I FEEL LIKE A PRINCIPAL NOW

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS REFLECT ON THEIR EXPERIENCES AND SUPPORT DURING THEIR SOCIALISATION INTO THE PRINCIPALSHIP

Submitted by

Meryl Davidson
M. Spec. Ed.; Cert. Grad. (Ed. Mgt);
Grad. Cert. (International Studies)
B. Ed., Dip. T. (Pr)

36 unit dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirement for the degree
Doctorate of Education

School of Education

Flinders University of South Australia

October 2016

DECLARATION

I declare that all the work in this research study is the result of my own research, that it does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and it does not contain any materials previously submitted, written or produced by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Meryl Davidson

Date   11 October 2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the following wonderful people:

- Associate Professor Carolyn Palmer for her outstanding wisdom, immense patience and continual encouragement for without this support I may not have completed this research degree.

- My fantastic family – especially Jim, Stuart, Ainslee and Phil – for the love, support and patience they provided and for believing in me throughout this long journey.

- All my clever, creative and considerate friends, particularly Jill and Trudie who acted as critical friends, and to the lecturers at the School of Education at Flinders University for their encouragement and ongoing support along this journey.

- Lorna Lucas for her brilliant skills and personal support in assisting me by formatting this dissertation so professionally.

- The amazingly resilient participants who generously agreed to be interviewed and who shared their experiences and their deep felt emotions concerning the early years in their principal careers. By sharing their experiences and their stories we hope to be able to help others in their socialisation journey into the principalship.

   It has been a privilege to be part of this research with them.

Dedication

To my mother, Lorna Allister, formerly Burridge-Sibbons, whose unwavering belief in the importance of a good education for her girls, has been inspirational in my own educational journey.

ABSTRACT

Over the past twenty years, increased complexities and pressures on the school principal role, due to worldwide reforms in educational policies and practices, advances in technology, and an increase in the diversity of the student population, have made it much more difficult for novice principals to transition from their teacher role to the principalship. Recent research has indicated that many first time principals initially struggle with the heavy workload, the role responsibilities and early challenging experiences which, for some, may result in burn out, low self-confidence and even the early departure from the principal position.

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of the early experiences and support that twelve South Australian novice primary school principals, in their second to fourth years, from across the main educational sectors in both urban and rural locations, encountered during their socialisation into the principal role and how these influenced the development of their principal identities. This qualitative research is intended to provide advice to aspiring principals and to inform educational sectors and principal training facilities about the possible leadership preparation, induction and support needs of first time principals particularly during their transition from their teaching role to the principalship.

Valuable data gathered from the participants' individual and focus group interviews found that, regardless of their background and previous leadership experience, the twelve novice principals were initially overwhelmed by the amount, diversity and unpredictability of their daily responsibilities, stressed by community and administrative expectations so early in their career, and uncertain about managing the legacy of previous principals' policies and practices. Many found their second year in the role was busier and more challenging than their first year. While some experienced stressful encounters with aggressive parents others, who had difficult or non-performing staff, suffered anxiety in implementing their sector's time consuming processes for managing underperforming staff. Rural school principals working in a small community environment and dealing with additional leadership responsibilities for their local or parish communities, as well as their school, found the lack of relevant preparation very confronting.

This study showed that after two to three years in the position most of the novice principals were able to overcome their early challenging experiences through gaining knowledge of their organisation and learning strategies to manage the unpredictable nature of the role, and felt they had become successful school

principals. These results are significant as they demonstrate that encountering challenging and traumatic experiences early in their career does not necessarily lead to first time principals leaving the profession. The implications of these results for novice principals in SA indicate that, by viewing these challenging experiences as 'a rite of passage' and a valuable part of learning their new role, future novice principals may be assured of surviving their socialisation journey and, with the vital support of their colleagues and principal mentors, develop into school leaders with strong principal identities.

Future research into the 'rites' or experiences that novice principals encounter during their socialisation into their principal role is recommended for educational authorities and those involved in the planning of future initiatives in leadership preparation, induction and support programs for their aspiring and new principals.

Key words: Novice primary school principals, principal identity, transition, socialisation, early career experiences, support, principal mentors, rite of passage

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"Being and becoming a school principal, or head teacher, is not what it once was"
(MacBeath, 2009, p. 407)

The tenet of this research study is that novice primary school principals, both nationally and internationally, are finding the transition from teacher to principal more difficult and many struggle with the heavy work load, increased responsibilities and challenging experiences particularly in their first few years (Spillane & Lee, 2014; Wildy, Clarke, Styles & Beycioglu, 2010). Some of these first time principals are severely affected by their early experiences and either burn out and resign or change careers (Stephenson & Bauer, 2010), while others thrive on the challenges and go on to become successful and innovative school leaders with strong principal identities (Crow, 2007; Stevenson, 2006). This South Australian study addresses the issue of the effects of the early experiences of novice school principals by researching the following question: *What are the perceptions of South Australian novice primary school principals as they reflect on the influence that their early experiences and support had on the development of their principal identity during their socialisation into the principalship*?

1.1   Statement of the problem

Over the past twenty years, significant policy changes in education, influenced by the UK and the US and driven by an ideology of economic rationalism, have increased the complexity of the role and pressure on the school principal. The added responsibilities and workload have made it much more difficult for novice principals to transition into the principalship (Crow, 2006; MacBeath, 2009). During this time leadership preparation courses and early induction programs have been developed internationally to assist in preparing aspiring and novice principals for their new role (Cowie & Crawford, 2009). However, in Australia there are still few "consistent and cohesive approaches to principal preparation" according to a recent study by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2015). In addition, few of these ad hoc leadership preparation programs are mandatory and novice principals still continue to struggle, thus making the 'top job' in schools unattractive and aspiring principals reluctant to apply (Watson, 2009; Wildy & Clarke, 2008). There has been much published research in the area of leadership preparation programs worldwide (Dinham, Anderson, Caldwell & Weldon, 2011; Bush, 2009) but there is much less investigation into the early experiences of the newly appointed principal during the socialisation process (Bush, 2016; Brody, Vissa

& Weathers, 2010) and how these experiences might influence their development into confident school leaders with strong principal identities.

1.2   Purpose of the study

This study aimed to address some of the issues concerning the initial challenges faced by novice principals during transition by identifying the early experiences and support programs received by first time South Australian primary school principals during their socialisation into the principalship. The study explored the perceptions of novice principals in their second, third and fourth year in the role as they reflected on the experiences and the support offered during their early career and how these may have influenced the development of their new principal identities. In addition, the study gathered participants' advice for aspiring and other novice principals and identified their perceptions of the importance of the support provided. The outcomes of this research are intended to provide information concerning leadership development and transition experiences for aspiring and novice principals and may provide information to educational sectors and systems, and principal training facilities about the possible needs of first time principals that leadership programs need to address.

1.3   Background context of study

In the 1980s and 90s, researchers including Southworth (2008) and Baker (1993) described the role of the principal as "busy, diverse, unpredictable and involving the wearing of many hats". Baker (1993, p. 2), in her study of novice primary school principals in Victoria, found that the main concerns for them in their first year were: "adjusting to the context, curriculum development, managing time and the organisational paper work".

Over the last twenty years, leadership and management responsibilities and work loads of school principals have increased significantly due to the reforms in educational policies and practices (influenced by the new right ideology with its focus on managerial and accountability measures) as well as advances in technology, and an increase in the diversity of the student population (Bush, 2009; Brundrett & Anderson, 2008). For schools, one major policy reform included the devolution of managerial responsibilities to the local level or Local School Management (LSM) as it was known. Issues such as resource allocation, once managed by the bureaucracy, now fell on the shoulders of the principal, along with an increased focus on strategic planning, quality assurance, accountability measures and entrepreneurship (Dinham et al., 2011).

MacBeath (2009) commented that becoming a school principal in today's world was no longer a relatively smooth transition from teacher to principal as these new responsibilities and accountabilities require skills other than classroom teaching. The current role of the principal now required the additional skills of financial management, human resource management, facilities management and instructional leadership among others (Bush, 2016; Watson, 2009). For the novice principal, this now means that during their transition and socialisation into the principalship, they suddenly face a rapid rise in acquiring new technical skills for the position as well as trying to gain role clarification and come to terms with their new status and their new principal identity (Bush, 2016; Crawford & Cowie, 2012; Crow, 2007). In addition, they need to deal with today's school communities which have an expectation that the principal holds all the knowledge and expertise to lead and manage the school regardless of whether they have barely begun in the position or not (Walker & Qian, 2006). As Lashway (2003, p. 1) noted, school communities also show an intolerance to beginners' mistakes thus putting much additional pressure on the new principal who has to 'hit the ground running'.

Novice principals often begin their principalship in rural and/or small schools which usually includes both teaching loads and leadership roles (Drummond & Halsey, 2013; Duncan & Stock, 2010). Additionally, they frequently have few staff and no one in a leadership position with whom to share any issues or concerns. This context has created additional pressures and tensions for the novice principal who can often feel professionally and physically isolated from peers and sector support and "face challenges of conservatism and sometimes poverty and disadvantage" (Wildy et al., 2010, p. 310). It is not surprising then that some novice principals 'flounder' and struggle to cope with the competing demands of the job (Bush, 2009). It is the survival of these early years in the position that is often the decider as to whether novice principals develop strong principal identities (self-efficacy and self-image) and go on to become successful and innovative school leaders or whether they leave the position altogether (Stephenson & Bauer, 2010; Crow, 2006). Their survival through the early years, therefore, is certainly a matter of concern for educational authorities as research shows that **"school leadership plays an important role in a variety of school, teacher and student outcomes"** (Drummond & Halsey, 2013, p. 19).

1.4   Major research question

The major research question this study seeks to answer is:

What are the perceptions of South Australian novice primary school principals as they reflect on the influence that their early experiences and support had on the development of their principal identity during their socialisation into the principalship?

Supporting Research Questions

1.   What early experiences did novice primary school principals in South Australia (SA) encounter during their socialisation into the principal role?

2.   What form of induction and support did novice primary school principals in SA perceive assisted them to cope with the dilemmas and tensions of the role?

3.   What experiences and emotions assisted novice primary school principals in SA to recognise when they felt comfortable and confident with their identity as a principal?

4.   What advice from their recent experiences did novice primary school principals perceive could be beneficial for newly appointed and aspiring principals during their socialisation into the principal role?

N.B.   Interview and focus group questions expand on these research questions and can be found in Appendices 1 & 2.

1.5 Significance

This study addresses the gap in the literature regarding research into leadership preparation and induction particularly for new principals in South Australian schools. This investigation into the perceived influence that the early experiences and additional support received by novice primary school principals during their socialisation into the principal role adds insights into the development of their identities as principals. While not every situation, school context and previous experience is the same, there is enough evidence (Earley, 2009; Kelly & Saunders, 2010) to indicate that research into the early experiences of novice principals, once they are in the job, will nevertheless assist those who are developing future leadership preparation and induction programs for aspiring and new school leaders (Crow, 2007; Crawford & Cowie, 2012). In addition, the stories gathered from newly appointed principals, particularly in SA, enrich the literature on the transition from teacher to principal and have the potential for formulating new principal preparation programs for aspiring and novice primary school principals (Close & Raynor, 2010).

1.6 Dissertation organisation

To deliver the outcomes of this research into the effects of the early experiences and support encountered by South Australian novice primary principals during transition, this dissertation is organised into six chapters. The present chapter introduces the aims, purpose, background context and research questions as well as the significance of this study.

Chapter 2 discusses the literature concerning the beliefs and approaches that influence current practice in preparing and supporting the novice principal during their transition and socialisation into the principalship. It examines the concepts concerning developing a principal identity, briefly presents some of the previous research into the socialisation experiences of novice principals in Australia and internationally, and identifies the gap in the research for school leadership in the South Australian context. The chapter also includes this study's conceptual framework which used the stages and phases of the socialisation hierarchy (Parkay, Currie & Rhodes, 1992, p. 54) to guide the development of the research methodology and research questions that will produce answers for this study's major question.

Chapter 3 identifies the methodology and research design for this study including the theoretical framework based on a social constructivist paradigm with an interpretivist approach. The qualitative approach of using multiple case studies and focus groups is explained as the most appropriate method of collecting data for this research. This chapter includes information concerning the eligibility criteria and recruitment of participants from South Australian schools across the four educational sectors, the data collection and analysis procedures including a detailed outline of the coding process used to identify themes that address the research questions. The final section of this chapter includes strategies to ensure trustworthiness of the research design, ethics considerations and the limitations and delimitations of this study.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of both the individual case studies and the two focus groups by using the four research questions as a framework to firstly, present relevant background data concerning the 12 participating principals in the study and secondly, to trace their socialisation journey across the first four stages in the socialisation hierarchy (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). It outlines the participants' views on principal support and induction programs and the emotions and experiences they go through in developing their principal identity. It contains

quotations from participants and advice to aspiring principals as they reflected on their own early career experiences. The chapter concludes by summing up the seven overarching themes that emerge from the data.

Chapter 5 discusses the seven overarching themes identified from the findings from the previous chapter in relation to the current literature concerning the early years' experiences of novice school principals. It is followed by a discussion of the development of participants' principal identities from the perspective of the stages and phases of the socialisation hierarchy and a summary of the most noteworthy findings identified from this discussion.

Chapter 6 draws conclusions from the major issues gathered from the previous five chapters and utilises the main research questions as a framework to synthesize the key findings for this study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications that emerge from the findings and suggestions for future research that will add to the literature concerning the socialisation of newly appointed principals.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

"Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors
that contribute to what students learn at school"
(Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 3)

Introduction

In researching the literature both nationally and internationally concerning the early years of a school leader, one is immediately struck by the tone of the research article headings over the past decade. Such phrases as: "*Being in the 'hot seat'; Beginning principals: Balancing at the top of a greasy pole; Principals on L plates; Surviving the first year; and How hard can it be?"* herald the universal belief that the first few years as a novice school principal are generally very difficult. It is therefore not surprising that the focus of educational research into the principal's role over the past two decades has addressed practices that will best assist novice principals to survive their early years in today's complex schools.

This chapter critically reviews the literature concerning the two major research strategies that are currently used by educational authorities and governments to prepare and support aspiring and novice school principals during their transition into the principal position. A focus on the advantage of mandatory leadership preparation programs that develop the aspiring principal before appointment as opposed to supporting the novice principal after appointment and acknowledging the importance of his/her socialisation into the role guides the first section of this literature research. A brief discussion of the literature concerning the development of a principal's new identity is then presented along with two brief summaries of current research into the early experiences of first time principals and some of the support approaches provided to novice principals both nationally and internationally. The gap in the literature concerning school leadership in Australia is identified. The conceptual framework, based on the early stages and phases of the socialisation hierarchy (Anderson, Clarke & Vidovich, 2009; Kelly & Saunders, 2010) is presented to inform the development of relevant research questions and the research design for this study.

2.1   Strategies that influence educational debate concerning transition to the principalship

The literature identifies two strategies that influence educational debate on successful transition processes for school leadership succession (Macpherson, 2009; Crow, 2006). The first strategy focuses on the development of the individual leader and on providing pre-appointment programs to develop their leadership skills

and knowledge in readiness for his/her transition into the principalship. The second strategy supports the belief that principals mainly learn their role while in the job and recognises the importance of the school context and the socialisation process that all principals must go through to learn their role (Hart, 1991, p. 452). This strategy looks at induction methods and ongoing support programs to assist the novice during his/her transition and socialisation into the principalship.

Over the past few decades, once the importance of the principal role in school improvement became evident, research into the planning of leadership preparation programs rose to prominence in many countries and "the design, development and delivery of these principal programs" became the main focus of educational debate on transition into the principal role (Cowie & Crawford, 2008, p. 676). However, more recently the focus of educational research into transition to school leadership has shifted to studying what happens during the principal's socialisation into his/her new role, as according to Crow (2006, p. 311) "the preparation of principals, particularly in universities, is inadequate for the new policy and societal contexts". This study pays particular attention to how the socialisation of new principals during their transition into their role informs both the development of relevant leadership preparation programs as well as appropriate and useful ongoing induction and support once in the role (Bush, 2016; MacBeath, 2009; Crow, 2006).

2.1.1 The influence of leadership preparation programs for transition into the principalship

Many countries including the UK and the US particularly focused on establishing accredited leadership development programs for their aspiring school leaders (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006; Bush, 2009). Over a decade ago, both Scotland and England, for example, made attendance at leadership preparation programs mandatory for all new appointees. These programs involved centralised pre-appointment training and assessment certification processes designed by national authorities such as the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) and the English National Qualification for Headship (NPQH) (Cowie & Crawford, 2008; Bush, 2009). Similarly, many states in the US have compulsory leadership preparation courses that must be completed before the candidate can apply for a principal position (Pounder, 2011).

In Australia, according to Ingvarson and Anderson (2007, p.11), there were few "systematic programs for preparing school leaders across most states and territories" which they described as situations of short unrelated topics for school leaders to 'catch on the run'. More recently, researchers Dinham, Collarbone, Evans

and Mackay (2013, p.469) reported that while there were a few consistent leadership preparation programs, most education systems and professional associations had "developed varied leadership standards and frameworks". In 2015, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) published their research concerning the preparation of future school leaders and noted that almost half the surveyed principals reported below-standard leadership training. AITSL made five recommendations based on "a consistent and coherent approach" to guide the development and support of aspiring and new school leaders in Australia (AITSL, 2015, p. 21).

Crawford and Cowie (2012), however, argued that while there is a consensus that preparation programs are important, there is much disagreement as to their effectiveness in helping the novice principal cope with the realities of leading and managing schools particularly during their transition into the role. The Levine Report (2005) in the US for example, identified the mismatch between new policies and societal contexts and those preparation programs developed by universities which were "little more than a grab bag of survey courses" (Levine, 2005, p. 28).

2.1.2 The influence of socialisation theory on preparation and support for principal transition

The second major strategy that has guided leadership development research into appropriate preparation and support for transitioning novice principals is influenced by the socialisation theory and the recognition that learning the principal role occurs within the school context and after the newcomer is in their new role (Bush, 2016; Crow, 2006; Hart, 1991).

The socialisation theory was initiated by Merton in 1963, to describe how people new to organisations learn their role, and how they come to identify and feel comfortable in the position. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) introduced the term organisational socialisation which focused on the importance of learning about the content and skills required to do the job within the particular context of the organisation, in this research, the school. They identified six tactical dimensions that are used as structures within the organisation to socialise the new person into their new role. These structures can be both intentional (specific meetings, prescribed activities such as the annual school concert) and non-intentional (the school's history, predecessors and other cultural characteristics around location). The authors explained how organisations use these structures as tactics to manage the socialisation of the newcomer into their role with the intention of maintaining the status quo. The succession of the novice principal and the socialisation process

according to Bengtson, Zepeda and Oksana (2013, p.144) "are two sides of the same process … one side focusing on the group's influence on the newcomer, the other interested in the newcomer's influence on the group".

In her synthesis on leader succession and socialisation, Hart (1991, p. 452) pointed out that "the traditional succession research into preparation programs remains focused on the individual leader – his or her actions, beliefs, and possible effects on organizational performance", whereas leader succession involves more than the individual leader as this ignores the impact of the people (school community) and the context on the new leader's transition to the role.

Normore (2003, p. 3) agreed with Hart's comments that organisations in the past have focused on "high leadership potential individuals" and commented that as the role of school leaders had changed there was a need to focus on the ability of the leader to fit within the context of the school. He emphasised that "a major component of any succession process involves socialization whereby attention is drawn to the leader and the context simultaneously" and argued that both professional and organisational socialisation processes were an important part of succession preparation.

Bengtson et al. (2013, p. 159) argued the importance of understanding the effects of organisational socialisation during principal succession to the role and stated that "more focus on the implementation of organizational socialisation tactics would assist in supporting the newcomer to stay longer in the role". Cottrell and James (2015, p. 3) built on this view of needing a greater emphasis on the organisational socialisation process during novice principals' transition and focused their research into the concept of role "as central to considerations of headteacher socialization". Mullins (2005, in Cottrell & James, 2015, p.4) defined the term role as "the expected pattern of behaviours associated with members occupying a particular position within the structure of the organization". Cottrell and James (2015, p. 4) identified the legitimate practices of a principal as a "role-as-practice" (acceptable expectations for those in the principal role) as opposed to those that are non-legitimate practices (not expected to be within principal role). In their research, the authors discovered that their principals had more difficulty in coming to terms with what they believed were unreasonable expectations and they used the term "role boundary" to identify the demarcation between what was a legitimate responsibility or practice and what was not, as seen by the principals in their study.

Most recently, Bush (2016, p.3) strongly advocated the importance of looking at both the professional (acquiring leadership skills and knowledge deliberately or inadvertently) and organisational (induction) socialisation processes of new principals. His reasoning is that most principals begin their careers as teachers, for which they were trained, and then they move gradually into more non-teaching roles, for which many have not been trained, through a process of socialisation where they learn their new role in an unfamiliar context 'on the job'.

2.2   The socialisation phases

Crow (2006), in his paper on the perspectives of the socialisation process on new principals, put forward the argument that the traditional focus on professional and organisational socialisation was no longer enough to assist researchers to really understand the change in the principal role in the 21st century. He added two additional phases or concepts to the socialisation framework: anticipatory socialisation and personal socialisation. Brody et al. (2010, p. 615) also supported the identification of these four phases which indicate the "approximate phases of identity development".

Anticipatory socialisation phase, also identified by Merton (1963) and Browne-Ferrigne (2003), occurs in the early stages of a professional's career before appointment to the principalship i.e. a teacher who aspires to become a principal. Greenfield (1985) categorised this early phase as an informal process of role learning about the values and orientations of the principal profession. Opportunities to take some leadership responsibilities through distributed leadership positions, including coordinator and assistant principal, is part of this phase in the socialisation process (Crow, 2007).

Organisational socialisation phase as stated by Van Maanen and Schein (1979) is the time when the novice principal learns the knowledge, values and norms associated with the school to get the job done. Weindling and Dimmock (2006, p. 334) also discussed the organisational socialisation phase as dominating the immediate post-appointment processes when the important interactions with the staff, parents, students and the district authorities occur and "validate the new leader to take charge and begin to create change in the school".

Professional socialisation phase according to Greenfield (1985, p. 7) is when the novice learns "the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to participate as a member of a profession". This author goes on to describe the phase as beginning "in the pre-appointment phase of a school leader's education career and continues

into early post-appointment growth and on-going development". Parkay et al. (1992, p. 45) supports this definition by stating that "professional socialisation refers to the processes through which one becomes a member of a profession and, over time, develops an identity with that profession".

Personal socialisation phase according to Crow (2007, p. 318), is rarely discussed separately in the literature on the socialisation process and involves the change in self-identity that occurs when a person takes on a new role. Brody el al. (2010, p. 615) also discussed the importance of this phase, which often begins before appointment, when the aspiring school leader widens his or her personal image to include a whole school perspective, and stated that it involved the changing of the novice principal's self-image from being a teacher to being a school administrator.

2.3   Stages of the socialisation hierarchy

Following a three-year study into the professional socialisation experiences and concerns of 12 first time high school principals, Parkay et al. (1992) identified five stages of professional socialisation that these principals progressed through during their early years. They classified these stages in the socialisation hierarchy as: "Survival, Control, Stability, Educational Leadership and Professional Actualization" (Parkay et al. 1992, p. 54). These researchers also noted that the time taken from initial appointment to actualisation varied for each new principal and depended on their initial stage of professional development, individual characteristics and situational variables (Parkay et al., 1992, p. 60). Weindling (1999, cited in Weindling & Dimmock (2006, p.335) developed "a model of the suggested stages of transition through headship" using data from a longitudinal research study into the transition of new head teachers in the UK and also the work of other researchers. This model included the preparation or pre-appointment stage as an important and influential part of learning the role of the headteacher. Weindling and Dimmock (2006, p. 339) commented that they used the stages of the socialisation hierarchy model to provide "insights into the processes by which headteachers established their new professional identities based on their socialisation experiences in the role".

Other authors also built on the concept of the early stages of the socialisation hierarchy in their research. Anderson et al. (2009), for example, used this theory in their research to explain the transitional stages and associated themes for new deputy principals in Western Australia (WA) while Kelly and Saunders (2010) identified three stages in the transition of their study's novice principals to identify increased capabilities in the role. For this study, the stages of the socialisation

hierarchy were developed from the work of both these authors to guide the organisation of the data collection and the method of data analysis, which also only focuses on the early years of the novice principal. Table 2.1 identifies the early stages and phases of the socialisation hierarchy during transition to the principalship.

Table 2.1: Early stages and phases of socialisation hierarchy during transition to the principalship (adapted from Anderson et al., 2009 and Kelly & Saunders, 2010)

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Pre-appointment	*Entry and induction* *0–3 months*	*Taking hold* *Immersion into the school* *4–8 months*	*Taking control* *Moving on* *9 months – 3 years*
Preparation programs Support and professional encouragement Leadership opportunities	Steep learning curve about school and organisation Includes developing relationships	Continuing with school relationships and implementing small changes	Consolidating and moving on Changing school culture
(Anticipatory, professional and personal socialisation)	**(Organisational socialisation)**	**(Organisational and professional socialisation)** **Building professional identity**	**(Personal socialisation)** **Principal and personal Identity**

2.4   Developing the new principal identity

Stevenson (2006, p. 415) stated that "the socialization process helps to explain how identities are formed and reformed over time" and defined the term identity as "how we perceive ourselves – our self-image – in relation to specific contexts and roles in life and work". Weindling and Dimmock (2006) commented that the moulding of a new principal identity from that of the teacher identity meant gaining a new sense of status and self-image, and of establishing values and identifying what one stood for.

Kelly and Saunders (2010) discussed the search for personal authenticity and the importance of personal values as part of their research into participants' growth in self-awareness and identity while Stevenson (2006, p. 414) defined "personal identity as how we see our private informal self". Quong (2006) identified the development of a novice principal's intuition, often referred to as a personal 'gut reaction', when instinctively the novice principal makes a decision without needing to spend valuable time in accessing data or in thinking about the issues. Close and Raynor (2010, p. 219), from their study, noted that the novice principals talked about using their nous, common sense or being perceptive and described it as "keeping

their ear to the ground, having their finger on the pulse, knowing who the key people were and knowing the dynamics" of relating to the school and the wider community.

Working out the dimensions of the role, according to Cottrell and James (2015), is central to the socialisation of the novice principal into the profession and to the development of their principal identity. Cuban (2011, p. 1) presented the concept that the principal role consisted of three major overlapping responsibilities which he identified as instructional, managerial and political roles. He stated that these different responsibilities caused "a dilemma of identity: am I a manager, a politician, or an instructional leader?" The novice principal, according to this author, had to learn to manage "these conflicting and overlapping roles on a daily basis" Cuban (2011, p. 1).

Van Gennep (1960, p. vii) offered the perspective of a 'rite of passage' that an individual would go through from their previous identity to their new identity in their new situation. This rite of passage phenomenon is relevant to the journey of novice principals from their teacher identity to their principal identity. He described this passage as having three phases: the first phase, separation (from the teacher role); the middle phase, transition, of being "in between identities" which he explains is an unsettling and isolating time where the newcomer has to learn the way things are done (in that school and profession); and then the final phase, aggregation, where the novice principal feels part of the professional group of principals. Van Gennep (1960, p. vii) also explained that the rituals, routines and expectations of the way to behave in the role that the new comer encounters during the transition are intended to modify the individual "so that society as a whole will suffer no discomfort or injury". According to this author, these rituals, which can also be in the form of ceremonies, could be examined further to indicate the distance travelled from initial transition to aggregation in the principal role.

In addition, Weindling and Dimmock (2006) found from their review of 20 years of research into the experiences of UK novice headteachers that there were no significant differences in the newcomer's responses to the continual challenges that they face during their socialisation into the role despite the addition of leadership preparation programs and increased levels of support in their first year. They, too, likened "the enduring nature of the processes, challenges and ways of socialization experienced by new heads – almost as rites of passage into the role" (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006, p. 338).

