Entry planning: a key aspect in preparing for school leadership in Western Australia

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ENTRY PLANNING – A KEY ASPECT IN PREPARING
FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN WESTERN
AUSTRALIA

A Masters by Research (Education) Thesis submitted to
the Graduate Research School, of Edith Cowan
University

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ABSTRACT

Through my work in various contexts, as a senior leader, a curriculum improvement officer, a deputy principal, a project manager for professional learning and now as principal, I recognised from experience and dabbling in research that there were gaps in professional learning offered to aspirant and beginning secondary school principals in the public system. Undertaking research in this field would either confirm or refute my theory that support for secondary principals through professional learning in the Western Australian Department of Education was limited. The premise that quality leadership enhances quality teaching was a driver in establishing my goal, which is to inform and influence the system to better support secondary principals in public schools in Western Australia.

Therefore, this is a unique study of beginning principal preparation in the public secondary education sector in Western Australia. The specific purpose of the study was to investigate the level of preparation undertaken by new and experienced principals for their role and to explore to what extent entry planning could assist in the preparation for principalship.

A comprehensive literature review was undertaken and to date the majority of the literature investigates the challenges facing beginning principals and how well prepared they felt they were to meet those challenges. Clarke, Wildy and Styles (2011) argue that:

in educational settings where generations of school principals have taken up their appointments without any prior preparation, who have learned to do the job while on the job, and whose professional development has been driven mainly by their own initiative, it is unlikely that incumbents have an understanding of what might have been different for them in their work had they experienced a formal preparation program prior to appointment. (p. 174)

The study sought to ask questions of practitioners that would either validate the global research or support the view of Clarke, Wildy and Styles. The findings were
consistent between the literature and the case studies. The participating principals articulated the components of effective principal preparation programs and they have a keen desire to see these implemented in support of public education in Western Australia.

The study found that professional learning and preparation for secondary principals in the public sector is ad hoc, and often developed, or not, at the personal level. There were three main findings: effective principal preparation can reduce the perceived complexity of the role and therefore minimize the expectations experienced by the beginning school principal; formal implementation of informal learning opportunities such as mentoring, coaching and networking can reduce the drift from the profession; and that entry planning has a significant effect in assisting in preparation for the principalship. Principals from a range experience, from 18 months to 20 years, agree that a systemic, coordinated approach would more adequately prepare secondary principals for the complexity of expectations from local, state and national perspectives, and encourage aspirant school leaders to move into the principalship during a time when a predicted shortage in the teaching profession is making the role even more complex.
Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

i. Incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

ii. Contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis; or

iii. Contain any defamatory material.

Signed: [Signature] Date: 16/4/14
Dedication Page

I would like to dedicate this work to my family who have encouraged and supported me along the way. They have asked about my progress and shown interest in my research. They have been superb role models for me in persistence and they will celebrate with me the successful completion of my thesis. I would like to thank Jeff, Gareth, Dylan and Bronwyn for acknowledging the importance of this work, allowing me to take time away from the family in order to complete it, and badgering me to be persistent.

I wish to acknowledge the support, guidance and understanding shown by my supervisor Glenda Campbell-Evans. She has been instrumental in ensuring that I strive for a better product with each version.

Finally, I would like to thank the 6 principals who generously gave up some of their time to participate in the interviews that informed this thesis. As a result of their participation, I trust that they will find their response will help shape professional learning for secondary principals in Western Australian public schools.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The role of secondary school principals in public Western Australian schools is becoming increasingly more complex. Currently there is no requirement for any specific training or preparation prior to entry to the principalship. In this context the problem for the system is that school leaders enter the principalship with varying degrees of experience, skill and capacity to lead their schools. Therefore the intent of this study is to investigate the level of preparation undertaken by secondary principals for their role and to explore to what extent entry planning can assist in the preparation for principalship in the Western Australian public school sector. Recent literature suggests that current preparation and support for school principals in Western Australia is inadequate (Clarke, Wildy and Styles, 2010; and Hinton, Hayward, Banks, Fry and Heap, 2013). This study aims to address the issue of secondary principal preparation from practitioners’ observations of factors, including professional learning, support, and planning, that successfully support entry into the principalship. As the study also aims to explore to what extent entry planning can support the beginning principal it necessary to offer a definition of entry planning at this point. The literature on entry for both public and private sector organizations (Jentz & Wofford, 1982) emphasizes the importance of forming a "learning agenda" to understand an organization's history and culture before developing goals or strategies. Entry activities may be described as learning, listening, sharing, building and planning. The purpose of an entry plan is to create a smooth transition from one role to the next. A detailed definition is offered in chapter three.

Worldwide, there is agreement in both past and more recent educational literature that there are issues associated with building leadership capacity and in sustaining principal leadership. There is also agreement that there are problems in attracting and recruiting suitable candidates to the role of principal (Walker, Anderson, Sackney, & Woolf, 2003; Meesook & Parkay 2004; Riley, 2011; Kuhn, 2012; Hinton, Hayward, Banks, Fry & Heap, 2013). The role of the principal has become increasingly complex and constrained (Riley, 2011) and "effective leadership of principals is one of the crucial factors for innovating schools and improving the
quality of school education" (p. 86) (Meesook & Parkay, 2004). Walker and Qian (2006) summarize these factors stating: "Three interrelated areas help set the context for beginning principals internationally. These include the expectations facing new principals, the shortage of new principals, and preparation for principalship" (p. 298). These factors have influenced this study through shaping the literature review and subsequently the methodology, and finally the discussion and recommendations that follow.

There is also some uniformity in the global research that supports quality teaching and quality leadership as a determinant of student achievement. This is particularly evident in the research presented by Schleicher (2013) that provides a summary of systems across the world, highlighting the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results that show improvement in the world ranking league tables. In Australia, Schleicher's view is supported by Hattie's (2008) research that indicates principals have a positive effect size on student learning indirectly through influencing quality teaching. Hattie's meta-analysis of global research indicates the biggest effect size for student achievement, other than the student herself, is the quality of the teacher. Schleicher supports Hattie's notion that the biggest effect size on the quality of teaching is the principal or school leader.

Currently in Western Australia, similar to the world trend, there is a strong focus on improving leadership support in public schools. Schleicher (2013) reports that improving school leadership is a key element in improving teacher quality and therefore student achievement. At the same time as focusing on improving leadership quality, the Western Australian Department of Education's last published predicted workforce trends show that there will be a significant leadership loss to the system in 5 to 10 years when current leaders retire (DET, 2009). Riley (2011) indicates that "Principals' Australia estimates that as many as 70% of Australia's 10,000 principals will reach retirement age within the next five years" (p. 9). Riley elaborated further, "workforce changes brought about by either changing community attitudes or government policy affects all schools and all school principals yet no systematic measurements of their effects have been conducted until now" (p. 9). It is also evident in the literature that principals' work in
Western Australia is impacted by government policy made at the State and Nationals levels. Such policy implications include both the national reform agenda and the Western Australian State Government’s reform of public schools; agendas that hold accountability and autonomy in the foreground of planned changes to education (Holden, 2011).

Recent Australian and uniquely Western Australian research reported in the literature such as Clarke, Wildy and Styles 2010; Riley, 2011; and Hinton, Hayward, Banks, Fry and Heap, 2013, corroborate these factors. Clarke, Wildy and Styles found that school principals were mostly prepared for the principalship through on the job experience while Hinton et al., suggest:

The level of support for principals and deputy principals is a contributing factor in attracting and retaining highly skilled and experienced educators. Therefore there is a need to provide appropriate systems of support in Western Australia in order to retain high performing individuals as school leaders, and to encourage others to aspire to these roles in the future. (p. 100)

**Western Australian Context**

In response to these identified factors, the Director General for the Department of Education announced the establishment of the Western Australian Institute Professional Learning, including The Public School Leadership Program, which O’Neill described as providing a variety of opportunities including post graduate qualifications for existing leaders and aspirant leaders (www.det.edu.wa.au). The Institute for Professional Learning provides professional learning programs for all Department employees as well as school leaders. While the response by the Department has warranted some change to principal preparation and support, Hinton et al. are very firm in their view:

...that the support being offered to school leaders by the system is inadequate. The arrangements that the Department has put in place do not address the issues that school leaders are dealing with arising from the changed context of their work and the waves of
devolution of responsibility and accountability to schools. (p. 101)

Similarly, this view is reported in other Western Australian studies and further confirms the need for a coordinated systemic approach to preparing school leaders for the principalship (Kuhn, 2012). The announcement made in 2008 by the Director General signalled the commencement of a new era for professional learning and leadership development in Western Australian public schools (Booth, 2009). Prior to 2010 in Western Australia, leadership learning and services were delivered to government schools through the Western Australian Leadership Centre. Funded by the Department of Education, the Leadership Centre was an independent body that had representation from associations including Western Australian Secondary School Executive's Association (WASSEA), Western Australian Primary Principals Association (WAPPA), Western Australian Secondary Teaching Administrators Association (WASTAA) and Western Australian Education Support Principals Association (WAESPA), the Teachers' Union and Department of Education (DoE) on its board. The Leadership Centre was managed by a Principal Consultant who worked with project managers, seconded from schools on 12 – 24 month rotations, to develop professional learning as well as manage mentoring and induction programs (Invar gson, Anderson, Gronn & Jackson, 2009). In September 2011, the then Western Australian Minister for Education announced a new Master of School Leadership program. She said, “the Department of Education had entered into partnership with the University of WA to develop and deliver the program, which would contribute to the increased stability and continuity of leadership, performance and accountability within schools” (Constable, 2011). According to the University of Western Australia’s web news:

In January 2012 some of Western Australia’s best teachers enrolled in the new Masters of School Leadership degree, offered by UWA's Faculty of Education. The degree is tailored to nurture leadership talent and provide professional support for aspiring school principals. The course aims to develop participants’ confidence and high levels of skills to lead their own school communities. (O’Neill, 2011)
Clarke, Wildy and Styles (2010) suggest that the notion of on the job experience as preparation for the principalship is in difference to mandated professional learning requirements in other countries. They also make reference to certification of principals. The Masters of School Leadership is a “key component” of the public school leadership program (O’Neill, 2012). Introducing a postgraduate qualification may be similar to principal or even teacher preparation trends occurring worldwide (Schleicher, 2013). It is not a requirement for selection to the role of principal and the Masters of School Leadership program covers only some of the aspects reported by the literature as being factorial in exemplary principal preparation programs. In Western Australia (WA), Hinton et al., (2013) have found that principal preparation programs are inadequate. According to Riley (2011) the principal role is described as rapidly changing and in an ever-increasing age of accountability including the push for improved outcomes for students and the reform agenda, would-be principals face a lonely, somewhat arduous task of adjusting to a new life in the role of principal. As Jacquie Patuawa, a New Zealand principal writes:

As a new principal, who had only ever been a deputy principal, I found the task of setting budgets, drafting annual plans and finalising staffing through management of the direct resourcing of teacher salaries was akin to learning a foreign language. Trying to achieve all of this at the same time as building relationships with staff, students and community was a big ask. I had an inherent fear that asking for help would be seen as incompetence and therefore was reluctant to do so. I struggled on ‘alone’. (Patuawa, 2006, p. 1)

Patuawa’s sentiment is reflected in the literature (Clarke, Wildy and Styles, 2010; and Kuhn, 2012), which confirms that the Western Australian context is consistent with the range of literature that investigates principal preparation across the world. By signaling changes to the way principal preparation is delivered to public school principals in Western Australia, the Minister and the Department of Education heightened awareness of the need to develop leaders for the future. Based on the
literature, there are still gaps in principal preparation in this state even though the Department has invested in the partnership with a local university and continues to develop the Institute for Professional Learning. The literature suggests it would make sense that the Department provides direction in three key areas: attraction and recruitment; capacity building and leadership development; and adequate preparation and support for the principalship which could include a focus on planning. Planning could be accommodated through various professional learning models, but as demonstrated in a study of effective principal preparation programs in the United States, most value can be gained in an internship, as part of a broader program that supports planning as a tool for entry into the principalship (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe & Orr, 2010).

Data from six practicing principals of varying degrees of experience have been collected and are presented as stories that articulate both the individual and collective view of preparation for secondary school principalship in the Western Australian Department of Education system. To complement their stories I will also include my story to add richness and an additional perspective.

The data collected in the principal stories will be used to develop recommendations based on the literature and the data. It is my intention that policy makers hear the recommendations and that the knowledge created in this study can influence the developers of principal preparation programs. This is consistent with Connolly and Clandinin's position (cited in Kitchen in Fitzgerald, Heston & Tidwell, 2009) who advocate that by “developing deeper understandings of our own practical knowledge through narrative self-study we can provide a solid foundation for improving our practices in the future” (p. 35).

The preceding rationale: that principal preparation for secondary principals is inadequate; that workforce trends predict a shortage of candidates for the principalship; and that the role of the principal is rapidly changing; sets the context for the study. The following chapters present a review of the literature including: the Western Australian reform agenda and the three key issues facing principals.

Further literature review in chapter one outlines the complex reform agenda that is underway and affecting school leaders. The present context, whereby international,
national and state government policy and trends influence and impact the role of the principal, is reported. Details of the two key education reforms occurring in Western Australia at the moment – accountability through the Expert Review Group (ERG) review process and autonomy through the Independent Public Schools (IPS) initiative are provided. An historical context of the development of public school leadership in Western Australia as well as a view of the future is presented, again discussing national and state Government policy and planning that will influence the development of public school leadership in this state. The detail provided in this chapter will provide an understanding of the complexity facing the secondary principals whose stories and reflections as beginning principals are reported as part of the study and who each make reference to the contexts in some way.

Chapter two extrapolates the expectations facing new principals and therefore highlights the complexity of the secondary principal’s role in the Western Australian public sector. Chapter two continues with a review of literature pertinent to the flagged shortage of principals and concludes with a review of literature that investigates the factors that are attributed to successful principal preparation programs worldwide.

Chapter three further investigates principal preparation programs by providing detail highlighted in the literature that supports the development of such programs. This chapter also investigates the balance between theory and practice, as well as providing features of entry planning that may assist in preparation for the principalship, especially for beginning principals. Chapter three provides a concept map that summarises the literature and shows the connections between topics presented.

Chapter four presents the methodology and articulates the case for using narrative inquiry and self-study as the research method in the study. These methods afford the sharing of participant stories and personal experiences that set the basis for recommendations about secondary principal preparation in the Western Australian public sector. The chapter outlines the limitations of the study as well as the criteria and processes for data collection.
Chapter five presents the principal stories. The data collected though interview with each participant are presented as a story that outlines each individual’s experience and recommendations. The need for the detail provided in the first chapters will become evident in this chapter where reference is made to the Western Australian reforms: the Expert Review Group (ERG) and the Independent Public School (IPS), as well as the global themes as found in the literature. A narrative self-study that aims to add a personal perspective to the issues identified by the six principals in their narratives is also included. A purpose of including the self-study is to add to the case for entry planning. Finally, this chapter ends with discussion of the key themes in relation to the literature.

Chapter six brings together the key themes so that recommendations can be made. This chapter also offers a forward view – what are the implications for the system and what further study could take place following this research into preparation for secondary principals in the Western Australian public sector.

The following sections of the thesis are necessarily detailed in order to provide a deep understanding of the complex issues facing all public school principals in Western Australia. Firstly, further background is offered that describes the overlapping reforms taking place at the State and National level. The historical context and recent changes to the institutionalised professional learning and support offered to principals and aspiring school leaders in Western Australia is described in chapter two, which is a comprehensive overview of the complex and changing education context facing public school principals in Western Australia.

**Background and Context**

**The Reform Agenda.**

Education reform can be mapped to changing political agendas as well as to changes in governments. Down (1990) argues “that the role of the state leads to education reforms such as those seen in the 1980s in Western Australia and argues this more powerfully explains the changes than the theories of the proponents of systems theory” (p. 1). Peter Garratt, Minister for School Education,
Early Childhood and Youth said in April 2012, “This is a period of unprecedented reform activity and debate Australia-wide.” In this speech delivered to the John Curtin Institute he goes on to say, “This Government is not leaving education to chance.” He posits that school education became a national priority in 2007 and that his government, “began to build a new architecture for Australian schooling with the key features of transparency, accountability, measurement and investment in what counts” (Garratt, 2012). The Council of Australian Governments (COAG), which represents the State and Territory governments, has agreed under the National Reforms to be:

Committed to improving education standards and the quality of schools. The education reform agenda is being implemented with unprecedented levels of investment in Australia’s schools, and is making an important contribution to promoting social inclusion and Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage, so that everyone has the opportunity to learn and work. (http://www.coag.gov.au)

Under this commitment there are nine broad areas of reform: Improving Teacher Quality; Bringing our Schools into the 21st Century; Improving Literacy and Numeracy; Better Outcomes for Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities; Better Information About Schools; Working Towards a National Curriculum; Supporting Students through Supporting Schools; Supporting Students with Disabilities; and Helping Students Make the Transition from School to Further Education, Training or Employment. Each reform area is developed through a partnership between the national government and the state, or national agreement and may be directly linked to funding that each state or territory is entitled to as a result of entering the agreement.

Holden (2011) looks at the Australian reform agenda and states, “the education reform agenda in Australia owes much to the education reform agenda in the United States, which in turn owes much to the education reform agenda of big-time American philanthropic foundations” (p. 6). He draws a link between the United States reform agenda and organisations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which has provided US$90 million to the Chicago Public School system
under the title of the Renaissance Project in 2010 (Holden, 2011, p. 7). While not discussed further as part of the background to the study reported here, this point is important in terms of discussion about funding. Cost cutting and budget sustainability has been illuminated as a very recent addition to the reform of public education in Western Australia (S. O’Neill, personal communication, September, 2013) and the fiscal crisis in the United States is cited by Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) as impacting principal preparation programs. The premise of Holden’s article is that government policy can be categorized into three platforms within the current Australian reform agenda. Autonomy, choice and testing form the platform for the nine board policy areas as outlined by Minister Garratt. Holden goes further to conclude that these platforms have not been adequately tested and there is no real research evidence that autonomy, choice and testing will improve student achievement (Holden, 2011). In the Western Australian context these platforms are played out through the Expert Review Group (ERG), which is an accountability measure that includes a review of school performance data, and Independent Public Schools (IPS) which is a strategy to develop autonomy. Choice is applied through the Director General’s Classroom First Strategy (2007) and subsequent annual Focus documents where the concepts of distinctive schools and schools of choice are promoted.

It is important to understand the convergence of the National and State reform agendas, the international influence, and the educational debate as these have a direct impact on the work of my colleagues, as well my work as a beginning principal, in that they shape the nature of my work as well influence the complexity of that work. As Garratt mentioned in his speech “This is a period of unprecedented reform activity and debate Australia-wide.” While the national agenda has gathered momentum since 2007, plans for reforms were well underway in Western Australia. The ERG review process and the IPS initiative are explained in detail in the following sections. Both reforms impact on the expectations facing principals and therefore the complexity of role of the school leader, and also change the nature of the work undertaken by the principal in an educational setting that is rapidly changing (Riley, 2011).
The Expert Review process in Western Australia.

In 2007 the then Labor Minister for Education and Training, Mark McGowan and the Director General of the Department of Education and Training introduced a process to review school performance that would hold public schools in Western Australia to account with expected targets for improvement. To date, there is little published research about this process, which was “based on world research” (Hunt, 2013, personal communication, 25 February). In a media statement delivered on April 9 2008, Sharyn O’Neill, Director General, announced that the formation of an “Expert Review Group” was a “move to achieve excellence across WA’s public education system.” She went on:

Previously school reviews were carried out at the local level by a district director working with the school over a two-year period. The new independent and more rigorous process will have quicker turnaround times and will add to the local review. It is genuinely about aiming to provide an excellent public school system with the highest standards among students and teachers. (O’Neill, 2008)

As there is little published research about the Expert Review Group process, I made contact with one of the directors who I had worked with in three situations as part of the process: as a group member reviewing a high performing school; as the acting principal enacting the recommendations of the Expert Review Group process; and as a group member reviewing a school requiring improvement. The purpose of this contact was to understand how the ERG was established. In 2007:

Mark McGowan and the Director General wanted to set up a review process, but did not want to go to the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) model. A team was convened to research the best models across the world. The team looked across Australia; they did not like the Victorian model. They did like elements of the OFSTED approach. So they developed their own process. Basically, they knew that some schools weren’t performing and so they developed a process of desk top analysis which led to lines of enquiry, which enabled the
team to suggest prescribed improvement strategies to the school (B. Hunt, personal communication, February, 2013).

In her April 2008 media release O’Neill outlined the following:

The review team will then spend up to five days in the schools engaging the whole school community, consulting the principal, teachers and parents. The groups reports will include prescribed improvement strategies with particular attention on various aspects of school performance, for instance: Literacy and numeracy standards; Student behaviour being successfully managed to ensure effective learning can occur; Education programs appropriate to the needs, abilities and interest of students; and Resources, including staffing, being managed effectively to optimise learning opportunities. (O’Neill, 2008)

O’Neill ended the media release by stating that schools would be required to develop and implement an action plan outlining how the prescribed improvement strategies would be met. One of the ERG’s key intents is to assist schools with this aspect of the process. From my experience of this process, as an acting principal responding to the report that was tabled at the commencement of my new role, there were several milestones in terms of the planning and review process: the review takes place over a period of up to 5 days; 6 - 8 weeks later the report is tabled; 6 weeks later an action plan should have been developed by the principal in consultation with the school community to address the prescribed improvement strategies; at 12 weeks the principal is required to provide a progress report to the ERG; at 6 months the ERG returns to the school to closely review the planning that has been established. The team may advise further planning is required, or the planning may be approved; and finally at 24 months the principal in conjunction with the line manager is required to complete a detailed self-analysis of progress against the findings of the report. The ERG decides whether the school has met the requirements of the process, or if further support is required.

This process has not been implemented without some angst for teachers and school leaders. In 2012 a summary of the process and how many schools had
undergone an Expert Review was delivered to members of the State School Teachers Union of Western Australia. The summary included the following data:

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>K-12 District</th>
<th>Agricultural Colleges</th>
<th>Education Support</th>
<th>Aboriginal</th>
<th>Remote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exemplary</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescribed Improvement</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>89</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In total by July 2012, 89 schools had been reviewed. While these data of the schools are quantitative only, the executive summaries of the ERG reports can be found on the Schools Online website operated by the Department of Education. Storing the reports on a public website therefore allows ready access for the media and community groups. Questions relating to school performance reported through the ERG process are often raised in parliament, usually in relation to specific schools and the reports generate great interest in the print media in particular. Headlines such as “Three Rs suffer at struggling schools” (Hiatt, 2011) and “Wake-Up call for dud schools” (Hiatt, 2013) share the successes and failures of schools that have been reviewed in a sensational light.

The State school Teachers Union of Western Australia is calling for the removal of the reports from the public domain. Included on the Union’s website is the following message:

The SSTUWA is calling for the removal of External Review Group (ERG) reports available publicly online as part of its pre-election position paper. The purpose of an ERG report is to improve a school’s capacity to offer its students a quality education, not create a negative public perception of our schools. It is irresponsible of the
State Government to continue to allow ERG reports to be publicly available. The public nature of ERG reports has, on several occasions, led to negative media, which only serves to denigrate the public school system, and makes it hugely problematic for the school community to address the various issues raised in the report. Whilst the SSTUWA supports the need for transparency, it is our view that this information should be kept within the school community. (“SSTUWA calls for removal of ERG reports online”, 2012, para. 1)

Hunt (personal communication, 2013) referred to the development of the Expert Review Group using some elements of the Office for Standards in Education Model (OFSTED) from the United Kingdom (www.ofsted.gov.uk). A decade or more ago Donnelly suggested that Australian schools lacked transparency, especially in Victoria, “where the government refuses to rank schools or make test scores widely available” (2002, p. 17). Despite the time that has lapsed since Donnelly first presented his views about school accountability it is these views that are being played out in current Australian education policy and practice. Donnelly presents a view that favors an OFSTED model where inspectors evaluate schools and identify areas of weakness. He writes, “English schools are evaluated and if found wanting, face the consequences” (p. 17). He elaborates the circumstance in the United States whereby the Bush government introduced testing in reading and mathematics for all students from grades three to eight.

Donnelly (2002) says “greater accountability and transparency are also being forced onto American schools” (p. 17). He is highly critical of the Australian system and even suggests “that failing schools put students at risk year after year” (p. 17). He challenges governments and education departments to be more transparent while moving towards empowerment for schools. This sentiment is reflected in the national focus on testing, National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and the publication of these data on the MySchool Website (www.myschool.edu.au) introduced by the Rudd and Gillard Australian governments. Donnelly’s opinion is that it should be simple for parents to select the school that best meets each child’s needs. These views align strongly with the
platforms of policy reform as suggested by Holden; autonomy, choice and testing (Holden, 2011). While Donnelly's view of accountability measures takes a punitive stance, the public nature of the OFSTED inspection reports is a similarity between English schools and Western Australian schools. Another similarity is the requirement for transparency to improve standards of education for all students. The underlying difference is the level of support afforded to principals and schools to develop and implement appropriate action plans to meet prescribed improvements in the Western Australian context. While supports of varying nature are provided to state schools that have undergone an ERG review there is no generic process for allocation of resources, or support, and therefore schools deemed underperforming may also have to endure making recommended changes on a limited budget. Thus far, schools have not been considered failing, other than in the media, nor have schools been closed as part of “facing the consequences” as Donnelly puts it (p. 17).

The introduction of the Expert Review Group and the associated reviews of public schools has impacted on the complexity of the work of principals. It has also highlighted the need for professional learning, or further support in developing planning materials to support principals and some of the gaps are being filled by the SSTUWA. In my case, I had recently completed a contract in the Western Australian Leadership Centre and therefore came to the acting principal position with a good understanding of the School Accountability Framework. A personal strength was in planning and with competencies and understandings of the system on board I was able to develop a highly effective planning template to address the prescribed improvement strategies as outlined in the ERG report for my school and I have shared this work with other school leaders. The process helped me set direction and goals within a defined structure. It also gave me a mandate to implement change and therefore progress was continuous throughout, but also ongoing at the end of the two-year ERG cycle. The data presented though the review process was the starting point for a planning process that included setting achievable and measurable targets. The planning process assisted me in preparation for the principalship and the tools that I developed may be of use to
other principals. Currently there is no system mechanism for sharing this information other than word of mouth.

**School Autonomy - IPS and Local School Empowerment.**

Independent Public Schools (IPS) was the second major reform introduced in Western Australia (WA) in recent years. The WA state government introduced this reform well before the Federal Government announced its “local empowerment” agenda for schools. Garratt said in April 2012, “The Western Australian Government through its Independent Public Schools has provided a conspicuous example of reform in this area”. According to the WA Department of Education website, “the Independent Public Schools (IPS) initiative honours a State Government pre-election commitment to hand greater control to schools” (O’Neill, 2010).

In fact, the Barnett Liberal-National government announced in August 2009 that Western Australian public schools would be afforded more authority to make localised decisions through the empowerment of schools. Schools successful in application for IPS status can select staff, manage a one-line budget, approve leave, set curriculum direction and manage utilities, maintenance and faults. This combined with the Expert Review Group (ERG) process established under the regime of the previous Labor government sets a scene for the perfect combination according to an article published by PISA (Ikeda, 2011).

