Retaining the Reservoirs of Hope: supporting school principals in Australia in spiritual and moral leadership

Alan Flintham: Consultant Headteacher, NCSL Research Associate and Churchill Fellow 2005

Barossa Dam, South Australia

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Background:  

A previous research study (Flintham 2003a) investigated the validity of the metaphor of ‘reservoirs of hope’ in describing spiritual and moral leadership of headteachers of schools in England. When critical incidents hit a school, it is argued that the successful headteacher, by providing a coherence of vision and integrity of values, acts as the ‘external reservoir of hope’ for the institution, because ‘hope’ is what drives the school forward towards delivering its vision in the face of such external pressures, whilst allowing it to remain true to its fundamental values when such critical incidents threaten to blow it off course.

The preservation of this coherence of vision and integrity of values when faced with such external pressures may be termed ‘spiritual and moral leadership’, not necessarily in any specifically religious sense but rather using a concept of ‘secular spirituality’ wherein actions are based and relationships governed explicitly or implicitly by foundations of ethical belief.

To be called upon to act as the spiritual and moral leader of a school in this sense demands an ‘internal reservoir of hope’ (the phrase is from John West-Burnham 2002 and is used by kind permission), the calm centre at the heart of the individual leader from which their values and vision flows and which continues to allow effective interpersonal engagement and sustainability of personal and institutional self belief in the face of external pressures.

This personal reservoir of hope has, it is argued, to be refilled periodically by a variety of individual replenishment and sustainability strategies. It requires to be strengthened from a range of corporate support strategies which can collectively enhance individual well-being. A follow-up study (Flintham 2003b) has explored the consequences of these individual and collective support strategies failing to preserve inner well-being, resulting in a situation of some headteachers leaving headship early ‘when reservoirs run dry’.

The two cited studies were based on individual interviews with a total sample of 40 headteachers drawn from a cross-section of school phases and social contexts in England. The award of a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship in 2005 has allowed the extension of this research to investigate the views of a sample of Australian headteachers (known as school principals in the Australian context) and those who seek to provide them with corporate support.
The Fellowship has permitted discussions with a wide range of colleagues as to whether the use of the metaphor of reservoirs of hope to describe the spiritual and moral leadership of school principals has resonance within an Australian context. It has allowed an international comparison to be made, across two educational systems with many similarities, concerning the foundational value systems of school principals and how they have been developed and sustained when tested by critical incidents. Above all, it has enabled a mutual interchange of good practice regarding headteacher sustainability and support mechanisms, which it is hoped will be of some value not only to serving school leaders both in England and Australia but also to those in both countries charged with meeting their on-going professional development needs.

**METHODOLOGY:**

**The research questions:**

The Fellowship study has sought to explore the following research questions:

1. What similarities of value systems exist between headteachers in England and school principals in Australia
2. What resonance does the metaphor of ‘reservoirs of hope’ have in describing spiritual and moral leadership for Australian school leaders and those who contribute to their on-going support and development
3. What personal sustainability strategies are used by Australian principals and how do they compare with their English counterparts
4. What experiences of corporate good practice in headteacher sustainability and support mechanisms may be shared to mutual benefit across systems
5. What mechanisms are possible for the transmission of learning in this area of spiritual and moral leadership to aspirant and newly appointed school principals.

**The research sample:**

During the 6 week duration of the Fellowship visit, 1:1 interviews were held with a total of 18 serving or recently retired Australian school principals in the state capital cities of Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney and their environs. The sample was drawn from a cross-section of school types and contexts, including government, faith and private schools, serving both affluent and socially deprived communities. The composition of the sample sought to reflect the balance of schools within the Australian education system and to ensure that as many as possible of the major faith communities were represented within it. The sample was augmented by the inclusion of two New Zealand school principals, with whom interviews were conducted by e mail, to provide further range and balance. **The total number of school principals interviewed was thus 20.**

Individual discussions were also held with 17 leading educationists drawn from government, faith community and university sectors, together with groups of school and other leaders: **a total number of educationists interviewed of 20.** (Full details of sample composition are to be found in an Appendix to this paper).
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

1. All the principals interviewed could readily articulate a personal value system that underpins their approach to spiritual and moral leadership. These value systems could be categorised as faith-based, upbringing-based or transference-based in approach, analogous to similar value systems described by headteachers in England.

