An exploration of the relationship between teacher leadership and the principalship in nurturing student learning

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Statement of Authorship and Sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

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Abstract

The concept of instructional leadership has become a growing interest in the discourse on school leadership. Effective schools studies in the 1970s and early 1980s found that principals who were strong instructional leaders significantly influenced school performance.

While this thesis predominately focuses on the relationship between principal, school curriculum officer (hence forth as SCO) and teacher, it focuses heavily on the role of the principalship in fostering the growing emphasis on multiple leadership approaches throughout the school. The specific purpose of this study is to explore how teacher leadership and the principalship nurture student learning. It highlights the professional culture which principals nurture to engage teachers in school improvement issues.

The notion of teacher leadership potentially empowers teachers to exercise professional responsibility for student learning and promotes a focus on teacher professionalism. The literature illuminated several key themes, which formed the conceptual framework underpinning the research. These included school improvement, encouragement of learning communities, teacher commitment and motivation, changing roles of principals and promotion of teacher leadership. Given the purpose of this study it seemed fitting that the approach of the study should be predominantly interpretive and orchestrated through multiple site case study.

The research results confirmed the findings of the literature in terms of leadership. The response of schools to improve student learning was strongly influenced by the principal and SCO who were able to articulate school vision and engage staff in meaningful whole school decision-making practices. This study concluded that the support of the principal for the role of the SCO was a major determiner of the SCO's success in implementing school-wide pedagogical reform.

The findings also affirmed the role of principals as being able to influence student learning through their interactions with class teachers. Furthermore it is essential such interactions are school wide, agreed upon and implemented via a close working relationship with the principal and the SCO. The findings also highlight that specific work conditions had an influence on the motivation and commitment of teachers to ongoing school reform.

Acknowledgements

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

1   CHAPTER ONE – IDENTIFYING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1   Introduction

Teacher leadership has emerged as a promising strategy in the promotion of authentic school revitalisation. Historically, research on school improvement has focused primarily on the role of the principal as a means to achieve it (Boucher, 2003). In contrast, contemporary research on educational reform identifies collaboration among the school community members as a more sustainable strategy for educational revitalisation (Bloom & Stein, 2004).

Research from the effective schools movement of the 1970s through to contemporary education has identified differing perspectives of school leadership (Reynolds, 1998; Thrupp, 2001). Consequently, the evolved changes in the role of principals and teachers to accommodate the organizational changes in education have seen a transfer in the responsibilities of and expectations on the key players.

Authentic and self-sustaining educational revitalisation depends on the commitment, enthusiasm and motivation of those involved in the process (Fullan, 1992; Gronn, 2000). For this to occur, education innovations need to be personally meaningful to the participants. Personal meaningfulness harnesses the teacher's energy and professional purpose (Wheatley, 1999). This dynamic is more likely to occur when the organisational locus of control is with the local community and not the preserve of the bureaucracy at head office. Such a trend has been occurring firstly with the school based curriculum initiative of the eighties and culminating currently with the teacher leadership innovations happening throughout Australia (Crowther, Kaagan, Fergusion, & Hann, 2002). Increased school based autonomy invites the cultivation of shared decision-making in many areas such as policy generation, curriculum implementation, budgeting processes, facilities maintenance and development. Consequently, "(t)he role of the teacher has moved away from its traditional base of classroom instruction and become more complex and arguably more stressful" (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004 p.72). This sharing of

responsibilities beyond classroom responsibilities has initiated research into leadership displayed by classroom teachers (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).

To engage staff in such leadership, principals have witnessed a movement from a focus on management to a more collaborative approach to leadership. This redefining of the traditional role of the principal entails encouraging others to share in decision making as well and clarifying their decision-making responsibilities. Furthermore, participation in decision-making persuades teachers and parents to accept both the responsibilities of implementing the decision and the ensuing consequences. Such a decentralized locus of control is seen as a catalyst to authentic school improvement (Crowther, Hann, & Andrews, 2002).

The movement towards decentralization has demanded increases in the time demands on school leaders in their endeavours to support the development of collaborative measures throughout the school. Unfortunately with this devolution of responsibility, the decentralized approach has made increased demand of accountability through the introduction of mandated student testing and demanding school accountability (Rowe, 2000). Although the basic premises of decentralization are that schools will have more control over budget, personnel and curriculum issues, the consequence for schools is that they are being held more accountable for student learning. Moreover, Fullan (2006) argues that the road to such autonomy has not necessarily enhanced student achievement. Ironically, the introduction of accountability measures including performance standards, assessment strategies and structured approaches to teacher appraisal seems to have had a deleterious influence on innovation and teacher creativity (Fullan, 2006).

Such so called accountability measures tend to narrow the teaching process to attaining a test result. It fails to scrutinise the developmental learning outcomes as well as the interpersonal dynamics of the teaching/learning process. Teaching for sustained learning is far more sophisticated than the completion of a standardized test and the

subsequent attainment of government benchmarks. Paper chasing is not leading towards enhancement of student learning. This bureaucratic stance and subsequent calls for increased accountability does not negate the importance of competent and dedicated teachers as the catalysts to enhance student learning. While accountability demands have necessitated changes in school approaches to enhancing student learning the focus on the classroom teacher as the key determinant for student success can not be minimised (Hattie, 2003).

One means of addressing the increasing accountability in schools is the distribution of responsibilities from principal to teachers. Teacher leadership is claimed to be catalytic in promoting self-sustaining improvement in student learning (Crowther & Olsen, 1997; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). What is important to understand is that there appears to be in teacher leaders self-generated motivations, competencies and enthusiasm that enable them to promote authentic student learning.

1.2   The Research Context

At the time of this study, I had been a principal for ten years in charge of three Catholic primary schools. I have worked in three dioceses across three states and have been involved in Catholic education for twenty years.

This research study takes place in the Catholic diocese of Rockhampton, a rural diocese in Queensland with the geographical boundaries from Mackay in the north to Bundaberg in the south and west to Longreach and the Northern Territory border. In an area almost twice the size of Victoria, the Rockhampton Diocese covers approximately 415,000 square kms.

The diocesan school system consists of twenty-eight primary schools and eight high schools. Approximately 6,000 children attend primary schools in the diocese and are taught by approximately 625 primary school teachers.

Servicing these schools is the Rockhampton Catholic Education Office. This educational authority is a ministry of the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton from which it derives its purpose and meaning. The Rockhampton Catholic Education Office is the central body that facilitates the funding and accountability measures required by the state and federal governments. It is a centrally controlled educational system which employs approximately 1870 staff members including teachers, school officers and ancillary staff.

The senior executive of the Rockhampton Catholic Education Office currently consists of the Director and three Assistant Directors – Religious Education, Administration and Curriculum. The Diocesan leadership team monitors the schools through regular visitations by the four regional Assistant Directors – Schools.

In 1998, the Rockhampton Diocese like all Catholic education authorities in Queensland, participated in the Queensland Bishops' Catholic Education Research Project (Queensland Catholic Education Commission, 2001). This project was conducted over a three year period. Its purpose was to research the defining features of Catholic Schools in the context of the Church's evolving mission in the world. It was from this project that six specific defining features of Catholic schooling were outlined for the Rockhampton Diocese. These goals were translated into strategies in order to translate these goals to the school level.

In particular, defining feature four from the project identified the need to offer relevant and holistic curricula emphasising quality teaching and learning. From within this area, a major curriculum focused recommendation arose. It sought to encourage the establishment of a curriculum committee in each school to provide ongoing policy and strategic advice on curriculum matters.

The implementation of such a recommendation was devised to address perceived limitations in principals' knowledge and skills in curriculum. The increased bureaucratisation of the principals' roles has removed principals from the classroom experience. They can no longer be seen as head teacher of schools. To help support and oversee such a recommendation the new position of Assistant Director – Curriculum was introduced. In doing so the Catholic Education Office of the Diocese of Rockhampton sought to provide an additional structure that assisted teachers in their promotion of authentic learning for pupils.

The creation of this position was the beginning of perceiving school leadership very differently in the Rockhampton diocese. Consequently, after initial consultation with diocesan principals and staff and a review of practices being undertaken in other dioceses, leadership within schools moved from being the solitary principal directing everything to the concept of leadership teams where school members had specified leadership responsibilities. Such a concept demanded relevant professional development among stakeholders. Consequently, the Diocesan Leadership Teams Conference was inaugurated in August 1999. Later that year, the Rockhampton Diocesan Catholic Education Office instigated a new charter for leadership in schools, especially in the primary school sector (Diocesan Catholic Education Office, 1999c). The specific aim of these professional development experiences was to assist team members cultivate and nurture a 'vision of leadership' as well as a shared vision centred on the Catholic Christian ethos, arising from the Bishop's vision statement. The focus was on building leadership teams.

This new and evolving understanding of leadership was consistent with the fundamentals of Catholic teaching. Within Catholic theology, the concept of communion is an important concept. It teaches that individuals can achieve their potential only as "persons in community" (Groome, 2003). Upholding and respecting the dignity of the human person is a fundamental tenet of Catholic education. As such, the heart of Catholic education is the integration of faith with life and recognises the relationship

between teachers and learners based upon mutual support (Laghi & Martins, 1997). These theological principles and their relationship to school leadership were articulated in the Diocesan document *Catholic School Leadership – 5th Edition* (Diocesan Catholic Education Office, 1999c) which highlighted the role of co-responsibility of the principal, their members of the school leadership team and the school community with the Diocesan Catholic Education Office.

It is within such an array of educational and theological matrices that the role of SCO is to be appreciated. This position has become a key contributor to the school leadership team, with the specific role of promoting school based curriculum (Diocesan Catholic Education Office, 1999b).

This initiative by Rockhampton Catholic Education Office (CEO) is endorsed by current research. Hierarchical models of school leadership commonly impose educational reform by edict with minimal consultation with stakeholders (Fullan, 2005). Not unexpectedly such projects driven by authoritarian models of school leadership have generated disappointing outcomes (Wildy, 1999). The movement in the Rockhampton Diocese towards improving schools through supporting principals and teachers has been given greater prominence through fostering the development of schools as learning communities. It was anticipated that such strategies would ignite genuine interest in curriculum issues across schools encouraging teachers to take greater responsibility for improving student learning.

Given the complexity of schools and the bureaucratization of the principal's role, the appointment of a SCO is an additional strategy to support teacher learning. Supporting the introduction of the SCO is the provision of remuneration equivalent to other leadership positions and teacher release time for the SCO to undertake duties associated with the new role. Release time is provided on a sliding scale depending upon the enrolment population of the school ranging from one day to three days per week.

1.3 The Research Problem

Teachers, who work in the same Diocese or in the same school, do not necessarily exhibit the same work ethic nor demonstrate the same enthusiasm or passion for the art of teaching. Nor, as it seems, do they have the same opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge base for their field (Baulach, Malone, & Castleman, 1995). There is wide diversity of opinions in what motivates people to choose the teaching profession, as there are concerns about the increase in accountability and societal expectations on teacher performance (Linn, 2003).

Although addressing such pressures has traditionally been seen as the sole domain of the school principal, the complexity of school life has necessitated the distribution of responsibilities amongst the staff. Furthermore, the need to develop 'shared leadership' practices where each staff member has a major stake/participation in the decision making process is seen as a major thrust of the teacher leadership movement (Frost & Durrant, 2004). For schools to continue to progress and to continue to engage in the implementation of curriculum frameworks, the reliance on teacher co-operation, collegiality and commitment must be seen as a critical strategy for schools to achieve success.

However, even with the fostering of teacher leadership through the introduction of SCOs, the implementation of this curriculum innovation is not as simple as first perceived. There are problems supporting teacher leadership development within schools (Chesterton & Duignan, 2004). Some of these include teacher motivation, time constraints, lack of leadership opportunities and unsupportive work conditions.

Within this context, it is possible that the SCOs could see their roles essentially as in completing the curricula documentation and handing it down to staff to implement. On the other hand the SCO could facilitate dialogue with the principal and staff members to

collaboratively develop the documentation as well as to collaboratively implement the school's curricula plan. The problem focuses on how teacher leadership is demonstrated in traditionally hierarchical school systems.

1.4 Purpose of the Research

Because leadership in schools is taking on many forms, teacher roles are becoming more complex and the relationships developed between principals and teacher leaders are becoming more significant in promoting school improvement. Given this increasing complexity in schools and the renewed attention to student achievement and standards, the relationship between principal and teacher takes on greater importance in ensuring schools aspire to and sustain student achievement. Having identified teacher leadership as a leadership alternative in schools, a challenge clearly exists to determine what motivates teachers in being leaders in schools and remain committed to their chosen profession. Consequently there are a variety of ways SCOs might implement their new role. The specific purpose of this study is to explore how teacher leadership and the principalship nurture student learning.

1.5 The Research Questions

Four research questions emanating from the literature review focussed the conduct of the research.

1.5.1 Research Question One

The revitalisation of schools has seen a plethora of initiatives and innovations introduced into schools as a means to improve student learning. With the focus on improving student learning differing opinions are held on which programmes are more successful in addressing student needs. Consequently, research question one explores:

What factors are perceived by staff to impact on school improvement experiences initiated by the school curriculum officer?

This question provided the opportunity for participants to draw on their knowledge and experience on what influences the success of school improvement programmes. In particular it sought to discover participants' personal understanding on what factors contribute to the success of such programmes.

1.5.2 Research Question Two

It is acknowledged that the quality of the teacher is a key determinant in improving student learning. Furthermore, teachers do not enter the profession with all the knowledge and skills necessary to support student learning. Consequently, research question two asks:

How do principals nurture the professional development of the SCO and teachers?

This question recognizes that professional development of teachers is regarded as a crucial factor in improving student achievement. Furthermore, this question invites principals and staff members to describe the nature of principals in facilitating professional development in their schools in the area of quality curriculum implementation. In doing so, it entices staff to reflect upon the relative appropriateness of its delivery.

1.5.3 Research Question Three

Teachers enter the profession with a love of children and a genuine desire to influence student learning. However, research indicates that increasingly, teachers are leaving the profession. Consequently research question three asks:

What motivates teachers to remain committed to their profession?

This question invites participants to reflect on the reasons why they chose teaching as a career and their employment desire for the future. It explores the factors that make teaching attractive, engaging, and rewarding work. Furthermore it seeks clarification not

only on what is needed to motivate and retain teachers but also on their motivation to move into potential leadership positions, particularly the SCO leadership role.

1.5.4 Research Question Four

Schools are educational institutions focussed on nurturing student learning. Once developed, the school improvement programme can be adopted and implemented in the school setting. Teachers are an integral part of implementing school improvement innovations. Consequently research question four asks:

How do principals and SCOs engage teachers in the school reform process?

Acknowledging that implementing successful school improvement programmes is the responsibility of all staff members, this question seeks to discover participants' personal views and experiences of inviting teachers to participate in the school reform process. In particular, it explored the factors that attracted teachers into the school reform process and the inherent difficulties with promoting shared leadership strategies.

1.6 Significance of the Research

The opportunity to explore the impact/role of teacher leadership (particularly the SCO) in promoting and sustaining school reform is of significant importance to the broader educational community. This study is important because:

1. The complexity of school life has seen an increased focus on the role of the principal in establishing and sustaining positive learning environments. This study highlights the approaches used by teacher leaders to engage staff in fostering such environments.

2. Where teacher leadership flourishes, the collegial atmosphere produces a spirit of wanting to improve both personally and professionally. With the role of the principal becoming more complex the reliance on shared leadership practices is

becoming an important strategy for promoting school improvement. How principals foster such leadership qualities is an important dimension of this study with the findings providing support for principals in building leadership capacity.

3. Understanding what motivates teachers to be committed to teaching helps principals develop specific school infrastructure to support teacher development. In determining what conditions makes teacher leaders perform their work more efficiently, what encourages them to improve and even aspire to formal leadership positions within schools, principals and diocesan leaders will be better placed to support and prepare future teacher leaders. This study aims to contribute to the research on teacher commitment.

4. Teachers do not enter the profession with all the knowledge and skills necessary to nurture student learning. As new teaching technologies emerge teachers need to upgrade their knowledge and skills to ensure they are aligned with the needs of the students. This study aims to illuminate how principals professionally develop their staff to equip them for the changing needs of the students and the school.

5. Each school community has its own unique context where differing work conditions prevail. Principals need to be flexible and adaptable within the workplace in order to support both student and teacher learning. This study provides insight into teachers' and principals' perceptions of work conditions that contribute to the well-being of staff.

6. Finally, the relationship between teacher leaders and principal leaders is critical and the first step in establishing productive school environments. This research will contribute to the conversation on defining the influence principals have on teacher leaders in schools.

1.7   The Research Design

Given the purpose of this study is to understand perceptions, an interpretive design was adopted to explore the relationship between the principal, the SCO and teachers in nurturing student learning. An interpretivist approach seeks to understand the complex

world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it, so that they can understand the meaning of social phenomena (Schwandt, 2000). The adoption of the interpretivist approach is appropriate since the emphasis is on the meanings in the actions of the participants involved; the daily life experience of staff, and how they use such meanings to interpret and make sense of their world.

Constructionism is an epistemological perspective that assists researchers to make sense of knowledge from the experience of research participants' interpretations of school life. Such knowledge offers understanding of participants' meaning from their lived experiences. Constructionism highlights the importance of personal and shared meanings. It eschews the proposition that knowledge is an objective science and that the role of research is to discover it (Merriam, 1998). Constructionism is adopted because it offers voice to the experiences and stories of the principals, teachers and SCOs of this study. Furthermore, constructionism declares that knowledge and truths are constructed and sustained through language, linguistic resources and social processes (Neuman, 2000). Since the construction and maintenance of knowledge is achieved through negotiation with one another rather than by an examination of the world (Merriam & Associates, 2002) then those in schools would be influenced in their thinking by their educational function as teachers. Consequently, each of the participants may have a different construct of knowledge due to their personal experience, their social environment and the interaction between them. This difference in the construction of knowledge and truth by the participants will assist in illuminating this study.

Within the constructionist epistemology is symbolic interactionism. The importance of symbolic interactionism is that it investigates how people create meaning during social interaction. Symbolic interactionism focuses on the premise that people act toward things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them. It is from the social interactions that meanings arise as people continually adjust their behaviour to the actions of others. This adjustment of behaviour is achieved because of how people

interpret their actions (Charon, 2001). Consequently, by understanding the perceptions of individual staff and by understanding the nature of their work from their perspective, the disparity between espoused importance and actual lived experience will be illuminated. It enables that an understanding of school reality is reliant upon social interactions which influence the way the teachers, leadership team members and principals construct their leadership meanings.

The methodology employed in this research is case study. Case study is defined as an in-depth study of a few people, events or organisations (Yin, 2003). In this study it enabled empirical investigation of school leadership within school settings and allowed questions to be posed to participants from whom most could be learned (Merriam, 1998). The boundaries for this case study were the principals, leadership team members and selected staff members within seven catholic primary schools of the Northern District of the Rockhampton Diocese. The case study research methodology as an empirical inquiry was chosen because it investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 2003). The phenomenon in this study is the relationship between principals, SCOs and teachers which is bounded by the experiences of the staff working within the Rockhampton Diocese. The case was bounded by research questions that focussed upon the participants' construction of school improvement programmes in their schools.

All principals and leadership team members from within the Mackay district of the Diocese of Rockhampton were invited to participate. As such they formed a naturally occurring group within the boundaries of an administrative area. There were seven principals and seven SCOs interviewed. However, all classroom teachers were purposively selected based on criteria established for the case. Purposive selection ensured that the selection of teaching staff who had deep knowledge and understanding of the functions of school life were able to contribute constructively to the research. A total of thirty two teachers were selected and participated in the study.

The four data collection strategies that were used were an open ended survey, interviews, participant observation and document analysis. The results of the survey were used to inform the construction of a series of one to one interviews and focus groups. The interviews involved one to one meetings with teachers, leadership team members, and principals while a focus group was formed for each group of the participants' groups; teachers, leadership team members, and principals. Transcripts were provided to participants for verification and review. Visiting school settings enabled field notes to be taken. Document analysis provided cross referencing of information.

1.8   Limitations of the Research

The findings and the implications of this study should be considered in light of limitations embedded in it. This study is firstly limited by the researcher's own perceptions, past experiences and knowledge of both the school and system wide practices. Being a principal within the Mackay district and being known to the participants may have inhibited responses. However, the design of the study incorporated a number of strategies to enhance the reliability, validity and trustworthiness of the data collected and analysed. These are detailed in Chapter Five.

The strength of interpretive research is the rich descriptive data that emerges. In order to obtain this richness of description it was necessary to limit the study to a small sample of participants. Consequently, the second limitation involves the size of the "sample" and the extent to which findings can be generalised beyond the cases studied. It could be argued that findings based upon 105 survey responses, 39 members of focus groups and 46 individual interviews from a national teaching population of 225400 teachers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005) are limited.

However, this study is concerned primarily with reader generalisability (Merriam, 1998) and not with generalisability of results. Merriam (1998) refers to reader generalisability

as the extent to which the study assists readers applying and transferring the study's findings to their own circumstances. In this study the use of detailed thick description in the analysis of data enables the reader to resonate with the findings and increases the possibility that the reader will be able to transfer the findings to their own situation.

Finally, the study is limited to the geographical setting of the Rockhampton Diocese, a rural country Diocese. Although the initial open ended survey was conducted throughout all primary schools in the diocese, the interviews and focus groups were held in one small section of the diocese.

1.9   The Outline of this Thesis

This chapter provides a succinct overview of the research problem and its context. The following chapters offer a more detailed and comprehensive perspective.

Chapter Two explores the current contextual influences upon the role of the principal and teachers in managing student learning. In particular the influencing role of educational authorities on school improvement at the local level has seen a refocus on the roles of leaders within the school community. This chapter generates the rationale for the problem underpinning the study.

Chapter Three reviews the literature in respect of school improvement. It provides evidence of the context of leadership as a vehicle for nurturing student learning.

Chapter Four investigates factors influencing the performance of principals and teachers in nurturing student learning. It discusses teacher commitment and teacher motivation to develop a comprehensive understanding of the personal commitment teachers bring to schools. As part of this discussion, the relationship between the teacher leader and principal will be explored as the changing role of principal is examined.

Chapter Five details the methodology adopted for the study. The research employed an interpretive approach and a constructionist epistemology. An interpretivist orientation was adopted with the research design utilising the principles of symbolic interactionism. The chapter explains and justifies, documents the selection of participants, the choice of data gathering strategies and the processes engaged in data analysis.

Chapter Six presents the findings of this study and provides a discussion on the data gathered. The analysis and discussion demonstrates a clear understanding of the relationship between principals and teacher leaders.

Chapter Seven offers conclusions drawn from the findings and outlines recommendations.

2 CHAPTER TWO – DEFINING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore how teacher leadership and the principalship nurture student learning. The purpose of this chapter is to define the research problem.

The current educational environment exerts considerable pressure on schools to raise the level of student achievement. There have been pressures placed on schools to be both more efficient and accountable. In order to comply, schools are emphasising management strategies that are derived from economic rationalism and market driven forces (Patching, 1999) narrowing the instructional process. An example of this can be observed in the standards movement in the United States, which has witnessed a proliferation in expectations by government, community, and school systems and even by classroom teachers themselves (Cimbricz, 2002). In Australia, this is further exacerbated with pressures of a nationally imposed student reporting system (Deacon, 2006).

Aligned with the challenges of how to improve schools is the additional challenge of sustaining improvement. The call for sustainability, which depends upon a school's internal capacity to maintain and support the work of teachers, is gathering momentum (A. Harris & Chapman, 2002). Sustaining student improvement is achieved through capacity building and preparing teachers themselves to lead innovation and development (A. Harris, 2002). This supports the inference that, in focusing on learning, the significant role of leadership distribution is in generating and sustaining improvement in schools (Gronn, 2000).

Sustaining school improvement requires the leadership capacity of many staff members in the school in contrast to the traditional view of leadership where only a few appointed people lead (or manage the work of those below them). For developing such leadership capacity, there is anecdotal evidence that specific factors are necessary. Teacher

commitment is a major contribution to improving the quality of teaching. Indeed both factors have been identified as critical factors in the success of school reform (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004). It is suggested that analysing the work function of teachers is the first step to introducing strategic structural change and improvement (H Silins & Mulford, 2004).

Analysing work functions of teachers and developing leadership structures are crucial as research highlights the effects of economic rationalism and government pressures now placed upon schools (Patching, 1999). School administrators are required to address different forms of accountability and address the external expectations placed on the school. If the promotion of student learning is the core mission of schools, developing successful structures to reach high learning goals is incumbent upon all members of the school community.

2.2   Australian Educational Context

In 1999 all Australian states and territories signed the Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals of Schooling for the 21st Century. This document stressed the importance of improving the quality of education through further strengthening schools as learning communities, enhancing the status and quality of the teaching profession, continuing to develop curriculum and related systems of assessment, accreditation and credentialing that promote quality and are nationally recognised and valued (Department of Education Science and Training, 1999).

The introduction of national benchmarking in literacy and numeracy and the implementation of the national standardized testing programme has enabled the federal government to provide defensible evidence on the success of government initiatives. The view is that teachers and school leaders, armed with evidence of student performance will be more able to generate innovative programmes to meet student needs and thus better placed to improve student learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the Australian Government introduced a variety of regulations as conditions of general recurrent funding for the 2005-2008 quadrennial funding. These regulations apply to all schools in Australia and range from values issues to data collection, school performance and student reporting issues. This particular legislation sees the Australian Government having regulatory influence over the day to day activities of teachers.

The overarching consequence is that these new conditions are also binding on the state and territory governments, which enter into schools' funding contracts with the Australian Government. In leading up to the 2005-2008 quadrennial funding agreement some states had already mandated similar and in some areas even more onerous requirements for non-government schools. These requirements from both the state and federal governments have manifested into registration requirements and have eroded school autonomy.

Government interventions such as these have precipitated the erosion of schools' autonomy. Implementing the regulations has exerted more pressure on principals to meet compliance in a variety of areas. This increased principal workload through implementing the regulations must be viewed in the context of such diminished autonomy. Internationally school systems, are facing increasing regulation as governments move to make them more accountable for the education they deliver (Thrupp, Mansell, Hawksworth, & Harold, 2003). For example, standardised testing has been rigorously applied in the United Kingdom and is credited with major gains in literacy and numeracy. As a consequence all schools are inspected and assessed against a range of performance criteria (Wallace, 2002).

In the same vein, the new federal funding- regulations introduced for the 2005-2008 quadrennium has been implemented by the Australian Government to make the state

and territory governments more accountable for the quality of education they deliver. The regulations build on the national benchmark testing for literacy and numeracy introduced by former federal education minister, Dr David Kemp (Department of Education Science and Training, 2000).--

While the intervention of government policy is aimed to make education more accountable, more transparent, more competitive and more autonomous, the impact upon schools at the local level has seen a degenerative effect. Low morale, increased workloads, declining teacher numbers and a narrowing of school curriculum are being reported (Greenberg, 2004).

2.3 Queensland Educational Context

Each Australian state and territory system has regulated bodies that were initiated to monitor the standards of teaching. In anticipation of the shift in educational policy at the national level these bodies began to promote a range of policy statements aimed at improving student learning.

In November 2002 the Queensland Government released *Queensland the Smart State - Education and Training Reforms for the Future: A White Paper* aimed at improving the quality of education (Department of Education Training and the Arts, 2002). Consequently, mandated approaches to curriculum development and teaching methods were outlined. The paper proposed policy considerations associated with adopting a middle phase of schooling and innovative ways to improve student achievements in the middle years. Guidelines to providing continuous support to students through different stages of learning and the outlining of specific strategies for students at risk of leaving school early were articulated. The paper aims at strengthening links between primary and secondary schools (Department of Education Training and the Arts, 2002).

In response to the release of the white paper, Education Queensland developed *Destination 2010: The action plan to implement Queensland State Education – 2010.* This policy document identifies key performance measures and performance indicators that show whether outcomes are being achieved and establish critical indicators which inform Education Queensland of its policy achievements. In direct response to Commonwealth regulations it mandates that schools establish strategic and operational directions and plans. Furthermore schools will report against the indicators to determine how the school community performs (Education Queensland, 2003).

With the reporting of current achievement against the indicators school communities are required to publicly set school based performance targets. It is believed that such school targets provide the specific focus for school communities to improve learning and are to be detailed in annual school planning and reporting documentation. The promotion of standardized testing practices and the releasing of data regarding systemic and school information provide quantitative and qualitative evidence of progress towards achieving stated education goals.

At the same time further initiatives impacting upon schools were being developed including the "New Basics" approach to curriculum, teaching, assessment, reporting and school organisation (Matters, 2005). Such initiatives reflect the agenda of widespread recognition that improvement in student learning and the mandate to increase comparability of assessment and reporting across schools is an expectation of the wider community (Education Queensland, 2005).

For Queensland teachers this mandate is highlighted further with the implementation of the "Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers" beginning in 2007 (Queensland College of Teachers, 2006). While the standards provide benchmarks for the full registration of teachers for Queensland schools it embodies the need to demonstrate teacher learning as a prerequisite to addressing student learning needs.

2.4   Local Educational Context

The Rockhampton Catholic Education Office mandated that schools will participate in quality assurance programmes aimed at improving the quality of Catholic education and that school principals were expected to lead such activities (Diocesan Catholic Education Office, 1999a). Consequently, the policy *Quality Assurance of Catholic Schools in the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton* was developed. This particular document focused on the development of a School Development Plan providing the mandate for the principal to engage the school community and focus on school improvement planning.

In keeping with the Diocesan Curriculum Reform programme "Making the Difference" and mindful of the need for assurance mechanisms to support the provision of quality curriculum in Rockhampton Catholic Diocesan schools, an accreditation process was initiated. Consequently, in 1995, a document entitled *Accreditation of School Curriculum Programmes (Key Learning Areas)* was published and disseminated to all schools within the Diocese (Diocesan Catholic Education Office, 1998).

From 1995, in an attempt to help address the perceived view of curriculum inadequacies within school leadership teams, the commencement of Diocesan School Leadership Inservice Programme was promoted and expanded over subsequent years. The expectation was that principals needed particular professional development in the area of curriculum development and their attendance at an annual three day conference provided opportunity for specialized inservice across a variety of curricula issues.

Arising from such meetings of school leadership personnel and to support the mandated changes to curriculum reform within the diocese, the role of the regional curriculum co-ordinator was developed. To support the regional cluster of schools within the diocese each regional curriculum co-ordinator was expected also to support the principals and

the school community by providing professional development and guidance on curriculum issues.

Following the release of the initial document in 1995, Catholic Education undertook revisions of the document during 1997-1998 (Diocesan Catholic Education Office, 1998). These revisions witnessed further refinements of curriculum planning and expectations for the school community. The ongoing monitoring of curriculum support suggested a "new model" of leadership in primary schools which was presented at the Diocesan Curriculum/ Finance inservice days in 1999. Feedback received from schools was positive and a proposal to introduce the role of Assistant to the Principal (Curriculum) in primary schools was taken to the DCEO Leadership Team in September 1999.

The introduction of an above award leadership position within schools was instigated to be responsible for curriculum development within the school. Depending upon the enrolment size of the school the phased in process enabled schools to employ a teacher to fulfil a role titled "Assistant Principal – Curriculum" (schools over 200) or "School Curriculum Officer" (schools under 200). The introduction of the new role was intended to provide additional leadership support in primary schools.

Being part of each school leadership team, the school's Curriculum Officer was to provide support to the principal and accept responsibility for the long-term and short-term goals for school-based curriculum development. In so doing, the curriculum officer was expected to work with members of the school's leadership team to ensure that a cohesive and integrated model of curriculum support was a characteristic of the school. Such development included the accreditation of the key learning areas (Diocesan Catholic Education Office, 2001). It was perceived that, with the introduction of this above award position, the appointed person would help share the responsibility with the principal and teachers in promoting student learning in a more focused way.

2.5   Principal's Role

Recent educational reform has witnessed a shift in educational responsibility. Efforts to improve the quality of education at the school level have focused on the principal as pivotal in the school reform agenda (Thrupp et al., 2003). However, with the principal being absorbed more with the external demands of educational groups and the needs of teachers and students, as well as the community, principals have less time in direct involvement in the educational and pedagogical responsibilities.

Recent research highlights the complexities of the principal's role in the context of school reform (Blackmore, 2004) demonstrating how the expanded workload of principals has had a deleterious effect on the education mission of schools. It is hardly surprising then that many principals are taking early retirement, while experienced teachers are reluctant to move into administration (Lacey, 2002). Principals appear to be under increased pressure to be accountable for everything within the school. Moreover, adding to this pressure is the expectation to involve others in decisions that once would have been made by the principal alone. The practicality of implementing such expectations means that more time is needed to be competent principals (D'Arbon, Duignan, Duncan, & Goodwin, 2001; Lacey, 2002). The sheer number of personal interactions during the day on a wide array of issues has increased the principal's workload. Furthermore, principals are expected to serve as knowledgeable resources for their staff members, parents and community. To a large extent, principals are experiencing information overload. Discerning what information to circulate to parents and community members is an added expectation of principals in the arena of shared decision making (Timperley, 2005).

The importance of developing relationships within the school community has always been a key component of the principal's responsibility (Macmillan, Meyer, & Northfield, 2004). Developing relationships requires superior communication skills, trust and rapport (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005). The principal is expected to model honesty and integrity reinforcing the concept that education is a people mission where human beings

inhabit schools and classrooms. Schools are inhabited by individuals with differing beliefs, backgrounds and labouring with an array of personal traumas. Kouzes and Posner (2003) suggest leaders can encourage greater initiative, risk-taking, and productivity by demonstrating trust in employees and resolving conflicts on the basis of principles, not positions.

It is the quality of relationships with students, parents, school staff and community members that makes a difference in school improvement (Kelley et al., 2005; National College for School Leadership, 2003). Yet devoting the necessary time and energy to build and nurture those relationships is often minimised by the many management tasks that are part of the principal's responsibilities.

Stress related illness among principals is becoming a major issue. A study by the Victorian Education Department reported 80% of school principals experienced high levels of stress; and nearly 50% reported a medical problem linked to work, including heart disorders, headaches and weight control (Victorian Department of Education & Training, 2004). The major sources of stress for principals are associated with site-based management and shared decision making (Thornton, 2004). Involving others in decisions is seen as problematic with the major obstacle being finding time to work with representatives of various groups to explain the issues and solicit their ideas while simultaneously trying to work through everyday crises. What is developing is that contemporary principals are being encouraged to delegate more responsibilities, develop structures to ensure collaborative decision making, alter leadership behaviours and develop new communication skills to facilitate consensus building (A Harris, Hargreaves, & Southwell, 2005).

Consequently, principals are struggling to provide instructional leadership when so many more management responsibilities are associated with the profession (Victorian Department of Education & Training, 2004). Principals are expected to interact regularly with teachers on instructional matters only to find that they are more often focused on managing such issues as selecting and ordering new curricula materials, organizing for

district and state assessments and completing teacher evaluations. While these important responsibilities were connected to curriculum and instruction, they did not necessarily nurture thoughtful and engaging dialogue about teaching and learning (Azzam, 2005).

Furthermore, the multitude of demands of leading a school often forces the role of principal in disparate directions and at times these directions are contradictory. Principals manage various roles including instructional, managerial, and even political (Fink & Resnick, 2001). At the same time they are developing an understanding of new initiatives for change while addressing competing demands from the school, educational authorities and governmental departments. Often educational authorities increasingly view principals as site-based managers responsible for acquiring and directing human and financial resources on behalf of their educational systems. However, at the same time they are expected to encourage teachers to think deeply and creatively about their classroom practice. Compounding this already complex set of demands is an expanded and public sense of accountability. Principals must perform their multitude of tasks to a high degree to ensure that their schools "measure up" in a climate of increased parental and governmental expectations.

One of the more surprising findings in the literature regarding the principalship role was the extent to which principals are involved in community issues. It is in this area where the role of principal seems to have changed the most particularly in marketing and promotion of schools. Interacting with other community agencies to meet the needs of children and families has also increased. In particular, principals in Catholic schools have seen an increase in assumed Parish responsibilities, particularly principals in rural areas (Sinclair, 2005).

Added to this is the situation that schools are influenced on by the social implications of increasing numbers of at-risk students. Schools are failing to provide the type of education that will enable all students from at-risk backgrounds to succeed (Rowan, Chiang, & Miller, 1997). Increasingly principals are dealing with external health

agencies, including psychologists, psychiatrists and social services personnel as a strategy to address the increasing number of students with special needs. This growing area of school life includes students receiving medications for attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), schizophrenia, post-traumatic stress disorder or bipolar disorder. Furthermore, the number of children with learning difficulties is also impacting upon the responsibilities of the principal through increased administrative tasks, development of specialised learning programmes and the professional development of staff.

In summary, the literature identifies growing concerns over the expanding workload principals are expected to assume. In light of this development it appears that a flatter leadership dimension would alleviate the workload being placed upon principals. To this end, emerging research (Anderson, 2002; Frost & Durrant, 2004) on the role of teacher leadership indicates such a role can provide significant support for the principal.

2.6   Managing Student Learning

Surveys of graduates from teacher training institutions (Bailey & Robson, 2002) indicate that the major area of concern of new teachers is their feelings of inadequacy in managing classrooms. Despite clinical experiences, student teaching, and other observations in classroom settings, this problem has persisted for decades (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Even experienced teachers comment on the difficulties of managing large class sizes (Wenglinsky, 2000). This research suggests that there is no magic formula that will promote skill in this area of professional responsibility.

Research highlights that classroom management and management of student behaviour are skills that teachers acquire and sharpen over time (Brownhill, Wilhelm, & Watson, 2006). Effective teaching requires considerable skill in managing the myriad of tasks and situations that occur in the classroom each day. Skills such as effective classroom management are central to teaching and require common sense, consistency, a sense of fairness, and courage. These skills also require that teachers understand the psychological and developmental levels of their students. Furthermore, the skills

associated with effective classroom management are only acquired with practice, feedback and a willingness to learn from mistakes (Brownhill et al., 2006). Compounding this issue is that there is no practical way for trainee teachers to practice their emerging skills outside of actually going into a classroom setting (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

As a result of an increased interest in classroom management, research is indicating that positive student behaviour is a result of a positive classroom environment created by energetic, engaging teachers (Hattie, 2003). Teachers, to effectively provide instruction for a diverse range of students, need to be flexible in their use of time, classroom space, resources and materials, group work and instructional methodologies. It has been demonstrated that teaching to individual student variances produces positive results (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000). However, most teachers persist with a single approach to teaching in their classroom.

The demands of teaching necessitate that teachers develop a routine approach during the formation stages of their teaching career. However, once established, such habit forming approaches inhibit a teacher's ability to modify their teaching practice to address individual student needs (Tomlinson et al., 2003).

