.0

Harrison[43], discussing Schön's[44] representation of the 'reflective practitioner', argues that such an approach is suited to the complexities and ambiguities of the practice setting and describes professional action as being characterised by 'artistry' rather than 'technical rationality'. Such artistry demands reflection on the complexities of collegiality, on for example the practice of management through teams. O'Neill[45] argues that while teams are seen as a ready solution to the intensification of teachers' and managers' work in schools, 'the practice of teaching and the process of teamwork may simply be incompatible bedfellows'. Thus, while one survey respondent described the ideal as *'The principal develops the staff team which will be capable of bringing about change and improvement'*, an interviewee described his reality:

> *When I arrived here first, I thought I'd be clever and create an extended leadership team. And I created a team of people who were principal, deputy principal and all the year heads and we started having meetings. Jesus! Did that backfire? All the other post-holders thought 'Who's this? What are they talking about? Why are we not involved in this?' etc. etc. etc.* [Martin]

Affective awareness and reflection on experience are therefore key components of team-led change-management as the intention to increase staff commitment via greater involvement in decision-making 'is laudable but remains a double-edged sword in practice'[46].

Leading teacher-practice change at classroom level is seen by participants as equally challenging:

> *I suppose teachers are a bit solitary in some senses, they don't like to be told and can get a bit of a siege mentality!* [F, 46-55, 1-3]

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Part of the reason for this is a policy context in Ireland in which 'staffing, teacher supply, the timely delivery of reports, training days delivered, management structure and the pace of implementation of syllabi changes are all monitored but not the work or practices of teachers in classrooms'[47].

One respondent nonetheless saw the current context as an opportunity:

In the current climate it's a good opportunity however to move in on classroom practices and do some work on standards of teaching and learning. [F, 46-55, 13-15]

Thus, whether at individual or whole-school level, awareness at least, and deftness at best, in the emotional dynamics of change-management are seen by participants as being as at least as important as rationality. 'Emotions are embedded in ethics'[48] and, as one respondent put it, *'people can change and can be led to believe that the common good is also important.'* [F, 46-55, 1-3]

In summary, principals demonstrate a high degree of affective awareness in relation to change-management in their schools and evidence unstructured but nonetheless real reflective practice in 'artfully' managing change as a shared enterprise.

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Concluding comments

The claims supported by evidence in this chapter offer respondent principals' perspectives on the interpersonal affective factors involved in the collaborative realisation of positive transformational change in their schools. The findings may be summarised thus:

- Participants care *for* and care *about* their teachers and see relationship-building as a key task in the establishment of a collegial culture driving school transformation activity.

- Leaders demonstrated an awareness of the affective dimensions of communication in assigning particular weight to listening and to 'how, not what, you communicate'.

- Respondents employ 'drawing-in' and 'holding-out' strategies in the management of negativity and use their emotional acumen to manage conflict situations.

- Respondent principals display a preponderance of 'democratic' and 'affiliative' leadership styles and can migrate among a range of approaches as the situation demands but they exhibit caution around teacher performance management.

- School leaders in this study demonstrate an acute awareness of the porous nature of the boundary between the school and its environment.

■ Respondents demonstrate a high degree of affective awareness in relation to artful or nuanced change-management strategies but their approach to reflective practice remains unstructured.

This examination of the final dimension of interpersonal emotional competencies presents as a culmination. Recurring intersections between elements of each sub-theme nonetheless point to a profound level of complexity at the lived-experience level of headship. Chapter Six, next, thus opens with the development of an overarching synthesis and considers applicability of these understandings with the aim of linking emotional competencies with behaviours and actions in the quest for school enhancement.

CHAPTER FIVE: Notes

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Chapter Six
Affective Attunement

Chapter Six
Affective Attunement

Introduction

In this chapter, a synthesis of the findings is established and is linked to the work of other researchers and the emerging body of research exploring, in particular, relationship between the affective ecology of the school and student outcomes.

Implications of this study for school leadership development and support are then investigated and the tensions between the modalities of formal training and social learning critically discussed in terms of appropriateness and impact.

Towards a Theory

Having now examined each of the four themes, a consequence, or affectively-underpinned outcome, can be identified for each which further clarifies the pattern of connection between them. The theme 'Foundations' comprised a set of three affectively-embedded competencies which were associated with ethical, self-directed living. Principals provided evidence of:

- A meaningful connection between identity and practice and of their life stories informing ways in which they negotiate the ethical and social landscape of their school;
- A capacity to translate foundational values into action which connected strongly with their emotionality, especially when their values were threatened, and,
- A capacity for emotional self-regulation, beginning with self-awareness and underpinning a consequent capacity for emotional self-control.

Respondents thus identified self as the ultimate locus for control and values as fundamental to their motivation and the competencies of the 'Foundations' theme consequentially provide principals with a *personal impetus*, a stimulus for energising their subsequent behaviour and action.

The theme 'Agency' presented a set of competencies which act as a link between the principal's foundational vision and values and the social world of the school. Respondents provided evidence of:

- A capacity to build trust as an essentially relational phenomenon, underpinned by personal authenticity;
- A capacity to incorporate inspiration and creativity in their approaches to problem-solving, and,
- The prioritisation of resilience, sustained by a range of strategies to source emotional and practical help.

Principals in this way activate their foundational qualities, bridging the personal and social dimensions of their work, and the competencies of 'Agency' consequentially provide for *personal mobilisation*, defined as 'bringing resources into use for a particular purpose', which in this context relates to their advocating for subsequent collective action.

The theme 'Connection' described three competencies in which principals develop an understanding of people's situations as well as strategies to energise and empower others and participants provided evidence of:

- The centrality of relationship-building in their practice, manifested in care *for* and care *about* their teachers;
- An awareness of the affective dimensions of effective communication in assigning particular weight to listening and to 'how, not what, you communicate', and,
- The use of their emotional intelligence, in the broader sense, to manage conflict situations by employing 'drawing-in' and 'holding-out' strategies.

Respondents thus reveal that they first establish a relational culture upon which subsequent collaborative activity is founded and consequentially provide for a *collective impetus* for 'whole school' transformational efforts.

Finally, the culminating theme 'Synergy' identified three competencies which underpin the principal's artful achievement of collaboratively-mediated transformational activity and principals provided evidence of:

- A preponderance of 'democratic' and 'affiliative' leadership styles but also a facility to migrate among a range of approaches as the situation demands;
- An acute contextual awareness of the porous nature of the boundary between the school and its environment in their decision-making, and,
- A capacity to endow their change-management activity with 'artful', contextually and affectively nuanced strategies.

Principals, in this way, use their emotional adeptness even at the highest levels of transformational endeavour, bringing the human resources of at least a critical mass of their teaching staff into use and providing for a *collective mobilisation* for change.

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In terms of an overarching phenomenon, I generated the expression 'Affectively-Attuned Change-Management' to capture the central process at work within the narrative, employing the notion of attunement to imply that emotional awareness is not the only determining factor in leadership and management but nonetheless requiring of the principal's serious consideration as repeatedly emphasised by the research participants.