2. All felt the metaphor of ‘reservoirs of hope’ had resonance for them and was useful in reflecting on and discussing their approach to spiritual and moral leadership and its development when faced with a range of critical incidents and external pressures. The educationists interviewed also felt the metaphor was of value in thinking about their role in supporting principals.

3. All could describe a range of personal sustainability strategies. These could be codified as reflection opportunities, reinforcement of self-belief and relaxation strategies. They parallel those described by headteachers in England in terms of support networks, belief networks and external networks of activities beyond education.

4. As corporate support, principals valued above all informal self-generated networks of corporate and individual peer support. They could draw upon a wide range of organisational support mechanisms offered by a variety of support providers. Such providers offered both personal and reflective support but also professional development opportunities. These were considerably enhanced by the availability of entitlements to long-service and study leave not available to their English headteacher counterparts.

5. It was felt that transference of learning and experience in the area of spiritual and moral leadership to aspirant and newly appointed school leaders was most effectively done through mentoring and modelling approaches and through opportunities for guided reflection.

6. What was seen as the privilege of principalship needed to be underwritten by the provision of such legitimised and accessible individual and collective support mechanisms to offset the potential price of its demands upon principal personal well-being.

7. It was felt that much could be gained from the continued exchange of good practice in school leader sustainability and support across two educational systems with many similarities.

It is hoped that the findings of this study as summarised above, and in particular the authentic rendering of the practitioner voice of principals captured in the quotations shown in italics in the account of main findings which follows, will make a contribution to that exchange of good practice.
MAIN FINDINGS:

1. Personal value systems of principals:

In common with their English counterparts, all the school principals interviewed could readily articulate the spiritual and moral bases on which they stood and how they affected their approach to school leadership. It was possible to categorise these value systems as faith-based, upbringing-based or transference-based.

A number of principals in the sample had a firm underpinning of religious faith, even if they were not presently actively worshippers within a faith community:

‘I am doing God’s work…His instrument to make things better in this school, by enabling and empowering’ (Principal 1)

‘I cannot stand alone. I have to realign my life with God. That’s integral to my thinking and my actions’ (Principal 5)

Such faith systems had often been laid down in childhood, but even those who had moved on from that faith perspective still retained what was termed the ‘universal values’: ‘the common threads of all religions’ (Principal 14) which had left behind:

‘a deep inner spirituality based on love and care for my neighbour as myself’ (Principal 2)

‘a strong work ethic and a can-do philosophy to do the best you can, not only for self but for others’ (Principal 19)

A significant number of principals had emerged from working class backgrounds, often where they had been the first to engage with tertiary education. This upbringing had led to what was termed ‘an ethic of obligation’ (Principal 6):

‘a passion to put something back…to make a difference’ (Principal 9)

and a value system which ‘having learned from my own life experiences’ (Principal 10) necessitated a culture of respect towards others:

‘seeing the good in everyone…you’ve got to dignify the learner…preserve and respect individuality, even idiosyncrasy’ (Principal 7)

Some expressed beliefs based on the utilitarian but no less powerful transference value system of

‘do unto others what you wish they would do unto you’ (Principal 18),

in a universal drive for fairness and social justice (the Australian concept of the ‘Fair Go’ was cited more than once):

‘It’s the Golden Rule of all religions: love your neighbour as yourself. So treat other people not only the way you would wish to be treated but also the way they choose to be treated’ (Principal 5)

‘Try to treat others’ children as if they were your own’ (Principal 1)
2. The ‘reservoirs of hope’ metaphor:

Again in common with English headteachers, both principals and educationists interviewed showed a universal identification with the metaphor of reservoirs of hope in describing approaches to spiritual and moral leadership:

‘It resonates with me and the colleagues I’ve shared it with. It sums up the difference between people who stay and people who don’t.’ (Principal 1)

In an era of increasing challenge and responsibility, with one colleague recalling the words of Winston Churchill that ‘Headmasters (sic) have power at their disposal with which Prime Ministers have never yet been invested’ (Churchill 1930), the metaphor was felt to give ‘a shared language to describe and aid reflection’ (Principal 10) and to provide a powerful visual image to support leadership when confronted by critical incidents such as pupil deaths, aggressive parents, political attacks and the consequences of external events such as reorganisation threats and terrorist outrages, all of which were compellingly described:

‘Hope is fundamental when you are walking in the valley of tears and your reservoir running dry is a constant fear. You have to see the wider picture framed by hope.’ (Principal 16)