> In recent years, many schools have grown into more autonomous organisations and have become more accountable to students, parents and the public at large for their outcomes. PISA results suggest that, when autonomy and accountability are intelligently combined, they tend to be associated with better student performance. (p. 1)

This is contrary to information provided by the SSTUWA that proposes there is no research that hints autonomous schools improve student outcomes. PISA (2011) suggest that while school autonomy in allocating resources can be linked to improved performance this is often also linked to the publication of achievement
data. The organisation asserts that it is a combination of policies to do with accountability and autonomy that lead to better student outcomes, stating:

The bottom line: Autonomy and Accountability go together: greater autonomy in decisions relating to curricula, assessments and resource allocation tend to be associated with better student performance, particularly when schools operate within a culture of accountability. (Ikeda, p. 4)

Donnelly’s (2002) view captures the direction of both the Federal and Western Australian governments. PISA’s research and data collected from OECD countries provides input from principals and school leaders, as well as student results from participating countries. It is apparent that Australian education reform mirrors the trends researched and reflected by PISA. The WA Minister for Education, Peter Collier announced in January 2013 that all public schools would be invited to become Independent Public Schools, but the process would be different to what it had been in the past. In a fact file at the end of his January 20 media release the following points were listed about the IPS initiative: the Liberal-National Government’s Independent Public Schools initiative is biggest education reform in decades; WA leads Australia in giving more decision-making power, autonomy and flexibility to parents and school communities; there are 255 Independent Public Schools across WA, representing one-third of all public schools and half of all students and teachers in the WA public school system; more than half of all public schools and their communities have applied for Independent Public School status; and a new development program for schools wanting Independent Public School status to be designed this year (Collier, 2013).

The Minister’s fact file implies success for the IPS initiative. It does not indicate changes that have occurred to the role of the school principal. However, in his study of the Health and Wellbeing of Australian Principals, Riley (2011) states, “A significant stressor has been the increased emphasis by governments on accountability for uniform curriculum delivery along with the devolution of administrative tasks from central to local control” (p. 8). Riley’s work undertook a
comprehensive survey of 10,000 principals Australia wide and emphasised the
stress caused by the rapidly changing role of school principals. While public
schools in Western Australia have been able to apply for Independent Public
School status, in recent times, all public schools have been afforded more
flexibility, according to the Director General (2012), which infers that more
accountability processes have been placed in all schools. The first comprehensive
evaluation of the IPS initiative was tabled mid-year 2013 and the complexity of the
change in expectations is briefly outlined below:

The implementation of the IPS initiative has overall, had
a positive effect on the public school system by raising
its profile and contributing to a sense of renewal and
positive reform. The complexity that occurs as a
consequence of working towards school change as well
as system change, however, cannot be underestimated.
At a whole system level there are demonstrable
changes in working conditions. Changed roles and
increases to the administrative and managerial
responsibilities under autonomy have altered the work
load of school leaders, although most acknowledged
that this additional burden would reduce somewhat over
time ad point to benefits for IPS school communities.
(Clinton, J., p. 3)

To enhance the transition to Independent Public School status leaders were
offered a suite of professional learning. A new training model will be introduced
following the tabling of the Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative
Final Report (Clinton, 2013). The original suite of professional learning included the
following:

- Quality Assurance, Governance and Review
- Human resource Management/RAMs Training
- One-line Budget and Finance Flexibilities
- Calculating the One-line Budget
- Workforce Management
- Payroll
• IPS authorities and Accountable and Ethical Decision Making
• Quality School Self-Assessment – Understanding School Data (optional) (DoE website, retrieved 24 March 13)

The training offered to IPS principals reflects a systemic coordination of the possible risk factors associated with devolution; the key risk being poor student achievement. A systemic response was carefully planned that ensured a comprehensive professional learning package to support the principal and associated school leaders in their transition towards autonomy. The suite of professional learning for IPS principals was mandated and provided a basis for deeper understanding of the managerial aspects of operating as an autonomous school. This is an important factor that emerges through the data collection for this study and was raised by each of the principals who participated. Further discussion about the importance of the mandated professional learning for principals transitioning towards Independent Public School status will be elaborated through the principal stories and recommendations offered in later chapters.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Minister for Education flagged that the process for becoming an Independent Public School would change (Collier, 2013). Schools that take up the invitation to become independent will be offered a training program to assist with the application process. Principals who have become and are now practicing as Independent Public School principals may deliver the training, or professional learning. Schools wishing to become independent will still need to complete an application addressing the following criteria: capacity of the school to assume greater responsibility for its own affairs; level of local support, including staff support; and potential benefits to students and the broader school community. (“A new approach to becoming an Independent Public School”, 2013, para. 9).

The suite of professional learning offered to would-be independent public school principals is an indicator that achieving Independent Public School status increases
the complexity of the principal’s work (Riley, 2011). Expectations from the local and wider community increase, as does the need for tighter accountability processes at the school level. On a personal level, my school applied unsuccessfully to gain IPS status and not being successful brought about its own set of complications that needed to be managed at the school level. There is no doubt that the community, parent, staff and students, view the opportunity to have more autonomy as advantageous. Four quotes taken from the Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative Final Report (Clinton, 2013) indicated:

All stakeholders, including those from IPS, Central office, and Regional office, raised the issue of the damaging effects of unsuccessful applications on school morale. This was identified as the most problematic outcome of the IPS initiative. (p. 53)

Having applied unsuccessfully twice to become an IPS my biggest challenge has been managing the staff and community disappointment at not being granted IPS status. With the system actively promoting IPS as the progressive way to achieve school improvement and our school wishing to take on the added responsibilities they find it difficult to understand why the school is still not an IPS. ([30105] Principal Survey – Applicant school) (p. 53)

Dealing with the community belief that IPS schools are the ‘better’ state schools. The community somehow feel we have ‘failed’ in not being given IPS status. ([30058] Principal Survey – Applicant school) (p. 53)

The impact has been disheartening for our staff and our parent community who dearly want us to pursue IPS. The major challenge has been maintaining a positive profile despite our lack of IPS status. ([30073] Principal Survey – Applicant school) Evaluation of the IPS Initiative (p. 53)

Each of the quotes emphasize that there is additional complexity for principals who apply for IPS status whether or not they are successful. The type of complexity is dependent on the expectations from the community and these may be positive, if
the application is successful, or negative, if it is not. The complexity of my work was impacted as a result of managing the expectations from the school community that the profile of our school would match the perceived profile of IPS schools. To assuage expectations form the community, I committed to, where possible, to operate as if our school held IPS status. It is certain that the IPS reform will continue in Western Australia, and while the Federal Minister for Education lauds this reform for its success, the local empowerment reform is set to continue as a National education priority as well. The work of school principals will continue to be impacted both the State and National influences to education policy at the local level. Wever (2013) describes this mix of state and federal reform as a contest. She lists recent federal initiatives:

NAPLAN, the MySchool website, national professional standards for teachers, Building the Education Revolution, teacher performance bonuses, the SES funding model, national professional development standards and the creation of the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). (p. 16)

The list of federal initiatives is either an add-on, or a change that needs to occur at the State and school level. Wever believes that the federal influences make it harder for school leaders to implement changes as the “contest” causes complexity at the school level. Jensen (cited in Wever, 2013) argues “the federal government intervening actually makes it harder” and “a huge problem we have at the moment is that policy design is completely separate from policy implementation, because the government comes over the top with policies, and then says to the states: now you implement it.” (p. 16) Wever also cites the WA Education Minister who is seemingly “unimpressed” with “the commonwealth government …threatening to withhold funding, while failing to provide adequate details as to how Canberra will implement a system whereby it controls the way our children are successfully educated” (p. 17). The notion of withholding funding suggests compliance, or as Donnelly (2002) put it, “facing the consequences”. Compliance becomes an issue
for principals, as they are required to report across two levels of government. This impacts on the complexity of their work as does the federal policy and state implementation of that policy. It is also apparent that there is strong international influence on the development and implementation of education policy and this is evident in the trend towards networks and collaboration in and between schools. Schleicher (2013) suggests that:

As more countries grant greater autonomy to schools in designing curricula and managing resources, the role of the school leader has grown beyond that of administrator. Developing school leaders requires clearly defining their responsibilities, providing access to appropriate professional development throughout their careers, and acknowledging their pivotal role in improving school and student performance by offering the kind of work environment that will attract the best candidates. (Retrieved 29 March, 13)

Schleicher (2013) reports a global trend whereby systems are devolving and developing new ways of working. For example, the move to develop networks of schools and/or leaders and teachers providing support and professional learning for each other is evident in countries such as Finland where in some municipalities school leaders spend one-third of their time as district leaders and Sweden where school leaders foster a learning environment (Schleicher, 2013). Such a move towards collaborative models of working again increases the complexity of the principal's work. There is evidence of networks and models of collaboration occurring in the Western Australian context. In 2012 schools were asked to nominate a network in which to participate. Networks were asked to: have a K-12 focus; emphasise Australian Curriculum; and nominate a network principal. Funding was allocated to the network. In order to access funding principals and schools had to participate in the network (“Focus 2011”, 2010).

As stated in the Introduction to this chapter, there is agreement in the global literature that there are issues associated with building leadership capacity and in sustaining principal leadership. There is also agreement that there are problems in
attracting and recruiting suitable candidates to the role of principal. Therefore understanding the influences that affect the complexity of the work of and expectations facing principals; and the level of preparation and support offered to beginning principals, in order to attract and retain the best candidates for the profession, is central to the development of this study. While work is underway in Western Australia to develop principal preparation programs that aim to build confidence in addressing the complexity of the role, the history of support for government school leaders is relevant. The next section of this chapter provides a recent history of professional learning and support offered to public schools principals in Western Australia.

**Professional learning for secondary principals in Western Australia.**

Until 2010, the Western Australian Leadership Centre fostered the professional growth and leadership capacity of aspirants and school leaders in partnership with the professional associations, the State School Teacher’s Union of WA (SSTUWA) and the Western Australia Department of Education, through the provision of leadership services focussing on preparation, development and recognition. The premise of The Leadership Centre was to continually strengthen and enhance the leadership capabilities of potential and current school leaders. Three broad strategic aims were established: to develop and promote a contemporary understanding of school leadership; to contribute to enhancing the professional standards and standing of school leaders; and to provide opportunities for the professional growth and learning of government school leaders (O’Sullivan, 2004).

The Western Australian Leadership Centre developed leadership programs that held many of the positive aspects as described in the literature. Amongst the offerings were a series of leadership modules including Leading Curriculum; Finance and Budgeting; Human Resource Management; Our Policies; and School Improvement and Accountability. Completion of the five modules provided the participant with a Certificate of Introductory School Leadership that could be used to gain Recognised Prior Learning accreditation from Western Australian public
universities. Each of the modules, in part, or as whole, matches the concepts identified by the literature as being essential. Completion of the modules provided participants with opportunities to gain skills, competencies and knowledge to enhance their leadership (Booth, 2009). As suggested by Caldwell (2006) the modules and another program, New Directions, which was also offered by the Leadership Centre, were “concerned with curriculum, pedagogy, strategy formation, vision building, alignment of staff and the community to the vision, working well with staff and having fun along the way” (p. 159). Each module included two days of formal learning and the requirement to complete a school-based task. ‘Experts’ and practising school leaders presented modules in tandem. It was not mandatory for school leaders to complete these modules and most participants self-nominated (D. Booth, personal communication April 1, 2010). These modules are referred to by some of the principals interviewed for this study and their comments are included in the principal stories.

Traditionally another program that the Leadership Centre provided was a Fast Track Conference biannually to all newly appointed school leaders. The three-day program sought to provide newly appointed leaders with a comprehensive introduction to the often complex and challenging issues facing school leaders. The Leadership Centre immersed participants in a structured overview of the professional learning leadership modules offered. The Fast Track Conference provided participants with opportunities to develop a range of knowledge, skills and competencies that enhanced their role in the school context. Participation in this professional learning was not mandatory, but was offered as a ‘risk-management' strategy for the Department of Education. That is, participants were provided with enough information about the operational or management requirements of their role such as policy and procedure, human resource management and financial management to “keep them out of trouble” (D. Booth, personal communication, April 1, 2010).

The preceding history of the development of public school leadership in this state sets a possible scene for future developments and provides a basis to ask what
preparation programs are available to principals and how can they be best supported as they enter the principalship? The final section of this chapter seeks to summarise the complex context that public school leaders in Western Australia face as well exploring exemplary principal programs as reported in the literature (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe & Orr, 2010).

**The Future – Developing public school leadership.**

The convergence of National and State reform agendas continues to impact school leadership. At the Western Australian State level, reforms in regards to accountability and autonomy are well underway as highlighted by the Expert Review Group process and the Independent Public School initiative. To understand the work of the beginning school principal and the preparation required for their success in the role it is important to understand the influences that are causing rapidly changing conditions for their work (Riley, 2011) hence the detail in this chapter. At the National level, the introduction and development of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSIL) which oversees all things to do with teacher quality and quality leadership, and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) which oversees all processes regarding student achievement, including NAPLAN and the Australian Curriculum further impact the work of and expectations facing school principals. Since the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) committed to the nine broad areas of reform in 2007, both organisational bodies, firstly ACARA and now AITSIL have increasingly exerted influence over the Australian and State education systems. Highlighting the work and influence of AITSIL as a professional learning body coincides with the themes developed through the data collection and subsequent principal stories shared in this study. “AITSIL has responsibility for: rigorous professional standards; fostering and driving high quality professional development for teachers and school leaders; working collaboratively across jurisdictions and engaging with key professional bodies” (http://wwwaitsl.edu.au/). Kilvert (2013) provides summary that:
The Australian Principal Standard sets out what principals are expected to know, understand and do to achieve in their work. The Standard is presented as an integrated model that recognises three leadership requirements that a principal draws upon within five areas of professional practice.

The three leadership requirements are:
- Vision and values
- Knowledge and understanding
- Personal qualities and social and interpersonal skills.

The five areas of professional practice are:
- Leading teaching and learning
- Developing self and others
- Leading improvement, innovation and change
- Leading the management of the school
- Engaging and working with the community. (p. 3)

It is intended that the Australian States will implement the standard and that it will be reflected in the work of all principals. As previously stated, in September 2011 the then WA Minister for Education announcement that a partnership had been established with a local university. Prior to this there was a call for tendering services to develop a Centre for Public School leadership. “The primary role of the Centre for Public School Leadership would be to act as a centre for excellence for the development of leadership in government schools in Western Australia“ (2010, Tender Document, p. 22). It was possible that the development of the Centre may have heralded the introduction of mandatory learning for aspirant school leaders. The Institute for Professional Learning is endeavouring to offer a range of leadership programs, such as Change2 and an Introduction to Team Coaching (http://www.det.wa.edu.au/professional-learning/detcms/navigation/for-leaders/?oid=MultiPartArticle-id-14534044) while the Masters of School Leadership program is underway. The key issue here is that principals are reporting that principal preparation and support in Western Australia is inadequate (Hinton, et al., 2013).

The secondary issue is that the idea of mandatory learning as principal preparation was raised several years ago and through developing the Australian Professional
Standard for Principals by AITSL certification has been raised again. This time the profession itself, at a national level, is raising the idea of voluntary certification for schools leaders. In late 2013 the Principals Australia Institute (PAI) published on its website:

Principals Australia Institute in consultation with Australian principals is leading the development of a voluntary Australian Principals Certification program. This endeavor will allow the profession to lead and develop its own quality assured and publically accountable process for certifying the leadership capacity and expertise of Australian principals, aligned with the Australian Professional Standard for School Principals (http://www.pai.edu.au/).

The Principals Australia Institute is an incorporated body that represents the four peak principal associations: Australian Secondary Principals Association; the Australian Primary Principals Association; the Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools and the Australian Independent Heads of Schools Association. While still in development, the consultation phase for this work is underway and the work undertaken is sure to influence the development of aspiring and future principals. For example, Lenahan (2013) defines principal certification as:

The formal process by which the performance achievement of school leaders is assessed, verified and recognised in writing by issuing a certificate of the attributes, characteristics, quality, qualification, or status of individuals in accordance with profession-developed requirements and the national standard. (p. 2)

With all the peak principal bodies supporting the work of PAI there has been significant development in the certification process during 2013 (http://www.pai.edu.au). Another example of a national certification process is the National Professional Qualification for Headship introduced by the National College for School Leadership and Children’s Services in the United Kingdom. This is an example of a program that has been lauded in regards to establishing mandatory certification for school principals. A prospectus for the mandated qualification for aspirant school leaders in the UK indicated that assessment was based on portfolio
evidence provided that indicated reflection and planning for the role of headship ("National College of Teaching", 2009, p. 9). However, despite the reported success of this program and subsequent reference to it by other jurisdictions, it is important to note that as the UK government has changed in recent years, so too has the overall focus of the National College for School Leadership. Most specifically, the mandatory status for the National Professional Qualification for Headship has been removed. In Western Australia the notion of certification of school leaders is now strongly influenced by the completion of the Australian Professional Standard for Principals in 2011 by AITSL. In some regards it is not the idea of mandatory certification that is important here. The important question is who has ownership of developing the certification process? Historically the Western Australian Department of Education has had some influence in partnership with the associations and the State School Teacher's Union. If there are now perceived gaps in support and preparation for the principalship and there comes a requirement for certification can it be assumed that if the Department does not take a lead role that the other organisations will? Certainly, the Principals Australia Institute is quickly filling the gap with a documented process established and published online (http://www.pai.edu.au). Caldwell (2013) suggests that certification processes help:

Create an environment in which principals are likely to support the idea of differentiating themselves from the teaching profession, particularly if they see that they can gain greater support in their personal development and the contribution that they make to improving education. (p. 4)

The national emphasis stemming from both the Australian Government and the Principals Institute indicate that principal preparation is very much in focus. Given the convergence of Federal and State influences on education, and the apparent lack of development of leadership programs to meet the needs of beginning principals by the Department, the complexity of developing a public school leadership principal preparation program grows larger as does the role of the principal in Western Australian public schools. The findings of Darling-
Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe & Orr (2010) whose study was motivated by inadequate preparation and support for school leaders in the United States of America may help to alleviate some of this complexity. Darling-Hammond, et al., identified that there was unwillingness for potential school leaders in the United States to aspire to the role of principal and that their lack of capacity to survive and succeed was related to the quality of principal preparation experiences (p. 9). These issues replicate those found in the literature and those that have been articulated in the data collected for this study. What Darling-Hammond et al., offer in their research is a comprehensive comparison of eight principal preparation programs that have been deemed effective, or exemplary and this provides a foundation from which they identify features of effective leadership programs (2010).

Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe and Orr identified seven common components of exemplary programs:

- Research-based content, aligned with professional standards and focussed on instruction, organizational development, and change management
- Curricular coherence linking goals, learning activities, and assessments around a set of shared value, beliefs, and knowledge about effective organisational practice
- Field-based internships that enable the application of leadership knowledge and skills under the guidance of an expert practitioner
- Problem-based learning strategies, such as case methods, action research, and projects that link theory and practice and support reflection
- Cohort structures that enable collaboration, teamwork and mutual support
- Mentoring or coaching that supports modelling, questioning, observations of practice, and feedback
- Collaboration between universities and school districts to create coherence between training and practice as well as pipelines for recruitment, preparation, hiring and induction (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Jackson and Kelly, 2002) (p. 42)
They also identified three key support factors that contributed to effective principal preparation programs: Vigorous recruitment of high-ability candidates with experience as expert, dynamic teachers and commitment to instructional improvement; Financial support for pre-service candidates to enable them to undertake and intensive program with a full-time internship; and District and/or state infrastructures supporting specific program elements and, often, embedding programs within a focussed school reform agenda (p. 43).

The Western Australian focus on developing school leadership, or principal, professional learning seems be static. That is, the centrepiece is the Masters of School Leadership. For Department of Education staff, a scholarship program exists to help cover costs associated with higher degree study. Funding is noted here, as reference is made earlier to the work of Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe and Orr (2010) and Darling-Hammond and Davis (2012) that indicates funding is an important contributor to successful principal preparation programs. There is little else offered through the Institute for Professional Learning that would align with the factors or lessons outlined by Darling-Hammond et al., However, as highlighted earlier, the influence on some principal preparation from the National Australian perspective is increasing.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) since its inception has developed the following:

- Australian Professional Standard for Teachers
- Australian Professional Standard for Principals
- Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework and
- Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders

It is the purpose of AITSL to “provide national leadership for the Commonwealth, state and territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of
teaching and school leadership” (http://www.aitsl.edu.au). An example of the work undertaken by AITSL to support the implementation of one of the federal government education policies is witnessed in the Local Leadership program, which has been developed to support the Local Empowerment reform (http://www.coag.gov.au).

The program has been designed as a three stage suite and aims to: support principals' professional learning; to develop communities of practice; and to strengthen the research base around autonomous schools. Note, Western Australian schools were not included in the initial Local Empowerment policy implementation, as the State Government had commenced its journey towards school autonomy well before the Federal Government. However, the Local Leadership program is available to Western Australian participants at a significant financial cost.

The three stages of the program include:

- Core Learning – through a 3-day conference.
- A personalised learning program supported by a learning broker, or mentor, and a community of interest. The learning program is a school-based project based on increasing empowerment and may include participation in national or international learning programs.
- Showcase, or sharing the school-based project outcomes with other participants.

While this program has embedded in it some of the factors of exemplary programs as articulated by Darling-Hammond et al. (2010), it highlights the need for a State focus on developing and preparing school principals that reflects the common components of exemplary principal preparation programs. In the Australian context one of the major issues with a national preparation program is the disadvantage of distance and associated cost of travel, from Western Australia to the East Coast where the program is delivered. So, in terms of developing public school leadership in Western Australia, the future is greatly influenced by state and national reform
agendas that include a greater focus on autonomy and accountability. At the same time, there are strong international trends highlighting the need for quality leadership that influences quality teaching and thereby improves student outcomes. The historical actions that led to the development of the Western Australian Leadership Centre should not be forgotten as many of the elements embedded in its operation contributed to cutting edge practice in principal preparation (Invargson, Anderson, Gronn and Jackson, 2009).

As the purpose of this study is to investigate the level of preparation undertaken by beginning principals and to explore to what extent entry planning can assist in the preparation for principalship, the contextual background outlining the present, historical and future contexts was a necessary precursor to the literature review which will further investigate the three areas that impact on beginning principals: the expectations facing new principals, the shortage of new principals, and preparation for principalship. The following chapter explores the expectations facing principals as well as the predicted shortage. The literature review extends into the beginning of chapter three which investigates principal preparation in some depth.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter two reviews the literature to extrapolate the expectations facing beginning principals. Links are made to some principal preparation programs as reported in the literature and explores the concept of entry planning to support entry into the principalship. The second part of this chapter then unravels the reasoning behind predicted shortages of these leadership positions. The impacts of the reform agenda and the particular reforms occurring in Western Australia that influence the expectations facing principals will also be highlighted.

The Expectations Facing New Principals

In reference to the increased focus internationally on decentralisation and the increased complexity that this brings, Caldwell (2006) describes the paradoxes of school leadership. He writes, “Despite the workload, unnecessary paperwork, increasing complexity, and higher levels of responsibility that came with self managing schools, principals were highly committed to their work, prefer decentralisation to centralisation, and report high levels of job satisfaction” (p. 129). Independent Public School principals are in a developmental phase in Western Australia and in this capacity are experiencing a new level of expectation from the Department of Education, the State Government and their local school communities. The initiative of Independent Public Schools is driven by the Western Australian State Government and will see an increase in levels of accountability and skill required by principals as the initiative flows to the majority of public schools. Not dissimilarly, the Federal Government has its ‘Empowering Local Schools’ agenda, which commenced roll out across the country in 2012 (“Empowering Local Schools”, 2012). It would seem that the initiative is here to stay; based on the support shown by both the state and national governments. As a practising principal in this context, it was one of my aims to hear the stories of other beginning principals as to how their work has been impacted, not only by this political platform, but also by the changing circumstance of their work. A key driver arising from this aim was to investigate the level of preparation and support
afforded to beginning principals to ascertain whether or not principals viewed whatever preparation they received as adequate.

According to the literature, the most pressing expectation facing Independent Public School principals aligns with the expectations facing principals in general (Schleicher, 2013). Meesook and Parkay (2004) indicate that effective leadership by school principals is crucial for transforming schools and improving the quality of education, regardless of the national setting. Hess and Kelly support this argument and write:

School principals are the front line managers, the small business executives, the battlefield commanders charged with leading their team to new levels of effectiveness. In this new era of accountability, where school leaders are expected to demonstrate bottom line results and the use of data to drive decisions, the skill and knowledge of principals matter more than ever. (2005, p. 2)

The nature of the complexity of the principal's role is further elaborated by John Cotter's framework (cited in Caldwell, 2006):

Leadership is a process for establishing direction, aligning people, motivating and inspiring, and achieving change. Management is a process that calls for planning and budgeting, organising and staffing, controlling and problem solving, and producing a degree of predictability. Elements of leadership line up with elements of management, so that the counterpart for establishing direction (leadership) is planning and budgeting (management). Aligning people (leadership) matches up with organising and staffing (management), motivating and inspiring (leadership) matches up with controlling and problem solving (management), and achieving change (leadership) matches up with producing a degree of predictability (management). (p. 6)

Given the attention to leadership and management, Cotter's framework is still relevant (cited in Caldwell, 2006) to the Western Australian context. Educational leadership programs and educational management programs were explicit
requirements to meet the tender document released for the Centre for Public School Leadership (February, 2010) and the currency of this approach is further highlighted in a study of school principal preparation in Europe. Thody, Papanaoum, Johansson and Pashiardis (2007) quote a Cypriot principal:

> The principal needs to know the duties of his position, disciplinary matters, rules about personnel, rules about students, all those are the Alpha and Omega of his position because he always has to face them on a daily basis. Then, he needs to know psychology and pedagogy, he needs to know about parents, society, correspondence with the Ministry, he needs to have public speaking skills because very often he will speak in public. (p. 50)

Again, the notion of increasing complexity of the role and expectations facing the principal aligns with the Western Australian context and is explored further in Cline and Necochea’s (2000) work where the principal is expected to “restructure schools and implement new educational paradigms that focus on pedagogical findings, foster the ideals of a just and humane educational system and prepare the populace to make moral and ethical decisions in an ever-changing society” (p.157). Wright, Siegrist, Pate, Monetti and Raiford (2010) in their search of the literature for beginning principal induction programs note that it was not unusual to find that new principals were given the keys to the school, asked to sign some documents and handed a series of policies, and wished good luck, suggesting that participants may not have been adequately prepared for either the expectations they would face as they transitioned into their new role or the complexity of that role. Patuawa (2006) highlights this perceived lack of preparation in her study in which she found principals need a greater focus on organisational issues in their first year. She elaborated by indicating that theorists refer to this time as organisational socialisation, which is defined as being context specific and requiring that new leaders learn the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to conduct the role in a particular setting (p. 111). She cites Normore (2004) who states:
Each school is comprised of a complex array of people, policies, processes, and priorities to which school administrators must adjust. As teachers make the transition to school administrator so does the emergence of new socialization experiences (p. 5).