A theoretical model summarising this synthesis is presented in Figure 6.1:

Figure 6.1: A theoretical model of Affectively-Attuned Change-Management
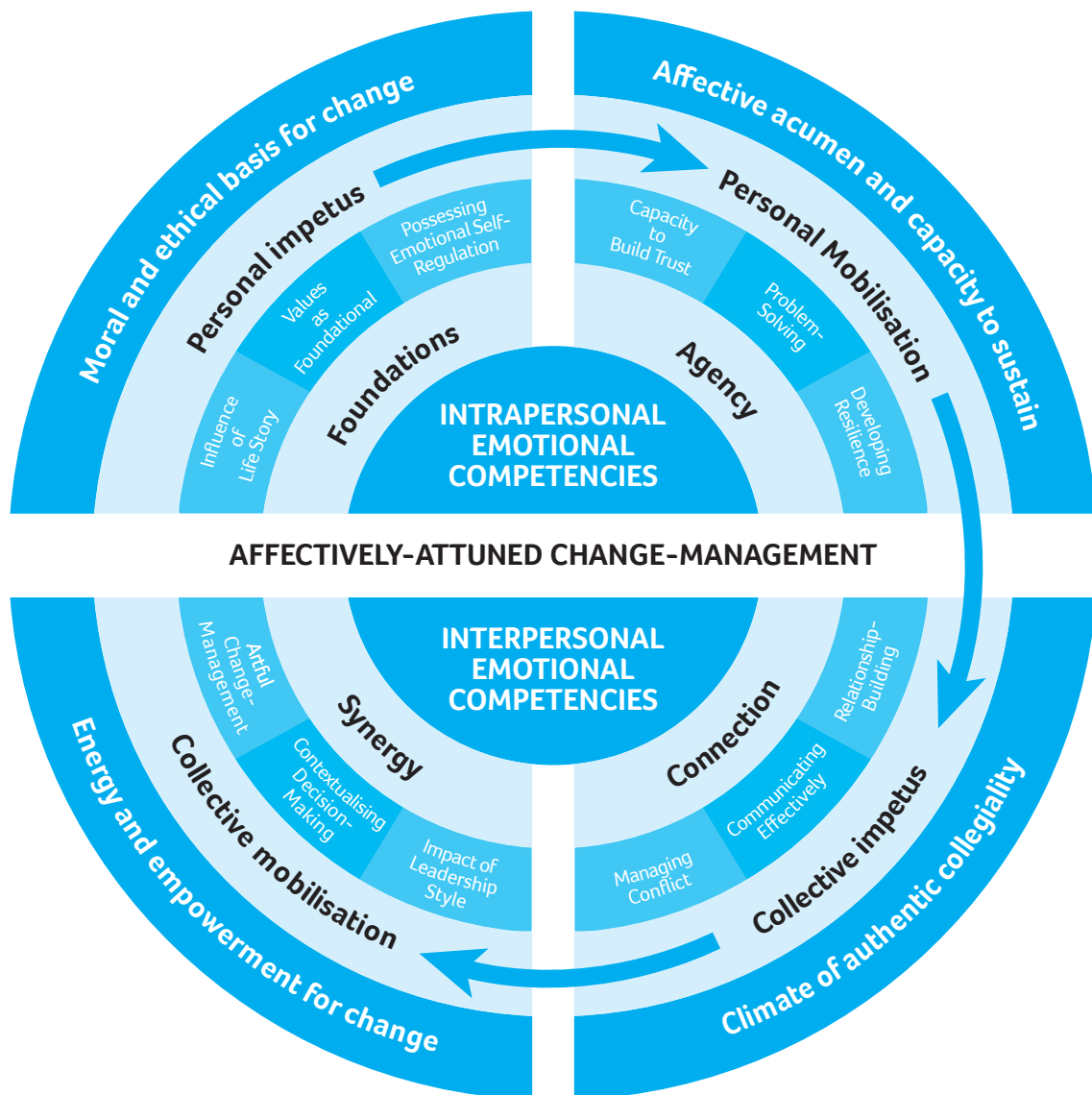
The model represents a synopsis of the findings presented as a graphical conceptualisation. Behind this synthesis lies the shared experience of 182 respondent principals and in terms of characterisation, their narrative demonstrated a range of features relevant to answering the central line of enquiry. Firstly, though interviewees were understandably apt to lose focus on a particular question and speak to their enthusiasms, respondents in general fully comprehended the issues and remained on theme. The principals' narrative was also characterised by a distinct association with their 'lifeworld' and though many were at ease in responding in the abstract, a significant number of survey commentaries and many more elements of interviewee commentary were exemplified by reference to personal and professional life.

There was also evidence of fluency and a willingness to engage. Each interview and focus group exceeded its allotted recording time, not including preliminary conversations and *post hoc* discussions, equally rich in dialogue around the topic. In all forums, principals' repeated articulation of emotionality as rooted in their moral agency emerged as a significant theme with the 'good of the students', 'taking care of people' and 'improving the school' cited frequently. Such a recurrence supports employing the theme 'Foundations' as a starting point for an interpretation of the model presented in Figure 6.1.

Glimpses of spirituality also emerged, though it was usually given as underpinning a set of personal values and not as an overt practice or in any way evangelical. The level of candour and evidence of considered perspective on this deeply subjective and personal topic was also particularly evident. Principals shared some highly personal insights and features of their lives which enriched the commentary but also pointed to a need for a 'safe space' for such narratives, as expressed by some.

The commentary demonstrated school leaders' use of humour, with self-deprecation and irony appearing at many elements of the narrative. Respondents also expressed gratitude for the opportunity to reflect-upon and respond to the issues raised in the survey and there was evidence that even completing the questionnaire proved cathartic for some.

Thus, while it may be concluded that respondent principals are eager and proficient in articulating the complexities and subtleties of their work-related emotionality, it is equally the case that they rarely get the opportunity. Participants thus used this study to share comprehensive, detailed and personal insights, analysis of which offer an enhanced, qualitative understanding of this under-researched aspect of their practice.

The Emotional Dimensions of Principalship

The structured and honest approach to uncovering the themes and sub-themes embedded within the data support a contention that the dimensions

of the emotional practice identified within the affectively-attuned change-management synthesis are both real and important to the respondent school leaders. It is equally the case, however, that the focus on collaboratively-mediated change-management adopted for this study necessarily limited the range of affective dimensions presented in Figure 6.1.

Principals do not speak in themes or sub-themes. These dimensions were elicited from what emerged as a comprehensive, complex and rich narrative generously shared by busy school leaders. The emotional dimensions presented in Figure 6.1 are not experienced as distinct from each other and a profound degree of interconnectedness exists, not alone among the dimensions themselves, but also with contextual factors such as the relentless waves of policy demands, significant social change and the impact of successive cuts to resources in Irish schools.