Principals recognised a development of capacity to act as spiritual and moral leaders in their schools when faced with such critical incidents. Often this came about through an increase in confidence and personal resilience gained through experience:

‘I don’t know what I’d have done if it had happened in my first year’ (Principal 9) in a gradual evolutionary change from ‘doing headship’ into ‘being the head’:

‘I grew into being me…rather than the actor on the stage’ (Principal 17)

and that gave greater confidence in managed risk-taking and courageous support in being true to one’s values:

‘altering the balance between procedural correctness and courageous compassion’ (Principal 6)

Above all, leadership development and experience allowing
‘the stepping back from having to be hands-on all the time’ (Principal 15) provided space for personal reflection on values and the opportunity
‘to discuss and vocalise with other leaders in the school’ (Principal 19).

It was within this opportunity for both personal and mutual reflection on values and personal sustainability and well-being issues that the metaphor of reservoirs of hope was found to be such a supportive one.
3. Personal sustainability strategies:

Personal individual sustainability strategies described by principals may be categorised as **reflection** opportunities, **reinforcement** of self-belief and **relaxation** strategies.

**Reflection** time ‘often in the middle of the night’ (Principal 12) or in a special quiet place ‘just me and my God’ (Principal 16) in ‘daily prayer and meditation’ (Principal 20) provided such personal space deemed essential.

**Reinforcement** of self-belief in the rightness of one’s value system and the validity of one’s actions based upon it came from feedback and support of colleagues, families and friends and was highly valued in maintaining and developing both professional and personal confidence and, through such collective ‘thinking out loud about principles’ (Principal 3) and reinforcement of them, providing ‘a substrate on which confidence could grow’ (Principal 4)

**Relaxation** strategies involving participation in activities often far removed from the professional role (for example ‘the precious 38 minutes out of communication whilst scuba diving’ (Principal 12)) offered the opportunity of ‘disappearing into something else’ (Principal 17) and reinforced a firm belief in the importance of compartmentalisation:

> ‘You cannot be a successful school leader if you are only involved in school life. Don’t live to work…work to live!’ (Principal 8)

4. Corporate support strategies:

Whilst personal sustainability strategies are invaluable in retaining the reservoir of hope of school leaders, corporate support strategies also are perceived to have an important role to play. Principals interviewed identified **networks**, **organisational support** and **professional development** opportunities as being of value in this regard.

These areas were congruent with the findings of discussions with a variety of educationists as to the mechanisms they provided in their area for the collective support of school principals in maintaining their inner reservoir of hope, a concept for which there was strong support. There was much interest amongst those interviewed in learning about analogous provision in the UK.

Principals found the value of ‘home-grown’ **networks** of colleagues with common interests to be greater than those externally imposed. For those leading all-age schools or in campus situations, such networks could actually be extremely local, creating ‘an on-site sense of community and team support within a group of principals sharing a common task and vision’ (Principal 13).
For others, the networking, through the power of the internet, could be international rather than local, fuelled by a recognition that:

‘there are some schools half a world away that I have more in common with than schools 2 kilometres away’ (Principal 6)

and this international networking was supported by participation in on-line conferences such as those organised by iNet: International Networking for Educational Transformation, an initiative of the Specialist Schools Trust.

The value of such networks was felt to be in their informality and voluntary nature, and some concern was expressed about the position of colleagues who were not pro-active in joining, ‘who choose not or fail to be included’ (Principal 10). This was reinforced by the response of a principal taking early retirement who ‘didn’t think there are any (collective support) mechanisms in place…(other than) a wave of literature and courses focussing on the sustainability of principals and their health and well-being’ (Principal 18) a concern about a perceived prevalence of theory over praxis.

Access to networks of support could be supplemented by peer support opportunities. In the case of some principals, this was on an ad hoc and informal basis from ‘a critical friend at a distance’ (Principal 12); for others it was the use of more structured mechanisms, especially in times of severe need. In Melbourne for example, an organisation called ‘Principals First’ provides both professional mentoring and also counselling support on health and well-being issues from a team of retired principals, and there is some resonance with and much interest in the structured Heads Count scheme of peer support provided free by serving headteachers to their colleagues in Nottinghamshire Local Authority in England (Flintham 2005).