2.5   Experiences of novice principals

Over the past decade a number of researchers from Australia and internationally identified some of the experiences that novice principals encountered during their first few years in the role. Quong (2006) in an action research study into his own experiences in an Australian urban school, for example, identified the major issues for him and offered some advice concerning the dilemmas that novice principal face such as finding a balance between doing too little or too much and decisions about whether to become involved in issues that arise or not. Belmonte and Cranston (2007) conducted their research into Australian Catholic lay principals in rural communities and noted they experienced added responsibilities in religious leadership in the school and parish which contributed further pressure and stress.

Wildy and Clarke (2008) and more recently Drummond and Halsey (2013) focused their research into the experiences and support for principals in rural areas across outback Australia and cited lack of appropriate preparation and ongoing and accessible support as a major concern for novice principals. Lester (2003), Wildy (2004) and Gilbert, Skinner and Dempster (2008) found that there were higher expectations placed on female principals in rural schools in Queensland and WA. If female principals took an active part in the community, however, they were more likely to be accepted. Wildy, Siguroardottir and Faulkner (2014) reported that novice principals in rural locations, in both Iceland and Australia, experienced significant pressure from the school culture and community to conform and maintain the status quo.

As a result of principal wellness concerns across, Australia in particular, a joint project involving two major private health funds and the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) funded principal surveys across Australia over a five-year period. Riley (2015) published the results of these surveys and provided detailed information on the challenging experiences that principals faced and the effect on their stress management. Some of these include: high job demands, working hours, and expectations of employers (Riley, 2015, p. 21).

Internationally, researchers Cowie and Crawford (2009) reviewed leadership preparation programs in Scotland and found that participating headteachers felt these programs "provided a grounding in the identity of 'being a headteacher' and to gain access to professional networks for further support". In Earley and Bubb's (2013) study into the day in the life of new headteachers in England, it was found that there was a variety and diversity of experiences covering administration, leadership, staff issues, teaching and professional development all in one day.

Spillane and Lee (2014, p. 455), reported on the importance of novice principals realising they had "ultimate responsibility" once in the position had a significant effect on them and their initial role practice. Researchers from Mexico, Garcia-Garduno, Slater and Lopez-Gorosave (2011, p.100), conducted a literature review of research into the experiences of "beginning elementary principals" around the world and concluded that there were many similarities for both English speaking and non-English speaking novice primary school principals including "professional isolation, multitasking, difficulty managing school budgets, ineffective staff and implementing new government initiatives" (p. 101). After a number of often challenging and traumatic experiences, these authors found that most novices gained tacit knowledge which allowed them to become more confident in their job.

2.6   Support models for novice principals

A number of researchers including MacBeath (2009), Cowie and Crawford (2008), and Bengtson et al. (2013) identified a range of support programs including induction programs, online courses, mentoring both before and after appointment and networking with colleagues. They all concluded that these programs were useful and supportive for the novice principal particularly during their early years. Lochmiller (2014) added to the range of new principal support programs by reporting on his USA research into the inclusion of leadership coaching as part of an initial university based three-year induction program for novice principals. He found that leadership coaching together with induction courses successfully met the individual needs of each participant in the three-year course.

Tooms (2003) provided some general advice for the rookie principal and included the need for a moral compass which he described as a set of the new principal's values which could be used as a guide when making difficult decisions. The research by McCulla (2012, p. 84) which specifically addressed the transition of 15 accomplished NSW teachers, identified their most important support areas as employer-provided professional development courses, personal learning initiatives, and most importantly professional networking and informal mentoring relationships.

MacBeath (2009) in his reflective study into the various support strategies used by many countries to support novice principals stated that while necessary, these support strategies were still inadequate. He explained that "while making the task of leading a school less daunting to the incumbent and more appealing to the career deputy" the underpinning policies and practices of schools are left untouched (MacBeath, 2009, p. 415).

2.7 The gap in the literature

Throughout this literature search the researcher found only one study (Shields, 2008) into the early experiences and induction of first time primary school principals from one religious sector in Australia. This study did not address the experiences of South Australian novice principals during their socialisation process into the principal role and the support they found helpful as they progressed through their early years. The study by Barty, Thomson, Blackmore and Sachs (2005) that was conducted in both South Australia and Victoria, investigated the apparent lack of suitable applicants for the principal job and cited location, incumbent principals and perceived perceptions of the difficulties of role as some reasons for the reduced number of applicants. They did not look specifically at South Australian principals' early years' experiences but rather what influenced them to apply.

There is also no current research into the influence that the experiences and support encountered by South Australian novice primary school principals had on the development of their new principal identity. In addition, there are no recent studies that specifically relate stories of novice primary school principals from the field in South Australian primary schools across all educational sectors and locations. The use of "autobiographical and contextual" stories from the field of education, according to McCulla (2012, p. 80), is an important addition to the usual "large-scale issues and psychometric analyses" that form the major part of research in education today.

2.8 The conceptual framework for the study

A conceptual framework, according to Punch (2009, p. 83), is "a representation, either graphically or in a narrative form, of the main concepts or variables, and their presumed relationship with each other". It provides the plan for the study and informs the rest of the research design by helping to refine the major research questions and select appropriate methods to collect the relevant data (Maxwell, 2008). The conceptual framework for this South Australian study links the two main research strategies of either preparing leaders before their transition to the principalship or supporting their transition after appointment with induction and ongoing relevant leadership programs by using the stages and phases of the socialisation hierarchy (Parkay et al. (1992). The stages in the socialisation process are adapted from Anderson et al. (2009) and Kelly and Saunders (2010) and are intended to reflect novice principals' progress while the four phases as outlined by Crow (2006) identify the development of the novice principals' new identities. The questions for both the individual interviews and the focus groups were based on the

four stages of the socialisation hierarchy and focused mainly on the reflections of the participants as they looked back on their experiences and emotions during their early years in their new role. The data collected as a result of participants addressing these questions assisted in the answering of the major question and the four supporting questions of this study. The conceptual framework for this study is represented in Figure 2.1 on page 19.

2.9   Summary

In summary, a number of key research trends from the literature into the leadership development and support for novice principals were synthesized to frame the context of this study, establish the gap in the literature and underpin the development of the conceptual framework.

Firstly, the practice of developing and implementing leadership preparation programs for the individual leader, as opposed to the influences of the socialisation theory that acknowledges the two way socialisation of the incoming principal and the school community during the transition process, were identified in the literature as major strategies for preparing and supporting novice primary principals during their early years in the role.

Secondly, the early stages of socialisation that were identified by the literature, particularly those from the research of Anderson et al. (2009) and Kelly and Saunders (2010) were synthesized by the researcher into four stages that demonstrate both a hierarchy of socialisation progress and the developing principal identities. This process was the lens through which the collection and analysis of data occurred and it also provided an insight into the experiences and emotions of the participants and how these shaped their principal identities as they progressed through their first year in the role and beyond. Their stories provide information for aspiring principals and may also assist in the development of future leadership preparation programs and appropriate support levels for novice primary school principals particularly in SA.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology, including the research design which is guided by the conceptual framework, the criteria for the selection of participants and the procedures for data collection and data analysis. The trustworthiness strategies for qualitative research, ethical considerations and the limitations and delimitations of the study are also included.

Identifying the experiences and support that influence the development of South Australian novice primary school principals' identities during their socialisation into the principalship

Framework – Four stages of socialisation during the early years

(Anticipatory, professional, organisational and personal socialisation phases)

The experiences and support for novice primary school principals in SA during their socialisation into the principalship

Stage 1   **Stage 2**   **Stage 3**   **Stage 4**

Pre-appointment

Q1 & Q2
Sub-Q2

Anticipatory, Professional & Personal

Entry and Induction

Q2
Sub-Q3 & Q4

Organisational

Taking Hold

Q2 & Q3
Sub-Q7

Professional & Organisational

Taking Control – Moving On

Q3
Sub-Q7–Q11

Professional Organisational and Personal

Professional Socialisation and developing professional identity Sub-Q6

Personal Socialisation and developing personal identity Sub-Q10–12

**Principal identity
2nd–3rd year in role**

Q3 & Q4 – Sub-Q9–Q11

Figure 2.1: **The conceptual framework of key concepts that shape the questions for the two interview phases of the study**

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

"A culture is expressed (or constituted) only by the actions and words of its members and must be interpreted by, not given to, a fieldworker"
(Van Maanen, 1988, p. 3)

Introduction

The previous chapter analysed and synthesised the literature on current research relating to leadership development, socialisation theory and support for novice principals as they transition into the principal role. This discussion of the literature established the gap in the literature which underpinned the design of the conceptual framework and the chosen epistemology for this research. In this chapter, both the methodology and the methods selected are presented. The purpose of this chapter is to provide detailed information about the methodology, research design and the methods of data collection, and the data analysis procedures used, as well as an overview of the trustworthiness strategies of the study.

3.1   Methodology and the research design

According to Silverman (2005, p. 107), methodology defines how the researcher "will go about studying any phenomenon", and the method identifies "specific research techniques" that assist in the collection of data that best provide answers to the research questions. Punch (2009, p. 112) outlines the research design as the "basic plan for a piece of research" which includes four main ideas: the strategy, conceptual framework, the who or what that will be studied, and the tools and procedures to be collected and analysed (Punch, 2009).

The theoretical framework for this study is based on a social constructivist paradigm with an interpretivist approach. The theory of social constructivism was developed by Vygotsky (1978) who believed that language and culture provided the frameworks for how humans saw the world and that human cognitive structure was essentially socially constructed and co-constructed. This study explores the socialisation process of novice primary school principals as they transitioned into their new roles and investigates their perceptions of the knowledge and understanding about the role that they gained through socially interacting with their school community and organisational environment. An interpretivist approach which, according to Somekh et al. (2005, p. 346), "seeks to uncover meaning and to understand the deeper implications revealed about people" was used to analyse and interpret the data collected. This assisted in the interpretation of the principals' perceptions of their emotions and the influence that their early experiences and support had on the development of their new principal identities.

Justification for using a qualitative approach

For this study, the researcher initially intended to use a mixed method approach which included both a quantitative method in the form of a survey and a qualitative method using case studies with individual interviews and focus group interviews. Although the quantitative approach of using a survey would have described "trends about a large number of participants" (Creswell, 2005), a pilot study of a previously planned survey found that it did not generate the 'how' and 'why' answers to the research questions or delve deeply enough into the lived experiences of the participants during their first year in the role and beyond (Yin, 2009, p. 4).

Therefore, a qualitative multiple case studies approach, using interviews and follow-up focus groups, was chosen. A case study approach, according to Punch (2009, p. 356), "is a research strategy that focuses on the in-depth, holistic and in-context study of one or more cases". The two focus groups for this study involved inviting the same participants to come together at the most convenient location for them to add to the data by providing further anecdotes in response to the research questions. According to Barbour and Schostak (2005, p. 42), focus group interviews can add to the research data by accessing "group norms and provide insights into the formation of views which cannot be so readily achieved via individual interviews".

The use of both the multiple case studies (Phase 1) and the two focus groups (Phase 2) enabled the researcher to gather in-depth and rich data that provided a greater understanding of the lived experiences and emotions of the participants. The method identified is consistent with the social constructivist framework of the study as the qualitative approaches used involved the collection of data about the social interactions and the early experiences and emotions of the participants.
Figure 3.1 on page 22 indicates how this qualitative design was implemented.

Phase 1		Phase 2		Merge
Qualitative Data collected through individually interviewing 12 eligible participants. Broad themes and issues were identified for further discussion with the two Focus Groups.	**PLUS**	Two Focus Group Interviews were established to provide in-depth discussion and stories and to raise any further issues and themes.	**Merge**	Merge themes and issues from the two phases to make one set of data for analysis and discussion in relation to the research questions.

Figure 3.1: Plan for implementation of the qualitative design

3.2 Setting for the study

This study occurred within SA only and involved participants from schools in the four main education sectors (State – Department for Education and Child Development (DECD), Catholic – Catholic Education of SA (CESA), Lutheran Schools and the Association of Independent Schools SA (AISSA) and in both urban and country regions. These schools had a variety of student numbers, some being medium to large schools (300–500 or more) and others with small numbers of students (less than 100). In the South Australian state schools sector, a school with a student population of up to 200 students is categorised as a small school (Small Schools Association SA, 2013). In a small school the principal may be the only school leader while in larger schools there are more school leaders (deputy, assistant principals) to work with and support the principal. The context, size, educational sector and the nature of the community had some influence on the experiences and perceptions of the novice principals. (N.B.: For the purpose of this research study, the educational systems and individual sectors will be collectively identified as sectors.)

3.3 Selection and recruitment of participants

Ethics approval was gained from the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee of Flinders University, the Department for Education and Child Development and the Catholic Education of SA sectors before the research proceeded. Both the Association for Independent Schools in SA and the Lutheran sectors stated that individual school principals were able to make their own decisions about their participation and an ethics application was not required.

The selection of participants for this study occurred using a homogeneous sample which is a type of purposive sample described by Punch (2009, p. 359) as a "deliberately targeted sample drawn from the population according to the logic of the research". The purpose of this type of sample was to enable a stronger focus on the experiences and support encountered by novice primary school principals in SA during their socialisation into their new role. The targeted group of participants was from primary school principals in the second, third or fourth year (2012–2014) of their initial appointment as the researcher believed that these principals would still be able to reflect clearly on the experiences and emotions of their first year in their new role. Each educational sector in SA was contacted to ascertain the most expedient method of inviting all targeted principals to participate in this research study. The researcher had prepared an explanatory invitation (Appendix 3) that could be sent to all first time primary school principals in their sector with two to four years' experience, inviting them to take part in the study and to contact the researcher directly if interested for further information. Two sectors arranged to have a staff member from their Central Office send out the researcher's invitation via email (Appendix 4) and contact details to principals in their early careers within their sector while the researcher was able to send the invitation to all principals in the other sectors.

Over 20 principals responded to the invitation indicating that they were willing to take part in the study. The researcher used a purposeful sampling qualitative approach to identify 12 participants who met the eligibility criteria of being in their second to fourth years in their first principal appointment. Silverman (2005, p.129), explains that "purposeful sampling provides researchers with an opportunity to choose cases that will give answers to their research questions". Information and consent forms were sent to the 12 eligible principals – four were males and eight were females; five were in urban schools and seven were in rural or country schools; while five were from non-government schools and seven from government schools (see Appendices 5 & 6). This selection of participants was based on those eligible to be part of the study and was not intended to be representational of each sector or gender. (N.B.: Having a cross-section of novice principals in each of the second, third and fourth years in their first principal position enabled opportunities to study progress over time.)

The 12 participants were also informed about the second phase of the study which was a focus group Interview. The purpose of this focus group interview was firstly, to share the identified trends and issues collated by the researcher from the individual

interview data (without breaking confidentiality) and secondly, to provide an opportunity for further sharing of data through the groups' interaction (Punch, 2009).

3.4 Data collection techniques and procedures

The following information details the method of collecting participants' reflections of their early years in their new principal role through using the individual case study approach (Phase 1) and the two focus group interviews (Phase 2).

3.4.1 Phase 1

This phase involved the use of semi-structured interviews for each of the 12 case studies. The intention of using semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to ask both open and closed questions (Creswell, 2005) to gain a more in-depth understanding of the novice principals' progress through the stages of socialisation. Questions for the interviews were designed to assist participants to reflect on their early experiences and emotions in their new role and to share any anecdotes of those experiences, initial feelings, strategies used that they could share, support they found useful through mentors and others, and when they felt confident in the position. The individual interview questions were aligned with the stages of the socialisation process to enable the researcher to follow the development of each participant's principal identity as outlined by Stevenson (2006, p. 415).
See Appendix 1 for all interview questions.

Once the consent forms had been returned, the researcher negotiated suitable times and venues for the interviews. The four interviews with participants from rural schools were held in a quiet room in the School of Education at Flinders University. All five urban participants, and one from a rural school, were conducted in venues of their choosing, while two other interviews were conducted via phone linkup. The researcher used the same semi-structured interview protocols for each interview to ensure that the data collected was comparable (Yin, 2009). The interviews took between 60 and 90 minutes with an option for a follow-up if unavoidable interruptions occurred. The researcher used a digital voice recorder and took brief notes to ensure as accurate a record of the interview as possible. The individual interviews were sent to a transcriber through the use of a secure internet Dropbox set up between the researcher and the transcriber. Ten of the transcripts were then sent electronically to individual participants for editing while the other two transcripts were sent via registered post as the schools did not have suitable internet access. The interviews occurred between July and mid-August 2014.

3.4.2 Phase 2

Once the researcher had completed a broad first coding analysis of the interview data and had some information to share on the themes and issues that emerged, a time and location for the focus group interview was negotiated. It quickly became evident, however, that it would be difficult to get all 12 participants together at one time and in one location. The researcher then held two focus group meetings (after permission from the University's Ethics Committee had been granted). One was held in the University's School of Education building and the other at one of the participant's rural school in the north of SA. Several of the principals in rural locations used a range of technology to be involved in the discussion. The two focus groups were held during November 2014. See Appendix 2 for focus group interview questions.

3.5 Data analysis process

The following discussion outlines the methods used to analyse the data collected from participants for both the individual case studies (Phase 1) and the two focus groups (Phase 2). It also explains the method of cross-case analysis and of first and second cycle coding and the strategy used to identify themes and patterns that emerged from the data.

3.5.1 Phase 1: Individual interviews

The narrative data from the edited transcribed individual interviews concerning the participants' experiences, emotions and opinions were analysed based on Yin's multiple case study design (2009, p. 56) which involved a within-case analysis and a cross-case analysis. This analysis design was supported with a case-oriented approach which "considers the case as a whole entity – looking at configurations, associations, causes and effects within the case … and then is followed by a comparative analysis of a number of similar cases" (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, p. 103). The within-case analysis of the 12 cases occurred using a first cycle coding method (as explained in Miles et al., 2014, p. 72) to identify recurring broad themes, issues and stories that would help to address the research questions. According to Saldana (2013, as cited in Miles et al., 2014, p. 71), "codes are labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled in a study". They can be attached either to a small issue or to a larger amount of narrative text to assist the researcher to find similar types or families of information (Miles et al., 2014). Both descriptive coding (single words about the activity in the text) and in vivo coding (very short phrases using participants' own words, Miles et al. 2014, p.74) were used. Creswell (2005, p. 239) explained that "themes are

similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database" and are usually expressed in short phrases or single words, particularly for the first cycle coding.

A cross-case analysis was then conducted using the same first cycle coding method to identify any recurring themes and issues from each of the cases and also to enable the researcher to identify different views and experiences that would assist in addressing the research questions with more clarity and the real lived experiences and emotions of participants. A cross-case analysis is used to "enhance generalizability or transferability to other contexts" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 101). An overview of the broad themes and issues from the cross-case analysis was shared with participants for their comment and editing before being used as a starting point for discussion of questions used for the focus group interviews. Figure 3.2, identifying the coding method for 1st and 2nd cycle coding, follows.

1st Cycle Coding		→	2nd Cycle Coding	
Individual Case →	Cross- Case →	Focus Group →	Merged Cross-Case Focus Group →	2nd Cycle Pattern Coding
Analysis	12 Analyses	2 Analyses	Analysis	Summarising data into themes, major themes and overarching themes
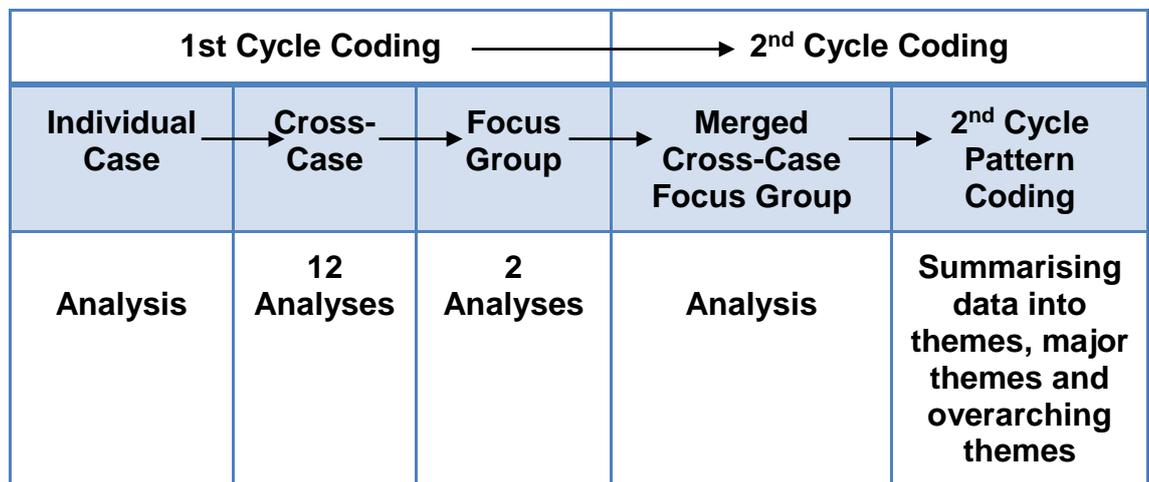
Figure 3.2: Coding method for 1st cycle and 2nd cycle coding and themes

Phase 2: Focus Groups

A similar first cycle coding method was used to assist in analysing the data collected from the two focus group interviews. Both sets of coding were merged and were then added to the themes and issues of the cross-case analysis (Figure 3.2 above). Care was taken not to replicate the same information given in the interviews and then again in the focus group interviews. Once the data from both phases of the study were merged, and the first cycle coded broad themes and issues identified, the researcher then used the second coding or patterning method of "pulling together or grouping the first cycle coding in a smaller number of categories, themes or constructs … a meta code" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 86). These patterns or themes were categorised by identifying the main experiences from the first codes and summarising these into more generalised groupings. By following the pattern back

to the first codes, it was possible to quickly identify and retrieve the anecdotes. This provided an opportunity to return to the original transcripts to ensure that the findings were comparable and not simply forced into a superficial theme (Miles et al., 2014).

Figure 3.3 demonstrates the data analysis process involving the individual case studies, the cross-case analysis, the focus group analysis, the coding methods used and the merging of the identified themes.
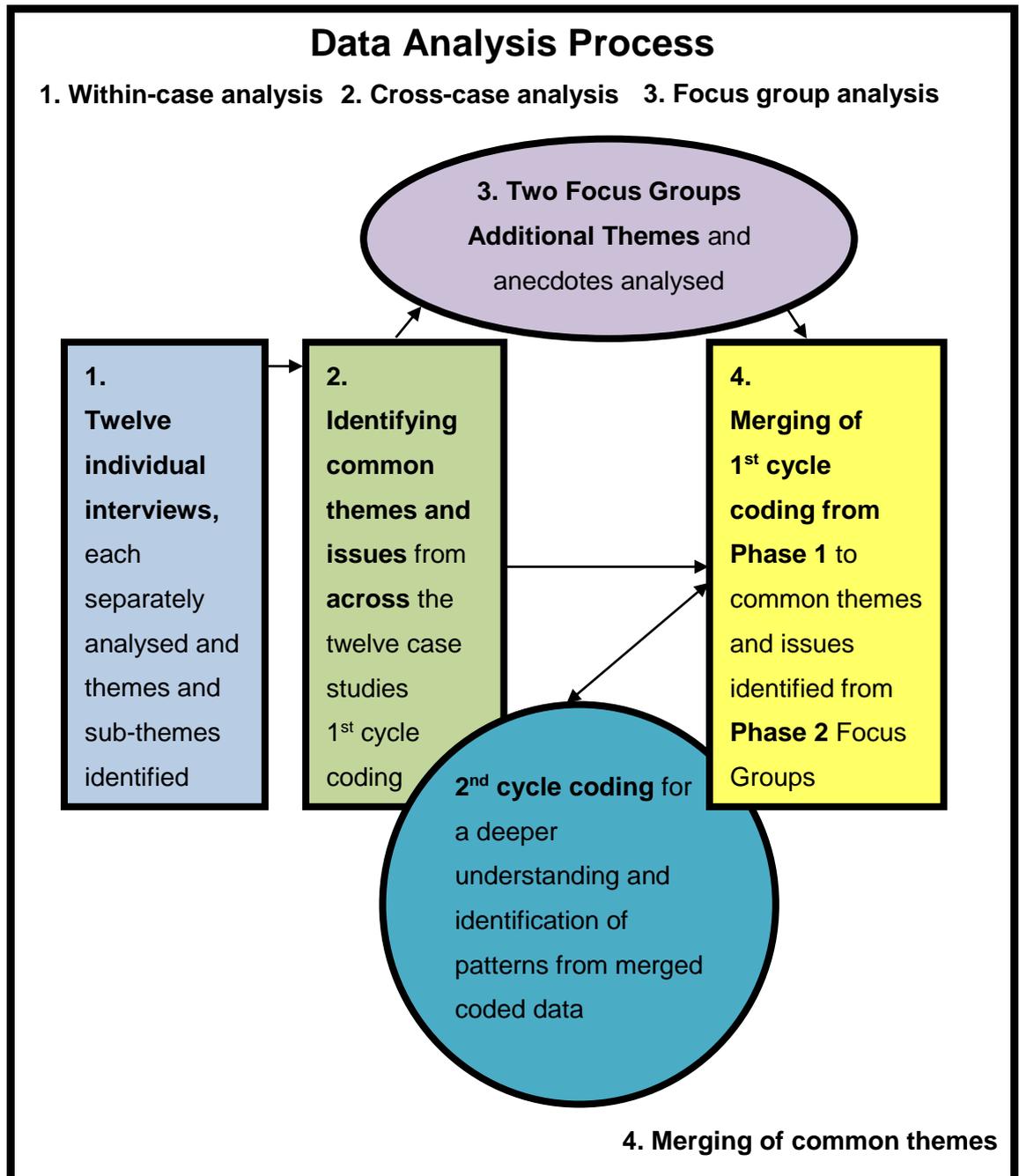
Figure 3.3:   **The data analysis process for this study**

3.6 Trustworthiness strategies

Silverman (2005, p. 2009) states that qualitative research "demands theoretical sophistication and methodological rigour" and stresses the importance of ensuring the validity and the reliability of any research. According to Shenton, the criteria for judging the trustworthiness of qualitative research, however, has been heavily debated due to difficulties in demonstrating rigour of naturalistic research (Shenton, 2004, p. 63). Authors Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Lincoln, 1995, p. 277), therefore, presented an alternative set of criteria, "analogous to the scientific standards of rigor, validity, and value" to evaluate the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Their parallel criteria were identified as: internal validity (credibility); external validity (transferability); reliability (dependability) and objectivity (confirmability) and have been used in this study as a guide to evaluating the trustworthiness (rigour) of the research design.

To test the internal validity and credibility of the study a process of pattern matching and the identification of themes including minority experiences was used in the data analysis phase to minimise the effects of researcher interpretation of the actual data from the participants.

To ensure the external validity and transferability of the research design for this study, a triangulation process was used that involved individual interviews for 12 participants and two focus group interviews. Other processes for ensuring trustworthiness included member checking (where participants were given the transcript of their interview for validation), the use of a reflective journal to assist in documenting the paper trail, and the involvement of key colleagues including this researcher's supervisor and two critical friends to review the case study reports.

For the reliability and dependability of the data a case study protocol was applied using the process for both the 12 interviews and then the two focus groups to be repeated as closely as possible within this research (Yin, 2009). The importance of including the procedures and methods of this study also ensured the reliability and dependability of this research as other investigators can follow the same procedures which would then enable valid conclusions to be drawn between studies.

Managing reactivity and bias, as suggested by Padgett (1998), was important to ensure that the participants' views were paramount which gives objectivity and confirmability to this research particularly as the researcher is a former South Australian primary school principal.

3.7 Ethics

As this research study involved humans as participants, issues of ethical considerations were required. Weber (1964, cited in Silverman, 2005, p. 257) stated "all research is affected in some way by the researcher's values and political and moral beliefs". Punch (2009, p. 50) clearly identified the main ethical issues as "harm, consent, deception, privacy and confidentiality of data". The researcher addressed these concerns by ensuring that each participant received information about the scope and purpose of the study, together with a guarantee of confidentially and anonymity and information stating that there were no perceived risks and that they could withdraw at any time. Their written consent to take part in the interview was also obtained along with a written record of their transcribed interview and an overview of the findings of the study to discuss at a focus group meeting. Participants were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement which was part of their consent form to be involved in the focus groups for this study. Subsequent presentations of the data have also been shared with participants to ensure that the interpretation of their issues was correctly reported. Care has been taken in this dissertation to ensure the anonymity of participants by using pseudonyms where applicable and when presenting anecdotes and examples to support the findings from this research study.