Principals expressed gratitude for what one respondent described as 'precious moments of contemplation on the role and the personal resources needed to manage'. Particularly in the final survey reflection space there was evidence that even completing the questionnaire proved cathartic for some:

> *Thanks for opportunity to take part*
> *We don't get enough time to off-load*
> *I enjoyed completing this much more than I expected!*

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Finally, a striking feature of the survey commentary lay in the degree to which the narrative emerged as polarised, aligning with either a highly emotionally attuned approach to leadership or to a more robust, less affectively demonstrative one. In an early attempt at comprehending the survey narrative data, I employed a heuristic in which I categorised commentaries as either 'Worriers' or 'Warriors'. Two pairs of responses to the same survey prompts illustrate the contrasting stances:

> *Schools are 'people places' and the emotional climate is one of the key nurturing aspects of education for students.* [F, 56-65, 19-21; categorised as 'Worrier']

> *Compassion and understanding are needed but my head has to call the shots.* [F, 56-65, 16-18; categorised as 'Warrior']

and

> *Need to be able to read people well, know how to approach an issue with them and how to get them on side.* [F, 46-55, 13-15; categorised as 'Worrier']

> *Small things like this help but it is leadership that will direct the improvement.* [M, 46-55, 4-6; categorised as 'Warrior']

In addition, a subset of Worriers emerged who articulated high degrees of anxiety or distress and was given the classification 'Wounded'. I sought commentary on this concept from the final focus group. Availability reduced the group from four to three on the day, comprising one male member of the original focus group and two female principals, invited on the basis of experience, school type and willingness to participate.

Specifically, the characteristics of each principal were:

Pseudonym	Marian	Karen	Paul
Gender	Female	Female	Male
School Type	Co-Ed	All Girls	All Girls
Social Context	Middle-Class, City	Working-Class, City, with Disadvantaged Status	Working-Class, City, with Disadvantaged Status
Experience	6 years	1 year	8 years

Table 6.1: Characteristics of the Final Focus Group Participants

Participants in this second focus group affirmed identification with the typology:

Paul: *My initial reaction when I saw that Worrier, Warrior, Wounded thing was that there would be a mixture*

Marian: *And mine too... in the one person. They might have a dominant sort of disposition but I still think in the role of a principal that the Warrior must have some times when they are a Worrier*

MR: *So classify yourself then...*

Marian: *I would definitely be a Warrior though I would have periods of being a Worrier and maybe if you're having this conversation with me in five years' time, I would be the Wounded!*

Karen: *And likewise, I would see myself as a Warrior but I allow myself time each day to worry about certain issues, think about them and then go back to being the Warrior in public*

MR: *So a Warrior in public and a Worrier in private...you're a crypto-Worrier?*

Karen: *Yeah, yeah, yeah. In order to keep my staff happy, they've to see that I am in an emotionally good place that day. This isn't a burden, it's part of the richness of what I do but whether I'd say the same thing back to you Michael in five years' time, I don't know. But it's making me become more reflective as a person and calmer and slower at reacting*

Paul: *You can switch from one to the other very quickly*

Karen: *Yeah, a couple of times a day*

Thus, while it is plausible to conclude that respondent principals are eager, proficient and polarised in articulating the complexities and subtleties of their work-related emotionality, it is equally the case that they rarely get the opportunity, a state of affairs also voiced in the final group discussion:

Paul: *Who else do we talk to? Maybe the deputy if you're lucky. When you get something like that* [the survey] *... it's pouring out what you're doing... there's no-one else you can tell.*

The emotional landscape of contemporary school leadership, while presenting as a compartmentalised framework of competencies and domains in the conceptual model of affectively-attuned change-management, manifests as intensely complex and challenging in the lifeworld of the principal. It may also be the case as argued by Harris[1], that such 'dynamic disequilibrium' equally sets the stage for the promotion of learning and change – that being disturbed acts as a catalyst for new learning to occur and this perspective has important implications for the leadership of change, discussed next.

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Change-Management

While linkage between emotionality and change has been affirmed in the literature and in particular in the collaborative work of Leithwood with others, evidence is also found from within the data and 90.25% of principals agreed or strongly agreed with the survey statement 'I have to use my emotional intelligence because if I don't use it, I'll get nowhere with school improvement'.

This study set out to discover association, not to *prove* the existence of direct linkage between the emotional competencies of the principal and the development of effective action for school improvement. The emergence of a coherent conceptual model from within the data nonetheless demonstrates, I submit, the existence of a plausible chain of association linking emotional dimensions of the school leader's foundational motivating forces, the mobilisation of capacities for personal sustainability and interpersonal connection and, ultimately, the generation of synergies for collective action across the school.

Association between principals' emotional competencies and shared school enhancement efforts is dealt-with from a variety of perspectives in the literature. For example, Leithwood and Seashore-Lewis[2] assert that instructional leadership, shared leadership and trust in the principal have the combined potential to increase student learning. Participant principals' characterisation of trust as an essentially affective phenomenon points to an expansion of the Leithwood and Seashore-Lewis trust-components into a distinctly relational dimension within respondents' settings at least. Such an affectively nuanced characterisation of trust from a respondent perspective resonates with the 'human capital' foundations of educational leadership and is revealed in the tensions emerging in the neo-liberalised policy context wherein:

> Individuals struggle with identities in a new managerial context – seeking to retain personal meaning and connectedness in the face of colonisation of the life-world while simultaneously surviving in an increasingly competitive work environment [3]

Harris[4], while declaring that 'there is no desire to make spurious links between the focus on emotions and pupil outcomes', nonetheless makes a case for the acknowledgement of emotional literacy as an essential ingredient in what she calls 'third wave' school improvement efforts. If the first wave comprised 'one size fits all' organisational change efforts and the second coupled such organisational change with classroom level change, then the third wave represented tailor-made school development focussed on:

> ...building capacity, developing collaborative school cultures and improving teaching, learning, enquiry and pupil outcomes.

Contrasting with Leithwood and Seashore-Lewis, Harris sees no hard evidence of a direct correlation between emotional factors and pupil outcomes but is, like many survey and interview respondents, convinced that school emotional resources and conditions are likely to have played their own part in helping schools to improve their examination results. Specifically, she cites two British 'third wave' projects, ['Improving the Quality of Education for All' and the 'OCTET Project'], which introduced an emotional component into the 'mix' of interventions and concluded that:

> Teachers found this component particularly helpful in thinking through how to creatively mobilise and engage colleagues and pupils in change efforts.

Locating affective factors as a 'component of the mix' and 'playing a part' resonates with the perspective of many respondent principals in acknowledging a place for emotionality in whole-school change efforts but frequently arguing against its centrality, particularly when set in opposition to, or superseding, cognitive/rational considerations.

In summary:

- Principals overwhelmingly agree that they have to use their emotional intelligence, in the broadest sense, to achieve 'whole school' mediated change

- The emergence of a coherent conceptual model from within the data demonstrates the existence of a plausible chain of association linking emotional dimensions of the school leader's foundational motivating forces, the mobilisation of capacities for personal sustainability and interpersonal connection and, ultimately, the generation of synergies for collective action across the school

- While no direct correlation between emotional factors and examination results is claimed, respondents affirm that positive emotional resources create the conditions for collaboration and are thus likely to have helped improve the educational experience and outcomes for students

- Principals acknowledge a role for emotionality in whole-school change efforts but arguments against its centrality are also presented

Implications for Practice

The pragmatic underpinnings of this study set out to 'enable us to make appropriate decisions, take effective action and successfully get things done'[5]. In service to these aims, this project was primarily designed at enhancing our understanding of the affective factors at work in the change-management process and to seek to apply these insights to practice. The notion that 'understanding precedes action – and geography maps the course'[6] sets the stage for a mapping of our insights into affectively-attuned change-management as framed in Figure 6.1 onto the life-world of the principal and such applicability will be presented in two distinct formats. Firstly, as one of my tasks in the JMB is to present key elements of a training programme for newly appointed principals, a set of semi-structured reflections based on the sub-theme findings of this study will be presented below. Secondly, an actionable heuristic device based on a theory-of-action[7] and which will support the integration of rational and emotional elements of problem-solving will be presented in the next chapter.