In New Zealand, an initiative from the Ministry of Education and thought to be ‘extremely effective’ (Principal 19) provides a website Leadspace which provides access to information, leadership resources and links and which enables leaders to access Principal Professional Learning Communities which are small networks of 4-5 principals providing high trust, high support structured environments for mutual reflection and discussion. This may be supplemented through a Principal’s Development Planning Centre which allows the formulation of a professional development plan based on feedback from experienced fellow-principals acting as facilitators.

Support may be drawn not only from peer principals but from other agency co-workers. In the evocatively named Southern Sea and Vines District of Adelaide, education social workers and their line-managers see part of their role as having a concern for principal well-being and support by providing informal counselling, mediation and brokerage, ‘in helping to fill up the reservoirs of hope of principals’ as well as providing a more conventional source of expertise for the principal in difficult pastoral matters.
More structured organisational support may be provided through national professional associations such as the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) which aims ‘to provide a collegial environment of mutual understanding, trust and support, and encourage an atmosphere in which members and their school communities can be nurtured in spiritual growth’. The secretariat of AHISA can provide ‘a listening ear’ for colleagues, and the collegiality of conferences and branch meetings was felt to offer ‘not competition but abundance’ (Principal 5).

Regionally, the New South Wales Secondary Principals Council (NSWSPC) has been involved in the pioneering of a Principal Support Officer role to provide personal support and leadership development to principals. This role has now been subsumed by the state Department of Education and Training (DET) within the wider role of Principal Liaison Officer, which aims to provide a listening ear with guaranteed confidentiality and offers support and brokerage to school principals from both primary and secondary phases, whilst also providing input into policy and professional development programmes. The appointment of such Principal Support Officers to the staff of the Department is similar to the appointment of a Headteacher Well-Being Officer in Norfolk Local Authority, UK.

Also under the aegis of NSWSPC, a Principal Welfare/Support Reference Group has been set up under the leadership of a serving secondary school principal to provide ‘support for principals by principals at a local level’ (Principal 11) through ‘short-term intensive support and advice delivered by a locally based principal who can understand the specific context and nature of the school and its community and can quickly help to rebuild principal resilience and confidence’. A similar welfare and support reference group also exists under the aegis of the New South Wales Primary Principals Association.

Such locally based pairings are also available within the Catholic sector of the education system. For example in the Archdiocese of Sydney every Catholic school principal is assigned a consultant to act as link person between the school and the Catholic Education Office (which has a far greater range of autonomous functions than its UK counterpart). Such consultants are former principals who have been identified as beacons of good practice or so-called ‘lighthouse principals’ for their competence, experience and capacity to build relationships. They offer ‘head to head’ contact with principals offering opportunities to talk through ‘the things that can only be talked through with a fellow head’ on the principle of ‘once a head, always a head’. Principal Officers within the Catholic Education Office in many dioceses also provide valuable support, drawing on their own past experience of headship.

Principals of Catholic schools in Sydney also have access to events organised by the Catholic Spirituality Team with a focus on spiritual formation and development, of particular interest due to the growth of lay leadership of schools and the reported difficulties of recruiting principals within the Catholic sector.
Within the Diocese of Parramatta, the *ELIM programme* (an Old Testament reference to a place of oasis in the desert) has been devised for experienced principals to gain ‘professional development and spiritual nourishment, and allow the sharing of stories and journeys’ and facilitate networking.

The Flagship for Creative and Authentic Leadership of **ACU National (Australian Catholic University)** seeks to provide a distinctive spiritual perspective to higher education, by explicitly engaging with the social, ethical and religious dimensions of research questions. It offers a widely supported programme of higher degrees as well as other academic support and opportunities for reflection, together with non-reporting feedback with regard to spirituality and leadership issues.

Further professional development opportunities are provided by organisations such as the *Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC)* which offers a ‘Leaders Matter’ workshop project and a ‘Learn: Lead: Succeed’ resource book to facilitate leadership review and build leadership development. The *South Australian Centre for Leaders in Education (SACLE)* funded by the state government Department of Education and Children’s Services, provides through its ‘Leaders Learning’ framework an holistic input of expertises and opportunities for professional development aimed at ‘engaging, enriching and sustaining educational leadership’.