However, the complexity of managing teaching and student learning is enhanced by effective administration and organisation of time to plan and generate resources, organise and plan frameworks for learning. It requires an engagement with the policies and organisational priorities that impact on teaching and learning.

It is not uncommon to see that a curriculum innovation fades after a few years time when the initial enthusiasm subsides or when difficulties arise (Spillane, 2003). This often occurs when leading personnel leave the school. Consequently, there is a critical need to improve the distribution of leadership responsibilities to ensure continuation of quality learning.

2.7   Research Problem

The literature highlights the expanding role of the principal and the related difficulties in promoting student learning. Furthermore it suggests an alternative leadership paradigm is needed to support and enhance student learning.

While various strategies to improve student learning are implemented at both school and system level, they have had mixed results. The introduction of the SCO is seen as a strategy to help distribute leadership responsibilities and to support the principal and classroom teachers in nurturing student learning. The problem underpinning this study is how the role of the SCO influences the enhancement of professional growth among teachers to nurture student learning.

3 CHAPTER THREE – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: THE CONTEXT OF NURTURING LEARNING

The purpose of this study is to explore how teacher leadership and the principalship nurture student learning. The purpose of this chapter is to present a critical literature review which synthesises appropriate scholarship on teacher leadership and its relationship in cultivating school improvement.

3.1 Conceptualisation of the Literature

The concepts outlined in this literature review are complex in their inter-relations (Figure 3.1). To support the diagrammatic expression of the conceptual framework, the following section highlights the relatedness of the emerging themes.

Figure 3-1: The Inter-relatedness of themes identified in the Literature Review
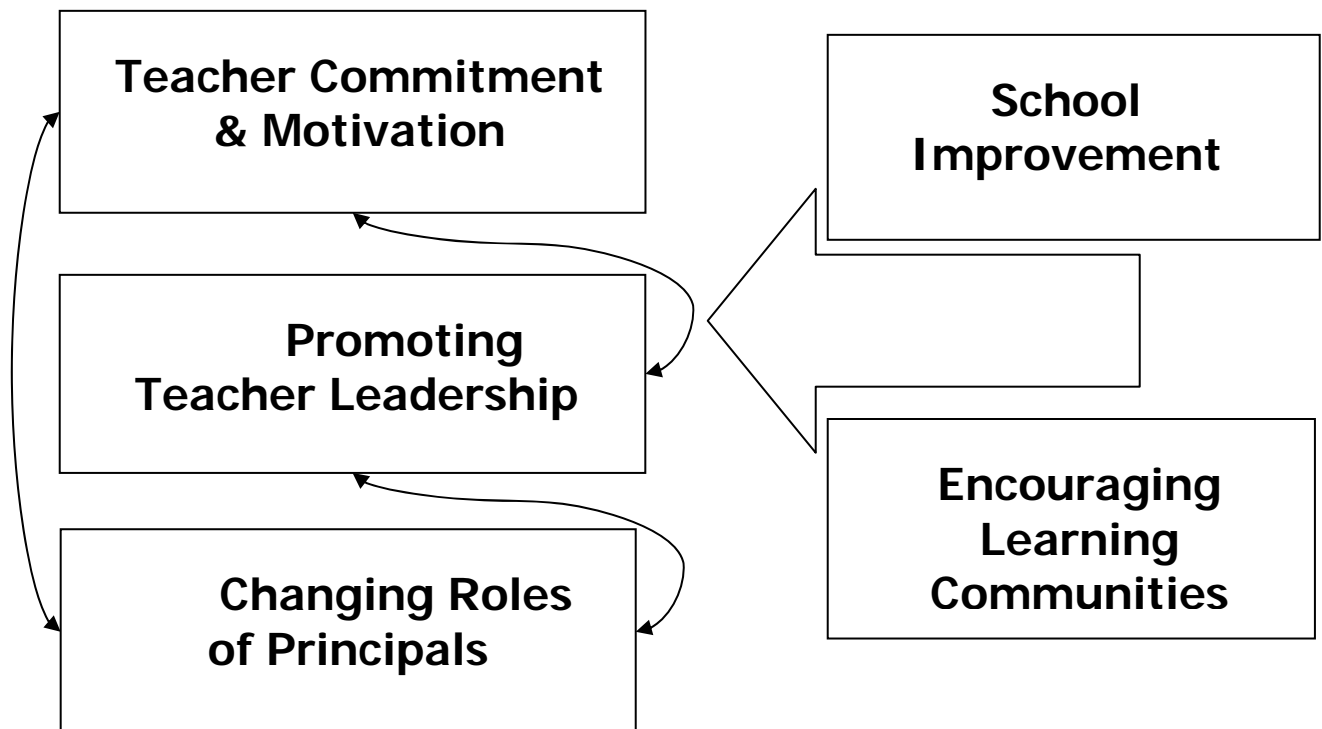
3.2 Literature Review Framework – An Overview

This literature review identifies and conceptualises teacher leadership and its focus in nurturing student learning. Since learning is the core mission of schools, particular attention is given to the direct relationship between teacher quality and student achievement. This is explored in the section on school improvement.

Literature associated with teacher commitment and motivations for teaching underlies teachers' perceptions of their roles both inside and outside the classroom. The implications for the teacher in the promotion of learning (for themselves as well as students) in a school are explored and the link to encouraging learning communities is outlined.

The synthesis of the literature in Chapter Three and Chapter Four leads to discussion on the changing role of the principal and the promotion of teacher leadership in sustaining student achievement. It also helps to develop an understanding of the appropriate processes to support the learning endeavour. Furthermore, the insights generated offer a lens to view the relationship between teacher leadership that emanates from the desire (passion) for teaching and the role of the principal in supporting student learning. It also offers a way of perceiving the role of the principal and school improvement. Together these concepts present an inter-relating effect in the conceptual framework with each component having an impact on the other.

Table 3.1 provides a structure illustrating how the appropriate literature will be critically synthesised.

Table 3-1: The Literature Review Concepts in Order of Discussion

3.3   Changing Views on Leadership

The importance of leadership in promoting learning in schools is documented in the literature (A Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). However, the changing nature of leadership has meant that principals' roles have been viewed differently over the years. In the 1950s principals were viewed as administrators, in the 1960s as street bureaucrats, in the 1970s as change agents, and in the 1980s as instructional leaders (Hallinger, 2001). While principals were viewed as the key to creating conditions in the school that would support student learning, it is evident that the increased number and multiplicity of their responsibilities has led to confusion amongst them about their roles (Hallinger & Heck, 1996) and even inhibiting their productivity as leaders (Azzam, 2005).

Concurrently, there have been recent debates concerning the interpretations of concepts such as instructional leadership, learner centred leadership and pedagogical leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). These concepts were underpinned by the premise that the principal was seen as the "head teacher". This meant that pedagogical initiatives were articulated ultimately by the principal for teachers to implement. However, the changing view on leadership is that it is a shared enterprise, which invites teachers to be leaders at various times, whether teachers consciously desire to be leaders or not (A. Harris, 2002). This view, referred to as distributed leadership,

suggests the role of leadership be shared by all staff members and is not the sole domain of the 'head teacher' (Spillane, Halveson, & Diamond, 2001).

Instructional leadership has been a popular theme (Elmore & Burney, 2000; McKewan, 2003). The description of instructional leadership identifies four key dimensions of the leader: resource provider, instructional resource, communicator and visible presence (Smith & Andrews, 1989). By ensuring teachers have the necessary resources, budgets and facilities the principal fulfils the role of resource provider. In the role as an instructional resource the principal supports the instruction through attending inservice courses, modelling appropriate pedagogy and honouring precedence to instructional issues. As a communicator, the principal articulates clear goals for the school and promotes a common school vision. By being readily available to staff and parents and by visiting classrooms regularly the principal fulfils the being visible dimension of an instructional leader.

However, research contends that for instructional leadership to be realised in addressing the learning needs of all students, leadership ought to be distributed across multiple people and situations, rather than residing with the principal (Timperley, 2005). Furthermore, if instructional leadership is to be distributed then knowledge, skills and attitudes in promoting such learning need also to be distributed. Improving the capacity of individual teachers is an important step towards promoting teacher leadership within the school.

An important assumption highlighting the role of teacher leadership is that pedagogical leadership cannot be separated from educational leadership in general. Educational leaders (be they principals or classroom teachers) has student learning at the centre of their educational enterprise. A growing body of research indicates the pedagogical leadership model as influential in enticing the most talented leader-educators to return to formal teacher positions (Donaldson, 2001).

With student learning as a school's core mission, the focus on curriculum leadership has also gained momentum. Where teachers provide for and encourage effective learning and teaching, their role as leaders in the school is heightened (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Curriculum leaders successfully contribute to the nature and practice of school reform and since this is a shared phenomenon amongst teachers, it is the classroom teacher who ultimately is responsible for promoting school improvement.

This perspective challenges the traditional view of leadership and may explain why the formal (or traditional) executive style leadership positions in schools are becoming more difficult to fill. Research on the decreasing number of teachers applying for principalship positions is becoming more prolific. The research identifies reasons such as "the balance of lifestyle, personal qualities and professional aspirations, as well as the job itself" (D'Arbon et al., 2001 p.13). It is acknowledged that authentic leadership encourages a values based leadership style which permeates through the organisation. As such, it engages people generating a desire to be actively involved. Consequently, it is increasingly important to provide for alternative leadership patterns within the school setting (Patrick Duignan & Bhindi, 1997).

This particular conceptualisation of leadership focuses on the moral dimensions of leadership and the importance of constituents in defining leadership (Patrick Duignan & Bhindi, 1997). This view repudiates position or privileges as constituting any matrix for leadership. In contrast, it is embedded in the way leaders relate to each other and the whole school community and to their own personal values. Authentic leadership has a particular focus on doing what is morally right. It is direction orientated and centred on moral action.

In studying authentic leadership further, the concept can be categorised into four distinct elements (Patrick Duignan & Bhindi, 1997). The first defines authenticity as a service view of leadership. In this dimension leaders earn the commitment and loyalty of other staff members through their personal interactions. Additionally, the strategies the leader

uses to shape the organisational structures, processes and practices (reflected in the core values of the organisation) are central to this concept. The second element of authentic leadership involves a visionary dimension. Visionary leadership energises the work of the members of the school and builds community. The third element is one of spirituality where the leadership helps others to find and share meaning in the work they do. This also helps to promote moral and ethical decision-making. The final dimension of authentic leadership relates to sensibility. Leadership that is sensitive to the feelings, aspirations and needs of others is particularly important to attaining authentic leadership. This particular conceptualisation of leadership from a teacher's perspective is gaining popularity (Frost & Durrant, 2004).

3.3.1 Leadership is a Teacher Function

Each classroom teacher brings a unique combination of knowledge, experience, skills and values to the role. Through their interaction with students and other members of the school community, effective teachers are constantly concerned with promoting and developing high quality learning (and teaching) not only in their classroom but also throughout the school. Teachers exhibiting this quality are said to be teacher leaders (Fried, 2001). Teacher leadership is not a formal role, responsibility or set of tasks. It can be defined as teachers being empowered to lead particular tasks within the school which ultimately has impact upon the quality of teaching and learning within the school (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). That is, teachers helping teachers to improve in turn leads to increased student learning.

The practice of viewing leadership in schools as a function of teachers' work has increased in recent years (Crowther & Olsen, 1997). The type of leadership responsibilities a teacher adopts depends upon a variety of factors and can be categorised in six main areas of activity (Crowther & Olsen, 1997; Gronn, 2000; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). These can be categorized as follows:

      1) continuing to teach and to improve individual teaching proficiency and skill;

2) organising and leading peer review of teaching practices;

3) providing curriculum development knowledge;

4) participating in school level decision making;

5) leading in service training and staff development activities;

6) engaging other teachers in collaborative action planning, reflection and research.

The above role categories identify the function of teacher leadership as essentially collaborative and collegial. Supporting this viewpoint are the studies of Katzenmeyer & Moller (2001) that identified specific skills and qualities that were important to teachers' work. These include an ability to work with people, communicate well, develop rapport, trust and to be competent.

Teachers perform many organisational functions that include not only an instructional leadership function but also management functions and probably more importantly relationship functions. Historically these functions were the responsibilities of principals, deputy principals, subject co-ordinators and even senior teachers. However, some distributed leadership studies have defined the role of leaders more broadly and include individuals who are not in the formally designated leadership role (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Elmore & Burney, 2000).

In contemporary Australia, many teachers show, through their daily efforts of instructional teaching, leadership qualities and skills. The conclusions of an Australian study showed the link between strategic, transformational and educative leadership in the daily work tasks of effective classroom teachers (Crowther & Olsen, 1997). Likewise, another Australian study (Crowther, Kaagan et al., 2002) demonstrated a close relationship between teaching and leading school reform. In their *Teachers as Leaders Framework*, the authors conceptualise the daily work of teachers in terms of leadership

attributes. These attributes are often used to describe the leadership of principals and leadership teams.

3.3.2 *Summary – Implications for the Research*

The focus on leadership has moved towards a focus on the individual and away from the 'expert' and 'keeper of the knowledge'. This movement acknowledges the complexity of school life and by doing so places the teacher in a prominent position to impact upon the learning of the students. These recent studies warrant further analysis of the role of teacher leadership in schools. In particular, the relationship between the principal and the teacher leader is of importance in developing a clearer understanding of the role and impact of school improvement.

3.4   School Improvement

3.4.1 *Introduction*

It is of importance to this study to note the literature that reports the influence school improvement processes have on the development of teacher leaders, the role of the principal and how these impact upon the learning of students. In particular, it is important to understand how school improvement studies influence the environment that supports student learning and the role teacher leaders play in promoting school improvement. This is helpful when scrutinizing the viewpoint that teachers primarily, not schools, make the difference in sustaining student learning.

Research into school effectiveness and school improvement indicates that family characteristics and background have a greater impact upon student learning than individual schools (Hart, 1995). However, more recent research studies are demonstrating that schools do have a considerable influence (James, Duning, Connolly, & Elliot, 2005). In fact, through advancement in the use of technology, a more comprehensive range of statistical data are now available (Goldstein & Healy, 1995). The analysis of such data is presenting a more informed and in-depth viewpoint.

3.4.2   From an Effective School to School Improvement

The scholarship generated from recent doctoral theses have contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the effective schools conversation (Gartner, 2001; Hill, 2001; A. Townsend, 1992). A summary of such research provides some understanding of what constitutes effective schools. The research concludes that effective schools have:

1. a clear and well articulated school mission;
2. effective pedagogical leadership practices;
3. high community (staff & parental) expectations;
4. a safe, organised and positive environment;
5. ongoing curriculum improvement;
6. maximum use of instructional time;
7. frequent monitoring of student progress; and
8. positive home-school relationships.

                    (Taylor, Pressley, & Pearson, 2002)

However, developing an understanding of the essential characteristics of an effective school does not automatically provide effective strategies for creating them. Systems theorists (Wheatley, 1999) and researchers on school change (Fullan, 1992) continually advocate the inter-relatedness of such characteristics and comment on the unpredictability associated with them. Schools are complex and the planned and unplanned consequences of decision making impact upon the success of the school (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998). Therefore, it is not simply "characteristics" that make schools successful. It is the inter-relatedness of professional initiatives within their environment that is of particular importance (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000).

There are a number of driving forces underpinning student achievement in schools. When schools have a collective sense of responsibility for improving student achievement, more constructive discussion amongst staff and positive participation in school-based decision-making occurs. This sense of ownership of the process of school

improvement encourages teachers to be committed to its successful implementation (Potter, Reynolds, & Chapman, 2002). In addition, strong teacher collaboration is an affirmative indicator of schools dedicated to improving student achievement. Where teachers plan collaboratively with the focus on how to best meet the needs of the child, teacher quality improves (Hallinger & Heck, 1998).

However, before teacher planning can begin, the school needs an educational direction. Successful school improvement is dependent upon establishing and building a shared educational vision (Lambert, 1998; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). This vision is embedded in the mission of the school and is expressed in how the school institutionalised strategies concerning how well the school accomplishes that mission, identify areas for improvement, developing plans to change or implement new educational directions. The development of the vision is seen as being central to the learning process. It is the responsibility of leadership in the school to develop the processes necessary to achieve the goals of the vision.

The building of strong leadership is a common strategy used in effective schools with principals re-arranging timetables and providing feedback on teaching performance through supervision practices and encouraging risk taking by teachers. These are seen as supportive measures. When schools are expected to undertake school improvement, the central component of support given is through targeted professional development or in-service for school staff (Hawley & Valli, 1999). Provision for professional development in effective schools stresses the importance of teachers learning and changing as they reflect upon effective teaching strategies, how those strategies impact upon the assessment data collected and how the data alters the instruction process. Underlying the principles for effective professional development is the need for continuous teacher and school leadership team learning in an environment of collaborative problem solving. When professional development is provided as a set of workshops, programmes or events it is unlikely to have any long term impact upon student learning (Hawley & Valli, 1999). The message here is that schools need to be organized in ways that enable

teachers to learn collectively and to work as a team in addressing the deficiency in the teacher's knowledge of student learning. Such a collegial approach fosters increased ownership of whole school teaching initiatives and supports the school improvement process. Developing schools as learning communities (as outlined later) as a means for promoting a collaborative culture is an important starting point.

The importance of establishing collaborative cultures (Swain, 2002) is further explored in recent research (Crowther, Kaagan et al., 2002; D. Hargreaves, 1995). Where teachers work collegially on major school tasks signifying strong interdependence, shared responsibility and collective commitment, student learning is more likely to be enhanced. This suggests that through the establishment of collaborative cultures schools can create rich and meaningful learning environments for students and teachers.

Another emerging theme in the scholarship is the involvement of the family in the nurturing of the school's educational mission (Wenglinsky, 2000). Parents' intimate knowledge of their children assist teachers to understand more fully the students and their learning challenges, interests and capabilities. Using the new information provided by parents enables the teacher to develop meaningful teacher-student relationships. Such teacher-parent partnerships build trust and common understanding that enable teachers and parents to work together in ways that are beneficial (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005). This parental involvement demonstrates the importance of schooling and motivates students to be more engaged. Furthermore, the respect and positive communication that teachers receive from parents help to increase teachers' sense of efficacy and satisfaction. Consequently, building effective partnerships with parents promotes a positive school climate, improves communication and enables the daily life of the school to flow. The role of the teacher in fostering such school harmony is seen as critical to the overall effectiveness of the school (Swain, 2002).

3.4.3 Teacher Quality

The transformation of schools and the improvement in learning outcomes for students is seemly dependent upon the quality of school leadership. In particular, building a capacity for leadership sustainability is important (Caldwell, 2003; Lambert, 1998). The first step is to identify leaders and potential leaders early in their careers. It then becomes necessary to implement a framework for their professional development. Educational leaders have their origin in quality teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Taylor et al., 2002).

The traditional approach for assessing the quality of a teacher is usually an intuitive stance focusing on quality teachers being identified by their peers as successful (Fried, 2001). This stance acknowledges successful teachers as expert teachers, who use their knowledge about their students to develop lessons that link new knowledge to student experiences. By providing meaningful experiences, expert teachers engage students more in their learning (Hattie, 2003).

While current research affirms teacher quality as the single most influential factor in determining student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Rowe, 2003) how to define teacher quality is not an easy pursuit (Goldhaber, 2002). By following this field of research, focusing on individual teacher effectiveness within schools, it is possible to develop increased understanding of what makes schools more focussed on student learning.

The concept of teacher quality can be categorised into two distinct components. The first component, teacher preparation and qualifications, is concerned with what a teacher brings to the school personally. It focuses on the intellect, professional training, prior professional teaching experiences and personal demographics (Louis, 1998). The second component relates to teaching practices and refers to a teacher's ability to foster positive learning environments, to select appropriate instructional experiences and

assessment choices in the implementation of curricula (Darling-Hammond, 2000). These components are inter-related and both need to be taken into account in any understanding of what constitutes teacher quality.

While little specific research has been conducted concerning the relationship between quality teachers and the undergraduate institutions from which teachers graduate, research supports a positive correlation between student achievement and certain factors related to the teacher's training institution (Summers & Wolfe, 1975, 1977). These factors include services for students, specific facilities within the institution and even alumni support. In supporting teacher quality and with the need to attract student numbers at the tertiary level, universities are endeavouring to provide specialised factors to gain the winning edge (Australian Council of Deans of Education, 2003).

Adding to the discourse on the quality of the teacher there are a series of studies focusing on the link between the verbal skills of the teacher and the achievement levels of the students (Rowan et al., 1997). These studies identified a positive relationship between a teacher's own performance on word tests and the students' reading scores and this was consistent with findings of other similar studies (Fergusion & Ladd, 1996). Other studies concur that teachers' verbal ability (teachers' abilities to convey ideas in clear and convincing ways) is related to student achievement (E Hanushek, 1971; Murnane, 1985). These studies conclude that the strength of a teachers' verbal ability coupled with deep knowledge of subject matter influenced student achievement. It is evident here that the educational levels of the teacher are an accurate measure of teacher quality.

3.4.4 Student Achievement

When critiquing the evidence concerning the effectiveness of a school, the traditional measure of success is student achievement as measured by standardised tests (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). Using standardised tests in promoting educational reform and

change, places the emphasis on the varying levels of student achievement which in turn illuminates the achievement gap. Consequently, analysis of such tests has narrowed attention to two main areas; variables that impact upon the learning process and that of assessment and monitoring (Rowe, 2000).

One such variable is the socio-economic factor. The 1966 Coleman Report was a landmark study, which concluded that the socio-economic status of parents was the best indicator of a student's academic achievement (Coleman et al., 1966). However, other studies have identified that other issues (including teacher qualifications, school climate, teacher quality and pedagogy) now play critical roles in influencing the learning of children (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Wenglinsky, 2000). In addition, a number of other influences impact upon student achievement. These include gender, quality of instruction and preferred teaching strategies. Indeed research questions the appropriateness of traditional measures of student achievement. Given the multitude of variables gained from research over the past thirty years of educational research, it is important to identify within the individual school setting which factors influence substantially school improvement. Consequently, research question number one is: What factors are perceived by staff to impact on school improvement experiences initiated by the SCO?

In studying such factors it is recognized from the literature that the main form of measurement is via administration analysis and interpretation of standardized testing programmes (Lin, 2001). Once cohorts of children have completed regular tests, analyses of data provide teachers with information on trends in student learning. While this helps to provide structured feedback to students, it also allows teachers to redesign learning programmes addressing areas of deficiency or concern. The results of these annual tests also enable administrators to assess the success of planned school improvement programmes.

However there is considerable disquiet concerning this statistical approach to evaluation of teaching and learning. Elmore (2004) expresses the view that no external accountability will succeed unless there is also internal accountability:

> It appears from early research that school systems that improve are those that have succeeded in getting people to internalize the expectations of standards-based accountability systems, and that they have managed this internalization largely through modelling commitment and focus using face to face relationships, not bureaucratic controls (Elmore, 2004, p. 82)

Consequently, if schools do not have their own internal systems for focusing on instruction, student learning and expectations on teacher and student performance then schools will implement such external accountability measures in an incomplete fashion.

Indeed, the basis for comparisons of student achievement across schools as a means of studying the effects of a range of school improvement programmes has gained popularity in the public arena (Cimbricz, 2002). Spurred on by political intervention and heightened community expectations, a movement towards minimum benchmarks (or standards) in schools has, in some countries, seen the development of a means to judge the effectiveness of a school (Watson, 1996).

The sharing of student assessment data and the methods and techniques used in the classroom collectively to assist teachers align the instruction process to focus on improving student achievement (Goldstein & Woodhouse, 2000). This discourse has led schools and the wider community to use the results of student performance as a major factor in judging the quality of the teacher.

As noted, the use of standardised testing as a means of measuring student achievement (and effectiveness of school improvement programmes) has its critics. Many researchers have identified specific issues including the exclusion of students from

testing, the specific alignment of teaching testing skills and strategies to sit the tests and the sacrificing of instruction in other areas of the curriculum leading to a narrowing of the curriculum base (Cimbricz, 2002). Even the timing of the annual tests may provide inaccurate data to judge the success of learning, let alone conjecture about how results are interpreted at state and national levels for political gains. This debate has intensified in recent times with the quality of education being a high priority for all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (Rowe, 2000).

It is noted that the influence of the OECD countries implementing policies on student achievement has had an impact at the school level. In particular, countries including the United Kingdom, the USA and Australia have seen the inevitable consequence of comparing schools' performances in national testing programmes (Darling-Hammond, 1998b). These league tables enable parents ultimately to choose schools that would provide the best education for their children. Unfortunately, the downside of 'league tables' provides the social stigma of failure on so-called under performing students and schools, which once labelled makes it difficult to remove. This has a domino effect of negative consequences including reduction of enrolments, inability to attract quality teachers, lack of morale and motivation and a sense of failure.

This move towards an accountability model to define quality has minimised the initial freedom that originally attracted prospective teachers to the profession. The current dedicated testing environment discourages teachers from taking risks and initiating innovation in the classroom. This unconscious stifling of creativity restricts the decision making process and ultimately devalues the belief that a teacher's involvement makes a significant difference in promoting student learning. Since teacher efficacy is positively linked to promoting student achievement (Australian Council of Deans of Education, 2003; Ebmeier & Nicklaus, 1999; Louis, 1998) a more appropriate measure of student achievement is needed.

This particular issue has seen a movement towards performance-based assessment as a better measure of student achievement. This outcome based educational model views schools being judged not on courses taken and grades achieved, but rather on what students actually know and do as a result of their time at school. Research on schools fully integrating performance based assessments raises concerns by teachers on their workloads, the supposed consistency of teacher judgments, reporting to parents and alignment of this performance approach (Glatthorn & Jailall, 2000).

Furthermore, this area of research into student achievement (performance based assessment) has yielded mixed results (Darling-Hammond, 2000) and although the empirical data in this field is lean, current literature reveals two distinct components: learning and performance. Learning refers to information processing, comprehension and understanding, while performance is the demonstration of such knowledge. They co-exist and are reliant on each other and on the community to foster their success. This is where the climate of the school comes to the fore.

Educational researchers acknowledge the growing emphasis of school climate in influencing student achievement (Baulach et al., 1995; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). The adage that when the climate is right people are inspired to do their best is built upon such studies. In particular, school climate and its influence on teacher empowerment and motivation have been recognised as important factors influencing the pedagogical decisions of the classroom teacher. Literature on school climate has two distinct paths. The first associates school climate with the organisational practices of the school and reflects the 'personality' of the school (Donaldson, 2001), while the second path views school climate as the physical and psychological environment (Fried, 2001). Ultimately, the leadership behaviours of the principal contributes to the outcome of the climate of the school and its influence on student learning (A Hargreaves, 2003).

The inferences drawn from the literature in this field highlight the relationship between developing student motivation to learn and the role of the teacher in promoting set

standards. Research on studying student achievement poses a reciprocal approach and tends to measure teacher/student interaction, teacher preparation, teacher knowledge and teacher motivation rather than actual student learning (Baulach et al., 1995; Cimbricz, 2002).

3.4.5 Summary – Implications for the Research

School improvement is seen as a major focus of educational reform initiatives. The purpose of school improvement is improvement in student achievement. Improving in student learning is influenced by the quality of teachers. Learning and instruction are intertwined with the social and organisational context of the school as is the nature of the teacher/student relationship. Appropriate teaching is the single most important factor in student achievement. Providing greater focus on supporting the role of the teacher in the school is emerging as a major priority for school administrators (Taylor et al., 2002). How this is achieved is yet to be explored.

The relationship between the elements of an effective school and the role of the teachers in promoting such elements is clear. The organizational factors that contribute to the effectiveness of the school are in turn dependent upon the effectiveness of the personnel of the school. When addressing with the core mission of schools, learning, the role of the teacher is critical. For student achievement to be enhanced, effective schools focus on improving classroom teaching and teacher quality. An immediate question raised is how to define the essential teacher attributes that lead to high student achievement and how do schools provide opportunities to foster such attributes within their staff? Does higher teaching degrees or the particular university a teacher attended or the types of subjects studied make one teacher more effective than another? Therefore research question number two is: How do principals nurture the professional development of the SCO and teachers?

3.5 Encouraging Learning Communities

3.5.1 Introduction

Contemporary education invites increased flexibility, less teacher driven instruction, more concentration on student learning processes and the use of technology to mediate learning tasks and to monitor student achievement. All of these warrant a more focused approach to teacher learning and the facilitation of the culture of learning in schools (Ash, 2000). For this to occur, the challenge is to build a 'leadership oriented' culture in schools.

Effective schools achieve improvement in student achievement despite a turnover of staff (Ingersoll, 2001). How well any school does this depends on factors such as internal communication and the assimilation of individual knowledge into new work structures, routines, and norms (Williams, 2002). Learning communities become the matrix for enhancing personal capabilities of each individual and then mobilising these within the organisation (Andrews & Lewis, 2002). In order to function as a learning community the school needs to address three areas; personal capacity, interpersonal capacity and organisational capacity (Mitchell & Sackney, 2003).

3.5.2 Purpose of Learning Communities

The defining feature of the learning community lies in the responsibility all members have for creating the environment or context for the learning to occur (Joyce, 2004). Staff, while embracing the view that learning is the purpose of the school begin to articulate common goals and ensure that their practices and the procedures of the schools are aligned with that purpose. Once a common purpose is realised, a good health indicator of an organisation can be identified by the motivation, the sense of job satisfaction, and the well being of the staff. This is dependent upon attention to the collective values held by the organisation (Lewis, 2002).

An investigation into learning communities (Leithwood, Leonard, & Sharratt, 1998; Louis, 1998; Halia Silins, 2000) has identified four specific dimensions that characterise the nature of the learning community. The first relates to the presence of a trusting and collaborative climate. Where a school's climate and culture engage staff in collaborative work processes, information is shared and open communication is evident. Once a comfortable enriching climate develops, staff members move to the second dimension characterised by taking risks and showing initiative. School leadership that develops structures to support experimentation, rewarding teachers for taking initiative and making teachers feel valued, enhances the esteem of the community. As a result members are likely to participate and share in the mission of the school. This includes decision-making and developing ownership of the direction of the school. This third dimension of sharing the mission is central to the learning community concept and promoting school improvement. The final dimension of the learning community is commitment to professional development. The interaction of staff in sharing their skills and knowledge leads to a continuous improvement in their performance and more importantly an increase in student learning.

Additionally, research on organisational learning in high schools (Leithwood et al., 1998) added an additional two dimensions. The first, environmental scanning, refers to the multitude of activities that a school is involved in and the way in which these activities inform the development and decision making of the school. The second is review and this refers to the level of priority given to reassessment of programmes and practices of the school. Addressing these dimensions provides schools with the foundation to attend to the issue of organisational culture and promotes innovation and change (Gaziel, 1997).

Complementing Gaziel's research, the *Learning First Alliance* (Learning First Alliance, 2002) identified four core elements necessary to create and maintain schools as learning communities. These elements are identified in all schools regardless of the

varying circumstances of the community (ie rural, urban, affluent, and impoverished). The elements common to all schools are:

1) a supportive learning community where a strong sense of belonging is found. The community have shared values and goals;

2) systematic approaches to supporting positive behaviour, including approaches to improving school culture, developing focused classrooms and providing a continuum of support for students;

3) involvement of families, students, staff and the wider community in a relationship based upon respect;

4) standards and measures to support continuous improvement based upon an action research based framework are central to learning communities.

Increase in student achievement is directly linked to the positive elements of a learning community (Sergiovanni, 1996). Enhancing the knowledge and skills of individual staff members is often the basis of school improvement. However, it does not always guarantee the growth of the organisation. It is necessary to engage in collective learning through collaborative structures and networks and in doing so provide a team approach to school improvement. For learning communities to be created and sustained particular building blocks are essential to success. They include school mission, instructional programme, the accountability system and school leadership (Wohlstetter & Griffin, 1998). The promotion of commitment to these building blocks through a collaborative approach leads to an increase in teacher productivity including motivation to teach and creativity in teaching methods (Lambert, 1998). The consequence of this collaboration and sharing is the enhancement of student achievement.

While empirical research on the role of learning communities is relatively thin (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001) the development of a learning community would appear to centre on two underlying principles. The first lies in the creation of a supportive school culture. Fostering a supportive learning culture engages teachers in a collaborative

atmosphere, encouraging and motivating them to excel. The second principle is creating a knowledge based environment, that is, a place where trust is promoted and information shared. Recent work by Bryk (2002) has demonstrated that teachers working in top performing schools reported a higher degree of trust than teachers at lower performing schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). By openly sharing the knowledge of the organization with all its members, there is opportunity for the school to break down the traditional 'top down' structures. Where schools have embraced the learning community framework, teachers feel their work is more satisfying (Donaldson, 2001) and are more effective in the classroom (Hill, 2001).

3.5.3 Summary – Implications for the Research

Learning communities are established to continue to improve performance and build capacity to manage change (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998) and while no single definition of a learning community is preferred, common elements include vision directed, continuous learning, common responsibility and collaborative structures. Gathering all members and moving them towards commonly shared goals, and promoting best practices throughout the school is seen as the task of the leaders of the school.

Developing a learning community is recognised as a significant strategy for improving student learning. It is also seen as a means of increasing the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of schools today (Lewis, 2002). This section also supports the findings of Crowther, Hann & Andrews (2002). In a study of selected schools in Australia where sustained student achievement was evident, the employment of parallel leadership was found. The employment of parallel leadership is seen as the central component of establishing learning communities. It enables three specific courses of actions to occur: school wide learning, culture building and a common school wide approach to pedagogy.

The learning community is built from within by its members and links individual learning to organisational learning. Learning communities are schools where the leaders have intentionally shaped the culture and acted to ensure all members of the community address the challenges and issues related to student learning.

4 CHAPTER FOUR - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: INFLUENCING STUDENT LEARNING

The purpose of this study is to explore how teacher leadership and the principalship nurture student learning. This chapter critiques the literature relating to teacher leadership, the role of the principal and student achievement.

4.1 Teacher Commitment & Motivation

4.1.1 Introduction

Contemporary research demands that the role of school leadership create "a fundamental transformation in the learning cultures of schools and the teaching profession itself" (Fullan, 2002, p 14). However, for principals to achieve this they need to engage their staff and influence them to willingly embrace change processes (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998).

The term "teacher commitment" is often used to describe the positive characteristics of a teacher. Teachers themselves view the term 'commitment" as forming their identity and defining their work (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004). While current literature is sparse in the area of teacher commitment, it is referred to in terms of a teacher's reaction (affective or emotional) to experience in a school setting (Ebmeier & Nicklaus, 1999). From these reactions to their school environment, teachers make daily decisions (both consciously and subconsciously) about their own willingness to devote themselves to that school setting or group of students. Some researchers (E. Atkinson, 2000; Fried, 2001) use "commitment" in the same vein as passion.

Teacher commitment is inextricably linked to career satisfaction and motivation. Understanding what is meant by the term motivation is generally narrowed to a

> …stimulus for behaviour and action in light of a particular context, while satisfaction – and indeed dissatisfaction – is usually taken to mean a product of behaviour and action in

light of a particular context or environment (S Dinham & Scott, 1998, p 362).

Such is the influence each has on the other, that the view of job satisfaction as an indicator of the (quality of) performance exhibited by a teacher is worthy of further exploration. While links between job satisfaction and teacher retention have been established by researchers (S Dinham & Scott, 1998; Mertler, 2002), what is particularly helpful to principals is insightful research on factors that influence job satisfaction will guide principals in fostering teacher commitment.

Commitment is considered to be part of the teacher's emotional reaction to their experiences in a particular school setting (Steve Dinham & Scott, 2002). The quality of a teacher's commitment is often enough reflected in the teacher's attitude and behaviour. Furthermore, it is the emotional reaction to the school setting that determines the extent of the teacher's commitment to that setting or even to a particular group of children. Consequently it influences a teacher's decision making.

Developing teacher commitment in schools contributes to the current discussions on the professional standing of teachers and supports the emphasis being placed on professional learning communities. Promoting teacher leadership consequently raises the quality of teacher instruction. The practice of collegial sharing of best practices inevitably leads to improved student learning. An Australian study on organisational learning and leadership practices that foster student learning concluded that building leadership capacity within all staff dramatically increased student achievement (Halia Silins, 2000). Such a shared vision promotes a sense of ownership of the work environment.

The quality of a teacher's work life was found to promote teacher commitment (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004). Engaged teachers work harder to make their classrooms productive, to implement innovative programmes and become involved in extra curricula

activities. Increasing teacher commitment to improving student-learning is the first step towards increasing a student's commitment to his or her own learning.

4.1.2 Influences on Teachers' Workplace

A teacher's role takes place in the context of a particular school environment and is influenced by many factors. Often these factors are outside the control of the classroom teacher. The very essence of a teacher's work is influenced by specific school policy directions, decision making processes, support from parents, the nature of the children and the personality of the teacher (A Hargreaves, 1994). Understanding the complexity of the work environment assists leaders in structuring school improvement strategies to address student learning deficiencies. However, the challenge for principals is engaging teachers to undertake school improvement strategies.

The main theme resonating through the literature is the reluctance of teachers to embrace change (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004; A. Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). While change is notionally accepted as part of school life, the nature of change in the educational setting is frequently presented in conflicting terms. Teachers and administrators perceive the motivation for change as not aligned with providing positive outcomes for students (Patching, 1999) but rather the 'flavour of the month' approach. In many cases in school based curriculum development mandated change is often reversed at a later time (Bywaters, 2003).

Because teachers are central to the learning process they have an appropriate understanding of its specific needs and of the ensuing culture of the school. Their contributions to the discourse on school improvement are critical to the success of the improvement process. When teachers participate in improvement programmes of their own choice school reform is more likely to "succeed". Without their enthusiastic contribution, teachers are more likely to agree in principle to the imposed new expectations but when in the classroom return to their comfort zone and continue as

before. As a consequence of such non-commitment to innovative initiatives, the process fails (Thrupp et al., 2003). The literature identifies key reasons for such non-commitment.

Research portrays teachers as being stressed by the increase of structural pressures in their work place (Mander, 1997). These pressures include policy directions, coping with special education needs of children, attending to demands exerted by technological developments, responding to constant curricula changes and professional development demands. Addressing the increasing workload is seen as being dependent on several factors including parental involvement, principal and peer support. The conclusions of the *Teacher 2000 Project* (S Dinham & Scott, 1998) highlight the increasing feelings of inadequacies by teachers in light of rising expectations and greater responsibilities.

These rising expectations emerge from the wider school community where parental support is purported to be a major factor that contributes to the learning environment. Several research studies indicate parental support as being critical to a student's achievement at school (Learning First Alliance, 2002). Three common elements that impact upon the teachers' classroom work environment emerged. The first involves a home environment that encourages learning; the second is instilling in their children high expectations for achievement and future career prospects and the third is being involved in the child's education.

