SCHOOL LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION IN A FAITH-BASED EDUCATION SYSTEM: PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFERENT HIERARCHICAL LEVELS

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

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Avondale College of Higher Education

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CERTIFICATION

Statement of Original Authorship

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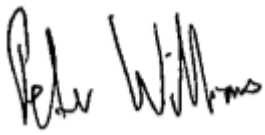

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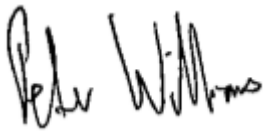

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ABSTRACT

Educational research literature indicates that minimal time is spent planning for future school leadership, but unplanned school leadership succession can have significant repercussions on school improvement initiatives. The role and expectations of school leaders, and the school principal in particular, have been increasing in intensity and complexity, causing many to question why they should continue in their roles, and reducing the number of potential applicants who aspire to such positions. This lack of school leadership aspiration is exacerbated by the increasing number of retirements experienced both nationally and globally in educational leadership. The overwhelming majority of educational leadership succession research is explored from a systemic viewpoint, focusing on the administrators' involvement in the process. This study sought to add to the education succession literature by including the teacher's voice, which remains essentially unexplored. It draws on the experience and perceptions of employees within the faith-based Adventist Schools Australia (ASA) education system at three different hierarchical levels: classroom teachers, school-based administrators, and system-based administrators. This study made use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Particular emphasis was given to exploring the perceptions of drivers and barriers to aspire to ASA school leadership positions, and the perceptions of current and ideal succession practices within ASA. Very low levels of active aspirants existed amongst ASA employees, indicating future risks to ASA leadership sustainability exist. Even though hierarchical level perceptions differed in magnitude, results indicated that a perceived lack of work-life balance was the predominant barrier to applying for school leadership positions, while 'calling' and the opportunity to positively contribute to the school and community were the predominant drivers in the decision to apply for school leadership positions. All hierarchical levels perceived that current succession practices need improving but had different emphases for this improvement. For the classroom teachers, their ideal succession model would be a formalised and communicated model, for the school-based administrators it would include input from all hierarchical levels, while the system-based administrators saw the ideal as a consistent and nationally implemented succession model. These results indicate ASA can improve current

succession practices, and in doing so, ensure educational system sustainability by involving all hierarchical levels in succession practice design and development, and importantly younger generation classroom teachers, which will assist in the attraction, development and retention of high-quality future educational leaders.

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Lastly, to anyone who takes the time to read this, I hope it provides food for thought, and impetus for change.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the following life-shapers:

My wife and love, Melina Katrina Williams. Thank you for your love and support, and for providing a ‘saloon’ at home that has helped to keep me out of trouble! You are the ace up my sleeve! Thanks also for never really engaging in this project - it has kept home a sanctuary. We started our family while completing this thesis, and we’ve done well to embrace that while the days are long, the years are short!

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ABBREVIATIONS

List of principal abbreviations in text

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ASA	Adventist Schools Australia
NCSL	National College for School Leaders
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist

PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCE PRESENTIONS

Published Papers

Williams, P., & Morey, P. (2015). Future leadership of schools in Australia: Employee perceptions of taking on the challenge. *TEACH Journal, 9*(2), 22-33.

Williams, P., & Morey, P. (2018). School leadership aspirations: Differences in perceptions of drivers and barriers across hierarchical levels. *TEACH Journal, 12*(1), 37-44.

Conference Presentations

Williams, P. (2015, August). *Adventist Schools Australia and Leadership: Employee views of taking on school leadership.* Paper presented at the Christian Education Research Centre Research Symposium 2015 Annual Conference, Cooranbong, Australia.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Effective leadership transition is pivotal to the sustainability of educational systems (Read, 2012; Renihan, 2012; Rothwell, 2010). Current research indicates that the role and expectations of school leaders and the school principal, in particular, are increasing in intensity and complexity (Ainley & McKenzie, 2000; Bush, 2009; Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley & Beresford, 2000; Dempster, Lovett & Fluckiger, 2011; Gronn, 2007; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007; Starr, 2009). Contemporary school leaders are questioning why they should continue with their roles, or consider taking on higher levels of school leadership (Bengston, Zepeda & Parylo, 2013; d'Arbon, Duignan, Dwyer & Goodwin, 2001; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Kruger, 2008; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999; Lindle, 2004; McAdams, 1998; Mertz, 1999; Peters-Hawkins, Reed & Kingsberry, 2018; Portin, Shen & Williams, 1998; Pounder & Crow, 2005; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Riley & Meredith, 2017; Thomson, 2009; Whitaker, 2001; Williams & Morey, 2018). Further, the number of teachers willing to consider leadership roles is declining (d'Arbon & Dorman, 2004; d'Arbon, Duignan & Duncan, 2002; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). These factors have the potential to significantly impact educational outcomes. Literature often laments the future of educational leadership in light of a current generation of teachers who view the role as too demanding (Bush, 2011a; Cooley & Shen, 2000; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007). Research findings suggest that teachers do not see principals as having high levels of job satisfaction, and this has a negative impact on their own leadership aspirations (Gallo & Ryan, 2011; Lacey, 2003a).