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The summarised findings of the chapters on intra and inter-personal emotional competencies can support the presentation of a set of twelve insights related to the model outlined in Figure 6.1, in the form of recommendations which could prove of significant value to early-stage, or indeed any-stage, principals. I envisage a presentation of this study's outcomes supporting a focussed discussion on their wider implications and such a framework of understandings is presented as Figure 6.2:

Figure 6.2: A framework of reflections emerging from the study

1. Influence of Life Story Your life story informs ways in which you negotiate the ethical and social landscape of your school and will act as an important resource in your leadership.	**2. Values as Foundational** Your capacity to translate values into action is foundational to your leadership and will connect to your emotionality, especially when your values are threatened.
3. Possessing Emotional Self-Regulation Emotional self-regulation begins with self-awareness and only then your capacity for self-control in which you will develop a capacity to express and suppress your emotional displays as needed.	**4. Capacity to Build Trust** Your capacity to build trust with people is essentially relational and will be underpinned by your own personal authenticity.
5. Problem-Solving Your approaches to problem-solving can be enhanced by pausing to creatively use 'incubation' and 'inspiration' to resolve the often ill-structured problems of school life.	**6. Developing Resilience** Resilience is given top priority by your fellow principals and you will therefore need to find sources of emotional and practical support for sustainability.
7. Relationship-Building Relationship-building is a key task in establishing collegiality in your school and you will need to both care for and care about your teachers.	**8. Communicating Effectively** Your ability to communicate effectively will demand that you focus first on listening and that you think carefully about how, not what, you communicate.
9. Managing Conflict In conflict situations you should distinguish between task challenges and relational challenges and use your affective awareness to draw-in people or hold-out people as appropriate.	**10. Impact of Leadership Style** You will have a dominant leadership style ('democratic' ranked highest among your peers) but you will also need to be able to migrate among a range of approaches as the situation demands.
11. Contextualising Decision-Making You will need to become aware of your school's national, local and in-school environments and make decisions informed by this knowledge.	**12. Artful Change-Management** Successful change-management is an ensemble of arts and will demand a highly reflective approach to your practice as well as attunement to your school's emotional ecology.

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Although presenting as a set of normative statements, such reflections are nonetheless grounded in the perspective of peer professionals and may, at least, support a helpful degree of reflection and focussed conversation in support of affective capacity-building for new and, indeed, experienced school leaders.

While there was overwhelming agreement amongst survey respondents that 'principals need support with the emotional side of their work from the very beginning', no consensus emerged around which features of the 'emotional side' in particular were required. Principals nonetheless affirmed a need for awareness-raising relating to the role of emotionality in leadership but were divided on whether any intervention could go further and 'teach' emotional competencies such as self-awareness, resilience or empathy. This lack of clarity and consensus around the question of emotional 'teachability' carries implications for the design of interventions and, indeed, whether to intervene in the first instance.

Implications for Interventions

As discussed earlier, one of the key annual tasks of the JMB is to provide induction training for school leaders, not alone principals but also deputies, chairpersons and members of boards of management in the sector. It is perhaps reasonable that expanding hitherto interventions to include presentations on affective awareness might be considered a key implication for practice emerging from the present study. Spindler and Biott[8], however, counsel the adoption of a wider perspective:

> Training is likely to have positive outcomes where it is seen as only a small part of a broader framework of support that takes into account the different perspectives of school leaders at different career stages.

If the present project emphasises one particular developmental need however, it is for career-long, safe and affectively-articulate peer-delivered dialogic support, a model supported by Spindler and Biott in the same piece:

> Reformers must acknowledge that it is the resilience and emotional engagement of principals and teachers rather than training programmes, which helps them to go beyond the call of duty when they are being subjected to relentless imposed change and to the ratcheting-up of targets. Instead of emphasising accountability measures and common sets of technical competencies for all principals, the focus should be on how to engender and support inter-generational learning in local districts.

Survey, and particularly interview, commentaries strongly affirmed the supportive character of principal-gatherings, even though more than one

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survey respondent characterised such encounters as 'moan-fests'. Principals in the Irish voluntary secondary school setting have access to a range of opportunities for meeting oneanother and a frequently-cited by-product of these, usually agenda-driven, events is the opportunity to engage with one's peers in a collegial and 'safe' environment. That such encounters fulfil the requirements for 'inter-generational learning' is, however, doubtful. I cannot improve on Spindler and Biott's identification of principals' developmental needs within groupings constituted with this work in mind:

1. Allowing veterans to connect with the concerns of new principals, not in order to tell them how to do things, but to help bring perspective to current issues;

2. Embracing emotional dimensions of starting out and keeping going in demanding circumstances, and,

3. Making connections between repertoires of accumulated capital as part of the reservoir from which all principals can derive sustenance

Thus, while doubtless some pairings and small groups of principals have conspired to construct *ad hoc* relationships achieving these aims, the majority of school leaders in the Irish voluntary secondary school setting have no access to such a resource. JMB and other engagements are either too agenda-heavy, mixed-participation (e.g. including deputies or board chairpersons), instructional, transactional, faith-centered, or short-lived to provide for the deeper, trusting and long-term relationships required of effective and transformational mutual support for principals. The challenge therefore, lies in clarifying our thinking around such developmental needs, researching practice in other countries or professions and seeking to build a fit-for-purpose model of appropriate, workable and acceptable professional networks supporting the long-term sustainability of individuals and, indeed, of voluntary secondary school headship in general into the future. In this regard, the JMB is exploring the potential of the 'Balint Group'[9], a peer workgroup model developed in the 1950's to provide a framework for medical professionals to share and learn from the emotional dynamics of their practice.

That said, there nonetheless remains a distinct role for awareness-raising, training, workshop discussion and other targeted interventions around the affective landscape of principalship. I have, over the course of this research, built a series of such interventions around 'principal voice' as emerging from the various data-gathering exercises of this project. That these presentations and semi-structured discussions receive much more positive evaluations than my earlier models founded solely on literature extracts, points yet again to the validation of principal-voice by principals and reinforces the premise on which both the sub-theme framework of reflections (Figure 6.2) and the professional network ideas are founded.

The dearth of expertise, relevant literature and support materials around emotionality in school leadership in Ireland, if not also elsewhere, presents as a challenge to continually develop and refine awareness-raising and other interventions catalysing conversation and reflection on this foundational yet neglected aspect of the role.