The context of the school contributes substantially to the extent of parental involvement. Where schools create and encourage parental involvement in various levels of school decision making, increased ownership and commitment to the school by parents is generated (Wenglinsky, 2000). Conversely, parents not actively engaged or informed are less willing to commit or support school based change. This engagement of parents in the learning cycle is a major part of a teacher's work environment.

However, when discussing a teacher's work environment, research emphasises the teacher's role inside the classroom (S. Drake & Miller, 2001). This focuses on the pedagogical process and methods of instruction. However, much of the teacher's work takes place outside the classroom and involves playground duties, attending staff meetings, discussions with parents of student performance, coaching teams, marking work samples, writing school reports, preparing lessons or running peer professional development in-service. While some of these tasks are accepted as part of the professional life of a teacher, they illustrate evidence of an ever expanding workload (S. Drake & Miller, 2001).

Contributing to the workload is the use of curriculum reform as a catalyst for systemic reform. Although reluctantly embraced by teachers (S. Drake & Miller, 2001), the tasks of curriculum reform are often the stimulus for teachers to accept educational innovations. Consequently, teachers supporting each other in a collaborative culture of learning seem more likely to embrace innovative curriculum reforms and classroom initiatives. This collaborative approach helps teachers to realise that they too are learners and that the school is in fact a learning organisations for all, including teachers. Thus curriculum reform facilitates the conditions for teachers to develop and improve their own teaching practices.

While schools have undertaken numerous waves of change, the growing list of responsibilities and the increasing burden of accountability has also impacted upon the work of the teacher. Teachers are expected to do more than maximise the formal learning opportunities for their students. They are expected to enable students to be able to contribute meaningfully to society when they enter the adult world. Political and economic pressures placed upon schools to ensure students have the necessary skills to make a contribution to society are increasing (Patching, 1999).

A contribution to these expectations is the popular debate on class size. There is a view that teachers' work loads are reduced with smaller class numbers (Rowe, 2003).

Allowing teachers more time and opportunity to work productively with each student is associated with increased academic achievement. While this view is refuted in the literature (Rowe, 2003), in the public domain there is a continued pressure to reduce the number of children in each classroom (Learning First Alliance, 2002).

As teachers engage with new technologies to promote student learning new pedagogies likewise need to be generated (A Hargreaves, 1994). Teachers are not able to rely on their own prior knowledge and practices. They must be dedicated to ongoing learning throughout their professional lives to meet the ever changing 'chalkface'. To support such teacher development necessitates a changing view on the role of the classroom teacher.

Consequently, the nature of the classroom teacher has moved from one of isolation where the outside of the classroom had little effect on the inside. Changes to decision making, decentralization of services and curriculum reform has forced the teacher to be more collaborative. Such collaboration occurs with colleagues as well as with outside agencies. This movement has implications as the classroom teacher moves away from pedagogical leadership to being a leader of learning. Teachers teach students how to learn, to solve problems and be life-long learners. Schools are becoming places where learning is also about nurturing tolerance, embracing conflict resolution, engaging in team building and promoting personal responsibility for others. This change in the role of the teacher impacts upon job satisfaction concerns.

4.1.3 Teacher Job Satisfaction

American research in the early 1990s identified two distinct motivations (Mertler, 2002); intrinsic (personally based) and extrinsic (externally based). The literature identifies intrinsic aspects of teaching as those such as student achievement, personal recognition, the art of teaching, responsibility for and the opportunity of career promotion. This view equates with how the teacher feels satisfaction about his/her job.

The extrinsic matters of work relate to working conditions, supervision, work policy, salary and interpersonal relationships (S Dinham & Scott, 1998). Moreover the lack of resources created stress among teachers thus lowering their sense of efficacy and even affecting their attendance at school (Corcoran, Walker, & White, 1998). These particular factors are more likely to generate increased teacher dissatisfaction.

Moreover, an American ten year study from 1985 to 1995, and involving both intrinsic and extrinsic matters associated with teachers' work, concludes that teachers are deriving more satisfaction (54%) from their work compared with ten years earlier (44%) (Latham, 1998). Although teacher satisfaction has increased since 1985, nearly half of the teachers who responded did not find their profession satisfying. These dissatisfied teachers communicate their unhappiness to the students through unprepared lessons, lack of interaction with students and peers, poor communication, lack of motivation for their profession and poor collegial relations (Evans, 1997). The challenge remains to identify factors that schools can control in order to help teachers achieve career satisfaction.

These conclusions have been linked with Australian research. In a study of the leadership aspiration of teachers in Victorian government schools, teacher job satisfaction was found to be influenced by the personal experiences of the leaders of the school (Lacey, 2002). In particular, the role of the principal has been a major factor in determining teacher satisfaction. Teachers who are dissatisfied with their career often have less satisfying interactions with their principal. Additionally, these interactions are less frequent (Markow & Scheer, 2004).

Clearly then, teacher job satisfaction is a key predictor of teacher retention (Lacey, 2002), an indicator of teacher commitment (Mertler, 2002) and a vital influence upon school effectiveness (Lambert, 1998). However, there has been some conjecture as to what contributes to job satisfaction. Motivation is an individual's response to a situation and is not observable although it is possible to observe the actions that seem highly

motivated. This is important when examining job satisfaction. Job satisfaction causes teachers to be motivated to achieve, however, the reciprocal argument (that motivation causes satisfaction) is also evident (Evans, 1997). Regardless of the existence or direction of causality, satisfaction and motivation are linked (Denzine, Cooney, & McKenzie, 2005).

It is hardly surprising then that elements of job satisfaction, including principal leadership has been related to support teacher retention (Andrews & Lewis, 2002). In particular, positive development of teacher morale and the collective sense of contentment in the workplace throughout the career of a teacher are dependent upon effective leadership, realistic expectations and the alignment of personal and professional values and goals (Evans, 1997). Unfortunately, job satisfaction does not equate to job commitment (Sturman, 2002) and while teaching can be a satisfying career, creating commitment to a career in a particular school appears to rely more upon factors beyond working conditions. School effectiveness and school improvement presuppose a teacher's personal commitment to the education profession and the mission of the school (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2002). School culture that emphasizes a positive work environment and provides affirmation and recognition of teacher performance encourages teacher enthusiasm (Swain, 2002). It is clear that teacher satisfaction is recognised as a major component in promoting school improvement.

Undoubtedly teacher satisfaction influences job performance and ultimately student achievement (Mertler, 2002). The main contributor to job satisfaction is working with children while dissatisfaction is the result of work overload, challenging student behaviours, perceived lack of support and perceptions of how teachers are viewed by society (Evans, 1997). Research on teacher commitment has used attitudinal measures of liking the job and the school as indicators of commitment (Louis, 1998). Teacher commitment is related to a teacher's sense of efficacy. Moreover, a teacher's sense of efficacy is seen as a critical factor in raising student achievement (Louis, 1998). A sense of efficacy has been described as a "psychological disposition in which the teacher

believes he or she is able to achieve their goals and/or have a sense of personal mastery" (Louis, 1998, p 4). A key feature of a sense of efficacy is situation specific rather than a characteristic of a person's personality. Therefore a teacher may feel contented and effective in one school setting but not in another. This idiosyncratic experience raises the question of how to improve the social-psychological condition of teaching, including both intrinsic and extrinsic matters, as a means to improve student learning.

4.1.4 Teacher Involvement

A growing body of research is demonstrating the strong link between improving student learning and teacher leadership (A. Harris, 2002; A. Harris & Chapman, 2002). In fact, with the move to decentralisation, providing teachers with opportunities to discuss whole school change strategies not only enhances teacher commitment to the reform process, but also promotes collegial support and dialogue in school faculties. However there is a negative side to increased participation by teachers. Increased shared decision making by teachers seems to have made the role of the teacher complex and stressful (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004).

However, a series of USA studies support the contrary proposition that active participation in the choice of the whole-school reform design increases teachers' commitment to the model (Muncey & McQuillan, 1996). In fact, encouraging teachers in the decision-making process from the beginning creates a natural accountability that positively influences the implementation of the reform and is essential to achieving successful classroom-level changes; teachers who, conversely, perceive top-down decision-making are more likely to resist engaging in the restructuring effort. Empowering teachers to participate in decisions regarding curriculum, pedagogy and assessment is a shift away from traditional patterns of authority in schools (Short, Rinehart, & Eckley, 1999)

Teacher empowerment in schools has expanded the role of teachers in planning and decision making and is seen as an alteration of the distribution of power in the workplace (Short et al., 1999). For this to happen, issues including trust, open communication and risk taking are central to increasing teacher effectiveness within the school. This understanding of empowerment requires leadership that develops a collaborative, professional environment built upon trust and respect (Ebmeier & Nicklaus, 1999).

Some research argues that leadership is something that flows through an organisation and is seen as a process providing a fluid interaction between its members (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Senge, 1992). The ongoing consequence of such fluidity is continuous improvement in student achievement and for this to occur, the key to improving schools lies in improving the interactions among teachers and between teachers and principals (Barth, 1999). For the relationship between these key stakeholders to be successful, an authentic leadership platform for these interactions is needed (P Duignan, 2006).

To ensure student learning is sustainable, engaging the leadership capacity of many people within the school is necessary. Further to this, improvement in student achievement is more authentically cultivated when leadership is instructionally focused. Giving teachers recognition for the leadership tasks they undertake on a daily basis provides the platform for ongoing teacher professionalism and the key figure for this to occur is the principal (Creswell & Fisher, 1999).

Consequently, improving teacher effectiveness is the first step in improving student achievement (Rowe, 2003). Promoting teacher leaders in a school leads to an increase in confidence and expertise, encouraging teachers to take on greater responsibility, attempt innovative teaching methods and support school reform. This involvement contributes to better job satisfaction and is justified through a meaningful sense of challenge and control.

Such involvement necessitates close working-relationships. Research has concluded that the fostering of collaborative work practices based upon collegiality and trust enhances student learning (Blase & Blase, 2001). It also sponsors a positive platform for implementing whole school change. Moreover it is likely teachers would be inclined to remain in the profession when they feel valued and supported (Barth, 1999). Providing teacher leaders with varying roles of responsibility imbues them with renewed interest in the teaching profession. Consequently authentic participation in school improvement leads to a sense of commitment and loyalty to the school. Such participation helps promote the leadership capacity of teachers.

Teacher leadership is built upon a collaborative approach to decision making empowering teachers to take responsibility for leading school improvement. Through roles such as mentoring, opportunities are provided for teachers to help develop the capacity of other teachers. This in turn benefits the school community as teacher effectiveness is promoted, impacting positively on student achievement.

4.1.5 Summary – Implications for the Research

Schools are becoming more responsive to the authentic learning needs of students as teachers gain more power over the decisions that directly affect the classroom. This power more likely positively influences teacher commitment, which is a critical ingredient in the promotion of student achievement in schools. Commitment however, is dependent on many inter-related factors, which collectively promote school improvement. Developing a personal passion for the teaching role together with a sound knowledge base appears to be the most productive path for promoting student achievement. The importance of teacher commitment is emphasized by its links with quality teaching, ability of teachers to adapt to change, teacher retention, teacher stress and burnout, overall 'health' of the school and the attitudes and motivation of the children. This being the case, a question on how a teacher becomes committed to student learning and

motivated to their chosen profession is raised. Consequently research question number three is: What motivates teachers to remain committed to teaching and learning?

4.2   Changing Role of Principals

4.2.1 Introduction

Traditionally, leadership positions in schools, especially principalship, are selected on the basis of qualifications, knowledge of and the delivery of curriculum and the techniques of managing an educational setting. However, in the post-industrial, information and technology age, new challenges are associated with the principalship. With a re-emergence of the debate on whether successful pedagogical leadership is an innate quality or whether it can be developed, a new focus on the role of the principal is emerging (Lairon & Vidales, 2003). This also sees the changing of roles and responsibilities and the breaking down of traditional school based structures.

The traditional role descriptions for principals focus primarily on the administrative and managerial tasks which are often expressed through a checklist of competencies (Williams, 2002). The ensuing lists of competencies portray a viewpoint of school as bureaucratic, with the principal mistakenly seen as an 'all knowing' guru. However, the school improvement literature repudiates this role for the school principal (Leithwood & Duke, 2000).

Traditional school structures of education are crumbling with the new era of educational requirements (Beare, 2001). The old career-path for the principal was based on a repertoire of school knowledge, years of experience and seniority in the school. This occurred when school life was stable and predictable. In contrast, contemporary school leaders are asked to:

> ….reform curriculum, restructure schooling, revolutionise pedagogy and establish new understandings of the cognition, social and emotional development of children and young

people. That's like building a plane while we are flying it (Bywaters, 2003, p. 57).

4.2.2 Distributed Leadership Role

The role of the contemporary school principal is complex. The principal carries dual accountability to both the school authority and to the school community. On the one hand there has been a "bureaucratically driven escalation of pressures, expectations and controls concerning what teachers do and how much they should be doing within the teaching day" (A Hargreaves, 1994, p 108). On the other hand, the principal is being inundated with bureaucratic accountability and system imperatives (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998). Consequently principals, within the current reform agenda, are caught between external imperatives of the system and the internal demands of the school.

To attend to the needs of an ever changing role, the principal needs to encourage a more informed, integrated and distributed leadership (A. Harris, 2002; Spillane et al., 2001). Contemporary school principals are taking on many leadership responsibilities including instructional, transformational, managerial, participatory and transactional, and the difference between these forms lie in the key assumptions and the nature and focus of leadership power (Leithwood & Duke, 2000). While the principal is the acknowledged school leader, it is debateable how the role of the principal directly influences student learning outcomes. A review of 40 empirical studies conducted between 1980 and 1995 concluded that the principal leadership effects, while important, were small; and secondly, that refined research frameworks were needed to identify those effects which led to student improvement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998).

The research implies that principals have an indirect influence on the promotion of student learning (Hattie, 2003). The direct impact by principals on student achievement was gained through close relationships with supportive teachers and by changing the

instructional environment. As teachers implemented agreed upon strategies student improvement was noted.

These strategies included mission/vision statements, academic expectations and curricula organisational structures. Studies of distributed leadership concur the principal's indirect impact on student learning is through the increased role of teachers in exercising professional judgement on a daily basis. Elmore's (2000) concept of distributed leadership is explicitly functional and expresses the view that leadership is the guidance and direction of instructional improvement (Elmore & Burney, 2000). Furthermore, the aim of distributed leadership concerns capacity for learning, improved teacher professionalism and increased student engagement (Copland, 2003; Crowther, Kaagan et al., 2002).

4.2.3 Emerging Principalship Roles

It is hardly surprising then that the critical factor in improving student achievement is principals working through (and with) others in the school setting to improve the in-house practices of the school. As principals invest time with teachers collaborating on instructional issues and improving working conditions, teachers reciprocate by being more committed to supporting school based decisions.

There is a subtle shift in what constitutes the role of the principalship. Principals are required to be catalysts in supporting the emotional and intellectual work of teachers (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998). With the focus on principals as change agents of teacher behaviour, an increased emphasis is being placed on learning as the core mission of schools. This emphasis is also characterised in developing effective learning communities as a means of improving the interaction of staff members (Fullan, 1992; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998). Research emphatically emphasises the role of the principal as pivotal to engendering and sustaining teacher learning.

This is not surprising, as a study of newly appointed principals highlighted that the skills and knowledge of new administrators during initial preparation is not entirely complimentary with their original position (Macmillan, Orr, & Sherman, 2000). There is an increasing discrepancy between the nature of teaching and the role of the school principal (Gronn, 2000). This difference can be addressed through increased concentration on identifying and supporting potential teacher leaders and the cultivation of a culture of leadership in schools.

In summary, the former paradigm which emphasised the predominant role of the principal as a manager has moved through a variety of cycles describing the principal predominately as pedagogical leader to that of transformational leader. The role of the principal in the new era of education is becoming synonymous with a multifaceted leadership framework and part of this framework is to work collaboratively with collegial staff. In doing so promotion of school improvement is through engaging collegial participation in the re-structuring efforts (Wildy, 1999). That means motivating and inspiring teachers to participate actively in the decision making process. For this to occur, principals must believe in the value of the new paradigm and act accordingly.

4.2.4 Leadership Behaviours

The traditional school leadership model asserts that leadership is synonymous with a single person in a position of formal authority (A. Harris & Lambert, 2003). In this model leadership responsibilities are delegated in a hierarchical system.

However, in high performing schools, the contemporary principal moves the school towards its vision, working collaboratively with all school community groups (Halawah, 2005). This interactive behaviour highlights the significance of a principal's interpersonal skills in promoting (or discouraging) commitment of staff to a common goal (Creswell & Fisher, 1999). Historically, this form of leadership is labelled as transformational (Murphy & Louis, 1994). Recent research suggests this conception is outdated and is "an

impediment to successful school reform and improvement" (Crowther, Hann et al., 2002 p 10) because its focus is on the single person. Leadership needs a broader concept that is separated from the person's role and a discrete set of individual behaviours. Consequently, a post-industrial leadership paradigm is emerging focusing on five distinct yet inter-related functions as outlined in Table 4.1.

Table 4-1: Five Functions of the Post-industrial Principal

		The Role of the Post-industrial Principal: Five Key functions
Function 1	Visioning	A preferred future is the guiding force that links all action and tasks of the school
Function 2	Identity generation	Building of quality relationships to enhance the commitment of the community towards its preferred future
Function 3	Alignment of organisational elements	Development of infrastructure to bring about innovation is school wide
Function 4	Distribution of power and leadership	Encouragement of teacher leadership
Function 5	External alliances and networking	Collaboration with others outside the school setting in innovations without compromising the distinctiveness of the school

The specific role of the post-industrial principal (Crowther, Hann et al., 2002) is heavily laden in nurturing teacher leadership. Through re-focusing the role of the traditional principal as the change agent (through mandated procedures) to one that cultivates leadership potential in teachers, a more sustainable school improvement process is made. The role of the principal in creating the necessary support for developing teacher leadership ought not be underestimated (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). The following quotation offers an astute insight into the importance of the principal's role: "A school [through its principal] must build its own teacher leaders if it is to stay afloat, assume internal responsibility for reform, and maintain a momentum for self renewal" (Lambert, 1998, p 3).

Consequently, astute principals cultivate an environment that nurtures the sustainability of leadership within the school. This theme is reiterated in a number of studies (Creighton, 1999) where shared governance structures were present. "It was not the inclusion of teachers in the decision making process that precipitated reform, but the commitment of the principals to change the way the school operated" (Creighton, 1999, p 23).

4.2.5 Summary – Implications for the Research

Principals influence teachers' commitment to their profession through the provision of work experiences, communication, job design, feedback and decision making processes. By these means, the principal becomes more responsible for influencing the collegial environment in schools by fostering shared goals, values and professional growth. The position of principal has seen a number of structural changes in role descriptions and in community expectations; possibly the most important expectation in the newly defined role of principals is to nurture leadership skills in teachers (Creighton, 1999; Macmillan et al., 2000). In addition research in the effective schools domain concludes that principals who demonstrate strong leadership skills and enthusiasm to be involved in the classroom create better schools (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998).

Although much research into the role of principal has been conducted in relation to collaboration and the importance of viewing teachers as professionals, little of the research has focused specifically on what principals need to do to foster the development of teachers as leaders within their schools. This raises the question of considering what principals can do and what strategies are productive to encourage such development. Therefore, research question number four is: How do principals and SCOs engage teachers in the school reform process?

4.3   Promoting Teacher Leadership

4.3.1 Introduction

While there is considerable literature in lauding the virtues of teacher leadership, there is far less available on how it can be nurtured by the principal. Emerging research concludes that when teacher leadership is flourishing in a school substantive reform is taking place (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). This implies that the quality of learning is thriving and the support for teacher leadership has been cultured. The consequence of supporting teacher leaders enables a more productive work environment. However, generating a practical and sustaining culture that nurtures teacher leadership is a challenging initiative.

4.3.2 Barriers to Teacher Leadership

For teachers and principals to engage in professional development appropriate time is needed (Hawley & Valli, 1999). From graduate teachers who are developing their teaching repertoire to the experienced teachers needing to engage with new ideas, the provision of professional development is an ongoing issue. To address this challenge, schools need to generate school based organisational methods and scrutinise alternative structures to enable a time efficient approach to professional development (Darling-Hammond, 1998a). This often invites a positive and proactive approach by the designated school leaders in promoting teacher development.

Unfortunately there are reoccurring barriers to such initiatives (Zinn, 1997). The negative attitudes of current leaders, the difficulty of leaders surrendering responsibility and the lack of positive interpersonal skills by potential teacher leaders inhibit the potential development of teacher leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). In addition, there is the influence of personal lives (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004); the lack of support from colleagues and the shortage of leadership opportunities (Lacey, 2002). Consequently, the desire to take on leadership roles can be diminished. Where senior leadership personnel is supportive of teacher leadership roles and actively promotes opportunities

to develop leadership skills, other teachers accept the influence of their colleagues (Ash, 2000). Consequently, teacher leadership derives not from formal authority but rather from influence, respect and trust.

Additionally, the current school structures that are embedded in formal authority inhibit teacher leadership (A Hargreaves, 1994). These include inflexible classroom teaching positions, formal and informal policies, ambiguous role descriptions and top-down directives. These structures inhibit creativity and personal commitment to teacher leadership and consequently devalue the role of the individual teacher leader in the promotion of school improvement (A. Harris, 2002).

Outside the school developed structures, professional development opportunities and training programmes may also hinder the development of teacher leaders. Since a major characteristic of teacher leaders is that they are often full-time or part-time teachers with added positions of responsibility in schools, attendance at and access to professional development opportunities, are a concern. Teacher leaders in the absence of such opportunities have generally learned a new role just by doing it (Zinn, 1997).

However, teachers are vocal concerning the inadequacies of learning a new role through osmosis. An Australian study on the aspirations of teachers in Victorian schools to move into leadership positions reported a number of contradictory conclusions (Lacey, 2002). While acknowledging that the opportunity to motivate, to impact upon student learning and opportunity to shape educational vision were appealing aspects of being part of senior leadership, the difficulty of the tasks, stress and time needed to accomplish the new responsibilities were factors that influenced teachers to disengage from teacher leadership opportunities.

Further research has confirmed these observations. The role as being too difficult was not the only influencing factor (Lacey, 2002). Lack of confidence, 'bad' prior

experiences, a perceived lack of support from peers and poor relationship with administrators were the factors concluded from Zinn's (1997) study that influenced the success and failures of teacher leadership. From this study, the interpersonal influences on teacher leaders are seen to correspond with findings by Katzenmeyer & Moller (1996). In particular the attitude and interaction of colleagues often influence their leadership choices in order to maintain harmonious partnerships. Resentment or a sense of jealousy towards teacher leaders is often the result of being seen as the favourites of the principal (Zinn, 1997).

Consequently principals can be both a barrier and promoter of teacher leadership. The sharing of power and new understandings of school-based leadership are critical if the teacher leader is to develop skills and knowledge (Frost & Durrant, 2004). A significant strategy for promoting effective school restructuring is the fostering of participation by all staff members (Wildy, 1999). Interestingly, Wildy's research concludes that the decision making undertaken by principals leans heavily towards an autonomy approach rather than that of collaboration. Principals argue time pressures and work place constraints hinder collaborative approaches to decision making. Research concurs that with the bureaucratic nature of schools (fuelled by system imposed policies, rules and regulations) principals are hesitant to give teachers major tasks of responsibility. Principals believed that ongoing collaboration impedes the efficiency of the school as teachers lack the appropriate skills to facilitate collaborative decision making (Murphy & Louis, 1994). Collaborative practices inhibit school growth as decision making processes induce more opportunity for conflict within the school, hinder open discussion and lead to inoperative decision making (Murphy & Louis, 1994).

Therefore, for teacher leadership to be effective, principals need to not only foster supportive relationships but also provide opportunities to develop strong interpersonal skills. The concept that leadership belongs to all members is the assumption that underlies actions, behaviours and personal relationships (Sergiovanni, 1996) and it is through the interactions between the principal and the teacher leader that the success of

school improvement is critiqued (A. Harris & Chapman, 2002). Consequently, the building of the relationship is a key factor in promoting the development of teacher leaders and the building of a collaborative school culture.

In a collaborative school culture, where trust and openness are present, teachers feel at ease in stepping into leadership roles (Swain, 2002). Conversely, a school culture that is devoid of such trust and openness hinders such development. Failing to understand school culture and its dynamics leads to a fragmented staff which limits the impact of any school improvement (D. Hargreaves, 1995). However, once the school culture is understood the next step is developing the appropriate leadership skills within staff necessary to facilitate school improvement.

4.3.3 Developing Leadership Skills

Aspiring administrators need to integrate managerial, pedagogical and transformational leadership qualities and balance these roles according to the needs of the school. Traditional leadership positions have evolved around hierarchical arrangements in schools from heads of departments to committee members and master teachers but little is documented regarding formal programmes that enable an emerging leader to become a principal or take on more formal leadership roles within the school. Research into new leadership roles has emerged with teacher leadership being an integral ingredient to sustaining school reform (Crowther, Kaagan et al., 2002; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Consequently, there has been an increase in tertiary institutions developing programmes to help provide avenues for teachers to formally gain specific skills required for assuming leadership roles in schools (Australian Council of Deans of Education, 2003).

Although the decision to accept leadership roles is the choice of individual teachers, principals have an important influence on teachers to take on leadership roles outside the classroom (Lacey, 2002). Principals who offer teachers with the opportunities to

experience 'acting' leadership roles in schools enabled teachers to gain valuable managerial and leadership insight. According to Lacey (2002), a 'leader in waiting' can gain personal confidence to handle administrative roles leading to teachers aspiring to take on leadership roles through to the principalship level. Spending considerable time in schools, learning through exposure to real challenges, interacting with successful leaders, and practising with real problems, is where teacher leadership begins. People learn leadership by actually leading.

A key component of the 'leader in waiting' model is the involvement of mentoring by key personnel in the school. Mentoring is seen as a significant step forward for developing teacher leaders (Czaja, Prouty, & Lowe, 1998). Mentoring introduces a more positive view of collegiality, teacher recognition of work, open communication and a positive environment providing principals and senior administrators with a foundation for developing teacher leadership potential. Because opportunities are abundant in educational settings, mentoring provides a practical platform for developing (and initiating) teacher leadership potential. While not specifically stated, after an 'acting role', if a teacher is not involved in a formal leadership role in a school, the"acting role" experiences have a positive influence on class professional behaviours. While the teacher may not have career ambitions as a principal, this strategy is beneficial for the teacher and directly influences student learning.

4.3.4 Leadership Aspirations

Research by Lacey (2002) on the factors that impact on teachers' leadership aspirations highlights the importance of succession planning. The deliberate and methodical attempt by schools to employ, develop and retain teachers who have demonstrated leadership competency is an essential strategy for building a successful school (Leibman, Bruer, & Maki, 1996).

Unfortunately, the early focus of leadership succession centred on preparing potential leaders who demonstrated competence in the classroom to replace others leaving leadership positions. Research in relation to a dwindling teaching force indicates the urgent need to address leadership succession as a means of focussing on the attraction and retention of the best personnel at all levels of school structure (Adey, 1995; D'Arbon et al., 2001). This is of particular importance as research indicates that almost 25% of teachers in Australia leave teaching during the first five years of their employment (Adey, 1995). Moreover, lack of administrative support and lack of support from peers were influential factors in teacher attrition and dissatisfaction (Ingersoll, 2001). Other reasons for leaving the teaching profession include loss of enjoyment of teaching, negative student behaviour, interpersonal issues either at work or away from work and own family commitments (Wilhelm, Dewhurst-Savellis, & Parker, 2000). However, addressing these concerns is seen to be the role of educational authorities.

Catholic education has attempted to introduce strategic leadership processes into schools as a means to increase the availability of future leaders within schools (D'Arbon & Dorman, 2004). However, for this to occur, educational authorities will need to support schools in developing and implementing policies and practices for the recruitment, development and retention of school leaders. Promoting quality teachers, while leading to sustained student achievement, will provide quality leaders in the future.

4.3.5 Summary – Implications for the Research

Research about teacher leadership effects is limited and reports ambivalent conclusions. The literature has identified studies of educational leadership that focus on people in positions of authority to studies of whole school change that emphasise the need for leadership to be distributed among many members of the school community. The barriers to distributed leadership are overcome through the promotion of authentic nurturing relationships between principal and teacher leaders. With the fostering of such relationships teachers are more willing to take on leadership responsibilities within the school.

Many of the earlier studies focused on formal teacher leadership roles that have emerged out of traditional career paths. Consequently, the professional development programmes that followed these studies centred on seniority leadership succession theories (Hart, 1995). This may in part explain the tension between studies that focus on the management of running of schools and those that focus on the core business of learning. Add to this the reports on teacher shortages which cite organisational and industrial issues as the main contributing factors, then this study is timely (Adey, 1995; D'Arbon et al., 2001).

4.4   Conclusion to the Literature Review

This chapter has reviewed the literature relating to teacher leadership, the role of the principal and student achievement. It has drawn on the research of studies in these areas and the synthesis of their conclusions has offered insights into the research problem underpinning this study. In particular the review focused on the following three areas and their inter-relatedness:

1. Teacher Commitment and Motivation
2. Changing Roles of Principals
3. Promoting Teacher Leadership.

Research on differing aspects of school life and their influence on student achievement draw similar conclusions: the programmes, events and activities occurring in schools largely depend upon the quality of the leadership within the school (Fullan, 2006; A Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Providing teachers with a more defined leadership role in schools is emerging for many reasons. Principals and members of school leadership teams no longer have the time nor the skills to lead the school and unless classroom teachers have the opportunity to share their pedagogical expertise, those with career ambition have only one option namely to move into administration positions where they are lost to the classroom (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).

While evidence suggests that teacher quality makes a difference to student learning in schools and that the leadership behaviour of the principal influences teacher job satisfaction and motivation, there has been little inquiry into the effects on student achievement that may be associated with the relationship between teacher leadership and the role of the principal (Creswell & Fisher, 1999; Steve Dinham & Scott, 2002). Research is clear in its findings; that if you want to improve student learning the most important step is to improve the schools where the learning takes place.

The next chapter, the Design of the Research, will explain and justify the research design adopted in the exploration of the relationship between teacher leadership and the role of the principal in nurturing student learning.

5   CHAPTER FIVE - DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

5.1   Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore how teacher leadership and the principalship nurture student learning. The purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify the research design adopted in the conduct of the research.

The research questions that focus the research design are:

1. What factors are perceived by staff to impact on school improvement experiences initiated by the school curriculum officer?
2. How do principals nurture the professional development of the school curriculum officer and teachers?
3. What motivates teachers to remain committed to teaching and learning?
4. How do principals and school curriculum officers engage teachers in the school reform process?

5.2   Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework provides the overarching direction to focus the research. It offers a lens through which the conduct of the research is viewed and justifies the structure for implementing it. The theoretical framework emerges from the articulation of the research questions derived from a more complex understanding of the research problem and consequently guides the research process.

Table 5.1 provides an overview of the four sections of the research design. The first section, epistemology, explains why the constructionism paradigm is appropriate to underpin this study. Secondly, the theoretical perspective used to enable a logical process for the research is interpretivism. In particular the appropriateness of symbolic interactionism is explored. The third section offers the rationale for using case study as the research methodology. In the fourth section a number of data gathering strategies

are explained. The second half of this chapter identifies the participants chosen for the study, explains how data are to be analysed, how trustworthiness is maintained and how ethical issues are honoured.

Table 5-1: Research Design

Paradigm	Components
Epistemology	Constructionism
Theoretical Perspective	Interpretivism • Symbolic Interactionism
Research Methodology	Case Study
Data Gathering Strategies	Open ended Survey Interviews Participant Observation Document Analysis

5.2.1 *Epistemology*

The research epistemology is a perspective that explains the nature and origin of knowledge; it is concerned with what knowledge is and how it can be negotiated (Crotty, 1998). More specifically, epistemology refers either to the development of common bodies of knowledge or to the establishment of personal knowledge.

Since the purpose of this study explores classroom teachers, leadership team personnel and school principals making sense of their world, the epistemological stance chosen is constructionism. The epistemological underpinning of constructionism is employed to reveal the meanings of leadership embedded in the language of principals, SCOs and teachers as they articulate their responses to the research questions (Crotty, 1998). Constructionism acknowledges realism in a personal and subjective way as human beings engage with the world they are interpreting.

Constructionists negotiate their reality through concepts of culture and language. Constructionist inquiry seeks to "understand the complex world of lived experience from the view point of those who live it" (Schwandt, 2000, p. 118). While constructionism holds that learning is essentially dynamic, each participant constructs his/her knowledge of the world into a unique pattern connecting perceptions, experiences or understandings in a personal way that the participants become connected into a matrix of significant relationships to the wider world. Constructionists honour the need to interpret their world (Crotty, 1998).

For constructionists, knowledge is created and negotiated, not discovered (Schwandt, 2000). Being concerned with the perspective of an event, constructionists "invent concepts, models and schemes to make sense of experience and, further continually test and modify these constructions in light of new experiences" (Schwandt, 2000, pp. 125-126).

In addition, through the interaction of the researcher and the interpretative stance taken to explain meanings, knowledge is seen as being individually constructed (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, in relation to a studied phenomenon, it is expected that participants may have differing meanings. This particular study seeks to understand reality through the eyes of the principals, SCOs and other teacher leaders as they make meaning of their reality in the context of nurturing student learning. Consequently, it is through the constructionist lens that multiple meanings emerge and are honoured in a research context (Crotty, 1998).

5.2.2 Theoretical Perspective

A theoretical perspective provides a basis for understanding the world (Charon, 1998). It ensures and justifies that the methodology and data gathering strategies chosen are congruent with the research purpose (Crotty, 1998).

Because this study involves an understanding of the personal and professional perspectives of principals, SCOs and other teacher leaders, their viewpoints, motives and reasoning, an interpretivist lens is adopted. Interpretivists argue that every teaching and learning encounter is a new experience and is partly independent from previous situations. This interpretative approach allows the researcher to understand the nature of the interaction of the participants within a specific education environment. The data for interpretivist research is generated from those whose behaviour is under study. It is through interpreting how the persons understand and negotiate their contexts that the interpretivist generates meaning of the participants' behaviour (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). Humans are always "meaning makers", and not usually under the control of forces they do not or cannot understand. Interpretivist researchers seek to understand how participants negotiate situations and act (Merriam, 1998).

The use of this approach emphasises the following key assumptions (Schwandt, 2000):

1. any event is composed of many inter-related factors;
2. people make sense of their world based upon personal experiences;
3. the aim is to develop individual understanding rather than universal generalisations;
4. context makes a difference; and
5. the inquiry is always value laden.

The interpretative paradigm can incorporate a variety of particular approaches. These include phenomenology, hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism (Charon, 1998). Each has a unique stance and conceptualises how the participants (their experiences, actions and interactions) relate to their reality.

5.2.3 Symbolic Interactionism

This particular study invites the personal knowledge of principals, SCOs and teachers gained through their interactions with peers within specific learning environments. As a result of the workplace environments, an interpretation of their shared experiences can

only be understood and articulated through the common use of language and symbols derived from the working environment (Charon, 1998). Therefore it is appropriate to use symbolic interactionism as a framework to understand the meanings of their shared experience.

Essential to Symbolic Interactionism is the notion of people as constructors of their own actions and meanings. Humans live in a physical world and the objects in that world have meaning for them. They are not always the same objects for the same people, nor are situations interpreted in the same way. Symbolic Interactionism is an "attempt to break away from traditional science and to view the human as maker, doer, actor and as self directing" (Charon, 1998, p 203). Consequently there are four deciding parameters that underlie the focus for Symbolic Interactionism which guides this study. They are:

1. The environment provides constraints on the action of the participants;
2. Response to stimuli can be both conscious and unconscious;
3. Influence of our social world may shape our actions and intentions;
4. Action is limited by language and by symbols.
   (Charon, 1998)

The consequences of these four parameters are that the different ways the participants invest objects, events, or experiences with meaning form the central starting point for this research. In this study, the teachers' shared experiences, developed in a common setting, are articulated through the use of common symbols and language (Schwandt, 2000). It is also through the study of gestures and non-verbal communication that the researcher is able to establish meaning and understanding. It is sometimes the hidden message that is symbolically communicated that provides a truer reality (Schwandt, 2000), thus there is more knowledge to be gained than merely from transcripts. The context and physical interactions need to be recorded.

However, it is acknowledged that within the context of this study, teachers and principals are continually adjusting their understanding of phenomena as new information is

interpreted. Thus, in the reconstruction of such subjective viewpoints, Symbolic Interactionism, is an appropriate theoretical perspective for analysing the social world.

5.3   Research Methodology

A research methodology is an orchestrating dynamic for the data gathering strategies used for research. The methodology most suitable for this research is the case study because this research "evolves around the in-depth study of a single event or a series of linked cases over a defined period of time" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p 317). The single event is the interaction between each principal, SCO and teacher leaders in each school.

Case study offers the opportunity for the researcher to explore a phenomenon ('the case') bounded by time and activity (e.g. a programme, event, institution, or social group) and collects detailed information through a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Merriam, 1998). In this study the phenomenon is the relationship between the principal, SCO and teacher leaders while engaged in their pursuit of improving student achievement. This case study is a descriptive record of individuals' experiences and/or behaviours.

There are four characteristics of case study. Case studies:

1. **Respond actively to participants' situations wherein the realities of life are examined** (Stake, 1998). In focusing on the life of Catholic schools within the Mackay region, interpretations and explanations offered by the participants can be critiqued. This enables an accurate account of the phenomenon to be recorded (Merriam, 1998).

2. **Provide rich descriptions of events, context and other variables** (Yin, 2003). It is the concern for the rich and vivid descriptions of the relationships between principals and teacher leaders that will provide the social truths (Bassey, 1999) for the case study. Because this study operates in an interpretive paradigm the focus on the reactions to decisions, events and the interactions of the participants will provide insight into the realities of schools (Bassey, 1999) .

3. **Present opportunity to develop assertions or generalisations** (Stake, 1998). In letting the case "tell its own story" (Stake, 1998) the case study engages the researcher in issues that will resonate with the reader. In this particular case teachers and principals will relate to the experiences of the participants of this study and draw their own meanings from the data (Merriam, 1998).

4. **Offer flexibility to explore interpretations and explanations** (Yin, 2003). Because the process of the case study emphasizes exploration rather than prescription or prediction, the researcher is comparatively freer to discover and address issues as they arise in the study. In addition, the looser format of case studies allows the researcher to begin with broad questions and narrows their focus as the study progresses rather than attempting to predict every possible outcome before the study is conducted (Bassey, 1999).