The totality of such examples of networking, organisational support and professional development opportunities seen during the context of the Fellowship, whilst specific to their Australian settings, has clear resonance with similar opportunities available to support and sustain school leaders in the UK. One sustainability strategy available to many Australian principals which is not replicated however is the concept of entitlement to long-service and **study leave**. Within the government sector, this entitlement to long-service leave accrues to up to 90 days after 5-10 years service and similar availability pertains for principals of private schools. Within the Catholic sector, sabbatical funding and long-service leave is also available. Such entitlements provide a highly valued and flexible source of professional development and renewal ‘to enable the resurrection of the phoenix’ as one colleague put it. Those with long memories of the history of the UK education system will recall similar proposals being made in the James Report on teacher education and training of 1972 but never implemented in the UK on the grounds of cost.

One potentially destabilising feature of Australian provision (at least when viewed through English eyes) in terms of personal sustainability could be that principals tend to be on fixed term, albeit renewable, contracts of between 5 and 7 years duration. However some principals interviewed felt that the time-limited nature of tenure provided a paradoxically sustaining sense that *‘it’s not forever, and that can be quite liberating in having a life outside’* (Principal group E9)

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5. Transference of learning:

Given that principals increasingly recognise that principalship is not necessarily the pinnacle of a professional career nor inevitably a job for life, but are adopting an increasingly post-modernist portfolio approach to their career development (Flintham 2004), there was a need for mechanisms that would transfer learning and experience regarding spiritual and moral leadership to other members of leadership teams and to aspirant and newly appointed principals.

There were available structured opportunities for leadership development such as the master classes for young leaders (5-10 years in the profession) offered by the University of Melbourne and similar faith-oriented developments in the Catholic sector, for example the Animator project within the Archdiocese of Sydney developing teacher spirituality by the provision of reflective exploratory guided space, and a bespoke study leave and reflection opportunity for Catholic RE teacher development in the Archdiocese of Melbourne as the seedbed for possible future Catholic school leaders, and these were valued by school principals interviewed.

However it was felt that the development of future generations of leaders in this important facet of the leadership role would come about more effectively through mentoring and modelling approaches. Mentoring of new headteachers followed a similar pattern to the UK, being time-limited to the early headship years and using allocations of mentor pairings made by Department of Education officers, which was a source of some concern to some principals. It was felt that the role of the mentor was not as a task-oriented procedural flow of information but as ‘providing a listening ear, providing non-judgmental support’ (Principal 20) and supplemented by personal absorption into existing networks where ‘a positive group can absorb and develop an newcomer through its critical mass’ (Principal 13)

Whilst such mentoring relationships when successful were deemed to be valuable, it was felt important that they were preceded in the formative ‘aspirant’ years by existing principals modelling appropriate behaviours. This approach, described as ‘the caught not taught model of leadership development’ (Principal 3) demands the principal having a focus and concern for the formation of others in the leadership team: ‘growing them for leadership by giving them the freedom to make mistakes’. (Principal 4)

Such modelling may be supplemented by interschool visitations and workshops led by experienced principals to enable ‘hearing from the peers’, but there was no substitute for ‘sitting in the seat for a bit’ (Principal 15) through a distributed approach to leadership, although one academic observer expressed some concern as to whether this concept had been fully understood, internalised and practised, and argued the need for greater clarity in identification of the generic skills and psychological capacities needed for school principalship, which would then impact on the identification and formation of future leaders. (Educationist 1)
CONCLUSION:

A study of principals’ workload and its impact on health and well-being, conducted for the Department of Education and Training of the State of Victoria (Saulwick and Muller 2004), was aptly named ‘The Privilege and the Price’. It found that principals almost universally ‘love their job’ and think of themselves as having the ‘privilege’ of caring for and developing young people and their families. A number of respondents in the survey indicated that a commitment to the people in their care will usually take precedence over everything else, be it demands from outside the caring relationship, monetary reward or personal preferment. The ‘price’ however is an inherent leadership tension between this caring imperative and the managerial demands of the role: what the report calls ‘the carer versus manager tension’ (ibid p.22).

‘The Socially Responsible Indicators (SRI) Project’ conducted by ACU National (Australian Catholic University 2005) also identified similar potential tensions in human service organisations between economic and social imperatives. It contrasts a managerial economic efficiency orientation, driven by a concern for competencies, targets and measurable outcomes, with a caring socially responsible imperative, with indicators of service, care, stewardship and trust.

The chief investigator in this study, Patrick Duignan, writing in another context, argues that authentic leaders earn the respect of their colleagues not through performance compliance: ‘Leaders earn their allegiance through authentic actions and interactions in trusting relationships’ (Duignan 2003).