Wright et al. (2010) also found that as beginning principals entered their first year, the staff and the school undergo a series of shifts in their expectations of the new principal. “Much is expected of new principals” (p. 3). Wright et al.’s research indicated that as a priority a methodical process for inducting new principals should be developed. Their research also indicated that opportunity to create professional growth plans rated highly in the collection of data for the range of principals who participated in the research. There is a body of research, including Hallinger and McCary (1992), whose work is still influential, that reports principals who have the most positive effect on student achievement are, in the main, those who adopt a strategic approach to instructional leadership. Hallinger and McCary contend that strategic thinking involves skilful planning, forethought and purposeful coordination of resources. They note, “It is not enough for principals to have a repertoire of behaviours; they must know how and when to use them, and monitor their effects on student learning (p. 9). Caldwell (2006) suggests that “a capacity for strategic leadership has special priority” (p.120) at this point in history. He also contends that accountable leadership joins strategic leadership and educational leadership capacity as the three dimensions of leadership in the 21st century (p. 121). “School leaders will be comfortable in collecting, analysing and acting on data and will be concerned at all times how their schools ‘add value’ to the learning experience” (p. 121). In a study aiming to improve understanding of the nature, causes and consequence of school leader efficacy, including indirect effects on student achievement, Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) found that there is “an important link between district conditions and both the conditions found in schools and their effects on student achievement” (p. 496). A summary of some of this literature is found in Table 2.
Table 2

The attributes, qualities and skills required by principals. Principals need to have or be able to do the following:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>Strategic Acumen</td>
<td>Management skills</td>
<td>Leadership development</td>
<td>Vision and values Knowledge and understanding Personal qualities and social and interpersonal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Managing teaching and learning</td>
<td>Developing people</td>
<td>Leading teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to build relationships</td>
<td>Applied Action</td>
<td>Managing resources</td>
<td>Developing the school</td>
<td>Leading the management of the school Leading improvement, innovation and change Engaging and working with the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Managing the environment</td>
<td>Staff Development</td>
<td>Developing self and others</td>
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</table>

Complementing the summary in Table 2, Barber, Whelan and Clarke (2010) suggest:

The research on school leadership shows that a small handful of personal traits explain a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness. While many of the skills required of a principal can be acquired by anyone with the right support and motivation, some people develop those capacities much more readily than others, and some do it to a much higher level. By implication, attracting and selecting those with the right
qualities is critical to the overall leadership capacity of the system. p. 11

While leadership effectiveness is not the focus of this study, the literature supports the idea that principals require the right attributes, qualities and skills in order to undertake their work. At the same time, Barber, Whelan and Clarke highlight the importance of targeted recruitment which is an issue raised by other researchers (Schleicher, 2013) and some of the principals in the stories provided in chapter five. Recruitment processes can add to the complexity of the beginning principals entry into the principalship.

Beginning principals face a myriad of complex expectations; from themselves, their staff and students as well the communities in which they work. Table 2 simplifies the literature and also illustrates how the Australian Professional Standard for Principals reflects the literature. The principal's role as an instructional, educational, strategic and accountable leader is complex (Hallinger & Heck, 1998, and Caldwell, 2006). As a consequence, effective planning encompassing entry and transition plans may be the starting point for principal preparation. Chapter three provides greater detail about principal preparation programs, but the notion of planning as a support for principal preparation as a foundation of this study can also be referenced here. In order to combat the expectations facing a beginning principal, the principal may be able to reduce the complexity of the role by ensuring that strategic plans are developed prior to and on entering the principalship (Caldwell, 2006). An example, found in the literature, of a high profile program where planning is a component, is the New York City Leadership Academy Aspiring Principals' Program. Planning summers are the culmination of the New York City Leadership Academy's Aspiring Principals Program (NYCAPP). The other two phases of this program include an intensive six-week summer program followed by a 10-month internship under the guidance of an experienced principal. The duration of the program is 14 months. Upon appointment principals are offered further support through mentoring and coaching (De Leon, 2006). In 2011 a new Chief executive Officer was appointed to lead the implementation of this program.
While the literature reports that the NYCAPPP has been effective, questions have been raised about some graduates of this program and their quest for improved student achievement. Arp (2011) writes “some graduates of the program have come under fire for creating dysfunctional work environments in their pursuit of student gain” (http://gothamschools.org). Arp’s comments are a reminder there are varying views within the literature and a range of factors need to be considered in developing mechanisms to support principals in their preparation for school leadership. The information summarised in Table 2 is also pertinent here. Without the attributes, skills and abilities included in the table principals may not be able to meet the expectations they face.

However, returning to the NYCAPPP, according to positive reviews, activities included in the planning summer, or third phase of the APP, comprise: analysis of student and teacher performance data; preparation for ‘firsts’, such as the first staff meeting, first parent meeting, first school leadership team meeting; professional development planning; and preparation of a personal development plan for the first year as a principal (nyvoices, 2010).

Dempster (cited in Patuawa, 2006) offers a word of caution about plan based professional learning. He raises concerns with plan-linked professional development and he asserts that it: asks principals and teachers to focus their learning towards organisational priorities; shifts the focus from personal professional needs and experiences; shapes professional development to the organisational conditions; focuses learning on the school context; and centres the planning focus on the individual rather than the group (p. 111). In her study, Patuawa (2006) indicates that principals had the following advice for beginning principals:

1. Find out as much as you can about the school prior to accepting the position.
2. Lead by example – ‘walk the talk’.
3. Manage change carefully - don’t try to change too much too quickly.
4. Spend time building relationships.
5. Seek help – don’t be afraid to ask questions. (p. 111)

Pituawa’s advice is directed as counsel for beginning principals. Her guidance aligns with the first activity offered in the New York City Leadership Academy Planning Summer - analysis of student and teacher performance data. Her third point refers to the process of managing change that requires skilful planning. Therefore, despite Dempster’s caution about planning based professional learning, it would seem applicable for beginning principals to be strategic, as indicated by Caldwell (2006), by developing an entry plan to support their transition to the role of principal. The advice offered by Dempster is relevant as are the questions raised about the NYCAPP, which suggest caution is warranted. A beginning principal should be aligning planning to the needs of the school in which they are about to begin. It was my experience that recommendations provided by the Expert Review Group report as I commenced my principalship, provided a clear context around which I could plan my entry into the new school. The data collected in this study also confirms that planning is justified.

Given the changing nature of their role both as a result of changing expectations and the Independent Public School agenda, or the autonomy and accountability agenda, Western Australian public school principals may be guided towards developing an ‘entry plan’ approach to manage the shift in complexity of expectations and their work. Schleicher (2013) asserts that the school leaders in the highest performing systems in the world are able to: support, evaluate and develop teacher quality; set a vision for results and equity through goal setting, assessment and accountability; set strategic direction; respond to local needs; manage resources strategically; distribute leadership; and demonstrate leadership beyond the school walls. Therefore his earlier statement that developing school leaders requires providing access to appropriate professional development is paramount and by listing the preceding actions he answers his own question, “How
do countries succeed at developing successful school leaders at scale?” (2013). Schleicher further asserts that in order to make leadership development ongoing, seamless and career-staged, there are some key lessons including: professional recruitment; appropriate compensation; appraisal; initial training, including induction; in-service training; and system leadership.

On the one hand it is evident that expectations facing beginning principals are many and complex. On the other hand, research is indicating that with appropriate preparation beginning school leaders can be quality school leaders who create the conditions for improving school and student achievement.

The Shortage of New Principals
It is likely that the expectations facing principals will contribute to the impending shortage of principals. Western Australia faces a comparable challenge to most countries belonging to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – as reported by the OECD (Mulford, 2003) fewer applicants are applying for the role of principal. This comes at a time when the “baby boomer” generation is starting to retire and leave the workforce (Taylor, 2005). Successors to the role are not likely to come from the current pool of deputy principals or heads of learning areas, as their average age is similar to that of principals. The average age of public school principals in WA is 51 (DET, 2009). Normore describes the problem with attracting teachers to the role of principal by stating:

In the past, attracting teachers into the ranks of school administrators was relatively easy because educators saw administration as a normal part of career advancement and usually occurred in mid-career (Fullan, 1997; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1999; Winter & Dunaway, 1997). Teachers no longer see administration as a way to improve their salaries, prestige, or respect among other colleagues (ERS, NAESP & NASSP, 2000; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Seyfarth, 1999). Many highly qualified, competent, and talented teachers dismiss careers in administration because they do not want to sit in an office all day, hassle teachers, discipline students, work with unhappy parents, or push paper; all activities frequently associated with the
stereotypical role of the school administrator (Rebore, 2001; Renihan, 1999). Many individuals do not consider the fact that alternative images of school leadership are possible. Until some of those alternatives become better accepted and understood, there may always be a problem of individuals pre-screening and self-selecting (ASCD, 2000; Cascadden, 1998; Chirichello, 2001; Rebore, 2001; Wallace Foundation, 2003). (p. 2)

Given the complexity of the role as described previously, it is no wonder that potential principals are thinking carefully about whether or not they want to take up such a role. It is likely that candidates recruited to the principalship in the future will come to the role lacking the depth of knowledge and experience needed to quickly acclimate and socialise into the new role. This is an interesting thought given the current Western Australian context which would indicate that a large number of current principals, and deputy principals could potentially retire in the near future. As experience is often gained through acting roles according to the literature and data collected for this study, candidates may come to the principalship earlier than expected and therefore their journey into the principalship may be made further complex, meaning that they would learn through experience on the job with little or no assistance from others in the field. As a beginning principal, I had experience as a deputy and as an acting principal. I had also had experience working to support aspirant school leaders and principals in their development. While I felt confident in the complexity of the position in which I found myself, would others be able to replicate my experience as a beginning principal without further preparation? In fact, has my experience, especially in the design and delivery of professional learning enhanced my ability to plan my entry into the principalship and therefore contributed to success? I am interested in answering these questions in comparison to the data collected from the principal stories articulated in Chapter six. Does the level of preparation for the principalship influence the numbers of candidates entering the profession? The literature provides some answers to the latter question.

For example, in the USA it was reported in the National Association for Secondary School Principals bulletin (March 9, 2004) that 90 percent of respondents to a
survey investigating superintendents’ perceptions of quantity and quality of candidates for the principalship confirmed a moderate to extreme shortage of principal candidates, with the problem more severe at the high school level. Weingartner (cited in Wright et al., 2009) notes that districts across the USA are finding it difficult to recruit and retain qualified principals. Complexities including, state and federal mandates, rising numbers of students at educational risk, and increased violence in schools have combined to make the principalship challenging even for the most seasoned administrators (2009). Wright et al., state, “although the search for a principal ends when one is hired, the process of getting an effective principal is just beginning” (p. 3). Walker and Qian (2006) make comment that where there is no shortage of candidacy for the principalship, for example in Hong Kong and Singapore, there is not necessarily a guarantee of quality. They further suggest that this may be the case internationally.

Walker and Qian (2006) suggest that most principals spring from the ranks of teachers and continue with the premise that if there is a shortage of teachers there will naturally be flow-on effect to the quantity and quality of principals. That is, a shortage of teachers may mean a shortage of principals, a situation further complicated by Normore’s (2004) assertion that potential leaders are not attracted to the role. Chasteauneuf and Kitchenham (2010) conclude “the supply and demand of specialist teachers in Canada in general and in the North in particular are in jeopardy” (p. 869). They attribute an anticipated shortage of teachers to an increasing retirement rate and a decreasing graduation rate. Western Australia is in a similar situation to some parts of the world, apart from Hong Kong and Singapore, in regards to a predicted shortage. Anecdotally, it has been reported that suitable candidates are not applying for secondary school principal positions in either rural and remote, or metropolitan settings in Western Australia (R. Nairn, personal communication, September, 2013). A teacher shortage has been predicted to occur since 1998 (Scott, 1998 and ASPA, 1999) in Western Australia and this is likely to exacerbate when Year 7 students are transitioned from primary schools to secondary schools in 2015 (S. O’Neill, personal communication, 2012). In the secondary context, as current principals
reach retirement age and there is a deficit of secondary teachers, including those attracted to the role, it is likely there will be shortage of applicants to the principalship. The Department acknowledged:

In WA it is anticipated that teacher shortages will increase beyond 2011, primarily due to a projected increase in retirements, based on recent exit patterns of older teachers projected against the current age profile. Teacher retirements will peak towards the mid to late part of the next decade, then decline beyond the period presented in this forecast as the peak of the ‘baby boomer’ workforce would have retired. It is noteworthy that this retirement impact will be significant for the public sector where the age profile is notably older than the private sector (DET, 2008).

Added to the projected shortages, the Australian Government’s National Agenda is layering further complexities and expectations to the principalship. In addition to those explored in the previous section of this review, extra complexities are brought about by the former Rudd government’s “Education Revolution” and include the National Curriculum, Reporting and League Tables, Incentives and Performance Pay, and changes to Duty of Care responsibilities for principals (F. Crowther, personal communication, November 6, 2009). Crowther cites the example of a principal in New South Wales who was facing criminal charges in relation to an incident where other students whilst at school bashed a student to death. He pointed out that this case was impacting on the number of people wanting to take up principal positions. Crowther highlighted the expectations facing principals that are born of the political agenda, but also emphasised the expectations facing principals from the community under the duty of care requirements.

Taylor (2005) also makes the point that in future years the luxury of a network of experienced colleagues may no longer exist as there will be a dramatic increase in the numbers of inexperienced principals. She recommends that current principals “identify members of their staff who have the potential for leadership (at all levels)
and involve them in the thinking behind specific whole school planning and decision making" (p. 11). She also recommends that the system develop programs for potential leaders. Taylor is referring to succession planning and infers that it is imperative that current school and system leaders work together to find ways of recruiting and sustaining future school leaders. This is reflected by Walker and Qian (2006) citing Hess who “stresses the need for human resource systems to think carefully about how they recruit the leaders schools need, prepare them for their positions and how they sometimes lock out candidates with vital knowledge and experience” (p. 300). The model for recruitment and preparation adopted by the New York City Leadership Academy through its Aspiring Principals Program was in response to a dramatic shift in the demographic of the principalship over a period of 5 years from 2000 - 2005. De Leon cites Sandra Stein in highlighting that a “non-linear view of career” has emerged as a result of the shift in labour market. The New York City Leadership Academy recruits and selects applicants who have had at least 3 years teaching experience, aspire to become principals, and who are willing to commit to the 14-month training program. This commitment to the training program combined with the recruitment and selection process ensured that a strong sense of accountability from principals to their school communities and the system was embedded in practice.

At the time of writing, similar programs in Western Australia are currently non-existent for aspiring secondary public school principals. The now defunct Leadership Centre did offer an Aspirant Program, developed in partnership with Western Australia Primary Principals Association (WAPPA). The program operated as a two-day workshop for approximately 20 participants during school terms in venues as negotiated. The program gave a ‘taster’ of some of the aspects of leading schools. The four core modules were: Leadership Framework; Instructional Leadership; Self as a Leader and Applying for Promotion (DoE – Leadership Centre Website). Participants generally self nominated for this program and there was a cost associated with participation.
The high cost of the APP program, $70 million, indicated the commitment of the New York City Department of Education’s focus to ensuring sustainability and capacity of the principalship (De Leon, 2006). In Western Australia in recent years the state government has made changes to funding in public education and the at the inception of the Institute for Professional Learning, access to professional learning was based on a user pays model. The announcement of the development of public school leadership also flagged a change in the Department of Education’s commitment to aspirant principals in Western Australia. Funding, in part, or full, is provided to public school participants who complete a Masters of School Leadership through a local university. Due to economies of scale, it is certain that the level of resourcing and the structure of the New York City’s Aspirant Principal Program will not be replicated in the development of public school leadership in Western Australia. However, some of the concepts of the APP and other preparation programs may be worth replicating despite the barrier of a lack of funding.

While the Masters of School Leadership degree offered to aspiring principals in the Western Australian public sector is funded in some form for some participants, other professional learning delivered by the now well-established Institute for Professional Learning is funded through a user pays process. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) postulate that:

> It is not surprising that financial support emerged as an important enabling condition of strong programs. On average, graduates of exemplary programs were much more likely to receive financial support while attending their programs than comparison principals, though the amount of support varied across programs. Federal, state and foundation grants, as well as district and university contributions enabled this support. (p. 185)

As well as funding complexities, it is clear from the literature there needs to be a strategic approach to identifying and developing potential candidates to the principalship, both at the school and system level (Taylor, 2005). Due to the depleting pool of experience and the changing complexity of the role of all school
principals in Western Australia, including those who seek autonomy as an Independent Public school principal, it will be essential to provide effective preparation programs as further support for those taking up leadership positions. It is also likely that other mechanisms, such as mentoring and coaching, will be needed to further support principals once they have taken up the principalship.
CHAPTER 3: PRINCIPAL PREPARATION

Taking into consideration the complexities facing principals and the predicted shortage chapter three investigates principal preparation programs by providing detail highlighted in the literature that supports the development of such programs. Chapter three also investigates the balance between theory and practice, as well as providing features of entry planning that may assist in preparation for the principalship, especially for beginning principals. Finally, the chapter provides a concept map that summarises the literature and shows the connections between each of the preceding topics presented in the comprehensive literature review.

Principal Preparation in the Literature
McKenzie, Rowley, Weldon and Murphy (2010) report that of 838 secondary leaders surveyed as part of the Staff in Australia’s Schools Survey 2010, 11% had not “undertaken any preparatory work for the leadership role” (p. 59). They also report that while 46% of respondents felt either very well prepared (6%) or well prepared (40%) the majority (54%) felt only somewhat prepared, or poorly prepared for the leadership role. The literature, including the work of McKenzie et al., indicates that there are gaps and overlaps in principal preparation programs. Some of these are represented in Table 3.
### Table 3

*Principal attributes, principal preparation program elements, and entry planning according to the literature*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals must:</td>
<td>Standards provide:</td>
<td>Principal Preparation Programs should include:</td>
<td>Leadership development programs should include:</td>
<td>Entry planning is guided by the following questions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have personal qualities including:</td>
<td>Enhanced educational leadership</td>
<td>A focus on how teachers teach</td>
<td>A focus on pedagogy</td>
<td>What do the data tell you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Trust</td>
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<td>Confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have passion – love the work</td>
<td>Clarification of expectations for school leadership</td>
<td>Clear definition and development of instructional leadership</td>
<td>A focus on curriculum</td>
<td>Does the curriculum meet the needs of, and challenge students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be operationally acute - being able to organise the work</td>
<td>A framework for professional development</td>
<td>Vision building, alignment of staff and community to the vision</td>
<td>What needs to be addressed? When does it need to be addressed?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have courage – to redesign</td>
<td>A framework for self reflection and assessment</td>
<td>A focus on how to intervene and support teachers</td>
<td>Working well with staff and having fun</td>
<td>What do I know about my community members, including teachers and parents?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have strategy – the ability to apply practical action</td>
<td>Enhanced student learning</td>
<td>A focus on how students learn</td>
<td>Strategy formation</td>
<td>What questions need to be asked about student learning? Do staff need support? How can I best provide this?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Certification</td>
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<td>- Goals</td>
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<td>- Objectives</td>
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<td>- Actions</td>
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<td>- Timelines</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Evaluation procedures</td>
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</table>
Table 3 includes Hopkins (2009) take on the personal attributes required for school leaders; the standards to which they are aspiring; and an alignment to entry planning. Goldsmith (2009) writes that “plans do not develop anyone – only developmental experiences develop people” (p. 15). He goes on to say that “there is a false sense that the planning process is an end to itself rather than a precursor to real development” (p. 15). Hopkins would probably concur with this argument. In a paper delivered at the Australian Secondary Principal Association’s National Conference he suggested that principals, “Don’t need to go to principal school” (2009). Rather he cited, Jim Collins (2009) and suggested a model of principal development that included identifying candidates with the following:

- Passion;
- A range of personal qualities including: optimism, the ability to engender trust and a sense of confidence;
- Strategy (the ability to apply practical action);
- Operationally acute; and
- Having the courage to redesign.

Hopkins also suggested that the “development” comes from seeking feedback and through self-assessment against principal standards. A development program is designed around what the self-assessment says, therefore the individual’s strengths and weaknesses are addressed. How do we know whether or not the aspirant or beginning principal has the skills to best plan in this way and, therefore, become a meaning maker? The literature reports one way of knowing the answer is to implement a learning program that teaches the skills of strategic planning, especially focussed on the Entry Plan for the beginning principal (Caldwell, 2006). Another way is to have a set of standards (Invargson, Anderson, Gronn & Jackson, 2009).

In Australia, there was increasing policy concern about the extent to which school principals are adequately prepared for their role (Invargson et al., 2009). This concern has since been allayed by the development and publication of the
Australian Professional Standard for Principals by AITSL in 2011. Invargson et al. support the notion of standards in their report commissioned by Teaching Australia, which has been subsumed by AITSL, stating that a "main reason for establishing school leadership standards is to increase the effectiveness of the professional preparation and development of school leaders" (p. 2). This view holds some alignment with the view of Hopkins (2009). Invargson et al. conducted five case studies investigating standards for school leadership. The examples were chosen on the basis that they provided illustrations from different countries, were developed in different ways meaning the end products had a different focus, and were in operation. The five cases studies reviewed were:

1. Performance Standards for School Principals in Western Australia.
3. Professional Standards for Educational Leaders in Primary Education (Holland).
5. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) in the USA.
   (p. 3 – 4)

The report found that the five case studies shared the following: standards systems: clarify expectations about school leadership for all those affected by it; enhance student learning outcomes; enhance the quality of educational leadership; provide a framework for professional development; provide a framework for certification; provide a framework for self reflection and assessment; and provide a basis for determining eligibility for school leadership positions (p. 12).

The Australian Professional Standard for Principals based on these principles has been developed by AITSL and is summarised in chapter one. This is relevant to the Western Australian context as there will be a requirement for the Institute for Professional Learning to work in unison with the Australian Institute to ensure there is alignment across the states in terms of recruitment to and capacity building of the principalship. The principal standard will be the tool to gain consistency in measuring performance. Invargson et al. state that there is a need for professional
learning systems that offer a structured, sequenced set of courses for school leaders over time. They found several examples, including the Western Australian Leadership Centre, where individuals played an active role in their professional learning guided by standards. Their report supports a standards approach to improving leadership capacity. In the opening statement of the National Standard for Principals it is clear that AITSL expect that the strength of this standard “will be in its implementation through ownership and engagement by the profession” (p. 1).

Stevenson, Cooner and Fritz (2009) write, “the standards movement has infiltrated all aspects of schooling” (p. 1). However, they also suggest that principals are not being adequately prepared to lead schools in today’s education system. Invargson et al. (2009) suggest that the professional development infrastructure in the USA for school principals is quite varied and mainly “captured” by universities. Arthur Levine (2005) levels criticism, at current principal preparation programs in the USA:

> ...many university based programs designed to prepare the next generation of educational leaders are engaged in a counterproductive ‘race to the bottom’, in which they compete for students by lowering admission standards, watering down coursework, and offering far less demanding degrees. (p. 10)

Stevenson, Cooner and Fritz (2009) suggest that internships, standards and reflective journals are significant examples of what should be included in principal preparation. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) advocate that reflective journals allow the principal voice to be heard. In citing Brown-Ferringo and Muth, they stress the importance of future school leaders being immersed in authentic learning activities that produce real products used by the schools where the work is conducted. Hess and Kelly (2005) conclude their paper by stating, “meaningful reform of principal preparation programs must retool the content so that it matches the challenges confronting principals in 21st century schooling” (p. 38). They conclude that principals should receive more training in the use of data, research, technology, human resources including hiring and firing, and performance management or appraisal. They also propose that the base for educational scholarship and sophisticated inquiry be broadened (p. 36).
The Australian National Professional Standard for Principals was "developed to define the role of principals and unify the profession nationally" (2011, p. 1).

It will assist in attracting, developing and supporting aspiring and practising principals. It is a content standard and will be used to lead learning by:
- Providing a framework for professional learning
- Guiding self-reflection, self-improvement and development
- Guiding the management of self and others.

The strength of the standard will be in its implementation through ownership and engagement by the profession." (p. 1)

Thus far, the literature indicates that there is a need for standards in order to justify effective principal preparation programs and to date there has been continued to be criticism of programs situated in universities (Levine, 2005). At the same time there has been identification of the essential elements of principal preparation programs (Hess & Kelly, 2005, Darling-Hammond et al., 2010, Davis and Darling-Hammond, 2012). The other aspect referred to in the literature is certification for principals.

The work undertaken by AITSL in developing the National Professional Standard for Principals may be linked to certification for principals and it will be essential for the profession to be involved in this aspect of the standard. It is interesting to note that the current United Kingdom Government has removed the once mandatory certification of Head Teachers, overseen by the profession through the National College for School Leadership, an initiative of the Blair government. It is also important to note that the current British government has also redefined the structure and purpose of the National College. The National College has now expanded to become a government department for "Leadership of Schools and Children's Services".

While the certification for Headship is no longer mandatory school boards in the United Kingdom may still request it when appointing new school leaders. The certification process developed in partnership with the profession is highly respected. The Schools Network (cited 29 March 13) state on their webpage:
NPQH no longer mandatory for headship
From February 2012, those aspiring to take up their first headship within England are no longer required to have the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). This government decision recognises that schools and future school leaders should be allowed more freedom to choose how best to develop the leadership skills required for headship (http://www.ssatuk.co.uk/ssat/programmes-support/leadership/aspirant-headteachers-programme/).

The Schools Network group offers training that would be the equivalent of the National Professional Qualification for Headship. They suggest that it is good practice for aspiring school leaders to hold certification whether it is mandated or not. Balanskat and Gerhard (2005) reported that training to become a head teacher or principal was not common practice in the majority of countries surveyed in that year. They concluded, “the lack of specific leadership training and requirements other than experience seems to suggest that intuitive leading prevails in the majority of countries” (http://insight.eun.org). Western Australian researchers, Clarke, Wildy and Styles (2010) support this view.

In 2013, the understanding presented by Schleicher is that, “now most countries evaluate school leaders through systemic performance appraisal processes” and he states, “If you can’t define a good principal [through a standards or leadership framework], you can’t get a good principal” (2013). He articulates a set of factors that support the development of quality leadership: targeted recruitment; training for what matters most (instructional leadership); mentoring; networking; training programs in line with professional standards; emphasis on instructional standards; and a combination of theory and practice. He cites the Australian Professional Standard for Principals as useful tool for developing effective leadership. Like Darling-Hammond et al., Schleicher believes there are some key lessons to be learnt for leadership development. He believes the following should be incorporated into the process of developing leaders:

- Targeted professional recruitment
- Compensation
• Appraisal
• Initial training, including induction
• In-service training
• System leadership

These lessons combined with the previous set of factors required for developing quality leadership form the basis of effective principal preparation. He argues that “hiring the wrong principal can lead to 30 years of poor leadership” (2013). He provides examples of countries that have commenced succession planning and suggests that using leadership frameworks rather than seniority may encourage young teachers into future leadership positions. He adds that pairing current leaders with young teachers could be a succession strategy. He also cites an example from Singapore stating, “Young teachers are continuously assessed for their leadership potential and are given opportunities to develop their leadership capacity” (2013).