3.8 Limitations – delimitations

This study is limited by the scope and time constraints imposed by the requirements of the 36 unit Doctorate of Education research study. Accordingly, the study was limited to using a qualitative approach involving only 12 participants from whom data would be gathered to answer the research questions.

A further limitation is related to the use of a case study approach to gather participants' perceptions of their early years in their new principal position. As the interview questions were semi-structured, participants discussed issues and used stories as explanations that were important to them at the time of the interview which may provide different emphases in the responses to some questions. It is also a possibility that fluctuating feelings of self-efficacy may have influenced the responses of some participants as these interviews took place in the middle of the school year.

The data analysis and discussion also relied on the researcher's interpretation of these perceptions although every effort was made through member checking and editing to keep participants' responses as accurate as possible. In addition, as the

researcher's role of a former primary school principal in SA would influence the researcher's interpretations this could affect the rigour of the data. Again, however, strategies including member checking, having critical friends, using a journal, and the expertise of this researcher's supervisor, were put in place to minimise bias and reactivity.

The delimitations of this study narrowed its scope to include only primary school principals in their second, third and fourth year in the principalship from across the four main educational sectors in SA and no secondary school novice principals were interviewed. In addition, this study selected eligible participants from SA only and did not include any novice primary school principals located in other states in Australia. Finally, there was no intention to collect data from one specific characteristic of participants e.g. women only, rural schools only or urban schools only.

3.9 Summary

This chapter addressed the methodology and research design for the study including the theoretical framework based on a social constructivist paradigm with an interpretivist approach. The qualitative method using multiple case studies and two focus groups was identified as the most expedient way of collecting data from the eligible participants and was consistent with the social constructivist framework for this study. The collection procedure and data analysis was then explained together with a detailed outline of the coding process to enable the identification of recurring major themes, issues and stories that would assist in addressing the research questions. The evaluation processes and ethical requirements were also discussed. Finally, the limitations and delimitations of this study were acknowledged to provide guidance for future researchers on this topic.

Chapter 4 presents the findings including the major themes identified from the data. The results from the 12 case studies were not presented individually in this report due to the size restrictions for this dissertation. However, the collective data from the participants provides a deep and rich description of the complexity of the principal role and the socialisation process for the participants in this study. Key quotes from the individual and focus group interview data are cited as evidence to support the findings and provide a range of responses concerning their experiences and their emotions that will deepen understanding of their issues during their socialisation journey into the principalship.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

"The transition to school principal normally requires aspiring principals to 'let go' some of their identity as a teacher and embrace a new identity as a leader of others"
(Ibarra et al., 2014 cited in AITSL, 2015, p. 16)

Introduction

This study sought to identify the early experiences and support provided to novice primary school principals in SA during their socialisation into their new role and how they perceived that these experiences influenced the development of their principal identities. The previous chapter discussed the epistemology for the research which guided the decision to use a qualitative multiple case study and focus group approach to gather the data from the novice primary school principals in their second to fourth years of their first appointment. The methods for collecting the data were presented as well as an explanation of the data analysis for the 12 case studies and the two focus groups from which the themes for this research emerged.

In this chapter the findings address the four supporting research questions that established the framework for this investigation. The findings are presented along with the recurring themes that arose from the 12 participants' responses to the individual interviews and focus group questions. The interview questions were semi-structured and designed to enable each participant to reflect on their early experiences and support, and the focus group questions were designed to enable participants to share their reflections of their early experiences and support with other participants (Appendices 1 & 2). The questions evoked a wide range of responses to each situation. The data from both the cross-case analysis of the individual interviews and the focus groups' analysis were merged to provide a greater depth of understanding and to reduce repetition of information. The findings presented in this chapter reflect the merged data as demonstrated in Figure 3.3 on page 27.

Chapter 4 is divided into five sections. Section 1 presents the participants' background data that was analysed from their responses to interview questions 1 and 2 which asked about their reasons for applying for the principal position and about their previous leadership experiences before winning their first principal position. This section includes a brief pen portrait of each participant, their time as novice principal at the school, their gender, educational sector, location and size of the new school, and their previous leadership experiences. The participants' pen portraits provide a link between this data and some of the findings from Stages 1 and 2 of the socialisation hierarchy. (Please refer to Appendix 7 for the pen portraits).

Section 2 addresses the findings related to the first supporting research question which asks "What early experiences did novice primary school principals in SA encounter during their socialisation into the new role?" The results are presented according to the four socialisation stages adapted from Kelly and Saunders (2010) and Anderson et al. (2009). The phases are attached to the approximate stages as shown below:

Stage 1: Pre-appointment   *anticipatory, professional, personal socialisation phase*
Stage 2: Entry and Induction (0–3 months) organisational socialisation phase
Stage 3: Taking Hold   *(4–8 months) professional socialisation phase*
Stage 4: Taking Control   *(9–12 months) professional and organisational phase*
    Moving On   *(12 months – 3 years) personal socialisation phase*

Section 3 expands on the findings that address the second supporting research question as it focuses on the forms of induction and supports that novice primary school principals perceived had assisted them to cope with the early dilemmas and tensions of the role.

Section 4 presents the findings concerning the third supporting research question which asked about the experiences and emotions identified by participants once they felt confident and comfortable in their new role as principals.

Section 5 addresses the fourth supporting research question and provides some advice for aspiring and newly appointed principals that was shared by participants as they reflected on their own early experiences during their socialisation into the principal role. A summary of the findings from the five sections is then presented.

4.1   Section 1: Participating principals' background data

This first section presents participants' background data. Eight female novice principals from both urban and rural schools and four novice male principals all from rural schools were eligible to take part in this study. The urban schools (including one special school) were located across the suburbs of Adelaide and were classed as medium-sized schools as each had over 200 students or an equivalent ratio (special school). The rural schools were scattered across SA from the West Coast to the Mid-North and to the South East of the State. These schools had between 40–120 students and were classed as small schools with both teaching and leadership responsibilities for the principal. They had no deputy principal as school size dictated whether or not it was eligible for a deputy principal position. The data revealed that five novice principals were from the three South Australian non-government schools' authorities or sectors (Catholic Education SA (CESA);

Association of Independent Schools SA (AISSA) and Lutheran Schools) and seven were from government schools – Department for Education and Child Development (DECD). Of note, for the purpose of this study, the four educational authorities will be known as sectors. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the background data and the previous leadership experiences as shared by the 12 participating principals.

Table 4.1: Summary of participating principals' background data

Participant (pseudonym)	Years as novice principal	Gender	Education sector	Location of school	No. of students in school	Previous leadership experience
Linda	4th year	Female	Non-Gov.	Urban	450	Head of Middle School, DP. Sector role
Cathy	3rd year	Female	Gov.	Urban	300	Coordinator, Act/Pr, DP
Jo	2nd year	Female	Gov.	Rural	40	Pre-school Director
Stan	3rd year	Male	Gov.	Rural	40	Coordinator, Act/Pr for 6 mths
David	4th year	Male	Non-Gov.	Rural	130+	Coordinator
Geoff	4th year	Male	Non-Gov.	Rural	80+	Coordinator
Sam	4th year	Male	Non-Gov.	Rural	80+	Coordinator
Sharyn	2nd year	Female	Gov.	Rural	80+	Ed. Consultant Act/Pr for 6 mths
Anna	2nd year	Female	Gov.	Urban	80 (Special)	Head of Middle School, DP
Chris	4th year	Female	Gov.	Urban	250+	Sector role, DP. Act/Pr different school.
Jenny	2nd year	Female	Gov.	Rural	50+	Coordinator then Act/Pr same school 6 mths
Kate	2nd year	Female	Non-Gov.	Urban	280+	DP & Act/Pr
12 participants	**2nd–4th year**	**8 Female 4 Male**	**5 Non-Gov. 7 Gov.**	**5 Urban 7 Rural schools**	**7 Small schools 5 Medium size**	**5 with previous DP leadership experience**

Explanation of acronyms used in Table 4.1:
Sector: Government = State Schools; Non-Government = Catholic, Independent or Lutheran Schools
Size of school = small school (less than 200 students); medium sized school (200–600students); large school (over 600 students).
Previous leadership roles: T = Teacher; Coordinator Consultant (Literacy); Act/Pr = Acting Principal;
DP = Deputy Principal; Head of Middle School = Pr within Reception – Year 12 School; Pr = Principal

4.1.2 Summary

Section 1 identified background data concerning the participating principals' gender, years as novice principal, location and size of school and previous school leadership experience. Brief pen portraits of each participant also include the findings concerning their previous leadership experiences and the influence of the past principal of their new school on their early experiences in the principal role (Appendix 7).

4.2 Section 2: Participants' early experiences during their socialisation into the principal role

The findings in this section are presented according to the four stages of the socialisation hierarchy which outline the progress of participants along their journey to the principalship (Pre-appointment; Entry and Induction; Taking Hold and Taking Control – Moving On). In addition, the four socialisation phases (Crow, 2006) of anticipatory, organisational, professional and personal socialisation, are indicated at the approximate stage of the socialisation hierarchy and to demonstrate the development of participants' identities from being teachers to being a principal. For a further explanation of the stages and phases of the socialisation process refer to Chapter 2, Table 2.1.

4.2.1 Stage 1: Pre-appointment *(Anticipatory, early professional and personal socialisation phases)*

The findings for this stage focus on the range of previous leadership experiences that the participants in this study identified as influencing them to apply for the principalship. These include: early leadership influences, influence from pre-leadership programs, influence by a significant other, influence from previous school leadership experiences and the influence of moral purpose on applying for the principal position. In particular, the findings revealed that Linda, Cathy, Chris, Anna and Kate had significant previous leadership experiences including deputy principal and acting principal roles before their appointment as principal of an urban school. Some of this information from the findings was also presented within the participants' pen portraits (Appendix 7) and has been summarised in Table 4.2 under the themes of experiences, frequency noted and selected participant examples. A few participants mentioned more than one of the experiences for this pre-appointment stage while a number of others did not address all the identified themes.

Table 4.2: Pre-appointment influences on applying for the principalship (n = 12)

Theme	Frequency noted	Selected participant examples
Early leadership influences	4 3 2 n = 9	Leadership positions in secondary school Family member in management or school leadership Role model principals in early teaching career
Influence from pre-leadership programs	4 1 n = 5	Discernment or Aspiring Principal Course – sector University Course in Leadership
Influence by a significant other	4 2 n = 6	Previous principal encouraged participants to apply Regional Director, Line Manager or Leadership Consultant influence
Influence from previous leadership experiences	2 7 5 n = 14	Manager in non-school setting Part of school leadership team as coordinators Experience as assistant principals, deputy and acting principals
Influence of moral purpose on applying for principal position	7 5 n = 12	Principal position the next step of making a difference in children's life and in family's life The driving motivator for me was being able to impact the lives of more people

4.2.2 Stage 2: Entry and Induction (Organisational phase)

The findings for Stage 2 address three major issues that participants experienced during their entry and induction into the role. These issues include: the impact of each participant's school leadership history and the influences of participants' early experiences, strategies and emotions they felt during their first three months. Information concerning participants' induction and support programs is presented in Section 4 of this chapter.

4.2.2.1 Impact of previous principal's legacy on participants' early months in role

The findings revealed that each participant spoke about the impact the previous principal and the past history of the school had on how they were perceived by the school community and how they responded in those first three months. The impact of the past principal varied according to whether they had retired, were liked or disliked, had left the school well or poorly organised and whether there had been principal continuity or not. Table 4.3 presents a summary of the impact of the

previous principal's legacy on the participants' early years of principalship. (Comments included in Appendix 7: Participants' pen portraits).

Table 4.3: Impact of previous principal's legacy on participants' early months in role (n = 12)

Examples of previous principal's legacy	Impact on novice principal's early experiences	Frequency noted
Followed retired principal. Policies and practices in place.	School well organised giving time to settle in	3
Community unhappy with past principal or their past organisation	Positive relationships to be developed before any changes can be made	2
No continuity in rural school as rapid change over of principals	Need to hit the ground running re policy and practice development	2
Previous principal not good at behaviour management	Professional learning on behaviour management needed immediately for staff	2
The previous principal was a male and had been adored by school community. Impact of the reduction of school status from area school to primary school.	Unrealistic expectations of one school leadership role led to difficult community relationships	1
Incumbent principal didn't win position again	Difficult situation for both – requiring understanding of staff and parent reaction	1
Acting principals over time leave financial deficit	Planning strategies including staff reductions to manage financial deficit	1

4.2.2.2 Participants' experiences in their first three months in the position

The findings are organised into themes that relate to participants' experiences during their first three months as they tried to discover how things were organised at the school. Some of these experiences include: experiencing school familiarisation, developing good relationships, experiencing familiarity with role, experiencing school community conflict and experiencing the change of status. Table 4.4 presents the themes and examples of some participants' early experiences and what strategies they used. The table also indicates the number of times similar approaches were used by other participants. Several participants experienced more than one of the strategies identified.

Table 4.4: Experiences with strategies in the first three months in the role (n = 12)

Theme	Strategies used	Selected participant comments
Experiencing school familiarisation	**Visiting school to check expectations** 3 **Talking to previous principal** 9 n = 12	I spent a lot of time in the school during the holidays organising the first week and checking through the school policies and practices. **Jo** When I knew I had the job here I came to visit the incumbent principal for more information about the school. **Sharyn**
Developing good relationships	**Establishing coffee sessions** 4 **Using a hands on approach** 4 **Listening and observing** 8 n = 14	I introduced a coffee and chat session with all the staff. I got relievers in and I released all the staff including the School Service Officers. **Anna** I spent time on weekends 'on a cleaning rampage' and hoped that this would demonstrate to the community that I had a 'hands on' approach and wasn't about to change the culture too. **Geoff** My approach first and foremost was going to be listen more than I would talk, because I think anyone going into a new school or a new culture – it's very hard for you to have an intimate knowledge of how it works. **Kate**
Experiencing familiarity with the principal role	**Learning about the school's organisation** 4 **Grasping responsibility and decisions in role** 6 **Learning about managing finances** 7 n = 14	I've got this position so what do I do next, because you don't know what you don't know. But you do sit for a minute and you don't know the filing system, you don't know the digital system or anything. **Linda** Shocked, I guess just at the responsibility, you just can't believe the level of decisions that you make in a day and how many of them, it's beyond anything that I could have ever imagined. **Chris** I didn't know a thing about finances stepping into the school. As an IT coordinator … you're playing with $1,000 budgets. All of a sudden you're up to a million-dollar budget. **Geoff**
Experiencing school community conflict	**Trying to manage abusive parent alone** 2 **Asking for help from Manager** 1 **Valuing what has gone before** 2 n = 5	I had a really aggressive, abusive parent at the school and that was challenging dealing with. **Jo** I had difficulties with the Governing Council Chairperson, and the Area Director gave me some advice on how to deal with this. I was reluctant initially but then had it out with him as she advised. **Sharyn** I had a couple of teachers try and drill me into, "This is how we do things around here". **Geoff**
Experiencing change of status to principal	**Adjusting to being the centre of attention** n = 12	Everybody is looking at you with a magnifying glass and you cannot be seen to show human qualities but you still have to be professional and be careful what you say and what you promise. **Chris** You can't just sneak down in your Ugg boots to the shops to grab some milk and all of that sort of stuff. **Sam**

The following information expands on the selected participants' comments and the main themes identified from the findings concerning their early experiences and their strategies during Stage 2 of the socialisation process as presented in Table 4.4.

Experiencing school familiarisation

The 12 participants spoke about their experiences in trying to find out about the school and its organisation once they were appointed and before the school year started. Jo, Sharyn and Chris revealed that they were at the school during the holidays to develop an understanding of school policies and other administration issues as well as meet with any new staff and students. The remaining participants said that they either contacted the previous principal to gain information about the administration and school community or spent time with their line managers to get to know more about the school.

Developing good relationships

All participants talked about their initial intentions of developing good relationships with their school community. Linda, Cathy, Chris and Anna from the urban schools described their strategy of establishing one-to-one coffee and chat sessions with their staff to gain an understanding of their views about the school and to develop a positive relationship with each person. The four male participants revealed their strategies which related to activities that were needed in the school (cleaning up, getting jobs done and setting up websites) and this gave them opportunities to connect positively with the community and staff. The other four participants used strategies of visiting families and generally being seen as approachable in the school. Overall, the findings showed that six participants, Linda, Kate, Chris, David, Geoff and Cathy, related they started at their new school with the intention of listening and observing to demonstrate that they valued what had gone before they started at the school. Geoff reflected that he told himself "No, I just need to sit back, ask my questions – and even if there are things that don't sit well with me, respect them, because they are owned by the people there".

Experiencing familiarisation with principal role

Linda, David, Geoff and Stan admitted that when they sat down at their desks on the first day they didn't know what to do even though some had previous experience as an acting principal. Geoff reflected on how he shuffled lots of paper around on his desk while David, whose previous principal had left him only her daily diary to follow, spent the first few weeks outside at recess and lunch time playing cricket or football with the students. Five participants said they were shocked at the level and amount of responsibility and decision making they had to deal with so early into their

position. The five participants from non-government schools spoke about their lack of knowledge in managing the finances and how important it was to have a good relationship with their school bursar who had the responsibility of managing the finances. Geoff admitted he knew nothing about finances while Sam and David went with their school bursars to their sector's training sessions to get a better understanding of presenting monthly reports to the Board. Stan, Jo and Jenny from the government sector related how lucky they were that their school finance officer had been in the position for a long time and was able to gradually teach them about the finances. Sharyn, however, said she was feeling very frustrated and vulnerable as initially she hadn't been left with any of her sector's internet passwords to enable her to access any of their policies and procedural documents, and she had a new finance officer as well.

Experiencing school community conflict

While five participants talked about their initial three months being relatively easy and like a 'honeymoon period' some, including Jo and Jenny, had an abusive parent to deal with quite early into their new role and sought strategies from principal mentors on how to manage these people. Geoff related that he had experienced a few niggles from several staff members who tried to tell him how things were run at the school but he decided to demonstrate he respected what had gone before and didn't challenge them at this stage. Sharyn revealed that the school council and its chairperson, who were trying to come to terms with the downsizing of their school, were frustrated and angry with the change and took it out on her as the principal as she didn't do all the things the previous principal did. She shared that she had to seek help from her area director about how to handle the situation and eventually had to confront the chairperson to settle the situation.

Experiencing change of status to principal

All participants highlighted their surprise at the sudden change in status they experienced once in the principal role and this was particularly noticed by the seven participants who were in the smaller rural communities. Sam, Sharyn and David, for example, felt they were always on show and anything they did in the community was watched closely, while Chris, Anna and Cathy from urban schools, felt that they had to be more aware of what they wore and how they behaved even socially. Sam reflected that in the early months of his new position he discovered "people were thinking, well you're the principal, I can tell you anything and I know you'll keep it confidential". As he was still grappling with the change in his teacher identity, to viewing himself as a principal, he found this very confronting and time consuming.

Geoff commented on his new status as principal in a rural community.

> The principal just because of that title becomes a bit of putty filler within a town and is much more than the principal but is in some ways responsible for being the social glue and keeping things together.

In addition, participants who commented on the pressure of their change in status also commented on how the community viewed their accessibility which was hard to ignore. Anna's explanation was reflective of others in that she felt that everyone thought she was available 24/7. "I will get an email and people expect me to respond within 20 minutes and it can be on the weekend or four o'clock in the morning … just that you are now public property is the overwhelming thing as well".

4.2.2.3 Participants' early emotions

An analysis of the findings identified four themes concerning the emotions that participants experienced during Stage 2 of the socialisation process. These themes include: initial feelings in early months, shock at the reality that "the buck stops with them", feelings of loneliness and roller coaster emotions about the role. Table 4.5 identifies the emotions that participants experienced during their first three months in their new role. The numbers in the table indicate how many other participants expressed similar feelings.

Table 4.5: Emotions in the first three months in the role (n = 12)

Themes	Similar emotions noted	Selected participants' comments
Initial feelings in early months	**Excited, proud, sense of achievement** 5 **Feeling like a fraud, don't belong** 2 **No self-concept of being a principal** 2 n = 9	I felt overwhelmed but even more than that I was super excited, just proud and shocked, I guess just at the responsibility. **Chris** I feel like a fraud; I feel like I don't belong here. I feel like is this really what I'm meant to be doing? **Anna** The real difficulty in that initial stage was where I was going from being a teacher to being a principal. I still had principals on a really high pedestal. So I found that challenging personally just when I had no self-concept of being a principal. **Sam**
The buck stops here	**Overwhelmed and anxious** 3 **Shocked; different from DP position** 5 **Culture shock** 4 n = 12	Relieved and anxious – at the same time overwhelmed as well to think I have to be on top of everything. **Cathy** In the deputy position the buck actually doesn't stop with you and coming to that realisation that the buck stops with me and that I am responsible for every single thing was a shock. **Kate** It was probably, like a bit of a slap in the face with a wet fish with some of the things such as an angry parent or an underperforming teacher that I never experienced as a teacher. The buck never stopped with me then. **Geoff**
Feelings of loneliness	**Afraid, lonely** 3 **Frustration** 4 n = 7	It's lonely, and I'm in a small school so that's the thing that I probably find, you are always giving feedback to people. **Anna** Without fail you need to have somebody that you can call and vent to that works in your profession. I tried having these conversations with my teachers but because they didn't have that experience set that I've had of leading a school and seeing everything behind the scenes, they had a different perspective. **Stan**
Roller coaster emotions about the role	**Exhausted, guilt over family** 4 **Fear of unknown** 4 **Worried** 2 n = 10	I was extremely exhausted in those early months and I also felt guilt at leaving my young family but I felt I needed to make a great start. **Chris** I was very cautious – didn't want to give anything about me away. **David** I put on a game face every day so I wouldn't let anybody know that I was worried at school. I knew that the perception needed to be everything is under control and that was the perception. **Chris and Stan**

The information below expands on the participants' selected comments and the themes identified from the findings concerning their initial emotions during the second stage in the socialisation process as presented in Table 4.5.

Initial feelings on winning the principal position

Nine participants including Chris, Cathy, Kate, David and Jenny recounted their early feelings of elation and excitement at winning the position. Linda summed up. "There is a sense of pride in yourself and I think you do celebrate your success. And certainly you do have some doubts then too". Anna also shared her ongoing feelings of being a fraud for quite some time after winning the position even though she had

much reassurance from staff and parents that all was going well. Geoff admitted that he kept waiting for notification that his appointment was a clerical error while Sam explained that he was still feeling like a teacher and didn't feel comfortable with other principals or his new title of principal at this stage.

The buck stops here

All participants specifically spoke about the realisation that the buck really stopped with them as they tried to come to terms with the huge amount of responsibilities and decisions that needed to be made in the job. Kate, Cathy, Anna, Chris and Linda who had been deputy principals or acting principals at other schools commented that being in a permanent position was different from being in an acting principal position because they really did have to make the final decision. Geoff described the realisation that the buck stopped with him on all decisions as a culture shock as he had never experienced anything like it as a teacher.

Feelings of loneliness

Loneliness or the need to find someone to talk to was experienced by all participants but this feeling was expressed more strongly by participants in small schools for, as they said, they had few staff and no deputy principal with whom to share their experiences. Stan and Jo both related how they tried to engage their small number of staff in making some of the decisions. Jo felt she shouldn't keep asking her only experienced teacher all the time while Stan quickly found that his staff had a narrow perspective on issues as they didn't have his experiences and he had to turn to other principals in nearby schools for advice. Sharyn reflected that she felt very stressed and by herself in dealing with the immense pressure of all the responsibilities that she perceived were expected of her from the small rural community while she was trying to learn the role.

Anna and Kate both shared their feelings of isolation and loneliness in the school even though they each had a deputy principal. Anna reflected that she was not getting any feedback from her leadership peers as previously she had been in a much bigger school as the head of a middle school and felt quite lonely in her new position. Kate lamented that she felt she had walked into a school with a very staid culture where the principal was expected to do everything including dealing with cleaning of the school's gutters. She revealed there was no understanding of shared leadership or delegation of responsibilities and was feeling very, very alone in having to deal with this situation.

Roller coaster emotions about the role

Chris, Jo and Jenny noted how exhausted they were just trying to get their heads around all the responsibilities that they discovered went with the role. Chris, Sam and Kate shared that they felt guilty about the effect that the job was having on their families. Stan and Chris both spoke about putting on a 'game face' every day because they didn't want the staff and students to think there was anything wrong. Chris explained, "I then turned to my cluster people or my friend that I could ring and quickly asked for advice or ask 'what's this, I should know about this?' And then I learnt and I knew for next time". David and Geoff commented that they had some fears of the unknown and started cautiously at the school while Sam, Jo and Jenny noted the roller coaster of emotions that they experienced during the first three months. Jo also reflected on her situation in a small rural school of having both principal and teaching responsibilities with no deputy principal to share the load.

> Just the sheer amount of things that you had to be thinking about and the responsibilities that you had, but, because I teach about three days a week, so being a relatively new teacher myself I'm still learning to teach …

4.2.3 Stage 3: Taking Hold – 4–8 *months (Professional and organisational socialisation phase)*

During Stage 3 in the socialisation hierarchy, which usually occurs between four to eight months into the new role, the participating principals began 'to take hold' of the school and find a place for themselves by trying to implement small changes, continue to form relationships by interacting with staff and parents and gain some understanding of the day-to-day school management and organisational situations that occur in schools.

4.2.3.1 Participants' experiences and strategies in Stage 3

The following five themes demonstrate the experiences that participants encountered during Stage 3 in their socialisation journey to the principalship. Some experiences and strategies reported relate to this stage in the socialisation hierarchy: immersion into the role, management of people during change, experiencing the school's culture, small schools with both teaching and leadership roles and principal wellness. Table 4.6 presents the themes with some selected comments from the data relating to participants' experiences with some of the strategies used between 4–8 months into their principal role.

Table 4.6: Experiences with strategies utilised during Stage 3 (n = 12)

Themes	Strategies utilised	Selected participants' comments
Immersion into the role	**Changing small organisational practices** **5** **Attending professional leadership course** **3** **Conducting professional learning within school** **4** **n = 12**	I started implementing changes that weren't going to upset people because we'd been open and transparent about it. **Chris** I did the Principal as Literacy Leaders Course. I still use that 'leading by design' template and that really helps me think about all aspects of school leadership. **Jo** I ran a lot of PD just myself particularly around IT and using different technologies in the classroom and in doing that build some really good relationships. **Sam**
Management of people during change	**Gaining advice from coach** **3** **Managing hard conversations** **2** **n = 5**	I needed some advice (from Coach in the Box) in just fine-tuning some people stuff. I think that's the biggest challenge is managing people**. Cathy** Handling those hard conversations is probably something that throws you into, oh my goodness yes I'm now the one in charge here and my decisions that I make now are going to have, either a good effect or a terrible effect, and it is really difficult trying to find that balance. **Sharyn**
Experiencing the school's culture	**Building relationships** **2** **Aiming to support teachers** **1** **n = 3**	The toughest experiences have been around the culture coming into a school that has a very staid culture. It's the managing people and managing emotions of others that is the toughest stuff … **Kate** How am I as a leader going to support these teachers on a weekly, fortnightly, monthly basis in a dog eat dog culture where you shut your door, your curtains, you teach, you make yourself accountable, and you only use that accountability if someone questions your practice? **Geoff**
Small schools with both teaching and leadership roles	**Working long hours on admin. tasks** **3** **Organised and prioritising between teaching and leading** **4** **n = 7**	I feel like my 'to do' list is never ending. In a small school you wear every single hat you can think of – the toilets are blocked – oh well better go fix that. **Jo** You could be dealing with a sick teacher or have a teacher going home to look after their kid so then (you) jump into the classroom and suddenly you don't get the day that you thought you had. **David**
Principal wellness	**Restricting coffees to before lunch, avoiding reading emails at night** **6** **Exercising regularly** **4** **n = 10**	I find when I am sleeping I'm dreaming about work so you wake up and you've just felt like you've been working for 6 hours. And nothing's been done and you got to go do it all again. **Sam** As soon as I stopped exercising for an extended period of time, I started feeling really bad and wasn't able to focus as much. I had to do lists – to do to do lists. It was ridiculous. I was just trying to tick off as many things as I could. **Stan**

The information below expands on the themes identified and participants' examples of experiences and strategies utilised during Stage 3 of the socialisation hierarchy that were presented in Table 4.6.