In no circumstances is that trust called upon more fully than when critical incidents hit a school community. In terms of the metaphor of ‘reservoirs of hope’ as applied to school leadership, the ‘privilege of principalship’ in such circumstances is to be trusted as the external reservoir of hope for the school. The ‘price of principalship’ is the potential draining of the personal internal reservoir of hope by being called upon so to do.

Investing in the support and sustainability of principals regarding the spiritual and moral leadership they are called upon to exercise in such circumstances is a sound investment when compared to the potential human cost of burn-out or underfunctioning. And if best practice in this area can be further developed, then it could be extended to encompass the support needs of other members of school staffs and provide a prototype for the development of similar systems for other professions in a transferable model of mutual sustainability and support.

It is hoped therefore that this study and the mutual exchange of good practice across continents of headteacher sustainability and support mechanisms it has engendered, will contribute in some small measure towards ensuring that the collective ‘reservoirs of hope’ of school leaders do not run dry but can overflow in ‘a triumph of hope over experience’.
REFERENCES:

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Flintham, A.J (2005) *Heads Count: an evaluation of a Nottinghamshire model for headteacher sustainability, support and development through peer support*, Nottinghamshire LEA/East Midlands Leadership Centre

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**Melbourne 22 October-11 November 2005**

**Principals:**
Sholto Bowen, Huntingtower School, Mount Waverley  
David Loader, formerly Wesley College, Melbourne, presently University of Melbourne  
Kevin Mackay, Dandenong North Primary School, Dandenong  
Meenah Marchbank, Cambridge Primary School, Hoppers Crossing  
Ken Thompson, Gladstone Park Secondary College, Gladstone Park  
Harvey Wood, Fairhills High School, Knoxfield

**Educationists:**
Debra Brydon, iNet and cybertext On-line Conference Manager  
Brian Caldwell, formerly University of Melbourne, presently Director, Educational Transformations  
Joe Fleming, formerly Archdiocese of Melbourne, presently Visiting Scholar Cambridge University  
Neil Wright, Project Co-ordinator, Principals First, Council for Christian Education in Schools

**Groups:**
Presentation to Western Metropolitan Region Leadership Forum, Dept Educ. & Training, Victoria
Adelaide 1 November-11 November 2005

Principals:
Jim Davies, Australian Science and Mathematics School, Flinders University
Kaye Johnson, Woodville Primary School, Adelaide
Helen Seretis, Lockleys North Primary School, Adelaide
Wendy Teasdale-Smith, Aberfoyle Park High School, Aberfoyle Park
(also Vice-President Australian Secondary Principals Association)

Educationists:
Anne Barkaway, Education Social Worker, Dept Educ & Training Southern Sea and Vines District
Christine Budd, Inclusion Well-Being Co-ordinator, District Team, Southern Sea and Vines District
Wendy House, Leadership Consultant, South Australian Centre for Leaders in Education, DECS
Nancy Schupelius, Principal, South Australian Centre for Leaders in Education, Dept Ed&CServ.
Jeremy Hurley, Profess. Officer, Australian Principals Associations Professional Devpt. Council

Groups:
Group discussion with the following principals:
Deb Graham, Hallett Cove R-12 School, Hallett Cove
Kim Hebenstreit, Thebarton Senior College, Torrensville
Jenny Sommer, Wirreanda High School, Morphett Vale

Canberra 17-19 November 2005

Principals:
Dennis Flannery, Belconnen High School, Hawker
Moira Najdecki, Mackillop Catholic College, Tuggeranong

Educationists and Former Principals:
Allan Shaw, formerly Foundation Principal, Peter Moyes Anglican Community School, Perth
presently Chief Executive, Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia
Dennis Sleigh, formerly Principal, Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Primary School, Garran
presently Principal Human Resources Officer, Leadership, Review and Public Affairs, Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

Sydney 11 November-17 November, 19 November-29 November 2005

Principals:
Andrew Newman, Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College, Wylong, NSW
Sharon Parkes, Warners Bay High School, Newcastle, NSW
Phil Roberts, Mount Sinai College, Maroubra, Sydney
Lynne Stone, St Catherines School, Waverley, Sydney