There is agreement in the literature that principal preparation programs should be developed around a set of clearly defined standards which may in turn lead to certification of school leaders. There is also agreement that there are some strong lessons in developing principal (or leadership) development programs (Invarson et al., (2009), Darling-Hammond et al., (2010), Davis and Darling-Hammond (2013), Huber (2013) and Schleicher, (2013). It is evident that Schleicher believes that systems need to move away from seniority or experience as a defining factor for candidates moving into the principalship. Rather the standards should provide a framework for selecting younger, less experienced candidates into leadership positions. Taking the key ideas from this section of the literature into consideration, is it then possible to define a curriculum that would meet the requirements as agreed in the literature? The next section of this chapter seeks to cogitate principal preparation curriculum in further detail.
Principal Preparation - Curriculum

The current predicament of the issues facing beginning principals; expectations facing new principals, the shortage of new principals, and preparation for principalship is best summarised by Vicki Petzko (2008) who writes:

If there is a shortage of aspiring principals, if many of those are perceived to be unqualified, and if half leave the position in the first 8 years, something must be done to better address the immediate needs of those who actually do the job. University preparation programs, school districts and the profession must collectively begin to address the specific needs of beginning principals to provide maximum support for success. (p. 225)

Petzko (2008) draws attention to the link between principal preparation and standards by suggesting that a focus on standards intends to develop school leaders who place importance on improving teaching and learning and are able to sustain learning environments that promote success for all students (p. 226). She goes on to identify the NASSP Principal Preparation Task Force (2007) findings, which stated that programs include clear definition and development of instructional leadership as well as a focus on how children learn. It was also recommended that programs focus on how teachers teach while providing participants with the skills to intervene and support teachers (p. 227). The following competencies were identified in a national (USA) study where 60% of principals from highly successful middle schools ranked the following as essential: developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships; middle-level best practices; collaborative decision making; staff supervision and evaluation; and instructional leadership. Schleicher (2013) identified standards as essential in providing a framework for developing the principalship. In her work Petzko has identified the previous competencies and, somewhere in between, there will be links to required curriculum for principal preparation programs.

In addition to the competencies outlined by Petzko she refers to an earlier NASSP study (cited in Petzko, 2008) in which high school principals identified the following areas in which additional preparation would have helped them carry out their work
more effectively: curriculum development; program evaluation; professional development; strategic planning; and student assessment (p. 228). These are concepts that can be developed further as curriculum embedded in preparation programs for beginning principals.

Petzko's (2008) paper is comprehensive in its outline of perceptions of new principals. Barnett and Soho (cited in Petzko, 2008) noted that new principals spend a great proportion of their time trying to comprehend the dynamics of their school, assessing staff strengths and weaknesses and determining areas of need and this is consistent with Patuawa's (2006) study. In designing a principal preparation course, the beginning principal's perspective must be taken into consideration. For example, the planning summers as demonstrated by the New York City Leadership Academy Aspiring Principals Program set the premise that planning is a "teachable" skill. Aspirant principals spend considerable time planning for their new role. Developing an entry plan may in turn assist in the development of the principal, especially in reducing the complexity in determining the areas of need within their new context.

Other researchers, including Cunningham and Sherman (2008), are powerful in their assertion that emphasis must be placed on principal preparation tasks that facilitate instructional leadership, school improvement and student achievement. These aspects of principal preparation were included to some degree in a program worth noting from the Western Australian Leadership Centre: the New Directions program (2009) that focused directly on instructional leadership, improving student achievement and school improvement through change management processes. Participants were required to complete action learning tasks that were directly related to the schools in which they worked. The Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) evaluated the New Directions program and a report was tabled to the board in September 2009. "The results of the evaluation showed an 83% satisfaction rating, with 78% of respondents identifying an increase in their confidence in instructional knowledge as a result of the professional learning program (Booth, 2009, Annual Report, p. 7). Some impeding

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factors for the development of principal preparation programs in Western Australia, like funding, have been highlighted in previous sections of the literature review.

Another driver for this study along with ascertaining whether or not principal preparation for secondary public school principals in Western Australia is adequate is to articulate the framework for principal leadership, ratify the competencies that should be demonstrated and to define an effective curriculum for this context. Some of this work is complete through the functions of AITSL. I am interested in what secondary public school principals view as necessary preparation and support. I am also interested in to what extend entry planning could have assisted their entry into the principalship. To that end my interest also lies within the alignment, if there is any, of the principal voice and the literature. One aspect of principal preparation programs that may need further clarification then, is theory versus practice. What does the research say beginning principals should do versus what beginning principals actually do?

**Principal Preparation – Theory and Practice**

In principal preparation programs in the U.S.A, the move has been to develop strong partnerships between the theory-based programs and more practice-orientated programs often delivered by personnel in school districts. Olson (2007) provides an overview of changes that are occurring in some districts as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act (US legislation, 2002). She notes the need for a “tight link between theory and practice, rooted in local communities” (p. 5). This link is demonstrated in the principal preparation program offered by the New York City Leadership Academy, which has the essential component of the Internship as a focus for leadership development. Sandra Stein, the then chief executive officer of the New York City Leadership Academy is quoted by Olson (2007) as saying “There are some generalizable skills….part of the goal here is to accelerate the learning so that people hit the ground running” (p. 5).

Another key aspect of principal preparation reported in the literature is the notion of the internship that is explored in some detail by Cunningham and Sherman (2008). They elaborate the proposition that educational leadership programs should focus
on instructional leadership and in turn, student achievement, which is consistent with Petzko's study. They also support the proposition that “field experiences should be viewed as the primary vehicle for learning” (p. 309). The internship allows the intern to gain new insights while making theory-to-practice transitions. The strength of this mode of learning is in the opportunity to work with school leaders in real settings, “for the profession, by the profession” (Leadership Centre, 2009). Gibran (cited in Cunningham and Sherman, 2008) wrote, "a little knowledge that acts is worth infinitely more than much knowledge that is idle" (p. 300). Gibran is suggesting that knowledge with action is better than knowledge by itself and this notion is putting theory into practice.

The New York Leadership Academy has demonstrated a commitment to the internship as an integral component of its model. As planning is integral to the internship, the internship itself supports the notion that planning is a key to preparation. Gibran's quote infers that action is a key to ensuring knowledge growth. Therefore, planning before, during and after the internship, as one possible component of principal preparation should enhance the experiential learning that occurs.

**Principal Preparation - Entry Planning**

Darling-Hammond et al. (2010), suggest that the ways principals are prepared influences how they influence their schools, teachers and students (p. 107). Hall (2006) identified that one element needed in leadership preparation is training for school leaders that will teach them how to create transition teams and develop entry plans when they begin. Hall states:

> I have found that nothing establishes credibility with all stakeholders quite like a transparent accountability system. We need to establish our benchmarks and goals, collect our data, and then effectively communicate this information to the larger community. We must choose the right leaders and allies for these tasks and hold everyone accountable - most of all ourselves. (p. 524)
The beginning principal or school leader faces two simultaneously occurring transitions. Firstly, the personal transition from teacher to administrator and secondly the organisational transition from one leader to another. The transition from teacher to administrator is often perceived as being challenging. However, failure to adequately manage the organisational transition can cause significant human relations issues for the new principal (Neely, Berube, & Wilson, 2002). Hall (2006) suggests that a transition plan provides a framework for successfully meeting the demands and challenges that are immediate and pervasive for the school leader. Hall's idea of a transition plan is similar to the concept of an entry plan and for the purposes of this study the latter title will be used when discussing entry planning as a tool for principal preparation. There is agreement in the literature that skillful planning can assist the beginning principal in achieving a successful transition into the new role. The Entry Plan has five sections: goal statement; objectives; activities; timelines for completing the activities; and an evaluation procedure to determine the effectiveness of the plan.

The purpose of an entry plan is to establish a set of activities that will guide school leaders' transition into their new role. All executive leadership transition is critical. An entry plan's activities are designed to enable the new principal to gather information quickly about the community and the organisation; to establish a strong community presence early on; to assess the organization's strengths and weaknesses; to identify critical issues; to correct weaknesses; to build on strengths; and to create a network of contacts and resources that will assist in the work of improving their schools (Kinley, n.d.). McIlvain (2009) principal of the American Community School in Jordan writes in his entry plan 2009 – 2010:

This entry plan will allow me the opportunity to listen, observe, and learn from a variety of community members, while gaining a better understanding of the culture of the school. The entry plan will serve to help me begin to formulate ideas and frame strategies to “preserve the best and address the rest.” (p. 2)
Further entry activities may be described as learning, listening, sharing, building and planning. Newly appointed principals should investigate the available data for their new school. They should spend time with students, teachers, parents, school district administrators, community members, school committees, local leaders to hear accomplishments and challenges. They should become known in the community by sharing their leadership story, philosophy and expectations. Beginning principals should establish a positive tone and working relationships, and build rapport with all stakeholders while preparing a strategic plan with a specific action steps (Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2009). This advice from the Commissioner, if undertaken will begin the narrative experience for the beginning principal. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), it is this experience that may then influence further research as data can be collected as the story is retold.

In the Western Australian context, planning before arriving at a school as the new principal is somewhat a hit and miss affair. By chance, a planning template was included in the School Improvement and Accountability module delivered by the Leadership Centre. However, it was rare that the template was addressed. Anecdotally, newly appointed principals would like a more effective transition to their new school.

In summary, as the Western Australian Leadership Centre has been subsumed into the Institute for Professional Learning, it is important that the features of the programs offered by the Leadership Centre that were consistent with the findings in the literature are maintained. Some these features are identified by Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe and Orr in lessons taken from their study of eight effective school leadership programs in the United States (2010). Potential leaders will need to be identified at the school and system level and developmental support provided. Other programs, such as mentoring and coaching, also referred to in the literature, may need to become formalised courses offered and structures may need to be developed to create opportunities for internships and resourcing provided for summer intensives. The Western Australian Leadership Centre was
created through the partnership of the professional associations and the Department of Education, but there is now a distinct gap between the policy makers and the people who do the work. Elmore (personal communication, 26 March, 2013) is emphatic that the profession must take control of entry into the profession and become the bulkhead between policy and principals. The next step in creating a leadership development program that both builds sustainability and capacity is to investigate what beginning principals believe they need as they embark upon their journey. What will role can professional associations take? The Principals interviewed for this study in Western Australia articulated similar needs to their colleagues in New Zealand.

The literature and the data collected through this study indicate that the issues surrounding leadership development in Western Australia need to be further investigated and one aspect of principal preparation discussed in the literature is entry planning. This may be a first step in developing appropriate principal preparation curriculum for beginning principals in the secondary context in Western Australia. Much of the literature suggests that entry planning assists the beginning principal with their transition to the principal role (Jentz & Wottford, 2008; Salim, 2012).

The Entry Plan Approach is not new. There are references to the approach developed by Jentz and Wottford as far back as 1979. Their approach was seen as “confirmation of learning in practice” (Kelleher, 1979, p. 126) and Chambers (1983) suggested that the approach of “starting off right can make tremendous differences as a leader moves beyond the period of entry and into the day-to-day arena” (p. 119). While not new, the approach is still being used in the United States. Analisa Ficklin (personal communication 9 August, 2013) states:

The Entry Plan process is something that I observed our superintendent and a number of new principals work through a year before I became a principal. I appreciated the way these folks established a process for taking time to get to know the people and the history

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of the school before jumping in with changes, so I followed suit. At the time, our superintendent asked all new administrators to use the Entry Plan process. I believe new administrators this year will continue to use this resource. I had finished my principal prep program shortly before I was hired as a principal. This was not part of our principal prep program, but many of the suggestions resonate with what we learned and discussed there. I would recommend it to all new principals!

Ficklin referred to a resource, The EntryPlan Approach written by Jentz and Wotford, 2008. Chambers (1983) suggested, “the authors of the Entry approach describe the period of entering a new position as ideal opportunity for structured, collaborative inquiry into the nature and needs of the organisation” (p. 118). It is clear that Jentz and Wotford have continued to refine and develop their work around entry planning since the late 1970s. Salim (2012) shares his experience:

When taking on a new role, leaders benefit when they dedicate time to learn about the strengths and challenges of their new organization. The literature on entry for both public and private sector organizations (Jentz & Wotford, 1982; Watkins, 2003) emphasizes the importance of forming a "learning agenda" to understand an organization's history and culture before developing goals or strategies. Indeed, as the first superintendent who has been hired from outside the district since the 1960s, I find it important to learn about the community's successes, challenges, and opportunities from the practitioners and stakeholders who have been on the front lines. (p. 69)

Entry planning by its very nature is a foundation to the success of the beginning school principal (Chambers, 1983). Engaging in understanding the planning process for each stage of school leadership supports the leader as well as the school, in ensuring that the complexity of the principalship as well as expectations of the principal are, in part, met by careful preparation.
The preceding literature review highlighted that there is a relationship between expectations facing school leaders; the predicted shortage of potential principals; standards and recommended elements of principal preparation programs, including entry planning. Figure 1 draws together key concepts, taken from the literature, that are central to this study. Figure 1 shows the complexities facing beginning secondary principals in Western Australia and includes the expectations facing the newcomers and the potential shortage of school leaders: the figure also extends to include principal preparation and indicates a possible place for an Entry Plan approach (Jentz and Wottford, 2008). The diagram reflects the complexity facing beginning school principals and requires careful review to piece all the components together.
Figure 1: Three interrelated areas impact the beginning principal: these include the expectations facing new principals, the shortage of new principals, and preparation for principalship" (Walker and Qian, 2006). To what extent can entry planning assist preparation for the principalship? Effective preparation for the role is viewed as a key strategy for retaining school leaders in the position of principal (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe and Orr, 2010); and can also minimize the complexity of expectations facing the beginning school principal. Entry planning is seen as learning in practice and assists the beginning leaders with organisational transition to their new role (Neely, Berube, & Wilson, 2002).
Figure 1 highlights the entry point for a beginning school principal as making sense of the complexities of the role. Placed strategically at the top of the diagram is a focus on planning and information gathering, both which lead to a natural focus on entry planning. Since planning is a teachable skill (Stein cited in Olsen, 2007), it makes sense to articulate the planning process of plan, act, review used in a school setting by school leaders and to provide opportunities to beginning principals to engage in these processes to provide support for their preparation into the principalship (Olsen, 2007). The range of planning processes within the school context may include: strategic planning; operational planning and contextualized planning for specific purposes, for example, learning area planning or a whole school planning for a specialist area within the school such as literacy (DoE, 2010). Entry planning has the specific purpose of supporting the beginning school leader plan for transition into the new school by establishing goals, objectives, activities and a timeline for events before commencing in the new role (Hall, 2006). Entry planning can also assist the beginning principal in planning for firsts such as the first staff meeting; first parent meeting; the first school leadership meeting and so on (myvoices, 2009). The preceding processes are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore the question: To what extent can entry planning assist the beginning principal in preparing for a new leadership role?

The study uses qualitative methods and reports the data in a narrative style, sharing principal stories as a point of comparison to the literature.
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology, limitations of the study, validity and reliability as well as ethical considerations while referring to relevant literature that supports the processes and procedures that were undertaken to complete the study. It also presents the processes for preparation and provides an explanation of the data collection methods. Chapter four also articulates the case for using narrative inquiry as the main research method and self-study as a secondary method of data collection. A qualitative exploration, specifically, a narrative inquiry was undertaken in this study to answer the question; to what extent can entry planning assist the beginning principal in preparing for the new role? Qualitative research consists of investigation that seeks to answer a question; it seeks to describe and explore. Connolly and Clandinin (1990) suggest that narrative researchers describe lives, collect and tell stories of them and write narratives of experience. Qualitative research produces findings that are not predestined, but that can be applied beyond the boundary of the study. Broadly defined, qualitative research means, "Any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of qualification (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Myers (2000) asserts that the qualitative study aims to understand the social world from the perspective of the selected participants in the study. So, in this study the data collected from the sample of principals will provide an understanding and overview of principal preparation in the WA context. The principals will either confirm or refute the findings outlined in the literature.

The data are presented in a narrative style capturing the stories of six principals as they reflect on their experience as a beginning principal. My story is included as a seventh story and the aim of adding my own voice is to complement the data from a sample of principals in the public education sector in Western Australia. Connolly and Clandinin (1990) propose that the researcher listens to the practitioner’s story and that narrative inquiry is a process of collaboration that involves shared story telling. They continue by suggesting that the researcher constructs a relationship in which both the researcher voice and the practitioner voice are heard. Connolly and
Clandinin (cited in Kitchen in Fitzgerald, Heston and Tidwell, 2009) continue "developing deeper understanding of our own practical knowledge through narrative self-study can provide a solid foundation for improving our practices in the future" (p. 35), and in this case, my own story is included in the data set to add richness to the data, but also to deepen my own reflection about the influences on my practice. Another advantage of using qualitative exploration through narrative inquiry in this study is that it permits the researcher to ask open-ended questions, allowing the participants to respond in their own words and evoke responses that are; significant and ethnically appropriate to participants; unexpected by the researcher; and probing in nature. Kemmis (cited in Myers, 2000) suggests that qualitative research is connected to the real world and is situated in historical and social contexts. Therefore in selecting the principals to be included in the study, I was careful to ensure the group represented a broad range of experience; including at least one principal who had been a principal for 20 years.

Other researchers support a narrative approach. For example, Nelson and Slater (2013) include Western Australian researchers Clarke and Wildy’s work in their book that investigates principal preparation programs from an international perspective. They pen of Clarke and Wildy:

they write from Australia to provide a rationale for the study of beginning principals and then expand on a theoretical framework for the study of the principalship using three lenses: social constructivism, micropolitics, and complexity. The authors suggest that a narrative approach is best suited to conduct research on the topic. (p. 7)

A narrative approach can link the concepts being explored thereby allowing theory and practice to meet. For example, in an age where education policy is driven by state, national and international influences it is important to ensure the voice of practitioners is heard. Watterson (Cited in Vertigan, 2011) suggests, “If you see research, policy and practice as three circles in a Venn diagram, then the emphasis is too much on policy followed by research and the least or little attention has been placed on practice” (p. 3). The point being that the narrative inquiry
allows the practitioner's voice to be emphasised, rather than policy. It is my intention to provide a strong practitioner's view of preparation that would be useful to the beginning principal. Fullan suggests that principals are vulnerable to overload as well as packaged solutions for improving practice that can be perceived as the easy option for take up. He goes on to posit that liberated principals craft their own theories of change, continually testing against new situations; they are able to sort out promising ideas from empty ones (Fullan, 2011). Liberated principals reflect deeply on their practice, seeking improvement to meet the needs of the community in which they lead. Narrative inquiry and self-study provide a basis for such reflection and will provide a collective practitioner voice that answers the research question.

Zeichner, (2007) argues that a great deal of what we know about teacher, or in this case principal, practice, is determined by reference to studies, “that do not include the inside perspectives of those who do the work in teacher, or principal, education” (p. 38) and this further strengthens the argument for a narrative inquiry approach that includes the principal voice. At the same time, Bullough and Pinnegar (cited in Zeichner, 2007) suggest that the aim of self-study is to incite challenge and highlight rather than confirm or resolve (p. 43). So, the data presented in my story will aim to challenge and highlight issues raised in the data presented in the principal stories. Dewey (cited in Kitchen, 2009) refers to narrative inquiry describing the educative experiences that lead to growth when teachers are responsive to the situations in which the interactions take place. Kitchen continues, individual practitioners can make sense of the “complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict within a particular professional situation” (p. 39). The collective views offered in the literature support a narrative inquiry approach to collecting data and provide a strong platform for the collection of such data from the participants of this study. It is my intent to highlight perspectives and voices of practicing principals so that there may be some influence over principal preparation programs currently offered in Western Australia. The key areas identified in the literature, expectations facing principals, a predicted shortage of principals and
principal preparation programs will be used as a point of comparison that either supports or denounces the findings from the data collection.

Using practicing principals as a data source allows the construction of real-world ideas based on their experience. In this way, it was expected that practical suggestions rather than theory could be generated to support beginning principals in their preparation for the principalship. “The constructivist paradigm allows the researcher to address a real life context and discover best fit solutions” (Thompson, 2006, p. 9). As such a narrative inquiry and self-study embodies this approach. Personal reflection enhances the data collected through interviews, but it is important to note that personal experience is not the primary data source. Data will be shared as principal stories that articulate the experience of each participating principal and these will be cross-referenced to ascertain the key findings of the study.

Process and Preparation
The research question: to what extent can entry planning assist the beginning principal in preparing for the new role was the guide for this study. In particular the notion of preparation for the principalship was being explored. Two groups of principals were identified: an experienced group and a beginning group. A semi-structured interview template was developed which allowed flexibility, as the respondents were able to tell their story with minimal interruption from the interviewer. In this way, the narrative could unfold naturally.

Data Collection.
Data were collected through interview and recorded in notes taken during the interviews, audio recordings and transcripts in three phases. Informed consent was obtained prior to interview. This group consisted of three principals in different stages of the principalship from five years’ experience to twenty. The aim was to re-craft questions for another sample of principals who were all in the beginning phase of their first principalship. The sample of beginning principals consisted of three principals who were in their first 6 – 36 months of the principalship. Both groups were identified through collegiate networks. During the data collection
stage, it became apparent that the questions crafted for the semi-structured interviews for the experienced principals were flexible enough to be asked of the remaining beginning principals. Therefore data were collected from a range of principals in various stages of their careers beginning at 6 months and extending to 20 years.

**Phase 1.**

A small group of three principals each at different stages of experience in the principalship was identified through collegiate networks. Table 4 (p. 70) provides a summary of participant information for this group. Letters of invitation were emailed to participants who were invited to participate in the research based on their level of experience as a school principal. I convened an individual meeting with each of the participants from this group. A brief explanation of the purpose of the study was provided and participants were reminded that their stories would be recorded. Confidentiality requirements were shared and completed. I articulated a definition for entry planning and participants were asked the question: to what extent can entry planning assist the beginning principal in preparation for the new role? Participants were encouraged to tell the story of their preparation for their role as beginning principal. Each participating principal was selected on the length of experience in their role as principal. There was an attempt to have gender balance.

The participants’ perceptions of their preparation for the principalship were collected through a narrative inquiry process as the main data source. The semi-structured interview allowed questions to be modified to suit the individual. Rossan (cited in Connolly and Clandinin, 1990) suggests that there needs to be recognition in the interview process for the participant so that the narrative triggers emotions and therefore denotes authenticity. That is, the stories told in the research are real. It was also expected that this group would confirm issues raised in the literature. If there were differences, a point of interest would be further investigated, in particular determining where the difference or differences had come from. First analysis of these data determined what was ‘looked for’ in further data collection.
and therefore the trial method used with the focus group was engaged to review emerging hypotheses (Gray, 2008).

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were read and re read, and the recordings were listened to on many occasions. Notes were taken from reading the transcripts and listening to the recordings. This process identified the common threads or themes presented by the principals.

Table 4

*Experienced principal group summary*

<table>
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<th>Principal</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Principal Experience</th>
<th>Number of Principalships</th>
<th>Current School Type</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Medium - Large</td>
<td>North Metropolitan</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Foundation year</td>
<td>North Metropolitan</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>North Metropolitan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phase 2.**

Each of the principals from the second group participated in a semi-structured interview. Principals in the second small sample, at the time of interview, were recently appointed, within 6 to 36 months, to the role of principal. A summary of this information can be found in Table 5. These principals were beginning principals and therefore I expected that there may have been some difference in their perspective of the level of preparation for the role as beginning principal, compared to the previous small group which included principals with a range of experience. These data, and any other examples provided by the participants were compared to responses drawn from the principals interviewed as part of phase 1. Three beginning principals were interviewed.
Again, there was an attempt to have gender balance. Individual stories and perceptions of preparation for the principalship were collected and these data compared to the findings from the sample of experienced principals and the literature. Where there were points of similarity or difference it may be possible to derive recommendations that support an emerging hypothesis (Gray, 2008). Recommendations will be discussed in Chapter 6.

**Table 5**

*Beginning principal group summary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Length of Principal Experience</th>
<th>Number of Principalships</th>
<th>Current School Type</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>South Metropolitan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>North Metropolitan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6 Months</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>North Metropolitan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phase 3.**

Using the common threads that developed through the data collected in phase one and phase two I have written my own narrative. I tell my story as influenced by the reform agenda, my understandings prior to taking up a principal role, and my experiences as a beginning principal. This phase is designed to be a self-study and data have been collected through notes and planning artifacts used on my entry into my new role as a beginning principal from 2010. My aim was to add richness to the findings from the six principal stories. Ziechner and Nofke (cited in Feldman, Paugh and Mills) suggest that self-studies differ from other:

traditions of practitioner research in two ways. First, while it has been common to talk about this form of inquiry as simply self-study, it has been developed
within the context of teacher education by teacher educators as the "self-study of teacher education practices." As a result, many if not most of the practitioners of self-study inquire into their teaching practices in higher education. Second, although they found in their review that self-study researchers use a wide variety of qualitative methods, there has been a focus on the use of life history and narrative forms of inquiry among its practitioners. In short, Zeichner and Noffke distinguish self-study from other traditions of practitioner research by the role of the people engaged in the inquiry — teacher educators — and by their preference for particular methods. (Feldman, Paugh and Mills, p 948)

While reference is made to "self-study of teacher education practices", in the context of this study it applies to self-study of principal education practices. Feldman, Paugh and Mills (2004) compare self-study to action research. They cite the research of Calhoun and use this to draw comparisons and define the purpose of self-study. They suggest that the key difference is the focus of action research being improvement of the organisation rather than the self (p. 951). However, they postulate, “theoretical orientation differed among the traditions of practitioner research” (p. 951). They “define a set of methods as a tactic” (p. 951) and further argue “people engaged in practitioner research may use a variety of tactics depending on the nature of their investigation” (p. 952). They elaborate:

We can compare the different meanings of the term self-study by looking at how each word is modifying the other. For example, “self” can be the subject for the very “study.” This suggests that the self is doing the research. But because the researchers are referring to themselves as self it suggests that they are studying something that has some special relationship to them. For example, when we engage in institutional self-studies, the selves doing the self-study are stakeholders in the institution. However, the self is not necessarily the object of the study. (p. 953)

This description outlines the purpose of the third phase of my research and embodies the approach I have taken which allows me to share my story as a
beginning principal experiencing the complexity of a system under reform, a school
under review and the expectations from all stakeholders in public education in the
Western Australian context. By including my story, it is my intent to highlight
experiences in my role as a beginning secondary principal in the Western
Australian Department of Education, as part of the principal stories so that there
can be improvement for the system.

Limitations
This study has limitations. The data were collected over one year and included a
small number of participants in both the experienced principal sample and the
beginning principal sample. The study commenced in 2009 and continued on a
part time basis until 2013. During this time there were significant changes in
Western Australian education. The study was limited to secondary principals
located in the metropolitan area, which restricted the data collected. Rural and
remote principal preparation issues will not be addressed in this study. Therefore
the findings of this study cannot be generalised to suit all contexts of principal
preparation in the Western Australian public school system. It is also important to
note that narrative inquiry and self-study research both have a potential risk of
everything working out well, or exemplifying the Hollywood plot as Connolly and
Clandinin put it (1990).

Interviews were recorded and transcribed to enable content analysis. This assisted
listening carefully to the interviews to identify categories and coding. Summarizing
content and identification of comments of particular interest was also possible (Bell,
2008). The interviews were listened to many times. Notes were used as the write
up of ideas about codes and their relationships. Notes in each phase of the data
collection helped to develop conceptual understandings from the raw data in the
context in which it was examined. Notes were used as both a procedural and
analytical tool throughout the research process, which allowed data exploration to
be enhanced and communication facilitated.
To eliminate complexity of context, secondary principals were selected from metropolitan high schools. Interestingly, Gililland de Jesus (2009) argues that training needs to be provided to urban rather suburban principals in the United States as the challenge this group faces is “more pronounced” (p. 5). While the urban versus suburban comparison is not pronounced in Western Australia, there are differences in level of challenge and complexity according to metropolitan versus rural and remote schools, and therefore it is important to note that this study does not address the rural and remote categories of schools.