The case in this study is the relationship between principal and teacher leaders as studied across a number of schools in one region. This particular case study is a systems approach to research. It is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (ie schools within a particular region) based on extensive data collection. This type of case study, known as a collective case study is appropriate as a series of schools are observed and compared (Stake, 2000).

One of the main qualities of a case study is that the finished product is characterised as " a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 1998, p 29). It enables an empirical study of a particular event in a real life situation. A key strength of the case study involves using multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering process. The data gathering strategies used are outlined in the next section.

5.4   Participants

Initially, all teachers (N = 924) across the diocese were invited to participate in a survey in order to see how they share beliefs, attitudes and viewpoints. Although the survey was voluntary, time was provided at a staff meeting to complete the survey. The data from this initial survey provided direction for the interviews and focus groups. The involvement of participants in the interviews and focus groups was confined to teachers

situated within the context of seven Catholic primary schools within the northern region of the Diocese of Rockhampton.

5.4.1 Selection of Participants for Interviews and Focus Groups

The participants for this study fell into three distinct groups; principals, leadership team members and classroom teachers. All principals and leadership team members within the Mackay district of the Diocese of Rockhampton were invited to participate. Depending upon school size, each school's leadership team was comprised of a Principal, Assistant Principal – Religious Education, Assistant Principal – Administration, and a School Curriculum Officer. As such they formed a naturally occurring group within the boundaries of the administrative area of their school.

However, all classroom teachers were purposefully selected based on criteria established for the case as stated below. Purposeful selection ensured that the selection of teaching staff who had deep knowledge and understanding of the functions of school life were able to contribute constructively to the research. A minimum of two classroom teachers from each school in the northern region were chosen to participate in the focus groups and interview processes. Principals nominated classroom teachers as potential teacher leaders with the two main criteria for selection as a teacher leader being as follows:

1. Minimum three years teaching at the school, and

2. Involvement in local school based change.

Specifically identifying teachers enabled the researcher to "discover, understand and gain insight from [those] which can most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). Consequently, letters of invitation to participate were sent to the nominated teacher leaders.

The description of participants is summarised in Table 5-2.

Table 5-2: Research Participants

Participants	Individual Interviews	Number of Focus Groups	Number Participated in Focus Groups	Open Ended Surveys Received
Classroom Teachers	32 24 Female/ 8 Male	2	8	75
School Curriculum Officers	7 7 Female	2	7	18
Principals	7 2 Female/ 5 Male	1	7	12

Invitations to attend the focus groups and interviews were sent to participants. The invitation included a letter of introduction from the researcher (Appendix B) detailing the research project, a copy of the consent form for persons participating in research (Appendix C) as outlined by the ACU Research Projects Ethics Committee and that approval to conduct the research had been obtained (Appendix A).

As a means to identify the data sources, a coding process was developed to distinguish between participants. All participants were labelled on the transcripts in order of interviews. Principals are prefixed by the letter P, teachers with T and leadership team members (Assistant Principal - Administration, Assistant Principal – Religious Education and School Curriculum Officer) with LT. The number that follows the letter enables the data to be tracked to its original source.

For example (P1, Q13) denotes the first principal interviewed answering question 13.

In the focus group interviews the coding is denoted by the prefix PFG, TFG or LTFG while the number refers to the group. For example (PFG1, P3, Q2) refers to principal focus group 1, with Principal 3 responding to question 2.

5.5   Data Gathering Strategies

The evidence for a case study can come from six major sources; interviews, documents, archival records, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artefacts (Yin, 2003). The following data gathering strategies were used in the conduct of the study.

- Open Ended Survey

- Interviews

    o   Semi structured

    o   Unstructured

    o   Focus Groups

- Participant Observation

- Document Analysis

Figure 5-1 illustrates the relationship between the data gathering strategies in the conduct of the study.

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Figure 5-1: Data Gathering Process
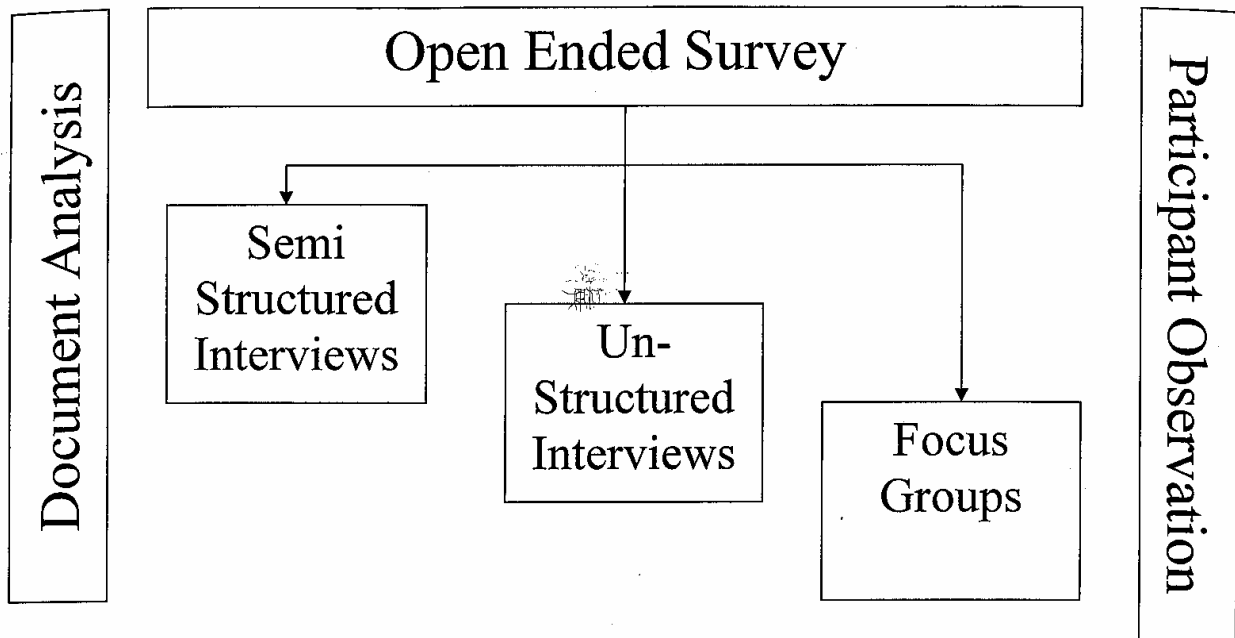
5.5.1 Open Ended Survey

Where a large number of participants make it impractical to interview, an open ended survey can provide a process to gather a large volume of data. Additionally, through such a survey participants can be assessed collectively to see how they share beliefs, attitudes and behaviours (Punch, 2003; Silverman, 2005).

As well as enabling cross referencing to other data collection strategies used in this study, responses from the open ended survey will help to refine the structure of the interview processes and inform the interview and focus group questions. Consequently, the data gathered from the open ended survey is used to make informed questions for the interview and focus groups. The open ended survey devised to initiate this study is tabled at Appendix D.

5.5.2 *Interviews*

Interviewing involves a face-to-face interpersonal situation in which an interviewer asks respondents questions designed to elicit answers pertinent to research hypotheses and records their answers (Yin, 2003). Consequently, interviews are an important strategy for a case study as they enable the researcher to probe into the perspective of the participant. For this study three specific types of interviews were chosen; semi structured, unstructured and focus groups.

Semi-structured interviews also variously described as in-depth interviews (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005) or focused interviews (Yin, 2003) involve a series of open-ended questions based on the topic areas the researcher wants to cover. This particular interview style allows the participants to disclose their views on specific concepts to help align the research context and its influence on interpreting the data (Merriam, 1998). Consistent with the Symbolic Interactionism assumptions, participants are able to provide multiple interpretations of a particular event. The three key assumptions are:

1. people do not respond simply to stimuli, but act towards things on the basis of the meanings which the things have for them;
2. that people give meaning to the activity of others as well as give meaning to their own action; and
3. that meaning is handled in, and adjusted through an interpretive process used by people in dealing with the things they encounter (Patton, 1990).

The second type of interview used in this study was unstructured interviews (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). Unstructured interviews have very little structure at all. However they do enable the researcher to administer questions in the same way. The strength of this form of interviewing is that it enables the participants to direct and focus the interview. In doing so, participants have the freedom to recall specific observations of interactions and to elaborate in depth. This is consistent with Symbolic Interactionism assumptions that view the world as socially constructed and subject to multiple interpretations. The use of unstructured interviews is appropriate for this study because it provides opportunities for the researcher to unpack participants' perspectives on relevant topics

and allow participants to discuss deeply their meaning. These meanings can be further refined during more structured interviews.

The third type of interview chosen for this study was the focus group interview. Focus groups are a variation of in-depth qualitative interviews in which several people are interviewed together in a flexible and exploratory group discussion format (Wilson, 1997). The emphasis is on the interactions between participants rather than between the researcher and participants. The purpose of focus groups is to explore participants' ideas in a public setting so that the interviewer can observe how they react to each other's ideas, when they challenge others' views, and how their opinions are formed (Wilson, 1997). This form of interview is appropriate for this study as it enables a re-articulation of perceptions which surfaced during the initial interview settings. Appendix E contains the interview and focus group schedules.

5.5.3 Participant Observation

Schools have their individual ethos and cultural rules. It is within these that teachers, principals and students interact, often unconsciously. The value of participant observation as a data collection strategy is that the researcher is actively involved in the reality of the participants' responses. Participant-observation allows the researcher to be physically present in the events being studied. The technique provides some first hand opportunities for collecting data, but could face some major problems as well.

Participant observation occurred during visits to the schools associated with the teacher interviews as well as during time spent meeting the principals and SCOs in their schools. Each principal's meeting and subsequent school tour enabled field notes to be taken.

Since the major purpose of the participant observer is to "observe the activities, people and physical aspects of the situation" (Spradley, 1980, p 45), the researcher is able to delve more into the social world of the participants. Consequently the data gathered

through this method relate directly to teachers, SCOs and principals in their particular roles and contexts. This data are gathered in the form of a research diary and note taking of observations.

As noted in the literature (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003), "the study of observable events is better accomplished by the observation of those events than by a collection of retrospective and decontextualised descriptions of them" (P. Atkinson & Coffey, 2003, p 112). This is accomplished through an exploration of statements made by participants and the actual realities of school life. By observing behaviours first-hand any discrepancies between the perception and reality can be identified.

While Spradley (1980) identifies three types of participation (passive, moderate and active) for the observer, the chosen method for this study is that of passive observer. This enables a low key approach allowing for minimal disruption within the school setting.

Observing principals, SCOs and teachers in their school settings allowed consideration of both their formal and informal interactions. Some examples of the various interactions noted were: morning announcements, sick children, late arriving students, conversations with parents, interactions with students and staff members, classroom observations, playground and bus duty, telephone calls, and year level meetings.

5.5.4 Documentary Analysis

In the organisational culture that underpins school life today, impressions of management strategies are gaining increased importance. School documentation highlights community opinion and expectations. Even self-promoting documentation gives valuable insight into the values and the thinking of the school community.

Documentary information is seen as a major source of evidence used in case studies (Yin, 2003). Three major documents available to the researcher for analysis included public records, personal documents and physical material (Merriam, 1998). The usefulness of documents within a case study is that they are embedded in the context. Documents are ready-made sources of data that do not depend upon a participant being available to the researcher, nor do they intrude upon an individual's comfort level (Merriam, 1998). They are materials that can be used to supplement the interviews and stimulate the researcher's thinking about concepts emerging from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In this particular study, documents relating to appraisals, school renewal, school development plans and the like helped uncover meaning, develop understanding and discover insights into the research problem. Documents were collected from all the school sites visited and analysed with the interview data. Other examples of documents that were used as sources of data were staff and parent handbooks, staff and committee meeting minutes, year level meeting minutes, school policy and procedure manuals, and correspondence between principals and staff members. The documents were an important source for learning how participants felt about what they were experiencing in their schools and how it was impacting on them.

5.5.5 Data Collection Timeline

The integrative nature of the chosen data collection strategies enabled the researcher to build upon data as the study unfolded. The timeframe and order of data collection strategies are outlined in Table 5-3.

Table 5-3: Data Collection and Analysis Timeframe

Stages	Data Collection Strategies	Data Collection Stages			Data Analysis Methods
Stage One	**Open Ended Survey I**	Term One 2005	Step One	Pilot survey with single school	Collated responses analysed with tentative themes emerging
		Term One 2005	Step Two	Survey collated and amended survey developed	
	Open Ended Survey II	Week Five, Term One	Step Three	Diocesan schools surveyed	
Stage Two	**Focus Groups**	Term One 2005	Step Four	North Region Focus Groups – Principals	Thematic analysis using QSR NVivo
		Term Two 2005	Step Five	North Region Focus Groups – Teacher Leaders	
	Unstructured Interviews	Term Two, 2005	Step Six	Selected individual interviews – principals, leadership team members and classroom teachers	
	Semi Structured Interviews	Term Two, 2005	Step Seven	Selected individual interviews completed following analysis of unstructured interviews	
Stage Three	**Document Analysis**	Term Two, 2005	Step Eight	Analysis of relevant documents	Thematic analysis using QSR NVivo

5.6   Analysis of Data

Data analysis begins with the first data collection strategy and involves the organisation of data and making sense of it. "Emerging insights, hunches and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of data collection, which in turn leads to the refinement or

reformulation of questions" (Merriam, 1998, p 153). This process is iterative and is not a linear process.

5.6.1 Data Analysis Framework

Before the data collected were analysed, it had to be documented and edited. Interview data needed to be transcribed, surveys collated and observations documented. The rich data collected was documented in context before it was transformed into text in readiness for analysis. The documentation process involved three steps; the recording of data, the transcribing or editing of the data and construction of the new reality produced by the text (Hodder, 2003).

This process complements the three levels of the analysis process (Merriam, 1998). The first step, *descriptive accounts* enables the researcher to compress and link data in a way that provides meaning. The *category construction* step follows and focuses on constructing recurring themes. The categories are most commonly constructed through a constant comparative method of data analysis (Anafara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002) where units of data are sorted into groupings that have something in common. This process is represented in Figure 5-2. Once the data is categorised (and re-categorised), inferences, interpretations and the generation of theories begin. This step, *theory building,* enables the researcher to untangle the relationship between the categories to provide an understanding of the relationship between them (Merriam, 1998).

Figure 5-2: Representation of the Constant Comparative Method

Data collection

Data display

Reflection on Data

ITERATIVE   *SIMULTANEOUS*

Data Coding

Data distillation (reduction)

Generation of Themes

Story interpretation

Conclusions and Report
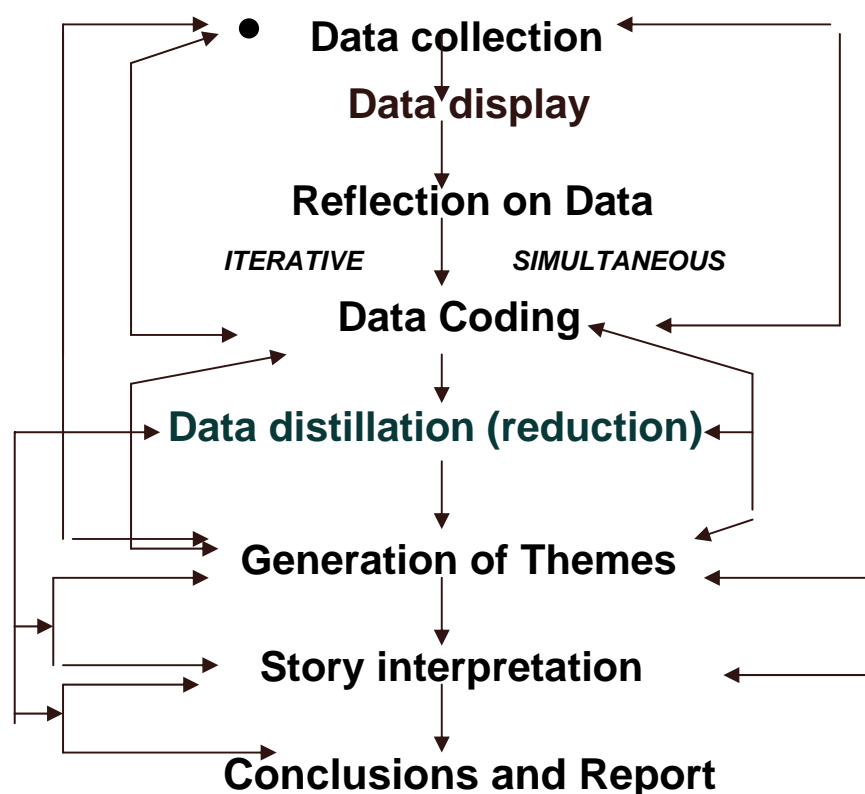
The research methodology chosen for this study is the case study which brings particular challenges to the data analysis process. The main consideration for case study researchers in analysing data is the communication of understanding (Stake, 1998). This is important as the data collection strategies may "present disparate, incompatible or even contradictory information" (Merriam, 1998, p 193).

Stage One of the data collection for this study was an open ended survey, the primary purpose of which was to gather organisational data of the case study to build the data analysis phase (Yin, 2003). Since data analysis begins with the first data collection strategy, this organisational data gathering step provided the means to accommodate emerging themes in preparation for the interview phase.

Stage Two incorporated the interview phase. In regional groups, principals participated in focus groups as did the nominated teacher leaders in the northern region. Consistent with case study methods of data gathering and analysis (Charmaz, 2003) individual interviews took place as data was analysed, categorised and compared with existing data. These in-depth interviews were audio-taped, and then transcribed generating large amounts of raw data. The interview texts together with the research notes recorded during the interviews were reviewed regularly. As the field work unfolded, it was necessary to vary the interview process to cater for and build upon data gathered.

Since this study was a multiple case study conducted over seven sites, data collected in this phase were analysed both individually (single school site) and then collectively (across the schools). This "within-case analysis" and "cross-case analysis" (Merriam, 1998) provides opportunities to understand the role of contextual variables when analysing data. The final stage of the data collection functioned as a means of answering new questions and confirming new interpretations that arose from the data analysis.

The initial management of data within this study included keeping a reflective field log, compiling analytic files and the development of basic coding schemes (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). While the large volume of data was initially collated, the interpretative nature of selecting and sorting during the collection stages made the data more manageable as the analysis stage progressed.

Once the initial management of data was finalised the next stage of analysis comprised of three key phases; analytic coding, data reduction and axial coding (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). In this phase, the researcher focused on classifying and categorising data in order to begin to make connections, themes and meanings from the initial analysis.

During this phase of analysis, units of data were renamed and reassigned in order to help the data illuminate meaning.

This refining processes led to the final coding category titled "selective coding" (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Continuing the coding process, selective coding aims to develop a single category where other developed categories can be grouped. This enables the story of the case to be put together.

It was from analysing the blocks of text (from transcribed interviews, observation notes, memos, journals) that the framework for data analysis was developed. Through an understanding of the participants' experiences in detail, identifying common categories and concepts from the texts and then linking the concepts into themes, a detailed analysis was made. It was through the constant comparison (Boeije, 2002) of themes across the data links that connections were made.

5.6.2 Organisation of Data

The collated data from the initial Diocesan survey enabled a refinement of interview questions for the focus groups and one-to-one interviews. The interview data were transcribed from audiotapes. After each interview the interview was transcribed and entered into the computer software programme, QSR NVivo. This computer software package is a toolkit designed to assist in managing and synthesising ideas and providing a range of tools for clarifying understanding of the data and for arriving at answers to research questions (L. Richards, 2002). The QSR Nvivo software provides for the storage of all documentary data and utilises a node system for representing all the topics and categories pertinent to the research project. Nodes are the "containers for ideas, concepts, themes and interpretations of information emerging from the data" (L. Richards, 2002, p. 35).

The nodes were created as the data was coded. The literature review was the genesis for creating the codes which were generated from each transcript as it was read and re-read. Such a thematic approach enabled concepts, categories and themes to be identified and developed as the research was conducted. The following table (Table 5-4) illustrates the categorization process using a portion of text taken from an interview with Teacher 4.

Table 5-4: Categorisation of Data – Using Excerpt of Interview with Teacher 4

Question by researcher: Q2. Fine. So do you think teaching has changed much over the years? **Teacher 4 Responds:** I think there's a lot more pressure. I think there's a lot more that parents expect us to do. Some come into the classroom to help with reading groups, but they only come to check you out. Then they have coffee with other parents and criticise you. And not only the parents, admin expect a lot more. And admin themselves are expected to do a lot more so that gets passed down to us and we're having to be more and more accountable for each and everything that we do and be able to give reasons why we done it and all the rest of it. Sometimes you know I think we have to be psychologists and help you know. Parents might have had an argument they might be arguing between each other at home and of course the kid comes to school and the kids upset and then we get, sometimes in preschool we'll get dad who'll show up and dad's not allowed to have custody of the kids so we sort of have to be half social workers and a bit of everything.

This portion of text has meaning and contains a variety of major ideas. Teacher 4 has commented on the pressure caused by a myriad of expectations placed upon the classroom teacher. For example, the increased demand on the classroom teacher is expressed in the statement *'we're having to be more and more accountable for each and everything that we do'*.

Data, such as the above, were then coded using the node creation facility of the software. Once all the documents are coded the node search function can be utilized where nodes could be combined, searched and analysed in multiple ways. Relationships among categories were identified as they were grouped together.

Consequently node trees began to form highlighting the relationship between the nodes (See Figure 5-3).

Figure 5-3: An Example of Creating Tree Nodes to Organise Data Using NVivo

(1) CULTURE

(1 1) procedures

(1 2) structure

(1 3) school characteristics

(1 4) rules

(2) WORK PRESSURE

(2 5) parent expectation

(2 1) children behaviour

(2 3) family commitment

(2 2) Time

(2 2 1) Release time

(2 4) KLA expectations
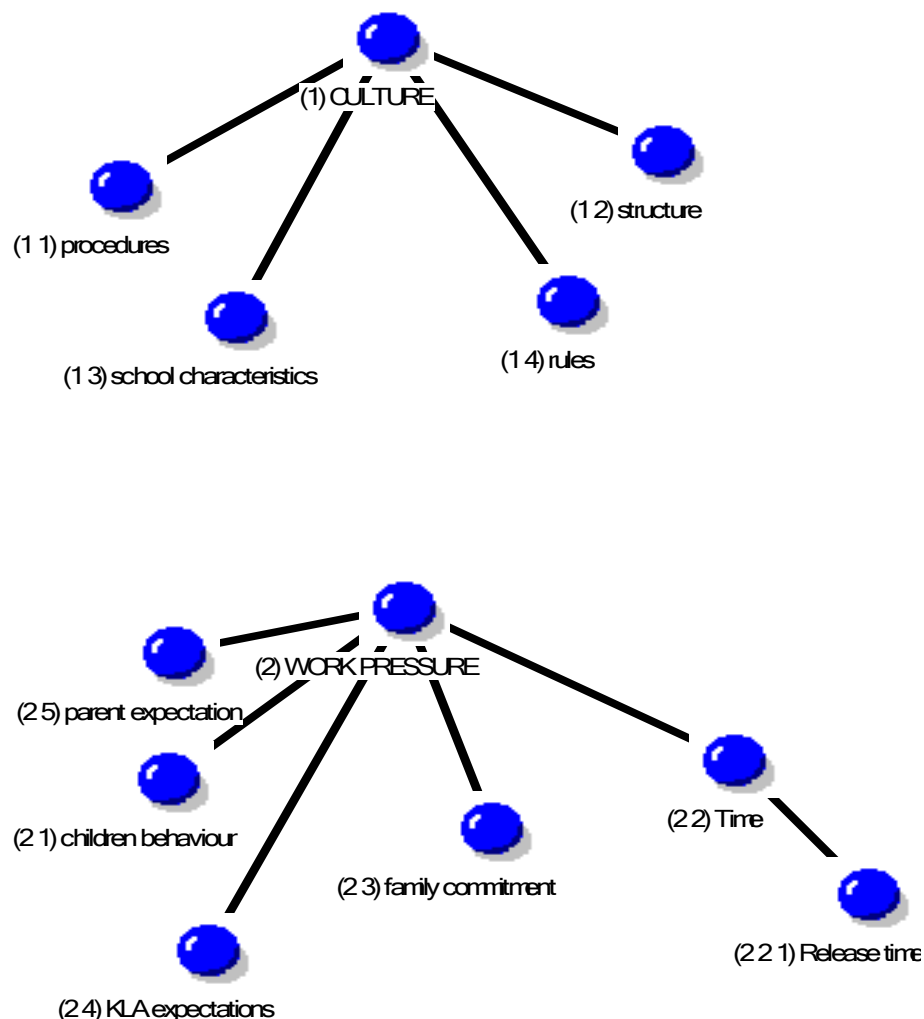
Prominent themes emerged as the tree nodes were formed and analysed. As these themes emerged they were clarified, confirmed and some even became redundant as transcripts were read and analysed. Table 5-5 illustrates the themes generated from the tree nodes.

Table 5-5: List of themes and sub themes elicited from the data

CULTURE	VISION	SCHOOL RENEWAL	TESTS
Policy	Common direction	Common understanding	Standardised
Rules	School goals	Strategic directions	Basic skills
Procedures		School improvement	Class based
Structure			Teacher accountability
School characteristics			
WORK PRESSURE	**PLANNING**	**STAFF**	**PRINCIPAL**
Children behaviour	Teams	Knowledgeable	Appraisal
Family commitment	Programmes	Inservice opportunities	Building relationships
KLA expectation	Timetables	Support	Accountability
Time		Collegiality	Supporting teachers
Release time		Teaching practices	Workload pressure
		Well-being	Changing role
		Supervision practices	Paperwork
		Mutual trust	
		Attrition	
CHANGE	**RESOURCES**	**STUDENTS**	**TEACHING**
Shared	Facilities	Welfare	Interruptions
Mandated	Teacher requisites	Family support	Parental support
Negotiated with staff		Behaviour	Love of students
INSTITUTIONS	**LEADERSHIP**	**WORKING CONDITIONS**	**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
CEO	Fear	Marking	Timing
Government mandates	Responsibility	Timetables	Personal
	Interpersonal skills	Playground duty	School focused
		Remuneration	Influencing learning
		Principal view	
		Staffing matters	
JOB SATISFACTION			
Students			
Staff relationships			
Principal support			
Teacher morale			

Interviews, observations, and the results of the Diocesan survey were triangulated as part of the data analysis to confirm themes as patterns. An "audit trail" to include the researcher's journal, original transcripts and interview notes was maintained.

5.6.3 Interpreting the Data

Themes emanated from the data and were defined and redefined. Following this process the themes were linked to the research questions and outlined in Table 5-6.

Table 5-6: Data Themes Tabulated Under Individual Research Questions

Research Question One	Research Question Two	Research Question Three	Research Question Four
What factors are perceived by staff to impact on school improvement experiences initiated by the school curriculum officer?	*How do principals nurture the professional development of the school curriculum officer and teachers?*	*What motivates teachers to remain committed to teaching and learning?*	*How do principals and school curriculum officers engage teachers in the school reform process?*
Educational vision	Government directions	Teacher frustration	Changing role of the principal
Evidence driven & collaborative decision making	Professional development	Relationship with principal	Principal workload
Staff relationships	Impact of teachers' personal lives	Love of teaching	Providing directions
Provision of resources	Quality teaching	Love of children	Exerting influence
Influence of school climate	Assessment & reporting	Fear of leadership positions	
School organisational factors		Staff collegiality	
School complexity		Teaching work conditions	
School working conditions			

5.7   Trustworthiness

Since research is concerned with "producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner" (Merriam, 1998, p 198), it is necessary that the research results are trustworthy. Trustworthiness refers to the degree to which the data obtained and the interpretations made captured the reality as seen from the perspectives of the participants (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In this study, this is undertaken in two ways to maximise the trustworthiness of the data gathering and analysis process. Because of the need to obtain data from more than one location and source, the decision to use a case study methodology and a variety of data collection strategies was made. Secondly, the researcher's local and professional knowledge served to constantly review data in terms of participants' perspectives.

Also contributing to the trustworthiness of the data is the implementation of multiple data collection methods (Glesne, 1999). Creswell and Miller (2000) advocate eight verification procedures although it is acknowledged that some procedures are more appropriate for particular research methods (Creswell, 1998).

The research methodology chosen for this research was case study. To this end the following three procedures were implemented to ensure that validity and reliability were adhered to:

5.7.1 Role of the Researcher

In any interpretive research, the researcher needs to outline any bias or assumptions that may impact upon the inquiry. Influence of the researcher can shape the interpretation and the manner of the study (Creswell, 1998). Interpretivist theories recognise that any interpretive study is influenced by the values of the researcher and the participants. This is important because of the influence the researcher's background may have on the interpretation of the data.

At the time of this study the researcher had undertaken a third principalship and had been involved in Catholic education since 1986. Having experience in three different dioceses has enabled the development of knowledge of school organisational practices. Although known to participants through professional circumstances, such familiarity provided acceptance, trust and respect of the participants involved.

5.7.2 Triangulation

Through the use of a number of data sources to form themes or categories, evidence is corroborated (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This study utilized four different data gathering strategies (as nominated in Table 5-1) to gain information from three groups of participants (principals, leadership team members and teacher leaders).

Consequently, it was possible to collect information about different events and relationships from different points of view. Cross validation across the data gathering strategies determined whether or not the data could be validated. Additionally, the use of multiple data sources ensured that other participants could provide clarifications and insights on sensitive issues.

5.7.3 Member Checks

Through the focus group and semi-structured interview strategies, participants in this study were able to provide confirmation of the interpretations of data collected during the data collection phase. Ensuring the final account of the raw data is accurate is a crucial step to maintaining credibility (Anafara et al., 2002). It was through the member check process that refinements of the interview questions were made. In addition to this, the opportunity for participants to make comment on themes generated by the interview process aided the research process.

5.8   Ethical Issues

With the essence of this study being to explore the relationship between principal and teacher leaders, ethical dilemmas may emerge not only in regard to the collection of data but also in the broadcasting of findings.

In adhering to the ethical guidelines as set out by Australian Catholic University's Research Projects Ethics Committee, clearance to conduct the research was sought. In addition, Section 3.5 outlined the selection of participants. Obtaining consent from the Diocesan Authority and participants was sought via specially designed consent forms outlining the purpose of the research, the data collection strategies and the participants' roles in the study. These forms are included in the appendices. As part of this consent form agreed protocols (or rules) were established including:

- Participation in the study was voluntary;

- Participants' privacy was upheld and not invaded;

- Ensuring the interview process was responsibly conducted;

- Data was recorded accurately; and

- Respect for and honesty with all participants was assured.

Finally, the data collected both in its raw state and through the process of analysis were stored as a hard copy in a filing system at the researcher's home and electronically on the researcher's laptop computer. Security in the home office ensured the safety of the material.

5.9   Overview of Research Design

In this chapter, the research design has been explained and justified. The interpretive approach that has been adopted is consistent with the nature of information sought from the personal viewpoints of the participants in the study.

Due to the nature of the research questions, the research design is embedded in the constructionism paradigm. The theoretical perspective, interpretivism, was chosen as this approach assists the researcher in understanding the nature of the participants' interaction with their school environments. Since this study focuses on how participants define their world and how that definition shapes their actions, a symbolic interactionism perspective was used.

Consistent with this theoretical perspective, the research methodology selected is case study. As the case study allows the researcher to focus on a singular event within a defined boundary, the relationship between the participants can be viewed as single cases. These single cases can then be compared and commented on. Consequently the data collection strategies chosen (open-ended survey, interviews, participant observation and document analysis) are congruent within a case study methodology.

Addressing the ethical issues for conducting this research enhances the results and findings are valid and reliable. An overview of the research design is represented diagrammatically in Table 5-7.

Table 5-7: Overview of Research Design

Source of Information	Data Collection Method	Data Analysis	Timeline
Stage One A *Developing initial survey to be trialled at pilot school* No. Teaching Staff = 20	• Open Ended Survey I	• Identification of issues raised and problems perceived with survey	Term One 2005
Stage One B *Survey all Diocesan Schools* No. Teaching Staff = 924 No. Principals = 35	• Open Ended Survey II	• Collation of Survey Responses • Identifying coding processes	Term One 2005
Stage Two *Interviews & Focus Groups* Classroom Teacher Interviews = 32 School Curriculum Officer Interviews = 7 Principal Interviews = 7 Teacher Focus Groups = 1 Executive Teachers Focus Groups = 1 Principal Focus Groups = 1	• Unstructured Interviews • Semi Structured Interviews • Focus Groups	• Listening to audio tapes • Transcripting and coding • Synthesising text for participants • Editing text where necessary • Reviewing research diary notes • Developing tentative interpretations	Term One & Two 2005
Stage Three	• Document Analysis	• Coding	Term Two

Reviewing school documents		documentation	2005
		• Comparing documentation with interviews	
		• Developing interpretations	

6 CHAPTER SIX - FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore how teacher leadership and the principalship nurture student learning. The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the research as well as to discuss the findings.

Previous chapters examined the context of learning and the current literature relevant to nurturing student learning. Arising from the literature review there emerged four major research questions, which focused the conduct of this study. They are:

1. What factors are perceived by staff to impact on school improvement experiences initiated by the school curriculum officer?
2. How do principals nurture the professional development of the school curriculum officer and teachers?
3. What motivates teachers to remain committed to teaching and learning?
4. How do principals and school curriculum officers engage teachers in the school reform process?

The presentation of the research findings is outlined under the four research questions. Consequently, the participants are not discussed individually or in school groups.

The issues that emanated from the data collation for each research question are presented in the following table (Table 6-1) as a means of guiding the reader through the chapter.

Table 6-1: Sequence of Findings and Discussion of Findings

Findings and Discussion of Findings

6.2 Findings and Discussion for Research Question One

      6.2.1 Educational Vision

      6.2.2 Evidence Driven & Collaborative Decision Making

      6.2.3 Staff Relationships

      6.2.4 Provision of Resources

      6.2.5 Influence of School Climate

      6.2.6 School Organisational Factors

      6.2.7 School Complexity

      6.2.8 School Working Conditions

6.3 Findings and Discussion for Research Question Two

      6.3.1 Government Directions

      6.3.2 Professional Development

      6.3.3 Impact of Teachers' Personal Lives

      6.3.4 Quality Teaching

      6.3.5 Assessment & Reporting

6.4 Findings and Discussion for Research Question Three

      6.4.1 Love of Children

      6.4.2 Love of Teaching

      6.4.3 Staff Collegiality

      6.4.4 Teacher Frustration

      6.4.5 Relationship with Principal

      6.4.6 Fear of Leadership Positions

      6.4.7 Teaching Work Conditions

6.5 Findings and Discussion for Research Question Four

      6.5.1 Changing Role of the Principal

      6.5.2 Principal Workload

      6.5.3 School Curriculum Officer

      6.5.4 Providing Directions

      6.5.5 Exerting Influence

6.2 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION FOR RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

What factors are perceived by staff to impact on school improvement experiences initiated by the school curriculum officer?

An analysis of collected data has revealed the following factors as being important in promoting educational change in schools.

6.2.1 Educational Vision

All principals and SCOs interviewed commented on the need to cultivate a common vision for the school. They saw it as a means of unifying both the staff and the school community. Principals saw that being part of the one school community helped in promoting unity and allowed them to provide guidance and direction. One principal noted there was a need to have everyone working towards the same goal:

> *If we all have the same music, we'll all end up singing the same tune. This vision gives us a common path to travel. Keeps us on the straight and narrow. (P2, Q17)*

Illustrating this further, another principal articulated this view more concisely:

> *The first thing we need to do is get the staff on side, develop their view points, engage them in the discussion and try and make the direction of the school more meaningful to them. Once they have the path they think is important to travel then we can get on with the job of improving the learning cycle. (P4, Q9)*

Other principals believed that in order to focus on school improvement the staff needed to understand the reason behind implementing any proposed improvement programme. An experienced principal at one school expressed the view that staff needed to "*see a purpose for using a new reading scheme*". A less experienced principal expressed this

particular point in another way. Needing to know why a new initiative was required, her point was illustrated in the following comment:

> *When we embarked on introducing streamed Maths and English lessons we had all sorts of "going nowhere debates" until we finally explained the link between our school's mission and how the re-organisation of class groupings addressed it. It was plain sailing after that (P3, Q7).*

Leadership team members attributed success in the classroom to how well the classroom teacher aligned their programmes to the school directions and annual development plan. Because they monitored class programmes they were able to identify which programmes aligned with the school vision and which did not. In particular SCOs were able to perceive which teachers were committed to the school vision.

> *When you mark teachers' programmes it is easy to tell who is committed to following the school goals. The strategies are embedded in their programme. Some teachers just do the same thing, year in and year out. They don't have the commitment (ET3, Q9).*

It is clear that the principals in this study articulate a vision that is not only influenced by the community (through its unique societal demographics) but which is also derived collaboratively with the school community. The position statement for the role of the principal in the Rockhampton Diocese clearly highlights not only the collaborative development of a vision statement but that a proactive implementation of the vision statement is expected. This development is a main component of the "Examination Phase" of the Diocesan School Renewal programme. To promote this, Diocesan principals are appointed by a panel comprising of equitable representation of school stakeholders (teachers, school board, Parents and Friends (P&F)) to ensure there is a correlation between the vision of the school and the skills, values and beliefs of the principal (Diocesan Catholic Education Office, 1999b). This ensures continuity between principals and ensures congruence with community expectations.

Successful schools have successful principals (Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004) who work constructively with their community to ensure that a common vision is enacted (Lambert, 1998). The promotion of an educational vision is central to successful schools (Marzano et al., 2005). What is particular about the participants in this study is the emphasis placed upon student learning by both the principal and the SCO. Comments by the participants about cultivating a common vision indicated a desire to work together. Furthermore, it was considered that the common vision enabled teachers to focus in greater detail on their role in the school.

It is from this articulation of school vision that the participants of this study derive meaning from their work. Developing class based programmes that support the directions of the school was an important initiative expressed by classroom teachers. The successful leader fosters not only this particular initiative but also the harmony between staff members as they develop consensus on the 'sense of direction' for the school (Cotton, 2003). As a result of common understandings both principals and SCOs appear to be able to develop specific structures to support the interaction of staff members and promote collaboration.

6.2.2 Evidence Driven and Collaborative Decision Making

Of particular importance to educational leaders in this study was appreciating how school improvement processes influenced the development of teacher leaders and the role of the leaders in supporting teachers. Principals appeared knowledgeable in the role of school improvement and had similar views on how to go about developing school plans but were reliant upon the SCO for curricula knowledge. Principals agreed that the collection of data was the first step towards school improvement and aided discussion on both the perceived directions for the school as well as the strategies to be implemented. A common understanding of school improvement processes is attributed to the release of the Diocesan School Renewal programme in 2000. The subsequent implementation of the School Renewal programme has guided the processes principals

use to implement school improvement and has helped detect what areas of improvement are needed.