Immersion into the role

During this stage in their socialisation journey all participants revealed that they used a variety of strategies to immerse themselves into their role. Some, like Chris, chose to implement small organisational changes after having consulted with all the stakeholders. She explained that having worked hard on building relationships during the first six months she found that the school community was more accepting of taking on new initiatives or were happy to build on already established school practices. Most participants decided to involve themselves and staff in some form of professional learning in a curriculum area where they felt there was a need and where they felt comfortable. Chris, Linda and Cathy found that their previous experience as curriculum leaders was an advantage as they were confident they could implement new goals in curriculum areas with their staff. Anna said she felt excited by the positive impact that working on the school's vision and mission statements had on her and her staff as they set up a focus for the school for the next four years.

Jo, Geoff and Stan reflected on the positive leadership support they gained by either being involved in national curriculum courses or a district curriculum project during this stage in their principal role. They found that these courses provided direction for them in implementing changes in the particular curriculum area. Geoff found that he was able to establish a network with other principals from interstate schools involved in the same national project and gained valuable support from their discussions. Sam, who has skills in IT, ran professional development activities for his staff to demonstrate the use of different forms of information technology in the classroom and found he also formed some good relationships with his staff. Similarly, David conducted workshops on student behaviour management strategies and began to get some positive recognition from both staff and parents.

Management of people during change

Jo, Sharyn, Jenny, Sam and Cathy related that they mainly had difficulties with a few staff members who were resisting any changes to their teaching skills and curriculum implementation. Cathy recalled talking to her coach from the *Coach in a Box* program about strategies for working with these few staff members and concluded that managing people during times of change was very challenging. Sharyn also commented on how hard it was to have tough conversations with some

staff as she realised that she was responsible for the outcome of her comments which may cause distress for a teacher who also needed to be responsible for a class of students! Sam related that while most of his staff had been at the school for 30 years they were basically good teachers who had not been given any opportunities to develop their teaching practices. He shared: "I had one teacher who started as a blocker and I just couldn't understand why she wasn't interested in any of these things that I wanted to do. But it turned out that that was just really a self-confidence thing for her and now she's my lead teacher in IT".

Experiencing the school's culture

During Stage 3, Taking Hold, three participants reported experiencing resistance to changing anything that had already been in place and they had a sense of being pressured into the role of the past principal. Sharyn, Geoff and Kate talked about the culture of their school and community as being staid and strongly against any change which they felt made it difficult for them to create change in their school. As Geoff reflected:

> The culture of an organisation and the culture of the community has a huge impact on someone's ability to lead especially in the first year because you're always held to that culture which is held as leverage over you.

He revealed experiencing staff resistance when he tried to change a once-a-year programming and planning process to a fortnightly principal and teacher half hour meeting. This was met with fierce resistance from all staff. He said he felt frustrated and worried as he thought his role was to support teachers in improving student learning and he didn't know how he could do that if they were resistant to change.

Sharyn, who was having ongoing difficulties with her school community's ability to accept the change in status of the school, felt that people had a different perception of her role and were becoming frustrated with her because they expected her to operate in the same way as the previous principal. At the same time, she became frustrated with them because they didn't get things done within her time frame.

Kate also related that she found the toughest experience for her in this stage of her principal role was in working with a staid culture and the lack of skills of her staff. She described working in this difficult environment to her line manager was "like having an oil tanker that she was trying to turn around at sea". She noted that changing the culture of the school "Can't happen quickly. We've got to do all these steps to get there".

Small schools with both teaching and leadership roles

The seven participants from the small rural schools spoke about the positives and negatives of having both a teaching and a leadership role. While all participants felt the job was so huge that they never felt like they had finished their day, the participants in the small rural schools commented that having to wear many hats meant that they often had to take work home particularly after a day's teaching. As Sam said, "I find that one of my biggest challenges is how much to take home. There's no end point to the job, there's always more that can be done." David agreed but felt there was a positive side as "being a principal in a small rural school means you need to be jack of all trades"!

Jo also reflected on her teaching days by saying that she felt rewarded when the children greeted her happily and said they had missed her in their classroom. However, she went on to share that it could be tricky when she had to hurry from the classroom to lead the staff meeting "running by the seat of my pants as I haven't really planned it and it's a bit of a disaster".

Jenny also found it difficult at times to wear the many hats of both principal and teacher roles and identified some of her principal responsibilities in a small rural school which also had a preschool attached.

> We've got a Kindy on site, so as well as the Australian Curriculum there's the National Quality Standards that have come in, and that was huge to try and get your head around that, because it's a completely different way of operating and a completely different set of regulations. Yeah – wondering if I was ever going to get my head above water.

Principal wellness

Six of the twelve participants shared that they were having difficulties in their sleeping pattern once they began working in the role. Cathy, Sharyn and Kate revealed they often woke up during the night and couldn't get back to sleep. Anna said that she got up and answered some of her emails and then went back to bed when she felt sleepy again. Sam also talked about his difficulties with sleeping. He explained that his mind was so full of all the massive amount of learning that he was doing that he couldn't shut off. Stan recounted that he was having problems and needed extra sleep and explained: "There was a stint of about four weeks where I went to bed at about 7.00 pm because I was just so drained, not from working too much – just up here (mind) not having clear vision, clear direction, where am I going, what am I doing, how am I going to get there"?

Jo, Jenny, Kate and Stan all commented that they were so busy in the first 6–8 months that they didn't have time to exercise and that this affected their health. As Jo reflected:

> The first six months last year I wasn't doing any exercises and then I started going to the gym a few times a week, and I think that made a big difference just having that time for yourself and you do feel so much better about things when you can punch a boxing bag a few times in the morning before you go to school.

4.2.3.2 Participants' emotions during Stage 3

The following three themes from the findings reflect the participants' emotions during Stage 3 in the socialisation hierarchy. These emotions include: worrying about disadvantaged families within the school, fear at not being accepted by the community and continuing fluctuations in role confidence.

Worrying about disadvantaged families within the school

Chris and Cathy in particular spoke about their concerns for some of the disadvantaged students and families in their school communities. Chris reflected: "At some stages I felt sadness and helplessness for some of the disadvantaged families that I was dealing with". She went on to say that in some cases she could put processes and strategies into place to make a difference. "So although there is disadvantage, when they are at this school they are getting the absolute best resources and education that they can." Cathy also related that she felt helpless at times with the family issues at her school. She reflected, "These are the ones that keep me up at night worried. It just seems to be these complex family things but I don't always have solutions". David and Sharyn commented on their concerns about the special needs of some students with difficult behaviours while Jo worried about the learning of two students whose parents withdrew them to home schooling with questionable discipline.

Fear of not being accepted by the community

Four participants, all from small rural schools, revealed that they were used to being liked and found it difficult at first to come to terms with the fact that not everyone in the community accepted them. Sharyn remembered a friend helping her to cope with the negativity by saying:

> You're a principal now. You have to get used to being hated! I said "Well I can't, I'm a person who loves to be loved," but it was a fair point. I was ready to just chuck it in that day, but, I think she took me over that line.

Kate, who was in a non-government urban school, was having difficulties with her school community as she had to rationalise spending by reducing staff numbers. She feared that she wasn't popular with her staff but reminded them that she was making these decisions professionally and that it wasn't personal.

Geoff and David both shared that they began to put up barriers between themselves and the school community during the first six months in their new position as they worried about the community's perception of them. Geoff related "I had begun to put up a few walls around who I was and how much I shared about myself, and perhaps I became very anxious – I began to forward think about how people would respond to certain things and I dwelt on things too much".

Continuous fluctuations in role confidence

Eight participants noted that their confidence in the role changed from a high to a low point as the unpredictable experiences continued to occur during this stage. Jenny who experienced some extremes in her emotions shared, "Sometimes I thought wow, this is fantastic, how lucky am I to have this experience to lead this great school – and at other times I thought oh my goodness, what am I doing, why am I doing this role?"

Sharyn also reflected on how easily things changed. "It's a rollercoaster, every time you think that everything's getting the way that you need it to be, something major will happen and you go right back to that first three months. You never feel secure and safe." Anna said she still had days where she felt like a fraud and other days when she felt she was doing well, while Linda also confided that there were days when she had doubts about whether she wanted to stay in the role. Cathy, Sam, Geoff and Jo similarly commented on their fluctuating confidence levels although they felt there were longer periods of good times before something happened to create a feeling of insecurity again.

4.2.4   Stage 4: Taking Action – Moving On: (9 months – 3 years) *(Professional and personal socialisation phases)*

The findings identified for Stage 4 of the socialisation hierarchy are presented in two segments. Segment 1 – Taking Action which addresses participants' experiences, strategies and emotions at the end of their first 12 months as principal. This is followed by Segment 2 – Moving On 1–3 years, which addresses the findings that participants shared about their experiences and emotions as they moved on into their second year of the socialisation hierarchy. This segment also includes the shared experiences and feelings of five participants who were in the fourth year in their new role at the time of the interviews.

4.2.4.1   Segment 1: Taking Action by the end of 12 months in the role

Segment 1 is divided into two parts. Part 1 presents the findings concerning participants' experiences and strategies used by the end of their first 12 months.

This is followed with the findings of participants' emotions at the end of their first 12 months in the role.

4.2.4.1.1   Part 1: Experiences and strategies at the end of 12 months

The findings identified three themes concerning the reflections of participants' experiences and strategies utilised by the end of their first 12 months in the role. The themes of experiencing positive school community relationships, developing positive staff relationships and experiencing major difficulties, are presented in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7: Reflecting on experiences and strategies by the end of 12 months (n = 12)

Themes	Strategies utilised	Examples of participants' comments
Experiencing positive school community relationships	**Staging a community event** 3 **Sharing plans with community** 2 **Building trusting relationships** 1 n = 5	We had a really big community event which was a tradition of the school. We put on a big fancy musical at the end of the year. Half the town turned up in our little hall. It was one of those events that leave you feeling wow that's great, and a community that thinks highly of you. **Sam** Just winning over the community and have their trust and time to get to know everything and all the operations of the school and once I had a bit of a handle on that … **Chris** I feel that people know me and I know them and that comes from community relationships – it's that cycle of confidence building. **Cathy**
Developing positive staff relationships	**Celebrating collegiality with staff** 1 **Motivating staff with professional learning activity** 1 **Focusing on staff harmony to move forward** 1 n = 3	The end of the school year was fantastic because you could see that you'd come someway with the staff. Collegiately you're working well together. We all went on a big school camp and it was just a really good feeling. **Sharyn** We brought over a speech therapist who is doing four blocks of literacy with us, and that is what is motivating people, reigniting their teaching practice and having everyone looking forward to next year. **Anna** Being in a small school – handling relationships is quite difficult because there's only a very small staff and there's not many places to hide. So I am learning how to manage everything, so we can all get on and things are moving forwards. **Jo**
Experiencing major difficulties	**Trying to change school culture** 1 **Support requested from outside school either through networks or sector manager** 2 **Reflecting on first year – not acting as principal** 1 n = 4	It hasn't been an easy 12 months with the staid school culture and the financial deficit to deal with. **Kate** I felt I hadn't achieved anything and that I had no support from anyone in the school. **Geoff** I had two staff members in serious conflict in the 2nd half of the year. **Jenny** I realised that all the work I had done wasn't what I should have been doing as a principal. It could have been done by Year 7 students!! **Stan**

The information below expands on the themes and the selected participants' comments concerning their experiences with the strategies used by the end of their first 12 months in their new role as presented in Table 4.7.

Experiencing positive school community relationships

Jo, Sam and Jenny spoke about the importance of their school's end of year concerts stating that they brought the whole school community together and helped to establish positive community relationships. Sam explained the importance of building that relationship between the school and the local rural community.

> In a rural school, building community links is important. That is a kind of a preventative strategy for issues. So opening up the school and inviting people in and talking to the community about what your plans are …

Chris, Linda and Cathy reflected on the end of their first year and felt that they had built some excellent relationships and had earned the trust of the community. Chris explained: "Winning the trust and confidence of the parents and staff took time, and different people at different times, some of them were a week and some of them took a year".

Developing positive staff relationships

Four participants spoke enthusiastically about having developed positive relationships with their staff by the end of their first year. Sharyn reflected that after her initial difficulties with the school community, she found support from her staff and celebrated their collegiality at an end of year whole school camp. Jo felt she was learning to manage difficult situations with her very small staff so that they could all continue to work positively with each other. Both Anna and Sam reflected on some excellent professional development activities they had either conducted or organised that motivated and reignited staff's enthusiasm for teaching which set the scene for very positive staff relationships for the following year.

Experiencing major difficulties

The findings revealed that four participants in the study did not feel that they had any successes at the end of their first year in the role. Kate, who was experiencing ongoing difficulties with the school community and her staff, described her challenging situation at the end of the first year:

> I was trying to bring about change but until we've got our culture right any of the changes that we need to do aren't going to work. Then you've got that big overarching compliance that you've got to do as well. So they can conflict with one another.

Geoff was also having difficulties with some of his teachers who had been at the school for many years and reflected on the end of his first year by saying that it was the lowest point in his well-being as a principal.

> I began to question myself at the end of that first year. I had stepped into a school that had a very deficit culture around how kids learn. It was very hard emotionally and personally, and I think it certainly took its toll …

Jenny described her second half of her first year as terrible. She had two staff members develop serious areas of conflict with each other which ultimately involved departmental investigators coming into the school. She commented however, on the good support that she had from her line manager, colleagues and her supportive staff team.

Stan shared that he was still having difficulties trying to find out what his role was. At the end of the year he reflected that he had been busy but that he had not made a difference to the teaching and learning. He had misunderstood his role.

> I was trying to take as many things off of other people's plates so that they could focus on their jobs being in the classroom. And I was trying to do everyone's job. I suppose that was a defense mechanism reflecting back on it now because I felt by doing all these things I was busy and I was somehow validating me being in this position.

4.2.4.1.2   Part 2: Participants' emotions at the end of first 12 months

The findings revealed that, by the end of their first year, participants identified a range of emotions that they had experienced in response to dealing with issues concerning: decision making, increased role confidence, and lack of role confidence. Table 4.8 demonstrates the themes that reflect participants' emotions in response to their experiences at the end of their first year.

Table 4.8: Participants' emotions at the end of first 12 months (n = 12)

Theme	Emotions	Selected participant comments
Decision making	**Feeling positive about good decisions** 1 **Using moral guidelines for guidance** 3 **Valuing honest feedback** 2 n = 6	In any leadership position you make some good decisions and you make some not so good decisions. I only remember the good ones. **Anna** When I was dealing with challenges and issues, I would always ask myself, am I putting the school and the children's needs first and if I am then I've got nothing to question myself about. **Chris** Just getting feedback from other people, whether its body language or just the reinforcement about you as a person as well as you as a principal is important. And that makes you think I'm on the right track or maybe I'll slow down on that. **Linda**
Increased role confidence	**Feeling of growth in spiritually** 1 **Feeling proud of achievement** 2 **Feeling more confident and self-assured** 5 n = 8	I've grown professionally an enormous amount but for me I reckon spiritually as well. **David** I guess the 12 months … there's an enormous pride in where the school is and the feedback from the community really good which outweighed everything else and that's why I'm still doing it. **Sam** There is just so much paperwork to do, and reading and emails it just blows your head and because you're new you have to read everything, whereas now I'm getting a sense that, oh that's about that, I don't need to read it. **Sharyn**
Lack of role confidence	**Feeling stressed and inadequate** 1 **Feeling anxious** 1 **Feeling depressed** 1 **Feeling of despair re no achievement** 1 n = 4	Some of the emotions and feelings were dread, overwhelmed, depressed, feeling inadequate and thinking how on earth can I get all of this done. **Kate** I had lots of feelings around anxiety, insecurity; I didn't feel as though I had any allies on staff to support me. **Geoff** We had a good end of year concert at the school but I still felt depressed (over the staff conflict issues). **Jenny** I felt like I had achieved nothing although all the kids had IPads – even if they did use them as toys initially. **Stan**

The following information expands on the above themes and the selected participants' comments that reflect their emotions at the end of their first 12 months in their new role as presented in Table 4.8.

Decision making

Six participants reflected on their emotions concerning their relationships with the staff and the community. Anna stated that she felt positive about her ability to make good decisions because she didn't dwell on the bad decisions and used the feedback from staff and parents as a guide. Anna and Chris revealed that they felt confident when they used their moral compasses or integrity as a guide when being asked to make instant decisions while Jo reflected that by the end of the year she felt stronger and more confident in her decision making although she admitted that she was very relieved to have made it to the end of the year. Cathy, Linda and Sam reflected that they were feeling more confident in their decision making by the end of their first year particularly when they received valuable feedback from their community that they were going in the right direction.

Increased role confidence

Eight participants revealed that they were feeling more confident in their new role by the end of their first year. David, from a Christian school, felt pleased with his professional and spiritual growth while Sam and Chris shared their feelings of pride at where the teachers and the school were by the end of the year and again commented on the overwhelming feedback from the community which outweighed the other negative things that had happened during the year. Meanwhile Sharyn, Cathy, Linda, Jenny and Jo indicated they were feeling more confident in not having to thoroughly read all the emails by the end of their first year in the role as they had some idea of the content and could prioritise.

Lack of role confidence

The four participants in the study who didn't feel they had any successes at the end of their first year in the role expressed feelings of inadequacy. Two of these participants who were experiencing continuing difficulties with their school's culture felt very stressed and depressed. Kate, who was continuing to experience difficulties with staffing, the lack of finances and the negativity of the school culture, described her feelings at the end of the first year. "I think the things that I had to do were things that should have been done well before. So I almost felt like – geez I've been landed with this, I'm the scapegoat …".

Geoff also reflected on his feelings of anxiety at the end of his first year and reported that he was at the lowest point in his well-being as principal as he had no allies on staff or no one to "take up and be the missionaries to the cause" for school and student improvement. He confided that it was the people from outside of the school, including his family, his principal consultant, and his network colleagues, who supported him during this tough time.

Jenny, who had described her second half of her first year as terrible because of the conflict between two staff members, said that although she had good support and some positive experiences at the end of the school year she didn't feel very positive about her first year as a principal. She remembered that she did feel somewhat comforted when some of her colleagues said to her "Look, what you experienced in your first year, most principals wouldn't experience in their entire career".

Stan, who shared that he was still having some difficulties trying to find out what his role was, felt cynical in how little he had achieved although he was pleased that he had bought IPads for each student towards the end of the year. He resolved that he needed to spend some more time collecting data and look for ways to improve student learning to help him feel more confident as principal in the new year.

4.2.4.2 Segment 2: Moving On (1–3 years)

This segment presents the experiences, together with the strategies and emotions that participating principals experienced in their second and third years in the role. Anna, Jo, Jenny, Sharyn and Kate had not quite completed a full two years as principal at the time of the focus group interviews, Stan and Cathy had completed two and a half years while Chris, Linda, David, Sam and Geoff had completed almost four years in the role.

4.2.4.2.1　Experience, strategies and emotions of participants during their second year in the role

The findings identified four main themes that participants experienced during their second year and Stage 4 of the socialisation hierarchy. These themes revolved around the experiences, the strategies utilised to manage those experiences and the emotions felt by participants during this time. The themes include: a more challenging and busier role in the second year, experiencing some success as principal in the second year, ambiguity with role boundaries and pressures caused by underperforming staff.

A more challenging and busier role in the second year

Six participants revealed that they experienced a more challenging and busier role in their second year than in their first year. The reasons they gave for this included the community being less forgiving of their newness, not happy with their decisions and upset at the changes they were making in the school. Cathy felt that the initial honeymoon period she'd had in her first year was definitely over particularly when the school council reacted negatively towards having an additional class as student numbers had increased causing changes in teacher placement. She shared her emotions about this experience and how she used the strategy of working with individual families to solve some of their concerns.

> I think it takes a full year or a year and a half, when you suddenly get the whole gamut of emotions and feelings because you go from being the new person on the block and being accepted just immediately to suddenly having to work through issues with parents or teachers or children that you've never had to deal with before.

David stated that at the beginning of his second year the community suddenly began questioning his decisions particularly on the enrolment of students who were not part of the parish community. He found that this grievance snowballed into some parents setting up a petition about his plans for the school and for enrolling children from difficult backgrounds. He commented that during this stressful time he was able to work with the rest of the school community to develop a clear and inclusive enrolment policy for their school.

> So second year was when anything and everything was wrong – this school is growing was the main concern. Like what's your plan for this school? Is it going to grow to 200 kids? Are we capping it at 100? Like it was small school mentality – this was our place and it's been wrecked.

Chris remembered her first year as a bit like a honeymoon period but that her experiences became much busier and more challenging in her second year when she began to make changes in the school. It was so stressful, she stated, that she couldn't remember any specific event during that time. She reflected:

> It's still hard (in the first year) but everybody's giving you a bit of a go and you're sitting back a bit. And then the second year you get going. I found – I can't even remember it. But it's like the second year was so stressful that I think I've blocked it out. And the third and fourth year have been much more pleasant.

Anna, Sam and Jenny also noticed that they experienced a much busier and more challenging time in their second year. They all commented that there was still an issue of the roller coaster ride of the highs and lows despite already having experienced their sector and school's annual routines even though they had some idea of their role's expectations.

Experiencing some success as principal during their second year

Geoff, who felt the end of his first year was a low point, reflected that during his second year he experienced changes in staff attitudes as they began to work on the school's future mission and vision statements. He also found, however, that these discussions about future expectations challenged several difficult long-term teachers who decided to resign at the end of that year. As he explained:

> Looking back on it – that is probably when our school culture changed the most. I had a couple of teachers who jumped off and newbies jumped on. I think that was a huge turning point, and that was when I started to feel confident, because all of a sudden I didn't have roadblocks in place.

He shared that he still had low points in the second year but that these came more from a few angry parents with personal agendas rather than from his staff. He reflected that he was thankful for the tough times because he'd acquired strategies in that time – "skills, knowledge, mindset, attitudes" that served him better later on.

Jo commented that her experiences of the organisational expectations and school routines helped to make her feel more comfortable in the role during her second year although she still had issues with some parents. With the support of the coach from the Coach in the Box program she felt she was learning to deal with them. She explained: "Those things aren't as hurtful anymore and I guess the more experiences you have with that, it's helping you get through it".

Jenny also felt more comfortable in the role during her second year and explained:

> I felt more comfortable in staff performance development, and in holding those formalised meetings but also documenting things. Meeting with governing council, all of those things – the structure of the meeting – that you just don't do as a teacher.

Sharyn realised during her second year that she was experiencing more success in working productively with staff and that both the students' behaviour and their learning had improved. She also reflected that she was beginning to feel really confident with her staff's progress towards building relationships with the local community through their increased involvement in local activities and events.

Stan reflected that during his second year, even though he had worked on the school's development plan and had gathered some student data, he still didn't feel 100% competent as the principal. Then half way though his second year his new area director visited his school and set out her demands of him as principal.

> She was very explicit about what she wanted, how to get there, site improvement plan needs to be based on this. Use this process here; go through it with your staff. Boom I'll be back in three weeks. It was amazing. That nebulousness went away. I was alright, great; I know where to go now. I have a road map.

From that meeting, he reflected, everything fell into place and he had strategies to do his job which in turn made him feel more like a principal. He worked with the staff on refining the school's site development plan and began to collect more data. Having the data, he said, gave him the confidence to speak to the community and the governing council about issues as he had hard evidence to support his statement.

During this Stage 4 in their second year in the role, a number of participants, including Anna, Sharyn, Cathy and David, all experienced some frustration in not always being able to get out of their office and into the classrooms with the teachers and students. They all commented that one thing that kept them in their office was the 150 plus emails they received daily that often required several hours to answer. David summed up this experience as being a balancing act. "It's all about time management and trying to twist that admin into teaching somehow".

Ambiguity with role boundaries

Three of the four participants from non-government schools commented on the additional responsibilities that religious leadership had on their principal role. Kate explained how these additional expectations impacted on the non-government school principal role and at times created ambiguity for her. She shared:

> Within our work we've got the religious side as well to balance. So when there are significant celebrations within our school parish you feel that you should be at that, but then you've also got responsibilities to still be at your own parish. So I feel guilty where ever I am because I can't be at both parish events at the same time.

Linda and Sam both acknowledged that they had not previously experienced the personal pressure of having people from the parish community coming to them for advice and wondered if this was part of their role. Linda advised:

> As a principal, particularly in a non-government independent school, not only does the school but the parish and parents and the old scholars and the foundation all want a piece of you, and you have to manage that so you don't go into melt down and overload.

The findings also revealed that three participants from the government and non-government sectors found that they had some experiences in their second year which they reflected were beyond their expectations of what the principal role entailed and created ambiguity for them concerning their role boundaries. Sharyn experienced being told by some members of her small community that it was her job to sort out the feuding that was occurring between families and children in the town. "The parents don't know how to handle them you have to; you have to sort it out when things happen in the community". Cathy related that she found in her second year she was doing a lot of counselling around the mental health of some staff and

that she had two staff members who had needed to take sudden leave for mental health reasons. She explained her dilemma:

> It's a fine line to balance that one because you have to be pastoral and supportive but then on the other hand you've got to think about what's going to happen for the students and where do I go with that. And that's drained me a lot.

Geoff remembered an experience that he had during his second year which made him question whether this kind of situation was really part of his job. His dilemma, he related, involved having to place a child whose only parent became very ill in the afternoon and had to be transferred immediately to the city. As there were no family members in the town he found he was up till late trying to find someone to take the child in for the night. He explained his dilemma:

> I don't want to be responsible for placing a child in someone else's care and then for something to happen to that child, but I also don't want to be lying in bed late at night thinking where is that child right now? I agonised over that for quite some time thinking well, this isn't my job, but then whose is it?

Pressures caused by underperforming staff

The findings revealed that five participants experienced the pressure of managing underperforming teachers which was a concern for them particularly in their second year. Sam, Geoff and Kate from the non-government sector reflected that some of the older teachers, who had been at the school for more than 20 years, wouldn't accept change in their teaching practice and some had lost the desire to teach. Although Geoff did have several of these underperforming staff members leave the school at the end of his second year, they were all concerned about managing these staff members and how to either encourage them to improve their practice or to leave the school.

Kate particularly felt she had hit a concrete wall with some of her staff and felt very defeated after nearly two years in the role as she had nowhere to go in moving the school forward. She shared that her school had no trouble in enrolling reception children but later when they were in Year 3 and the parents found out who the teachers would be she lost up to 25 students in the first half of the year. She determined:

> Next year is really about performance management of a couple of staff. But the amount of time that that's going to require, I don't know who else is going to do everything else. I was having a discussion just over the weekend with a colleague who was saying it's a real risk of burnout and I'm going to have to be very, very careful to manage myself …

Jo and Sharyn, from the government sector, reflected on the difficulties of having poorly performing teachers in small schools as there were no non-classroom teaching positions for them and the parents threatened to take their children to nearby schools. One strategy they shared was to have a good relationship with the sector's staffing

officers in order to explain their school's particular teaching requirements to discourage them from appointing 'hard to place' teachers in their small schools.

4.2.4.2.2   Reflections of five participants after three years in the role

Five participants, Linda, Chris, Sam, Geoff and David, who were in their fourth year in the role, reflected that having learned from their earlier experiences and challenges they were feeling more confident and comfortable in their principal role.

Experiencing trust from the school community and confidence in their role

Chris commented that once she was in her third and fourth year in her role she knew she had earned the trust of the community and was confident in her actions. She explained, "It's hard in that first, even second year as you feel you should be at the school. But now I'm in my fourth year at my school and I'm very comfortable to go and pop down to my kids' sports day for an hour and come back". Linda also experienced this feeling of trust from the school community and related that she felt confident to go to the chemist at 10.00am in the school morning because they knew that she often worked late into the evening.