Validity and Reliability
Qualitative research is subjective as the researcher gives meaning to some event. Interpretation takes place on two levels: first the researcher interprets the significance of some of the responses from those taking part and, at the end of the observation, places the interpretation into a broader theoretical framework. This study focused on data collected from individuals in a sample of experienced principals and individual interviews from a sample of beginning principals. The literature review was used as an analysis tool: to measure the data collected through interviews. It also enabled comparison of the research findings to those of the literature review. Similarities and differences to what is reported in the literature are highlighted.

Ethical Considerations
The research will be conducted following Edith Cowan University Ethics approval and DoE approval processes. Principals agreed to participate in the experienced principal sample and the subsequent beginning principal sample, agreed to be interviewed individually and gave informed consent. In order to adequately record the information collected from the interviews, consent was needed to tape and transcribe each of the interviews and for this information to be used anonymously in the write up of the study. A letter was addressed to each participant outlining the study, privacy requirements and confirming their consent to participate. These processes aligned with Department of Education and Edith Cowan University protocols.
CHAPTER 5: PRINCIPAL STORIES

Experienced Principals

The sample of experienced principals consisted of three principals in different stages of the principalship. Claire was in her fifth year as a principal, Eric was in his eleventh year as a principal and Sarah was in her twentieth year. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of each participant. The principal stories are presented below and the stories are followed by comparison of themes identified by each principal. Each principal was interviewed separately. This chapter presents all the principal stories and discussion of the key ideas that have emerged. First the experienced principals:

Claire’s story.

At the time of interview, Claire was in her fifth year as principal of a secondary college built in a new suburb in the north metropolitan area of Perth. She had had twenty years in education prior to taking up her first principalship and credits this experience in helping prepare her for winning the position. Claire started in her current role as an off-line principal meaning that she was appointed to the position 12 months before the school actually opened. She recalls that there were a number of new primary schools being opened and two high schools. As one of many principals opening a new school she was given only an overview of what to expect by whom. Claire describes her experience as fortunate, compared to other principals who had been in a similar position, in that she initially had a great deal of direction from her line manager who was a district director whom had a very clear vision of how education would look in the area. As Carol entered her new role as principal her district director moved to a new position and soon after the district structure was abolished by the Department. So, on the other hand, Claire indicated that to prepare for her new role, she had just one day of professional learning, “where they went through everything from HR [Human Resources], through to buildings and facilities, resourcing, all those sorts of major areas that you might come across as a new school”. She continues to reflect about the perceived lack of
support and centres on the file provided as part of the professional learning or support offered to a principal opening a new school:

Quite frankly the file was totally useless, but I guess they thought that it was a form of professional learning. I was lucky in that I had the support of colleagues who had opened new schools. But, in terms of leadership, and in terms of management, and of understanding of a very complex and very significant project, I received no help whatsoever. It was purely up to me to find out what to do and how to do it. (C)

Claire’s school is a large senior high school that gained Independent Public School status as a part of a cluster of schools in the first round of the initiative as her school opened. During the 12 months prior to the school opening, Claire held responsibility for ensuring that the school would open and could function effectively with resourcing, staffing, policy and procedures in place, as well as developing sound links between her school and the local primary schools in the cluster. She formed a very strong relationship with the principals of the local primary schools. Claire relied on the knowledge of her primary colleagues. They shared the same thinking and were an “amazing support” for Claire. She elaborated:

We were very keen to have a sort of seamless connection between our policies and our procedures and how we approach children. We wanted the same approach to attendance, so we have a cluster attendance program. We have an across cluster homework program. So, the four schools have the same thinking; we use the same wording and we put out the same documentation. So that sort of sharing in terms of intellectual understanding of, I guess the philosophy of education, the approach to education, was what we shared. (C)

The relationship between Claire and her primary colleagues was a support for Claire. At the same time the relationship impacted on community expectations facing Claire in that there was high anticipation that the educational model she and her colleagues were developing would be highly successful. Claire postulated that
the work that she undertook within the cluster as principal is much more complex as a result of her partnership as it includes many collaborative projects that are in place to support student learning from 0 - 12. She said, "If you knew what you were in for, I'm not sure you would do it". She acknowledged the complexity of other roles in different environments, such as in business and industry and examined the challenges of working in a change capacity. However, when she came back to her own context Claire said, "this place creates an energy because you've got the opportunity to create something from nothing and you can build the culture as you go and you can set the expectations, and we've set very high expectations here". She also described the added complexity of managing a building program saying that since she commenced in her role as principal, the school had not been free of a building program and she suggested, "That's not part of the normal principal's role".

Gaining Independent Public School status prior to the opening of her school meant that Claire was then able to experience the mandated suite of professional learning for school leaders in this context. This training provided Claire with an in depth understanding of human resources, school resourcing and for the first time she had a very clear picture of the business side of the organisation.

Prior to her experience of IPS training Claire had completed the leadership modules in the now defunct Leadership Centre. She was also sponsored by her line manager to visit schools and different learning environments across Australia. Through her own initiative, she also completed a project management course. She described these kinds of professional learning experiences as broadening her thinking in terms of leadership. Before taking up these opportunities, Claire said she “was late onto the promotional trail” because she was a temporary teacher and historically temporary teachers could not get promotional positions. She was also a working mother and so when the “system changed”, to a merit select process, meaning a temporary teacher could apply for promotional positions, and her children were school age, Claire started to apply for acting leadership positions. She stated that she "had always been ambitious and wanted those positions". She
was interested in school improvement and school planning and specifically took on whole school roles.

She described many aspects of planning that needed to be embedded in preparing for the successful development of her school. Planning for her role as principal and for her entry into her new school was an essential element in Claire’s transition into her role as a beginning principal. However, she credits her experience prior to becoming a principal as her real preparation for the role. She acted in a level 3 program coordinator position and had acting deputy, or level 4, experience in the 1990s. In Western Australia, administrator positions, according to the Enterprise Bargaining Agreements negotiated by the SSTUWA (“Enterprise Bargaining Agreement”, 2011), start at level 3. Claire also looked for opportunities that included whole school planning and improvement. She looked for strategic roles that led her to a project manager role that oversaw the development of a rebuild of a metropolitan school in the early 2000s.

Claire is aware that in career development she had gaps in the operational aspect of running a school. For example, timetabling and staffing were two areas in which she had little experience. To compensate for this lack of first-hand experience in her role as principal now, Claire ensures that she chooses her staff carefully so that there is a balance of strengths in terms of leading an effective school. She believes the key is:

...how to lead the teaching and learning and the quality of teaching and learning. That’s the new role of the principal as well, is that instructional leader who has a handle on what happens in every classroom and who sets up an environment where each teacher has their own mentor and each teacher has the chance to coach and be coached. (C)

She believes that whole school planning is critical and that principals should have training in planning to assist with these processes. In her case, she considers she was well positioned to plan a whole school vision as she had had 20 years of
strong whole school planning experience. In terms of principal preparation Claire believes that the department in partnership with universities could provide better preparation programs for beginning principals. She considers work-shadowing programs, collegiate groups, coaching expertise as well as the opportunity to be coached, leadership theory and the opportunity to practice leadership as important. She also stated that training in planning is critical so that the links between a focus on teaching and learning and leadership are embedded in whole school planning.

Claire asks the question, “What does effective leadership look like?”. Then she suggests that the answer may lie in a combination of a structured professional learning program along with the experience or observation of leaders themselves. She says that you learn a lot from colleagues and this could be in the form of work shadowing or in collegiate discussion. A university or the equivalent could provide an overview of effective leadership to the Leadership Centre. She ruminated further:

> But I think in terms of the on-the-ground, how does this work and how does it look; how do you do it; how do you make it work in a school; you probably need the experience of some people who are doing it effectively and seeing it. (C)

She continued, “you know you can tell everyone, you can tell everyone until you are blue in the face about what something looks like but unless they see it they can't really get a handle on it”. Claire is of the opinion that aspirant leaders should ensure that they broaden their experience. They should seek out different opportunities and refrain from doing the same. Collegiate support is fundamental and this is an area that the system may be able to help facilitate. She also believes that leaders need to be futurist and to this end they should read professional articles, especially those that challenge thinking. Finally she believes that most leaders need some training in how to manage people well.
During the interview Claire indicated that she thinks that the principal role is a lonely job and suggests that “going to professional learning that is contextually appropriate for your environment is important and she advocates sourcing those experiences “which help you think differently and broaden your own experience.” Claire concludes:

Because too many of us are institutionalised and I think that is the problem with what we do. If we only know one model and then we only apply that model. That’s the beauty of IPS in that we are now starting to see changes in models, and I have to say the networks are whatever people want to do: more people are talking than ever talked before in our system. So, to me that’s got to be a plus. (C)

Claire cited that her experience in project management, whole school roles and the mandated IPS training helped to prepare her for her current role as principal, but she also has some strong views about effective principal preparation in any context and she was emphatic that her preparation for starting a new school was inadequate. Her story has some similarities to Eric’s story and Sarah’s story that follows.

**Eric’s story.**

Eric has been a principal for the past 11 years, 10 at the same school where he had also acted as principal for a short time. Before this, he had been deputy principal for a few years. At the time of interview, Eric was the founding principal in a school that was soon to open. During the course of the interview Eric was asked to reflect on his experience as a beginning principal and so, through the interview it became clear that his experiences as a beginning principal were interesting in that he has had two experiences in significantly different contexts. In his previous principalship, Eric’s school was a small to medium sized senior high school in the inner northern suburbs of the metropolitan area. The school’s clientele was predominantly from a low socio-economic background and there was a significant multi-cultural range of students.
Preceding his first principalship, Eric worked as, in his words, a “site manager” across two campuses where he had responsibility for staffing and other whole school operational tasks. He credits his “whole of school” approach to his career as preparing for future leadership positions. That is, throughout his career Eric has preferred to adopt a whole school approach, no matter the role he was in. Later in his career, he had acting principal experience and suggested that this experience was also preparatory for his current role and so in some ways there was:

..... end of line responsibility. There’s a big jump all of a sudden, from thinking you’re doing a lot of the running to actually doing the running and there’s no-one else to go and ask about something and not being able to walk away from it. It’s yours. (E)

Eric is a strong believer of “you’ve got to do the time in order to gain the experience”. He took on whole school opportunities early in his career, including chairing the staff association. He entered a district office position where he modeled lessons and provided professional learning for graduate teachers and cited this experience as helping to secure his first promotional position. “It helped in more ways than one, knowing how the department’s procedures and policies worked, but also the networking you were able to do”. He also looked for role models and continued to shape his own leadership practices on those around him. For example, Eric named a former principal whose work he credits as influencing his own.

Eric was in a unique context in that as an experienced principal he was moving into his second principalship and so it could be argued that he was a beginning principal again. This time the context was quite different. Eric was offline, meaning he was not working in a functioning school for a twelve-month period as he set about finalising plans and establishing a new school in the northern suburbs of the Perth metropolitan area. For Eric it seemed that there was little professional learning available that supported his entry into either principalship. He said, “Unfortunately, I can’t say there was”, when asked if there has been any
professional learning that has supported his leadership journey. He went on to say that he learned things because he needed to, and offered more in relation to finances:

Finances were the thing.... you learned but as you're learning you're hoping that you don't make mistakes. And that's a big one. When we first started that was the thing that kept me awake more than anything else. (E)

In his new principalship, Eric's school opened as an Independent Public School. Two terms into his new offline role, meaning he was offsite overseeing the building and establishment of his school, where he was not in a school setting, Eric had not embarked on any training in the mandated suites of professional learning that accompany this status. He believed that he would need to embark on the training, "to see if there is anything different", but he was of the view that legislation had not changed therefore there would be little difference in the operation of a school with IPS status.

Eric was perplexed by the lack of professional learning offered to him as a principal starting a new school. He stated, "I'm at a loss as to how the Department that opened so many schools doesn't have checklists in place and that say okay this happens now. What I have discovered is the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing". In thinking about professional learning that could support aspirant principals, Eric was very clear that he saw huge benefit in work-shadowing. He also believed that if future school leaders could do some time in a country location their practice would be enhanced:

I think that they'd have to rely on themselves a bit more. They'd certainly learn to do that. They've got a younger staff generally, or have had younger staffs out in the country, which might be different now, but by having that they become more of a mentor. (E)

Eric believed strongly that professional learning for principals should sit within the professional associations. He cited an example delivered by the Western
Australian Secondary Schools Executive Association (WASSEA) where participants were encouraged to reflect on whether or not “they would be good enough” for the role of principal. He continued:

.... we like to give people confidence to go with it and understand that a promotion isn't just to get an extra few thousand dollars in pay, there’s responsibility that comes with it, quite a bit of responsibility and so making sure that they are attuned to the needs and that they are advocates for public school education. (E)

At the same time Eric stated that he believes that the Department of Education has a responsibility to offer professional learning to support principals in their development and suggested, “the association can only support what’s going on within the department”. When Eric reached a point in his career where he “felt he could do a better job” he commenced seeking promotional positions. He described this as “a turning point”. He didn’t feel that he planned the next steps, but indicated that he took “knock backs” along the way and made sure that he learned from his mistakes. On entering his first principalship, Eric had experience and knowledge of his school, as he had been deputy for a term before taking up an acting principal position and subsequently winning the substantive position. This gave him knowledge that enabled Eric to set a clear goal. “I did set myself a particular goal…. and I had to because you have to have that to achieve what you needed to achieve”. In commencing his second principalship Eric had 12 months to plan and establish his school. He spoke with excitement when he talked about the dynamic planning processes on which he had embarked and there was a sense that this excitement far outweighs the frustration of little professional learning in regards to setting up a new school. He emphasised the importance of networking in order to get the support needed in such a context.

Eric believed that aspirant school leaders should read widely. He wished that it would be possible for the Department of Education to offer principals a sabbatical. He saw this as real benefit for the system as principals would be able to recharge and refocus with the support of the system. For him personally, this would also be
beneficial as he worked long hours, often not leaving work until 9 or 10 o'clock at night. A sabbatical would allow him the time to read, or study, or complete an educational activity without impacting further on the time he had available during the week. He emphasised:

I think our department really needs to ensure that it looks after people who are aspirants, because they are the future and our system needs to be a strong system. I’ve said to three Deputy Generals now, proud to be public. We need to be proud to be public. And to do that, they need to look after their leaders. We need to look after ourselves of course, but they need to look after us too. Bringing in something like that sabbatical, even if it’s a three-month sabbatical it would be something that would actually show they care. Really when I say they care, I mean us. They are the Department, but we are the Department too.

Eric’s story is intriguing as his experience as a beginning principal sits between the experience of Claire, given both he and Claire were offline principals, and of Sarah whose story follows and there are similarities between all three.

**Sarah’s story.**

At the time of interview Sarah was in her twentieth year as principal and she had been at the same school for the past fifteen years. Her school was a medium sized senior high school in the north metropolitan region. Before taking up the principalship at this school she had been a “Deputy Principal Female”, an acting head of department and early on in her career she was a year coordinator, a position that she credited as becoming a driver for her to embark on a promotional pathway. “Once I had been a year coordinator, I could see the balkanisation of the faculties”. In this role she had the capacity to visit other faculties, even though she “didn’t have the language for it”. She felt that “she did know how to teach” and of course she “enjoyed it”, but she “got fed up with making other people look good, or there not being any synchrony across the school.” She was frustrated that she would be introducing ideas and processes, as a year coordinator that other more senior leaders received credit for. Making others look good was a driver for Sarah
to seek change. She elaborated that “in those days” schools did not have such things as school plans or whole school visions. She also felt that the subject superintendents often held more power than principals, though she did not elaborate this point.

Sarah described the early part of her career as dominated by males. She also described a promotional system that kept women out of the principalship. She refers to regulation 102DA (Education Act 1928, Education Regulations, 1960) that was “formulaic” and recalled that Western Australia was one of the last states to legislate an Equal Opportunities Act (EOA, 1984). The 1960s 102DA regulation was repealed in 1999. However, the system that Sarah referred to was based on a promotions list whereby those due for promotion could seek such a position according to the level of school they wished to apply for. Later, Sarah describes how she uses this promotional system to her advantage. She ensured she was a member of the State School Teacher’s Union and was active in supporting changes to the system for women.

Following her stint as a year coordinator, Sarah embarked on moving through schools quickly, on the promotional run. Eventually she took up a deputy principal position in a country school. Sarah did not like being a deputy principal, which in those days was designated “deputy principal female” and predominantly an operational or management position. She stated that regulation 102DA kept women out of the principalship and therefore when the opportunity arose to use the system, which for her was based on “using the transfer system”, she made the decision to seek promotion to the principalship. She used the promotional transfer system to move forward in her career, especially in moving from level 3 to level 4. Level 3 was the first “Administrator” level according the Western Australian EBA. She suggested she had a mentor who supported her career pathway, telling Sarah what steps she needed to take in order to secure promotion. Money, length of stay required and proximity to the city were deciding factors for Sarah when she first opted to embark on this process. An example of how Sarah used the promotional transfer system was in her choosing to apply for promotion to a “C” school which
would mean earning less money, but required only one year’s commitment to a
country posting. There were three levels of schools to apply for promotion and the
“C” level meant Sarah would move away from home and commute at weekends in
order to join the promotional trail. This then meant she could eventually transfer
back to the city as a level 4 deputy principal.

Sarah took further deputy principal positions in the country and it was during this
time that she reasoned, “there was more to these management roles” than she had
entertained and so she embarked on further study, first completing a Diploma in
Education Management and then completing a Masters Degree in School
Administration.

She went on to describe an era:

... a lot of men, when seniority disappeared and the
women came through, they had plotted their career on
the basis of the promotional scale, and that’s what men
did. They plotted, so that they knew by a certain year
that they would be a principal. They didn’t know where,
but they knew when. So, when it became merit and the
women started getting in, of course there was a lot of
resentment and anxiety on the behalf of males, because
their future became uncertain, and I suspect, as did
d their superannuation. (S)

Sarah talked in depth about her studies having enjoyed the intellectual
conversation and studying with colleagues from outside the education sector. She
also realised while she was studying that she was being paid very little compared
to some of the executives who were studying with her. She explained that while
studying her Education Management course she was introduced to a range of
businessmen and women who were studying the same course, but who were not
from an education background. When completing her Master’s degree Sarah
decided to study full time, and following this she returned to a metropolitan
secondary school as deputy.
In continuing to articulate the influence of her studies on her leadership development, Sarah described the impact of critical theory and the concept of deconstruction on her thinking. In some ways she felt this put her at odds with mainstream thinking having been told by a colleague “Deakin was a red-rated university”. She, however, enjoyed the dissection of structural functionalism and suggested that others do not always appreciate this, as she would often ask hard questions of the system, especially those that had not been considered by others.

From this point; Sarah jumped to her current position as principal where she has been in the leadership position for 15 years. Earlier in the interview she shared how she felt that a lack of time for transitioning into the role and time to reflect on coming out of a successful position/role into a new situation may have affected her entry into the principalship. She described transitioning as “coming out of a situation in which one is highly successful and operating at that level with expectation, into a new situation there would be strategies that one would need to employ….that wouldn’t necessarily work in the old one”. She asked the question – would strategies from that context work in the new context? Sarah described the induction process that she underwent as a beginning principal. She described PD or Professional Development as mostly superficial and went on to articulate that much of what was offered to her focused on the mechanical or management aspects of her work rather than what she considered notions of leadership; including power and its use and abuse; change strategies; and knowing yourself well. She stated:

I don’t think that there is enough examination of how you manage stuff, upon which one then builds notions of leadership. And unless you understand these paradigms, I don’t think you can go the rest and people end up feeling a failure. They feel stressed, they feel unfulfilled because the expectations are…the realities of the situation are not explored in the way that I think they should be. (S)
She believed she had no preparation other than personal reflection about the type of leader she would be, following the decision to move forward using the promotional transfer system. Sarah implied that promotional system was seniority and plot based, stating that men plotted where they wanted to be, meaning they knew when they would be promoted by moving around the system, though they may not know where they would be promoted to, country or metropolitan schools. Sarah credited her experience as either a deputy or as principal as providing her with the tools to reflect on improvement. She "started to reflect" on how things were done and why in some situations things would end up with the same outcome. She used an example of school attendance and “that no matter what you do, you end up with same problems which usually relate to the people and their valuing the exercise of attendance being important or not important." In this example, Sarah was referring to the process of monitoring attendance in schools and she implied that the range of problems in schools is similar no matter what, but that the school leader’s influence on the people and processes were the factors that could rectify the problem. It was this ability to reflect on her experience that assisted her professional growth. There were few people other than her husband that she could acknowledge supported her in her career development. She indicated that she moved through the promotional system quickly and that her current school where she had been for 15 years was her ninth school.

Sarah could not recall any specific professional learning other than the study she pursued through her own interest that supported her entry into the principalship. She was emphatic about this and stated:

I don’t think the department is capable of it…I doubt there are many organisations that are really prepared to analyse their own value position and to do it properly you have to be prepared to unpack your own organisation warts and all. (S)

She did refer to an Induction that was conducted over one week that she attended in 1991. Sarah indicated that this course contained some rhetoric about leadership,
but mostly it was about management. She felt it was superficial and she detailed that it included abseiling and teamwork, but that much of what was covered may have already been covered in other forums. When asked about the development of future principals, Sarah recalled that the “best thing” she had participated in was the IDEAS [Innovative Designs for Enhancing School Achievement] (Andrews and Crowther, 2006) process that was delivered by the University of Southern Queensland under the guidance of Emeritus Professor Frank Crowther. She believed this process was embedded in reality.

While reflecting further on professional learning that could be offered to support the development of future principals, Sarah ruminated over the changing nature of the Department of Education, centering on the business model that was adopted during the 1980s under the regime of the Burke government. “I think in education you definitely need an educator in charge of education”. Sarah educed that since the 1980s much of the department’s professional learning centered on public sector policy.

Throughout our interview Sarah referred to the management versus leadership paradigm and in thinking about further advice she believed that professional learning would need to take two streams: the corporate culture and the reality. The latter she believed could be picked up, but she also believed that the theory of adult learning is that none of us are going to change unless it hurts. Sarah was reflective and towards the end of the interview she stated, “maybe what I am saying is that at the end of the day one has to personally reflect on one’s own experiences and that’s a choice one makes.” She elaborated:

But as I got out and about I realised I had some choices. The first one was having to serve out the bond. Well I served out the bond and after that every year was a choice. (S)

In talking about serving out the bond, Sarah was referring to a government initiative, which saw students take up a bond. A bond was established during
periods of teacher shortage (Lane, 2008). Pre-service teachers were paid a small entitlement during their study. In return those teachers went to the country to pay back the bond (Norman Moore, Regional School Teachers Motion, Western Australian Legislative Council 30 June 1999). Sarah referred to choosing to stay in particular positions or places in order to continue along the promotional track. Throughout her narrative Sarah refers to the promotional system and the lack of opportunity afforded to women. She was a member of the State School Teacher’s Union and championed for women’s rights, especially for promotion. “I’ve had to battle with some of these blokes. I really have. There’s no two ways about that. But I understand why. It was about seniority.” Further, Sarah adds that she had choice to stay or to move on and that this had meaning for her. This accompanied with her decision to use the promotional transfer system, by copying what the men did, to her advantage is the extent to which she planned her career and development as a beginning principal.

When asked about appropriate professional learning to support public school principals Sarah proposed there are four key areas that could be developed:

- The law according to the department
- Know thyself
- Dealing with difficult people
- Understanding your own history

She was quite concerned about perceptions of leadership being male dominated stating: “Leader. Tall. Dark. Handsome. Male”. Sarah also iterated the view that “women are still getting beaten up” in the leadership stakes. She also had strong views about primary school presenters delivering professional learning to their secondary counterparts. However, she did indicate that the theory “of adult learning is that none of us are going to change unless it hurts”.

In the concluding section of this chapter, key themes presented by each of the experienced principals, Claire, Eric and Sarah are elaborated. Similarities and differences in perspective are explored. An observation about the three stories
from experienced principals it that as the only male in this group, Eric makes no mention of the barriers of the promotional system, yet all three experienced principals have been in the system for similar lengths of time. Sarah’s story explores the notion of a female seeking promotion in some depth. While treatment of gender is not a focus for this study, it could be assumed that for experienced principals, in particular, being a female may have added to the expectations of a woman in the role and therefore increased the complexity of the work undertaken as a secondary school principal.

**Common themes from the experienced principal stories.**

From the interviews three key themes were evident. The themes expressed by the experienced group of principals were related to professional learning, planning, and support.

**Professional learning.**

Both Claire and Eric felt that professional learning for their new roles as beginning principals was lacking. They were both quite definite in that the Department offered no professional learning to them. Sarah on the other hand indicated that she was offered a week-long induction, but described the professional learning offered to support the principalship as superficial.

Interestingly both Claire and Eric were in the unique situation of commencing as the inaugural principal in a new school. Both experienced the luxury of twelve months planning to assist the development of their new school. Claire described the How to Open a New School file as ‘totally useless’ and Eric indicated that it was more his experience than anything else that had prepared him for the role. This was in keeping with both Claire and Sarah’s view that the experience in other roles in schools afforded opportunity to learn about the principalship. This experience amounted to whole of school roles that afforded the development of a strategic acumen. All three principals took on roles that required forward planning and developing the whole staff along the way.
Another similarity between Eric and Claire’s experience was that Claire’s school was successful in gaining Independent Public School status prior to the school opening and this was also the case for Eric’s school. While Eric had not yet embarked on the training, Claire described the training as providing the impetus for changing her thinking from “I’m just the school leader who looks after the educational stuff and has to worry about the management of the nitty-gritty, to now I’m a CEO who’s running a very large business”.

Eric and Claire also had other similarities that in their previous experience as a Project Manager, both overseeing large projects prior to taking on a beginning or acting principal role; and their experience working in a District Office setting. Sarah had not had these experiences and she had not undertaken any Independent Public School training, but she was of the view that it would be difficult for the department to offer meaningful professional learning as it would require deep self-analysis of the system and she was not sure the department could do this.

Planning.

In terms of planning both Eric and Claire felt well prepared for their entry into the principalship, again citing their previous experience as preparing them for the planning required as a beginning principal. Again, similarly, both had taken on whole school roles that required planning and preparation in order to be successful. Claire reported:

...then when I took on this job, I think I was well positioned to plan a whole school vision, because I had had that, I'd had that very strong whole school planning right. For 20 years that's what I'd been doing”. (C)

Sarah, on the other hand was not explicit about planning processes that were of use when she entered the principalship and perhaps this was due to the nature of my questioning rather than the answers provided. She did however, spend some time contemplating the nature of ‘transitioning’ and the impact of reflection on her
work and perhaps this approach has naturally embedded in it the keystones of
effective planning. Sarah referred to the IDEAS (Andrews and Crowther, 2006)
process [not a program] as having influence on planning processes, but this
occurred much later in her career, rather than at the beginning of her principalship.

Support.
All three principals agreed that system support was limited. Claire felt isolated and
found support from the principals within her cluster rather than her secondary
principal colleagues. Eric indicated that he felt confident to seek support when
needed, but also indicated that he was a member of his professional association.
While the purpose of the association is different, Sarah indicated that her
involvement with the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia,
particularly in support of women's rights and issues, was a support. All highlighted
the importance of networks to ensuring their continued success.

The following section explores the principal stories from the beginning principals
group. At the end of this section, the key themes presented in each of the
beginning principal stories will be provided. Recommendations based on the
themes from all six principals will be provided in chapter six.