> *School improvement is easier now that we have the Diocesan programme. We are able to go about reviewing that each year, looking at the strategies, the content, the evaluation and how we know that we've actually achieved it. It's made it a lot easier. (P2, Q8)*

Conversely, interviewing teaching staff on the need for school improvement programmes in schools resulted in varying responses. Although most teachers agreed that such programmes were necessary, there was also agreement that the implementation often caused some dissonance within the school. This is encapsulated in the following teachers' comments.

> *…everyone can improve, teachers, our students, even the principal. The problem with improvement programmes is the time, and the difference of opinions. Some people see a need, others are comfortable with the status quo, others don't care. (T13, Q12)*

> *Sometimes, we don't have a choice of what we do, it's given to us by the CEO or by the principal. (T6, Q11)*

When asked about how schools identified special school improvement projects, principals commented frequently on the need to have reliable information to underpin the decision-making process. There was a common view that decisions to implement a new initiative had to be evidence based.

> *You can't just change things for the sake of change or that a programme looks good so we'll introduce it. You must have a reason otherwise nobody will want to implement it and then it will fail. (P1, Q22)*

This view of collecting and analysing student data before school improvement decisions could be made was also shared not only by the SCOs but also other leadership team members:

We meet the teachers, we collect and analyse all the data that comes through from 3/5/7 tests. The learning support teacher, the SCO and I meet, we look at the trends, we look at all areas, compare that with previous years, then we work out what we need to do now so we can do better next year (ET3, Q18)

However, when discussing the role of standardised testing in schools as a means for determining school improvement programmes, some teachers commented on the inhibiting nature of "outside" school decision-making.

The Yr 3, 5 & 7 tests might be good for reporting to the government on student achievement in literacy and numeracy but they don't tell the whole picture nor tell us how to improve the teaching. (T7, Q23).

Given that staff accepted the need for school improvement programmes to be introduced as a means of improving student learning, principals encountered a common hurdle. Whilst staff at all schools recognised the necessity to collect information about school and student performance, how the data was collected varied from school to school. Some schools viewed the national standardised testing process as a starting point while others were content with class based assessments. All schools viewed the School Renewal Programme as a primary source of information because it sought opinions from the whole school community. However, common to all schools was a reliance on both commercially based tests as well as teacher developed assessments. For good decision making about innovative practice one principal stated that a range of data is necessary:

We need to look at the basic skills test results. That gives us our starting point, and then we look at what our school values, where we want to go and then implement the necessary programme, sometimes by consensus other times without negotiation (P4, Q14).

In promoting teaching and learning, successful principals used a range of data to underpin future instructional strategies (Cotton, 2003). Additionally they were able to interpret student performance data and use them to develop plans for improvement. Effective principals were able to develop school specific processes to disseminate information to staff (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000).

In this study, all schools had established patterns of decision-making where the principal, SCO and the classroom teacher shared in the discussion on student learning. Debate was believed to be a positive process when the outcome supported school improvement and although the decisions were sometimes 'handed down' to the staff, faith in the principal to make decisions was evident.

> *Because I always feel I have been listened to and included in the discussions I know he (the principal) will make the best decision. He has all the information and we've discussed it. We actually help make the decision (T22, Q18).*

It is acknowledged that in an effective school, data collection and analysis function as formative rather than summative assessment (Zmuda et al., 2004). This study supports the role of staff discussion on the collected data as a means of painting an accurate picture of the school's current performance. In doing so it enables a more comprehensive view on school performance removing decision making practices based solely on teacher anecdotal observations.

It is clear that principals and SCOs in this study demonstrated a strong understanding of the role of data collection for planning school improvement, namely the reasons why programmes should be implemented. Based on the solid analysis of available school data these designated leaders were able to develop, implement and evaluate strategies that would promote student learning. The style of communication used by the SCO in these schools was predominantly instructionally based (Fink & Resnick, 2001), working collaboratively with class teachers. Consequently, they were able to discuss pedagogical approaches and expected teachers to participate fully in the discussions. This process enables both the principal and SCO to be linked to the life of the classroom providing first hand support for class teachers and the children in their care (Glickman, Gordon, & Gordon-Ross, 2001; A. Hargreaves & Fink, 2003).

6.2.3 Staff Relationships

Ensuring that teachers perceived themselves as partners was a key strategy employed by principals. While all schools in this study had a combination of long term staff members and graduate teachers, the conversation with principals concerning staff relationships indicated a common theme. If innovation was to be productive, teachers needed to want to change. The larger the staff, the longer and more complex the decision-making process became. Principals commented on the difficulty of obtaining consensus, particularly when disagreement caused conflict or even alienation/isolation between staff members. As one principal expressed it, the need to have a harmonious staff group before any change could be introduced is essential.

> *My first failure related to my inability to gauge staff readiness. I wanted parents in the school and before I worked with staff I opened the floodgates. I invited them all in. Before I knew it there were problems and bush fires all over the place. (P5, Q18).*

Promoting staff support appears to be a commonly held viewpoint amongst principals in this study. When implementing new initiatives, or working towards a whole school decision, having staff on side was deemed essential for success.

> *Happy staff means happy teaching. Happy teaching means happy learning. In the end if teachers are on side and working well together, anything is possible (P2, Q3)*

This finding supports the previous research on conditions that promote professional communities namely in recognising the importance of teachers' collegial work (Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999). The professional interaction among teachers was more effective when the personal interaction of staff was high. Bryk, Camburn and Louis (1999) found that the social trust between staff members was a key determinant of student learning.

One school involved in this study had just completed a School Renewal Programme which enabled the whole community to review their effectiveness as a school and to

determine what future directions were needed. Discussion with staff opened up a more personal view on school improvement issues. Responses by teachers revealed a feeling of being under siege, threatened or even under-performing in their role.

> *School renewal became personal. We argued a lot over the survey results, trying to interpret what parents thought about our school. Let alone work out our own classroom results. (T16, Q11)*

> *Our staff meetings were interesting. We thought the parents didn't like us. They want everything changed. What were we doing wrong? What do we do now? (ET1, Q23)*

While the importance of effective teaching is documented (Hattie, 2003; Kaplan & Owings, 2002; Lampert, 2000), teachers' focus group discussions indicated that a feeling of self-worth improved teacher performance in the classroom. Furthermore, a strong collegial nature of the staff increased teacher interaction in the school setting. Teachers and principals agreed that positive interpersonal relations ensured greater depth in their discussions which ultimately led to a more comprehensive decision-making process for the school.

Highlighted in this analysis is an emphasis on relationships as the key to successful change in schools. Principals would argue that the success of their schools is dependent upon the success of the relationships within the school (Fullan, 2001). In this sense it can be viewed that positive staff relationships are seen as the consequence of engaging staff in school improvement programmes (Cavanagh & MacNeill, 2002).

The building of relationships is dependent upon many interpersonal skills and positive attitudes (McKewan, 2003). In particular, the development of mutual trust and a strong spirit of collaboration help promote a positive work environment leading to improved teacher efficacy (R. Butt & Retallick, 2002). Developing such trust helps improve teaching quality as principals and teachers work in a climate of genuine support that exists at both the professional and personal levels (Ebmeier & Nicklaus, 1999).

6.2.4 Provision of Resources

Principals expressed the view that successful innovation depended on the provision of adequate resources. This is exemplified in the following comment:

> *….they wanted to change the way literacy was done so they employed in every school a literacy person solely for that, for two and a half, three, four, five days, depending on the school. Now that's the level of support that you need to promote change. (P5, Q5)*

Different schools provided varying resources depending upon the discussed need and directions for the school. One school focused on achieving whole school improvement in writing and developed a budget to include the acquisition of teacher reference and specific student texts. Changes to the school timetable were initiated to increase instruction time while staff meeting schedules focused on specific professional development activities. While principals and teachers held different perceptions on the range and number of resources necessary to support classroom instruction, the participants argued for increased funding to purchase the necessary materials, equipment and extra personnel.

> *To improve student learning we need more money to buy more resources. More teachers to reduce class size (T2, Q5)*

However, providing resources was only an initial step in addressing learning needs of the children. Both teachers and principals agreed that time was an important issue for addressing gaps in student learning. Teachers felt pressured to implement school programmes. Not providing sufficient time for the implementation of innovations and programmes led to failures as highlighted in the following teacher's response.

> *We discussed the behaviour management programme at one staff meeting and then we had to have the new programme up and running by the next week to discuss any teething problems. It failed because there was not enough time to implement it. (T19, Q12)*

Not only providing sufficient time for innovation but also protecting instructional time is a key strategy in improving student performance (Fink & Resnick, 2001). Principals who fostered rules, guidelines and operational procedures to insure students were engaged with learning for sustained periods reported strong performances in state-wide testing programmes. Moreover, student achievement is fostered in schools when classroom teachers were able to match teaching resources to the specific needs of the students (Rowe, 2003).

Another dimension articulated by classroom teachers that highlights the lack of time is the initial planning needed to successfully implement innovation. Preparation and developing an understanding of the introduced initiative appeared to cause anxiety in teachers. One experienced teacher expressed frustration at the timeframe for implementation of a school based reading programme:

> *We had to read the six professional development articles provided by the principal before the pupil free day. They all had 15 pages plus. (T18, Q14)*

While teachers recognised the need to attempt different strategies and to engage with innovations they were often reluctant to negotiate in the innovation processes voluntarily. Teachers were more likely to implement an initiative if requested by the principal and/or the SCO. However, commitment to the initiative was increased if they felt the principal was genuinely interested in them. Teachers appeared to be quite intuitive when discerning the interest of the principal in their work.

> *My principal is excellent; he understands my classroom and my teaching. He actually teaches from time to time, to keep his hand in. (T12, Q8)*

When principals take an interest in instruction and are involved in teachers' instructional practices, schools are more likely to address gaps in student learning (Greenberg, 2004). Spending time in classrooms enabled principals to provide informed feedback on teaching practices and offer support on behaviour management issues. This supports

previous research on principal supervision of classroom teachers which linked increased teacher efficacy to principal classroom visitation (Ebmeier & Nicklaus, 1999).

6.2.5 Influence of School Climate

Another key factor expressed by participants in this study to influence more positively on school improvement programmes is the influence of school climate. Principals described the climate of the school as a consequence of how teachers relate with their students. The quality of the social atmosphere of the school's learning environment is an important challenge for teachers both in and outside the classroom. Key to achieving this goal is the personal interactions and rapport developed by the staff, parents and students. Teachers in this study also acknowledged the benefit of positive relationships amongst staff members.

> *What makes this school tick is the respect that all staff members have for each other; not just teachers but the cleaners, ancillary staff and even the parents (T18, Q2).*

Given that school climate refers mostly to the school's effects on students, staff teaching practices and school diversity (Swain, 2002), participants in this study suggest that it is the relationships among principals, SCOs, class teachers, parents, and students that influences school climate. This is illustrated in one principal's comment:

> *But I like to work at keeping relationships happy because I think that if people are happy then they're going to come and do their best. For the sake of the students and that in the end of course that's why we're here. But the teachers can do that more effectively than I can as Principal. They're the ones who are relating to the children all day, every day, and to me the more I can support them, the happier I feel. (P1, Q20).*

SCOs in this study expressed the need to meet regularly with teachers as a means to develop a positive professional relationship that, inevitably, promoted a more personalized approach to school improvement. This finding supports the research on emotional intelligence (Fullan, 2001; Goleman, 1996) and explains the importance of

developing strong emotional relationships both with teachers and among teachers. This study suggests that the strength of such relationships enables a staff to keep focused and on task.

Other leadership team members also noted the influence that school climate had on their students' academic performance. They expressed a need to understand the role of trust and mutual support within successful school improvement programmes. The following examples reveal the sense of support that leadership team members articulated when discussing the success of school innovations they were involved with. This is particularly important in the teaching of religious education.

> *Our religious education programme was easy to implement because everyone was keen to lend a hand and help each other. (ET3, Q8)*

> *The results of our reading programme in Year One were due to the hard work of the teachers, the way they supported each other, shared their planning and helped each other. (ET4, Q13).*

Both principals and SCOs were clear that working on positive relationships is a priority in gaining success. As one SCO explained:

> *I think we get a lot of, more out of people from a kind word than with a big stick. I think it's a way of managing people, it doesn't mean you give in to them but you've just got to manage one person maybe a little bit different to the other. I think relationships are critical. (ET6. Q7)*

In addition to this relational aspect, it was evident that it took time for schools to establish such relationships and for some principals this was a burden. This is illustrated in the following comment by a principal discussing the diocesan staffing policy as an inhibitor to sustained student learning.

> *Changing staff every year and only able to employ first years puts pressure on staff climate. It takes time to develop quality teachers and takes time to nurture the relationships. (P4, Q4)*

Supporting this, teachers discussed the need to have programmes like counselling services, peer mediation, positive discipline, and child protection activities to help contribute to a safe and supportive school climate. However, the role of teacher interactions was seen as the main contributor to maintaining a positive school climate. The personal attributes of the teachers were seen as important.

> *Being a large school we have many programmes that help support student learning. I think the visiting counsellor works best. But it is how teachers discuss students that any improvement takes place. From our interactions we can monitor how the programmes can support student learning. (T16, Q15)*

Responses in the interviews with principals revealed a more in-depth view of staff relations as a means of ensuring success of any school improvement project. Principals attributed success of school initiatives to the way teachers and other staff members work together. They refer to the deep patterns of values, beliefs and traditions that have developed within the school community over a long period of time. This school culture permeates through the staff and is manifested in what happens in the school.

> *Visiting the classrooms and seeing the culture. I like to empower, motivate and just be part of something bigger than myself. (P5, Q2)*

Principals spoke of the need for strong communication. This was of particular importance for principals when discussing the impact of relationships between principals and teachers.

> *Our school has a high academic record over many years because our teachers work together. We have a highly established curriculum process that teachers follow. Our term by term events, assessments and meetings work. Teachers are happy and students learn. (P2, Q12)*

Maintaining a goal-driven, collaborative school culture depends on clear and frequent communication (D. Hargreaves, 1995). When principals work to improve their oral and written communication skills, rapport with staff and the wider community is enhanced. This study highlights the connectedness principals and teachers had when working

towards common goals. Principals who demonstrated genuine sensitivity to teachers' needs both professionally and personally were more supported by their staff. This promoted a sense of trust and enabled the staff to feel confident to express opinions without the fear of reprisals and the establishment of power bases (P Duignan, 2006).

Key structures developed by principals to develop positive school climate include developing strategies for teachers to communicate with each other. Stage or year level meetings, shared programming formats, and development of programme meetings across the school were evident in each school in some form. The principal being readily available to staff and maintaining open/effective lines of communication enables staff to comfortably express and discuss their concerns.

6.2.6 School Organisational Factors

When asked how schools support successful improvement programmes, there were some varying responses. SCOs suggested that the organisational factors developed over time at the school contributed to the overall success of the school. Often these structures formed part of the culture of the school. Consequently, the structures that are generated in schools to support learning varied from site to site. From timetables to teacher appraisal procedures to the physical layout of the school site, these key organisational features of the school were integral factors in supporting student learning.

> *Our school runs smoothly because it is highly structured. Because we are a large school our timetables are necessary to make sure everyone is organised. We can't have everyone doing PE on the oval because we can't fit. (ET5, Q11)*

> *My appraisal highlighted the strength of our teachers. The comment on helping with curriculum instruction makes me want to support teachers further. (ET1, Q22)*

> *The new withdrawal rooms allow for small group lessons, helping with our literacy programme. (P2, Q13)*

The perceptions by leadership team members of the organisational factors clearly hinges on the professionalism of the personnel of the school and the warmth of relationships within the community. It was the respect and integrity of the person that motivated many staff members to engage and to participate in innovations.

> *Our last curriculum co-ordinator tried introducing the Reading Recovery programme and we (the staff) didn't take to it. The new one re-introduced it and we loved it. (T3, Q15)*

Principals, in partnership with their SCO, created collaborative structures that focused on teaching and learning. These structures were developed and embedded in the daily process of school life. Participants' comments about the opportunities created by the school to meet regularly to discuss teaching programmes indicated a positive working climate promoting strong teacher morale. Specifically, creating organisational structures (and in particular, opportunities for distributed leadership responsibilities) including meeting times and standardised agenda formats, was seen as a shared responsibility between teachers, SCOs and principals. Consequently, discussion on school issues led to site-specific organisational structures being developed and implemented. Furthermore, it was evident that the learning environment was crafted by the principals and the staff to suit their particular community. These structures in turn influenced the relationships among and between members of the school community.

This supports the evidence in recent studies that the organisational structure of a school can support a teacher's ability to teach effectively (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Mulford & Silins, 2003). Although workplace conditions varied from school to school, the principal's knowledge, understanding and willingness to initiate and implement action and to provide supportive workplace conditions were not only valued by teachers but contributed to the success of the school. Consequently, teachers in this study demonstrated satisfaction with the designated structures after being involved in the discussion even if they were not totally happy with the outcome of the decision-making.

The findings of this study indicated that specific structural support provided by the leadership of the school helped configure the school environment in such a way that teacher and community participation and shared decision-making about the issues that directly affected them were prioritised. Successful school improvement is facilitated by means such as a collaborative organisational culture, availability of professional development, authentic pedagogy and access to resources (Lovat, 2003; Su, Gamage, & Mininberg, 2003). While not only consistent with the findings in this study, (ie. principals commenting frequently on the fact that teachers are central to sustaining lasting change) they also included support staff and secretarial staff as agents of institutional change. Indeed, Fullan (2001), Hargreaves (2003) and Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005) have concluded that sustainable change is almost solely dependent on whole school acceptance and involvement.

6.2.7 School Complexity

The participants in this study agreed that the school environment has become more complex. Teachers frequently felt overwhelmed by the constant introduction of new programmes to their school. Covering a range of innovations from curriculum, welfare and occupational health and safety, to many societal issues like graffiti and vandalism, teachers' workloads are expanding. Teachers felt under pressure to respond to and include such issues in the learning programme. Experienced teachers agreed that life in the classroom had changed significantly during their teaching careers particularly in the welfare area. As one teacher commented:

> *I think the social aspects of the world we live in have changed our roles. We have to think about their welfare and how their family life may be impacting on their schoolwork and their health. (T12, Q2)*

Although the increasing focus on the well-being of the students and their families was high, the main area of concern focused on curriculum issues commonly referred to by teachers as the "crowded curriculum".

> *The explosion of knowledge. The fact that so many groups want us to include their agenda or curriculum or whatever within ours and always*

that hidden curriculum, but there's less and less time to actually cover what we call the basic 3R's. (T19, Q3)

While curriculum is one of the key frustrations for teachers, principals commented on the increased expectations from government agencies.

I think it's become more challenging and continues to do so. There's a lot of forces in operation on your end of the role. There's your own community, staff perceptions of how you should operate, system perceptions and increasingly government mandates on the role. (P4, Q2)

I think the demands of government, of course passed onto us by Catholic Education Office, are just becoming absurd. (P1, Q4)

Furthermore, principals were cautious of the role of parents in the school.

Every day a parent comes to my door wanting something changed. (P1, Q17)

However, the complexity was not isolated to governmental or parental factors. A number of principals emphasised that there was an increase in enrolments of children with behaviour deficiencies. Principals commented on the need for *"greater pastoral care programmes"* and *"teachers with experience in special education"* to cater for this growing enrolment trend. Many teachers shared the same view, which can be summarised in the following teacher's comment:

Our work load has increased. A lot more; not just with abilities of the kids, but a lot more things to cover, and not just in curriculum; it just seems to be a lot wider in social and behaviour attitudes. A lot more things seem to be coming under the teacher's responsibility rather than parents or ancillary staff. (T7, Q2)

Other indicators that life in schools has become more complicated were comments relating to rapid developments in technology and increasing diversity in student enrolments (including behavioural factors and family status).

We have to make our own report cards and that takes time. Time that we should be using in making resources. (T18, Q5)

Technology demands have increased dramatically causing pressure on teachers. (P5, Q15)

6.2.8 School Work Conditions

The work conditions varied from school to school with some teachers voicing concerns over class size and playground duty requirements.

I find it hard to prepare lessons and make resources because I am always marking. I've got 33 children in my class. Other teachers only have 20 and we have the same duties. (T15, Q12)

When you have at least one playground duty every day, usually two, often a lunch duty, you don't have a minute to yourself. You are always rushing (T9, Q14).

Often teachers commented on the benefits of being in other schools. Some referred to the luxuries available to teachers in the larger schools expressing the view that large staffs had more opportunities and freedoms that were not offered to smaller schools. Citing perceived facts like "more teachers to do the same work" and "more people to share and bounce ideas off" demonstrated a sense of the "haves" and "have nots". When discussing teacher workloads the following teachers reflected on the experiences in other schools:

So the workload doesn't seem to ease up to much regardless of which school you are at; but I know here at this school with our creation of the units, well it's making it a lot easier in the workload area, especially planning; since I've been in two schools already I can easily adapt the units I have to meet the needs of my kids. (T2, Q10)

…. this year our boss has come in, he's given us $500 for maths, $500 for literacy and from talking to all staff they just love having those hands-on resources. I think he copied the idea from another principal. (T16, Q25)

It was easier at my old school. We had more computers, enough for one each in the lab. It made it easier to teach. Here we only have one between three. (T14, Q25)

Teachers and principals generally felt they worked harder in schools today than ever before. There was also consensus that the increase in accountability had impacted negatively on the role of assessment and reporting. This has seen increased pressure on teachers' time.

However, some principals and leadership team members provided a more balanced view citing increases in release time and greater support processes for teachers, especially in the learning support field.

Thankfully the CEO has kept the regional Equity Co-ordinator to support schools. We get great support for our school programmes by having this role in place. (P4, Q18)

Further to the issues of release time, both principals and teachers defended the need for teachers to take 'personal time' not just for planning and school related tasks. As one teacher responded when asked about what factors are supportive in improving student learning:

With the ever increasing busyness in schools today, I love my holidays. I need time to myself, to regenerate, to regather myself. (T5, Q9)

At the heart of this study are perceptions and views by participants on the increasing complexity of school life. It was previously noted (Section 4.1.2) that the perceptions of the work of teachers are influenced by many factors. Some of the influences are out of the control of the teacher. Teachers, in particular, perceived teaching as an atypical profession with many demands however the main consensus from these teachers is the increasing concern with the focus on performance. Similarly increasing workload issues and the changing nature of family demographics add to the intricacy involved in school life (Cranston & Ehrich, 2002). Schools have a great impact on the behaviour of teachers who in turn influence greatly, the climate of the organisation.

Comments by participants about the frustrations encountered at school indicated that improvements to workplace conditions are needed. In particular the increasing attention given to assessment and reporting has added to the increasing complexity of school life and is viewed as inhibiting teacher effectiveness in the classroom. Specifically, while negative working conditions inhibit teacher efficacy, thus impacting detrimentally on the achievement levels of the students, there is wide variance between individual teachers on how they cope with imperfect environments.

However, the positive relationship between school working conditions and student achievement (Hirsch, 2005) demonstrate that appropriate working conditions are not only central to a teacher's well-being and satisfaction but are critical in attaining success for the children they teach. Principals in this study demonstrated a commitment and promoted a united focus on improving working conditions for teachers. Initially improvement strategies introduced were related to occupational health and safety issues. However, all principals agreed that improving working conditions is more than just focusing on resources and physical improvements (ie buildings, gardens) but also on more organisational factors including increasing teacher release time, creative timetabling and reducing class interruptions.

Some work conditions were more favoured than others. Female teachers enjoyed the opportunity to take maternity leave as a means for time out from teaching and a recharging of the batteries.

> *Teaching is a demanding profession. There are a lot of pressures that the parent community doesn't see. Being a mother I can have 12 months maternity leave unlike other jobs where they only get 6 weeks. I think I'm more refreshed when I come back. (T4, Q8)*

Other teachers enjoyed the security of being able to take extended leave knowing that they would be able to return to their teaching position.

Being allowed to take 12 months off after teaching for five years was great for me. I went overseas, had a great time. I was more refreshed when I returned. I think I was a better teacher because if it. (T7, Q7)

In summary, investigating the factors that impact more positively on school improvement programmes revealed two distinct categories that are interdependent. As stated, the first emphasises the collaborative aspect of school life. This study shows that successful school principals and teachers work closely to establish a common values system and promote practices that reflected such values. Furthermore, the study reflected the development of structures that evolve as a means of actualising the community's vision. Secondly, this study demonstrated that through the establishment of a positive relational aspect the school is able to develop important organisational structures that facilitate and strengthen the learning environment. Consequently the provisions of positive work conditions enhance teacher performance.

6.3   Findings and Discussion for Research Question Two

How do principals nurture the professional development of the school curriculum officer and teachers?

Schools are social institutions and are only as effective as the quality of the personnel. Research Question Two seeks to understand how principals support teacher learning.

6.3.1 Government Directions

One way by which principals nurture the professional development of staff is through the implementation of relevant government directions. This was a theme running through the responses of principals in this study. They referred to the focus of recent government reports and the establishment of new educational bodies to help improve the education system. It is evident that providing direct focus on the role of the teacher in the school was welcomed by principals. One principal remarked:

We've had all sorts of reports through the years. Beazley, Karmel, Dawkins. They all infer that the focus for schools to improve is the

teacher. We know that. Improve the teacher and we'll improve the kids.
(T3, Q7)

Another principal added:

The National Statement on the Teaching Profession. Teacher
Standards, Quality and Professionalism is guiding education today. To
put it simply we need to improve the teaching profession. (P3, Q15).

These responses mirror another comment made by an experienced principal:

The National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership is
aimed at improving the teaching profession. That's where we get our
direction, that's what should be guiding our decision-making. (P5, Q16)

All principals in this study believed that an effective teacher is the most important factor in improving student achievement. One principal went further emphasising:

…that we affirm good performance because I think if we only
concentrate on the people doing poorly then I think we create a bad
culture. Somebody said to me 'Don't feed the weeds', so make sure
you put as much attention into the people doing well and that will lift the
game of people doing poorly. Some people will probably never lift their
game, so it's not worth wasting time on them. (P3, Q9)

These results are further substantiated with the findings of the recent government reports on educational directions including the establishment of the NSW Institute of Teachers, the Commonwealth Government report *Teachers for the 21st Century* (Department of Education Science and Training, 2000)*,* and the joint research project between the Australian College of Educators and the Federal Government resulting in the release in May 2003 of the *National Statement from the Teaching Profession on Teacher Standards, Quality and Professionalism* (Australian College of Educators, 2003).

However, the argument as demonstrated by recent government reports, highlighting that school improvement requires a substantial change in teacher quality, has become more

intense as schools battle with marketing for student enrolments, employment of staff and funding issues (Eric Hanushek, 2004). When measuring school outcomes, as a means of providing better accountability and of making judgements on school performance, policy makers (including principals) are increasingly interested in standardised testing results to determine future priorities and even funding issues (Rowe, 2000). However, as discussed in Chapter 3 (see 3.2.4) standardised testing as a tool for measuring the effectiveness of the school has many critics.

6.3.2 Professional Development

A second way principals nurture the professional development of staff is through providing opportunities for professional development and encouraging independent individual efforts. This was one area in which principals felt that their schools were deficient, an area noted by researchers (Darling-Hammond, 1998a; Su et al., 2003) as being essential to improving student learning.

With the understanding that the quality of the teacher is critical in improving student achievement, the key issue for both principals and SCOs in this study in promoting teacher quality was the provision of professional development. This issue was identified as being essential for capitalising on the quality of schools, teachers and the effectiveness of the teaching process. The greatest concern for principals however was knowing what professional development was available and where to find it.

> *When a new curriculum is developed a training package needs to be developed in order to re-educate staff. (P4, Q13)*

Teachers were in favour of professional development and saw it as being beneficial for all staff members.

> *Professional development is essential, no matter how good or how young or old the teacher is. (T2, Q16)*

Furthermore, teachers believed that attending professional development improved their relationships with each other, provided a common ground for discussion and enabled each other to offer constructive feedback.

> *…ongoing professional development is very important for us as, not just us as teachers but us as people. The more we've got our head screwed on correctly, the better we are able to relate. (T3, Q20)*

> *I think it's great to have professional development; teachers are always looking for ways of getting new ideas and practically using that time to benefit their kids. (T10, Q10)*

When asked about the provision of professional development in schools, principals discussed at length the blurred role of responsibility. Some believed that the system was ultimately responsible as they set diocesan-wide priorities which guided school development plans. Conversely, some principals felt teachers should be intrinsically motivated to address their own professional learning needs.

> *Supporting teachers is a two way street. If it's school-based we should provide the PD but teachers are professionals and should want to improve their teaching themselves. (P3, Q14)*

Discussion with staff on who has the responsibility for providing professional development revealed similar conclusions. Most teachers believed the responsibility was the domain of the employing authority and the principal. However, taking ownership of their own professional development was seen as part of the professional responsibility of each teacher.

> *Not only do principals need to be aware of what professional development opportunities there are but teachers need to make time themselves. (T11, Q15)*

But the opportunity for teacher development experiences also depends upon other influences. Some teachers find the timing and quality of professional development an issue. Training during the school day usually leads to issues of finding relief teachers,

leaving teachers concerned about support for their class, thus creating some burdens in itself.

> *When I attend an inservice day I have to prepare lessons for the*
> *casual. That's double the workload. (T16, Q14)*

Professional development after school, on the other hand, created other difficulties for teachers. Teachers expressed the view that after working all day they were often tired and unable to be totally focused on the inservice provided. Additionally, teachers felt that after school professional development opportunities simply added work to their already crowded out of school time duties.

> *Going to inservices after school isn't helpful. You are tired and worn out*
> *and it's hard to sit and listen to lectures. (T13, Q17)*

> *I don't like after school inservices because I need to find time to do all*
> *my paper work. And it eats into your personal family time. (T7, Q15)*

Although evidence highlights the disparity between the role of teacher and principal in determining the type of support (Kaplan & Owings, 2002), there is consensus that teachers who possess a strong desire to learn, influence their students more positively (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Fried, 2001; Rowe, 2003). Therefore, deciding who was responsible for professional development was secondary to the real issue for both teachers and principals. The means by which professional development was delivered caused much debate. The disparate views about after school seminars to tertiary studies to module type workshops have implications for principals and school communities in developing and presenting effective professional development. This disparity, as Clarke (2004) suggests, leads to confusion and frustration for teachers. The end result of poor ongoing training and development is limited growth in teacher quality.

Successful schools offer a range of professional development opportunities, focusing both on content and structure (Glickman et al., 2001). These opportunities include group

learning workshops either led by the principal or staff members, personal post graduate studies, attendance at conferences or sharing of experiences.

> *so the more opportunities we have for professional development,…..*
> *in all areas….. it will definitely impact upon the children's learning in*
> *the classroom. (T2, Q17)*

While all principals in this study worked at providing a variety of professional development activities, the teachers appealed for more workshops that were provided in school time and were ongoing. Additionally, teachers were opposed to the single day inservice model.

Principals in this study participated directly in all school-focused professional development activities, which gained respect and credibility from their staff. It has been argued extensively (Ash & Persall, 2000; Crowther, Hann et al., 2002; Williams, 2002) that the participation of the principal in professional development events is critical to the ongoing success of school improvement. They believed that by attending inservices with teachers, they had a greater impact upon teacher learning.

Further to inservice attendance, principals in this study spent substantial time observing teachers in action and providing constructive feedback through supervision activities.

> *To help improve our school's performance, I visit classrooms and*
> *speak with teachers often. I meet with them in their grade groups and*
> *talk about what's happening in their classrooms, who's having*
> *trouble, who's not learning, discussing their interactions with parents*
> *and stuff like that. I try and do this at least once a fortnight. (P3, Q3)*

However, interview data in this study revealed that professional development activities were more successful when they focused on improving instructional practice regardless of the specific curricula content being addressed. Furthermore, both principals and teachers believed that the delivery of professional development, while important, was secondary to its initial purpose. If the professional development was agreed upon and

impacted upon the teachers' daily instructional practice, then it was more likely to be successful. In making this connection research is indicating that principals are credited with promoting the success of professional development activities (Cotton, 2003), a finding substantiated by this study.

This study also concludes that teachers engaging in educational reform need constant support and guidance including professional development opportunities. As one teacher noted:

> *When you go to a full day inservice, well you need follow-up. Just like kids need constant revision so do we. I can't remember everything, there needs to be follow-up (T8, Q16).*

Ultimately, this study identified that principals are working more closely with teachers to help support their instructional capabilities, improve feedback to students and develop whole school-based professional development programmes. Substantial time, resources and finance have been devoted to moderation of student work samples. The Diocesan commitment to the Year Two Net Programme highlights the dedication to analysis of both student performance as well as teacher performance. Consequently, a greater emphasis on both teacher quality (knowledge) and the quality of teaching (instruction) has become a major component of a principal's work life and is supported by targeted professional development.

6.3.3 Impact of Teachers' Personal Lives

A third way principals nurture the professional development of staff is by neing sensitive to the impact of teachers' personal lives on staff motivation to participate in professional development activities. Participants' comments about the role and timing of professional development draws attention to the pressure placed upon teachers' personal lives. Teachers in this study voiced concern over the encroachment of school life into their personal domains. This supports recent studies (R. Butt & Retallick, 2002) that teachers' wellbeing was at risk as they grappled with the increasing accountability of student

welfare issues including child protection, family breakdown and the increase of diagnosed behavioural disorders.

Being a teacher in schools today, while deeply satisfying professionally, is extremely demanding of staff (Hirsch, 2005). However, outside the boundaries of school life there are other pressures that influence the performance of teachers. Principals in this study expressed varying views on how the impact of a teacher's personal life affected their performance in the classroom. The major influence observed involved personal relationships.

> *One teacher broke up from her boy friend and, unconsciously, it became everyone's problem. Morning tea and lunchtime became counselling sessions rather than sharing class experiences. (ET3, Q14)*

> *Principals today are often counsellors helping staff with their personal problems and it can be difficult to keep them focused on their role as a teacher. No doubt they are not as effective if their mental state is out of whack. (P3, Q17)*

Likewise, teachers also referred to the impact that their career and their daily teaching routine had on their personal lives. One teacher described the difficulty she found in achieving a balance between school demands, and the need for her to have her own time.

> *I've got a family of four children. Sometimes it is hard to make time for them, especially during report writing time, marking assignments for a class of thirty or when the children are sick. (T16, Q26)*

An experienced teacher nearing the end of her teaching career reflected upon the impact of raising a family and the pressure it placed upon her teaching effectiveness.

> *And now getting towards the end of my career I think I am looking very satisfied now with the way I do things because I've got more time. I'm more effective. I don't have a family to look after. I think in the middle part there was my teaching, my lifestyle, being committed to raising*

children and trying to be a good teacher at the same time and it was an enormous pressure. (T6, Q3)

In the interviews, responses by leadership team members revealed consistency in the view that the diverse nature of the students also impacts upon the effectiveness of the teachers. A student's family circumstances were seen as a factor by some leadership team members in inhibiting a teacher's performance in the classroom. One executive teacher, when discussing the changing nature of enrolments, particularly an increased number of children diagnosed with attention deficient disorders stated:

I've seen teachers come to school worried about how the kid in their class with a behavioural problem was going to disrupt the class. You can't teach well if you are battling disruptive behaviour everyday. (ET3, Q16)

Teachers also believed that the role of the family inhibited the teachers' role in the classroom. Citing causes of poor student performance to "lack of parental support" and "the busyness of the family", teachers were able to report a decline in student achievement to the role of parents. One teacher explained the cause of decline in a student's learning:

I had a parent interview with a child who never handed in homework. All the parent said was that she tried to make him but he just went to his room and played his gameboy. If he won't do as he is told by his mother, what hope have I? (T7, Q9)

Another teacher linked the increased family workload to being an inhibitor of student learning.

Parents expect too much of their kids. I have one child who plays three sports, trains each week, does dance and learns the piano. If she spent more time on her reading and tables she'd do better at school. (T11, Q9)

Another aspect of the impact of a teacher's personal life is demonstrated in the following concern by an experienced class teacher.

Some parents catch you at the supermarket, others on the tennis court to discuss their child's progress. Do they make an appointment and come to school to see me? No, they interrupt my time, I'm working 24 hours a day. (T14, Q10)

This study verifies the influence that a teacher's personal life has on their role as an educator. Parental expectations, support and socio-economic circumstances were seen as key indicators in determining student achievement (Rowe, 2003). Additionally, as teachers move through their career added pressures arise. Teachers may get married and raise children, finance issues develop with mortgages and even moving home can add to the drama of their personal lives (Lacey, 2002).

This study confirms that the connection between teachers' personal and professional lives impacts upon the quality of teachers and their ability to effectively instruct the children. The literature demonstrates that there is a clear correlation between the way that teachers prepare lessons and their own beliefs, personal philosophies and even state of mind (Mander, 1997). Schools are human institutions and as such teachers in schools are influenced by their home factors, peer relations and personal experiences. Personal happiness sustained teacher commitment (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004) while conversely, marriage disintegration, financial pressures and child care issues impacted negatively (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2002). Principals often referred to their role as counsellor identifying not only the changing roles of principals but the growing need to support the welfare of staff both professionally and personally.

Positive relationships have more influence on student achievement than any other factor (Cotton, 2003). Notwithstanding, initiating change programmes to support school improvement involves more than the programmes themselves. Their successful implementation requires the commitment and goodwill of a professionally well-prepared and competent group of teachers. How they see their job, their personal interactions, the conditions under which they work and prospects for the future were significant findings of this study. While supporting the meta research compiled by Cotton (2003) this study

substantiates the influence of a teacher's own personal beliefs as a factor in developing relationships. Teachers in this study discussed how their family life, their faith background and their personal opinions shaped their understanding of school life. Even critical incidents in their lives impacted upon they way they saw the world.

6.3.4 Quality Teaching

A fourth way principals nurture professional development of staff is by creating an environment in which quality teaching and learning can occur. The practice of effective teaching is a combination of appropriate teaching methodologies and classroom management practices (Watson, 2005) that collectively provide an environment for quality teaching and learning to occur. Being able to devise appropriate teaching strategies to address particular student needs is an important facet in improving student learning.

The principals identified the importance of having effective teachers on staff so that the promotion of successful school improvement could occur. Principals sought knowledgeable staff members in areas of curricula, instruction and interpersonal relations who could contribute to the discussion arising from school improvement directions.

> *When discussing where we need to improve teachers must have knowledge of effective classroom practices, an understanding of curriculum outcomes and a sincere desire for their children to improve. (P2, Q11)*

> *You can't discuss strategies to improve reading if the teachers don't understand the reading process. (P5, Q11)*

However, having knowledgeable staff is only part of the requisites needed for improved student learning. Principals in this study asserted that quality teaching, the act of teaching that produces learning, is necessary. They saw many teachers engaged in the task of teaching but had some reservations as to whether children were learning.