CHAPTER SIX: Notes

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Chapter Seven
Affective Attunement in Action

Chapter Seven
Affective Attunement in Action

The four processes at work in affectively-attuned change-management can be crystallised into a single statement:

In seeking to bridge the gap between having a vision for improvement and the achievement of transformational change, a school leader will require to employ both emotion and rationality in the establishment of a moral and ethical basis for change ('Foundations'); the deployment of one's affective acumen and capacity to sustain ('Agency'); the activation of a climate of authentic collegiality ('Connection') and, ultimately, the mobilisation of energy and empowerment for collaboratively-mediated change ('Synergy').

This overarching construct is a suspiciously hierarchical, linear and causal model. In real life however, the twin processes of feedback and learning add complexity and are required for effective action in bringing about school enhancement.

Argyris and Schön[1] developed a series of abstract representations about how people produce the consequences they intend. The theorists used the term 'theory-of-action' to replace the terms 'skills and strategy' and identified two outcomes of learning: creating a match between intention and effect and detecting and correcting a mismatch. It is this mismatch between intention and action that led to their differentiating between a person's 'espoused theory' and their 'theory-in-use':

> People have a 'theory-in-use', a kind of executive program that actually directs their actions; but, they also have an 'espoused theory', a theory-of-action that they talk about or write down if asked to explain their actions[2].

The theory-in-use therefore represents the psychology of everyday life, an operational theory-of-action, and, as people only examine their theory-of-action when they are being ineffective or when they fail, their theories-in-use contain working assumptions about self, others and the situation.

It is unreasonable to expect that overburdened principals will retreat from their roles to comprehend and discover how to implement models of effective

change-management across their practice. What is feasible however is that practitioners begin to develop their own continuing theory-of-action under real-time conditions. It means that the professional must learn to develop microtheories of action that, when organised into a pattern, represent an effective theory of practice. The aim is not to set out yet another effectiveness-enhancing formula but to identify emotionally-attuned cognitive learning strategies which can set a pattern of successful behaviours.

Heller[3] identifies that bridging the gap between insight and action and interrupting automatic behaviour patterns are two of the hardest tasks in creating effective learning. He proposes a three-component heuristic, or 'mini-program' which can be used to replace a current behaviour pattern:

1. A 'flag' which alerts us to when the heuristic should be used

2. A 'recognition' of what is really happening in the situation, and,

3. A 'prescription' of how to act in the situation

The heuristic can be very powerful because the individual can go beyond the recognition of ineffective or counter-productive behaviour to follow through with more effective action[4].

I am proposing that a heuristic such as Heller's which involves assigning meaning, planning and only then enacting may be rendered significantly more effective if it also incorporates the affective at the levels of situation recognition, meaning-making and planned action. If this study demonstrates anything, it is the pervasive nature and need for a recognition of the importance of emotionality in decision-making and action at every level of the real-time lifeworld of the school. Incorporating an intelligence around feelings, one's own and others', into microtheories of action has the potential to enrich and add power to the mental models principals might use to support effective decision-making. Such a heuristic is presented as *'Situation – Sense – Say'*:

Situation:

Not all scenarios demand deeply insightful responses and, with practice, school leaders will develop discernment skills allowing for an awareness of when to interrupt their automatic behaviour patterns and slow-down to deploy a more situationally appropriate response.

Sense:

Moving beyond the cognitive to incorporate emotional understandings of a situation is at the heart of the affective-attunement construct, though this is not to polarise either dimension as both are essential. At the early stages of practice however, using two sentences, one of 'thinking' and a second

of 'feeling', will support the emergence of a more holistic and appropriate response at the action stage.

Say:

Principals, though always active, will sometimes declare 'I don't do things, I get things done'. They achieve results, immediate and longer-term, largely by effective advocacy. In situations such as staff meetings demanding intensively reflective and collaborative processes, what the principal says and how she or he says it, is assigned great significance by staff and impacts on eventual outcomes. For principals, therefore, saying *is* acting.

At time of writing, secondary schools in Ireland are facing a common change-management challenge in the form of a contested new curriculum framework for Junior Cycle. Resistance at teacher union level is compounded by a difficult industrial relations atmosphere generated by pay-cuts and principals are now responsible for implementing significant curricular change with little support or ownership at school level.

A successful approach to such change-management will not reside in reliance on a small in-school implementation group, however composed or motivated. The governing values that guide behaviours and actions across the *whole* school must first change and, as Heller advises, 'it takes hard effort, practice and commitment to accomplish that level of change'.

That said, there exists some value in imagining an approach which would begin with a diagnosis of both the new curricular demands and the capacity of the school to meet them. In the present example, a key capacity lies in the willingness or otherwise of the teaching staff to implement the new programme. A principal with a sensitised staff might begin with the following heuristic:

When Demands and Capacity Conflict

Situation: When imposed compliance with policy threatens staff cohesion

Sense: *Think:* My teachers agree cognitively with the need for curricular change but there exist significant barriers to implementation

        Feel: Threatened and angry people entrench – imposing change now will lead to cycles of resistance

Say: 'Let's use this entire term simply to have conversations. I will ensure we get the facts we need and we'll worry more about getting this change right rather than on time'.

Such contextualisation is essential as individuals within the school are best placed to make judgements about how to resolve its problems. Incorporating an awareness of emotionality adds to the power of such analysis and is more likely to avert ineffective behaviours such as direct policy compliance or opposition.

Once the non-threatening 'conversation phase' has progressed (and hopefully the industrial relations atmosphere has improved), the principal may continue with further tentative steps aimed at generating an internal commitment to freely-chosen change on the part of the teaching staff. To achieve this objective, the processes of sharing valid information, its public testing and combining with advocacy might helpfully be supported by further use of the heuristic:

Resolving Irresolvable Conflict

Situation: When win-lose arguments emerge

Sense: *Think:* That staff need some alternative method for overcoming this impasse and this will demand a carefully thought-out strategic approach to its resolution

Feel: They are hugely sensitised to this issue and will need to know they have advocates in the solution-seeking process

Say: 'Let's call a meeting of assistant principals to gather information and explore possibilities for action'

followed by:

Keeping a Focus on the Problem

Situation: When participants are likely to generate emotive distractions

Sense: *Think:* That factual information is less likely to be challenged and will support rational discussion

Feel: They will still need to vent but once this is over, they will need some structure to focus on as feelings will remain high

Say: 'Let's generate and share a discussion document which will clarify the issues at stake and begin the process of finding a way forward'

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At a later stage, the staff will need to be brought together to explore possibilities but large-scale plenaries are unlikely to be productive:

When Abstractions may overpower Specifics

Situation: When the plenary will not generate solutions

Sense: *Think:* My teachers are pragmatists and will focus better on tangible, local scenarios as opposed to negative, national-level abstractions

Feel: The quiet ones will not feel it is safe to speak in the plenary as the negative voices will inevitably dominate the discussion

Say: 'Let's take specific examples of how this might work at our school and discuss these in small groups during the meeting'

Such a nuanced approach to collaborative change-management may, to the outside observer, appear to present as infantalisation of a group of professionals who should be prepared to implement national policy directives without question. It is, however, due to their very professionalism that teachers resist externally-imposed change. Industrial relations aside, educators' innate conservatism and tendency to re-set can stem from an inclination to defend children from the vagaries of politically-driven change efforts. Neither outright opposition to nor unquestioning acceptance of the new curriculum represent effective action and the tasks for leadership are (a) to begin to make the case that the new is a significant improvement on the old and, (b) to systematically make clear over time the mismatches between the desired outcomes and current practices. Cognitive rules alone will fail to achieve these goals and the explicit integration of emotionality into the principal's actions will not alone become a tacit theory-in-use but has the potential to become mirrored across the institution as individuals learn to generate cumulative change and actualise the potential within themselves and their organisation.