Beginning Principal Stories
This section tells the stories of the beginning principals’ experience as they
commenced in their first principalship. The beginning principal stories are placed
after the experienced principal stories as this reflects the order in which they were
interviewed.

Marie’s Story.
At the time of interview Marie was in her third year of her first principal
appointment. Marie’s school was a small south metropolitan high school that
catered for a high number of students who may have been at risk or
disadvantaged. The model that was developed at the school was based on a
particular philosophy, which required a substantial change from traditional school
structures. Her school was granted Independent Public School status and then in
her new role, in the first year Marie undertook the associated training with this
initiative.

The application process for her new position was completed after the school year
had ended. That is, the interviews for the position were conducted during the last
week of the school term. Marie was notified that she was the successful applicant
in the following week when schools were closed for the Christmas holidays. Due to
the lateness of her appointment to the position she was not able to undergo a
handover with the former principal:

I couldn’t get in until the day school started due to a
number of circumstances that happened; there were no
keys, the deputy wasn’t there, my deputy in fact, who
had been the acting principal, became very ill within the
first few days of school commencing and had the most
of first term and then most of semester and then the rest
of the year off. A lot of the knowledge that would have
been passed on from one person to another was lost. I
didn’t have a handover from him as the ex-principal and
I didn’t have a deputy there who knew how the school
ran. So for me the learning curve was very steep and
the staff were distrustful because I was the third
principal that they had in three years. (M)

Marie reports that this situation caused her stress in the first few weeks of her entry
into the principalship, as she felt underprepared. The only information that was
available to her was what she could find online. The school’s website was dated
and anything else she could find was quite superficial. There was no one available
to talk to and very little information to give her a deeper understanding of the
school that operated on a unique model (Name of the model has been removed as
it is a potential identifier of the school) that required a depth of knowledge. The
model had been introduced through a whole school initiative that was driven by
staff in previous years under a different principal. The process of change took three
to four years of dedication from staff. Marie credits the staff with turning the school
around from a school that had no order to one that was running effectively, even
functioning beautifully despite being in a low socio economic area with a student population consisting of at least 40% Aboriginal students and 20% English as a second language students. The staff had created a supportive environment for student learning but they were distrustful of the new principal in case the work they had done would dissolve. She elaborated:

I’d done whatever research I could have on the school but the only information I could get was basically what was online; an outdated website, schools online, that sort of stuff, which of course, gives you a superficial view of the school. There was no one to talk to and no information to be had apart from that. (M)

Marie felt that the process to fill the position of principal was held too late in the year, with the appointment not made until the middle of the school holidays. As a consequence she believed that there was probably little else she could have done to prepare for her new role in the principalship. She spent the first six months “sitting back and watching and just learning from what was happening in the school.”

Prior to applying for principal positions, Marie indicated that she went to as much professional learning as possible, especially professional learning focused on operational matters. She made the comment that there are fewer opportunities for aspirant leaders now. In her previous role as deputy principal, Marie experienced a range of professional learning that was offered to Independent Public Schools and she experienced the same professional learning in her own school when as a beginning principal her school achieved Independent Public School status. Marie indicated that this professional learning was mainly of an operational nature and reported that she didn’t “know that it has made any difference to her leadership style or management of people”.

Marie made comment that for some people “their thirst for knowledge will mean that they get all the information they need, they will get in there, they will learn, but for other people, they rise to positions of leadership and they don’t have the
knowledge." She pondered whether there needed be some uniformity to professional learning, similar to the modules delivered through the Professional Learning Institute (Leadership Centre). She went further to say that,

There must be some degree of knowledge that you need to get into that position or some requirement to update your knowledge on things as you go through, because even your WACOT [Western Australian College of Teaching, now the WA Teacher Registration Board] membership as leader is no different to that as a teacher. What is it that we've done recently? A first aid course? That's ridiculous that counts as professional learning to register me as a principal. (M)

Marie felt that it was important for the profession to be involved in the delivery of professional learning and she cited one main reason for this: the opportunity to develop networks. "If you want to advance in the system then you need to know people and be able to relate to them and have people you can ring and talk to and have mentors on lots of different levels".

The Master of School Leadership offered through a local university is a "wonderful initiative" according to Marie and she feels that the system initiative will be of benefit because it will deepen leadership understanding. She was uncertain that the Institute for Professional Learning had a role to play in developing leadership learning and this was based on her past experience when she had wanted to access courses and they were no longer available. She did think that any such courses offered through the Institute should be recognised as prior learning and therefore contribute to the completion of the Master of School Leadership.

Becoming a deputy principal was not a career goal that Marie set and so once she became a deputy and discovered she enjoyed the role she, set about very clearly to learn everything she could about running a school. She was a substantive deputy in 2004 and by the end of 2009 Marie was being interviewed for principal positions. She advises aspirant schools leaders to understand the operational aspects of running a school, especially, policy, processes, procedures and finance.
She suggests getting to know the whole school operation and believes job rotation can assist this. She recommends that aspirant leaders join a professional network and that they take every opportunity to take on different roles and acting roles as this develops capacity for writing a strong curriculum vita.

Marie was brief and to the point during the interview. She indicated that she had had time away from the education profession while her children were young. During this time she experienced other career options and credits this with shaping her view of leadership positions in schools, as well as giving her the confidence to seek promotion, even though this was not a planned career move.

Marie stated:

I see people stuck in roles where they've got no opportunity to grow and I think as a system, as leaders in system it's beholden on us to make sure that we grow the people in our schools. And maybe that's something the system needs to work on, making sure that leaders build the capacity. (M)

While being somewhat uncertain of how this may look, earlier in her interview, Marie articulated some key areas essentials for budding leaders. These included: Finding a mentor – someone to bolster confidence and assist with development as a leader; joining a professional association; networking; and learning the operational aspects of the position – policy, processes, procedures and finances. From a system perspective, Marie emphasised the need to break what she perceived as a culture in the Western Australian public school sector. She suggested that:

there is culture in WA that it's okay to do it (seek leadership positions) like you earn your stripes just by time and there's always been a culture in WA that's how you do it.....it's still a bit of a club to be in and you have to get your face known. (M)
Therefore, from her perspective, system recommendations would include finding a way to break this culture and Marie was hopeful that perhaps the new professional standards would assist this change. Marie also suggested that if the system could afford it, it would be of benefit for aspirant school leaders and current deputies and principals to work shadow in rural and remote positions for at least a term at a time. Marie felt that this kind of experience would be mutually beneficial for both parties, and that they would be able to learn from each other.

Marie’s story was similar to Nathan’s in that they both were highly proactive in seeking relevant professional learning that would assist them in advancing their career aspirations.

**Nathan’s story.**

Nathan was in the first year of his first principalship at the time of interview. He was successful in winning a substantive position as principal following acting in the same position for the preceding three terms. Prior to this, Nathan had been a deputy principal in a different school for five years where he had established himself as a hands-on leader. He had a strong professional relationship with the principal when he was deputy and cites many opportunities provided to him to develop his leadership capacity including portfolio development, networking and work shadowing.

Nathan’s school is a small metropolitan school in the north-eastern suburbs that has a large number of students from a socio-economically disadvantaged background. Over the past several years there has been a drop in student numbers and this has impacted on the complexity of the school. Expectations from the community include students having broad curriculum choice and opportunity to achieve success. As well, in order to sustain student numbers Nathan has had to develop strong relationships with his primary colleagues and parents. He has also developed strong partnerships with business and industry with a view to increasing opportunities for his students. While facing these expectations, Nathan continued to align school processes to ensure that there was a focus on improvement in
achievement, the development of an orderly learning environment and beautification of the school itself.

When asked to describe his experiences as a beginning principal, Nathan responded with, “Good experiences. I think that my experiences have been really positive probably because of my preparation for the position”. Nathan felt well prepared for his first principalship and had a clear idea of the planning he would need to undertake in order to be successful in the first few months of his new position. He felt that the performance management conversations that he had with his previous principal, combined with a number of acting stints in the role of principal had prepared him well for his future principalship. He reflected:

I did a few acting stints within the school, so at least a couple of years before it was identified that this was what I wanted to do, and then professional learning opportunities were put in place to allow me to do that. This included taking on portfolios within the school that might be seen to be something the principal would be doing. (N)

Nathan was provided with opportunities to take on portfolios that encompassed whole school and strategic direction. For example, in the years preceding his entry to the principalship, Nathan carried responsibility for: staffing, including managing referred teachers, or redeployees within the system. Redeployees are permanent staff [teachers] who must be placed in another school, as the current school, for one of a number of reasons, no longer has a place for that staff member. He also held responsibility for restructuring the sub-school nature of his school; and for coordinating the process for applying for Independent Public School status, including writing the application.

As a result of his previous experiences, Nathan felt well prepared for the role that he was currently in. However, Nathan strongly believes that there needs to be a more coordinated approach from the system: he believes that new principals should be provided a compulsory induction. This would not be about leadership
styles and interpersonal skills; rather it would be about compliance, all the policies that every principal should know but perhaps does not. Nathan had not participated in Independent Public School professional learning, but speculated that this would cover many of the aspects of compliance he thought should be covered in a compulsory induction.

Nathan noted that the professional learning that had most impact on his entry to his role as a beginning principal was gained as a member an Expert Group Review (ERG) panel. When he was deputy, his school underwent a review and Nathan saw this as a positive experience. “Being at a school that was interviewed by the ERG was a positive learning experience for me, then I was seconded to be part of the ERG panel, and that was a fantastic learning experience”. At the same time, Nathan acknowledged the influence of the principal he worked with while deputy. He described this person as a coach and mentor, someone who provided opportunity for Nathan to develop his leadership so that he would be prepared to take on the principal role himself.

Nathan specified finances as an area requiring development. He described this as a ‘gap’ and noted that he was provided an opportunity to work shadow a colleague to learn more about this operational aspect of school leadership. Support from colleagues and others was also recognised by Nathan as aiding his successful transition into the role of beginning principal. In particular he acknowledged the highly professional response and support from his direct line manager, despite a heavy load.

When Nathan applied for a principal’s position he believed part of his plan for entering the school was about “establishing yourself as a new principal” and he “had a very clear plan about how I would do that”. He extrapolated that when he first arrived at the school that several issues were evident. During his acting period and the application process for the substantive position he was able to clearly outline his plans for the following year and beyond. The key milestones in Nathan’s planning included:
• Establishing what kind of leader he was – this encompassed both qualities and actions, “letting staff know I have an open door policy and that I am responsive and effective; and fair and transparent.”

• Listening to staff for the first few weeks to gain an understanding of the context and issues within the school.

• Not making any changes to the school within the first weeks.

• After several weeks, using feedback from staff and his observations of the concerns raised, implementing a clear leadership strategy. Nathan articulated to staff the following message:

  I’m making a commitment to all of you right now as a staff, that I will follow through on improving attitude, behaviour and attendance and effort at this school; that you have the full backing of the administration, but I need to know whether you as a staff feel that you want to improve these areas and raise standards at this school because that’s what I believe is needed.

• Ensuring that he was and remains visible in the school. Nathan indicated that he does duty every lunch-time so that students know him and he is visible in supporting staff.

Nathan commented, “that was my plan and it's not rocket science, it's not hard, but it has made all the difference.” Nathan believed that his experience as a deputy principal was integral to his transition and positive experience as a beginning principal. He credited this experience as preparing him for the principalship. However, Nathan strongly believed that the system, the Department of Education, has some imperative responsibility in improving processes for beginning principals. He reiterated the need for compulsory induction and a review of the process for appointing principals. He said, “I think that people who are aspiring to be principal, once they are the level below principal, I think professional learning should be offered in a structured approach”.

He also believed that the appointment of principals needed to change. He went further to suggest that principals who have the ability to build capacity in those
around them should be identified as "training grounds for new principals within the system." He also reckoned that the best way to get the best person for the job is similar to the process of review conducted by the Expert Review Group. Once the aspirant has applied for a principal position the panel should visit the applicant’s school and a range of sources so that they can formulate a contextual understanding of how the person operates and their capacity in each of the criteria linked to the principalship. Nathan believed that if processes were modified in this way that stronger leaders would be appointed and that this would be of overall benefit to the system. When asked about professional learning offered to schools that have achieved Independent Public School status, Nathan was emphatic in his assertion that "all schools should have been granted the flexibilities of IPS at the same time".

In his development as a school leader Nathan always tried to perform at the level above that in which he was working and this is the advice he offers to aspirant principals. He also advised that aspirant principals be clear about their aspirations and state these to their line manager so that they can be provided opportunities to perform tasks that demonstrate the complexity of principal level responsibilities. He indicated that it was important for aspirant principals to prepare themselves for the changes in complexity of the role from deputy to principal, moving from operational leadership to strategic leadership. Nathan also felt that it was essential that school leaders develop networks and have the confidence to call and seek advice from other leaders within the system. "There needs to be an understanding of those different roles and what people do because, when you become a principal you will be speaking with those people more frequently. And, it is also important those people know who you are".

Nathan's experience of entry into the principalship was quite different to the experience of Marie whose story preceded his and Tracey's whose story follows. Both Marie and Tracey experienced difficulty accessing their schools due to the timing of the application process, in particular being notified that they were the recommended applicant for their position.
Tracey’s story.

At the time of interview Tracey had been in her first principal role for nearly two school terms. She came to the position with a week's notice that she was the successful candidate. Tracey's school was a medium sized senior high school in the northern metropolitan area and her new school was an Independent Public School. Tracey felt that it was fortunate that the school she was leaving as deputy principal had also been an Independent Public School. She was able to bring to the new principalship a key organizing tool that she had used in her previous school and this assisted with her transition into the role. The tool also assisted her with planning as it mapped events that needed to occur and when they should occur. However, Tracey felt that she came into the school on the run and this made her transition quite difficult. She felt that she started on the back foot and that she was thrown in, but she acknowledged that she had been in the school previously, in an acting capacity, and therefore had an advantage of knowing the staff. She also underwent a handover process with the exiting principal who provided school data so that Tracey felt that she had a handle on what was happening in the school when she met with the executive staff. Tracey emphasised that this was important to her so that she was perceived as a credible school leader.

In her previous role as deputy, Tracey held responsibility for sourcing, delivering and coordinating professional development and linked this work to the school priorities and leadership needs within the school. Understanding all the roles within a school and system-wide experience were two factors that Tracey highlighted in her preparation for the principal role. She stated:

I have a firm belief that the principal's role should be filled by a person who has qualifications in education, and ..., I have found working with other colleagues that the colleagues I have gained most from, as in role models, have gone through that line of credibility where they have been a classroom teacher, they've gone to
HoLA [Head of Learning Area] position and then they've gone to deputy's position. (T)

Tracey referred to qualifications, but also emphasised experience as prerequisite for school leadership. She also noted that if leaders had missed developing experience in any of these roles that they may not have been perceived as credible. She cited experience as vital preparation for leadership roles and indicated that acting opportunities would be fortuitous, especially in allowing for the development of leadership skills while being mentored in the role.

She went on to elaborate that she considered four areas to be important in preparing to become a principal: experience; professional learning; networking and collaboration; and innovation. Having responsibility for professional learning in her previous school had afforded Tracey the luxury of being able to source her own professional learning to help in her preparation for the principalship. She said, “I think that's probably part of taking on a leadership role. It's the self-reflection and recognising that you need to be constantly improving yourself to build capacity with your own staff and imparting that knowledge”.

Tracey contemplated whether there would be advantage in professional learning that was mandated to cover planning aspects for beginning principals. She reminisced that the system had lost some advantage in professional learning over the years. In particular, Tracey recalled a leadership program for “newly promoted people” that she had experienced when she first became a deputy in a rural town. She felt that there were benefits and positive outcomes from this program and highlighted the development of collegiate networks as a significant outcome. She also indicated that as a newly appointed deputy in a country school she had an opportunity to visit the school, meet with the school principal and other executive leaders, form her own observations of the school and then plan her entry into the position following discussion with colleagues from her newly established network, facilitated by the leadership program.
Tracey also pondered the professional learning mandated for schools with Independent Public School status. She indicated that this training had made a difference to way she sees her role as principal. “It’s a totally different way of operating”. She felt this status had more effect on the administration team and how they operated within the school than any other stakeholder in the school community. “There’s a higher level of accountability”. The training provided through this initiative had increased Tracey’s confidence in managing her role as principal. She also saw benefit for the system in rolling out to all schools some of the mandated suite of professional learning for Independent Public Schools (IPS). She cited marketing, accountability and policy, as well as finance as being not only essential for principals in an IPS, but essential for principals in any school. She highlighted the training for IPS principals around the development of a school board and how the expectation of principals changes under this governance. Tracey cited an example of an acting principal in her previous school who “was really taken back by the school board” and she emphasised the need for a shift in performance in accordance with the increased expectation.

As a professional, Tracey expected that school leaders and beginning principals would automatically plan for their entry into a new position. She was unsure if this was case: that all new principals planned their entry, but she “would never go into a school blind” and suggests that this “comes back to that credibility”. She elaborated:

I needed to be on the ball, I needed to know about the school and I needed to know about the very clear directions and I also needed to have a sound background of where the school was at, and to project what’s gone well, let’s celebrate that, let’s have a look at what hasn’t gone so well, this is what we could improve and set some targets and vision for the year. (T)

Tracey indicated that she was able to use an organisational tool that was developed in her previous school when she entered her new school as principal. She described the tool as “an organisational tool for the executive team” with a
calendar of events that included school targets and priorities, the school weeks within the term and a "to do" list. She used the tool in her new context and indicated that she found this very useful, as it has kept her on track.

Tracey believed that a powerful insight came for her when she gained teaching experience in the United Kingdom. She had been a deputy for six or seven years, but chose to take up a teaching position in the UK. She says, it was "the best thing I ever did" and that the experience changed her thoughts completely about education. She now advocates that teachers and school leaders should move out of their schools in order to broaden their journey of professional learning.

One of the things that Tracey thought is missing from the principal's role is mentoring. She felt that she "has been cut loose" and had limited contact with colleagues who could provide her with critical review of how her school and her leadership was progressing. She said that as an IPS principal she had access to one meeting per term with the director general, but this was not a personal conversation where she was provided with critical review. "There is a need within the system. New principals really do need a go to person." She went on, "I think our high functioning principals have an obligation to mentor and help new principals, just as our teachers have an obligation to feed back by taking practice teachers".

Tracey also believed that due to the higher level of accountability in her new role that a refresher course in financial management would have been of great benefit for her personally. She clearly articulated some wonderment that much of the mandated professional learning for Independent Public School leaders was not accessible for any school and suggested that there would be advantage to the system if all schools had access to this suite of professional learning.

As well as these recommendations, Tracey held a belief that there should be some professional learning around building relationships. She cited a personal example where another principal referred to staff in an inappropriate way. She found the
conversation depressing, yet she encouraged the principal to think of ways to build positive relationships with staff. She felt that some people in leadership roles need work in that area, referring to developing emotional intelligence skills and abilities, especially when dealing with performance issues. In providing advice to aspirant principals, Tracey suggested that it was important to be part of other schools and other organisations. She gave an example of her own experience when as a deputy principal she took an opportunity to return to the classroom in the UK.

Like the themes that became evident from the experienced principals who participated in this study, the beginning principals shared some similarities and differences. Again these have been organized under the headings, professional learning, planning and support.

The experiences of each of the beginning principals were all slightly different but similar at the same time, especially in terms of their actual appointment to their school. Marie’s experience was the most negative in that she felt stressed that she could not access any information about her school. Tracey had a week’s notice before taking up her appointment, but was able to contact the exiting principal and therefore had some data about the school. However, her intended planning did not work out at the beginning of the school year and so she felt she was in catch up mode for much of the first term. Nathan, however, had a much more positive experience as he had been an acting principal in the same school and knew the context well. While his experience was positive, Nathan believed that the selection process needed improvement and Marie also voiced this view. Nathan indicated that the process was much better than it used to be, but:

I reckon the best way to get the best person for the job is to do something similar to what the ERG does and that is: you want to be principal; you apply; a panel will come out and they won’t be asking you why you would be effective; they go to a range of other sources and say, “Tell me about this” and they formulate a contextual understanding of how that person operates and their
capacity in those criteria linked to the principalship; and they do a rating. (N)

Marie was unsure how the process could be further improved but was critical of the timing for advertising the process. She said:

Well, I think the problem was that the process was run too late the year before and in fact the interviews were held on the last day of school, so the appointment wasn’t made until the middle of the holidays. The person who had been acting and was deputy didn’t know if they were coming back to the principal’s position so were not happy about how things were happening and had gone away from that day until the beginning of the next year. I don’t know how that could have changed except for they had a whole year to advertise that position, so in system terms that is a very bad thing to do. (M)

All three principals, whether it was available or not, wanted to be able to access the data and relevant information about their respective schools. This is telling about their approach to the role and their preparation through professional learning for it.

**Common themes from the beginning principals’ stories.**

Similarly to the stories of the experienced principal three common themes were identified.

**Professional learning.**

Each of the beginning principals had had a rich history of professional learning; both experienced-based and through seeking out opportunities to suit their individual needs. Tracey had held the professional learning portfolio in her previous role and therefore had sought relevant professional learning as a school leader for herself and her staff. She placed importance on preparation through experience, especially in an acting capacity, and she also highlighted the weight of a being able to develop leadership skills under the guidance of a mentor. Both Marie and Nathan agreed with these concepts: the opportunity to experience the role; and the need for an effective mentor. Nathan expanded though, by advocating that having
a coach was also a powerful professional learning opportunity. Marie commented “as leaders in a system it’s beholden on us to make sure we grow the people in our schools”.

Marie also commented that there must be some degree of knowledge that you need to become a principal, or at least some requirement to update knowledge, as otherwise registration requirements for principals were exactly the same as they are for teachers. Both Nathan and Tracey were of the opinion that there are some aspects of the Independent Public School suite of professional learning that should be rolled out to all principals. Nathan held a strong view that issues to do with compliance should not be left to chance and he cited finance as a key area that beginning principals may need more knowledge. He was forthright in stating that he believed there should be a compulsory induction for beginning principals. Tracey had undergone this training through the Independent Public School training and like Claire from the experienced principal group she believed that she was more confident in her current role as result of the training.

Tracey had experienced an “induction” professional learning opportunity when she had taken up a deputy position in the country. The timing of this induction was probably around the same time as Sarah, from the experienced principals, who undertook her induction program as a new principal twenty or so years ago. Tracey reported that there was a lot of advantage in the program; and a lot of benefits and positives outcomes “as you automatically formed little networks with people in the same position."

Planning.

It was apparent from the beginning principals' desire to understand the data and context for their new school that planning was an important entry frame for them. In Marie's case her inability to gain access to data about her school caused her stress, while Tracey had some data, her transition did not work as effectively as she would have liked due to short notice she had before taking up her new position. Tracey commented:
Because I came in here on the run, it was really quite difficult. I did get the school data so that I could do the school report and the review of the data analysis for the leadership team meeting. I was in the school Monday and I was expecting the leadership team meeting to be on the Friday and it wasn’t because it was a public holiday and they had decided to have the leadership meeting on the Thursday so they could have Friday free. And that really put me on the back foot. I was thrown in, probably luck that I had been there before, that was a term, but at least I knew the staff. That was a big advantage and they knew me. (T)

Nathan’s experience highlighted the advantage of having been in his school and knowing the data well. As outlined in his story, Nathan felt well prepared and positive about his plan for entry into his new principalship. He was able to clearly articulate to staff his plan for moving forward.

Support.
Nathan’s experience in terms of support was markedly different from Tracey’s. He said when responding to a question about the level of support coming into his new role:

Lots of support. Support from colleagues. Being a member of the an alliance was very useful to me, because that allowed support from colleagues who knew the context of the local area, support from the previous principal...but also outstanding support from my line manager who has got...two hundred and twenty schools. There’s not been a single time that I’ve contacted him and left a message that he hasn’t called me back within twenty-four hours, which is just outstanding... (N)

The alliance was a group of six secondary schools that were attempting to work collaboratively to offer broad curriculum choice to senior school students in each of the schools. The group met on a regular basis. Nathan’s experience was in stark
contrast to Tracey who says one of the things she thinks was missing from the principal's role is mentoring. She explained:

As an IPS, one of the biggest things I've noticed is that I have been cut loose. I have no alliance with my line manager. When I was at this school last time my previous line manager came out to visit me, which was nice. I appreciated that and I appreciated the chats and just the confirmation that things are going well, and have you thought about this? My line manager is the Director General, what is that? She has a meeting with us once a term. We have a meeting and I like those and I like meeting with the other principals and with her, but it's not that personal thing where you've got someone looking critically at your school. (T)

Marie on the other hand did not talk directly about support, but mentioned levels of support in terms of career planning and preparation for her entry into the principalship. She expounded:

Look I didn't ever expect to become a deputy. That was a bit accidental, so that was interesting but once I became a deputy I realised that I really like the job so I set about very clearly to learn everything I could about running a school. So I went to everything I could get my hands on and then when I thought that I might become a principal...and that really came about because of an idea that was put in my mind by a colleague who I was working with that kept saying to me, “You can do this. Why don’t you do this? Come on, come with me and we’ll go and do this stuff.” ...So having a mentor, and I don’t know if it’s a mentor in terms of teaching you to be a leader, or somebody to give you the idea that you can do things and to bolster your confidence. (M)

The experiences of each of the beginning principals seem random, or are dependent on personal choices about professional learning and career planning. There has been little system influence, or shaping of professional learning, career development or support on their development as a principal. Like the experienced principals in the previous group, who felt the system offered little support; the
beginning principals mapped their own promotional development, either through ambition or serendipity. It is interesting to note that Claire from the experienced principals, as an Independent Public School principal felt isolated and this sentiment is somewhat articulated by Tracey from the beginning principals of who stated she had been cut loose.

Discussion of the themes raised by each of the principals is included at the end of this chapter. Chapter six seeks to provide recommendations to the Department of Education based on the findings from the literature review and the recommendations made in each of the principal stories. Prior to the discussion being presented, my story, as a beginning principal is provided as a narrative self-study in the next section of this chapter. It is my aim to highlight the experiences of the six principals through reflection on my own experiences as a beginning principal, and to provide a richer backdrop to the themes that have arisen. My story will highlight the three key factors facing principals according to the literature, and align both with the recommendations of all the principals who participated in this study.

A Narrative Self-Study.

This section of Chapter five provides an additional interpretive lens through personal experience that complements the data collected in the principal stories. It is provided as a reflective perspective shaped by collecting the other stories.

My journey towards the principalship, while planned in terms of career goals in the second installment of my career, was not planned in terms of professional learning. I had been a teacher in the early 80s and decided to resign while expecting my first child. The public education system was undergoing a range of current reforms for the times and I was disillusioned with teaching. In 1998 a colleague asked me to return to teaching and from that point I sought and went after professional learning that was of interest to me. I felt in synch with messages of leadership from world-renowned experts such as Fullan (2001), Hargreaves (2003), and Robinson (2006) and I worked at putting their theory into practice. I took leadership roles afforded to
me seriously and I researched how I could improve my own leadership, while influencing my team to achieve better outcomes for students.