Geoff reflected that he had earned the trust of the school community which in turn made him feel more confident in his role. He noted that he no longer needed to "be the first at school or the last to leave" which he had previously believed was expected of him by the community. He stated that into his third year he started to feel that he had an answer for most things as he had several years' worth of data on student learning to fall back on and he felt confident in reading the finance reports to the board. He revealed that he had joined the local cricket and basketball teams and felt "this actually puts a lot of runs on the board for me, as a male. I don't know how many issues just being involved in the community in that way actually stops things coming over my desk".

Sam noticed that when he was on committees for his sector he could confidently state his opinion and feel he knew what he was talking about even though he was a lot younger principal than some of the other members. David and Geoff both noticed that toward the end of their third year they could respond to parent anger and personal criticism in a professional way and not take it personally. Geoff found that one of his most difficult parents was now one of his strongest allies. David also said that he felt confident now that when he walked into his office most days he knew what he had to do and he sat down and did it.

Chris shared her understanding of the role and how she had developed strategies to deal with the unpredictability of the experiences now that she had almost completed her fourth year.

> I think you acknowledge that you are a learner and don't beat yourself up. Something new comes every day so you're never really there. Just know it's a journey and you continually learn and grow and unfold and rearrange.

4.2.5 Summary

A number of themes were identified from the findings concerning participants' experiences that they felt influenced their development as they journeyed through the socialisation process to becoming a principal. These themes were condensed into major themes as demonstrated in Table 4.9. The major themes are: *previous leadership experiences, influence of previous school principal, relationships, role clarification issues, emotions concerning responsibility, decision making and roller coaster experiences, teaching and learning as a strategy, staff and parent issues and change, experiencing the school's culture, school size and location, principal wellness issues, growing in confidence in role, role boundaries, underperforming staffing issues and role confidence as principal.*

Table 4.9: Major themes identified from findings in Section 2

Stages	Major Themes	Themes
1. **Pre-appointment**	Previous school leadership experiences	Early leadership influences Influence from pre-leadership programs, by significant others, from previous leadership experiences, from moral purpose about role of principal
2. **Entry and Induction**	Impact of previous principal Relationships Role clarification issues Emotions concerning the responsibility, and decision making of role Roller coaster experiences	Impact of previous principal's legacy Experiencing school familiarisation Developing good relationships Familiarisation with new role Experiencing school community conflict Change in status to principal Emotions towards understanding the buck stops here Feelings of loneliness Roller coaster emotions about role
3. **Taking Hold**	Use of teaching and learning as a strategy Staff and parent issues and change School culture School size and location Wellness issues Role confidence	Immersion into the role Management of people during change Experiencing the school's culture Small schools with both teaching and leadership roles Principal wellness Fear at not being accepted by school community Worrying about disadvantaged families Continuing fluctuations in role confidence
4. **Taking Control** **Segment 1**	Relationships Difficult staffing issues Role issues Decision making Roller coaster emotion confidence in role	Positive school community and staff relationship development Difficult experiences with staff and role clarification Decision making Increased role confidence Lack of role confidence
5. **Moving On** **Segment 2**	Managing the role during change in second year Role boundaries Underperforming staffing issues	More challenging and busier role in second year Experiencing some success as principal in second year Ambiguity with role boundaries Pressures caused by of underperforming staff
4th year as principal	Role confidence as principal	Experiencing trust from the school community and confidence in the role Identity as principal

4.3   Section 3: Induction and support

The following information identifies the support structures that address the second supporting research question concerning the induction and support that the participants felt helped them deal with the dilemmas and tensions in their early years as principal.

4.3.1   Support structures

Ten main support structures that participants found helpful during their socialisation into the principalship were revealed from the findings. The bar graph in Figure 4.1 below identifies the ten support structures which include: Induction Programs, Principal Mentors, Principal Networks, Line Managers, Coach in the Box Program, Leadership Sector Courses, Sector Administration Personnel, Principal Associations, National Project Involvement and Family and Friends.
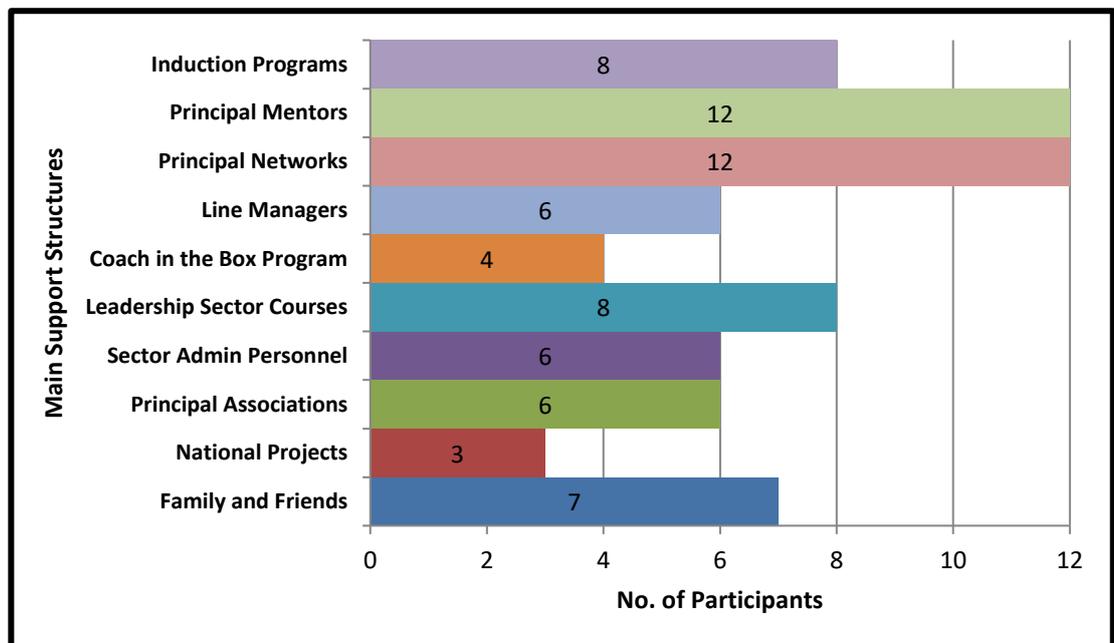
Figure 4.1: Support structures used by participants during their socialisation into the principalship
(n = 12 participants; support = 10 main support structures used by participants)

The following information expands on the support models identified in Figure 4.1.

Induction programs

Eight participants indicated that in the first few months in their new role they took part in some form of induction organised by their sector. David discussed his small sector's day of induction to which he was invited and remarked that he found the best part of the course was the networking with other principals. Chris, Jenny and Anna also commented that the most valuable part of the induction course for them

was networking with other new principals like themselves. Chris felt the timing of the course was difficult for her as she wanted to be in her school during the first few weeks and therefore attended only a couple of times. She commented that some of the content was not always relevant for her. Cathy and Jo, however, both felt their sector's leaders' induction course was very helpful for them. Jo explained:

> I went to the new leaders' induction program, which was useful I think for getting your head around the entire breadth of the role, because it's just so different from being a teacher.

Principal mentors

The findings from seven participants found that their sector had formally arranged for each of them to have a principal mentor to act as their 'go to' person. Linda and Chris revealed that this process wasn't available when they started but said that they were able to use their networks to find themselves suitable mentors. Linda said she found that her previous boss was a reliable mentor for her while Chris said she went out and found her own support, for example: "There's a principal that I had got to know who I knew if I thought I had a dumb question that I should know the answer to, I could ring him and he wouldn't think anything of it". Cathy, Sharyn and Anna lamented that they missed out on getting a mentor appointed and couldn't find one themselves. All three felt that they would have liked a mentor for, as Anna commented:

> I would still like to have a mentor and rather than do it ad hoc, actually plan … so then I can bank up my questions for when we meet and so actually formalise it a bit more.

All participants, regardless of whether they had a formalised mentor or not, reflected that at times they needed someone they could quickly contact for immediate advice and someone else whom they could "whinge to or share their war stories" with at the end of a week.

Principal networks

Participants, including Chris, Linda and Geoff, found working within their principal cluster groups or their own networks of principals to be the best support for them. Cathy, however, commented that in her sector "There's no longer regions, no longer clusters, there's these partnerships. But I really like the one I'm in, with very professional, knowledgeable people and I would like to think that would help a new principal".

Kate found that her most valuable support was her close principal colleagues. She explained: "They are the ones that I felt that I could actually talk to at a real level and say – oh my gosh, I don't know what to do about this – and you could be yourself with them".

Jenny and Jo found that their small school principals' hub group was the best support because they were also in small schools and dealing with similar issues. Jo reported that she actually had many offers of support but after a while she found she needed to be more selective and not always choose to travel long distances to the capital city four or five times a term.

Line managers

Six participants reflected that their respective line managers were of great support to them at different times during their first year. Jo, Jenny and Sharyn particularly commented on the wisdom and professionality of their line managers. Jo said that she could call her line manager for advice any time and sometimes she got a pep talk "Look it's not that big of a deal, it's okay" which she said she needed at the time. Jenny reflected that her line manager gave her wonderful support during her very difficult situation with staff in conflict while Sharyn had very good advice from her manager in how to work with her governing council chairperson. Sam, Geoff and Kate had principal consultants from their sector to support them and help them with difficult issues and site planning.

Coach in the Box program

Four participants revealed that they had completed the "Coach in the Box" course which was part of their sector's induction program. Cathy, Anna, Jo and David spoke about its excellent value as a support program for novice principals. Jo described it as an online course which included a regular phone conversation with a coach who worked with them individually on their own challenges in their schools. It was also convenient as she didn't have to leave her school or travel long distances to be part of the program. She explained how her coach helped her during one difficult situation with a bullying issue which she thought was her fault for not being able to deal with it. "I've learnt some strategies through the coach on how to handle my guilty feelings better and it's certainly made me a better leader**."**

Leadership sector courses

Eight participants reflected that they found that their respective sectors conducted useful courses for principals particularly in managing the administrative responsibilities of a school. Chris reflected, "The support from our Department, like a principals' course, is really useful if it's got the right content and if the timing's right". Topics concerning governance, legal issues in schools, and financial and performance management were seen as the most useful. In addition, participants found they were able to access these courses when they needed them rather than

at 'an all in one' induction or conference where the information would not be relevant at that time.

Support from sector personnel

Six participants whose sectors had central administration offices found that contacting their respective staffing, finance or administration officers proved to be very supportive. Stan and Jenny both reflected that in their first few months they phoned most of these officers for help and Stan even had some come out to his school. David explained that as part of the culture of his small sector he found that the more experienced principals provided the administrative support for new principals like him. Sam, Geoff and Kate also indicated that they felt well supported by their parish priests who acted as sounding boards for them as they shared the same parish families.

Principal associations

Six participants reflected on the support they received from their respective principal's association. Stan found that the SA Primary Principals Association (SAPPA) has a SAPPA–Talk chat line which he said he used constantly in his first six months by posting many questions that he had about the running of the school. Chris and Cathy also found some support from being in SAPPA, Jo found the Small Schools' Principal Association (SSPA) network extremely supportive while Sam found that attending both the SA Catholic Primary Principals Association (SACPPA) and the Australian Primary Principals Association's (APPA) workshops or conferences very important for his professional learning and principal networking. David spoke about the support the Lutheran Principals Association offered him.

National projects

Three participants spoke about the support they gained through being involved in either a national project or a district curriculum project. Stan said that he found working with local colleagues, particularly in his second year, very reassuring and enjoyed the sharing that occurred. Both Jo, who did the Principals as Literacy Leadership Course, and Geoff, who became involved in a National Partnership Project, found that the content was very useful in providing direction on working on building the culture of the school. Geoff explained: "I had a lot of guidance through a team that I work with – we're involved in a national partnership at the moment – and it is all about school transformation. We still keep in touch even though the project has finished".

Family support

Seven participants commented on their family's support which they felt was very important in helping them through their early years. Chris reflected that she didn't think she could have worked so hard at the school in those early months in the job if she had not been well supported by both her husband and her mother. Jo, Sam and David, who all had family members in businesses, found their help and support with the administrative issues at the school very valuable.

4.4   Section 4: Feeling comfortable and confident in the principal role

The following information from the findings addresses the third supporting research question, "What experiences and emotions assisted novice primary school principals in SA to recognise when they felt comfortable and confident with their identity as a principal?" This section identifies the progress of each participant towards their principal identity at the time of the individual and focus group interviews.

4.4.1   Principal identity development – I feel like a principal now

The findings showed that eight of the participants reported that they felt they had now developed their principal identity and were able to relate a time or an event that helped them to recognise when they felt they were principals. However, four other participants who had not completed their second year in their new role said they didn't always feel like principals at this stage and gave an explanation for these feelings.

Table 4.10 presents the participants' main experience or evidence that demonstrated they had developed their principal identity.

Table 4.10: Experience or evidence participants had developed their principal identity

Participant	Experience or evidence for feeling like a principal
Linda	When I was first working with the Board if they asked me to do something I did it. Now I might say, 'Actually I'm going to think about that, and the impact and where it's at and come back to you with some sort of recommendation around it' rather than just doing it. (I felt like a principal from the beginning – comfortable and confident after 12 months.)
Kate	I think I did feel like a principal from the very beginning I felt confident that I can do the job and I still feel confident that I can do this job but what I don't feel confident about is the toll that it can take on me and my family (after 1 year).
Chris	Knowing that I had the trust and the respect from my community was the big experience that made me feel comfortable and competent in my role (in 2nd year).
Cathy	I was pleased how I handled all stake holders in the extra class event. I was in control with the change and then with that year with student numbers which have stabilized now for a while, which is really good. But I think that's when I felt like I was a principal then – (in 2nd year).
Sam	I think because I'm studying and because I'm interested in learning I tend to have a pretty good grasp about what best practice is and what different schools are doing. So it's led to – maybe this year where I've really felt self-assured as a principal and not just the principal but I'm a principal doing well (4th year).
Stan	We are now focusing on what we want to do and our core business which is student outcomes and we have the data. We have our site improvement plan. We are on the same page. I feel like a principal now (in 3rd year).
David	A parent would just walk out of the office after hounding you and you would think that was good. Like they obviously need to get that off their chest and I'm the person to do it to – like you just kind of rehearse on the party line – like professionally more than anything else. It feels very natural – that's just what principals do I think (in 3rd year).
Geoff	I think because I always fell back on my faith or my moral imperative for why I was there, I always had an inner confidence that 'I know this is hard, and I know I'm copping a fair bit here, but it's the right thing to do.' I didn't strut that confidence, until my 3rd year.

The following situations were identified from the evidence that participants expressed in Table 4.10 to demonstrate they had developed their principal identity.

Participants said they felt confident as principals when they could: make significant decisions, manage conflict to successful outcomes, feel they were in control, gain the respect and trust of the school community, feel equal with principal colleagues, manage organisational expectations as well as the core business to improve student outcomes, and cope more professionally with the negative issues that arise.

4.4.1.1 Participants' progress towards their principal identity

Jo, Jenny, Sharyn and Anna who had not completed two years in their first principal role at the time of the individual and focus group interviews revealed that they weren't always sure that they were comfortable or confident in the role, nor with their new identity as a principal. Table 4.11 presents the participants' progress towards their principal identity.

Table 4.11: Participants' progress towards their principal identity

Participant	Evidence of their progress towards feeling like a principal
Jo	When I really probably started to feel more comfortable in the role was probably into my second year, when I sort of felt that I knew what I was doing a bit. I haven't moved up the rankings and it's something I would have liked to have done. Then I would have a more rounded view of leadership and had a mentor.
Jenny	I feel like the principal when people were coming to me with all these dreadful things – I thought oh my gosh, is this what this job's all about. I think in the second year you think oh yes, I've got a bit of an idea of what's going on here.
Sharyn	It's when that cultural shift happens, when you see it starting to happen and when you hear the kids saying please and thank you. The self-assurance is when you can explain yourself and what you want for the school and the reasons why. It's still a roller coaster ride though – I never feel quite safe.
Anna	I feel comfortable but I don't always feel competent where I want to be – where I feel I'm on top of things. And I don't know if it ever comes. I still feel like a fraud sometimes. I would just like to have someone (peer mentor) that I can just bounce some ideas off and say well how do you manage your emails and just nuts and bolts stuff?

N.B.: After the focus group interviews three participants indicated that they would not be continuing in their principal position at their current school. Two were leaving the field of education altogether and cited concerns about previous lack of experience in leadership and challenging school situations while the third had won the principalship in another rural school nearer to her home.

The four participants who didn't always feel like principals identified issues to do with learning to be leaders and managing the whole role. These issues emerged from the explanations that participants provided to demonstrate that while they were progressing towards their principal identity they still had doubts about their ability to manage all aspects of the role (see Table 4.11). They included: still being shocked by expectations of the role and only having some idea of the whole role, limited previous leadership experience, feeling comfortable with the cultural shift in the school but not comfortable with constant highs and lows in the role and not always feeling competent and on top of things. Some felt they still needed to learn more about the administrative side of their role before they would feel they had developed their principal identity.

4.5 Section 5: Advice for aspiring and novice primary school principals

The following information from the findings addresses the fourth supporting research question, "What advice from their recent experiences did novice primary school principals perceive could be beneficial for newly appointed and aspiring principals during their socialisation into the principal role?" All participants responded to the question and offered some advice for new principals after reflecting on their early experiences and the support that they had received. The advice is presented according to the themes that materialised from principals' responses. They included: managing the school culture, managing people, dealing with change, support structures, decision making, prioritise, principal wellness and celebrating. The importance of keeping up with professional reading and study, and attending their sector's leadership courses, were also seen as important in developing their principal identity. The advice from participants' experiences that may help future new principals is presented in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Participants' advice for future new principals

Theme	Selected examples of participants' advice
Managing the school culture	Value what had gone before and recognise the positives in each situation.
	Get to know the community before you do too much, and get known by the community for who you are, be true to yourself. And also don't think you have to be everything to everyone.
Managing people	In this role the most difficult thing is people, it is challenging and I think having someone who has been a principal, who you can ring and chat to if you've got issues, dealing with a challenge.
	Don't bulldoze people – be reflective. If you bulldoze you will lose people so if you get that feedback it enables you to realign slightly.
Dealing with change	Don't bite off more than you can chew. Take that 12 months to look, listen and learn. Make the changes that you need to change but the bigger ones hold off on. You've got to work out how the dynamics work, of the school and the community and try to get as much base line data that you can that can help you with any the changes that you see.
	Share your mistakes with staff. Create your own culture of learning.
Support structures	Importance of having a number of mentors, networking, coaching – going to principal meetings even if you think you're too busy or the agenda doesn't look interesting.
	Be proactive with your relationships with other principals as everyone is busy. Keep ringing till someone has the time to help you.
	Even if it's not a structured mentor system, having someone that you can debrief with, share ideas with, someone with experience would be good.
Professional reading or study	(Do) some type of educational study around leadership depending on the context, governance, finance, all of those sorts of things.
	You need to read a lot. You're getting into a profession that uses a certain language like any profession and you pick this up from principal articles.
Leadership courses	Do a course specifically a Principalship type, how do you, what are the, what does the role entail? That's really useful but the content and timing of it is critical.
	Use your sector's administration support e.g. finance, staffing, legal issues.
Decision making	Use a delegation tree exercise with your staff so they understand which decisions they can make autonomously.*
	Believe in yourself, be confident in your skills, trust in your decisions and don't beat yourself up if you make mistakes.
	Have a moral purpose /compass that will guide you when making decision and this will help with sleeping at night.
Prioritise	Be super organised, so dealing with challenges and issues, if you're not organised then your whole world can come crushing down and you become very overwhelmed. Prioritise – make lists.
	Manage your emails (150 per day). If you read something over the weekend you can't switch off from it.
	In the first 12 months it's easy to get bogged down in responding to the small issues, and perhaps never attacking the big ones. If you waste that first 12 months on those things, then you're not really making head ground. What's going to make our school better in 5 years is a good place to start.
Principal wellness	From the day that I found out I had the position, I just did not sleep a decent sleep for a very long time. But I got some good advice not to drink alcohol which was tempting.
	Exercise to stay fit. Go out with friends for coffee – get away from the job sometimes.
Celebrate	Acknowledge your own journey and also celebrate journey of staff.
	You're never there – you're continually learning in this role.

* A delegation tree exercise is used for staff to understand which decisions they can make autonomously, which decisions they just need to report to you on, which decisions they need to discuss with you and which decisions you need to make for them. It gives everybody a lot more ownership of decisions being made and clears your plate as well.

The information below expands on the themes and examples of the advice that participants offered to new and aspiring principals which were presented in Table 4.12. This list is not in order of preference but indicates the main experiences that participants felt had been difficult for them and they offered advice and strategies they'd learned to overcome or manage them.

Managing the school culture

All participants offered some advice concerning the influence of the school culture on a novice principal, particularly in their first 12 months. The example from Linda, that reflected similar advice from six other participants, stressed the importance of the new principal getting to know the community and in valuing what had already happened in the school before making any changes.

Managing people

All participants commented that they realised that a large part of the job was about managing people. Linda, Cathy, Geoff, Sam, Kate and Sharyn found that a good strategy for managing staff issues such as conflict was to have someone else from the profession to talk to. This strategy was also important in gaining valuable advice when dealing with parents or other members of the community. Linda suggested that it was better not to bully or bulldoze people into making decisions as they would only feel negatively about it and not feel they had a part in the planning process.

Dealing with change

Five participants, including David, Linda, Sam, Geoff and Chris who had the most experience in the principal position, reflected on dealing with the reactions to change with the staff and community and suggested that using data was a good method of supporting the direction of that change. They advised that it was better to prioritise the areas to work on, particularly in the first year, and identify which ones could wait before attempting to introduce too many changes.

Support structures

All participants stressed the importance of building a network of principal colleagues and having a principal mentor particularly in those early months. Six participants, Sam, Stan, Chris, Jo, Linda and Jenny, stressed the importance of attending principal meetings and conferences as just being with colleagues and sharing experiences was an important part of assisting in developing their professional identity.

Professional reading and study

Linda, Sam and David particularly believed that keeping abreast of current professional reading was important to build on professional knowledge as a principal as this also helped in developing a feeling of being part of the profession. Linda offered the strategy of setting aside a day or two in the school holidays for professional reading.

Leadership courses

All participants reflected on the importance of attending sector or principal association courses as needed. Jo, Jenny, Sharyn and Kate suggested the strategy of putting aside some funding in the annual school budget to enable attendance at these association courses. These funds could possibly even cover the cost of the fuel and the employment of a temporary replacement teacher who could release a senior staff member to be the school leader while you are out of the school.

Decision making

All participants discussed the importance of having strategies for feeling confident in making decisions as they reflected that the role involved making "many decisions on a daily basis" right from the beginning of their appointment as principal. Stan offered the suggestion of sharing the delegation tree strategy (see footnote on p.71) with staff, while Anna advised new principals to believe in themselves, and Chris suggested that having a moral guide to making decisions would help them feel more confident, less stressed and would also improve their ability to sleep at night.

Prioritise

Chris, David, Stan and Geoff, in particular, suggested making daily lists or setting tasks was an important strategy for novice principals so as to avoid getting bogged down in the unimportant issues. Learning not to look at emails during non-school time was also seen by most participants as vital to managing the huge number of emails that they all said they received on a daily basis. As Anna and Chris revealed, once they looked at an email on a weekend they couldn't focus or enjoy any family or rest time as they worried about how to manage the issue highlighted in the email. Chris also advised, "Check all your emails so that you don't miss anything that's really important. And then hit the delete button very frequently as half the mail every day is rubbish and goes into the recycle bin".

Principal wellness

All participants commented on aspects of their personal wellness particularly in the first 12 months in the role. Kate, Jo, Stan, Linda, Chris and Anna provided some advice for other novice principals to help them cope with the workload of the role. They stressed the importance of keeping healthy whether through eating healthily, exercising several times a week, not becoming alcohol dependent, getting enough sleep or sharing concerns with other colleagues.

Celebrating

Anna, Sharyn, Chris, Stan and Sam suggested that it was important to celebrate successes each term by reflecting on the school's journey, the staff's journey and also your own. Anna suggested holding a special staff meeting and to encourage staff to write down and share their successes.

4.6   Summary

In this chapter the findings of both the 12 case studies and the focus group interviews were presented within five sections that addressed the four supporting research questions for this study. Major themes were identified from the themes in each section.

Section 1 presented the participants' background data and a series of short pen portraits about each participant that included information about the influence of their new school's past principal (Appendix 7). A summary of the major themes identified from this section includes the influence of: *participants' previous leadership experiences, gender, school size and location.*

Section 2 addressed the first supporting research question and presented the themes related to participants' experiences, strategies and emotions as they progressed through the first four stages of the socialisation hierarchy. What is very clear from this section is the progress that each participant made as they encountered their challenging experiences, developed strategies to deal with them over time and become more confident in their role. A summary of major themes presented includes*: the previous principal's legacy, relationships, role clarification issues, emotions concerning responsibility and decision making, teaching and learning as core business, managing difficult staff and parents, school culture, size of school and locations, principal wellness, increasing confidence in the role over time, staffing issues, principal wellness issues, encountering role boundaries and underperforming staff pressures and finally role confidence as principal.*

Section 3 addressed the second supporting research question by identifying the support participants felt was often vital in assisting them through the tensions and dilemmas of their new role. A summary of the major support structures includes*: induction programs, principal mentor and having a network of principals, support from a line manager, having access to a coach, attending sector leadership courses and family support.*

Section 4 addressed the third supporting research question by presenting the important experience that each participant identified as indicating they had either developed their principal identity or whether they were still progressing towards it. The major themes identified include: *making significant decisions, managing conflict, being in control of the role, gaining respect and trust of school community, feeling equal with principal colleagues, managing organisational expectations and core business to improve student outcomes and coping more professionally with any negative issues that occur.*

Section 5 addressed the fourth supporting research question concerning the advice that participants offered to aspiring principals that they gained from their own experiences. A summary of the major themes includes: *managing the school culture, managing staff, dealing with change, support structures, decision making, prioritising, principal wellness issues and celebrating successes.*

From a further analysis of the above major themes, seven overarching themes emerged to demonstrate the most challenging experiences that influenced the development of the novice primary school principals' new identities. The seven overarching themes include: *learning about the role and its boundaries, school culture and change, managing difficult staff and parents, issues of school location, leadership to improve student learning, principal wellness during the transition and the vital support structures.*

In the next chapter these overarching themes are discussed within the context of the participants' socialisation journey from their teacher identity to their principal identity and how they provide answers to the major research question. The discussion will also include how the issues raised align with the relevant literature concerning leadership preparation, induction and support for novice principals during their transition and socialisation into the principalship.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

"I Feel Like a Principal Now"
(Stan, participating principal)

Introduction

The findings presented in Chapter 4 reveal that the majority of the twelve South Australian novice primary school principals who participated in this study were initially excited but also shocked and overwhelmed by the diversity and unpredictability of their responsibilities in their new role and encountered some very challenging experiences within their first year. As they grew in confidence during their socialisation journey to the principalship, most found they had developed endurance through using strategies for managing the most significant of these experiences and, with the support from their colleagues, had become confident and comfortable with their new identity as a principal.

Seven overarching themes concerning these early experiences and the support received that participants felt were most significant in influencing their developing principal identity emerged from the data: learning about the role and its boundaries, school culture and change, managing difficult staff and parents, issues of school location, leadership to improve student learning, principal wellness during transition and vital support structures.

The results of this study contribute to the understanding of what happens to novice primary school principals when they enter their new role and how the experiences they encounter influence their developing principal identities. These results represent the major experiences and support that were encountered by twelve South Australian novice primary school principals as they transitioned into the principal role. It is notable that these experiences occurred within the unique social contexts of South Australian primary school locations in both urban and rural settings from the across the four major educational sectors. The knowledge gained from this study will support the direction of future leadership development and appropriate support strategies for South Australian aspiring and novice primary school principals.