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CHAPTER SEVEN: Notes

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[3]   HELLER, J. (1982) *Increasing Faculty and Administrative Effectiveness,* San Francisco, Jossey Bass.

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Chapter Eight
Reflections

Chapter Eight
Reflections

While the emotional intelligence construct has increased wide-ranging awareness of the role of emotional competencies and opened-up a debate around 'soft skills' achieving 'hard targets'[1], such a conversation within the Irish setting has so far been limited to the informal sharing of craft knowledge, occasional conference presentations and unpublished research activity, largely focussed on the primary school sector.

While not in any way evangelical about the topic or blind to the need for professional balance, I have nonetheless been actively seeking-out opportunities to begin a conversation with our principals around emotionality, its linkage with school culture and development, support-seeking and affective sustainability in challenging times. In particular, I have been feeding-back to our members their generous survey and face-to-face narrative on the subject and have sought-out speaking and writing opportunities at Annual Conference and workshops, the JMB Education Conference, training events, AMCSS/JMB publications and school in-service opportunities with teachers. While, inevitably, such a theme has become known as 'Michael's *thing*', the subject is now no longer 'new' in our field and I am looking forward to continuing to support and promote such conversations in the future.

The task of revealing the potential for bias demands an uncovering of the personal context, one's own role, preoccupations, assumptions and values, as articulated by Wright in an extract from her journal as she carried out Masters research on reflective practice in principalship in Alberta:

> 'I am no longer a detached observer. First-hand interactions with these principals have naturally become more involved and emotional, making it challenging to reflect on the process that I actively participate in. Ongoing tension exists as I negotiate being a principal and researcher, and being an insider and outsider'[2].

In terms of my personal conviction, as a principal I maintained a belief in the centrality of emotional adeptness in the exercise of effective school leadership. My assumption that this belief would be shared across the spectrum of practitioners was quickly challenged by contrasting perspectives emerging from the principals' narrative. One outcome of undertaking this research has therefore been a realisation of the wider than anticipated spectrum of stance on both emotion and leadership style among this cohort of principals.

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While my actions as a researcher have been strongly underpinned by a set of ethical provisions, I have been conscious of my own emotionality at each stage of the process and can point to a range of particular feelings experienced at different points:

Gratitude – at the high level of engagement by my peers at the various data-gathering phases

Relief – that principals were providing well-articulated and relevant commentary

Surprise – at some of the stances taken by school leaders and surprised at my own surprise that this should be the case

Anxiety – that a coherent presentation of the research-story might not emerge

Empathy – even sympathy for the plight of overwhelmed principals at this time, and,

Hope – for a useful outcome to the investment made by respondents and researcher alike

In terms of my approach to interpretation, this project essentially became an attempt at meaning-making of others' meaning-making. Such a layering of interpretation was unlikely to present in highly replicable form and its correspondence with the phenomena under scrutiny must therefore stand or fall on the integrity of the research process. The likelihood of bias was nonetheless very real and can be uncovered at a range of points, including:

Case selection for the focus group – a 'judgement sample'[3] specifically selecting for factors such as gender, age, experience and school-type but nonetheless not including anyone likely to be critical of the focus of the research.

Questionnaire design – selective focus group transcript elements were used to frame the survey which addressed the research questions but which also betrayed a partiality in favour of 'softer' approaches to school management.

Homosociability[4] – aligning with personally held dispositions in which I affirmed (with words such as 'yes', 'right' and 'of course') more affectively rich interview feedback than the transactional.

Interviewee selection – another judgement sample and controlling for demographic, school type and leadership style factors, but I deliberately opted for 'talkers' and avoided the taciturn or 'quiet'.

Value judgements during interviews – beyond the affirmation of emotionally attuned approaches to principalship, I also (inadvertently) led people toward conclusions I wanted, for example:

> MR: *'And so it's fair to say that you're aware of the so-called softer side of your work?'*

and

MR: *'Right. I've heard you use the word 'people' about five or six times in that little element of our conversation, so would you describe yourself as a 'people-person'?'*

Power relationships in interviews – while my role in JMB is largely one of service to members, I nonetheless have a level of recognition within the organisation. Both the reasonably high return-rate of completed questionnaires and the absence of outright refusals to participate in face-to-face engagements pointed to a need to be aware of the power dynamic and the potential for reactivity in conversation settings in particular.

This awareness of threats to trustworthiness within the process has been present throughout the project and, given that 'bias is likely to be endemic'[5] in interview settings particularly, the existence and naming of such threats does not necessarily detract from an underlying integrity but may, in fact, support a more authentic standard of reflexivity, particularly given the essentially subjective nature of the research focus itself.

Non-use of inventories and limited triangulation

Literature-as-data aside, this project relied on principal voice as its primary source of information and, while it reflects a stance developed in a range of books on the topic, it differs from much of the academic literature in avoiding the quantification of emotional capacities. This exploration may therefore have been supported or challenged by the employment of emotional intelligence and leadership inventories and also by incorporating the perspective of teachers or other stakeholders in triangulating against the self-reflective commentary or claims of the principal. I avoided using inventories on the basis of experience, their trustworthiness and alignment with the qualitative paradigm of the project, while triangulating the claims of a principal interviewee against, for example, his or her staff or board chairperson, would have presented serious challenges to my ethical framework and the avoidance of harm to subjects.

Not opening-up the gender debate

The noticeable homogeneity of Irish voluntary secondary principals in terms of social class and race leaves age, experience and gender as the key remaining differentiating personal factors self-identified within both survey and interview. Whatever about the influence of longevity of professional experience, there exists a definite discourse around leadership emotionality and gender[6] and this remains to be comprehended by subsequent research in the Irish setting.

Substantive theory?

The generation of substantive theory has remained a goal of this research which, as a concept, presents as far from uncomplicated (Charmaz[7] calls it 'slippery').

My background in the natural sciences has left an 'if – then' legacy of conceptualising theory which was never destined to characterise a synthesis of emotionality in principalship. That said, the construct of affectively-attuned change-management presents a coherent framework for conceptualising emotionality in school leadership and its greatest strength – that of being grounded in the data – offers plausibility to the model and potential for further exploration, enrichment and applicability. I also believe the study demonstrates a number of characteristics of pragmatic and interpretivist theorising such as significant degrees of reflexivity, the imaginative framing of emerging concepts and an attempt at meaning-making as revealed in the relationship between researcher and respondent.