This thirst for improvement, however, was not embodied as a positive experience in the first installment of my teaching career. As a new graduate in 1982 I held robust values in regards to ensuring that students were engaged in learning and achieving the best outcomes they were capable of. As a new teacher I found the system frustrating and rather than meeting this as a challenge I chose to leave the profession in 1987. While my children were young I engaged in various forms of part-time employment, mostly outside education. When I had children myself my expectations of the education system were raised. On return to the public education I was even more motivated to ensure the best possible outcomes for all students. I was fortunate that when I returned to teaching I was able to work with passionate educators who modeled ways of meeting challenges head on. I also had the opportunity to work collaboratively with colleagues to achieve the very thing that underpins my work – students engaged in learning and learning to high levels. It was during this time that I decided that I needed to embark on achieving promotional positions so that I would have more influence over the direction of teaching and learning in schools. I took on a Team leader position with responsibility for developing a middle school team and for developing curriculum that reflected the principles of teaching, learning and assessment as outlined in the Curriculum Framework (1998). I subsequently won a level 3 Head of Team position with responsibility for English as well as the team, including staff and students. From here I moved to District Office as a Curriculum Improvement Officer for a short time before being offered an acting Deputy Principal position. While deputy, I joined my professional association (WASSEA) and embarked on further professional learning opportunities that would enhance my work.

In 2009 I took up a position as a project manager in the now defunct Western Australian Leadership Centre, described in more detail in the introduction (Chapter one). My substantive position was as a deputy principal in a metropolitan secondary school. I was seconded from the deputy position to the Leadership
Centre where my main portfolio was leadership development for secondary school leaders. In this capacity I worked with the Principal Consultant and a second Project Manager to identify professional learning needs for secondary school leaders. I was tasked with developing suitable professional learning opportunities. I enjoyed this work but the complexity of it was very different to working in a school environment. During the secondment I formed a view that the future of professional learning for school leaders could be influenced by the school leaders themselves. This view was informed by my work as conference convener in the Western Australian Secondary Executives Association, which had afforded me the opportunity to attend a range of professional learning experiences led by academics that challenged my thinking about leadership and the place of theory and practice in developing such learning. Who decided, how, and what professional learning, if any, was appropriate for aspiring deputies and principals?

It was during this time that I decided to pursue further study. Initially I thought I would complete a Masters of Education through course work, but following completion of the Research Methods unit and the influence of my work in the Leadership Centre, I set about pursuing research into the professional learning needs of school principals.

Shortly after commencing my research I was invited to take up the position of acting principal at medium sized metropolitan secondary school for the beginning of term three, 2010. As a result of my work in the Leadership Centre and through delivery of all professional learning modules on offer through the centre I felt well positioned to take up this new role. I was familiar with the operations of a school, having had a previous principal who delegated responsibility and also allowed me some autonomy when leading school processes while still deputy. The Expert Review Group (referred to in detail in chapter two) report that was about to be tabled in the school provided me with a firm framework to commence my work. The school had recently undergone an Expert Review. The report included prescribed improvement strategies that covered a range of areas that required improvement, including: leadership; teaching and learning; operational processes; and management of school resources. The tabling of the report and the planning
processes in school that I developed, in turn influenced the direction of my research. The research question I been contemplating before taking up this position was centered on planning before entering a school. The brief literature review that I had undertaken had also revealed the concept of entry planning. While I transitioned into the complex role of acting principal in an ERG school context, my research was placed on hold until I had more time to refocus and continue. However, I took the idea of entry planning seriously and applied the concept to the development of an initial plan that addressed the requirements of the ERG report.

Some of the initial steps, in terms of planning on entry to my school:

- Tabling the report at an extraordinary staff association meeting and collecting staff feedback as an 'initial response'.
- Developing and implementing a plan to address the prescribed improvement strategies.
- Speaking with the entire leadership team, including all leadership levels, to collect their response to the review process and to develop a wish list.
- Identifying that the most pressing need which was to develop a Behaviour Management Plan that also identified and clarified the roles of the staff involved in the BMIS (Behaviour Management in Schools) process. This was in line with the work of Robinson (2006) that indicated a key factor on creating a positive effect size for school improvement was creating and maintaining a safe and orderly learning environment.
- Engaging the services of a consultant from DoE who assisted in:
  - Raising awareness of whole school behaviour processes
  - Facilitated several meetings to establish a policy/plan
  - Facilitated a review process of student services roles.

As a result of this process, I had identified that the most pressing issue was to establish an environment of order in terms of behaviour and how it was managed in the school. I was able to workshop a draft Behaviour Management Plan with the
whole staff at the beginning of term four, 2010. I enlisted the support of a consultant and with her assistance a behaviour management committee established. I was able to offer key staff a place in the Classroom Management Strategies (CMS) professional learning to support positive behaviour management practice and that complemented their understanding of a shared approach to behaviour management.

Early in term four 2010, I successfully excluded a student from the school due to the extreme nature of his behaviour. This process highlighted a need for better records management and these processes have improved as a result. At the same time as improving behaviour management processes, I introduced the notion of school improvement and accountability that was a precursor to school planning processes occurring during the term. I have described the process of addressing the behaviour management processes in some detail to shed some light on the complexity of the work I was undertaking. It is important to remember that this was only one aspect of the review that needed to be addressed and I was facing high expectations from the whole community to “turn the school around”.

The ERG report included prescribed improvement strategies (PIS) or mandated improvement strategies that needed to be planned for and successfully implemented during a 24-month period. Identified in the PIS was the need to develop the instructional, strategic and operational capacity of the executive. This was also apparent at the level 3 leadership team level, which was the senior leadership team. In the first term of my appointment I established a partnership the Institute of Professional Learning to deliver leadership-focused workshops to this group. These workshops raised knowledge and awareness of leadership skills, competencies and knowledge and explored instructional leadership in some depth.

The importance of this work, for me, was that as a beginning principal I had a irreplaceable opportunity to plan my entry into the school. The Expert Review Group had thoroughly investigated the schools processes and operations and using this information, I was able to plan how I was going to go about establishing
myself in this environment; including the staff, students and wider school community in plans for improvement.

Further to the initial steps outlined in preceding paragraphs, I founded focus groups; each led by a member of the senior leadership team. These groups were responsible for deeply analysing their negotiated prescribed improvement strategy and tasked with creating a plan to ensure that the strategy would be successful within the given time frame. Prior to this, as principal, I was required to report progress to the ERG at six weeks and then 3 months. At the six-month milestone two members of the ERG returned to the school to complete analysis of the plans that should have been developed to address each of the prescribed improvement strategies. Each of the leaders from the focus groups presented their plans, based on a template that I had provided. The school received approval for the planning processes that were now embedded in the work of the school. Staff were also provided with numerous opportunities to provide feedback regarding the progress being made towards improvement and this feedback then informed further planning processes.

A further important point of this work was that there were multiple layers of planning that were needed in order for my transition into the principalship to be successful. I was fortunate that the ERG had provided the research for my Entry Plan and I was also well-off in terms of planning skill and was able to lead processes as a result of my previous roles and also my brief literature review in preparing my research question, within the school to ensure that all community members were included and accountable. I had had shorts stints of acting principal roles in previous years and this combined with my work as project manager provided me with a good grounding in terms of preparation for my first principalship, especially in terms of planning. I came the role with a strong belief that planning and goal setting would assist in either a change process, a school improvement plan, or in transitioning to the new role. While the individual staff responses to the report were sometimes challenging, having developed a plan through consultation with staff meant the challenges could always be overcome.
The planning that took place was supported by the milestone stages set out by the review process.

In the beginning, in my new role as principal, I found the role quite isolating. There were new structures within the Department and it was hard to pick up the phone to ask a colleague comparative questions, or simply ask advice. Again, I felt fortunate that my then District Director visited me regularly and was only a phone call away. In late 2011 the education districts in Western Australia were reorganised into regions. Regional Executive Directors were appointed to oversee what had now become very large regional education settings. District Directors no longer exist. I was also fortunate that my professional network gave me links to colleagues who were there to listen. A previous principal was also a mentor. This principal provided support whenever I needed it. The notion of networking was something I was not always comfortable with, keeping smaller networks in the past. Involvement in my professional association and the work I undertook at the Leadership Centre were paramount in my network development.

Further to this, as the Western Australian Education system was reorganised in 2011, first into regions and then into networks within regions; as well as a shift away from “support from the centre”; there was significant organisational change for schools and for school principals. The reforms that have influenced this change are outlined in detail in the beginning chapters. The Western Australian Department of Education (DoE) rolled accountability measures through the ERG and autonomy through IPS, thereby devolving from the DoE as the business centre for public education. There was little research or dissemination of the reasons why this change was happening. It seemed as though a top down decision had been made and school leaders were required to make it work. These changes seemed to signal that there was a lack of support for principals and I wondered if other principals felt the same about needing to know the background information so that they could adequately understand, and therefore lead the changes required of them. Like the principals who participated in this study, I sought professional learning opportunities to enhance my practice. I embarked on a journey to find out
why the centre was moving towards this model and what impact this would have on me. I was able to join a study tour to the United Kingdom in April 2012 that posed the question: “What are we learning about varieties of network models in educational settings?” Proslmeyr (2012) wrote:

There is a commonly held view now that as a direct result of the move to regionalisation, and the restructure of the systems’ support for schools, there has been a significant reduction in access to quality professional learning for school leadership. There is also a commonly held view that responsibility for sourcing appropriate professional learning for school leadership has fallen squarely upon the shoulders of the networks and network principals. (p. 38)

The Western Australian Primary Principals Association (WAPPA) led the study tour. Breen (2012) WAPPA president wrote in the introduction to the study guide for the tour:

Networked learning communities are purposefully led social entities that are characterised by a commitment to quality, rigour and focus on outcomes. They are also an effective ease of supporting innovation in times of change. In education, networked learning communities promote the dissemination of good practice; enhance the professional development of teachers, support capacity building in schools, mediate between centralized and decentralized structures, and assist in the process of restructuring and re-culturing educational organisational systems. (p. 6)

Breen continued:

The definition above clearly identifies learning in networks and the concept of knowledge creation; joint practice development and knowledge transfer as central to this model. Consequently many countries around the world have adopted at the policy level the concept of networks as a new model for leading and managing schools. The public school education system in WA is no exception in its declared intent. (p. 6)
The study tour was timely for me as it provided a backdrop of reasons why the system was moving in this structural direction and also enabled me to develop new networks of colleagues outside my usual sphere. It also emphasised my belief that professional learning and preparation for principals, especially beginning principals, was inadequate. Whilst on tour with my primary colleagues I had opportunity to explain the purpose of my research and I was overwhelmingly met with requests to ‘interview me’. During 2012 I was able to conduct interviews of six secondary principals.

In the preceding paragraphs I have explained my recent past and this elucidates three strong influences on my entry into the principalship: my role as project manager in the Leadership Centre with responsibility for developing secondary leadership professional learning; the Expert Review Group report tabled as I commenced as acting principal; and the restructure of the Western Australian public education system. In terms my research these influences returned me to the question I posed at the start of this journey: What level of preparation is undertaken by a beginning principal and to what extent can entry planning assist in preparation for the principalship?

Now, as principal I see the value of developing a professional learning culture, rather than a professional development regime, within a school and I believe it is incumbent on me to be developing leaders for the future and do this by modeling being a lifelong learner, embedding a coaching model for performance and encouraging staff to “have a go”. I still seek out professional learning that will enhance my performance and the most recent opportunity for this has been the Local Leadership suite of professional learning offered through AITSL. This professional learning, while very expensive has afforded me the opportunity to collect feedback from my line manager and staff about my leadership. Course costs amount to approximately $3,000. This does not include travel and accommodation costs to Melbourne where the professional learning is held. There are additional University fees payable to Melbourne University in order to complete 122
a Professional Certificate in Instructional Leadership. I have included this detail as it is a signal of the importance of appropriate funding for professional learning for principals and it may be an area that requires further investigation in future studies. Darling-Hammond et al refer to funding sources as an important indicator of successful preparation programs (2010). Engaging in this program also included travel to and from Melbourne four times throughout the year, as the course must be completed through face-to-face contact. The program has provided me the opportunity to work with esteemed educators such as Hattie and Dinham through study towards a professional certificate. I have been allocated a learning broker, or mentor, and I am part of a community of interest, or network, group. The preceding elements are factors that the research, as described in the literature review of this study, suggests partly contribute to effective preparation for the principalship.

I have concerns about the approach to leadership learning and principal preparation that is offered to aspiring school leaders in Western Australia. The Institute for Professional Learning offers License for Leadership; Leading Professional Learning Communities; Executive Leadership; and the Masters of School Leadership. How are these programs coordinated so that they emanate what the research says makes an effective preparation program? And on the other hand, how do we ensure that all principals have the necessary knowledge and skill to manage all the operational and compliance issues that help a school to function effectively?

Discussion
It is evident from the data that the three key themes: professional learning, support, and planning can be further divided into categories of principal preparation, according to analysis of recent literature. For this reason principal preparation needs to be defined. Huber (2013) indicates that there is wide-ranging international agreement about the professionalization of school leadership and this is being played out through application of standards, and in some cases certification processes. He argues “professional development (PD) plays an important part in the professionalization of aspiring and established school leaders” (p.528).
Schleicher, whose influence as Deputy Director for Education and Skills with the OECD, is far reaching on the international stage, supports Huber’s argument.

Huber uses the term (continuous) professional development or CPD, which is an expression used by other professions to describe an ongoing commitment to professional learning. Elmore cited in Black (2000) suggests effective principal development "... should provide principals with substantive research on teaching and learning, take place in the principal's home school, focus on solving real problems, and include networks of principals who serve as ‘critical friends’" (Black, 2000, p. 48). There appears to be some interchangeability of the terms professional development and professional learning in the literature. The United States National Staff Development Council defines PD as “a comprehensive sustained and intensive approach to improving teachers and principals effectiveness in raising student achievement.” (NSDC, 2011, PD Definition, para. 3). For the purposes of this discussion professional development, professional learning and principal preparation are terms that all apply, interchangeably, to preparing for school leadership. Huber’s research into principal preparation is expansive and in his most recent publication he indicates that several international trends can be identified:

During the last decades, formats and learning approaches besides the traditional ‘course formats’ have been developed and tried out in the PD of school leaders in many countries (Huber, 2004, 2010a, 2010b). In addition to the cognitive and theoretical ways of learning (lectures and self-study), which primarily serve to impart information, there are alternative approaches to learning in PD such as cooperative and communicative process-oriented approaches (for example, group work or project work), which primarily serve to develop a situational understanding and skills and abilities to apply acquired knowledge. Also, reflexive methods (for example, self-assessment and feedback as well as supervision/mentoring/coaching) are increasingly used to better link program aims to participants’ needs, as argued above. Particularly, the use of these approaches in combination, taking
advantage of their complementary functions, can also be observed (Huber 2004, 2010a, 2010b). (p. 528)

He continues by outlining a four-phase program that is offered in some states of Germany. Huber describes the program as “modularized” and each of the phases addresses a stage of principal or school leader development: phase 1 being orientation for teachers interested in school leadership; phase 2 is the preparation program for aspiring school leaders; phase 3 is the induction for newly appointed school leaders; and phase 4 includes a variety of programs offered to experienced school leaders. (Huber, 2013, p.528)

Similarly, Webber and Scott (2013) found:

Principal preparation is essential for good leadership in schools. However, existing preparation experiences actually may promote conceptualizations of leadership that lack currency and warrant scrutiny. This is one observation that emerged from the International Study of Principal Preparation (ISPP) (http://www.ucalgary.ca/ispp/), a study conducted in 14 countries: Australia, Canada, China, England, Germany, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, New Zealand, Scotland, South Africa, Tanzania, Turkey, and the United States. The ISPP research team examined principal preparation opportunities available to aspiring principals, explored their early-career challenges and successes, and surveyed samples of novice principals in an effort to understand better the types of pre-appointment experiences that support success as a new principal. (p. 95)

It is evident that there is a growing body of research (Kuhn 2012, Clarke and Wildy 2013, Huber 2013, Weber and Scott, 2013 and Wilson and Xue, 2013) that is trying to understand the experiences of beginning school principals, and principals in general, in terms of preparation and professional learning in order to support the quest for effective school leadership internationally (Schleicher, 2013). A recent study conducted in China introduces paradigms of learning that may be practiced by principals at different stages of their development. Wilson and Xue (2013) depict
their work as a small-scale study that investigates key policy documents and uses
semi-structured interviews of ten school leaders to develop an understanding of the
effectiveness of professional development in the Fujian Province. They articulate
three categories of description for professional development: formal learning,
informal learning and the influence of systemic contextual factors, see Table 6 (p.
129). Formal learning is described as the system mandated requirements while
informal learning is gained through observation, networking, mentoring, coaching
and related activities. Wilson and Xue provide a further layer of detail by outlining
three paradigms, which were based on “priori assumptions about authentic
leadership learning and its practical application arising from a comprehensive
review of international adult (especially professional) learning theory” (p. 801).
They caution using these paradigms to describe a Western context, as the
translation is recent. However, the literature reports similar paradigms identified
some years ago (Reeves, Ford, Casteel and Lynas, 1998). Wilson and Xue identify
situational learning, expansive learning and critical, or scholarly, reflection as the
broad three areas of effect. They define situational learning as “learning by doing”
and provide examples such as “observation, coaching, scaffolding, modeling,
action learning sets, and opportunities for reflection on practice” (p. 801).
Expansive learning is autonomous or self-determined and an example is provided
where a collaborative solution to a problem is found. It is seen as a collective
activity.

Wilson and Xue espouse, “thus, from a workplace perspective, expansive learning
requires an integration of both personal and organizational development (Fuller
and Unwin, 2004), a crucial consideration in considering the extent to which
professional learning impacts on leadership practice and school improvement” (p.
801). The third paradigm according to Wilson and Xue is the need to focus on
developing the critical thinking, or scholarly reflection, of school leaders which has
the purpose of developing better leaders, not only through reflection of their own
practice but also through critical review of system policy contexts. They confirm,
“Such learning requires both a grasp of theory and its application through praxis”
(p. 801).
Table 6

Characteristics of professional learning according to the literature (Wilson and Xue, 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Formal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal or self-directed</td>
<td>System designed and delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prescribed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge Transmission Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational</td>
<td>Top Down Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning by Doing</td>
<td>Pre-service training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>In-service training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>Learning through theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>Learning through practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaffolding</td>
<td>Learning implications of a centrally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>controlled agenda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expansive
- Self determined and collaborative
- Involves communities of practice
- Acquires mastery over shared problems

Critical or scholarly reflection
- Theory into practice
- Reflection on self-actions
- Critical reflection on policy contexts for leadership practice

Desirable Learning
- School Visits
- Experienced principal involvement
- Workshops based on school case studies
The six principals interviewed for this study referred to aspects of these broad areas and used the language of informal and formal learning. It is clear from the literature that formal learning refers to the mandated, or system directed professional learning, while informal learning captures the preferences of the individual. It is also clear from the six principal stories told in this study that there are interconnected gaps and overlaps of both informal and formal professional learning opportunities. Like their Chinese counterparts, the Western Australian (WA) principals believe that the system is missing the opportunity to “formally implement informal learning opportunities” (p. 813). A summary of the WA principals’ experiences and their recommendations is included in Table 7, which follows:

Table 7
Secondary principals’ perceptions of their professional learning experiences and recommendations to enhance preparation for the principalship in Western Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>Experiential</td>
<td>Leadership Centre Modules</td>
<td>The Department in partnership with universities provide better preparation programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-directed</td>
<td>IPS Training</td>
<td>Work shadowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project Management</td>
<td></td>
<td>Collegiate groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whole school planning opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coaching – both developing coaching skills and the opportunity to be coached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community of practice – through cluster of schools</td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning leadership theory and the opportunity to practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional reading</td>
<td></td>
<td>Training in planning – embedding teaching and learning to whole school planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Activity Details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>Experiential</td>
<td>Work Shadowing with opportunity for rural and remote experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-directed</td>
<td>Professional associations work in partnership with the Department and other providers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Associations</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project management</td>
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<td>Self-reflection – the impact of critical theory and concept of deconstruction</td>
<td>Professional learning that encompasses: - The law according to the department - Knowing thyself and understanding your own history - Dealing with difficult people</td>
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<td>SSTUWA involvement</td>
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<td>Marie</td>
<td>Experiential</td>
<td>IPS training (x2) Improve the appointment process</td>
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<td>Self-directed</td>
<td>Work shadowing, including rural and remote opportunities</td>
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<td>Professional Association</td>
<td>Design and create more professional learning opportunities for aspirant and beginning school principals</td>
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<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>Review system imperatives in terms of ‘necessary’ professional learning</td>
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Table 7 confirms the principals' collective opinion that formal professional learning or principal preparation in WA is inadequate. Their recommendations include a range of both informal and formal opportunities that include a balance of situational, expansive and reflective learning. Principal preparation was one of three central issues identified by the literature in the investigation of the level of preparation undertaken by secondary school principals for their role in the WA...
public education sector. Professional learning was one of the themes identified through the principal stories.

The second theme that was evident throughout the principal stories was support. Recommendations from the principals regarding supports such as mentoring, coaching and networking have already been mentioned as components of informal learning that could be implemented, or formalized, by the system. Support in terms of career planning for each of the principals was experience based and lacked a perceived coordinated approach to succession planning by the Department of Education. Guidance and leadership development experienced by each of the principals was somewhat dependent on the leaders with whom they worked and interacted. Taylor (2005) proposes that a strategic approach to identify and develop potential school leaders is needed both at the system and the school level. Wilson (2009) provides the following scenario:

Wanted: Secondary school principal for a 900-student school in an urban setting. You must be able to meet state certification requirements. Your responsibilities include: supervising a staff of 100, of which 25 percent are new teachers; managing a school budget; working with various stakeholders including teachers, parents, students, community members, central office staff, school board members, social services and the police department; and assisting the superintendent and school board in passing a major referendum. Other duties include serving on various committees such as: teacher negotiations, district improvement and curriculum adoption. And, by the way, the school has a performance rating of "in need of improvement". (p. 24)

While this an American scenario it aligns with the reported experiences of Western Australian principals and also with the literature. Wilson reports that in past such scenarios would see numbers of up to 75 applicants applying for the position. As seems to be the case in WA, only a handful of applicants are now applying. Wilson outlines a comprehensive program for succession planning in Delaware and explains how different districts within the state developed their own succession
models. She indicates that the successful models held a rigorous identification process; sought a commitment from participants to ongoing training over a two-year period; provided opportunities for up to 12 months of internship; and reviewed hiring policies. At the same she exposes the shortfall for many programs as a lack of human and financial resources.

If the WA Department of Education is to develop a strategic coordinated approach to succession planning there are further considerations apart from resources. Bower (2007) cogitates “if leaders need a decade to develop and need to take the helm with a decade of service still ahead of them, they need to be identified by the time they are 30” (p. 96). Bower writes from a business perspective and states, “it takes world-class quality and cost control for any company to stay in the game. It takes innovation to sustain industry leadership” (p. 96). Lamoureux (2009) claims that succession management, or planning, reduces leadership gaps and enables talent to develop the skills for future roles. As identified through the New York City Aspiring Principal Program career progression to principalship is no longer linear. At the same time Schleicher (2013) purports that a standards framework allows for talent identification that does not lock leaders into having to complete years of experience before progressing. He also cautioned that choosing the wrong principal could lead to thirty years of bad leadership. Lamoureux suggest the reasons for people being promoted into leadership positions for which they are not well-matched include: “a underdeveloped or non-existent leadership strategy; lack of a leadership model; inability to be honest, authentic and transparent with high-performers; and no common definition of high potential and high performer” (p. 18). Interestingly, Sarah indicated that she did not believe the department could analyse its own value position in relation to professional learning and her opinion is supported by Lamoureux’s third point, though this is referenced to succession planning.

The final theme identified through the principal stories was planning which has been central to this study. All principals indicated they knew about planning and most were influenced by an instructional stand-point where they wanted to access
data to plan their entry into their school. Sarah indicated that a planning process came to her later in her career and this was through the IDEAS process already mentioned in her story. Nathan was heavily influenced by the data analysis provided through the ERG process, and both Claire and Eric had experienced project management roles, which required high levels of planning. The case for entry planning has been put, but to reiterate: the literature and the principals agree that entry planning has a significant impact on preparation for the principalship.

The key findings from the research, and the recommendations made by the principals whose stories are included in this chapter, are included in chapter six. The chapter provides discussion around the findings and presents recommendations to the system for secondary principal preparation programs in the public school system in Western Australia.
Chapter 6: MAIN FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS

In undertaking this study I set out to investigate the level of principal preparation undertaken by new and experienced principals for their role. My purpose was also to explore to what extent entry planning could assist in preparation for the principalship. While the research question focused on entry planning, underpinning this were a series of questions that influenced how the study was shaped and these are referred to in my concluding remarks:

i. Would others be able to replicate my experience?
ii. In fact, has my experience in the design and delivery of professional learning enhanced my ability to plan my entry into the principalship and therefore contributed to success?
iii. Is it possible to define curriculum that would meet the requirements as agreed in the literature?
iv. What does the research say beginning principals should do, versus what they actually do?
v. What role can professional associations take?

The study found that principal preparation in the public sector in Western Australia is ad hoc, and often developed at the personal level. Through the narrative inquiry and self-study of this research, confirmation of entry planning as an effective component of preparation for beginning secondary principals in Western Australia can be made.

Main Findings

Three interrelated areas were identified in the literature as impacting beginning school principals; principal preparation, a predicted shortage of principals entering the profession and the expectations facing new leaders. The latter point first: the rather detailed introduction to this thesis is an attempt to capture the complex educational reform agenda that is occurring on an international, national and state level. Along with the usual expectations facing school principals, the reform agenda is increasing the level of complexity that principals face in their work, as well as increasing the expectations from the community in terms of their leadership. The
premise that quality leadership influences quality teaching (Hattie, 2008, and Robinson, 2008) reinforces the need for quality professional learning for principals and according to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium's "Proposition for Quality Professional Development of School Leaders" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2000):

quality professional development: validates teaching and learning as the central activities of the school; engages all school leaders in well-planned, integrated, career-long learning to improve student achievement; promotes collaboration to achieve organizational goals while meeting individual needs; models effective learning processes; and incorporates measures of accountability that direct attention to valued learning outcomes. (p. 9)

Therefore, in concert with the perceptions of the six principals, and the literature, it is possible to conclude that quality professional learning, or principal preparation, will assist in minimizing or diminishing the complexity of the work undertaken by the school principal, including principals embarking on their first principalship. The themes identified through the principal stories; professional learning, planning and support can be addressed within preparation and ongoing programs that include formal implementation of both formal and informal learning opportunities.

The second issue raised in the literature as significant is the predicted shortage of principals joining the profession. Walker and Qian (2006) suggest that most principals spring from the ranks of teachers. Therefore if there is a shortage of teachers, one can assume that there will be a shortage of principals. Chapter two contains specific detail about this issue, which is a worldwide trend, not just an issue relevant to Western Australia. Predicted WA workforce trends published by the Department of Education (2008) concur that there will be an impact to towards the mid to late part of this decade. As recently as November 2013 The Sunday Times newspaper reported that there has been a shift in the numbers of teachers retiring from the profession, and a decline in the number of teachers under 30 leaving the profession. Sharyn O'Neill, the Director General refers to the drop in
numbers of young teachers leaving the system and indicates that “additional support and mentoring” provided to beginning teachers has had an impact (The Sunday Times, *More Stay to Teach*, 10 November, 2013). From personal contact (L. Bothams, personal communication, July, 2013) I am aware that mentoring is now being offered through the department to principals in the first three years of their first principalship. As a recipient of this service, I can say that it is helpful and also very insightful. As indicated by both the principal stories and the literature, mentoring and coaching are both perceived as effective support mechanisms for beginning principals and principals in general.