The major research question for this study was to explore the perceptions of novice primary school principals in SA as they reflected on the influence that their early experiences and support had on the development of their principal identity during their socialisation into the principalship. The seven overarching themes emerged from the four supporting research questions as stated in Chapter 1.

The present chapter discusses the seven overarching themes that emerged from the data in the context of the participants' socialisation journey from their teacher identity to their principal identity, and how these answer the major research question for this study and align with the literature. This discussion concludes with the identification of the noteworthy findings and the chapter's overall summary.

5.1 Discussion of the seven overarching themes

The following discussion focuses on the seven overarching themes which participants identified as having a lasting impression on their developing principal identities during their socialisation into the role.

5.1.1 Learning about the role and its boundaries

It is evident from the findings that the most difficult experience that all participants in this study discussed as having a major impact on their developing principal identity was in learning what their role was and how to manage its breadth, diversity and unpredictability. This finding is in accordance with the research of Brody et al. (2010, p. 612), who assert that understanding the new role and who they are in relation to its responsibilities is central to the development of novice principals' professional identities. So important was learning about the role that the participating principals described issues with the role at every stage and phase along their socialisation journey; from their anticipatory phase before appointment, through their organisational and professional phases particularly in their first few years, and finally to their personal socialisation phase when most participants felt more confident and comfortable in their role as principals.

5.1.1.1 Experiences in learning the role practice

One of the questions that this study sought to answer concerned the early experiences that novice primary school principals in SA encounter during their socialisation into the principal role. Participants discussed the experiences and emotions they endured in their first few months after winning the principal position. Regardless of their educational sector, location and previous leadership experiences, participants claimed they didn't really know what to do in their first few weeks in the role and reported being shocked by the amount and diversity of the decisions they had to make, the unpredictability of incidents that happened even during one day and just what the term 'the buck stops with you' actually meant. Shields' (2008) research study on the early experiences of novice principals from Adventist schools across Australia also found her participants experienced a culture

shock during transition into the role and had difficulties managing the demands of the day-to-day operations of the school.

The sheer volume of responsibilities incurred by the role was overwhelming and participants reflected it was very different from their teacher role. Dealing with their sector's expectations, and in some cases, the set of individual responsibilities imposed on them by the traditions established by previous principals and by community expectations contributed to the ambiguity of the role.

This finding is consistent with Cuban's (2011, p.1) assertion that the principal role was "a multifaceted job with three overlapping areas of responsibility" which he termed instructional, managerial and political leadership. He noted that learning to recognise and manage all three responsibilities of the role was a difficult task for most principals and especially those new to the principalship. It is important to add here, that the findings showed participating principals from non-government schools identified a fourth responsibility which included their role in the religious leadership of their school and within their parish. According to Belmonte and Cranston (2007), these added expectations of religious leadership create additional dilemmas and tensions for lay novice principals and cause increased stress levels and role ambiguity.

The reality of 'the buck stops here' and having total responsibility for everything that happened in the school meant that participants felt very lonely at the top, even when they had a deputy principal, as there were always decisions to be made that couldn't be discussed with others within the school. Participants spoke about the effects of their change in status and some even noticed the differences in staff attitude towards them particularly in not wanting to have them in their classrooms. This professional loneliness was emphasised by participants who noted the importance of having someone from outside of the school to talk to and listen to their concerns.

The impact of professional loneliness on participants is in keeping with the research of Stephenson and Bauer (2010) who found that professional isolation can lead to stress and even burnout for the novice principal. Even those who had previously been in acting principal positions or had been deputy principals noticed that the effects of having the final decision making responsibilities were quite daunting and vastly different from being in the 'acting' position which carried mainly the administrative duties of the role.

Regardless of the levels of responsibility for the school's financial management among the different sectors, participating principals discussed their lack of

knowledge in how to understand the school financial system and noted that it took up to two years for many of them to finally feel confident with presenting and discussing the school budget statements with their governing councils or boards. Previous research by Spillane and Lee (2014) and Shields (2008) also acknowledged the challenges that novice principals faced in managing and presenting the school budget, particularly in the early stages of their organisational socialisation into the role.

Within the first year in their new position participating principals revealed that they had experienced some quite difficult challenges such as sector expectations of the school's review process, staff in conflict with one another, the results of having a succession of principals over a short space in time and dealing with angry and aggressive parents. While most participants reported using strategies including contacting their line managers for advice or sharing their problems with colleagues, all participants involved felt that these experiences had a negative impact on their developing principal identities and wondered how anyone could be prepared for some of these initial traumas. This is similar with the research of Crow (2007, p. 56) who found that his participants also experienced traumas including "the removal of the previous headteacher and a major parental backlash over a change in admissions processes" for which they were not prepared so early in their careers.

Whereas Weindling and Dimmock (2006) reported that by the time novices reached their second year they were more confident principals with the hindsight of annual routines, the participants in this study noted that their second year in the principal role was much harder, more stressful and busier than in their first. Researchers Kelly and Saunders (2010, p.135) acknowledged an intensification of their novice principals' personal workloads towards the end of their first year in the role but as their research only focused on the first year they did not comment on their second year experiences. Participants in the present study noted that in their second year there were increased expectations of them in their role as well as less personal tolerance of their newness by the community. They observed, however, that they had begun making major changes to the school's organisation and the teaching and learning pedagogy which not only led to an increase in their workload in their second year but was also the time when some of them met with resistance when they changed the traditional way of doing things. Crawford and Cowie (2012, p. 181), from their research in Scotland, concurred with these findings and reflected that while "their new heads were able to assume new identities with relatively high levels of confidence" by the end of their first year in the role, the effects of a complex

global society meant that this first year would only be the beginning of a much longer socialisation process for new headteachers in today's environment.

5.1.1.2 Advice on managing the role practice

Another of the research questions for this study included exploring the advice that participants believed would be beneficial for newly appointed and aspiring principals. Participating principals found that developing strategies, having a moral compass as a guide to decision making and learning to prioritise helped them deal with, and manage, the challenging experiences and the day-to-day incidents that they faced in learning the role practices of the principal position. This advice is consistent with the findings from researchers Kelly and Saunders (2010) who reported that participants in their study developed strategies by using their moral purpose while Crawford and Cowie (2012) noted that their participants were able to prioritise and think more strategically during their second and third years in their principal role.

5.1.1.3 Issues of challenging experiences and role boundaries

Clearly during the early stages of their socialisation journey the participants expressed confusion about the boundaries of their new role particularly when some of their experiences seemed to be well beyond their expectation of what they thought their role should be. Participating principals questioned whether their unusual experiences which involved families from outside of the school community, were part of their role or not and made statements such as, "Who should do this?" and "Is this my job?" They spoke about their conflicting emotions as these situations involved people in need of help but they expressed concern that they didn't have the life skills or counselling expertise to support these people and noted how draining this type of situation was for them.

These feelings about their unusual experiences and role ambiguity are in accordance with the findings from the research of Cottrell and James (2015, p.4) who used the term 'role boundary' to identify those experiences that the novice principals in their study felt were beyond their expectations of what their role entailed. In those authors' study, however, the situations that went beyond their participants' perceived role boundaries were organisational whereas in this study the situations were outside of the school and often crossed the boundaries of education, mental health and child protection laws. Spillane and Lee's (2014, p. 451) research study in the US found that some of their participants also experienced a huge diversity in the expectations on their role where they felt they were "everything to everybody and that principals have to pick up the slack when others don't deliver".

As indicated from the findings, participating principals from non-government Christian schools commented that their additional religious leadership responsibilities added to the blurring of the boundaries between their principal role and their perceived responsibilities to the outside parish community as well as the school community. According to Belmonte and Cranston (2007, p.15) role ambiguity was a significant concern for the lay principals in Catholic schools. They identified the need for additional professional development and support for these principals to successfully manage their religious leadership role. The need for more professional development in religious leadership is apparent in this study as the participating principals from the non-government religious sectors indicated some confusion concerning the breadth of their role beyond their school.

It is evident from the findings that most of the experiences outside of the perceived principal role boundary involved participating principals in small rural schools, many of whom had already noted that the rural principal is often 'the social glue' for the local community. This is in keeping with the research by Halsey (2011, p. 7) where he emphasises the important role that the school plays in small rural communities and noted that there is less role demarcation in small schools than in larger organisations. One concern that needs investigating further is the legal implications of rural school principals overstepping their educational role boundaries particularly when the community's expectations of the principal's role extend beyond the legal protection of the South Australian Education Act. While this did not happen in this study, there were some incidents where community needs put a participating principal in a difficult situation that could potentially have been in conflict with child protection laws.

5.1.2 School culture and change

Dealing with their new school's culture was a major point of discussion with participants particularly in the first six months of their organisational socialisation journey. A number of strategies for finding out about the culture of both the school and the local community were discussed by participants who spoke about the importance of taking things slowly, observing how things were being done, involving all the stakeholders and in valuing what had gone before. According to Wildy and Clarke (2012), involving all the stake holders in sharing their beliefs about the school and its educational programs is an ideal strategy for understanding the school's culture, particularly in rural and remote locations.

Paramount in developing an understanding of the school and community culture, according to participating principals, was the strategy of building relationships and

trust with the school community. The participants discussed the various strategies they used to get to know the staff and the community, explaining it was during these times that they found out what was valued in the school and what the community thought should be changed. Authors Wildy et al. (2014, p. 107) concurred with the participating principals' belief in the importance of learning about the school's culture which, they stressed, was the "key to understanding what is needed to improve student learning" and would give them some direction in changing the culture.

5.1.2.1 Resisting change

Within their first six months, participants from both rural and urban small schools spoke about experiencing the full pressure of the current school culture and meeting resistance from staff and parents when they tried to implement some new initiatives and changes to the way things had been done, particularly if they had been set up by the previous principal. Participants described this resistance as very confronting and depressing as it made it very difficult to introduce any change at all in their schools in their first year. These participants spoke about their feelings of failure and how, at some point in their first year, they even considered resigning from the principalship. This is also consistent with the research of Lester (2003, p. 93) which found that the community pressure against changing the organisational practices in the school was so great for a few of her participants that they decided to give up the struggle against that culture and hoped that their next appointment was in a more progressive school.

Resistance to change was experienced more by participating principals in rural small schools as they noted that their schools often reflected the conservative nature of the local communities they were in. These participants complained about the 'small school mentality' of their school's culture when increased student numbers caused complaints from parents and school boards due to the resulting changes that were infiltrating the current student culture and altering their relationships with the current teaching staff who had more parents to get to know. The impact of the conservative attitudes and beliefs of small communities on the school's culture and on the novice principal and the teaching staff has been acknowledged in the literature, including works by Lester (2003), Gilbert et al. (2008) and Drummond and Halsey (2013).

5.1.2.2 Gender issues and school culture

Whereas researchers, Lester (2003) and Gilbert et al. (2008), found in their respective studies that some of their female novice principals felt there were negative community attitudes towards them as female school leaders, only one

female participating principal experienced significant negative responses from the school and the community who indicated that they preferred a male principal. However, addressing the issue with her school council chairperson and encouraging her staff to build positive relationships with the local community all helped to improve the attitudes of the local community towards the school. Similarly, in a research study by Wildy (2004), the findings identified that the successful female principals in the rural schools in WA who had become involved in town sports and other local events, were perceived more favourably by their rural communities than those who kept themselves separate from the local community and commuted to the city on weekends. It must be noted, however, that principals in this study were not asked any questions concerning gender issues in their interviews and it cannot be assumed that some of the other female participants did not also experience gender bias as female principals.

5.1.2.3 Building a shared school culture

It is evident from the findings that as the participating principals moved gradually through the stages of the socialisation hierarchy, as noted in the literature review, they noticed that their difficulties with the nature of the school culture became less intimidating. Their strategies of using verbal and non-verbal feedback as a guide to how they were going, developing trusting relationships over time and of working together with staff and the community on the school's new vision statements and strategic plans were some of the approaches they felt influenced this improvement. For most, however, this took several years to achieve for as participants observed 'change occurs slowly'. Authors Garcia-Garduno et al. (2011, p. 103) concurred with these statements and noted from their research that novice principals gradually "acquire tacit knowledge which allows them to handle problems in a less conflictive and more efficient way" and, therefore, find the whole role less difficult.

The struggles with changing the school culture experienced by the participating principals is in keeping with the work of renowned authors, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) who put forward the concept that the newcomer to any organisation will experience different tactics set up to preserve the existing culture of that organisation. Having issues with the legacy of previous principals, not wanting a female principal, resisting updating pedagogical skills and annual Christmas concerts as the participating principals experienced, were all part of those tactics that Van Maanen and Schein identified as being part of the organisational socialisation of the novice principal. As these authors predicted, after a period of time, participants and their school communities had more realistic expectations of each other and they were able to move forward together.

5.1.3 Managing difficult staff and parents

Participating principals discussed the issues they faced in managing their staff and the parents at their new schools and how these influenced their developing principal identities. Participants generally reflected on the 'honeymoon period' when they first started at the school and enjoyed being the centre of attention in their early months whereas a few participants reported feeling the tensions with staff and parents very early in their tenure. During these early stages in their socialisation journey to the principalship participants referred to situations where they felt unprepared and were not confident in managing parents in governing council meetings or addressing issues of conflict with staff. This is in line with the findings of research by Gilbert et al. (2008) which showed that their first time principals expressed apprehension at working with staff and also with parents, particularly those on their School Councils and other parent committees. Of note, seven of the participating principals had not had any previous experience in managing staff or in working with parents beyond the classroom and not all had used any strategies for getting to know them beyond day-to-day encounters.

5.1.3.1 Managing difficult staff

Earning the trust and respect of staff in their first year was a strategy that participating principals worked hard to achieve. However, trying to deal with a few staff who had either been at the school for a long time or who had lost their enthusiasm for teaching proved to be very challenging for participants. Regardless of the sector and personnel management practices of hiring staff, participating principals discussed the difficulties they had in trying to manage these few teachers as they had negative effects on the rest of the staff. They found having to conduct processes set up by their sectors for managing underperforming staff was very concerning particularly as they had been advised by experienced principals not to undertake such a task for it was very time consuming and often led to no successful outcome. This statement is supported by Spillane and Lee (2014) who cite that managing ineffective and resistant staff took an enormous amount of time and emotional energy from the novice principal who was often not well prepared or supported in this type of personnel issue.

5.1.3.2 Managing difficult parents

Very early in their new principal position participating principals spoke about becoming acquainted with a few difficult and aggressive parents and noted that these confrontations significantly affected their developing principal identities. While most altercations with parents were related to issues concerning their children, stories about parents who consistently verbally abused them with personal attacks

also surfaced. Non-government Christian school participants indicated that they fell back on their faith for managing these people and believed that it was part of their job for the parents to let their anger out on them, as often, they would then go away satisfied. With more experience in managing angry confrontations, however, participants revealed they were able to come to terms with not being liked by everyone and had developed a more professional manner in dealing with these experiences. What is concerning is that participating principals believed that managing these few constantly aggressive parents was part of their role and many did not seek further support.

While there doesn't appear to be many reports concerning the effects of angry and aggressive parents on principals in leadership and management research articles, Quong's (2006) research does support similar concerns to those of the participants in this study, and acknowledged his problems dealing with parent complaints, particularly the ongoing issues he had with one parent. This situation is in accordance with the results of one Australia-wide health survey of principals by Riley (2015, p. 25) which found that principals and deputy principals reported increased 'offensive behaviour' from parents and students over the five-year study and observed that this was at a far higher prevalence than in other occupations.

5.1.4 Issues of school context and location

There were noticeable differences between the schools in which participating principals began their socialisation journey to the principalship. These schools ranged from small to medium-sized, were either in urban or rural locations and could be from the government or the non-government sector. Additionally, the influence of the previous principal including how well financed and organised the school was left and whether the community was ready for change or not, had a significant impact on the strategies that the participating principals used initially to move successfully into their schools.

5.1.4.1 Size and location

Some of the differences in size and location were identified by participating principals as causing increased pressure and stress. While most of the small schools in this study were in rural locations, it is notable that participants in small urban schools, even with a deputy principal, still felt overwhelmed and lonely in the top job. They revealed they felt much more supported when they were in larger schools where there were many more people in leadership positions with whom they could share their concerns.

Issues of stress and uncertainty in going into rural locations were reported by participants, particularly those with no past rural school experiences. The difficulties of feeling like being 'in a fish bowl' was commented on by participants who also felt anxiety at the expectations of their continuous availability to all in that community as well as the school. This is consistent with the findings from research by Halsey (2011) who found that there were increased demands of educational and community leadership placed on principals in remote and rural schools. This author argues that more specific preparation time for novice principals when they are appointed to rural locations would give them greater knowledge and understanding of the location they were going into and would make them more aware of the differences of the systems used in small schools compared with larger schools.

5.1.4.2 Previous leadership experiences

Results from the participating principals' background data indicated that there was a significant difference between the previous leadership experiences of participants who had won principal vacancies in urban schools compared with those in rural school locations. What was evident was that the five urban school participants all had lengthy experiences in deputy and assistant principal positions which gave them some skills and understanding of school management and of staff performance management, whereas the leadership experiences of the seven participating principals who were in small rural schools was limited to curriculum coordinator and consultant roles with no administrative and teacher management responsibilities. This result indicates that the location of the school had a lot to do with the number of applicants applying for an urban school principal vacancy thus requiring the participating principal to have a higher level of previous leadership experiences than other applicants in order to win the position. The same level of previous leadership experiences was not a significant factor for the participating principals to win the principal vacancy for their small rural schools in this study. This influence of the school's location is consistent with the findings of researchers Barty et al. (2005), who noted, in their study of the potential shortage of applicants for principal positions in South Australia and Victoria, that the location of a school was one significant predictor for the number of applicants for a principal vacancy. Their study found that more experienced applicants applied for and won urban schools and that there were less applicants for the small rural schools. This is also in accordance with the findings of Drummond and Halsey (2013, p. 28) whose research noted that there were less applicants for rural and remote schools than for schools closer to regional and metropolitan areas.

5.1.4.3 The experiences of teaching principals with no deputy principal

Participating principals from small rural schools with no deputy principal spoke about the 'wearing of many hats' that goes with the teaching principal role and commented that being a 'jack of all trades' was a good description for them. They shared some amusing stories of trying to learn their new role on the job and be prepared for staff professional development meetings while running from the classroom and having to fix the toilets or answer emails while teaching at the same time. This finding is in accordance with assertions by Wildy and Clarke (2012, p. 64) who noted that many new principals particularly from small rural schools came straight from the classroom with little or no leadership preparation and had to carry the dual role of principal and teacher and 'learn on the job'.

Participants from rural schools with no deputy lamented they could never finish their administrative work and all had to take work home, thus interfering with their family life and their own well-being. In addition, participants shared their concerns that they were still expected to know about and implement all their sector's policies and organisational practices as well as new curriculum initiatives in the same way as principals in larger schools with more school leaders and with no teaching responsibilities. The expectation from two different sectors that their novice principals in small rural schools still had to carry out school reviews and implement the required changes while in their first three months in the role is indicative of the lack of understanding of their situation by their organisations. This concern is supported by Wildy and Clarke (2012) who acknowledged the lack of differentiation of organisational tasks between the expectations of small schools, often with novice principals and larger schools with more experienced principals.

Lack of close access to professional learning and feelings of professional isolation were also reported by participants in small schools as having no deputy principal meant they had no other school leaders with whom to discuss school incidences or professional issues. In addition, they found it problematic to leave their school when there was no other school leader to take over, thus making it more difficult to attend professional development workshops. Shields (2008) concurred with the lack of professional development as this was also experienced by her research participants in remote areas and recommended that better timing for professional development for novice principals be considered along with an increase in the use of technology to combat issues of distance.

5.1.5 Leadership to improve student learning

Participating principals revealed that their main reason for taking up the principalship was their belief that, as principals, they would be able to make a difference in young people's lives through their influence with teachers to improve teaching and learning outcomes. However, in their first few months during their organisational socialisation phase participants commented that they had to focus on learning about the new aspects of the school and its practices before they were able to turn their attention to the teaching and learning practices.

5.1.5.1 When to make changes

Participating principals spoke about their timing for making changes to the curriculum or staff teaching practices even though some were eager to get involved and could see areas in urgent need of improvement. Participants with particular skills discussed the reactions of staff when they began to implement change after their first few months in the role and related incidents where staff were supportive or resistant. Similarly, Gilbert et al. (2008) found that their participants were also eager to make changes to the teaching programs and curriculum areas in their small rural schools and found that some schools were ready for change while others weren't.

The study found that innovative principals faced blocking from some teaching staff when making changes too quickly and, as a result, experienced stress and depression that seriously affected the development of their principal identities as they wondered how they were going to do their job as educational leaders. This is in line with the research by Quong (2006) who found that, on reflection, he had moved too quickly in making some changes which had angered his staff and caused him to lose support in his school. Those more cautious participants in this study, however, who waited for up to a year before beginning to make significant changes to the pedagogy, indicated they still met resistance from some staff even after they believed they had developed good working relationships with everyone in the school community. Knowing when to make changes and whether he was doing "too much or too little", according to Quong (2006, p. 383), was one of the biggest difficulties for him in his first year in the principal role.

5.1.5.2 Educational leadership versus management responsibilities

Participating principals in their first years in the principal position spoke of difficulties in balancing the constant management issues and emails with their perceived educational leadership responsibilities. They described their feelings of guilt in not being able to get into classrooms very often. Frustration with the huge piles of emails and time consuming administration tasks contributed to this situation.

Feelings of frustration by the large volume of administration tasks was also found in the research by Spillane and Lee (2014) who acknowledged that their participants felt limited in being in classrooms as was expected of them as instructional leaders. According to Cuban (2011), the daily tensions of juggling the overlapping leadership responsibilities of the principal role meant that often guilt and conflict went with the principalship.

5.1.5.3 Educational leadership and the teaching principal

Participating principals in the small rural schools also commented that educational leadership was an important part of their role even though they all had limited experience in leadership and all had teaching responsibilities as well as management responsibilities. The study showed that these participants felt that leading was much harder to do than managing or teaching. However, they spoke enthusiastically about being rewarded when they saw their teachers adopting some of the curriculum or pedagogical changes that they had introduced. Researchers Clarke and Stevens (2009) concurred with this positive view of being a teaching principal in a small school as they found that several of their participants believed they were in a "strong position to influence directly the quality of teaching and standards" for they were able to model and encourage their teachers as they, too, worked to improve their teaching practices.

The teaching principals in the study spoke positively about their classroom time with the students but acknowledged that they had to be very competent with their teaching skills in the eyes of their staff and parents. One strategy that participants discussed was to involve the school in a curriculum project as they found it was a good way to become more competent with their own teaching skills as well as develop their new leadership skills. This view is supported by Lester (2003, p. 91) who asserts that the teaching principal must have a solid understanding of curriculum areas and be able to teach effectively to gain credibility from the school community which often then led to greater acceptance of their planned initiatives.

5.1.6 Principal wellness during transition

It is evident from the findings concerning participants' emotions that, at various stages during their socialisation journey, participating principals revealed they were concerned about their own personal health. In their early months, participants spoke of the effects that their anxiety and stress at trying to learn the role had on their personal health. This is in line with the findings of Spillane and Lee (2014, p. 444), who acknowledged their participants expressed similar feelings of stress when they

realised they had ultimate responsibility for everything that happened at the schools and were constantly alert to anything that could possibly go wrong.

After approximately six months in their new role, participating principals reflected that while there appeared to be less intensity in their ability to understand the responsibilities of the principal position, they noted that other experiences still caused them further stress. One of these stressful experiences was the perception of their school communities who thought they would be available 24 hours a day as participants often had emails and texts sent to them on weekends or after school hours. Participants revealed that the effects of this intrusion and the demanding role on their time with their families were a major area of stress and they wondered how long they could remain in the position. This agrees with the views of authors Clarke and Stevens (2009) and Walker and Qian (2006), who all acknowledged that the huge workload took its toll on family life, particularly for the teaching principal in rural locations. In addition, research by Drummond and Halsey (2013, p. 29) found that there were higher rates of job demand on principals in rural schools than in schools closer to metropolitan areas. These authors cite high job demands as a possible predictor of physical and mental well-being issues for the rural school principal.

Another major health concern that participating principals spoke about was their lack of ability to sleep either through worry or situations where they couldn't turn off their thoughts and woke tired and exhausted before the day had started. This is in keeping with the findings by Spillane and Lee (2014, p. 144) who acknowledged that leaving the job behind at the end of the day was a difficulty for the principals in their study as well. Coping with feelings of depression and inadequacy as well as problems with lack of sleep was also a concern for participating principals who shared their anxiety at not being able to achieve their perceived expectations. According to Riley (2015), issues of depression, stress, burnout, sleeping difficulties and low self-efficacy were also identified as areas of concern by the 4,000 Australian principals involved in his survey concerning principal health and well-being. The author reported that sleeping difficulties, stress and burnout were higher than in the general population particularly in NSW and SA, which has implications for South Australian educational sectors and principal associations.

5.1.6.1 Strategies to maintain health and wellness

After several years into their socialisation journey, participants reflected that they had learned a few strategies for keeping themselves well and suggested regular exercise, healthy eating and reducing coffee and alcohol as advice for aspiring and novice principals. One strategy that a number of participants discussed when having

to make difficult decisions was that they reminded themselves that their moral purpose as principals was to make a difference for students. They used this as a guide which not only reduced the stress of making the decision but also they found this assured them of a good night's sleep. Participants confessed that having this moral purpose was often the one thing that kept them 'hanging in there' in their principal position and not quitting when the going was tough. Tooms (2003) offered a similar strategy as he used the term 'moral compass' which he described as the new principal's set of core values for improving student learning outcomes which, used regularly, would act as a guide for deciding to make changes or not.

5.1.7 Vital support structures

An important research question for this study concerned the support and induction that novice principals perceived had assisted them to cope with the dilemmas and tensions of the role. In this study, participating principals revealed that it was important to have access to a range of support structures they could choose from to advise them in dealing with some of their dilemmas and their day-to-day tasks.

Overwhelmingly, the participating principals spoke emphatically about the vital support they received from their principal colleagues and mentors, and of being involved with professional principal networks. Having a sector appointed principal mentor who acted as a 'go to' person was seen by participants as an important support strategy for them. It is noteworthy that the special school participant in this study was unhappy that she didn't have a principal mentor appointed for her and, similarly, in the research of Earley and Bubb (2013) their special school principal participant in the UK also had no mentor appointed. As with this study's first time principal, their novice reflected that she missed out on the professional and personal support that a mentor would have given her early in her career.

Having access to principal mentors with a range of experiences was seen as very supportive by participating principals as this range enabled them to choose whether they needed someone to provide a quick solution for them or whether they needed a mentor they could spend time with talking over their concerns. MacBeath (2009, p. 413) acknowledged the need for collegiate support with a range of mentoring skills and commented that most practitioner knowledge is tacit knowledge and is passed on through "knowing who knows". Similarly, Earley and Bubb (2013) also noted that having a range of support personnel could be effective in combatting the impact of professional loneliness while researcher McCulla (2012) acknowledged that having a mentor relationship was the key to supporting novice principals in their transition into the role. These positive reflections on the importance of principal

mentors was not supported by the views of Bengtson et al. (2013, p. 159) who cautioned that "internal mentoring programs … reinforce the way things are done" and this method may not equip the novice principal for changes that have occurred in "the reconceptualization of the principal role".

As important as having a mentor, participating principals spoke about the need to be involved in supportive principal networks whether formally organised by their sectors or established by similar need. Some participants revealed that their small rural networks proved to be very supportive because all the principals in it were dealing with similar issues. This is consistent with the findings of Crawford and Cowie (2012) and Clarke and Stevens (2009) who acknowledged the importance of developing support networks of collegiate peers from their surrounding local schools or from attending new principal induction meetings where the members had similar issues. While participants from rural government schools found that the small school cluster groups of principals in their locations proved to be the most useful, participants in small rural schools from the non-government sector commented that they were further away from similar schools in their sector and felt isolated and a long way from any support. However, no one in this study spoke about actually seeking support from novice principals in other sectors within their local environment. Addressing this issue could be an avenue that universities and principal associations could fill concerning the professional development of novice principals in rural areas.