I have a few teachers who stand in front of their class and entertain them all day. The kids love them but I don't know whether they are learning anything. (P1, Q14)

Why is it that the teachers that tell you they are extremely busy, have everything that opens and shuts, use the best strategies, do the best lessons, seem to get mediocre basic skills results? (P5, Q13)

This perspective supports the view that effective teaching should promote student learning leading to increased academic achievement (T. Townsend, 2005). While teaching is a behaviour which can be observed, learning is not and can only be inferred indirectly by attempts to monitor its effects in some way. Some educators mistakenly confuse as direct correlation student high achievement with good teaching and poor results with poor teaching.

This is not to deny that teaching quality is a key factor along with other factors in promoting student achievement (Taylor et al., 2002) and that the quality of the teaching is dependent upon the quality of the teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hattie, 2003). As has already been noted by principals there is a view that the first step to improving student learning is to improve the quality of the teacher (Hattie, 2003).

While there is some evidence to suggest that the higher the tertiary qualifications of the teacher, the more competent that teacher is (Darling-Hammond, 1998b), other research on the quality of teachers' classroom practices (Dunkin, 1997) and on how professional development programmes support improved teaching and learning (Su et al., 2003) were of greater interest to principals.

I want to know how well they teach, not how well they did at uni. (PFG1, P4, Q17)

Consequently, the results of this study demonstrate that there are many factors that influence the quality of teachers. Principals and leadership team members were able to identify quality teachers in their school but had difficulty articulating why.

> *I can walk into a classroom and know a good teacher just by listening and observing them in action. (ETFG 1, LT 3, Q4)*

Amongst the teachers in this study are many different and sometimes conflicting views on what constitutes a good teacher.

> *I think, well you want them to have reasonable academic standards but I think it really has to be the standard needs to be determined by their performance in the classroom by observation and being able to see how they can plan and prepare, how they can interact with the children, what strategies they use, what kind of discipline they have in the class probably easy to say, but when you see a good teacher you just know that's a good teacher, that sort of thing. (ET1, Q11)*

> *All a teacher needs to be successful is integrity, flexibility and lots of hard work. (T26, Q25)*

> *Further study, you know, a degree, study in area of specialisation like special ed, maybe a masters. This has to be balanced with experience in difference grades and schools. (T15, Q22).*

Such views resonate with other studies in not only teaching practices (Lampert, 2000), but also teacher preparation and qualifications (Darling-Hammond, 2000) as well as the school environments where teachers work (Mander, 1997). Some principals in this study when determining teaching quality focused on student performances in tests while other principals and most leadership team members were more focused on instructional processes.

These findings corroborate the conclusions of the "expert teacher study" which focuses on teachers who have been identified as successful by their administrators or peers (Hattie, 2003). This field of research describes how successful teachers connect what

they know with how they teach. This research is detailed and comprehensive. Other researchers have found that expert teachers use knowledge about the children in their classrooms—their backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses—to create lessons that connect new subject matter to students' experiences (Cotton, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2000). They also use this knowledge to adapt their teaching to accommodate children who learn in different ways. According to Hattie (2003) expert teachers know how to recognize children experiencing difficulties, diagnose sources of problems in their learning, and identify strengths on which to build. These skills are particularly important because as principals in this study referred to often, growing numbers of students with a wider range of learning needs (i.e., students whose first language is not English and students with learning difficulties and disabilities) are enrolling in school.

One strength of the expert teacher research (Hattie, 2003) is that it relies on intuitive logic, which supports the belief that it is possible to identify good teachers by observing them and that, once identified, the teachers' strengths can be determined and recorded. These strengths include personal characteristics, instructional skills, problem solving and diagnosis of learning difficulties. This study also confirms that principals and teachers often use an intuitive stance in determining effective teaching. It supports the view that a quality teacher is someone who understands children and knows how to assist their learning (Mertler, 2002). As previously noted, principals and leadership team members identified the high quality teachers through frequent observations, reports from parents and other teachers and from school-based documentation such as class programmes and school reports.

6.3.5 Assessment and Reporting

A fifth way principals nurture the professional development of staff is by keeping them updated on assessment and reporting requirements and the rationale for such requirements. With government policy increasing the push for accountability, schools have seen a diversity of tools for measuring student performance including standardized tests, norm-referenced and criterion-based assessments, performance testing,

portfolios, and competency-based assessments (Watson, 1996). Teachers in this study used a variety of these tools, some of which were personally chosen while others were mandated by school policy. While principals had a rationale for such requirements, teachers were more cynical about why assessment and reporting was a mandated priority.

> *We do more testing today compared with 20 years ago when I first started. I put this down to the basic skills tests. Because the government wants statistics to justify their funding and the move to outcomes we are assessing every day. (T18, Q7)*

> *Our school tests the whole school on a special reading test at the beginning and end of the year. I think the principal wants to know how well we've taught reading and he uses this test to judge us. (T8, Q7)*

As schools work toward increasing assessment and reporting practices there are some perceived disadvantages to the learning process. Teachers felt that this increase in attention to assessment tasks has led to a decrease in instructional time.

> *All we seem to do is just assess, assess, assess. (T11, Q2)*

The perceived impact of this trend on the daily lives of classroom teachers is a concern for principals. Also, the effectiveness of how schools implement initiatives to overcome the disadvantages of increased assessment varied from school to school. Although there were variations, principals were in agreement that there was a need to protect their teaching staff.

> *Making sure your teachers are not overworked is a key to ensuring your school improvement project is successful. Stressed teachers means incomplete tasks and then they get frustrated and go back to what they've always done. (P3, Q22)*

Furthermore, principals argued that the way teachers managed their classroom adds to the success of school improvement and can overcome teacher distress. Supporting the work of Cotton (2003), this study demonstrates how principals can work with their

teachers to develop common protocols and procedures to help nurture learning. As noted earlier, through the provision of professional development opportunities both formal and informal, principals targeted specific teaching requirements ranging from flexible teaching approaches to behaviour management strategies and specific classroom observation practices. By linking teacher performance to student learning principals were able to provide comprehensive assessment and reporting of student learning. This diversity of support for teachers is regarded as essential to ensure each teacher works towards personal and professional improvement (Su et al., 2003).

Concern over the rise of assessment related tasks is connected to increasing teacher stress (Fried, 2001). This research found that teachers were focusing heavily on the role of assessment processes as opposed to their belief that instructional processes were more important. Teachers found that in order to address required accountability measures the need to provide evidence of student learning demonstrating attainment of particular outcomes, actual instruction was diminishing in the classroom.

> *Well, it has made a bigger focus on assessment and also the outcomes, and changing curriculum so constantly. It does put a big demand on the teachers' time. You don't teach new things as much and you spend all your own time marking or making assessment tasks, not teaching resources. (T15, Q3)*

This finding revealed a major tension in the cultivation of learning in schools and confirms research that governmental accountability measures are impacting negatively on the teaching workforce (Linn, 2003; Watson, 1996). Additionally, Dinham & Scott (2002) and Crosswell & Elliott (2001) have highlighted the increasing pressures of school life, particularly the rapid change in curriculum reform and the relationships in the workplace. It is emphasised in these studies that there is a relationship between increasing work conditions, teachers' personal lives and the quality of teaching. Their research parallels the findings of this study.

This study also found that teachers had difficulty in covering the content of the syllabuses. While each school had curriculum scope and sequences designated to cover the school's instruction of the curriculum concepts, the interpretations of key directions from syllabus documents provided much debate in each staff community.

> *The syllabus documents are getting bigger each time they're revised. Well I mean I guess it gets harder to cover everything let alone assess everything. (ET3, Q7)*

> *We had to realign our maths scope and sequences because we had some concepts out of whack compared with other schools. Our principal thought this is why our Yr 3, 5 & 7 tests were lower (T9, Q7)*

Discussion on the influences on teachers' workplaces (Section 4.1.2) regarding the strain of structural pressures impacting upon their workplace exemplifies the significance of principal support for improving teaching conditions. The findings of this study revealed an overwhelming need to address the teaching cycle to reduce the heavy emphasis on the assessment component. An analysis of teacher frustration reveals both relational and structural issues that can be addressed through the principal's intervention. This study concludes that without a shared commitment to the promotion of and support for quality teachers, the focus on improving student learning is diminished.

6.4   Findings and Discussion for Research Question Three

What motivates teachers to remain committed to teaching and learning?

Teachers encourage and stimulate learning for their students by providing successful strategies for learning, fostering enjoyment and demonstrating and modelling that learning is valued. Research Question Three seeks to understand what motivates teachers to remain committed to teaching.

6.4.1 Love of Children

Although the motives for entering the teaching profession varied from teacher to teacher, it was clear in this study that all teachers interviewed, on entering the profession had a common reason: a love of children. Many teachers cited working with children as being the major source of enjoyment and the main reason for becoming a teacher. This was not only confined to teachers who entered tertiary studies from high school, but it also included those who entered as mature aged students as well. Regardless of the age perspective statements like the following encapsulate the reasons why they became teachers:

I just love children. (T14, Q2)

Initially when I first left Grade 12 I applied to Teachers College at Rockhampton. Prior to that I did a bank exam. Just because a majority of the students did the bank exams. I had thoughts of being a teacher way back in Grade 12, I did a work experience in Grade 12, senior, in a Primary School for a week. So it was always there, however the Bank Manager approached me three times on three different occasions to be employed with them. I thought on the third occasion I haven't heard back from the Advanced Education and I accepted that position at the bank but two days later I got accepted in the CAE but had taken that role. Further down in my life, I had had enough of where I was for all sorts of reasons. I thought OK what can I do for the next twenty, twenty-five years and I thought "Hey, I can go back to what I previously wanted to do (T4, Q5)

Demonstrating a love for children is a key determinant for entering the teaching profession (Fried, 2001). Furthermore Fried (2001) concluded that passionate teachers must have at the centre of their being a genuine desire to help children grow. Growth in teaching ability over time contributes to a greater love of children and a more positive view of their profession (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). However, this was not the case for all teachers in this study. Some teachers were motivated to enter teaching by other factors. Some teachers who entered the profession after spending time in other careers provided a differing viewpoint. While a number of teachers in this study entered the profession with a single minded approach to teaching, others entered after coercion or through the influence of others.

I finished school a little bit early and I worked for a few years. Doing all sorts of jobs, manual jobs. I had many jobs before I got into, before I went to Uni and I just got sick of all the other jobs. And I thought, I had a mate who was doing education and he seemed to be enjoying himself and it looked like a good career, and I knew that I got along pretty well with kids so I thought that might be the way to go. (T16, Q1)

Somebody told me it was fun to go to Teachers College. I wanted to be a vet and I didn't get the score high enough to be a vet and somebody said Teachers College is fun so I said 'Ok that will do'. And that's what I fell into it…really. I can't imagine doing anything else now. (T9, Q3)

While the literature on the motivations of mature aged people entering the teaching profession is sparse, some supporting evidence of such views can be found in recent studies on job satisfaction. The most commonly stated reasons include dissatisfaction with previous careers (Johnson, 2004), searching for stability and security (Smithers & Robinson, 2000) and memories of their time at school and the desire to put something back (D'Arbon et al., 2001; Johnson et al., 2005). Likewise, in this study many teachers were able to highlight particular teachers who inspired them in some way during their own schooling which influenced their decision to become a teacher. This love for learning is highlighted in the following:

First of all probably inspired by having good teachers myself, and I want to pass that on to the children (T2, Q1)

Although teachers' love of children was the initial catalyst for teachers entering the teaching profession, most teachers saw their role as teaching students skills and knowledge and helping them to develop positive attitudes and values. Teachers in this study openly admitted that their love of children increased after being parents themselves. They felt a genuine desire to provide for the needs of the children. Consequently this sincere bond provoked many comments from teachers regarding their gratification from seeing children grow both academically and personally. The teachers felt they were able to see the children in a different light.

Seeing the kids learn new things. Like when suddenly that light comes on, the   light comes on that says I can read or you know I can remember that or I can recognise that. (T10, Q4)

However, it was not just the improvement that teachers loved about their students. Teachers exhibited a strong sense of satisfaction when children achieved at a higher level because of the teacher's personal intervention rather than following a key learning area's scope and sequence. The spontaneity of the children's reactions was valued by teachers in this study.

Children's reactions like when the penny drops when you see someone where something clicked for them or you can see that they've learned something or that they've enjoyed something or that you've made a difference to them, made their day brighter, given them some sort of interest or direction that they may follow in future. (T11, Q4)

Many teachers, especially those who began with a learning support background commented on the feeling of excitement when children demonstrated academic growth. A large number of responses are summed up in the following comment:

In a nuts and bolts kind of way when you finally get one of your underachievers to obviously finally understand something is a great joy. But to see at any level children perform to their best ability and to learn something new that they are proud of the efforts that they've done. That's where you get your reward from as a classroom teacher. (T1, Q4)

The major source of enjoyment for teachers in this study was the students themselves. This supports the work of Butt et al. (2005) who found that a love for students is a key factor for some teachers remaining in the classroom and the reason why they do not seek leadership positions. Teachers in this study were engaged in conversations with colleagues regarding student work and encouraged each other to adapt and make changes to their teaching. Such interest in the work of others indicates a strong sense of job satisfaction (Steve Dinham & Scott, 2002). Most principals in this study attest to the sense of enjoyment teachers exhibit when the principal visits their classrooms.

6.4.2 Love of Teaching

However, this study also revealed that what brought some teachers into the profession was not what sustained them. A number of teachers discussed their commitment to teaching to begin with was related to their love of children, but teachers towards the end of their career no longer saw this as the main motivation for continuing. This original catalyst for entering teaching was replaced by the excitement of teaching itself. This excitement for teaching was particularly prevalent with teachers who had taught in schools for a number of years. For some teachers though, it was the art of teaching that caused greatest enjoyment.

> *My love of teaching I guess goes right back to my first prac. I think if you are a teacher you should be interested in curriculum and how it works and how you can be better at it. I love taking a new maths concept and teaching the class. It's exciting watching them learn new things (ET4, Q1).*

> *…And I love the fact that we can make a real difference in children's lives by teaching them, and I just get a sense of achievement out of it. I became a teacher because I loved kids, but now the actual teaching excites me. Getting them to know something at the end of the day, that's a buzz. (T3, Q1)*

The majority of teachers in this study spoke of their happiness with their chosen profession and felt that they had developed as teachers over the years. Many teachers spoke of improving or developing as individuals as a senior teacher commented:

> *My first few years were terrible. I was ill prepared, didn't know what to do and had no support. I had classes of 40. I learnt as I went on and I got better. (T18, Q6)*

Other teachers indicated that learning to teach during university didn't hold them in good stead for their first year of teaching. It was only through this 'learning by doing' strategy that confidence as a teacher grew. Research regarding new teachers to the profession reveals that many teachers express doubts about their career choice during their initial years of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1998a). While D'Arbon et al. (2001) contend the

statement that teachers ill-suited to the profession often leave teaching early in their career, this study brings to light an opposing scenario. Principals in all schools were able to nominate teachers who were ill-suited for the teaching profession that were still employed in their schools. One principal noted:

> *Parents always request to have their child in another class. To be perfectly honest, I never had my child in her classroom. (P6, Q21)*

However, the majority of teachers saw teaching as a long term career and exhibited a genuine desire to improve. Experienced teachers felt almost intuitive in their approach to the classroom and over time they developed fluency in teaching, were able to read situations more accurately and adapt lessons according to the learning needs of the children. While researchers suggest that teachers' maturity support an experienced approach to teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hattie, 2003) this study reveals that their inherent love of children and their desire to help students learn, accelerated their competence in teaching as the years progressed.

Although the findings of this study support the research on the love of teaching (Liston, 2000), a number of teachers provided different perspectives. Some teachers were emphatic about the difficulties associated with teaching students with varying educational and emotional needs, and that these children were increasing in number. Furthermore, these teachers assert that students with special needs needed specific teaching strategies requiring greater planning, organisation and structure. It was the extra time and energy that teachers expended on a daily basis to accommodate the students' learning needs that eroded their love of teaching. This view is supported by the following comment by an executive teacher:

> *But then teachers have got a lot of other roles to take on as well. Like children, a lot of children nowadays aren't as well socialised, or they don't appear to have the socialisation skills that they had in past, or we're more aware of that perhaps. Teachers just seem to have to take on a lot of other little duties within the classroom and concerning these students that they might not have had to do once before and I find it probably leaves less time for that core teaching time where you can really get in and teach. (ET1, Q9)*

Additionally, the love of teaching was compromised when some teachers were expected to teach an unfamiliar year level. For some teachers this expectation caused them to feel under stress. This was particularly the case when they felt unprepared for the year level they were expected to teach. This view is illuminated when teachers have a special affiliation with a particular group of students.

> *I always teach in the upper primary, for years. I cried for days when my principal made me teach grade two. I didn't know what to do. All my teaching was in the upper grades. (T11, Q21)*

While most teachers felt that students responded positively to their teaching, the nature of particular students caused teachers to dread teaching. Feelings of dissatisfaction in the classroom were predominantly focused on the immediate personal interactions with students. The most frequent cause of dissatisfaction for teachers was the students' attitude to work expressed here by a teacher in his or her fifth year of teaching:

> *Some kids just don't get it. You try to keep them on track and they just don't care. You wonder why you come to school each day. These kids don't appreciate you so you unconsciously spend more time on the keen kids. (T15, Q23)*

This particular study highlights a disparity between the original expectations and understandings of teachers entering the profession and the changing role of teachers to accommodate administrative and social work duties for which they have not been trained. Other research (Brownhill et al., 2006) supports the view that such duties are taking teachers away from their core business of teaching.

What is of particular interest in this study is that the positive descriptions of teachers' experiences revolved around the act of teaching. Emphatic statements about their job "being fun", or getting a "buzz" from helping students were numerous. However negative statements regarding administrative tasks, increased assessment, reporting to parents and playground duty, countered such affirmative comments. These views support those

of Johnson (2004) who concluded that a teacher's love of teaching is greatly influenced by the cohort of children and a teacher's level of comfort teaching a particular grade.

Ultimately, teachers in this study were positive about their decision to teach and saw relationships with students as a major source of their professional satisfaction. This finding supports the reviewed literature in Chapter Four. Chapter Four (Section 4.5) identifies such influences on student learning with particular insight into the role of the teacher. Supporting such research (G. Butt et al., 2005; Steve Dinham & Scott, 2002), this study highlights teachers' involvement in the life of the school contributing to the greater good of the school which in turn supports teacher efficacy. Participants in this study exhibited a passion for teaching even though there were many reasons for choosing a teaching career. The stimulation gained from having vibrant classrooms, engaging children in innovative learning experiences and catering for the day to day needs of the children provided a sense of contentment for most teachers.

6.4.3 Staff Collegiality

For both teachers and leadership team members, working collaboratively with their peers was a strong cause for their satisfaction with teaching. When asked about what supports teachers in their profession, a common response highlighted the professional interaction with peer teachers. While only one teacher stated that peer collegiality was the sole reason he stayed in the classroom and that he did not like the idea that as an administrator he "would have to boss his colleagues around", many indicated the support of colleagues was a contributing factor for remaining in teaching.

> *Having more than one teacher on a grade helps keep you on track. You can plan, share ideas and simply help each other. I'd be lost without my teaching partners. (T9, Q9)*

Participants' comments about the professional relationships among staff members indicated a sense of contentment within their school. This experience highlighted a genuine desire by teachers to support each other. In contrast, there was a discrepancy

in schools between some teachers in the overt way in which they communicated and shared information. Some schools portrayed a culture where teachers kept their thoughts and practices private while at other schools it was evident that teachers promoted professional relationships with colleagues. The resultant growth in one's teaching supported success in promoting students' learning. These perspectives resonate with research on professional learning communities where weak learning communities grow out of insecurity and diffidence (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). It was concluded that a highly collaborative and innovative staff increases individual job satisfaction. Furthermore, such social and professional interactions were motivations for teachers to remain in the classroom.

Professional relationships were only one form of maintaining a teacher's motivation to remain in teaching. In addition, teachers commented on the need to socialise with other staff members. The need to celebrate, share personal experiences and "be there" for each other rated highly among teachers. The underlying issue for teachers was not only the developing of both professional and personal relationships, it was the value placed by teachers on the relationships.

> *I think valuing what is being taught. Valuing the children, valuing the teachers, valuing the place. And I think that comes through in our understanding of what we are doing and our enthusiasm for what we are doing. You know, the way we treat each other the staff, the way we treat the children, the way we treat the subject. This makes teaching worthwhile. (T8, Q17)*

The need to develop valued relationships was not limited to teachers. Principals interviewed in this study also commented that they found meaning from working collaboratively with staff. This consequence of effective leadership was signaled by the principals when discussing the principalship and the principal's role in building relationships. Recognising and encouraging attributes in others was a key element in the interviews. The following account reflects this view:

> *My staff work hard. They listen, ask questions. They're great mates; they respect each other and the values that each staff member puts in. I love working with them. It's professionally enriching. (P3, Q4)*

Conversely, there were some comments from participants that revealed a sense of unease and restlessness when discussing the need for staff to support each other. Teachers openly discussed the commitment of others to teaching and cited examples of disinterest, indifference to school life and laziness. Teachers' dissatisfaction with their fellow teachers is illustrated in the following.

> *Not all teachers in this school share the same passion. Some are just here for the money working nine to three and not contributing to anything we do. (T2, Q3)*

> *You can't teach old dogs new tricks. It's hard when others don't change. There's no consistency.* (T10, Q3)

Concerns over the consequences of poor personal interaction of staff are evident and are connected to the lack of motivation and teacher efficacy. Most interviewees supported the need for genuine interest in their work. This study demonstrated that teachers themselves were more receptive when the principal and SCO demonstrated genuine interest in their work, visited their classrooms regularly and engaged in curriculum oriented discussions.

> *I need to know I'm doing a good job, that I'm valued. My principal is good at visiting and supporting my classroom. He wants to know what's happening in my classroom. (T8, Q21)*

Such genuine interest appears to lead to greater teacher commitment. The importance of teacher commitment is emphasised by its links with quality teaching, ability of teachers to adapt to change, teacher retention, teacher stress and burnout, overall 'health' of the school and the attitudes and motivation of the children (Ebmeier, 2003). Developing a personal passion for the teaching role together with a sound knowledge base was the most productive path principals advocated for effecting student achievement.

Clearly the conception of teacher commitment is dependent on many inter-related factors that collectively promote school improvement. Commitment is enhanced through school variables such as nurturing aspects of their role, clear role definitions, school administrative support and positive relationships within the school environment (Steve Dinham & Scott, 2002). Improved student achievement in schools, programmes and classrooms is a result of clearly defined missions, educational focuses and co-ordinated themes within the school (Darling-Hammond, 2000). For this to occur, the relationship developed between principals, SCOs and teachers is seen as pivotal to student learning. Teachers in this study experienced greater job satisfaction and fulfilment in their work when a positive relationship with the principal and/or SCO was established. They tended to be more reflective about their role and had a propensity to take student learning more seriously. Consequently, when effective principal/SCO/teacher interaction is about instruction, teachers develop wide repertoires of flexible learning procedures and teaching methods and remain more engaged in student learning (Blase & Blase, 2001).

Furthermore, teacher satisfaction in this study was reduced in schools where negative attitudes (including those of students and the community), poor discipline procedures, excessive administrative workloads, increased expectations and poor student performances were evident. Moreover, an important side effect of teacher satisfaction is the establishment of teacher morale and that the more teachers found their work satisfying the higher the morale (Latham, 1998). All principals in this study affirmed that increasing teacher commitment was a critical ingredient for building teacher quality and therefore in promoting student achievement in schools.

6.4.4 Teacher Frustration

Teachers commented positively on their profession and spoke favourably on their teaching role. However, the passion for teaching demonstrated by the teachers in this study is balanced by a sense of frustration that detracted or even inhibited their enthusiasm for the profession. The following examples illustrate a sense of frustration

that most teachers in this study articulated when discussing their concerns with the teaching profession.

> *I enjoy being in the classroom working with the kids but the extra paper work is such a burden. (T1, Q3)*

> *Outcomes have increased our preparation and assessment time. All we seem to do is assess, assess, assess. (T11, Q2)*

Teachers at every school described the increasing demands placed on their teaching time. Furthermore, they regarded the pressure of trying to complete specific teaching tasks as being stressful and therefore limiting their effectiveness as a teacher. As the data analysis indicated, the tasks discussed by teachers that caused them stress were aligned with the instructional function of their work.

> *If I didn't have to programme, I'd have more time to relax at home, be more refreshed and enjoy my class more. (T17, Q21)*

However, it was not just the educational system placing pressure on teachers. While teachers supported efforts by parents and even welcomed them into their classrooms, a number of teachers highlighted the increasing role of parents in schools as another burden to deal with. In particular, the increased expectations placed upon teachers by parents in many areas including academic and attitudinal. Teachers reported on the irony that parents held a different view of the capabilities of their children compared to the reality of the child's performance exhibited in the classroom.

> *Parental expectations can cause undue pressure on teachers. They expect us to do miracles with their kids. Some of us cringe when we get the class lists and see which parents we get. (LT 3, Q3)*

> *Parents actually because I generally work on trying to do the right thing and I generally believe that I've got the ability to teach the kids but sometimes parents get in the way and ask really silly questions as to maybe, why didn't someone get an award or why aren't they reading at a higher level. Like I said, I'm not trying to punish anybody I'm just doing what I think is right and sometimes I think parents get in the way of that. Not all parents, it's mainly the odd one here or there but, yeh. (T13, Q3)*

Some poor experiences in dealing with parents have left teachers questioning parental motivation to help in the classroom. They felt that principals encouraged staff to engage parents in the classroom as a means to support student achievement, as it is acknowledged that parents are pivotal in influencing student success (Kyriakides, 2005). However, teachers in this study believed parents were visiting classrooms to observe the teaching/learning process and to make judgements on their teaching. Consequently some teachers held a more cynical view of parental involvement.

> *Some come into the classroom to help with reading groups, but they only come to check you out. Then they go out and have coffee with other parents and criticise you. (T4, Q2)*

This study reveals that teachers are cynical on the reasons why parents volunteer to help in the classroom and argue that they often inhibit learning. This view is not consistent with recent studies on parent involvement in schools which conclude that parents' only interest in helping in the classroom is to support their child's learning (Ferrara & Ferrara, 2005; Kyriakides, 2005).

Adding to the concerns on parental involvement, teachers believe that some parenting and societal issues are becoming more prominent and are being integrated into the school curriculum. During focus group interviews teachers discussed vehemently the adding of peripheral programmes to the school curriculum and the impact on quality learning time. Views encapsulated in the following comments highlighted a growing frustration on what constitutes school learning and the teaching that belongs to parents.

> *A lot more things seem to be coming under the teacher's responsibility rather than parents, now even the government wants us to teach values to the kids. (T1, Q2)*

> *…..so the parents in a lot of cases, and this is a general statement, but it does reflect a lot of parents I think, they're hoping that the school will fix a lot of the problems instead of starting with it at home. And I think that's where the pressure comes for the teachers, it's like as soon as*

something goes wrong, it's always something at school that's happened, rather than something that's built up over a period of years at home. (T19, Q5)

Teachers were adamant that some of these increased community-based expectations should be taught by parents and only supported by the school. Teachers agreed that schools had a place in supporting family life and community-based issues but were unhappy at the extra time it took away from teaching core skills. Discussing recent government policy on teaching values as an integrated topic in schools, the following teacher summed up the feelings of all interviewed.

On top of that we have to spend precious teaching time on teaching kids values. Isn't that the role of parents? (T5, Q2)

The frustration highlighted by teachers in this study reflects the growing trend of increasing expectations placed upon teachers both in Australia and internationally (Sturman, 2002). Although parental expectations were a growing concern, not all teachers held the same view. Teachers in the infants classes felt the support of parents in the classroom added to the success of student learning. Being able to have "an extra pair of hands", "listen to the children read" and "follow up on behaviour in class" were noted as supportive aspects of parental help.

However, parental expectations were not the significant cause of frustration for teachers. A consequence of increased accountability has seen greater pressure placed upon teachers to perform. An area reported by teachers that caused greatest anxiety is the use of comparisons on external exams, particularly from the annual Year 3, 5 & 7 *State Wide Testing Programme.*

The basic skills tests are a big concern as parents like to compare their kids and that means comparing teachers. But there's more to the tests than the scores. (TFG1, T3, Q 16)

It was believed that this particular measure of school performance resulted in a crowded curriculum that is more difficult to teach. Further, teachers consistently claimed that such

measures were narrowing their teaching as they streamlined lessons to cater for the statewide testing programme and taught to the mainstream of the classroom. Importantly, teachers felt they had little opportunity to engage students in creative or innovative learning experiences.

> *I think the government testing has affected our self esteem and it's taken a certain amount of our classroom freedom away because we've got this extra work that we've got to cover, and there is very little time for us to explore the children's areas of interest, so I think testing has affected teacher satisfaction in a very negative way. (T11, Q17)*

This study supports the research on job intensification (Woods, 2001) which demonstrates a more rigid approach to teaching grows as the teachers are expected to do more. In particular this study highlights the decline in the beliefs and attitudes that most teachers have acquired and developed during the course of their careers. According to teachers in this study the cause of this decline lies with the increase in accountability measures schools are involved with. In addition, the manner in which schools deal with the changes being imposed seems to be influencing the professionalism of teachers (Van den Berg, 2002).

6.4.5 Relationship with Principal

The principals and SCOs were unanimous in their assertions that they supported staff and worked closely with them in their schools. This view of such support reflected the leaders' belief in their instructional leadership, which highlights their perception that the essence of their work is related to instruction. However some teachers expressed concern over the efforts of the principal and SCO in this area of teaching and learning arguing that they had lost touch with classroom life. Teachers' view of the apparent lack of support often led to conflicts and inhibited collaborative decision-making.

> *My principal is out of touch; she never visits my classroom, yet wants to give advice on my teaching. (T8, Q5)*

> *Sometimes the SCO doesn't really understand how difficult it is to start something new. They've forgotten what class life is like. (T14, Q6)*

While some staff felt unsupported by their principals, the majority of teachers interviewed enjoyed the working relationship they had with their principals and SCOs. Throughout the interviews, and as depicted in examples offered elsewhere (see Section 6.4.3), what frustrated teachers was not the added responsibility of school life, but rather their perceived lack of value to function as professionals within the classroom. Outside formal meetings with the SCO, teachers welcomed the opportunity to meet regularly with their principal, to discuss the practices of their classrooms and to seek advice on how to improve their teaching.

> *My principal is wonderful. He listens to me, provides advice and supports me. He even came to my mother's funeral. (T14, Q22)*

> *He asked me to take on a relieving admin position. I didn't think I could do it but he had faith in me. (T11, Q23)*

Gaining principal support and approval for the quality of their work, teachers are more likely to enjoy teaching and develop better work ethics (Ebmeier, 2003). Researchers have found strong relationships between teachers' view of principal support, their own behaviour and students' achievements (Johnson, 2004; J. Richards, 2004).

The teachers in this study welcomed interaction with their principals and the opportunity to discuss the context of learning that takes place in their classroom. Teachers were more intent of meeting with their principal than with other leadership team members, including the SCO. Interestingly, it was revealed that principals were also keen to interact with teachers and saw as their key role, the developing of positive relationships among teachers, parents and support staff. In working closely with teachers, principals were convinced that many barriers inherent in school improvement practices were diluted and even overcome.

> *I find the closer I work with teachers, you know meet one to one, the easier it is to get things done. It saves me time. You know, it's all about regular and constant communication. That's the key. (P4, Q6)*

This is consistent with findings of research into principal behaviour and student outcomes which identify key strategies to enhance learning include a focus on teaching/learning, effective professional development, and implementing an action research culture to instruction (Cotton, 2003; Creswell & Fisher, 1999). In particular, Creswell and Fisher (1999) conclude that successful principals were those whose staff had attained high levels of empowerment and participative decision-making. Likewise, in order to be more informed and to monitor student learning, effective principals in this study used similar strategies to increase levels of empowerment including the visiting of classrooms, providing feedback on instructional practices, discussing personal issues and working in a team environment. Further to the findings of Creswell and Fisher (1999), this study highlights the importance of communication in building the relationship between principal and teacher.

These practices were minimal or non-existent in the lesser performing schools, particularly where communication issues arose. As explored in Chapter Three, considerable research supports the role of interpersonal relationships among staff as being a key factor in effecting cultural change in schools (Fink & Resnick, 2001). However, this study demonstrates that teachers believe that the principal is more responsible for developing and fostering positive interpersonal interactions throughout the school. Teachers in this study argue that the principal's role is crucial in providing support for building staff efficacy. It was expected that it was the principal's role to initiate such support and to be the catalyst for improving the practices of the school that will lead to improved student learning. Principals have demonstrated a sincere desire to empower teachers to take on more responsibility for student learning. An experienced principal demonstrates the desire to work with teachers as a means of emphasising his reason for entering the profession in the first place.

> *I went into to teaching because I loved kids. Now I'm a principal. I love working with teachers to ensure our kids are well taught. I believe that I am helping the kids learn through working closely with their class teachers. Giving them small tasks to do at school outside their*

classroom gives them more confidence. The more confident the more productive and excited they are about their job. (P2, Q4).

For schools, in this study, where the principal focused staff attention towards student achievement and provided time for staff to collaborate on school planning, the teachers reported high levels of commitment and productivity. This concept of the principal modelling interpersonal leadership is supported as a means to motivate staff and is highlighted in an executive teacher's response:

> *Everyone shares in making our staff great. But it's the principal's job to make sure everyone toes the line. He has to lead by example. (ET4, Q16)*

Principals saw this distribution of specific roles as a key step in empowering teachers. However, in fostering such shared leadership approaches there is plausibility in Crowther's et al. (2002) argument that principals must understand the mechanics of parallel leadership and the way principals and teachers work together to improve student learning. It is simply more than handing down role descriptions and the completion of delegated tasks. Furthermore the authors argue that the key ingredient to fostering parallel leadership is the building of positive working relationships (Crowther, Hann et al., 2002).

As this study illustrates, an important consequence of working closely with staff was that principals were able to comment deeply on various teachers in their schools, describing in detail, each teacher's favoured teaching methods and subjects, acknowledged areas of weakness and even predicting potential teacher/parent conflicts. They were able to plan thoroughly and circumvent any concerns because they had a deep understanding of their staff's personal and professional perspectives. To support their deep understanding of staff, principals commented on a variety of programmes developed specifically at school level to support teacher development, including teacher induction, peer mentoring and self-reflection tools as a means to improve teacher quality. These

programmes helped promote improvement in teachers by addressing personal deficiencies.

It is evident that the working environment developed in schools is a consequence of the relationship between a pastorally oriented principal, the leadership team and the school community (Di Stefano, 2002; Frost & Durrant, 2004). While each principal in this study held different perspectives on leadership, they all agreed on the need to respect the dignity of the person and promote a climate of respect within the school. This perspective on leadership supports the call for authentic leadership as a means of promoting school improvement (P Duignan, 2006). Building a climate of trust is deemed a necessary ingredient for building positive relationships in schools.

An inhibitor to building positive relationships, as highlighted in the data analysis, was the individual loneliness of classroom life. Some teachers felt the isolation of professional life and their lack of peer contact.

> *We're not a large school. There's no-one to discuss my programme with. We only have one teacher per grade, I've got to do it all myself. (T16, Q20)*

It is clear that the promotion of collegiality is an integral part of building successful schools (Blase & Blase, 2001) and that the responsibility rests on the leaders of the school to provide opportunities for professional interaction. Where principals in this study held a collaborative view of school working life and respected the expertise of the teachers, a greater sense of satisfaction and loyalty to the school by staff was evident.

Schools which demonstrated strong collegiality promoted a harmonious work environment (Blase & Blase, 2001). Teachers in this study were clear that the principal energized the school climate and were able to nominate the strategies that were seen as most successful. The strategies that positively influenced the organizational climate of the school revolved around encouragement, building trust and respect through

support, and acknowledging and affirming a teacher's professional competence. Teachers believed these strategies were successful because they were enacted through effective interpersonal communication skills of the principal.

This finding has been confirmed in recent studies (R. Butt & Retallick, 2002; James et al., 2005; J. Richards, 2004), which show increasingly the importance of personal relationships in promoting the environment for nurturing student learning. The promotion of such positive relationships highlights the intrinsic nature of teaching and the internal drive of teachers (and principals).

6.4.6 Fear of Formal Leadership Positions

Some teachers remained in the classroom despite given opportunities to take on more formal leadership roles within their school. While some teachers simply expressed a view that a leadership role did not interest them, others were more articulate in their reasons. For some teachers the loss of classroom time was a deterrent for taking on such roles.

> *I do enjoy teaching. I couldn't leave the classroom and become a principal. I'd lose touch with the kids. (T1, Q8)*

> *I just don't feel my skills are there. My joy is teaching so you go where your joy is. (T7, Q13)*

However, the loss of classroom time was not the main issue for some teachers. When questioned about becoming a principal, many teachers denigrated the idea and expressed a poor view of the formal leadership position. Besides expressing the opinion that the principal was over worked or that the multitude of skills necessary for the role was beyond them, they perceived the role of principal was too overwhelming and not enjoyable.

> *I have no ambition to be a principal. It's too big a job, there's not enough hours in the day, and the parents don't appreciate you. (T13, Q10)*

Leadership team members who held a part time teaching role were able to support the classroom teachers' fear of the formal leadership role. Having a closer connection to the principal due to their administrative roles, these leadership team members related stories of pressure and hardship attended to by their principal on a daily basis. They commented on the increased workload.

> *I know how hard it is. I see our principal battle everyday. At least I can return to my classroom and bury myself in teaching. He just gets buried in the office and can't escape. (ETFG1, ET2, Q10)*

The perceived increased workload of a principal was a major deterrent to leadership team members and classroom teachers alike. When asked why they expressed a fear of the increased workload, replies such as the following emerged.

> *I think there are too many people to balance and sort out and everyone has wants and needs and to work out how they all best fit together …well, you can't please everybody, with all the extra responsibility you work too hard. (T10, Q13)*

> *There are times when I think yes, I'd love to have a stronger role in the RE area, I feel at times I have a lot to offer in that area. But then when I get a bit of a reality check and sit back and just see what the role encompasses ….and at this stage of my life I couldn't possibly give to that job what it would take to do it properly. I've got too many other pulls on my time to really do that properly. (T1, Q10)*

However, it was not just the workload that discouraged teachers from formal leadership roles. For some, balancing home life and the rigors of school was a deterrent for taking on leadership roles. Having discussed his enjoyment of classroom life, when asked about furthering his career, an experienced teacher dismissed the possibility and discussed the impact it would cause on his family.