Future research

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The data collected within this research project alone could support the development of at least two other, quite different, publications and researchers are just beginning to mine the narrative that emerges when school leaders reflect-upon and share their emotional selves. Linking principals' emotional competencies to the work of collaborative change-management represents but a single aspect of the affective landscape of headship. If I were to expand on this foundation, I would be drawn less to the school perspective and more towards the personhood of the leader. Specifically, our understanding of the alignment between leader as person and leadership as process could be enriched by deeper explorations of meaning-making and motivation through a wider range of lenses:

Life History

Though not unique to school principals, a person's location on the multiple simultaneous trajectories of, among other factors, age, family history, career path, life story, financial status, personal relationships and health profile all conspire to create the personhood of the principal, from which he or she is enhanced or diminished in their multiple simultaneous roles as school leader.

Siting this story amongst the dozens of equivalent life histories in the staffroom alone opens up a treasury of potential insight into the dynamics of leadership and followership, identity and motivation in the theatre of the school.

Gender

That the experience and expression of emotion is gendered has been axiomatic for far too long. There exists real scope for an exploration of masculinities-and-caring as well as femininities-and-leading and the school is a perfect crucible for such a study. In affective terms at least, the barriers between men and women's emotional lives have moved beyond porous to a far more meshed and mirrored commonality – a phenomenon in need of deeper investigation and, indeed, celebration.

Spirituality

An axiom suggests that 'fish don't feel wet in the water' and the relative silence surrounding principals' articulation of their spirituality may be due to life-long immersion factors rather than an absence of its impact on their lives and roles. The opposite may also be the case – many leaders in denominational schools may be experiencing significant dissonance between their inner, private religious conviction where it exists and the pronouncements on ethos they must make as part of their job.

Whatever the truth behind the faith-story in school leadership, it merits serious attention if only to uncover the harmonies and conflicts with school ethos, the foundational origins of value-sets and the impact of such factors on the emotional health of school leaders, whatever their state of spiritual development.

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Storytelling

Exploring accounts of critical incidents in this study has, for me, opened-up a new understanding and respect for the school leader's story, an almost daily feature of the JMB's advisory work with principals. Though reasonably well developed in the international literature, no significant exploration of principals' stories has emerged in the Irish context – a source of insight rich in potential as there may well be cultural factors at play which add layers to narratives not found universally.

Last words...

I can still remember where I was when my prescribed reading for the OU Master's Programme provided this key *'Aha!'* moment:

> '... schools are emotional theatres par excellence. The headship in those institutions is therefore an emotional practice. The role of the teacher is

grounded in emotion, shaped by emotion and acted out in an emotional context. Addressing these issues is essential if the development of leadership capability of head-teachers is to be effective'[8].

Here was a 'warrant' for leading my schools in the manner I had been for the previous fourteen years! As I continued my reading around the topic, writing some assignments and a literature review, I became much more reflective in my thinking and practice, saw some potential within both the subject and myself and decided to pursue this area as a major research topic. Few active principals can find the time or other resources to successfully complete a demanding research project at this level and I have been extraordinarily fortunate to have been seconded to the JMB from my school at a time when such a possibility became realistic

Undertaking this project has therefore been a 'labour of love' and I have enjoyed both my engagement with the people who have supported this research as well as the challenges of writing. Meanwhile the school leaders who comprise the membership of the JMB require multi-factored support, week-in, week-out and year on year. I hope and intend that the insights I have gained as a result of their sharing and my emerging understandings will produce a ripple effect, stimulating reflection and creating new conversations among school leaders in Ireland and elsewhere.

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Glossary

Glossary

The Voluntary Secondary Sector: 380 (in 2011) privately-owned, often called 'faith' schools, both Catholic and Protestant, representing over 50% of the post-primary schools in the Republic of Ireland.

Trustees/Trusteeship: Faith schools in Ireland are privately owned either by individuals (less than ten schools), or by Trustees. In the majority of cases, these are Catholic religious orders or lay Trust Bodies established by such.

VEC Sector: Vocational Education Committees – largely county-based, emerging from the technical schools of the 1930's – 1960's and now comprising 40% of the post-primary sector. VEC schools are fully state-funded, non-denominational and are legally owned by these Committees. They also provide a wide range of adult and further education courses.

In late 2013, VECs were re-configured and re-branded as Education and Training Boards (ETBs). I have retained the VEC nomenclature throughout to remain consistent with the pre-2013 usage of the respondents.

Community & Comprehensive School Sector: Similar to VECs in that they are fully state funded, but schools in the Community and Comprehensive sector have stand-alone status and may also have religious representation on the Board of Management.

The Department of Education and Skills: DES does not own any schools but is both paymaster and policymaker.

SEN: Special Educational Needs

WSE: Whole School Evaluation

Post of Responsibility: Promotion grade for teachers.

Joint Managerial Body (JMB): The representative, advisory and support body for voluntary secondary school management (principals and Boards of Management) in the Republic of Ireland. The organisation comprises the Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools (AMCSS) and the Irish Schoolheads Association (ISA) representing the Protestant schools.

DEIS: A Department programme of initiatives and supports designed to mitigate the impact of social disadvantage at school level.
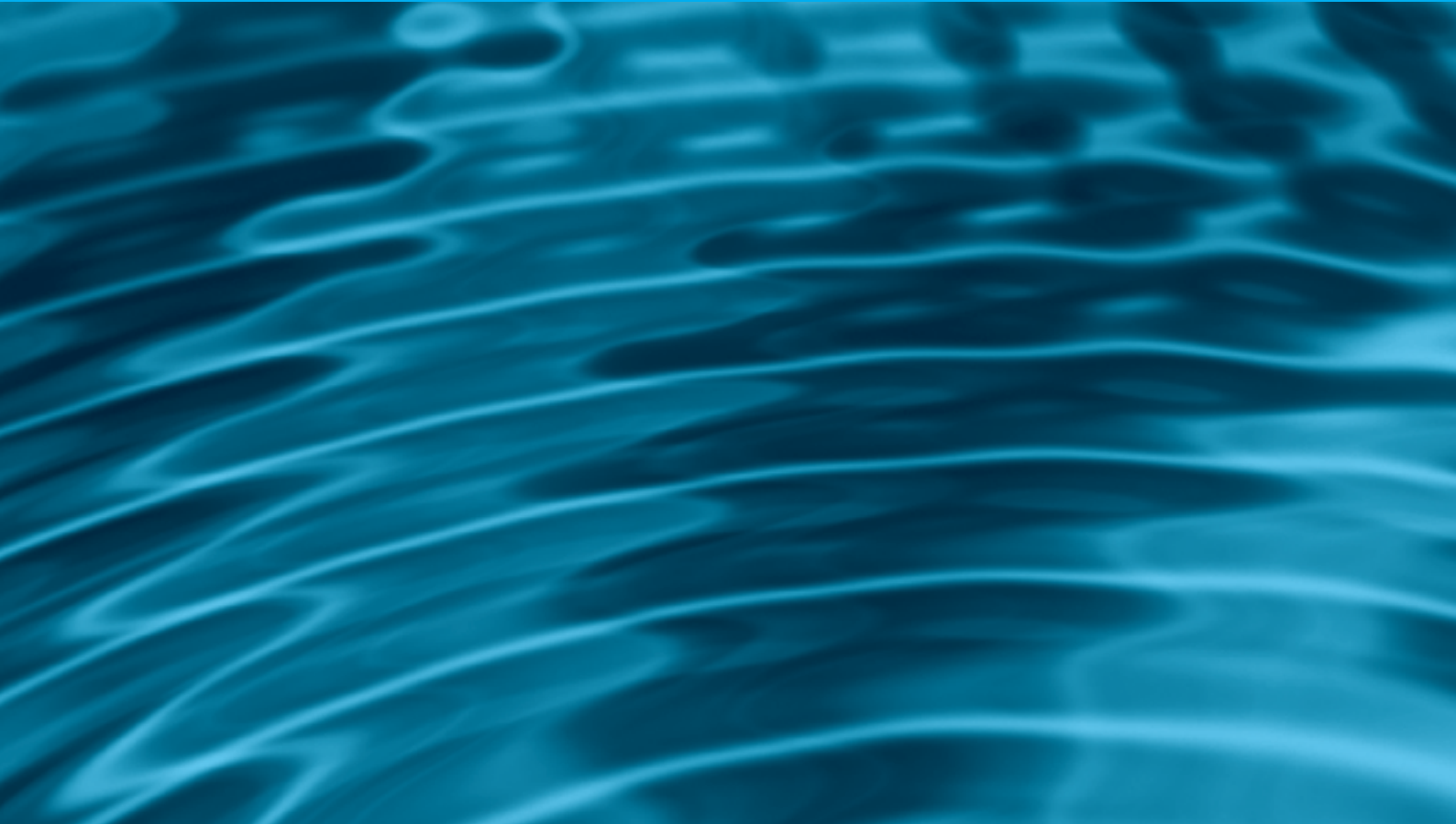
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Appendix:
Questionnaire Design Matrix