This study revealed that there was a mixture of attitudes towards the effectiveness of induction programs that participating principals attended. Issues of content relevance and timing of new principal conferences were seen by participants as inhibitors for attending these induction programs. In contrast, participants with limited previous leadership experiences commented that their induction programs were vital for the development of their principal identity as they found the principal role to be very different from their previous teacher role. All participants acknowledged that they found the most important value they received from attending induction programs was in meeting other novice principals with whom they could develop a network. According to Kelly and Saunders (2010, p. 132), attending a formal induction program builds on the previous professional networks before appointment and signaled the start of the novice principals' professional and organisational socialisation process.

A relatively new coaching program was noted by participants as being very supportive of novice principals during transition into their new role. While the

participants involved in the coaching program came from both urban and rural locations, those in the rural locations found that having someone to take them through their leadership development on a phone link up several times a term reduced their feelings of professional loneliness and isolation. This is in line with the findings of Lochmiller (2014, p. 79) who acknowledged the flexibility and neutrality of coaches and discussed the benefits of supporting novice principals with a leadership coach who could encourage the new principal to develop more successful practices within their school.

Another vital avenue of support that participating principals spoke about was their respective line managers, either area directors or assistant regional directors, and principal consultants. Participants who spoke about their difficulties in managing the more challenging and traumatic situations they found themselves in, related incidents where line managers assisted them in developing their endurance to cope with these issues. Participants from one of the sectors expressed concern that the line management structures they relied on had changed recently and, at the time of this study's interviews, there appeared to be no clear line of support identified for advising and supporting novice principals when they met a very challenging and traumatic experience.

Finally, being part of this study was seen as therapeutic by many participants who expressed their surprise and personal satisfaction at how far they had come since their early days in the principal role. Participants who took part in the two focus groups commented that reflecting on each other's journeys as well as just talking to other principals in the study was also uplifting and felt it was a relief to hear that others had similar issues and concerns during their socialisation journey to their principal identity. This is in accordance with the research of Earley and Bubb (2013, p. 793) who acknowledged that the face-to-face interviews were an important avenue for their participating headteachers to reflect on their journey and suggested that providing a similar opportunity to reflect would be a suitable strategy of support for other novice principals.

5.2 Development of principal identity

The following discussion summarises the importance of the key experiences identified in the overarching themes through linking their influence on participants' developing principal identity with the stages and phases of the socialisation journey to the principalship.

5.2.1   The stages and phases of the socialisation journey

The framework of using the socialisation hierarchy is instrumental in demonstrating participating principals' progress firstly, through identifying the four stages as mile stones along the journey to the principalship and secondly, using the four phases to identify their gradually changing identities from teachers to being able to feel like a principal. In addition, having 12 participants with a varied amount of experience in the role provided insights into the additional effects that the school's location, context, and the previous principal's legacy may have had on how each novice principal learned their new role and survived their early years in the position.

As part of their preparation for the principal role, participating principals spoke about the positive influences that their previous experiences had on assisting them in choosing to apply for the principal position. Some of these experiences included being in non-education management positions and having a variety of school and sector leadership roles. This is consistent with the work of Crow (2006, p.316) who stated that "in order to understand the nature of beginning principals' socialization" it is important to begin before appointment to the principal position, which he labeled as an anticipatory phase, Stage 1, Pre-appointment, and the start of the leadership development process. Initiatives that included attending aspiring principal courses, studying a university school leadership course and accepting acting principal roles all added to the skills and knowledge that participants revealed were of benefit for them once in the principal position. Kelly and Saunders (2010) concur with these findings and noted from their research that through their previous leadership experiences their participants were able to anticipate the requirements of the principal role and developed social networks and technical skills as part of their preparation for the principalship.

This study showed that participating principals entered their principal position at Stage 2, Entry and Induction, the organisational phase in the socialisation hierarchy as discussed in the literature review. This proved to be a period of steep learning together with uncertainty, anxiety and excitement for participants who reflected on the myriad of decisions, responsibilities and organisational issues that they need to do immediately they started in their new role. Participants shared their conflicting feelings with being expected to do the principal job when they felt like frauds as they had no concept of their principal identity and were trying to learn 'on the job'. Concerns for their personal well-being were also expressed by participants at this early stage in their new role although some participants did feel that they had a 'honeymoon period' in those early few months. These findings are in line with the research of Parkay et al. (1992) who found that their participants were generally

shocked at how much they needed to do and were concerned for their personal well-being at the stress of trying to make sense of the principal role.

What was evident from the study was that the most significant experience identified during Stage 2 was that of trying to clarify their role, with its competing and overlapping responsibilities as out lined by Cuban (2011) with the additional religious leadership responsibility for the non-government school principals (Belmonte & Cranston, 2007). It is not surprising that most of the participants' focus was on the organisational practices of the role at this time.

After a period of four to eight months, Stage 3, Taking Hold, participants discussed their strategies for becoming part of the school through implementing some small organisational changes and immersing themselves in the teaching and learning at the school. Some participants found they had to move more quickly in implementing changes which were either expected of them by their sector or by the staff and related their experiences of highs and lows in doing this. According to Weindling and Dimmock (2006, p.336), this stage of taking hold of the school is a time when new principals begin to challenge the "taken for granted" practices in the school and implement organisational changes which may or may not be accepted depending on the reactions or the staff and the parents.

It is also during this professional socialisation phase that participating principals commented on their positive involvement with their principal mentor and had begun attending principal cluster meetings and conferences where they heard other principals sharing their unusual and challenging experiences and strategies for dealing with issues, which added to their knowledge and feelings of being part of a profession. Bengtson et al. (2013, p. 153) confirmed that this was another of the socialisation tactics, known as the collective tactic by Van Maanen and Schein (1979), where participants in their research reported on the benefits of having "a group of peers to talk to" and learn how to do their job.

By the time participating principals had completed their first 12 to 18 months in the principal role, Stage 4, Taking Action and Moving On, there was evidence that some of the key identified experiences including the school culture and role clarity that had initially affected their developing identities were become less intense. During this personal socialisation phase, participants who discussed their developing endurance in managing the role noted that they had learned strategies in dealing with the unpredictability of the role or had gained tacit knowledge from their mentors about their organisation. Those who had grown in confidence showed they were

ready to move forward and began to implement more significant changes to improve their schools. In their second year, while these participants noticed that they were much busier and had more challenges than in their first year, they found that as the year progressed they were increasingly able to make decisions more confidently, prioritise the important situations that occurred and spend more time on their core business of student learning. This is more consistent with the views of Weindling and Dimmock (2006) who labelled this stage as "Reshaping" where the new principal felt they could take off their L plates during this second year in the role as the school was ready for major change. However, not all participants in this study revealed they had reached a stage of feeling more comfortable in the role at the end of their first 12 to 18 months and were still experiencing difficulties with challenging staff, a difficult school context or were still struggling with learning the role, and that it took them up to three years before they felt confident and comfortable in their new role.

It was evident from the findings that participants with previous leadership experiences were able to move more quickly through Stages 2, 3 and 4 of the socialisation hierarchy while in their principal position and confidently state they felt like principals after 12 to 18 months in the role. Participants who had limited leadership experience in this study, however, found that it took them three or more years to feel confident and comfortable in the role. This is in line with the findings of Parkay et al. (1992, p. 60) who acknowledged that novice principals would have different starting points due to previous experiences and could either move more quickly through the early stages of the socialisation hierarchy than others or could remain at one stage for a length of time particularly if there were contextual issues to manage.

Studies by Weindling and Dimmock (2006), Crow (2007) and Anderson et al. (2009) indicated that the three stages of the socialisation hierarchy from entry into the role through to the principalship and feeling in control and ready to move on, took approximately 12 months. However, a more recent study by Crawford and Cowie (2012, p.181), extended these time lines associated with the socialisation process and cited "the complexity of contemporary society and the changes in the priorities of the principal's tasks" as influencing a much longer timeline than just one year in the role for the socialisation process of today's novice principals. Even after participating principals indicated that they felt like principals they admitted that there was still much to learn and still many challenges and unpredictable situations to manage along the way.

5.2.2 A rite of passage

Regardless of the depth of previous leadership experiences that participating principals had before their entry into the principal position, all participants described their early few months where they were shocked at the diversity and amount of responsibilities and decisions they had to make almost immediately they began in the new role. Gradually, by learning on the job through both the many challenges and the rewarding experiences, they felt they had gained confidence in understanding their new role and felt comfortable with their new principal identity. These experiences are in accordance with the views of Van Gennep (1960) who cited the phenomenon of a rite of passage to describe the three periods in transition from one identity to another. The rites associated with this transition as described by Van Gennep (1960) are also clearly evident in the experiences and challenges described by participating principals in this study. Understanding this transition process of novice school principals and their experiences or rituals during their socialisation into their school could be beneficial to educational authorities in shaping future induction and support programs for novice principals in SA.

5.2.3 Identifying as a principal

When participants stated that they felt confident that they were in control of the role, making a difference for students, moving school forward together with their staff and felt equal with their principal colleagues, they knew they had developed their principal identity. This, according to Crow (2007), was when they had reached their personal socialisation phase of the socialisation process. Crawford and Cowie (2012, p. 182) agree, acknowledging that by the time their participants were in the third year in the role they were able to reflect on their journey and found they felt much more confident in being able to lead as well as manage and were working with their staff to make "a demonstrable difference".

Participants with limited time in the principal role reflected on their need to have more time in experiencing aspects of the role and felt they still had some learning to do before they could feel like a principal. According to Kelly and Saunders (2010, p. 139) the socialisation journey was a slow but demanding process as learning the role was very complex and involved building on the previous experiences encountered and the context in which they occurred before finally reaching their principal identity.

This description by Kelly and Saunders (2010) reflects the socialisation journey of the majority of the 12 participating principals who built on their early experiences, learned from the challenges and traumas as outlined in the key overarching themes,

and through endurance, time and collegiate support, demonstrated that they had developed strong principal identities.

5.3   A summary of the findings of this research study

A number of notable findings were identified from this chapter's discussion of the seven overarching themes that influenced participating principals' developing identities during their socialisation journey to their principalship. The findings address the gap in the literature concerning the lack of research into the early experiences and support programs available for novice principal school principals in SA and particularly on the influence these had on the development of their new principal identities. While several of the findings are consistent with the work of other researchers they add additional information that is pertinent to the unique situation of novice primary school principals who take up the principal position in rural and urban settings from across the four educational sectors in SA contribute new knowledge to the field of educational leadership preparation and early career support for novice primary school principals. Most importantly, the stories gathered from the 'lived' early experiences and support for novice primary principals in SA also make a valuable contribution to inspire prospective principals to take up this challenging and rewarding role.

Finding 1   Significant experiences influencing participants' developing identities
One of the notable findings in response to the major research question is the identification of seven major experiences and valuable support structures that the 12 novice South Australian primary school principals perceived had influenced their developing principal identities during their socialisation journey to the principalship. These experiences include: role clarification, managing the school culture, managing difficult staff and parents, issues of school location, leadership to improve student learning, principal wellness and the vital support structures that helped them progress through their early years in their new role. Even more notable was that the findings also revealed that ten of the twelve participants were able to endure the challenges and traumas of their early years and go on to develop strong principal identities. The two who left the profession at the end of their second year cited lack of previous leadership experiences and challenging situations as reasons for not continuing in the role.

Finding 2   Previous leadership experiences
The study has identified that having previous experiences in school leadership positions with administrative responsibilities before being appointed to the principal position shortened the period of time that the novice principal took to journey

through their socialisation phases and stages into the principalship. However, it was also evident that these participants still encountered feelings of initial shock at the amount of responsibilities they had and at the realisation that they were the ones who were responsible for "everything that happened at the school". Clearly, much of the principal role still has to be 'learned on the job' particularly as each school site is unique and can have quite different complexities and unusual situations for a novice principal to manage.

Finding 3   Influences of previous principal

The findings revealed that the influence of the previous principal of their new school was experienced by all participating principals in this study. While some of these influences proved to be very helpful, the majority of participants found that they had to deal with issues that were more difficult to manage. Some participants had to wait for most of their first year before they felt confident in their relationship development with their community to begin to initiate changes to some of the past school traditions.

Finding 4   Legal implications of blurred role boundaries

The expectations of the role of school principals in rural locations, particularly those from non-government religious schools, appear to include additional responsibilities for the whole parish or the local community. It would be beneficial for all concerned if educational sectors investigate these 'perceived role expectations' further and prepare their new principals to ensure that they are aware of their boundaries and don't allow community or parish expectations to take them beyond the legal protection of the South Australian Education Act.

Finding 5   Increase in aggressive parents

This study exposed the ongoing issues that five of the participants had in dealing with a few difficult and aggressive parents who continually abused either their staff or them, often at a personal level. What was concerning was that there appeared to be an acceptance among participating principals that dealing with these abusive parents was a part of their role and some sought no assistance for support in managing them. Riley (2015), in a recent Australian Principal Health Survey, also found principals reported a significant increase which indicated there was a significant increase in violence and abuse by parents

Finding 6   Managing underperforming staff processes

Another notable finding from this research was the dilemma expressed by participating principals in trying to implement their particular sector's managing underperforming staff processes in a situation where they had a staff member with

limited skills and enthusiasm for teaching. These novice principals indicated genuine concerns about the effects poorly performing teachers have on student learning but also shared that more experienced colleagues warned them against embarking on this time consuming difficult process which, they were advised, often offered no positive outcome for the staff member or the school.

Finding 7   Flexible and timely support
In accordance with the research of MacBeath (2009) and McCulla (2012), flexible induction programs, principal mentors and principal networks have an important role in nurturing novice principals and in enabling them to cope with the dilemmas and tensions of the principal role. In addition, the support of an external coach whom novice principals could access through phone or online face-to-face applications several times a term would give them valuable strategies to use without having to leave their schools. This support would help reduce the tyranny of distance that some rural school novice principals face during their difficult transition into the principal role (Lochmiller, 2014).

Finding 8   Specific preparation for novice rural school principals in SA
Building on the findings of Halsey (2011), this study identified a need for all South Australian education sectors to provide additional preparation sessions for novice primary school principals before they begin their tenure in small rural schools. Rural towns in SA are much smaller in size and are more isolated than many rural towns in most of the other states in Australia thus increasing the effects of loneliness for novice principals and their families.

Finding 9   Inconsistency with other research
The amount of time that it took a novice principal in this study to become socialised into their new position was inconsistent with previous research which indicated that while most novices experienced a steep learning curve during their early months in the role they were able to pass through the stages of their socialisation journey by the end of their first year (Kelly & Saunders, 2010; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). Challenging the school's status quo through initiating significant changes in curricula and pedagogy and the end of the 'honey moon' phenomenon was cited as possible reasons for finding themselves busier and more stressed in their second and possibly third years, even after having positive experiences and making good community relationships during their first year. These experiences left some still feeling uncomfortable with their principal identity until their third year in the role.

5.4 Summary

This chapter discussed the seven overarching themes identified from Chapter 4, in relation to the literature, where the similarities and dissimilarities between this study's findings and those of other researchers were acknowledged. The key experiences were then summarised within the four socialisation hierarchy stages and phases to demonstrate how participants developed their endurance in the face of the complex, challenging and unpredictable situations before they were ready to identify as principals. The term 'rite of passage' where participants experience certain 'rites' or experiences that are necessary for them to transition successfully from their teacher identity to their new principal identity was discussed with relevance to Stages 2, 3 and 4 of the socialisation hierarchy.

From these discussions, some important findings were identified particularly as they relate to the South Australian educational leadership scene. Additional findings that built on the research of others identified areas for further investigation by South Australian education sectors. One of the most important outcomes of this study involved the unique stories from the field of South Australian novice primary school principals in both urban and rural schools across the four educational sectors. The particular accounts of these 12 principals' experiences provide valuable insights into the early encounters of novice primary school principals for aspiring principals and educational authorities in SA.

The next chapter draws together the issues presented in the previous five chapters of this study and comments on these in relation to the research questions which were designed to identify the perceived influences that South Australian novice primary school principals' early experiences and support had on their developing principal identities. The implications of the findings, together with some suggestions for further research into the early experiences and support for novice school principals, are identified with the intention of providing advice for those who are responsible for devising future educational leadership preparation programs and ongoing support programs for aspiring and new principals.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

"Beginning a headship or school principalship for the first time is an exciting, exhilarating, but complex and difficult experience"
(Weindling & Dimmock, 2006, p.326)

Introduction

This study set out to investigate the effect of early experiences and support encountered by South Australian novice primary school principals during their socialisation into their role and how these shaped their developing principal identities. Over the past two decades, significant increases in school principals' responsibilities have made the transition from the teacher role to the principalship much more difficult for the novice school principal. The resulting work overload and diverse challenging experiences have been identified as possible reasons for discouraging future applicants and causing the early departure of novices from the principal position (Stevenson, 2006; McCulla, 2012). Feeling confident in their leadership skills once in the principal position is vital as research has shown that school leadership plays an important part in influencing school, teacher and student improvement (Drummond & Halsey, 2013).

This study aimed to address some of the issues concerning the initial challenges faced by novice principals during transition by identifying the early experiences and support programs received by first time South Australian primary school principals during their socialisation into the principalship.

The research questions that guided this dissertation are used as a framework to draw together and synthesize the major issues gathered from the previous five chapters. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications that emerge from the findings and provides suggestions for future research that will add to the literature concerning the leadership preparation, induction and support needs of newly appointed principals in SA in particular.

6.1 The major research question for this study

What are the perceptions of South Australian novice primary school principals as they reflect on the influence that their early experiences and support had on the development of their principal identity during their socialisation into the principalship?

Supporting research questions

1. What early experiences did novice primary school principals in SA encounter during their socialisation into the principal role?

2. What form of induction and support did novice primary school principals in SA perceive assisted them to cope with the dilemmas and tensions of the role?

3. What experiences and emotions assisted novice primary school principals in SA to recognise when they felt comfortable and confident with their identity as a principal?

4. What advice from their recent experiences did novice primary school principals perceive could be beneficial for newly appointed and aspiring principals during their socialisation into the principal role?

6.2   Methodology for this study

A qualitative multiple case study, involving 12 South Australian primary school principals in their second to fourth years in their first appointment from across the four South Australian educational sectors (Department of Education and Child Development, Catholic Education of SA, Association of Independent Schools SA and Lutheran Schools), was carried out using individual and focus group interviews. A range of questions based on the four early stages of the socialisation hierarchy (Parkay et al., 1992) which influenced the structure of this study's conceptual framework, collected participating principals' reflections of their early experiences, emotions and support as they progressed though their socialisation journey into the principalship. Using the stages (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006) and the phases (Crow, 2006) of the socialisation hierarchy, the progress of novice principals from their teacher identity to their principal identity emerged. Having novice principals in their second, third and fourth years as participants not only provided valuable insights into their experiences in their early careers but also highlighted the continuum of the newcomers' developing principal identities as they progressed through their socialisation journey to becoming confident and comfortable as principals.

The researcher is mindful that this study is limited by the small number of South Australian novice primary school principals in their second to fourth years in their first principalship. As these participants were not selected according to gender, location or educational sector, any comparisons based on these criteria alone will also be limited and, therefore, cannot be seen as representative of all first time primary school principals. There is, however, enough evidence from the literature to suggest that these findings provide a snapshot of experiences from the field of school leadership in South Australia and may be used to raise questions and

provide suggestions for future practice concerning leadership preparation and support needs for early career primary school principals.

6.3   A synthesis of the findings

The findings of this study of 12 South Australian novice primary school principals revealed that, regardless of their previous leadership experiences, the majority of the novice principals were exposed to quite challenging and often distressing situations in their early years in the role which they felt only enhanced their ability to survive and grow in confidence during their socialisation journey. Many also found they had developed strategies to manage these challenges and were able to become confident and comfortable in their role as principal.

Lack of leadership experience and traumas in the first year in the principal role caused several small rural school novice principals with no previous leadership opportunities beyond coordinator level to leave the field of education altogether. Other novice principals in this study who were in similar rural situations and also had some distressing occurrences early in their career, however, were able to learn from these challenges and go on to develop their principal identities.

This study identified that former principals have the potential to influence novice principals' initial entry into their first school. While not all of these influences were negative or challenging, the research provided evidence that having strategies for establishing themselves as leaders and carefully managing the pace of change was critical to their leader identity.

This investigation determined that flexible induction programs that considered the specific needs of individual novice principals' school location, their previous leadership experiences and the timing and relevance of topics were more valuable than a structured 'one size fits all' induction program.

Evidence clearly showed that support from principal mentors was vital to assist novice principals to manage their new role. Advice and strategies relating to how to manage daily challenging experiences, such as their sector's administrative expectations, emails and staff and parent issues and sharing their own similar stories, helped the newcomers to learn aspects of the role and reduce their stress levels by putting their own experiences in perspective.

The study revealed that being in control of unexpected situations, making significant decisions easily, managing conflict to successful outcomes and gaining the respect and trust of school community led to feeling like a principal, confidence in their

principal identity and equity with principal colleagues. The experience of being part of principal networks and attending principal conferences as well as keeping up with professional reading played an important role in developing the principals' professional identity. Strategies for learning the principal role, managing the school's culture during change, and having a moral purpose to guide their decision making emerged as important advice for future principals.

6.4   New findings and their implications

This study makes a valuable contribution to the literature concerning school leadership transition as research into the early experiences and support encountered by novice primary school principals from a range of contexts and educational sectors in SA has not previously been published. Challenging situations with role clarification, school cultural conservatism, difficult staff and parents, competing leadership responsibilities and monitoring wellness levels emerged as major themes affecting first time principals' developing identities. While these difficult challenges reflect similar findings with the literature from other national and international researchers (Wildy et al., 2010; Spillane & Lee, 2014), aspiring principals and those new to the role in SA can feel reassured that difficulties associated with school principal transition are also encountered by other novice principals worldwide. What this study reinforces is the important role of principal colleagues in supporting and guiding first time principals through the difficulties of their socialisation journey and towards the development of strong principal identities.

Evidence from this study that revealed pressure and criticism from a small number of aggressive parents resulted in considerable stress and loss of confidence by the principal has not previously been discussed as a major concern in school leadership and management literature. Of concern from the findings of the present study was the perceived view of novice principals that managing these difficult parents was part of the principal's responsibility which resulted in reluctance to seek additional line manager support. As the literature about principal wellness has indicated that continual stress and loss of confidence can lead to principal burnout and resignations, this finding concerning aggressive parents in schools raises issues for further investigation by educational sectors and principal associations.

Although the limitations of this small sample must be considered, clear evidence emerged from this study's findings concerning the additional challenging experiences encountered by first time principals in small rural schools. Balancing their teaching and managerial roles with limited previous leadership experience,

feeling they were in a 'gold fish bowl', supporting their families in small rural locations and overcoming the conservative attitudes of the school and community clearly had an impact on their developing principal identities. It is recommended, therefore, that principal leadership development courses of South Australian educational sectors and principal training facilitators include preparation for rural school leadership courses as well as specifically targeted induction and support programs to equip these rural school novice principals with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed with their dual role within their rural locations.

Perceived difficulties with implementing managing underperforming staff processes as a result of lack of experience and necessary resources led to frustration at not being able to deal effectively with poorly performing teachers. The implications of this finding suggests that further investigation concerning the practicalities of small school principals, in particular, being able to successfully implement their respective policies and practices for managing underperforming staff is recommended for all South Australian educational sectors.

Limited understanding of the breadth of religious leadership responsibilities, as part of the principal role in non-government religious schools, caused stress and role ambiguity for its novice principals. Surprise at being seen as confidants by church members outside of the school community and concerns about lack of counselling and life skills worried first time principals. This finding indicates that educational sectors with religious expectations of their novice principals could further investigate their practices in preparing and supporting novice principals concerning their expected religious leadership responsibilities.

The second year of the principalship was revealed to be much busier and more challenging than the first year which is inconsistent with a number of early 21st century researchers who indicated that the second year was a time when the novice principal knew the annual cycle of events and was more confident in their role (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). Greater knowledge of their role expectations, less tolerance of their newness from the school community and an increase in the implementation of major initiatives that challenged the status quo emerged as possible reasons for working longer hours and feeling more stressed and less confident with their leader identity than at the end of their first year. This finding leads to a conclusion that the responsibilities of the school principal have become even more challenging and unpredictable in the past 10 years due mainly to the complexity of today's global society and supports the view that the socialisation process will take longer than one year in the role (Crawford &Cowie, 2012).

6.5   Recommendations for future research

Based on the findings of this study, research into the experiences and support for secondary school novice principals in SA during their socialisation process to the principalship would provide valuable insights into the experiences and challenges that they face in their early years in the role. These insights may also provide information for educational authorities and training facilities that develop leadership preparation programs and provide support for secondary school principals.

Clearly from this study, local community expectations of principals and their roles, particularly in small rural communities, have the potential to compromise the principal position. The dilemmas faced by some novice primary school principals, to extend their responsibilities beyond their educational role boundaries and beyond the legal protection of the South Australian Education Act, require further investigation. It is recommended, therefore, that further research into the influence that local communities have on principals' expected responsibilities would be extremely beneficial for future school leaders and educational sectors in SA.

6.6   Closure of the study

The quote that heads this chapter was stated by Weindling and Dimmock (2006, p.326) after they had reflected on their literature review of 20 years of research into the early experiences of new headteachers in the UK and Wales. Ten years later this statement still aptly reflects the early emotions of excitement, shock and anxiety that the novice primary school principals in this South Australian study felt in their first few months in the role. Indeed, it heralds the difficult and unpredictable experiences they were to encounter during their socialisation into the principalship despite any previous leadership preparation, induction and principal mentor support programs they may had accessed before they entered the principal position. This difficult period in the novice principal's early career could be described as a 'rite of passage' as the newcomer transitions from his or her teacher identity to their principal identity. Having an understanding of this 'rite of passage' would assist novice principals to feel more confident as they begin their socialisation journey into their new school and towards the development of their principal identities. Gaining this understanding before entry into the principal position would then have implications for how educational authorities and those involved in planning leadership preparation, support and induction programs develop future initiatives that would be more supportive of the novice school principal during their socialisation journey to their new principal identity.

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions for newly appointed principals to collect deeper and richer data about their experiences and emotions in the first year.

1. What influenced you (the participant) to apply for the principal position?

2. Please describe any leadership experiences you had before applying for and being offered the principal position?

3. Could you describe some of your experiences during the first three months in the principal role?

4. What emotions and feelings did you have during those early months in your new role?

5. Could you describe any support that you used or received during the first six months?

6. How useful and important were those support systems or people to you in dealing with the challenges and issues during those early months as principal?

7. Are there other experiences during the middle of your first year that you would like to share with me?

8. What emotions and feelings were you experiencing during your first year as principal?

9. What experiences do you recall about the remainder of your first year?

10. When did you first feel comfortable and competent as a professional in the principal role and can you describe some of the events at that time?

11. When did you first notice that you recognised self-assurance in yourself and can you describe some of the activities or events at that time?

12. As you reflect on the first 12 months as principal what stands out as an enduring influence on your transition into the role of principal and why does it?

13. What advice could you offer to future novice principals to help them to successfully survive that first 12 months?

14. What support do you think would be useful for future novice primary school principals in your educational sector?

Thank you for participating in this interview. A focus group of five other principals also taking part in these individual interviews will be held in a few months' time.

APPENDIX 2: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

The following guiding questions were used to facilitate further discussion at the focus group interviews after the researcher shared the main themes and issues gathered from the individual interviews. Using a round table format, the researcher used open ended questions to stimulate discussion:

FOCUS GROUP QUESTION GUIDE

Research Focus	
Introductory questions	Please comment on the experiences you had in your first year.
What experiences helped or hindered the development of your new principal identity?	(Emergent, themes, concepts, perceptions, influences and support that emerged from interviews to provide basis for questions)
What types of support helped you in your first year as a principal and in the development of your principal identity?	(Emergent, themes, concepts, perceptions, influences and support that emerged from interviews to provide basis for questions)
What implications can be drawn from your experiences that can guide aspiring and newly appointed principals?	(Emergent, themes, concepts, perceptions, influences and support that emerged from interviews to provide basis for questions)
Concluding question	Is there anything you would like to add about your early principal experiences that you have not covered?