> *Essentially because I've got two children and a wife who works etc. and it would impact on not just me, but three others directly. So that gets complicated and I guess that management of time is one of the main reasons I haven't got time to be a principal. (T5, Q23)*

Other teachers commented on maintaining a balance between classroom teaching and outside school responsibilities. Being involved with community groups and providing support for such organisations is reported as being a time-consuming task. Some teachers liked the stability of classroom life and were comfortable in letting others take on leadership roles.

> *In small country towns like ours, the community relies on itinerant workers like teachers to come in and provide support. We give energy to the club and after a couple of years we transfer on. You can't commit the same energy to being a principal as well. (T12, Q23)*

This study revealed that it is not just the external factors that influence teachers not to undertake formal leadership roles. With the changing nature of the curriculum, some teachers actually enjoyed their independence or autonomy within the classroom. Being flexible and having the freedom to plan learning experiences appealed to some teachers. One teacher commented on the power of being a teacher.

> *I like the control, the ability to plan my own teaching experiences. I know my kids and I know what will engage them the best. I can be flexible and change the lesson to meet their needs. All in all I like doing my own thing. (T7, Q8)*

Having control of their classroom was also a defence mechanism for some teachers. In discussing the safety of their classroom they were removing themselves from discussion and decision-making on school wide issues including occupational health and safety and the daily duty of care. This distancing from such decision-making also enabled them to distance themselves from responsibility.

The teachers' fear of formal leadership positions in this study is well supported by research (D'Arbon et al., 2001; Lacey, 2002) which lists increased workloads and the enjoyment of classroom life as major deterrents. Besides their own personal aspirations, teachers make judgements on their observations of principal behaviour and the work

that engages principals. It is apparent that teachers view principalship as a burden and value more the collegiality of their peers rather than being a leader amongst their peers. Additionally, the lack of parental support and the concerns regarding duty of care issues expressed by teachers in this study inhibit a teacher's desire to become a formal leader in the school. Reports internationally (Public Agenda, 2004) on the rise of school litigations from unhappy parents substantiate teachers' fears.

6.4.7 Teaching Work Conditions

Some teachers indicated that job security was important. Staff appreciated the nature of improved work conditions gained through enterprise bargaining agreements. However, most teachers agreed that while the remuneration for their classroom efforts could always be better, it was established that they weren't in it for the money.

> *We might complain that teaching is a tough profession but we also have some positives. I think our work conditions have improved over the years.. like … class sizes have dropped, superannuation, paid inservices, extra leave entitlements. (T9, Q11)*

Teachers felt that improving work conditions enabled them to be more effective as teachers and believed that the students' learning opportunities were enhanced. When discussing which teaching work conditions supported them most in their role as teacher, the common response was release time. Teachers welcomed the introduction of release time, which has been cited as a significant contributor to relieving teacher stress. Teachers attributed release time to allowing them to "keep their heads above water" and "reducing the need to take work home".

This finding is consistent with recent studies on remuneration (McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, & Hamilton, 2003) and work conditions concluding that assigning money and control to the school level led to minor instructional changes at some schools, but no changes in most schools, let alone improvements in student learning (Joyce, 2004).

Some of the more experienced teachers with families (especially those with young children) commented on the advantage of having school holidays. Although they enjoyed being able to spend time with family, to mind their children and take the opportunity to recharge batteries, most teachers indicated that holidays included some work time.

> *Everyone bags teachers because they see it as a 9 to 3 job and that you get lots of holidays. But they don't know what's involved, how hard you work. Teaching is a demanding job….. physically…… you need time to regenerate, and it's getting worse. (T16, Q2)*

It is evident the provision of improved work conditions supported teachers and encouraged them to remain in teaching longer. Teachers indicated that the support given to provide improved work conditions was a key factor in sustaining their commitment to teaching. This desire to help teachers by improving work conditions was a key factor in promoting positive rapport between teachers and their leadership teams. A consequence of the promotion of positive relationships within the school organisation is the strengthening of the teaching/learning process.

> *Well I guess the principal and the admin team have a supervisory role but really I think in the long run you've got to trust that your teachers are doing the best thing. (T19, Q 23)*

Although some teachers indicated concern with the teaching profession and the conditions under which they work, the vast majority of teachers exhibited a genuine love of their profession. Furthermore, principals were committed to promoting positive work environments where teacher collaboration encouraged professional discussion and debate. In schools where regular discussions between principal and teachers were held, the school environment was more welcoming and exuded a positive teaching/learning environment. The emphasis for principals in this study was on promoting teacher personal growth, improving teaching skills and extending content knowledge of each key learning area. This is consistent with Southwell's (2002) findings. Principals in this study believed that this ensured that teachers saw themselves as part of the learning cycle. The consequences of such involvement are seen in the development of school policies

and guidelines, the review of student data and the development of school learning programmes (Southwell, 2002). The promotion of ownership and collegiality were the key motivators in maintaining personal relationships resulting in the promotion of the learning cycle for both the students and staff alike. Teachers are more committed to teaching when the working conditions are conducive to collaboration and collegiality (Frost & Durrant, 2004).

However, this study, while demonstrating the importance of leadership in improving teacher working conditions, principals, leadership team members and classroom teachers had slightly different perceptions of the quality of such working conditions. Survey responses showed that principals had a more positive view of working conditions (in particular release time, school resources and participation in decision-making) while classroom teachers had serious concerns about time constraints, curriculum development and decision-making processes. Furthermore, it is noted that all teachers, regardless of years of experience, the school they attended or their own backgrounds, similarly voiced these teacher perceptions. Similar to recent studies on workplace conditions (Andrews & Lewis, 2002; R. Butt & Retallick, 2002) the attention to improving such conditions is often dependent upon financial decision-making in the school and the effectiveness of forward planning. Consequently, some schools engaged in minimal discussion on such issues because of their lack of finances. However, it became apparent during the interview process that the primary concern expressed by teachers and SCOs is that if principals (and members of the Catholic Education Office) do not perceive the full extent of their teachers' concerns then the priority on improving working conditions will be low.

> *I think the CEO needs to go back to the classroom, let them know how difficult it is to do all we have to, deal with disruptive kids and assess all those outcomes. Then they might help us. Then schools would improve (T6, Q10)*

For a number of years, there has been a strong focus on educational reform with many strategies implemented to increase student learning. Most of these programmes have

169

focused on structural reform (ie open plan classrooms, timetabling changes). on changing the curricula taught in schools or creating new positions within the school (T. Townsend, 2005). This study found that while such structures are important, successful and lasting improvement in schools was dependent upon the quality of relationships between staff members and their principals. Furthermore, the strength of the principal to not only initiate change but also negotiate the designated change and how it was to be implemented were important factors.

This study emphasises the fact that the physical conditions of teachers' work influences their satisfaction and sense of efficacy. While teachers in this study distinguished between teaching resources, physical facilities and financial constraints, other researchers (Blackmore, 2004; Hirsch, 2005) have bundled such working conditions together implying that physical conditions are intertwined with other factors.

6.5   Findings and Discussion for Research Question Four

How do principals and school curriculum officers engage teachers in the school reform process?

Research question four seeks to explore how principals and SCOs engage teachers in the school reform process. There has been considerable research into the role of leaders in the areas of collaborating with teachers and the importance of regarding them as professionals (Clarke, 2004). However, little of this research has focused specifically on what principals in particular need to do to foster the development of teachers as leaders within schools. Responses from principals in this study shed some light on this issue and reveal the following factors impact upon teacher engagement in school improvement processes.

6.5.1 Changing Role of the Principal

All principals commented during the interviews on the changing nature of their role. They were clear that the role of the principal was significantly different from that of the

classroom teacher. However, the move from classroom teacher to the principalship was often commented on as being a "bigger step than first thought". As the following two principals note, there is more to being a principal than just being a good teacher.

> *There is a part of it where you need a whole lot of different skills to what you used to I mean school principals became school principals because arguably they were good teachers, it used to be easier to make decisions because of all those things which have just been said. Now the school principal probably its handy if they have an educational background, but needs lots of skills in negotiation and understanding of business practices that we are having to get used to and understand. (PFG1, P2, Q2)*

> *It is becoming more complex…. there seems to be more hindrances or blockers that you need to negotiate around. The actual complexity of the job has increased and probably the time too; that balance of doing all the admin work and then still trying to go and be an instructional leader and then you've got all your admin work and then there's all the changes with unions and policies and all the mandated things that are happening from above all puts pressure on. (PFG1, P3, Q2)*

Principals in this study rose to formal leadership responsibilities within their schools because they were identified as being good teachers. However when discussing the tasks associated with the role of the principal, the principals in this study commented on a myriad of responsibilities that appeared to be disconnected from the classroom. With principals voicing concern over diversions of finance, increased maintenance requirements, occupational health and safety issues and even dealing with marketing issues, there is a movement away from the role of principal as an educational leader to that of a manager of day-to-day school operations. This concern is illustrated by the following comment from an experienced principal:

> *The more I work on budgets, deal with parents, meet CEO visitors, order parts for the mower, the less time I spend with teachers discussing teaching. I didn't want to be a principal to do that. (PFG1, P3, Q16)*

All principals and SCOs arrived at their leadership roles after demonstrating success in the classroom. However, there is evidence that for the principals in this study, the role of

the principalship has changed over time and principals believed they are being removed from their view of why they became a principal in the first place. The following principal sums up the feeling of dissatisfaction as he goes on to state:

> *Unfortunately I'm getting taken away from being the instructional leader and that's where my strengths are, I know that. I wasn't, and this isn't beating my own drum, but I know I was an excellent teacher. And I went out to schools and taught teachers how to teach, so that's my background. But my problem is that I'm being torn. Instead of being in classrooms and at staff meetings talking about learning and teaching and how to better address this issue and how to help make learning better, I got so much other stuff on the admin side that is taking me away. (P5, Q8)*

With rapid change in schools at unprecedented levels the role of the principal is also under constant change (Fullan, 2001; A. Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). Principals in this study expressed a collective view that they operate in complex and challenging environments and are expected to manage the day-to-day operation of the school while attend to high accountability requirements both educationally and financially, balance the educational needs of the students against parental and community expectations and be competent instructional leaders knowledgeable in curriculum reform.

However, with the goal of school improvement being to improve student learning, research highlights that teachers are the most important school factor that impacts on student learning (Frost & Durrant, 2004; Hattie, 2003; Kaplan & Owings, 2002; Rowe, 2003). Principals saw their role in nurturing teacher development as being central to sustaining school improvement. They were clear that in order to promote student achievement they needed to support the teachers.

> *My role is and I tell the parents this; my role is not to support your child. My role is to support the teacher, they're at the coal face, they're the ones that really make a difference; but I can make a difference by making sure that the teachers' resources are enough and that their needs are met, that the parents support the teacher, because that's a blocker to teaching when the parents go against the teacher's will. (PFG1, P1, Q4)*

However, SCOs saw their role as working closely with the principal in supporting teachers.

> *I try and support the principal in bringing in new ideas for teachers however, once a plan is made my role is to help sell it to the staff. (ET3, Q15)*

All principals surveyed acknowledged the changing nature of their role as educational leader. Both experienced and inexperienced principals regardless of their school's size, parental demographics or results in their school's basic skills testing programme identified the increasing complexities in leading a school. One particular respondent who had been a principal of more than one school discussed the changes.

> *…certainly it's more multifaceted now in terms of particularly, say dealing with families and the counselling role the Principal needs to take on now. As well as all of the traditional roles that a Principal had, in terms of curriculum, staff management and budgets and those sort of things, we deal with community issues. (P3, Q2)*

While principals and teachers frequently commented on the extensive change in their roles in schools there was common agreement on the type of leadership structure needed in schools. Most principals agreed that their authority to lead the school was not based upon a hierarchical structure but came rather from the teachers themselves. The promotion of or the power of shared decision-making was evenly spread through the school.

> *…..the greatest school improvement programme I believe is to have learning teams. Learning teams share the discussions and decision-making. They are the experts in their field, we need to listen and work together. (P5, Q4)*

Although principals saw their role as working with teachers to improve student learning and the administrative tasks were increasing, they still felt a particular connectedness to classroom life. When visiting schools to meet with principals I often had to wait or walk around the school to find a principal who was in a classroom, meeting with children or taking lessons.

Most of my day is spent talking and making sure that my door is still open for parents even though I am visiting the classrooms, that's where I think a great principal comes to the fore… he is able to look, to wander around the school and know where the strengths are and where the weaknesses are. (P1, Q8)

I visit classrooms all the time. I need to. I can't converse with teachers on implementing initiatives to support them unless I know what they are doing. To do that I need to visit classrooms. (P4, Q7)

However, principals felt their connectedness to classroom life was being eroded. Principals expressed their frustration with the increasing administrative and accountability issues surrounding their role and believed that these issues overshadowed their instructional role.

I find it increasingly difficult to meet with teachers to discuss their programmes and students' needs because of the extra paperwork we are burdened with. I just don't have the time. (P2, Q7).

Addressing the tension between the administrative duties and the desire to continue to be committed to the instructional nature of their role, principals are engaging in distributed leadership strategies. Principals are encouraging staff to show more leadership in the school through specific functions that were once associated with the role of the principal. These distributed responsibilities included taking assemblies, leading policy working parties and developing school routines and procedural documents. As one experienced principal acknowledged:

I can't do everything on my own. I need the staff to share the workload, to help make the decisions, to take on some of the tasks and make the decisions. (PFG1, P5, Q8)

Principals in this study are maintaining their love of teaching by using strategies to engage teachers in daily leadership functions. Supporting recent conceptions on distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002b) the principals in this study believed that certain leadership functions need to be performed at every level in the organisation. While participants in the principal focus groups debated the question of whether teachers were

in effect leaders, consensus was gained on the view that teachers needed to take more responsibility in the daily running of the school. As one principal noted:

> *Being a principal is multifaceted in particular say dealing with families and the counselling role. To do this as well as all of the traditional roles that a principal had, in terms of curriculum, staff management and budgets and those sort of things, teachers need to stand up and take control. And I do think that the word needs to be spread a bit more to encourage those who might be looking for a principal role. Give them practice. (PFG1, P1, Q2)*

However, promoting shared leadership responsibilities in schools was not a simple matter for principals. Discussing the need to distribute responsibility for student learning, principals noted some inherent difficulties in engaging staff in school improvement programmes. The main inhibitor was the teachers' own scepticism about the possible success of the new initiatives, particularly from those who have been teaching for a number of years. With the myriad of school improvement projects both principals and teachers commented on the introduction of new programmes as being just a replication of a previous programme.

> *I have some long term teachers and it's hard to get them to budge. The catch cry about waiting for it to come into fashion again is always heard when we try to implement a new programme. (P1, Q19)*

This raises the question of exploring what principals can do and what strategies are most productive to encourage teachers in the development of school reform. Teachers have varied experiences with school improvement programmes, some successful and some not so. Principals felt that these experiences formed a teacher's view on improvement programmes and consequently, their commitment towards future initiatives.

> *…some teachers find (school improvement programmes) threatening because it has those overtones of supervision and the powers that we're looking at you. (P4, Q8)*

> *… they spend all this time developing this new programme and then suddenly a new guideline is released and the new outcomes go out the*

window, criteria reference comes in. No wonder teachers don't want change. (P3, Q8)

In this study, principals commented on the use of various strategies to promote staff commitment and to act positively to the introduction of school improvement programmes. The most significant strategy involved classroom visitations. Most teachers commented favourably on class visitations by the principal. Teachers saw classroom visitations as being beneficial and supportive of their work. They see value in the principal regularly visiting classrooms. The benefit for the school is summarised in the following comment:

> *Principal visits to the classroom and interaction with the children because I know as a lower school teacher the children really appreciate and love the visit from the boss, the big cheese to come from the office. And it's good for us too because he is able to see our problems first hand. (T2, Q22)*

As supported by comments from principals in this study, the position of principal has seen a number of structural changes in role descriptions and in community expectations (Ash, 2000; Crowther, Hann et al., 2002; Lambert, 2002). However, principals in this study argued for a greater need to nurture the leadership skills in teachers. All research in the effective schools domain concludes that principals who demonstrate strong leadership skills and exude an enthusiasm to be involved in the classroom create better schools (Crowther, Kaagan et al., 2002). This study revealed that principals who have a clear focus on teaching and learning and have physical involvement in classroom life enabled sound teacher management and management of pedagogical directions for the school. The close supervision of teacher behaviours by the principal enables a more precise management of the school personnel to best advantage student learning. Principals in this study, to varying degrees were keen to be not only involved in classroom life but also to add to the school debate on learning strategies and resources. Furthermore, principals had an intimate knowledge of each teacher and were able to discuss their strengths and areas of improvement. They were keenly aware of particular nuances.

6.5.2 Principal Work Issues

Like teachers, principals also expressed a strong concern for the increasing workload placed upon their role. One of the main issues is the focus on administrative tasks.

> *There's just more and more paperwork I find I'm sitting at my desk a lot more than I used to, and seemingly getting no further. And I mean by paperwork, I mean any kind of correspondence, administration type of stuff. I think the demands of government, and of course passed onto us by the CEO are just becoming absurd. (P1, Q4)*

As alluded to by this principal a significant component of the increased administrative tasks is the increased accountability in both educational and financial domains. The emphasis on accountability for student achievement has seen intensification on data gathering, analysing and interpreting, and a reliance on external assessments (Linn, 2003; Rowe, 2000). Responding to such measures has been a challenge to sustaining a sense of purpose and enjoyment of the role as principal.

> *It gets me down too, the pressure of the results. Did we do well? Better than last year? What do we need to do to improve? Is it the teacher? More resources? It's like stock exchange pressure. (PFG1, P3, Q4)*

In overcoming the work intensification concern, principals focused on other areas believing that increasing job satisfaction of staff is linked to ensuring other areas of the school were working well. One key area highlighted in the data is improving staff time management skills and the ability to manage daily tasks both inside and outside the classroom. Principals saw this key area as an important part of their principalship. They argued the need for professional development in areas of relationship building and interpersonal skills to help address job satisfaction issues and to keep teachers engaged in their classroom. As discussed in a principals' focus group interview, for one principal improving relationships was a key priority.

> *I've been to conflict resolution inservices and to Bill Rogers dealing with staff inservice but I need more in getting staff to relate better with each other. Where do I go? (PFG1, P1, Q14)*

These emerging work related issues are emanating from school responses to addressing accountability demands. As stated previously, teachers' comments on the increasing complexity of the principal's role is a deterrent and are up front in stating that this complexity dissuades them from seeking promotion. Teachers would rather stay in the classroom than seek formal leadership roles.

This finding supports recent Australian research on how potential leaders see the role of the principal (Lacey, 2002; Halia Silins, Zarins, & Mulford, 2002). With many principals openly displaying frustration at being inundated with menial accountability tasks, the message portrayed to staff is one of dissatisfaction and discontent. Consequently, teachers aspiring to become principals are deterred and often encouraged not to seek higher leadership positions (T. Drake & Roe, 2003; Gronn, 2002a).

When asked how the principalship could be made more attractive to aspiring leaders, principal responses could be divided into two categories: additional remuneration and the provision of more staff to share the work load.

> *Although I love being a principal the pay is miserable. There's not much difference between my pay and that of a long term teacher, with no responsibilities. (P1, Q18)*

> *One strategy would be to employ more staff. As the work load increases it is important to increase the number of people to distribute the work load. You can't just keep piling it on few people. (P5, Q17)*

Principals also saw the need to address the increasing workload. In addition to the increased focus on administrative tasks, principals see an increased workload in the area of student welfare and related family issues. Discussing influences on his time, one principal stated an increase in welfare issues.

> *Significant proportion of my time now is being spent on parental wellbeing issues and children's wellbeing issues. (PFG1, P1, Q1)*

It is with such an increase in issues relating to student welfare that principals have seen an increase in legal requirements and the changing role of parents in society.

> *Parents now, I feel, expect schools to do a lot more for their children and I'm only talking even academically here, let alone all the other issues that are involved, like the issues related to dysfunctional families and dealing with the fallout of failing family relationships. (PFG1, P4, Q1)*

While it is not surprising that the increasingly complex demands and challenges confronting principals have become an increasing focus for researchers (Cranston, Ehrich, & Billot, 2003; Gronn, 2002a; Miller, 2004), principals in this study were more concerned with supporting teachers. Instructionally, school principals are held accountable for the quality of education in the belief that the academic failure or success of the student is determined by the way the school is run (Fullan & Watson, 2000). Increasing accountability policies for education by governments have caused increasing pressure on schools to perform. This study exemplifies the change in principals' approaches to promoting school improvement programmes.

6.5.3 School Curriculum Officer

The appointment of SCOs in schools was received as a positive step towards improving the quality of teaching in schools by all staff. All SCOs in this study were appointed from within the staff and were professionally respected by their peers. Besides providing another career path option for primary school teachers, participants viewed the creation of the role as a means of making teaching easier. Classroom teachers in particular felt the SCO could take charge of some of the administrative tasks giving them more instructional time. This is illustrated in the following comment:

> *Having the SCO collect resources, develop programmes and help with testing allows us to spend more time teaching. (T17, Q23)*

Principals expected SCOs to take responsibility for the key learning area accreditation process and to take on some of the administrative responsibilities. Principals felt supported with the introduction of the SCO role citing the reduction of bureaucratic tasks as being a major benefit of the role.

> *Having someone dedicated to facilitating the accreditation programme and then writing the accreditation document allow me to focus more on leadership matters. I spent last week working on the development plan without worrying about the science accreditation. (P5, Q19)*

However, most teachers viewed the SCO as an expert teacher and the provider of curriculum knowledge. Not only did principals enjoy having an extra member of the leadership team but also teachers were inspired by the position and the expected support they would receive. Knowing the professionalism of the SCO as a classroom teacher before their appointment instilled confidence in them. This is exemplified in one teacher's comment:

> *It's great having another leadership team member who knows their stuff and she's one of us. She is a great teacher who knows the syllabuses inside out which helps our discussion and planning. We're lucky she's at our school and wasn't appointed elsewhere. (T19, Q21)*

Every SCO commented on the breadth of expectations of staff and their principal on what their role in the school entailed. With a role statement emphasising the fostering of professional development for staff many SCOs felt inadequate in meeting teachers' needs. This reflects other studies which concluded specific working conditions influenced perceptions of inadequacy of primary school deputy principals' responsibilities. These conditions, which included time constraints, lack of confidence, imposed expectations of the role and being caught up with bureaucratic tasks, interfered with planning and preparing professional development activities for staff (Harvey & Sheridan, 1995).

6.5.4 Providing Direction

Increasingly, the principals in this study referred to their role as providing a blueprint for improvement through developing a vision and then facilitating a path towards common understandings.

> *…well you actually look at where you want to go, so you look at your vision because that's critical, where you want the school to go, then after that our role is to guide everyone towards that vision. (P5, Q3)*

In order to develop a vision the principals agreed that they needed to listen to staff. Accommodating staff view points and integrating them into school goals were seen as a productive means of supporting the learning environment. Most principals were comfortable in setting a vision for the school. Citing the role of the *Diocesan School Renewal Programme* where the catch cry is on clarifying "who we are", "where do we want to be" and "how do we get there", principals were in common agreement about the need to establish a vision for the school. To achieve this, working with staff to promote consensus was seen as a key feature of principals' work today. However, leading teachers through the change process was seen as a challenge and the main vehicle to overcome the challenge was to continually ask teachers to analyse and reflect on how they teach.

> *You must give some guidelines for staff, you know direction, that's the challenge, to get them on task knowing where we want to be and then helping decide how to get there. It's like getting commitment to the plan. (PFG1, P4, Q3)*

By providing direction for the staff and SCOs, principals in this study were influencing teachers' commitment to their profession through the provision of specific interpersonal strategies. Engaging SCOs in the discussion on school improvement issues and supporting staff dialogue embedded a greater sense of ownership in the decision-making. This study highlighted work experiences, communication processes, expectations of roles and positions in the school, feedback and collaborative decision-making processes as key strategies employed by principals. These strategies support the claim that the principal is the key figure for influencing the collegial environment in

schools (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Additionally it supports the position that the successful principal promotes collegiality in schools (Blase & Blase, 2001).

Although it is acknowledged that a collegial environment is achieved through fostering shared goals, values and professional growth (Cranston & Ehrich, 2002), this is also a shared responsibility of the classroom teacher. Although many strategies to improve student achievement can be adopted and implemented by a single classroom teacher building a school dedicated to continuous improvement for all students requires leadership from outside individual classrooms (Rowe, 2003). A common means for principals in working towards continuous improvement was the implementation of the school renewal programme.

One principal articulated a strong association with the school renewal framework insisting that the path to school success was in providing direction, developing consensus on the strategies, implementing and evaluating before beginning the cycle again.

> *…. so it can't just be the principal or leadership team to develop the school development programme or plan or whatever it is, bang there it is, this is what we're doing, they have to be involved right through the renewal process to developing the plan if that's what we're talking about, to reviewing that each year, looking at the strategies, the content, the evaluation, how do we know that we've actually achieved it. To be a real part of it rather than here it is, that's what we're going to do. (P2, Q9)*

Whilst it was evident that the principals in this study had different leadership styles they agreed that principals need to coach teachers to help improve student learning. Distributing authority and decision-making and supporting the efforts of their staff were integral factors in moving the school forward.

> *If you want to improve student learning you need to spend more time teaching children and you have to improve the quality of the teacher. To do that you need to be a type of coach. (P4, Q12)*

6.5.5 Exerting Influence

All principals believed that the responsibility for improving student learning lies in the hands of the classroom teachers and that their role was to provide the support, resources and guidance necessary to achieve sustained student learning. For this to occur, principals commented on the need to support teachers through engaging them in specific professional development activities. Improving teacher pedagogical skills is at the heart of a principal's leadership desire.

> *That they are supported in all of that as well, whether that's through learning support or teacher assistant or resources or the ability to talk with, meet with the teacher next door, to make sure that they're similar in what they need and have their questions answered. I think just an openness thing too to have that discussion when and where possible. I think that professional development is a key to it. (P2, Q14)*

Principals and SCOs saw the use of professional development as a means to direct teacher learning and to align such learning with the goals and direction of the school. It is evident that the principal, and to a considerable degree the school's leadership team, impact considerably on the commitment of the classroom teacher. This was clearly expressed by many teachers interviewed in this study.

> *…. it's the message that the Leadership Team gives by their actions and not by what they say that is probably the most powerful. (ETFG1, ET1, Q7)*

Principals in this study set high expectations for teacher performance. There was a distinct sense of expecting teachers to do their best and doing so ensured that the focus was on teaching and learning. Frequent comments from principals are reflected in the following statement:

> *I have high expectations for teachers and I think it's unfair that teachers, I mean, I'm slightly different because of my contract, after five years, if I'm not up to scratch I go. I think that might be good for staff. We need to raise the expectation of performance. (P4, Q5)*

Supporting the work of teachers is a key finding in this study and is centred on the promotion of student learning and a positive means to engage teachers in the school improvement process. Findings of this study indicate that effective principals strive to support the growth, development and instructional work of teachers (Blase & Blase, 2002; Cotton, 2003).

Teaching is a challenging profession and lacks immediate feedback on one's progress. Principals and teacher leaders are in the best position to motivate staff through effective use of praise. Effective schools research (D. Hargreaves, 1995) raises the point that conveying high expectations to staff and students, and by communicating regularly a sense of value in their work, principals are able to draw out the best in their staff. Principals were unanimous in their views that staff needed praise that was focused, sincere and most importantly, immediate.

The current discourse in the field of teacher leadership (Crowther, Kaagan et al., 2002; Frost & Durrant, 2004; A. Harris & Lambert, 2003; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001) supports the argument that teachers have to be personally committed to the teaching profession. As professionals dedicated to learning, they participate fully in the life of the school. This study verifies that teachers are integral to the promotion of a positive school climate and harmonious working conditions that engender improved learning for students.

Furthermore, to help ensure success within the school there was a call to ensure principals had opportunities to employ appropriate staff. Principals felt their lack of input into the staff that were employed in their school inhibited the ability to promote a specific direction for the school. This is highlighted in the following statement.

> *If you want something to happen you have to have teachers with similar vision, if you don't have teachers with similar vision then it obviously isn't going to take place, so I think principals should have more of a say, they have more of an idea of the school community that*

they're in and more of an idea of who would fit into that community and who would best help out. (ET2, Q23)

Voiced in another way, the following comment illustrates principals' frustration with staff appointments.

I needed a Year One teacher and I got a senior primary teacher who resented teaching Year One. That appointment ended the harmony I had on staff. (P3, Q18)

Although these principals voiced concerns over the staff selection and appointment process, staff saw their principals as positive relationship builders. Leadership team members in particular commented on their principal's ability to relate well with staff, students and the parent community.

Our principal deals with disgruntled parents all the time. He's a magician. They go in cranky and come out calm. (ET6, Q5)

Principals in this study argued for the need for autonomy in appointing staff as a means to support the school vision, meet the individual needs of the school and influence its direction. Furthermore, it was felt that being involved with the personal appointment of staff promoted loyalty and stronger bonds between the principal and newly appointed teachers. Research shows that the success of principals engaging teachers in school reform was improved when they were able to be actively involved in the recruiting and appointing of staff to their school (Whitaker, 2002). Besides the personal connection with the successful applicants, principals felt greater loyalty and support in decision-making.

Where principals and SCOs were seen as 'connected to classroom reality', teachers expressed a genuine desire to work harder. This in turn generated teacher's self-belief and produced a high level of commitment to the task of learning.

I work with the teachers on our year level as well as the SCO and the principal. It works really well and you want to make sure you are prepared for the meetings. (T14, Q15)

When the principal collects your programme it is important it's up to date. Not because you have to but because you want to. He knows what curriculum planning is all about. (T17, Q15)

The principal's contribution to the direction of the school can be reflected in the school climate (Cotton, 2003). The development of a positive and supportive school climate is through several individual elements, which are highly interdependent on each other. Effective principals build their schools through the efforts of strong interpersonal and informational skills. They provide both emotional and practical support demonstrating a caring and compassionate approach to leadership. A strong element embedded in the relationship building with staff is trust. A finding that is echoed in the literature (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; D'Arbon et al., 2001; P Duignan, 2006).

Principal behaviours are related to teacher morale (Johnson, 2004). Johnson (2004) reported on the effectiveness of principal classroom visitations on teacher efficacy, noting that increased principal interaction with classroom teachers increased teacher job satisfaction. However, that study did not appear to discuss the influence on student achievement. The findings of this study highlight a deeper understanding/commitment to student learning. Not only do teachers demonstrate a love of children they also exhibit a genuine affiliation with the principal.

7 CHAPTER SEVEN - CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore how teacher leadership and the principalship nurture student learning. In doing so it explored the participants' perceptions on school improvement programmes, the influence of teacher work and examined the relationship between principals and teacher leaders.

This study is important because it provides insight into how principals and teachers conceptualise and experience school improvement programmes within their own school contexts. Given the increased complexity of school life, this study is timely as it responds and contributes to the current discourse on teacher quality as evidenced in both national and international research (Crowther, Hann et al., 2002; A. Harris & Lambert, 2003; Hattie, 2003).

7.2 Research Design

A specific and critical literature review generated four key research questions. It is acknowledged that the questions are closely inter-related. The specific questions are:

1. What factors are perceived by staff to impact on school improvement experiences initiated by the school curriculum officer?
2. How do principals nurture the professional development of the school curriculum officer and teachers?
3. What motivates teachers to remain committed to teaching and learning?
4. How do principals and school curriculum officers engage teachers in the school reform process?

As the purpose of this study is to explore a phenomenon from the particular personal perspectives of principals, SCOs and teachers, an interpretive approach for the research was employed. The epistemological position of constructionism was adopted because it honours the influence that the personal interaction with the research exerts on participants' constructions of meaning (Crotty, 1998). It is through the use of constructionism, that an understanding of how teachers make sense of their world and the meaning derived from their experiences can be interpreted to give insight into their knowledge of school life.

In order to illuminate the importance of the social meanings of their interactions the participants constructed in this study and to inquire into why different people act differently, the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism was employed. Symbolic interactionism (Charon, 1998) influences the collection, analysis and interpretation of data and enabled the opportunity to clearly interpret the findings. Guided by the belief that meaning is found in the interaction of people with their world, this study sought to explore an understanding of the relationship between the principal and teacher leader in nurturing student learning from the perspectives of the participants. Since people construct meanings of issues by relating to their own life experiences, the employment of a collective case-study design was appropriate (Merriam, 1998).

The research methodology adopted was case study because it facilitates the concentration on a single phenomenon (relationship between principal and teacher leader), enables the study of participants in their natural settings while engaged in real-life interactions and it allows for the development of holistic thick description. The utilisation of a case study incorporates several sources of evidence to foster understanding of the phenomenon under study from several perspectives.

The data gathering strategies adopted included surveys, interviews and participant observation as well as document analysis of relevant school documentation. Merriam

(1998) argues that collective case-study research must be analysed at two levels; the selection of the case to be studied and then identification of the participants in the case. Consequently this study employed both within and across case analyses (Yin, 2003) to enable a detailed description and an accurate reflection of the perspectives of the participants in this study.

7.3   Research Questions Addressed

7.3.1 Research Question One

The first specific research question sought to discover participants' personal understanding and experience of school improvement programmes in their schools. In particular it explored the factors that contributed to the success of such programmes. Specific Research Question One explored:

What factors are perceived by staff to impact on school improvement experiences initiated by the school curriculum officer?

Principals, SCOs and teachers agreed that there were four factors that positively influence school improvement. The first one was the importance of all participants having a shared vision. Shared vision is the alignment of a purpose and direction for the school (and a means for achieving it) developed collectively by the staff. Principals reported they fostered a shared vision through the promotion of a positive school climate and professional development processes. In doing so, principals specifically focused on the development of actions and structures that enabled the staff to learn together, make informed decisions collectively and to collaborate with each other in critically examining the quality of student work. For SCOs, having a shared vision and common philosophy was important because it encouraged the school staff to be united in their approach to teaching and learning. It also supported principals in making decisions on staff appointments and in supporting SCOs in implementing relevant teaching/learning programmes.

The second factor agreed upon by participants was on the reasoning for implementing any school reform effort. Teachers in particular needed a sound rationale for introducing a specific school improvement programme. Evidence of student learning needed to be collected and interpreted before a collaborative decision could be made. However, the challenges of providing evidence driven and collaborative decision-making processes varied from school to school. All principals and SCOs shared excuses and triumphs regarding the success of implementing school improvement programmes in their schools. For some, it was the provision of resources, while for others it was the school's organisational structures or the stability of staff retention. The school's context and environment helped determine the success of such programmes. Ultimately, the implementation of successful school improvement programmes was dependent upon both the principal and teachers (including the SCO) sharing in the discussion on student learning.

Furthermore, the ways in which the schools in this study identified targeted areas for improvement, made decisions on how to address them, the implementation of specific teaching and school wide strategies and the evaluation of such initiatives were deemed to be the major roles of leadership. As a result, one of this study's conclusions is that the successful contribution of schools to student learning depends upon the motivations and capacities of teachers and school leaders both individually and collectively to enact these roles.

The third factor highlights the belief that school improvement programmes, while focusing on improved student outcomes, are reliant upon the inter-relationships between school and class climate, school leadership practices and most importantly the effects of teaching. Principals concur that the need for a harmonious staff group was necessary before any change could be successfully introduced in the school. It followed that strong professional interaction between staff occurred when there were positive interpersonal interactions taking place among staff members. Principals fostered interpersonal

relationships through empowering teachers to make decisions, providing opportunities for career advancement, and fostering a culture of collaboration and support to ensure the consistency, longevity and quality of their teachers. Consequently, close working relationship with the SCO engaged staff in collaborative activities.

The final factor addresses the issues which contribute to implementation of the school improvement programme itself. Categorically, it was the individual school's working conditions that the school improvement programmes were embedded in and the relationships among the stakeholders that determined the success of the programme. The main working conditions noted by principals, SCOs and teachers included time (to work with students), empowerment (supporting teachers in the decision-making process), facilities and resources (ensuring teachers have the necessary resources to support learning), leadership (focused on student learning) and professional development (developing teachers' skills).

In summary, for school improvement programmes to be effective and sustainable participants agreed that a collaborative organisational climate, where those whom decisions affect are involved in the decision-making process, is imperative. Sustainable change is dependent upon whole school acceptance and involvement. Interestingly, while teachers emphasised the need for key organisational practices rather than the knowledge and expertise of the teacher, principals believed the quality of the teacher was a key factor in determining student learning. Additionally, that while this study has shown that student achievement is linked to effective teaching and learning practices it is essential such practices are school wide, agreed upon and implemented via a close working relationship with the principal.

7.3.2 Research Question Two

This specific research question sought to discover participants' personal understanding and experience of professional development programmes in their schools. In particular it

explored the factors that contributed to the success of such programmes. Specifically Research Question Two explored:

How do principals nurture the professional development of the school curriculum officer and teachers?

Principals in particular believed that the provision of professional development opportunities was critical for ensuring quality learning outcomes and to address future priorities for schools. With the changing nature of the school environment and the influence of both government and educational mandates, principals believed teachers need to avail themselves of ongoing professional development to address new pedagogical trends and to update their own professional skills. Principals agreed that professional development was the first step to improving teacher quality and pivotal to improving student learning.

With principals being the co-ordinator of school-based professional development, the decisions on what professional development was necessary became an important task. Further, where the principals consulted SCOs and used professional development to focus on addressing teacher instructional deficiencies, developing organizational structures to support student learning and encouraging teachers to work outside their comfort zone, an improvement in teacher satisfaction had resulted. Teachers, who felt valued, empowered and encouraged to be creative in the classroom held a more positive view of their school's leadership team. The flow on effect was that as teacher satisfaction increased so did the school climate, with the ultimate consequence being the enhancement in student learning. Consequently, in order to nurture professional development, principals needed to not only identify individual teacher weaknesses but also to work collaboratively with SCOs to develop a specific professional development plan that suited both the school directions and teachers' personal objectives.

In nurturing the professional development of SCOs and teachers, this study found that a principal's personal interaction with individual teachers had an identifiable impact upon teachers' motivation and enthusiasm for their teaching role. Demonstrating a genuine interest in each teacher on a personal level was deemed to be an important attribute assigned by teachers to their principal. Teachers welcomed the principal's interest and support, particularly in developing learning programmes that evolved out of the school improvement process. Consequently, for principals to have an impact upon a teacher's professional development, regular personal conversations and collaborative planning with the teacher are necessary.

Furthermore, collegiality and professionalism were key working characteristics identified by principals and teachers as fundamental strategies that supported professional development ultimately leading to enhanced student learning. With principals promoting collegiality and professionalism teachers were perceived to be more eager to discuss classroom practice and be involved in professional observation to critique their own teaching styles. Consequently, teachers were more willing to participate in designing and preparing curriculum programmes, focusing on their instructional improvement as a vehicle for improving student learning.