If coaching and mentoring, and formal opportunities for networking are seen as mechanisms of support for principals, it would make sense that the system, as in the case for graduate teachers (“Institute for Professional Learning, Graduate Teachers”, 2013) ensures that these are available for principals. At the same time, as Marie suggests, “as leaders in a system it’s beholden on us to make sure that we grow the people in our schools...the system needs to make sure that leaders build the capacity”. This is an example where the system is missing the opportunity to formally implement informal learning opportunities (Wilson and Xue, 2013). Another point to consider from the literature included in chapter two is the issue that in some countries where there is an abundance of applicants for the principalship, this does not necessarily equate to quality. Therefore it would seem imperative that the system itself takes a greater role in the preparation for principals within the system. It is also important to consider the influence of government policy and interest in school leadership as factor in principal preparation. In Australia we have seen this played out through the inception of AITSL, the Principal Standard, and now the concerted fast moving effort from the Principals Australia Institute to take ownership of the certification process (http://www.pai.edu.au/).

Before discussing to what extent entry planning can assist preparation for the principalship some concluding remarks are needed in regards to the three issues identified as shaping this research; principal preparation being the third issue
highlighted. Essentially, it is evident from the literature, the principal stories and the preceding discussion that effective principal preparation and ongoing principal professional learning contributes to a greater professionalization of school leaders (Huber, 2013), which in turn contributes to the ability to minimize the complexity of the role thereby diminishing also, the expectations faced by principals. Likewise, it is evident that emphasis on systems developing formal implementation of informal learning opportunities, such as coaching, mentoring and networking, can have a positive impact on reducing expected shortages in the profession. While only one example of this is reported in the Western Australian context (Phillips, 2013), and this has a focus on stemming the exit of young graduates from teaching, it is significant for the principalship as well.

So, to what extent can entry planning assist the principalship? Throughout the literature there is reference to the need for principals to be strategic (Hopkins, 2009, Caldwell, 2006 and Schleicher, 2013). There is emphasis on quality leadership to improve student achievement (Schleicher, 2013, Hattie, 2008, Robinson, 2008, Masters, 2010, Stoll, 2000, Fullan, 2008, Dufour, Dufour & Eaker, 2009 and Dinham 2008) and it is reported that effective principals can have the greatest effect size on teachers who in turn, outside the student themselves, have the biggest effect size on student achievement (Hattie, 2008). The literature surrounding entry planning suggests that in the United States at least this preparation for entry into the principalship has been around for some time (Chambers, 1983) and is still viewed as a useful tool, though in previous iterations district superintendents primarily used the planning method. Examples of entry plans can be found online and often they are published so that school communities can be aware of the principal’s plan on entry to their new school (A. Ficklin, personal communication, 2013). Added to this, three out of the six principals indicated in their stories that effective planning had been useful to them in the transition to the principalship. In particular, Nathan highlighted how his experiences as a member of an Expert Review Group panel had influenced his understanding of using data to set plans for improvement. He also emphasised his own plan for entering his new school as beginning school principal. While he may not have had
any formal training in planning processes he nonetheless was able to mimic the stages of entry planning purported to assist entry in the new school, or context. Olsen (2007) reports that planning is a teachable skill. Two of the six principals whose stories are presented in chapter five indicated that their planning was stymied because they were unable to access all the information they required to start their planning prior to entering their schools as beginning principals. My own experience told as a narrative self-study at the end of chapter five leads me to believe that planning prior to entering a school as a new principal is a precursor to success. Therefore, entry planning has a significant effect in assisting preparation for the principalship.

**Main Findings.**
This study has produced three main findings: effective principal preparation can reduce the perceived complexity of the role and therefore minimize the expectations experienced by the beginning school principal; formal implementation of informal learning opportunities such as mentoring, coaching and networking can reduce the drift from the profession; and that entry planning has a significant effect in assisting in preparation for the principalship. Based on these findings and the recommendations made by the principals, it is possible to identify recommendations that should be implemented by the Western Australian Department of Education.

**Principal Recommendations**
There are several areas of commonality that are evident in the principal stories, which also includes my story. Beginning principals’ perspectives must be taken into consideration by the system. According to the principals interviewed for this study, principal preparation programs for secondary school principals in the Western Australian Department of Education should include the following:
Targeted Recruitment: and review of the application and appointment process should be undertaken.
The principals each had different experience in regards to the appointment process and it was evident that there is a lack of satisfaction with the current processes employed by the Department of Education. For two principals the timing of their actual appointment proved problematic for their entry into the principalship. Given Schleicher's (2013) view that in the future school leaders may be appointed on merit rather than seniority due to a lack of supply, it may be timely to conduct a review of the application and appointment process. It would be appropriate that the profession is involved in such a review. If, as the research suggests, applicants to position of principal fail to apply, or candidates without the necessary attributes, qualities and skills apply, a strategic approach to recruitment is required in order to ensure capacity building through appropriate preparation, professional learning and support. A strategic approach is also needed to ensure succession planning for the future.

Preparation programs should be developed and offered to aspiring, developing and experienced school leaders.
There was strong evidence from the principals and the literature that exploration of notions of leadership through the dual lens of theory and practice is needed. This should include university-based theory and school based practice in order to experience the real world examples first hand. It is acknowledges that a Master's program is offered through partnership with the Department and a local university. Preparation programs should be extended to all aspiring and beginning principals. The literature supports the development of scholarly reflection that encourages critical reflection on policy contexts in which the leadership responsibility is exercised (Wilson and Xue, 2013).
Principal preparation should include professional learning that focuses on effective planning processes.
Professional learning that centres on effective planning, especially for the beginning principal should be developed as part of a principal preparation program. This would include use of data, and what data to use, as well as setting goals, targets, actions and review strategies and could be framed as Entry Planning. This training may also include a focus on research and technology with an emphasis on school improvement through student achievement.

Formal opportunities for aspiring, developing and experienced principals should be offered.
Opportunities to work in roles outside the normal school environment were seen as having a positive impact on profession growth. For example, project management was a common denominator for several principals in this study. One principal also suggested working in a different country, but working in a different school for a period of time could facilitate the experience of working in a new setting and this leads to the next point. These suggestions require flexible approaches from the Department: one to support aspiring principals and principals who find opportunities to work elsewhere; and two in brokering such opportunities.

Formal opportunities to work-shadow practicing school leaders in a variety of settings should be facilitated.
Opportunities to work-shadow school leaders in a variety of settings was seen by the principals as highly desirable. This included being able to work-shadow in rural and remote areas in order to gain experience in a supportive way in these environments. Offering work-shadowing requires a coordinated approach from the centre, perhaps in partnership with the professions. Identification of participants as well places to work shadow and then a matching process would need to be implemented.
Opportunities to participate in the Expert Review process should continue to be offered to aspiring, developing and experienced principals.

Opportunities to participate in the Expert Review Group were seen as a valuable professional learning opportunity by at least one principal that indicated that the process of review developed his understanding of the data sets used in schools. Being able to decide which data sets will be used in analysis, as well as being able to analyse the data for school improvement or to monitor effectiveness; and being able to set goals and targets are key planning skills that can assist the beginning school leader transition into their new role.

Processes to formalize collegiate support should be implemented.

Formalised mentoring, coaching and networking programs should be developed to ensure that all aspirant and beginning principals have these supports. The current approach is randomised as it is dependent on school leaders choosing to be mentored or coached. A systematic way of identifying future potential leaders and ensuring that they have opportunity to develop under the guidance of current leaders must be developed.

A compulsory induction program should be introduced for all beginning principals.

Compulsory induction for new school principals that includes training around issues of compliance should be implemented. The original independent public school suite of professional learning may cover many of the perceived compliance requirements.

Further incentives for principals need to be investigated.

One principal compared the incentives offered to principals in the private education sector with those available to principals in the public sector. Some principals considered the opportunity to participate in sabbaticals would show recognition of their service. These were seen as a possible
compensatory tool for long hours, as well as a celebration of the work of principals. Sabbaticals would afford principals time to refine, re-energize and enhance their leadership, but also the profile of leadership within the system.

Sarah was the only principal who mentioned affordability when talking about the Department completing a self-analysis of its professional learning requirements. There is no doubt that funding the initiatives outlined above would be challenging. However, if the department is to align with what the research overwhelmingly asserts is best practice in principal preparation a re-think of how such preparation programs are designed and delivered in Western Australia is required.

The literature is compelling in outlining the elements of exemplary principal preparation programs and two very convincing bodies of work are espoused by Schleicher through his work with PISA, and through the works of Darling-Hammond et al. Schleicher states, “If you can’t define a good principal (through a standards or leadership framework), you can’t get a good principal.” (2013) He articulates a set of factors that support the development of quality leadership:

- Targeted recruitment
- Training for what matters most (instructional leadership)
- Mentoring
- Networking
- Training programs in line with professional standards
- Emphasis on instructional standards
- A combination of theory and practice

He highlights the Australian Professional Standard for Principals as an essential tool for developing effective leadership. The AITSL standard is discussed in detail in chapter one. As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe and Orr (2010) identified seven common components of exemplary programs.
In comparing these elements with the principal recommendations articulated in this chapter, it is clear that there is much alignment. Therefore, combining the findings from the literature, the main findings of the study and principal recommendations the following are system imperatives:

Formalised mentoring and coaching programs should be offered to support aspiring, beginning and in-service principals. Such programs could be developed through partnership with the Department, the Institute and the professional associations and/or a university partner.

Work-shadowing and/or internship programs should be developed for aspiring school leaders. There are financial implications for such programs and it will be necessary to be innovative in seeking appropriate funding to support such a program. In the United States, foundation grants, like those from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, sometimes supplement state and national funding (Holden, 2011).

Independent Public School training should be rolled out to school principals, perhaps as a compulsory induction to the compliance issues facing school leadership.

Recruitment and succession practices need to be reviewed, both for appointing principals and for identifying aspirant school leaders.

The Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association must take a more active role in partnering with the Department and the Institute in determining professional learning programs and providing access to effective preparation for future school principals. The association could also be more involved in determining the entry processes to the profession (R. Elmore, personal communication, 2013).
These system imperatives could provide the vehicle for further study into preparation for the principalship in Western Australia. Further analysis of recent literature in this field supports the case for deepening professional learning for school leaders, and as indicated earlier, as a main finding, effective principal preparation minimises the perception of complexity around the role.

**Conclusion**

With careful planning from stakeholders involved in providing secondary principal preparation for beginning principals in Western Australia, including the Department, universities, the Institute for Professional Learning, principals and principal associations my experience can not only be replicated, it can be improved upon. Having had experience in the design and delivery of professional learning provided me an advantage as I entered my first principalship as I had a heightened awareness of planning processes. However, the research undertaken by the Expert Review Group that mandated prescribed improvement strategies also armed me with an advantage at this early stage of principalship, as it provided a rich database from which I could plan. Both the literature and the principals who participated in this study agree that it is possible to define the curriculum to effectively prepare school leaders for the principalship, and professional associations should take a key role in the development of preparation programs. However, it is incumbent on the system to generate a coordinated approach to such programs so that secondary school principals in the Western Australian public sector attain and sustain world class quality.

**Opportunities for Further Study**

Grace (1995) and Gronn (2003) cited in Clarke and Wildy (2013) suggest the merit of promoting research into the preparation for the principalship is evidenced by the increasing complexity of the role of school principals. In considering this study and how it may further influence professional learning and preparation for the principalship there are many areas that could be investigated more deeply:
1. A range of interviews could be conducted with the Director of the Institute for Professional Learning, the President of WASSEA, the Deans of Education at local universities, and perhaps the Chief Executive Officer for AITSL. The aim of these interviews would be to ascertain the vision for principal preparation in Western Australia from their perspective.

2. A comprehensive quantitative survey could be conducted amongst all secondary principals in Western Australia to ascertain their views of principal preparation in this state. It would be interesting to discover any similarities or differences in these data compared to those collected in the six principal stories.

3. A national quantitative survey of secondary principals could be conducted and this could be used as a point of comparison with the state view. The survey could be multi-faceted in approach, surveying different sectors. For example, public versus catholic.

4. Creating case studies of the principal within their school environment could develop the six principal case studies further. This would include teacher and student interviews and collection of artifacts from the school, in particular with reference to planning.

5. Research funding models to support the development of a Professional Learning Centre for Public School Principals.
Reflections

In terms my understanding of the massive change agenda we are undergoing in Western Australia, completing this research has been an invaluable exercise for me. While I have needed to stop and start the research process due to personal implications, especially losing my father-in-law to cancer, during the time frame from mid-2009, to mid-2013, I feel that the delay in completion has been positive in that many of the planned system changes from 2009 have come to fruition. My research is richer as a result.

In writing a narrative style study encompassing a self-study the subjective nature of this kind of research has been at the forefront of my thinking. It is my wish that the policy makers and those responsible for implementing policy will see some benefit from using my research to inform their work, thereby providing a coordinated approach to principal preparation in this state.
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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1

**Personal Communications – Details in order according to page number**

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<td>Brett Hunt</td>
<td>Director, Expert Review Group, Department of Education, Western Australia</td>
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<td>Doug Booth</td>
<td>Principal Consultant, Western Australian Government School Leadership Centre</td>
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<td>Rob Nairn</td>
<td>President, Western Australian Secondary School Executives’ Association</td>
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<td>Sharyn O’Neill</td>
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<td>2012</td>
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<td>Frank Crowther</td>
<td>Emeritus Professor, University Southern Queensland</td>
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<td>Richard Elmore</td>
<td>Professor, Harvard University</td>
<td>March, 2013</td>
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<td>136</td>
<td>Leila Bothams</td>
<td>Principal Consultant Department of Education</td>
<td>July, 2013</td>
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Appendix 2

Letter seeking approval from the Department of Education to conduct research.

Eleanor Hughes
Mr Alan Dodson
Director
Department of Education
Royal Street
East Perth WA 6004

Dear Mr Dodson,

Entry Planning – a key aspect to preparing for school leadership

I write seeking your approval for me to invite Department of Education employees to participate in my research project. I am conducting a research project that aims to identify the common issues facing beginning public school principals in Western Australia; to identify effective professional learning that supports beginning principals and to influence the development and delivery of professional learning programs to better support beginning principals as they enter school leadership in the public system in this state. Potential benefits of this research are: A strategic approach to development and delivery of professional learning for beginning principals; stronger leadership capacity in beginning school principals and identification of future principals through engagement of professional learning programs.

The project is being conducted as part of a Masters by Research degree at Edith Cowan University.

I am the chief investigator for this research project that is being conducted through the School of Education, Faculty Education and Arts. Associate Professor Glenda
Campbell-Evans and Associate Professor Jan Gray are co-supervisors of this project.

I would like to invite a number of principals, some experienced and some in the early stages of their career to take part in the project. It is my intention to use the data collected from unstructured interviews from the a small group of experienced principals and the participants, a small group of beginning principals as a point of comparison. Participants have not yet been identified. However, experienced group will consist of:

- A retired principal
- A principal, more than 10 years experience
- A principal, at least 5 years experience

The participants will consist of 3 principals in the first or second year of their first appointment as principal. It is my intention to identify both groups of principals in early 2012. Interviews will be conducted between March and April 2012.

**What does participation in the research project involve?**

The experienced principal group will be invited to participate in an unstructured interview for which an hour will be scheduled. The interviews will be conducted individually. Participants will be encouraged to tell the story of their preparation for their first principal role as well as highlight how planning assisted or otherwise.

The beginning school principals will be invited to participate in an unstructured interview for which an hour will be scheduled. The interviews will be conducted individually. Participants will be encouraged to tell the story of their preparation for their first principal role as well as highlight how planning assisted or otherwise.

Data from both groups will be compared and the findings, along with those from the literature, will be used to inform a narrative self-study written by me.
I will make contact with all participants, confirm consent to participate and manage data collected. There will not be a requirement for administrative support from anyone within the department.

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. If any member of a participant group decides to participate and then later changes their mind, they are able to withdraw their participation at any time.

**What will happen to the information collected, and is privacy and confidentiality assured?**

Information that identifies anyone will be removed from the data collected. The data is then stored securely in a secured filing cabinet and can only be accessed by me. The data will be stored for a minimum period of 5 years, after which it will be destroyed. This will be achieved by shredding and deleting.

The identity of participants and their school will not be disclosed at any time, except in circumstances that require reporting under the Department of Education *Child Protection* policy, or where the research team is legally required to disclose that information. Participant privacy, and the confidentiality of information disclosed by participants, is assured at all other times. The data will be used only for this project, and will not be used in any extended or future research without first obtaining explicit written consent from participants.

Consistent with Department of Education policy, a summary of the research findings will be made available to the participants and the Department. You can expect this to be available by December 2012.

The ECU Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this research.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study, or if you require further
information please contact:
Eleanor Hughes
Phone:
Email: emhughes@ourecu.edu.au

If you have any concerns or complaints about the research project and wish to talk to an independent person, you may contact:
Research Ethics Officer
Edith Cowan University
Email: research.ethics@ecu.edu.au

Please find attached a copy of my proposal for your reference.

Yours sincerely

Eleanor Hughes
Research Student
Edith Cowan University
Appendix 2

Letter of approval from the Department of Education.

Government of Western Australia
Department of Education

Ms Eleanor Hughes
81 Mary St
HIGHGATE WA 6003

Dear Ms Hughes

Thank you for your completed application received 30 January 2012 to conduct research on Department of Education sites.

The focus and outcomes of your research project, Entry Planning - a key aspect to preparing for school leadership, are of interest to the Department. I give permission for you to approach site managers to invite their participation in the project as outlined in your application. It is a condition of approval, however, that upon conclusion the results of this study are forwarded to the Department at the email address below.

Consistent with Department policy, participation in your research project will be the decision of the schools invited to participate and individual staff members. A copy of this letter must be provided to site managers when requesting their participation in the research. Researchers are required to sign a confidential declaration upon arrival at the Department of Education site.

Responsibility for quality control of ethics and methodology of the proposed research resides with the institution supervising the research. The Department notes a copy of a letter confirming that you have received ethical approval of your research protocol from the Edith Cowan Human Research Ethics Committee.

Any proposed changes to the research project will need to be submitted for Department approval prior to implementation.

Please contact Ms Allison McLaren, A/Evaluation Officer, on (08) 9264 5512 or researchandpolicy@det.wa.edu.au if you have further enquiries.

Very best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely

ALAN DODSON
DIRECTOR
EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY
Appendix 3

Letter to beginning principals.

Dear

Entry Planning – a key aspect to preparing for school leadership

I am conducting a research project that aims to identify the common issues facing beginning public school principals in Western Australia; to identify effective professional learning that supports beginning principals and to influence the development and delivery of professional learning programs to better support beginning principals as they enter school leadership in the public system in this state. Potential benefits of this research are: A strategic approach to development and delivery of professional learning for beginning principals; stronger leadership capacity in beginning school principals and identification of future principals through engagement of professional learning programs.

The project is being conducted as part of a Masters by Research degree at Edith Cowan University.

I am the chief investigator for this research project that is being conducted through the School of Education, Faculty Education and Arts. Associate Professor Glenda Campbell-Evans and Associate Professor Jan Gray are co-supervisors of this project.

I would like to invite you to participate in this project as a beginning principal.

It is my intention to use the data collected from unstructured individual interviews with experienced principals and the participants, identified beginning principals, as a point of comparison. The experienced principal group will consist of:

- A retired principal
• A principal, more than 10 years experience
• A principal, at least 5 years experience

The beginning principal participants will consist of 3 principals in the first or second year of their first appointment as principal. Interviews will be conducted between February and March 2012 and if you consent to participate I will be contact with you to confirm times and location.

What does participation in the research project involve?

The experienced principals will be invited to participate in an unstructured interview for which an hour will be scheduled. The interviews will be conducted individually. Participants will be encouraged to tell the story of their preparation for their first principal role as well as highlight how planning assisted or otherwise.

The beginning school principals will be invited to participate in an unstructured interview for which an hour will be scheduled. The interviews will be conducted individually. Participants will be encouraged to tell the story of their preparation for their first principal role as well as highlight how planning assisted or otherwise.

Data from both groups will be compared and the findings, along with those from the literature, will be used to inform a narrative self-study written by me.

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. If any member of a participant group decides to participate and then later changes their mind, they are able to withdraw their participation at any time.

What will happen to the information collected, and is privacy and confidentiality assured?
Information that identifies anyone will be removed from the data collected. The data is then stored securely in a secured filing cabinet and can only be accessed
by Edith Cowan University. The data will be stored for a minimum period of 5 years, after which it will be destroyed. This will be achieved by shredding and deleting.

The identity of participants and their school will not be disclosed at any time, except in circumstances that require reporting under the Department of Education Child Protection policy, or where the research team is legally required to disclose that information. Participant privacy, and the confidentiality of information disclosed by participants, is assured at all other times. The data will be used only for this project, and will not be used in any extended or future research without first obtaining explicit written consent from participants.

Consistent with Department of Education policy, a summary of the research findings will be made available to the participants and the Department. You can expect this to be available by December 2012.

The ECU Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this research.

Please find attached a consent form. If you are happy to participate please sign and return to me.

Yours sincerely

Eleanor Hughes
Research Student
Edith Cowan University
Appendix 4

Letter to experienced principals.

Dear

Entry Planning – a key aspect to preparing for school leadership

I am conducting a research project that aims to identify the common issues facing beginning public school principals in Western Australia; to identify effective professional learning that supports beginning principals and to influence the development and delivery of professional learning programs to better support beginning principals as they enter school leadership in the public system in this state. Potential benefits of this research are: A strategic approach to development and delivery of professional learning for beginning principals; stronger leadership capacity in beginning school principals and identification of future principals through engagement of professional learning programs.

The project is being conducted as part of a Masters by Research degree at Edith Cowan University.

I am the chief investigator for this research project that is being conducted through the School of Education, Faculty Education and Arts. Associate Professor Glenda Campbell-Evans and Associate Professor Jan Gray are co-supervisors of this project.

I would like you to participate in this project as an experienced principal.

It is my intention to use the data collected from unstructured interviews from experienced principals and the participants, identified beginning principals as a point of comparison. The experienced principals will consist of:

- A retired principal
- A principal, more than 10 years experience
- A principal, at least 5 years experience
The beginning principal participants will consist of 3 principals in the first or second year of their first appointment as principal. Interviews will be conducted between March and April 2012 and if you consent to participate I will be contact with you to confirm times and location.

What does participation in the research project involve?

Experienced principals will be invited to participate in an unstructured interview for which an hour will be scheduled. The interviews will be conducted individually. Participants will be encouraged to tell the story of their preparation for their first principal role as well as highlight how planning assisted or otherwise.

Beginning school principals will be invited to participate in an unstructured interview for which an hour will be scheduled. The interviews will be conducted individually. Participants will be encouraged to tell the story of their preparation for their first principal role as well as highlight how planning assisted or otherwise.

Data from both groups will be compared and the findings, along with those from the literature, will be used to inform a narrative self-study written by me.

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. If any member of a participant group decides to participate and then later changes their mind, they are able to withdraw their participation at any time.

What will happen to the information collected, and is privacy and confidentiality assured?

Information that identifies anyone will be removed from the data collected. The data is then stored securely in a secured filing cabinet and can only be accessed by Edith Cowan University. The data will be stored for a minimum period of 5 years, after which it will be destroyed. This will be achieved by shredding and deleting.
The identity of participants and their school will not be disclosed at any time, except in circumstances that require reporting under the Department of Education Child Protection policy, or where the research team is legally required to disclose that information. Participant privacy, and the confidentiality of information disclosed by participants, is assured at all other times. The data will be used only for this project, and will not be used in any extended or future research without first obtaining explicit written consent from participants.

Consistent with Department of Education policy, a summary of the research findings will be made available to the participants and the Department. You can expect this to be available by December 2012.

The ECU Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this research. If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study, or if you require further information please contact:

Eleanor Hughes

Phone:

If you have any concerns or complaints about the research project and wish to talk to an independent person, you may contact:

Research Ethics Officer
Edith Cowan University

Please find attached a consent form. If you are happy to participate please sign and return to me.

Yours sincerely

Eleanor Hughes
Research Student
Edith Cowan University
Appendix 5

Consent form.

Research project: Entry Planning – a key aspect to preparing for school leadership

Researcher: Eleanor Hughes

Consent Form for Public School Principals

I have been asked to participate in a research project that aims to identify the common issues facing beginning public school principals in Western Australia and to identify effective professional learning to better support school principals as they enter school leadership. I understand that this project is being undertaken by Edith Cowan University and is subject to ethical standards. I am happy to take part in this research project.

I understand that as a participant in this project I will be involved in an unstructured interview about my experiences related to the needs of beginning principals. I understand that I will be asked to share my experiences of planning during this phase of my career.

I understand that the research will inform future approaches to the development and delivery of professional learning for public school principals in Western Australia.

I have read the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, realising that I may withdraw at any time.

I agree that the research data gathered in this study may be published provided I am not identifiable.

Participant: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________
Appendix 6

Planned interview questions.
1. Tell me about your experience as a beginning principal.
2. How did you prepare for this role?
3. Did you have any support? Can you describe this?
4. What professional learning supported your entry into the principalship?
5. Did planning have an influence on your entry to school leadership? Please explain.
6. What professional learning and/or support do you think would be appropriate for the development of public school principals?
7. What advice would you offer to aspirant principals re professional learning?
8. Do you have any other comments, suggestions or points you would like to make?

Sample actual questions.
1. Can you tell me about your experiences as a beginning principal please?
2. So, you said that you had a positive experience as a result of your preparation. Can you tell me a little bit more about the preparation? How did you actually prepare for the role?
3. So, delegating those roles to do with underperforming staff and those sorts of things, in terms of those roles, what then was your principal’s role working with you in that?
4. Did you feel that you were adequately prepared for your role, that you’re currently in?
5. And did you have any support coming into your new role?
6. What professional learning...you’ve talked about the portfolios and professional learning opportunities for coaching and mentoring; was there any specific professional learning that supported your entry into this position?
7. In terms of your entry into your current position, did you do any planning prior to taking up the principal position? Read the context of the school? Did
you set about...did you go into the school with a plan of how you were going
to develop as a principal? How did you actually enter the school?
8. Are you able to share any of the details of your first plan, that clear plan that
you had about what you would do in the school and then your current plan?
9. And you clearly thought about that before you went into the school?
10. Earlier, you talked about the need for compulsory induction. So what do you
think would be appropriate in that as professional learning for principals
coming in?
11. How do you think the department could offer that? As pre learning, during
learning, continual learning?
12. Would that be linked to performance management? You talked before
about your principal being a coach and mentor that could also fit into that
couldn’t it? Provide a feedback loop in terms of performance management?
13. That's really interesting, that notion of working with the 5 or 6 or however
many principals and being onsite. You also mentioned work shadowing your
principal. How valuable was work shadowing for you?
14. You were talking about IPS earlier as well. Have you participated in any of
the training for independent public schooling?
15. Do you have any sense of what it may be about?
16. Do you think that this is something that should be afforded to all principals,
whether IPS or not?
17. From your experience then, what advice would you offer to aspirant
principals, re professional learning? To someone who might be a level 3
moving to a level 4 or a level 4 who’s been there for a while? What advice
would you offer them?
18. Are there any other comments or suggestions or points that you think are
relevant to entering the principalship and planning for that?
19. How do you think that might happen? Is that just through networking or