APPENDIX 3: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Flinders
UNIVERSITY

Carolyn Palmer PhD
Associate Professor in Education
Director of Post Graduate Programs
Chair: Flinders Leadership and
Management in Education (FLAME)
Lecturer in Leadership and
Management
Coordinator of Studies in Vision
Impairment
School of Education
Flinders University
Phone: +61 8 8201 3379
Fax: +61 8 8201 3184

Re Invitation for all early career primary school principals in SA in their 2nd – 4th years as a principal

Dear Principal

This letter is to introduce Ms Meryl Davidson who is a Doctor of Education student in the School of Education at Flinders University. She will produce her student/staff card, which carries a photograph, as proof of identity.

Meryl is undertaking research leading to the production of a dissertation and other publications on the subject *of how SA novice primary school principals perceive that their early experiences and the support provided during their first year influenced their development of their new principal identities.*"

Meryl was a primary school principal with DECD between 1994 – 2007 which was a time of significant change for education in SA and subsequently for the role of the principal. She would like to support new and aspiring principals by researching their experiences and the support provided during their first year in the position. The intended outcomes from this research include supporting aspiring and early career principals by identifying the challenges and the successes facing new principals today and providing education authorities and training facilities with issues they could address when preparing future principals.

Meryl would like to invite you as an early career principal in your   2nd – 4th year in the role to assist in this project, by consenting to being interviewed as part of this research if you are interested. The interview would last approximately 1 hour and can be either in your own school or at a location convenient to you.

Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting dissertation, report or other publications. You are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions.

Since Meryl intends to make a tape recording of the interview, she will seek your consent, on the attached form, to record the interview, to use the recording or a transcription in preparing the dissertation, report or other publications, on condition that your name or identity is not revealed, and to make the recording available to other researchers on the same conditions. It may be necessary to make the recording available to secretarial assistants (or a transcription service) for transcription, in which case you may be assured that such persons will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement which outlines the requirement that your name or identity not be revealed and that the confidentiality of the material is respected and maintained.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or by telephone on 82013379, by fax on 82013184 or by email (carolyn.palmer@flinders.edu.au).

inspiring
achievement

ABN 65 SLA 809 230   CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

110

Meryl can also be contacted by mobile 0487 745 426 or by email
(meryl.davidson@flinders.edu.au.

Thank you for your attention and assistance

Yours sincerely

A/Prof Carolyn Palmer
Chair: Flinders Leadership & Management in Education (FLAME.
Lecturer in Leadership &Management
School of Education
Flinders University

*This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (**Project Number 6412** For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au..*

inspiring
achievement

ABN 65 50A 908 230 CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

APPENDIX 4: INVITATION EMAIL

An invitation to all Early Career SA Primary School Principals in their 2nd– 4th years as principal

Dear Principal

Hi

My name is Meryl Davidson and I am currently doing research for my EdD at Flinders University into the early experiences and support for primary school principals in their first year in the role.

I was a leader and primary school principal in DECD for over 20 years during a time when there were significant changes in education and particularly for the role of principal. I would like to support new and aspiring principals by researching the experiences and the support provided both formally and informally during the first year in the principalship. The outcome of my research is to provide some insight into the challenges and the successes experienced by new principals in today's schools and to inform education authorities and training facilities of the needs of today's new principals.

This is an Invitation to become part of that research project.

Your involvement will **provide valuable insights into the socialisation process for new principals and will help future colleagues during their transition in their first year.**

Involvement will include – individual interview – 60 mins and a Focus Group discussion with other interviewed early career principals – 90 mins.

For further information please contact

Meryl.davidson@flinders.edu.au or mobile 0487 745 426

I'd love to hear from you – by June 30th 2014

Many Thanks

Meryl Davidson

Doctoral Candidate

Flinders University

Flinders
UNIVERSITY

APPENDIX 5: INFORMATION SHEET

Carolyn Palmer PhD
Associate Professor in Education
Director of Post Graduate Programs
Chair: Flinders Leadership and
Management in Education (FLAME)
Lecturer in Leadership and
Management
Coordinator of Studies in Vision
Impairment
School of Education
Flinders University
Phone: +61 8 8201 3379   Fax: +61
8 8201 3184

Flinders
UNIVERSITY
ADELAIDE · AUSTRALIA

INFORMATION SHEET

Title: *Reflections of SA novice primary school principals on how the experiences and the support provided during their socialisation into the principalship influenced the development of their new principal identities.*

Researcher:
Mrs Meryl Davidson
School of Education
Flinders University
Ph: 0487 745 426

Supervisor:
Assoc. Professor Carolyn Palmer
School of Education
Flinders University
Ph: 8 201 3184

Description of the study:
This study is part of the project entitled '*Reflections of SA novice primary school principals on how the experiences and the support provided during their socialisation into the principalship influenced the development of their new principal identities*'.

This project will investigate the early experiences and support programs received by first time South Australian primary school principals during their transition into the principalship. The study will explore the perceptions of novice principals in their second, third and fourth year in the role as they reflect on the experiences of their first year and how these may have influenced the development of their new principal identities. The study will also gather the participants' perceptions on what support would be effective for future early career principals.

This project is supported by Flinders University School of Education.

Purpose of the study:
This project aims to identify some of the challenges and successes that new primary school principals from DECD, CESA and AISSA education sectors face during their transition and socialisation into the principal role to:

- provide information concerning leadership development, support and transition experiences for aspiring principals
- provide information to educational departments and principal training facilities about the possible needs of first time principals that leadership programs need to address

inspiring
achievement

APPENDIX 5: INFORMATION SHEET (CONT.)

What will I be asked to do?
You are invited to:
1). Take part in an interview. If you volunteer you will be contacted by Meryl Davidson (the researcher) to meet at a mutually agreed upon location and time to take part in a one-on-one interview of approximately 60 minutes. Up to 8 principals will be interviewed for this study.
- The interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder to help with correct recording of your information and discussion.
- Once recorded, the interview will be transcribed (typed-up) and returned to you for your perusal and possible further clarification.
- Data will be stored on a password protested computer and then destroyed once the results have been finalised.

2). If you take part in the interviews you will also be invited to take part in a **Focus Group** follow up interview with 5 - 7 other participants who have also been interviewed. This will be held at a mutual location and time. It should take approximately 60 – 90 minutes.
- The purpose is for the researcher to share some of the general issues and themes that have come out of the interviews and to enable you and others to provide anecdotes and stories to further clarify any points discussed.

Participation in the interviews or the focus group is entirely voluntary.

What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?
You may not gain personally. However:
- having an opportunity to reflect on your early experiences and the support you received may be beneficial to others.
- the sharing of your experiences may contribute to the principal profession by encouraging aspiring principals to apply for future positions
- any issues and themes that come from the interviews may provide education sectors and principal training facilities with valuable information concerning the needs of first time principals.

Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?

1. **Interviews.** Once the interview has been transcribed and saved as a word file the voice file will then be destroyed. Any identifying information will be removed and the typed-up file stored on a password protected computer that only the reviewer Meryl Davidson will have access to. Your comments will not be linked directly to you.

2. **Focus Group.** Other group members may be able to identify your contributions but all will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement when consenting to take part in the focus group.

inspiring achievement

Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?
The researcher anticipates few risks from your involvement in this study.
However while reflecting on the experiences of your first year in the role you may find that unpleasant or unresolved events may cause you undue stress.
In this case the reviewer advises that you contact your sector's Employee Assistance Programme.
     DECD has a direct line for a personnel counsellor – **Davidson Trahaire Corpsych 1300 360 364**. This is a 24 hour 7 days a week support number.

If you have any other concerns regarding anticipated or actual risks or discomforts such as time or transport issues, please raise them with the researcher.

How do I agree to participate?

    1).   **Interviews and Focus Group.** Once you have read this Information Letter and are happy to volunteer to be part of the study you need to complete the 2 consent forms that accompany this letter and return them both to the researcher via email to
        meryl.davidson@flinders.edu.au

        or by mail to
          Meryl Davidson
          Ed-Doctoral Student
          School of Education
          Flinders University
          GPO Box 2100
          Adelaide, 5001

    2).   The reviewer will contact you directly.

Participation in any part of this research is voluntary.
You may answer 'no comment' on any of the questions in the interview.

You may withdraw from the interview or the focus group at any time without consequences.

How will I receive feedback?
Outcomes from the project will be summarised and sent to you by the researcher if you would like to see them.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and we hope that you will accept our invitation to be involved.

inspiring achievement

APPENDIX 6: CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH
BY INTERVIEW

Reflections of SA novice primary school principals on how the experiences
and the support provided during their socialisation into the principalship
influenced the development of their new principal identities.

I ....

being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the interview
for the research project on experiences and support for first year primary school principals.

1. I have read the information provided.

2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.

3. I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.

4. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.

5. I understand that:
   - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
   - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
   - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
   - I may ask that the recording/observation be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.

6. I agree/do not agree* to the tape/transcript* being made available to other researchers who are not members of this research team, but who are judged by the research team to be doing related research, on condition that my identity is not revealed.   *delete as appropriate

Participant's signature..Date.......................

APPENDIX 6: CONSENT FORM (CONT.)

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name..

Researcher's signature...**Date**..........................

NB: Two signed copies should be obtained. The copy retained by the researcher may then be used for authorisation of Items 8 and 9, as appropriate.

8.   I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read a transcript of my participation and agree to its use by the researcher as explained.

Participant's signature..**Date**.........................

9.   I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read the researcher's report and agree to the publication of my information as reported.

Participant's signature...**Date**.........................

APPENDIX 7: PARTICIPANTS' PEN PORTRAITS

The purpose of the following pen portraits of the 12 participating principals is to provide a greater understanding of the situation in which these novice principals were beginning their new principalship. The pen portraits were compiled from the findings identified from both the background data which included their previous leadership experiences and the data concerning the past principal of their new school.

Participant 1 – Linda was in her fourth year as principal at an urban non-government school. She reflected on her past leadership experiences which included working with good principal role models when she was a teacher, her previous leadership experiences as a Head of a Middle School (within a Preschool – Year 12 larger school) and her major role within the administration of her sector. She believed that these experiences, together with having completed a Masters' Degree in Leadership and Management, enabled her to win the position of principal at her new school. Before she started in her new role she discovered that the previous principal had not had a good relationship with the school community and resolved that she would spend time in building new positive relationships with her school community as her first priority.

Participant 2 – Cathy was at the beginning of her third year as principal of an urban school (her permanent appointment began in the second half of the school year). She explained her reason for applying for a principal position. "As a single mum I could see that taking control of what I was doing and where I was going would be beneficial for my family, instead of being moved around by the department, when we had the ten-year rule" (a past Government School's policy re teacher tenure). She believed that her previous leadership experiences including having a curriculum coordinator's role, a deputy principal role and an acting principal role assisted her in winning the principal position. The previous principal had retired.

Participant 3 – Jo was in her second year as principal of a very small rural school. She reflected that as her mother was a manager of a business she had grown up with discussions about management, which led to her working for several years as a manager of a non-educational company overseas. She reported that she was encouraged to apply for the principal position by her Assistant Regional Director who also provided her with information about the school which included having to conduct her sector's Validation Review in the first six weeks of her starting as principal. Her new school was located in a very small town as she described: "Our

school … is in a very, very small town, there's no shop, there's a post office, and there are maybe 40 houses in the town, and all the other children come from farming families".

Participant 4 – Stan was in his third year as principal in a small government rural school. He had been a school captain before becoming a leader in a non-educational management position and then went on to do a teaching degree. His main educational leadership experiences included being part of a leadership team in a large regional school before starting at his new school in an acting principal role for six months and then winning the position for five years. Stan said that his rural school had experienced four principals in the two years before he arrived and that "there was no continuity, there was no direction, there were new staff members as well". He reflected that this situation made him feel like he needed to "hit the ground running".

Participant 5 – David was in his fourth year as a principal of a small rural non-government school. He reflected that apart from being a school captain he had no other leadership experience beyond coordinator level. Although his father was a Junior School Head he had not previously thought about becoming a principal until an opportunity arose. He explained, "Within our system we had probably four people retire – so that just created a bit of movement around schools. And then it was just a little gap that opened up for me to apply". He said that the school had been left in a good financial position although the past principal only provided him with her diary to follow which left him with no real idea of managing the principal role.

Participant 6 – Geoff was in his fourth year as principal of a small non-government school. He had no leadership experiences beyond a coordinator role but had completed 12 months at a two-year Discernment Course conducted by his sector from which he said he learned much and was sorry he didn't finish the course. His principal had encouraged him to apply for the school to get some experience in applying for positions. It was also a family decision to apply for the school as both he and his wife were originally from a nearby country region. His new school was in a low socioeconomic conservative rural area and he discovered that, not only were most of the teachers on the staff a lot older than him, but had also been at the school for over 30 years.

Participant 7 – Sam was in his fourth year as a principal of a non-government rural school. He had no leadership experience beyond coordinator level but had been involved previously in his sector's Discernment Course on leadership. From this

course he felt he "was tapped on the shoulder and asked to apply". His older brother and mother were both involved in managing businesses and had accounting experiences which he reflected had probably given him some encouragement to apply as well. He discovered that his new school had been through a Registration Review and he was required by his sector to make some changes in the school before the end of his first term in the position. He also found that most of his staff members had been at the school for 30 or more years and were much older than he was.

Participant 8 – Sharyn was in her second year as principal in a government rural school. She had previous experience as a curriculum consultant and had worked extensively with school principals in the past to develop appropriate strategies for teachers to improve their students' learning outcomes. Her new school had just been reclassified as a small primary school and had lost its Area School rating and all of its additional leadership positions. She explained she was the only school leader which, she reported, meant that her school community expected her to do everything at the school. In addition, the past principal had been well loved by the community and was a male which the community preferred. As she stated:

> I can tell you there is a difference between a male and a female principal, and females aren't accepted as much as males. The community has a high expectation of female principals. They want you to be a mother and a leader all at the same time, and a wife.

Participant 9 – Anna was in her second year as principal of an urban government sector Special School with over 80 students and a significant number of staff including a deputy principal who had also applied for the position. Previously she had been at a number of special schools as deputy principal and as Head of a Special Unit within a large Reception – Year 12 complex. The school's past principal who had retired, was very helpful to Anna, providing advice and information about the school before she started and later became a good friend and mentor.

Participant 10 – Chris was in her fourth year in an urban government school in a low socioeconomic area. She had leadership experience as an assistant principal in curriculum development, in acting principal positions and in sector administration before applying and winning her first school. She reflected that she had modelled her leadership style on several of her past school leaders with whom she had worked and had admired their qualities and personal values particularly in relation to student learning. The previous principal at the school had retired and had left the school well organised.

Participant 11 – Jenny was in her second year as principal of a small government rural school. Her previous leadership experience included a coordinator role and then acting principal before applying for the principal position at the school. The difficulty she explained was that her principal had encouraged her to apply for the vacancy with the intention of them sharing the role. The sector leadership, however, chose her as the only principal which made her relationship with the incumbent principal very difficult and initially embarrassing in the school. She did, however, reflect that as she already knew all the families and the staff at the school she was able to settle into the principal role earlier than other novice principals she knew.

Participant 12 – Kate was in her second year as principal of an urban non-government school. She had extensive experiences as deputy principal for six years and as acting principal in several schools before winning her new position. She revealed that her new school was extremely overstaffed and had a serious deficit budget which meant she would have to make "some difficult decisions about staffing and would have little in the way of finances to make improvements in the school". In addition, she noted that many of the teaching staff had been at the school for over 20 years or more.

REFERENCES

Anderson, K., Clarke, S. & Vidovich, L. (2009). Taking up the Reins: The first year for deputy principals. *Leading & Managing.* Vol. 15, No. 2, p. 31–43. http://search.informit.com.au.ezproxy.flinders.edu.au/document Summary; dn=974790558711226;res=IELAPA>_ISSN: 1329–4539.

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) (2015). Preparing future leaders – Effective preparation for aspiring school principals. *Australian Institute for Teaching & School Leadership Ltd.*

Baker, J. (1993). Looking Back: Beginning Principals' Reflections on the First Year. (Online) www.aare.edu.au (September 3rd, 2007).

Barbour, R. & Schostak, J. (2005). Interviewing and Focus Groups. In *Somekh & Lewin Eds Research Methods in the Social Sciences. S*AGE pub. London. p. 41–48.

Barty, K.; Thomson, P., Blackmore, J. & Sachs, J. (2005). Unpacking the Issues: Researching the Shortage of School Principals in Two states in Australia. In *The Australian Educational Researcher.* Vol. 32, No. 3, p. 1–18.

Belmonte, A. & Cranston, N. (2007). Leading Catholic Schools into the Future: Some challenges and dilemmas for resolution. *Leading & Managing.* Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 15–29.

Bengtson, E., Zepeda, S. & Oksana, P. (2013). School Systems, Practices of Controlling Socialization during Principal Succession. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership.* Vol. 41, No. 2, p. 143–164.

Brody, J., Vissa, J. & Weathers, J. (2010). School Leader. Professional socialization: The contribution of Focused Observations. *Journal of Research and Leadership Education.* Vol. 5, No.14, p. 611–647.

Browne-Ferrigne, T. (2003). Becoming a principal: Role conception, initial socialization, role identity transformation, purposeful engagement. *Educational Administration Quarterly.* Vol. 39, No.4, p. 468–503.

Brundrett, M. & Anderson, R. (2008). Setting an agenda for the development of the next generation of school leaders: a commitment to social justice or simply making up the numbers? *School Leadership & Management.* Vol. 28: 3, p. 247–260.

Bush, T. (2009). Leadership development and school improvement: contemporary issues in leadership development. *Educational Review.* 61: 4, p. 375–389.

Bush, T. (2016). Preparing new principals: Professional and organisational socialisation. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership.* Vol. 44:1, p. 3–5.

Clarke, S. & Stevens, E. (2009). Sustainable leadership in small rural schools: selected Australian vignettes. *Journal Educational Change.* Springer: Vol.10 p. 277–293.

Close, P. & Raynor, A. (2010). Five literatures of organisation: putting the context back into educational leadership. *School Leadership & Management.* Vol. 30: 3, p. 209–224.

Cottrell, M. & James, C. (2015). Theorizing Headteacher Socialization from a Role Boundary Perspective. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership.* January. p. 1–14.

Cowie, M. & Crawford, M. (2008). Being a new principal in Scotland. *Journal of Educational Administration.* Armidale: Vol. 46, No. 6, p. 676–689.

Cowie, M. & Crawford, M. (2009). Head teacher preparation programmes in England and Scotland: do they make a difference for the first-year head? *School Leadership & Management* 29: 1, p. 5–21.

Crawford, M. & Cowie, M. (2012). Bridging Theory and Practice in Headship Preparation: Interpreting Experience and Challenging Assumptions. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership.* Vol. 40, No. 2, p. 175–187

Creswell, J. (2005). *Educational Research.* Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research (2nd ed.). Pearson, Ohio.

Crow, G. (2006). Complexity and the beginning principal in the United States; perspectives on socialization. *Journal of Educational Administration.* Vol. 44, No. 4, p. 310–325.

Crow, G. (2007). The Professional and Organizational Socialization of New English Headteachers in School Reform Contexts. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership.* Vol. 35, No. 1, p. 51-71.

Cuban, L. (2011). The DNA of the Principalship: Conflict and Guilt in the Genetic Code. Retrieved from http://larrycuban.wordpress.com/2011/2/16/ the-dna-of-the-principalship-conflict-and-guilt-in-the-genetic-code 21/2/16.

Dinham, S., Anderson, M., Caldwell, B. & Weldon, P. (2011). Breakthroughs in School leadership development in Australia. *School Leadership and Management.* Vol. 31, No. 2, p. 139–154.

Dinham, S., Collarbone, P., Evans, M. & Mackay, A. (2013). The Development, Endorsement and Adoption of a National Standard for Principals in Australia. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership.* Vol.41, No. 4, p. 467–483.

Drummond, A. & Halsey, R. (2013). How hard can it be? The relative job demands of rural, regional and remote Australian educational leaders. *Australian Journal of Education.* Vol. 57, No. 1, p. 19–31.

Duncan, H. & Stock, M. (2010). Mentoring and Coaching Rural School Leaders: What do they need? *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnerships in learning.* Vol. 18, No.3, p. 293–311.

Earley, P. (2009). Work, learning and professional practice: the role of leadership apprenticeships. *School Leadership & Management.* Vol. 29: 3, p. 307–320.

Earley, P. & Bubb, S. (2013). A Day in the Life of New Headteachers: Learning from Observation. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership.* Vol. 61, No. 6, p. 782–799.

Garcia-Garduno, J., Slater, C. & Lopez-Gorosave, G. (2011). Beginning elementary principals around the world. *Management in Education.* Vol. 25, No. 3, p. 100–105.

Gilbert, C., Skinner, J. & Dempster, N. (2008). Expectations of Successful Female Small School Principals. *Leading & Managing.* Vol. 14, No. 1, p. 72–91.

Greenfield, W. (1985). The Moral Socialization of School Administrators: Informal Role Learning Outcomes. *Educational Administration Quarterly.* Vol. 21, No. 4, p. 99–119.

Halsey, R.J. (2011). Small schools, big future. *Australian Journal of Education.* Vol. 55, No. 1, p. 5–13.

Hart, A. (1991). Leader succession and socialization: A Synthesis. *Review of Educational Research.* Vol. 61. No. 4, p. 451–474.

Ingvarson, L. & Anderson, M. (2007). Standards for school leadership: Gateway to a stronger profession. *The Australian Educational Leader.* Vol. 4, p. 11–14.

Kelly, A. & Saunders, N. (2010). New heads on the block: three case studies of transition to primary school headship. *School Leadership & Management.* Vol. 30: 2, p. 127–142.

Lashway, L. (2003). Principal Induction. *Clearinghouse on Educational Policy and Management. Research Roundup.* Vol. 20, No. 2, p. 1

Leithwood, K., Louis, K.S., Anderson, S. & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning.* http://www.wallacefoundation.org/ knowledge-center/Documents/How-Leadership-Influences-Student-Learning.pdf

Lester, N. (2003). Primary Leadership in Small Rural School Communities. *Leading & Managing.* Vol. 9, No. 1. p. 85–99.

Levine, A. (2005). *Educating School Leaders.* The Education School Programs. USA.

Lincoln, Y.S. (1995). Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretive Research. *Qualitative Inquiry.* Vol. 1 No. 3, p. 275–289.

Lochmiller, C. (2014). Leadership Coaching in an Induction Program for Novice Principals: A 3 – Year Study. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education.* Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 59–84.

MacBeath, J. (2009). Recruitment and Retention of Senior School Leaders: meeting the challenge. *European Educational Research Journal.* Vol. 8, No. 3, p. 407–417.

Macpherson, R. (2009). The professionalization of educational leadership: Implications of recent international policy research in leadership development for Australasian education systems. *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice.* Vol. 24, No. 1, p. 53–117.

Maxwell, J. (2008). Qualitative Research Design. An Interpretive Approach 2nd Edition. *Applied Social Research Methods Series.* Vol. 41.

McCulla, N. (2012). The Transition of Accomplished Teachers from the classroom to School Leadership. *Leading & Managing.* Vol. 18, No. 2, p. 79–91.

Merton, R.K. (1963). *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Free Press: New York, NY

Miles, M., Huberman, A.M. & Saldana, J. (2014). *Quality Data Analysis* Ed 3. SAGE: USA.

Normore, A. (2003). Professional and Organisational Socialization Processes of School Administrators: A Literature review. *Paper presented at Hawaii International Conference Education.* Hawaii, USA.

Padgett, D.K. (1998). *Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research: Challenges and Rewards.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Parkay, F., Currie, G. & Rhodes, J. (1992). Professional socialization: A Longitudinal Study of First-Time High School Principals. *Educational Administration Quarterly.* Vol. 28, No. 1, p. 43–75.

Pounder, D. (2011). Leader Preparation Special Issue: Implications for Policy, Practice and Research. *Educational Administration Quarterly.* Vol. 47, No. 1, p. 258–267.

Punch, K. (2009). *Introduction to Research Methods in Education.* SAGE Pub. London.

Quong, T. (2006). Asking the hard questions: being a beginning principal in Australia. *Journal of Educational Administration.* Vol. 44, No. 4, p. 376–388.

Riley, P. (2015). *Principal Health & Wellbeing Survey. The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey.* Institute for Positive Psychology & Education Faculty of Education and Arts. Victoria, Australia.

Shenton, A.K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information.* Vol. 22, p. 63–75*.*

Shields, M. (2008). Surviving the first year: What helps principals last the distance*? Education Papers and Journal Articles. Paper 5. www.research.avondale.edu.au/edu-papers / 5*

Silverman, D. (2005). *Doing Qualitative Research.* 2nd ed. London: SAGE.

Small Schools Association of South Australia (2013). www.decd.sa.edu

Somekh, B., Burman, E., Delamont, S., Meyer, J., Payne, M. & Thorpe, R. (2005). Research Communities in the Social Sciences. *In* B. Somekh & C. Lewin, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences.* (p. 1–12) London: Sage.

Southworth, G. (2008). Primary School Leadership Today and Tomorrow. *School Leadership & Management.* Vol. 28. No.5, p. 413–434.

Spillane, J. & Lee, L. (2014). Novice School Principals' Sense of Ultimate Responsibility: Problems of Practice in Transitioning to the Principal's Office. *Educational, Administrative Quarterly*. Vol. 50, No. 3, p. 431–465.

Stephenson, L. & Bauer, S. (2010). The role of isolation in predicting new principals' burnout. *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership.* Vol. 5, No. 9, p. 1–17.

Stevenson, H. (2006). Moving towards, into and through principalship: developing a framework for researching the career trajectory of school leaders. *Journal of Educational Administration.* Vol. 44, No. 4, p. 408–420.

Tooms, A. (2003). The Rookie's Playbook: Insights and Dirt for New Principals. *Phi Delta Kappan.* Vol. 84.7, p. 530. *Expanded Academic ASAP.* Web. 16 Oct. 2011.

Van Gennep, A. (1960). *The Rites of Passage.* The University of Chicago Press; Chicago. USA.

Van Maanen, J. (1988). *Tales of the Field.* Second Edition (2011), The University of Chicago Press, Chicago. USA.

Van Maanen, J. & Schein, E.H. (1979). Towards a theory of organizational socialization. *Research in Organisational Behaviour.* Vol. 1, p. 209–264.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in Society.* London: Harvard University Press.

Walker, A. & Qian, H. (2006). Beginning principals: balancing at the top of the greasy pole. *Journal of Educational Administration.* Vol. 44, No. 4, p. 297–309.

Watson, L. (2009). Issues in Reinventing School Leadership: Reviewing the OECD report on improving school leadership from an Australian perspective. *Leading & Managing.* Vol. 15, No.1, p. 1–13.

Weindling, D. & Dimmock, C. (2006). Sitting in the 'hot seat': new headteachers in the UK. *Journal of Educational Administration.* Vol. 44. No. 4, p. 326–340.

Wildy, H. (2004). *Small Schools Leadership Study.* Murdoch Press; Aus.

Wildy, H. & Clarke, S. (2008). Principals on L plates: rear view mirror reflections. *Journal of Educational Administration.* Vol. 46, No. 6, p. 727–738.

Wildy, H. & Clarke, S. (2012). Leading a small remote school: in the face of a culture of acceptance. *Journal of Education.* Vol. 40, No.1, p. 63–74.

Wildy, H., Clarke, S., Styles, J. & Beycioglu, K. (2010). Preparing Novice Principals in Australia and Turkey: How similar are their needs? *Educational Assessment, Valuation Acc.* Vol. 22, p. 307–326.

Wildy, H., Siguroardottir, S. & Faulkner, R. (2014). Leading the small rural school in Iceland and Australia: Building leadership capacity. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership.* Vol. 42, No. 4S, p. 104–118.

Yin, R. (2009). *Case Study Research Design and Methods.* Fourth Edition. SAGE. L.A.