Another prerequisite identified to nurture staff professional development was the development and maintenance of a safe and co-operative learning environment. Engaging staff and building a climate for promoting student learning was seen as a collective responsibility of staff through the initiation of the principal. Support, trust and openness were seen to be at the heart of the relationships necessary to promote learning environments. The principal's contribution in promoting such a climate is a commitment to valuing people as individuals and engaging staff to value each other. Consequently, this research singles out the role of leadership both at principal level and within the classroom as being crucial factors in nurturing professional development.

Another area identified as important when focussing on providing professional development was the issue of timing. There was disparity in views on the timing of professional development opportunities in meeting the needs of both the teacher and the school. Most participants felt that school-based professional development should be held during the school day and supported by the system authority. Both SCOs and principals believed the delivery of the professional development should be varied and aligned with the learning characteristics of the participants. In contrast, professional development that is idiosyncratic and unrelated to school and teachers' goals is considered to have a limited influence of teacher ownership.

A final area principals were attempting to address in providing professional development was the impact of teachers' personal lives in the day to day function of their work. Teachers reported that the increase in workload was impacting on their personal lives and that attending professional development opportunities complicated the issue. Teachers felt that teaching-related issues and attending professional development outside of school hours impact on the personal lives of their families. This study asserts that many teachers are attempting to manage the balance between personal commitments at home and their commitment to teaching. In fact, due to personal and family constraints, participants sought professional development opportunities within their local area.

In summary, SCOs and classroom teachers were able to take constructive criticism, face challenges, and to accept the pressure of increasing accountability with confidence, when they know they receive ongoing support from their principal. This support included a supportive climate, the provision of ample and varied professional development opportunities, the presence of principals and other leadership team personnel at important inservices, and the provision of suitable resources. However, while accepting the need for attending to professional development opportunities, there were also disparate views on who should be responsible for professional development with many teachers believing it was the system's responsibility, while principals and SCOs felt that

teachers should take some personal responsibility for the updating of their own skills and knowledge.

7.3.3 Research Question Three

This specific research question sought to discover participants' personal understanding and experience of teaching and learning. In particular it explored the factors that motivated teachers to remain in teaching. Specifically, Research Question Three explored:

What motivates teachers to remain committed to teaching and learning?

Participants in this study viewed the need for school improvement programmes as essential for promoting their own and their students' learning. All participants interviewed believed they were committed to their role, either as teacher, executive teacher or principal and believed they had a specific role to play in the teaching/learning process. Some participants expressed their frustration with the complexity of school life and its impact upon their ability to deliver a productive teaching/learning process.

When discussing specific factors that promote teacher commitment to the teaching/learning environment, teachers and principals agreed on the joy of teaching children as being the single most important factor. At the heart of the joy of teaching was the child itself. Teachers were clear that it was the love of children that first attracted them to a teaching career. This was not confined to graduates from high school entering tertiary studies but for mature aged entrants as well.

Teachers believed that job satisfaction rated highly for them. This study identified that teacher job satisfaction yielded both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The intrinsic rewards of teaching included the satisfaction of being with children, the excitement of contributing

to students' learning, the enjoyment of teaching particular curricula areas, the opportunity to develop new skills and the opportunity to take on new tasks. Teachers derived satisfaction from specific extrinsic rewards to remain committed to teaching including remuneration, community recognition for their teaching endeavours, and being selected to take on special responsibilities within the school. Furthermore, the interactive nature of these factors influenced teachers' motivation to engage productively in their role. Teachers were moved by unexpected growth in student achievement and at the same time felt valued when principals provided external rewards such as extra release time. This principal/teacher interaction was necessary in order to build positive relationships within the school context as a means of improving teacher job satisfaction. While teachers' job satisfaction varied from teacher to teacher the work of teaching and interpersonal relationships are believed to be the two main sources of teacher satisfaction.

Conversely, the areas where teachers exhibited dissatisfaction were connected to influences beyond their control. Frustration with mandated accountability measures, an overcrowded curriculum and an increase in the enrolment of students with behavioural problems were specified during both individual and focus group interviews. Some participants expressed the view that teacher attrition at their school was associated with overall job dissatisfaction.

SCOs noted their decision to apply for a leadership role within the school was directly related to providing the opportunity to impact upon the students' learning environment. Having the desire to take on a leadership role signalled a commitment to the learning and a belief they had something to offer in terms of curriculum planning.

A third area that was signalled as motivation for teachers to remain committed to teaching was the provision of adequate and appropriate resource materials. There was a correlation between the provision of physical conditions of teachers' work, including teaching resources, physical facilities and financial constraints, and teachers'

commitment to their profession. Teachers felt more supported, valued and willing to contribute to school life where the leadership team was committed to improving working conditions. While also believing it was the responsibility of the leadership team to promote positive working conditions, teachers also understood the difficulties school principals and leadership teams had in developing such infrastructure.

Subsequently, teachers viewed the complexity of school leadership positions as being a motivator to remain in the classroom. Issues of wanting to contribute to school improvement were countered by the demands of accountability, balance of family life and poor remuneration, deterring teachers from moving outside their classroom role. It is clear that teachers view formal leadership roles as a burden and prefer the enjoyment of classroom life compared to the perceived increased workload of the principalship.

In summary, there is a strong association between the quality of teachers' work life and their commitment and sense of efficacy. When principals improved the quality of teachers' work life, greater teacher commitment resulted. Engaged teachers worked harder to make classroom work more relevant and meaningful to students, introduced new ways of learning, and became involved in extracurricular activities with their students. This study reveals that teacher commitment to teaching and learning and their professional identity are closely linked to teachers' personal and professional values and beliefs.

7.3.4 Research Question Four

The final specific research question sought views on the role of principals and SCOs in engaging teachers in the school reform process. In particular it explored the factors that attracted teachers into the school reform process. Research Question Four explored:

How do principals and school curriculum officers engage teachers in the school reform process?

Principals and SCOs acknowledged that the link between the focus on school improvement and student achievement was the quality of the teacher. Teachers also acknowledged that they were directly responsible for student learning. Consequently, relating the need for school improvement to improving student learning outcomes was a factor identified by principals and SCOs to encourage teacher participation in the reform efforts. But if improvement is to be cultivated among all students, especially those who have struggled under more traditional approaches to education, this study demonstrates it is necessary not only to engage teachers in the school reform process but also engage them in the shared-decision making processes.

Principals felt that for teachers to be engaged meaningfully in school reform they must understand how the specific improvement programme would support student learning. As noted by principals in this study, this understanding has been an influential change in the role of principal. Helping teachers comprehend the link between educational accountability requirements and strategies that aim to better nurture student learning promotes greater teacher commitment to the improvement programme itself.

Another strategy used by principals to engage teachers in the school reform process was reflective planning. The principals were able to for the most part to anticipate obstacles, provide appropriate resources or at least prepare for perceived barriers offered by reluctant teachers. Furthermore, by embedding change into daily school life through analysis and reflection on the mission/vision statement, these principals continually enforced coherence of the school's purpose with alignment to the shared vision. Consequently, teachers were more enthusiastic about a school improvement programme if it was seen as necessary and related to their view of classroom life.

Although classroom experiences represent one key area that impacts upon student success, it is evident that classroom teachers strongly motivate students towards the

students' long-term successes. Principals directly influenced and motivated staff to adopt school reform through engaging teachers in daily leadership tasks. Encouraging staff to accept specific leadership functions, principals felt they were empowering classroom teachers, developing leadership skills within them. By principals providing constructive feedback and positive support, teachers felt valued and were more willing to be involved in school reform activities. Principals saw this facet of their principalship as being a major change in contemporary leadership behaviour as they sought to nurture leadership qualities in their staff.

This study indicates that these strategies are influential on both teacher and student learning. Specific strategies used by principals included prompting self-reflection and development to produce a cooperative, trusting relationship throughout the school. Principals believed positive learning environments actively encouraged teachers to be more involved in participating in school improvement programmes. Furthermore, unless the principal leads by persuasion and example for the nurturing of an educational environment that supports teacher morale, only the most committed teachers will be able to continually develop a strong learning programme for the students. This study demonstrates that teachers are dependant initially on principal guidance and direction.

Principals noted that what had attracted them to the leadership role was being eroded by an increase in bureaucratic tasks. Consequently, principals were constantly encouraging classroom teachers to assume increased leadership roles within the school. Greater commitment to student learning was observed in schools where the principal actively engaged teachers in decision-making processes and accepted the contributions of teacher-led professional discussions.

In summary, the principals who effectively led school reform are those who have an understanding of change processes and exhibit the capacity to improve relationships. Additionally, these principals are able to create and share knowledge, and are able to help teachers learn in context. In doing so, these principals also have the capability to

nurture teacher leadership and generate coherence, focusing on student learning as the purpose of school reform. Finally, to successfully engage teachers in school reform, teachers need to see the changes brought about by school reform processes as being relevant, and of benefit to them and their students.

7.4   Conclusions of the Study

This study concludes that principals have an important influence in student achievement through the judicious nurturing of environmental conditions and professional partnerships. This in turn influences staff motivation and work satisfaction levels.

In identifying the key conclusions of this study four distinct themes were generated. They are:

1. Principal's Role
2. Changing Teachers
3. Relationships
4. Community Building

7.4.1 Principal's Role

Expanding the role of leadership

This study illustrates a tension that principals have to face from being school managers to educational leaders. The reality is that the educational responsibilities of principals are being undermined by increasing bureaucratic tasks. Principals believe their key responsibilities as school leaders are:

1. cultivating and articulating a vision for school improvement,
2. developing a design to achieve it, and
3. managing the implementation and revitalizing of that design over time.

This study concludes that some principals are addressing this dilemma by expanding the leadership responsibilities of other members of staff. Leadership then is no longer the prerogative of school principals exclusively.

Key leadership responsibilities shared

This study also concludes that the above three key responsibilities are being shared among other staff members, teaching and non teaching staff. Principals do not abrogate their responsibilities, rather they see these responsibilities being more professionally addressed by actively engaging the talents and enthusiasm of a wide range of staff members. These principals use their leadership primarily through professional and personal relationships to assist staff to internalise school innovations through further developing confidence, the provision of resources and the experiences of freedom leading to personal ownership of school based plans. Importantly, accepting leadership responsibilities and willingly engage such relationships were critical to the success of the SCO's role. These conclusions are congruent with a wider scholarly discourse which believes school leadership's key focus is influencing and supporting learning and as a consequence it is being acknowledged as a pivotal role of teachers (Crowther, Kaagan et al., 2002; Frost & Durrant, 2004).

Creating structural mechanisms

Another key finding in this study identifies the structural mechanisms that are commonly used by principals and SCOs to support school improvement. These mechanisms include timetables, policy formation, teacher appraisals and duty statements. Principals who consult widely on the development and implementation of such mechanisms foster greater commitment from staff and are more likely to ensure such mechanisms are put into practice. It is these mechanisms that underpin the organisational and management functions of the school enabling attainment of school goals. In particular, principals expressed the need for cohesive communication throughout the school for these mechanisms to be successfully created and implemented. Although communication and the implementation of the mechanisms varied from school to school, they were identified

as being the platform for improving school life. Such mechanisms necessitate relational elements. These mechanisms are developed within the school through collaborative dynamics.

Furthermore, through observing these relational and structural mechanisms promoted in various schools, the schools' vision, values and beliefs are evident. This key finding focuses on the relational and encapsulates the human/social side of school life. Schools are human institutions and are based upon the interactions between people. The development and promotion of positive relationships are critical strategies in promoting school improvement and are seen by principals as a major element of their role as a leader. These findings are congruent with findings of the National College for School Leadership (2003) that such mechanisms are a consequence of the relationship between leadership and cultural, societal and organisational contexts of the school.

Engaging leadership capabilities

This study further concluded principals who used staff more and more in traditional leadership roles demonstrated leadership capabilities of flexibility and trust. Flexibility is the capacity to adapt and change. Staff viewed flexible principals as ones being able to reflect on the needs of the school, teachers and students, and able to adopt appropriate leadership strategies to address changing contexts. This flexibility in turn gave teachers the confidence to undertake risks in curriculum innovations because principals trusted teachers' professional judgements. SCOs felt more comfortable and were able to increase their own capacity to successfully implement innovative curricula aligned with the shared vision of the school. Regular dialogue with staff facilitated and identified potential leaders. Therefore, appropriate leadership is influential, relational and significant in improving teachers' professionalism. This in turn has positive impacts on improving student learning. Consequently, the focus on school leaders contributes to authentic sustainability in educational leadership (Fullan, 2005).

Engaging community in the learning process

This study concluded that there was a link between successful curriculum innovation and parental and community involvement in decision-making processes. Principals believed that parents who understood and supported educational standards were better able to assist children meet these expectations. While not all students learn the same way at the same time, addressing unrealistic goals and inaccuracies in community expectations of student learning (including both staff and the parent community) were key challenges for principals. However, the majority of principals used community expectations as a catalyst for staff professional discussions ensuring the interests of the community and the educational issues were intertwined. This contributed to the focus being constantly on improving student learning and provided teachers with a platform to communicate clearly with parents. When families were actively involved in schools, teachers engaged more personally with their students. For this to be successful, principals believed it was important to align staff members' educational philosophies with the school community to ensure decision-making was congruent with the school's mission and vision statements.

Building leadership capacity

This study found that improvement in teaching and learning begins with the change in the culture and structure of the school. Furthermore the principal is catalytic in fostering the change. To influence student learning principals believed they needed to not only share leadership practices amongst staff but also to build leadership capacity within staff. For principals, building leadership capacity involved creating the conditions in the school that would lead to better student performance, and included concern for the welfare of both staff and students. These conditions included a safe and supportive environment, opportunities to take risks and the development of position statements. Examples of capacity-building strategies included the distribution of power, involving others in decision-making, and developing infrastructure to promote professional learning communities. These conclusions resonate with research conducted by Harris and Lambert (2003).

Not all principals exhibited the leadership to generate capacity-building among staff and not all staff accepted the opportunity to develop the skills. Some principals seemed to lack trust in some teachers and offered them few opportunities to demonstrate leadership. These principals maintained a "controlling" function within the school rather than the role of "facilitator" which was exhibited in some other school sites. In fact principals with disengaged teachers often inferred they faced multiple competing demands for teachers' time and attention. Consequently, these principals preferred to be closeted in their offices engaging in administrative work which was used as an excuse to curtail classroom visits. Building leadership capacity within the school is not only critical for developing future leaders but also for developing competent, enthusiastic and caring professionals.

Principal as professional teacher

This study concluded that principals who appeared to have developed a culture focussed on student learning were respected by their staff as very competent teachers themselves. They demonstrated sophisticated abilities to engage students in learning. This professional competency earned them increased respect from their staff. Such principals exhibited a complex understanding of curricula and pedagogical matters and were able to engage teachers in the educational debate. Furthermore, the partnership developed between principals and SCOs further enhanced the knowledge of student learning and curricula experiences which were able to be manipulated into workable, coherent instructional programmes. Once the partnership was developed these principals were able to work with staff and the school community to develop and implement the instructional programmes in a manner appropriately modified to the students' needs and their local contexts.

Likewise, this study concludes that principals who were able to define, manage and improve curriculum and instruction were able to influence student learning. By leading and shaping the daily practices of school life the principal who was able to work

collaboratively with staff was able to influence student achievement. A key component of shaping school life was the supervision of staff. However, rather than imposing an external supervision model, this study concludes that supporting teachers in taking responsibility for planning, monitoring and evaluating their own leadership and professional learning is more powerful in driving school improvement. Principals who encouraged SCOs to see themselves as change agents promoted the confidence within the staff to shape the structure and culture of their workplace. These principals were encouraging responsibility for learning beyond the classroom.

7.4.2 Changing Teachers

Addressing accountability through understanding

This study identified a number of ways principals and SCOs influenced teachers to adopt progressive pedagogies. Both principals and SCOs believed that currently there were more structures that demanded their public accountability to both government agencies and to the wider parent community, than ever before. Principals who worked with SCOs in supporting teachers in analysing and aligning student needs against such accountability templates seemed to have teachers who attempted more creative initiatives in their classrooms and teachers who seemed more enthusiastic about being a teacher. This study concluded that principals who addressed accountability requirements through raising teachers' understanding of these requirements were more likely to gain teachers' commitment to the task.

Providing feedback

This study concluded that principals who provide informative and regular feedback to teachers on their teaching techniques improved the quality of teaching and learning. Through the provision of evaluative and descriptive feedback to teachers on their learning strategies, principals were able to help staff modify, adapt and improve their teaching. This strategy was best supported through frequent principal visitations to classrooms and regular professional discussions with teachers, both individually and as

a whole staff. Teachers who had principals that initiated regular personal and supportive communication felt personally affirmed and valued. Principals through regular supervision and monitoring strategies were able to identify strengths and weaknesses and help individual teachers develop meaningful and personalised improvement plans.

Reducing class disruptions

This study concluded that minimising the day-to-day interruptions to the teaching programme allows students to remain more engaged on learning tasks. Teachers appreciated the strategy of maximising student learning opportunities through reducing the amount of disruption time in schools. The provision of agreed upon school timetables that supported increased teaching time enabled teachers opportunity to expand their teaching repertoire, have the flexibility to address student variations in learning and to attempt more creative learning experiences. Principals who did not address the constant disruption throughout the school day tended to have more classroom teachers disengaged from the teaching process. Disengaged teachers lacked enthusiasm and commitment to the teaching/learning sequence.

Aligning instructional process to student needs

This study concluded that principals influence student learning through helping teachers align their instructional strategies to the needs of students. Principals who focussed on student needs and helped teachers align their instructional methods to meet those needs were more likely to change a teacher's pedagogical approach. Conversely, for some principals in this study it was the emphasis on accountability that was driving the change in teaching rather than the needs of the students. SCOs in these schools were reliant upon a directive from the educational authority concerning the reasons for introducing school improvement programmes. Consequently, the discussion in these schools was on being compliant to the increasing accreditation and registration issues rather than focusing on the needs of the students and supporting the staff to address those needs. Teachers in schools that focussed on accountability tended to lack enthusiasm and personal motivation.

Tailoring teacher professional development plans

Principals and SCOs who engaged teachers in discussions on analysing and evaluating student needs indicated that teachers were enthusiastic in volunteering to participate in professional development activities that would help them to address those needs. Principals agreed that these teachers seemed to want to take on more independent responsibility for their professional growth. In this study, teachers who took part in regular professional development opportunities were more supportive of school improvement strategies, were more engaged with the students in the classroom and had a better understanding of pedagogical practices. In addition, teachers were motivated by school-oriented goals that they found personally meaningful and challenging. Such behaviours are consistent with research that indicates a strong link between effective professional development for schools and the nurturing of student learning (Bloom & Stein, 2004).

Some principals argued that specific professional development plans that focused on individual needs of teachers were only effective if they were developed focusing on school goals. Consequently, when professional development programmes focused on improving classroom learning environments and increasing parental involvement, the quality of student achievement increased. The principals' strategic use of professional development was a major component for ensuring successful implementation of school improvement programmes.

Emphasis on learning was evident across the schools with students being the centre of decision-making practices. Teachers who involved themselves in both school-based and personal professional development opportunities were more in tune with supporting student learning. The greater the number of teachers in a school sharing professional learning the stronger was the focus on learning. This particular attribute of school culture promoted high levels of professionalism. Additionally the closer the teachers' alignment toward improvement and reflection on curricular issues and on what they were doing

with students in their classrooms, the greater the impact on students' learning. This study concludes that teachers' professional development needs to be integrally linked to the school's strategic directions to ensure student learning is nurtured.

7.4.3 Relationships

Genuine leader interest in staff

This study concludes that the principal and SCO influences student learning through the promotion of positive staff relationships. It is through the provision of genuine interpersonal interaction and the implementation of school-specific structures, that school leaders elicited commitment to and enthusiasm for teaching from staff. It also provided opportunities for teacher professional learning and shaped teachers' instructional capacity. Teachers, who had regular professional communication with their principal, believed their principal was good at developing and maintaining relationships within the school. These principals generated a high level of commitment from all staff through their honesty, openness and the quality of their interpersonal skills. Furthermore principals who have a genuine desire to learn and inculcate that desire in others were more likely to nurture student learning.

Creating positive work environments

This study concludes that teachers develop their attitudes about their teaching career over time and are often influenced by influential teachers who are not the designated leaders of the school. This study revealed three key actions that principals exhibit that impact positively on the relationships within schools. The first is the establishment of supportive workplace conditions. These were important to a teacher's sense of career and achievement and also nurtured a teacher's commitment to teaching. Examples of supportive workplace conditions included collaborative staff meetings as distinct from principal centred, redistribution of roles and responsibilities and the allocation of reflective time. Such conditions provided principals and teachers optimum time to converse on issues related to student learning. Where workplace conditions inhibited

teacher interaction, professional attention to student learning appeared routine and devoid of enthusiasm.

Secondly, principals encouraging a culture of professional independence and creativity rather than maintaining bureaucratic top-down control allowed teachers to choose more control and to take more responsibility. In one school, the high numbers of staff resignations were attributed to low levels of trust and collaboration. This impacted upon the functioning of the school as teachers lost personal rapport, connection with and respect for each other. The need to have induction programmes for new staff each year adversely affected continuity or stability of progress made in implementing school improvement programmes. As a result of frequent staff turnover, principals expend more time and effort on promoting staff cohesion taking them away from other leadership responsibilities. Where principals focused on increased teacher participation, teachers felt more valued and were self-motivated to improve their teaching. They were also more likely to remain in the profession.

Finally, the implementation of strategies that evoked self-belief and overall commitment to teaching also contributed to the sustainability of positive relationships. Given the demonstrated relationship between staff rapport and improved student learning, principals sought ways to help staff develop positive interpersonal skills. Principals believed that these are linked to job satisfaction and intrinsic rewards.

7.4.4 Community Building

Creating a learning focused culture

This study concludes that the role of the principal in creating a collaborative and learning focused working culture is a central ingredient to nurturing student learning. Principals who were able to focus staff on developing learning programmes and engage them in professional discourse promoted genuine commitment to learning. To create such a culture principals in this study utilised basic team building strategies that included

understanding and alignment with school mission, establishing positive relationships among professional staff and developing pride in what the school stood for.

Establishing a shared mission

This study concludes that the establishment of a climate of collaboration is necessary to foster a commitment from the staff to work together. For the teachers, the school mission statement was the yardstick that underpinned their passion and commitment to the school. When the mission was clear and specific, the school community (in particular, the teachers) was better able to translate its mission into practice. The practice of developing a shared mission while unifying the community in turn elicits commitment to the activities of the school. Where the school principal was not viewed as competent, did not focus on developing future directions or had no vision for the school, the teachers were reluctant to embrace school reform. This was further enhanced if teachers perceived lack of interest from the SCO. As a consequence, any attention to personal improvement, the quality of staff relationships and commitment to learning was not easily seen. This study concludes that through establishing a shared mission that centres on teaching and learning and has personal meaning for teachers, a greater commitment to student learning is achieved.

Creating trust

This study concludes that community building was a major contributor to creating a culture for improving student learning. It involved creating trust between the school and its wider parent body and the local community as a whole. Principals who worked extensively to bring about the interconnection of home, school and community were able to manage conflict successfully. They knew how to build relationships between the school and its community. Furthermore, principals who were not consistent in aligning teacher work to the formation of community had difficulty in engaging and motivating teachers.

Resistance among teachers to community-building efforts by principals was strong in some schools. Where this occurred it brought about teachers working in isolation from one another. Such a working environment exhibited low morale, high staff turnover and resistance to change. Additionally, teachers were reluctant to take on formal leadership roles within the school. To face and overcome such resistance, principals employed relationship-building strategies. The positive emphasis placed upon the building of interpersonal skills by principals to overcome poor morale and to build community is consistent with the literature (Fullan, 2005; Mitchell & Sackney, 2003; H Silins & Mulford, 2004; Spillane, 2003).

Improving parent/school relationships

This study concluded that improving parent/school relationships is instrumental in getting students to be more involved and engaged in learning activities. Principals who engaged parents in the decision-making process felt more supported in their role. Indeed principals who engaged families in developing positive home/school relationships were able to circumvent confusion and conflict. Engaging SCOs to facilitate regular curricula workshops increased parental knowledge and kept them informed of curricula issues. Consequently, teachers felt more at ease working with parents and felt comfortable in discussing student issues including engagement in learning experiences, poor behaviour and attitudes to school.

7.5   Recommendations for Future Research

As found in this study improving schools is embedded in the relationship between people and the ways in which this relationship influences the decision-making practices of the school. Evident from this study is resistance by principals to being trapped in the accountability debate. Their focus was predominantly on the school-based processes that support student learning. Positively, their support for the role of teachers facilitates student learning. Therefore the following recommendations for further research would enhance the findings of this study.

1. While this study focused on teachers, leadership team members and principals in a small country diocese, it would be useful to know the extent to which other school systems promote shared leadership.

2. The disparity of roles of the SCO's in schools emphasises different expectations of the role. Further research into the effectiveness of the role of the SCO is warranted.

3. In order to better understand teachers' motivation for teaching ongoing research is necessary. This study focused on primary schools in seven systemic catholic schools is regional Queensland. It could be replicated in a number of settings to provide valuable, additional, comparative data.

4. The issue of leadership and school context is one that warrants further exploration. Transferring successful leadership from one school to another, in different contexts is worthy of further exploration.

5. Further research is warranted in the field of data collection and analysis as a means to improve teaching practices. As a pathway for improving student learning a focus on teacher instructional practice and the impact of a teacher appraisal process will contribute to the findings of this study.

6. Exploring how principals and school leaders identify emergent leaders within their school is warranted. How principals are preparing teachers for leadership positions and how they develop leadership capacity across the school. There will not be an abundance of quality principals until there is an abundance of quality teachers.

7. Identifying teacher occupational stress in areas such as management issues, work variables, job status, parents and community, students and even individual teacher factors will lead to deeper insights into how schools promote quality teachers and consequently nurture student learning. Future research should consider the effectiveness of teacher coping measures for dealing with problematic or stressful circumstances. Findings from such research would develop in teachers stronger abilities to focus on student developmental needs. Research into effective methods for

developing principal prioritisation and personal skills would also support environments promoting student development.

8. While this study draws attention to the relationship between teacher and principal as being instrumental in promoting teacher learning, there is a need for more information and research on the quality of teachers' classroom practices, on the impact of those practices over time, and on how professional development programmes support improved teaching and learning.

7.6   Summation

In conclusion, principals' work, like that of teachers, has intensified and become more complex as ideologically driven external interventions by government in the curriculum and management of schools have increased. There has been a greater focus upon raising standards of student achievement for social and economic purposes. Consequently, assessing teacher and school performance through a range of formal accountability measures has become more prominent. As the emphasis upon rationalistic means-ends approaches to education has grown, models of school effectiveness have been characterised by segmented rather than holistic approaches to the education of students and many teachers have become disenchanted with teaching. This study identified specific steps forward to support the relationship between principal, SCO and teacher in nurturing student learning.

This research concludes that in order to nurture student learning, building strong relationships between staff members is a key factor in determining a school's success. Building leadership capacity within the school is a positive means of creating sustainable school improvement practices. However, the underlying theme in this discourse is the critical role of the school principal in developing a culture that yearns for learning. Furthermore, how well the principal utilises teacher leadership is determined by the world view of the principal.

As this study has confirmed, it is important to understand how school improvement studies shape the environment that supports student learning and the role teacher leaders play in promoting school reform. Improvement in student learning is reliant on a strong relationship between the principal, SCO and teachers and the need to promote ongoing professional development to achieve this aim is more urgent than ever before.

8   APPENDICES

8.1   Appendix A: Ethics Approval Letter

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne

✚ACU National

Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: A/P Denis McLaughlin   Brisbane Campus

Co-Investigators: Brisbane Campus

Student Researcher: Mr John Henry Madden   Brisbane Campus

Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:
An exploration of the relationship between teacher leadership and the principalship in nurturing student learning

for the period: 1st January 2005 - 30th June 2005

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number: Q2004.05-14

The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (1999) apply:

(i)   that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
  • security of records
  • compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
  • compliance with special conditions, and

(ii)   that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
  • proposed changes to the protocol
  • unforeseen circumstances or events
  • adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than minimum risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of minimum risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

Signed: ....   Date: ...22./.11./.2004
          (Research Services Officer, McAuley Campus)

(Committee Approval.dot @ 28.06.2002)

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8.2   Appendix B: Letter to Participants

Dear participant or teacher,

Information Letter to Participants

Title of Project: An exploration of the relationship between teacher leadership and

the principalship in nurturing student learning

Name of Researcher: Mr John Henry Madden

Name of Programme: Doctor of Education

You are invited to participate in this research project. Consequently you are

asked to read the following paragraphs carefully before signing the consent form.

1. The purpose of this research is to explore how the provision of the SCO on the school leadership team influences the professional growth of teachers and enhances student learning.
2. Although the data gathering methods may cause minimal concern for those who will be participating personal details are not required.
3. Supporting this research is the need to conduct interviews, which will require approximately thirty minutes to complete.
4. The benefits of this research are as outlined:
    a. Developing personal reflections on the role of leadership in schools
    b. This study will add to the growing bank of data on teacher leadership and teacher quality,
    c. By understanding what motivates teachers to become leaders it is conceivable that new initiatives can be developed to promote the path towards teacher leadership,
    d. Understanding what teachers value and what moves teachers to do their work well will add to the discourse on promoting improved student achievement.
5. Individual interviews and focus group interviews conducted by the researcher will be audio taped and transcribed.
6. As an invited participant you are free refuse to take part in this research. You are also able to withdraw from the study at any time.
7. Confidentiality of participants will be paramount with no direct reference to individuals or schools in the recording of data, reporting of results or in future publications.
8. Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the following people:
    a. Student Researcher: Jake Madden, St. Joseph's North Mackay by phone on 4957355, or
    b. Principal Supervisor, Associate Professor, Denis McLaughlin, School of Educational Leadership, ACU McAuley campus by phone on 07 38557154

9. Participants will have the opportunity to receive feedback on the results of the project at designated Diocesan based conferences.
10. This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University and by the Diocesan Director of the Diocese of Rockhampton.
11. In the event you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have an query that the supervisor of the Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Unit. The Queensland address is:

> Chair, HREC
> C/- Research Services
> Australian Catholic University
> Brisbane Campus
> PO Box 456
> Virginia, QLD, 4014
> Ph: (07) 3623 7294
> Fax: (07) 3623 7328

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully

investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

12. After reading the above paragraphs and you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one for your records and return the other copy to the Student Researcher.

8.3   Appendix C: Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of Project: An exploration of the relationship between teacher leadership and

the principalship in nurturing student learning

Name of Principal Supervisor: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin

Name of Student Researcher: Mr John Henry Madden

I…………………………………, have read and understood the information

provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered

to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I can withdraw at

any time. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be

provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

Name of Participant: ……………………………………………………………………

(BLOCK LETTERS)

Signature:………………………………………………… **Date**:..………………

Signature of Principal Supervisor: ……………………….**Date**: ………………

Signature of Student Researcher: …..…………………..**Date**: ………………

8.4   Appendix D: Open Ended Survey

Part A: In this section I'd like to know about your professional

life as a teacher.

1. What is your current professional role in your school? (Please circle)
    a. Classroom Teacher
    b. Executive Teacher
    c. Principal

2. Explain the reasons why you became a teacher.

3. What support have you experienced in the last 12 months in developing your career?

4. What aspects of your work do you find most unsatisfactory?

5. What does your school do to show its appreciation of the work you do?

Part B: In this section I'd like to know about your views on the

role of teachers in schools today.

1. How does the school community perceive teachers in schools today?

2. To what degree does professional development support the role of teachers?

3. How much influence do teachers have over school improvement programmes?

4. What are the factors that inhibit your role as a teacher?

5. How has teaching changed over the past five years?

Part C: In this section I'd like to know about your views on learning.

1. How do teachers impact upon student learning in your school?

2. What are the whole school practices that can be associated with increased student achievement?

3. As a teacher, how much influence do you have on the learning programmes established at your school?

4. When deciding on implementing school improvement plans, how does a school determine what is needed?

5. What support do teachers need in improving student learning?

Part D: In this section I'd like to know about your views on school leadership.

1. Explain your understanding of the leadership model at work in your school?

2. How does the relationship between principal and teacher impact upon student learning?

3. What role do teachers play in the leadership activities in your school?

4. How does the leadership team promote quality teaching in your school?

5. When taking on new initiatives in the school, how are they implemented?

Part E: Please feel free to provide any other comments

8.5   Appendix E: Guiding Questions – Focus Groups & Interviews

Principal Focus Group Questions

1. What were the factors that led to you becoming a school principal?
2. Has the role of principal changed since your first appointment?
3. What are the pressures placed upon the school principal today?
4. What do you think are the main priorities for the school principal?
5. What are the school practices that can be associated with increased student achievement?
6. What ways do schools support teachers in improving their effectiveness as teachers?
7. How do principals nurture teachers to become committed to their profession?
8. Do you consider teacher commitment to be an important ingredient to providing quality learning in your school? Why/Why Not?
9. What are the ingredients for a successful school community?
10. How is the sense of community encouraged in your school?
11. Explain how teachers are involved in whole school planning?
12. In your experience in what ways have teachers impacted upon school improvement programmes?
13. How do you monitor the commitment levels of staff in schools?
14. In your view does the PD offered at school level motivate teachers to take on new initiatives?
15. Why is it difficult to attract quality teachers to leadership positions?
16. With recent research highlighting the view that less teachers are aspiring to take on principalships, how do schools ensure student learning is not inhibited?
17. Are there any further comments on this area that you'd like to make?

Executive Teacher Focus Group Questions

1. What were the factors that led to you becoming an Assistant Principal Religious Education (APRE)/Assistant Principal Curriculum (APC) in your school?
2. What are the main tasks in your role?
3. How do those tasks support student learning?
4. What are the main priorities for the school principal?
5. What are the school practices that can be associated with increased student achievement?
6. How is the performance of teachers monitored in your school?
7. How does the support of other staff members affect your enthusiasm for teaching?
8. In what areas does your principal actively seek input from staff?
9. What discourages teachers' involvement in school improvement programmes?
10. Why is it difficult to attract quality teachers to leadership positions?
11. What are the ingredients for a successful school community?
12. How do you assess your successfulness?
13. Are there any further comments on this area that you'd like to make?

Teacher Focus Group Questions

1. What is the main role of teachers in schools today?
2. What are the school practices that can be associated with increased student achievement?
3. What do you understand about school improvement?
4. In your view what makes an effective school?
5. Describe how your school supports teacher improvement?
6. How is student learning measured in your school?
7. What are the main ways teachers influence student learning?
8. What makes an effective teacher?
9. What are the main factors that inhibit your ability to be a quality teacher?
10. What factors influence teacher job satisfaction?
11. What motivates teachers to remain in the profession?
12. What are the ingredients for a successful school community?
13. Have you any plans to move into formal leadership positions? Why/Why Not?
14. Why is it difficult to attract quality teachers to leadership positions?
15. What is the best way to judge the quality of a teacher's work?
16. How does the relationship between principal and staff impact upon student learning?
17. Are there any further comments on this area that you'd like to make?

Principal Interview Questions

1. What circumstances led to you becoming a principal?
2. What do you enjoy most about your principalship?
3. How has the role changed over the years?
4. How do principals improve school performance?
5. What are some factors that are seen as "roadblocks" that prevent a school from improving?
6. Explain your thoughts on the quality of teachers in today's schools?
7. What motivates teachers to be the best they can be?
8. How do you encourage teachers to want to be 'better' teachers?
9. How do you promote teacher commitment?
10. Why is it difficult to attract quality teachers to leadership positions?
11. How would you best describe the relationships in this school?
12. What are the ingredients for a successful school community?
13. Are there any further comments on this area that you'd like to make?

Executive Teacher Interview Questions

1. What were the factors that led to you becoming an APRE/APC?
2. What is it like to be an executive teacher in your school?
3. What makes your work meaningful?
4. Describe your relationship with your principal? Other staff?

5. What are factors that impact upon student learning in your school?
6. What work conditions provide the best context for improving student learning?
7. What are the major barriers to implementing school improvement programmes in your school?
8. What do you think discourages teachers the most?
9. Why is it difficult to attract quality teachers to leadership positions?
10. What support do you need to improve the quality of service you provide in your school?
11. How are professional development opportunities determined in your school?
12. What are the ingredients for a successful school community?
13. How do you know a teacher is floundering?
14. What role do you play in supporting teachers in your school?
15. How would you best describe the relationships in this school?
16. Are there any further comments on this area that you'd like to make?

Teacher Interview Guide Questions

1. As a teacher in your school what do you see as being your main role?
2. Do you think teaching has changed much in recent years? In what way?
3. Do you enjoy teaching?
4. In terms of your classroom work, what are the sources of joy?
5. What are factors that impact upon student learning in your school?
6. What do you think are the main inhibitors to ensuring students in your class learn?
7. If we removed those inhibitors will that make you a better teacher?
8. Recent research indicates that 1 in 5 teachers leave the profession in the first five years of their career. Why do you think this is so?
9. That being the case, how do you keep motivated in your role as teacher?
10. Do you have any aspirations to formal leadership positions? Why/Why Not?
11. What do you see yourself doing in ten years time?
12. How would you best describe the relationships in this school and how does this impact upon student learning?
13. What are the ingredients for a successful school community?
14. How does the school community judge the effectiveness of your school?
15. How do you define and then improve the quality of teachers?
16. What do schools do to improve the quality of learning of their students?
17. What are some of the school improvement programmes you have been associated with?
18. What have been the pitfalls in implementing those programmes?
19. What role does the principal play in the process?
20. Are there any further comments on this area that you'd like to make?

Additional Questions
1. In what ways has the classroom environment become more complex in today's school?
2. What are the key frustrations for you as a teacher?
3. What has made the school life more intense?

4. Tell be about the work conditions in your school and how they impact upon student learning?
5. With the shortage of teaching positions are our young teachers looking elsewhere?
6. What are the sources of job satisfaction for you?
7. What are the extrinsic factors that motivate you to be a good teacher?
8. What is attractive about teaching?
9. How do you feel when a student fails to learn?
10. What are the motivators that keep you in the classroom?
11. What powers do teachers have in this school?
12. What role does the standardised testing programme have in your school?
13. Working with peers is seen as a major source of teacher job satisfaction. What are your thoughts on the relationships between teachers and student learning?
14. How important is developing professional relationships to you?
15. What can you tell me about the role of the principal in schools today?
16. What are the main contributors to the difference in principal roles?
17. How do principals interact with teachers?

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227

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