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Questionnaire Design Matrix

Line of Enquiry	Specific Topics	Question Number	Survey Question Wording
Levels of awareness and understanding among principals	The emotional practice	Section 6 Qs 1 - 4	1. I mean there's a parent one minute, a staff member the next, then there's a kid the next - there's just such variety and there's so many emotions you're dealing with every day
			2. It's very demanding of principals - you're drawn into life stories which are intimately personal, very traumatic.. and positive listening is absolutely vital
			3. Well, you can only do so much and you try to step in while you can but I think it's the adults who take up most of my time
			4. Principal: I think your emotional response determines everything Interviewer: Everything? Principal: Everything
	The personal challenge	Section 7 Qs 1 - 4	1. I used to wake up at night-time and I'd spend two hours thinking about this, that and the other. I'm thinking about school…
			2. It's just constant…the large burden of administration from the Department, from the Board of Management and now the Trustees - it can actually subsume you and become all-consuming on every level Landscape of Secondary School Principalship
			3. You've to call upon a deep well from within and try to appear to have this public persona that's dealing with everything – that's perhaps one of the greatest demands emotionally
			4. When I became a principal, my family were at crucial stages and they have suffered because of it
	Supports and survival	Section 8 Qs 1 – 4	1. I'm learning to prioritise mentally so that my emotions survive the demands of the job
			2. Now I don't talk at home about school anymore, I tend just to talk to principals on the phone or whatever. I think even another principal is more valuable sometimes than your spouse because they understand what you're talking about
			3. The relationship with my deputy is vital because you've two people then looking out for the school and each other
			4. I need to have a regime – a physical regime in my day and I started that, I started to walk and that really helped me because I slept better

Line of Enquiry	Specific Topics	Question Number	Survey Question Wording
Reflection on critical incidents	Maintaining objectivity	Section 10 Qs 1 - 4	1. ..so I heard it second-hand, which was the first mistake I made, and reacted emotionally rather than asking the people who reported it for written reports
	Getting 'worked-up'		2. I suppose what did annoy me is that I got too worked-up over it and from my own experience I shouldn't
	Reflection on outcomes		3. The outcome of my reflection on that incident was very sobering for me emotionally and, I suppose, again made me look at all my mechanisms, procedures and responses
			4. On a bad day I have written it down, when I've had a really bad day I would write it down, because it helps me to reflect on it and see how could I do better? … what was it here that made me feel so terrible? ... and how I can look at it in a different perspective?
Perceived linkage between emotional competencies and organisational development	Using EI-type strategies	Section 9 Qs 1 - 4	1. I have to use my emotional intelligence because if I don't use it, I'll get nowhere with school improvement
	Purposeful 'caring'		2. You've to be extremely positive towards the most minor thing that is being told to you, in the corridor, in the staffroom, in your office, and you have to give it your whole attention for that one person.. because they will come on board with whatever element of school improvement you want to pursue if you show respect for them
			3. It's the smaller things that count - the way I deal with the staff on a day to day basis, 'cause every decision I make has some emotive response to it. And it's only because I facilitated a fundraiser for the gym or a debate and freed them-up - it's not actually about school improvement; that will follow
	Managing dissent		4. You can isolate the negative people, you know, where they realise that no matter what they say to you, it doesn't really affect you
	Impact of the Recession	Section 11 Qs 1 - 4	1. I just feel there's a lot more tension in school over the last couple of years and it's growing.. it's just constant..
			2. I think it's incumbent upon me now to try and generate a level of buoyancy and good morale in a way I've never had to before, so I can't appear in any way to be brought down by the current climate
			3. For me, the lack of devolved responsibility in voluntary secondary schools is probably the biggest difficulty
			4. ..and if a teachers spouse or partner has lost their job, I have to be aware of these things and how I can help, if I can give extra after school study or other additional work I do that.

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Line of Enquiry	Specific Topics	Question Number	Survey Question Wording
'Managing' emotionality within self and others	Empathic understanding and trust	Section 12 Qs 1 - 4	1. I think empathy is an inherent part of my school relationships - it's an emotional trust that builds-up between individuals and the principal. I think that that is really an essential dimension
	Managing emotions		2. Don't know if I would normally use the verb 'managing' with emotions – I do try 'containing' emotions, trying to 'segregate' emotions, trying to have a cut off point
			3. If someone had a problem with me about something I'd invite them into the office and we'd discuss it out and I'd feel worse after it usually!
	Centrality of relationships		4. I think relationships are at the heart of what we're doing in life
Enhancing emotional self-awareness	Self-identification with a leadership style	Section 4 Q 1	1. Every principal utilises a range of styles and strategies. If, however, you were forced to choose, which category best reflects your overall leadership style? [category descriptors provided] 1. Coercive 2. Authoritative 3. Affiliative 4. Democratic 5. Pacesetting 6. Coaching
	Ranking emotional competencies	Section 14	Please indicate how important you believe the following emotional competencies are to the practice of principalship: • Emotional self awareness • Internal emotional management • Control of emotional displays • Emotional authenticity • Capacity for reflection • Empathy • Social awareness • Relationship management • Conflict resolution abilities • Resilience • Value-driven
Training, recruitment and retention challenges	Selection Ongoing development Empathy: nature v nurture	Section 13 Qs 1 - 4	1. I would feel that part of the interview for principal should be probing their emotional intelligence
			2. Principals need support with the emotional side of their work from the very beginning
			3. I think training days can highlight the need for emotional competencies but that's all. You can't teach a principal to be empathetic, self aware, trusting..
			4. Interviewer: Can you teach people competencies such as empathy and self-awareness? Principal: Yes, absolutely

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Notes

€20.00