Educationists:
Chris Bonnor, President, New South Wales Secondary Principals’ Council
Tony Bracken, Hd. Professional Development&Leadership, Catholic Education Office, Parramatta
Tony D’Arbon, Dep.Director, Flagship for Creative&Authentic Leadership, Australian Catholic Uni
Patrick Duignan, Director, Flagship for Creative&Authentic Leadership, Australian Catholic Univ.
Tracey Hayne, Principal Liaison Officer, Office of Schools, NSW Dept of Education and Training
Kerryanne Knox, Principal Liaison Officer,Office of Schools, NSW Dept of Education and Training
Anthony Steel, Leader, Spirituality Team, Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Sydney
Robert Tobias, Member, Spirituality Team, Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Sydney

New Zealand: interviews conducted by e mail:
Graham Preston, Bethlehem College, Tauranga, NZ
Tali Temese, Porirua Primary School, Wellington, NZ

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APPENDIX:

The interview sample:

Principals:

Number of principals interviewed: 20
Gender balance: 8 Female 12 Male

Phase of school: Primary 7
   Secondary 8
   All age 5

Type of school: Government 12
   Catholic 2
   Private 6

Faith perspective of school: Anglican 2
   Catholic 2
   Christian Scientist 1
   Evangelical Christian 1
   Jewish 1
   Methodist 1

The principals had an average age of 54 and a range of total headship experience of between 3 and 32 years (mean 12), with a range of 1 to 21 years (mean 7) years spent as principal of their present school. 50% of the sample were on their second or multiple experience of headship. There was consequently a considerable depth of school leadership experience on which to draw.

Educationists:

Number of educationists interviewed: 20
Gender balance: 7 Female 11 Male

Number of organisations represented: 17

Type of organisation: Government 3
   Faith 4
   Professional Associations 3
   Universities 2
   Schools 3
   Other 2

The interview schedule:

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule as reproduced below, which had been sent to participants in advance. Educationists received a truncated version of the schedule as shown. As the interviewing sequence progressed, supplementary questioning regarding the emerging themes was inserted into the interview process. In the case of the principals interviewed, interviews were tape recorded to supplement the contemporaneous notes taken and, following respondent validation, to provide the source of the direct quotations cited, and thus hopefully to provide an authentic rendering of principal practitioner voice.
**Principals Interview Schedule:**

Please give some **background** about yourself: length of principalship, type/character of school, faith perspective if any, (remembering that the definition of spiritual leadership being used does not have exclusively religious connotations but seeks to embrace a broader concept of secular spirituality). Where would you say you derive your own spiritual/moral base from?

Do you find of value the **concepts** of an internal ‘personal reservoir of hope’ (the calm centre at the heart of the individual leader from which their values and vision flows and which enables effective interpersonal engagement no matter what the external pressures) and the external ‘reservoir of hope’ for the institution (where the leader acts as the wellspring of self-belief and directional focus for the school) in thinking about your role in spiritual and moral leadership, or are there alternative metaphors that would better describe your own approach to spiritual and moral leadership?

Could you give examples of **sustainability strategies** you use to preserve and replenish your personal reservoir of hope in the face of external pressures? How does the success of these strategies manifest itself internally for you personally/externally for the school?

Could you give examples of **critical incidents** in your ‘leadership story’ of how you have acted as the reservoir of hope for the institution yet preserved your own internal reservoir of hope?

Has there been a **development** of your capacity to do this as your school leadership has gone on, and if so, to what do you attribute this? Does this link to any perceived stages of leadership development?

What mechanisms are in place in your area for the **collective support** of school leaders? How effective do you think they are? How might they be enhanced?

What mechanisms do you think are possible for the **transference** of your spiritual and moral leadership qualities to other members of your leadership team, and to aspirant and newly-appointed school principals?

Are there any **other points** you wish to record?

**Educationists Interview Schedule:**

Please give some **background** about yourself and your organisation:

Do you find of value the **concepts** of an internal ‘personal reservoir of hope’ (the calm centre at the heart of the individual leader from which their values and vision flows and which enables effective interpersonal engagement no matter what the external pressures) and the external ‘reservoir of hope’ for the school (where the leader acts as the wellspring of self-belief and directional focus for the school) in thinking about the spiritual and moral leadership role of school principals and their support needs?

What mechanisms do you provide in your area for the **collective support** of school principals in maintaining their ‘internal reservoirs of hope’? How effective are they? How might they be enhanced?

What mechanisms do you think are possible for the **transference** of spiritual and moral leadership qualities to aspirant and newly-appointed school principals?

Are there any **other points** you wish to record?
Biographical Details:

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