Studies undertaken internationally are indicating that principals are an aging group. The Educational Research Service (2000) reported the average age of school principals globally was 50 years or older. With specific reference to the Australian context, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2009) found that the 'education and training' sector registered the largest proportion of workers who intended to retire within the following ten years. Scott (2003) reported at the time of his research that 74% of then secondary principals and 59% of primary principals would have retired

within a ten-year period. In addition, over 50% of the deputy principals (logical replacements for these principals) also indicated that they would have retired by this time. The literature suggests this will worsen, with such figures highlighting a generic problem in educational settings; the entire leadership team of many schools belong to the baby boomer cohort and are due to retire at similar times (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009; Brooking, 2008; Gallo & Ryan, 2011; Learning Partnership, 2008; Ontario Principal's Council, 2002; Quinn, 2002; Scott, 2003; Williams, 2001; Williams & Morey, 2015). These figures place a particularly strong onus on the need for systematic succession planning in Australia that can effectively and efficiently prepare pools of quality school leadership candidates.

Yet the literature repeatedly notes that minimal time is spent in succession planning for future school leaders (Doneley, Jervis-Tracey & Sim, 2018; Fuller & Young, 2009; Fusarelli, Fusarelli & Riddick, 2018; Hargreaves, 2005; Macpherson, 2009). Further to this, studies have identified that in educational settings, the succession planning process often does not follow a planned procedure, but rather, is done in an 'ad hoc' way (Canavan, 2001; Clark, 2016; Grunow, Horng & Loeb 2010; Macpherson, 2009). Succession ideally encompasses a set of organisational practices that will encourage potential future school leaders to look positively toward school leadership and develop in these potential leaders the skills necessary to successfully take up a leadership position when the opportunity arises. An education system that is utilising an effective succession program would be identifying teachers who demonstrate a high potential for school leadership early on in their teaching career and be providing ongoing leadership development training and opportunities to prepare them for a career in school leadership. It is rare, however, that such systematic processes are in place, particularly for school leadership positions (Grunow et al., 2010). Research from the faith-based Catholic education system in Australia would suggest succession planning practices have not consistently been utilised in the faith-based context; rather the process often consisted of "an ardent prayer that there will be someone out there, somewhere, who will be able to fill the vacancy" (Canavan, 2001). Anecdotal evidence from employees within the Adventist Schools Australia (ASA) education system suggests this is consistent with ASA education system practice.

A number of teachers who have leadership aspirations are deterred by specific elements of succession practices. For example, some teachers feel the application and interview process that accompanies selection to these roles is overly time-consuming, demanding, or even traumatic (d'Arbon et al., 2001; Lacey, 2003b). Identifying and establishing succession practices that strongly identify with the needs and ideals of classroom teachers, and that inspires leadership aspirations is crucial in the development of a pipeline of future potential school leadership applicants. There is clearly a need to better understand succession practices in educational settings.

Research in the area of school leadership succession appears to have gained momentum (as indicated by the number of published school succession papers) from the 1990's, but has somewhat lessened in more recent times. The vast majority of this research tends to explore aspects of school leadership succession such as the need for effective succession practices, principal retirement, preparedness for the role of school leadership positions, principal aspirations, and leadership development; most of which is explored from a systemic viewpoint. This study adds an additional voice which remains essentially unexplored in the literature; that being the viewpoint of the classroom teacher, a key potential school leadership applicant. Their perceptions of what influences aspiration, perceptions of current succession practice, and views on what succession practices should look like in order to encourage school leadership involvement, will provide a significant focus for this study.

A clear gap in the literature has been identified. In light of the increasing shortage of teachers who are willing to put their hand up for leadership positions, a planned approach to succession is a vital necessity for education systems. As Doneley et al. (2018, p. 63) note: "There is enormous professional and financial cost associated with neglecting to carefully plan principal recruitment and appointment processes by those involved in the governance of a school". While a growing body of research exists on the topic of leadership succession, there is still a need to understand succession practices better within an educational context. The dominant perspective provided within the literature is that of the administrative view. Classroom teachers, key potential future leadership applicants, appear to have essentially no voice as it pertains to the design and implementation of school leadership succession practices. Additionally, while much succession literature surrounds school districts and public

education systems, there is a distinct dearth of research that addresses this issue within a faith-based educational context. Further, no literature was found that addresses this issue from a multi-hierarchical level approach, taking into consideration the views and perceptions of classroom teachers, school-based administrators, and system-based administrators. It would, therefore, appear logical to give study to the perceptions of the influences on the decision TO apply or NOT TO apply for school leadership roles, along with the understanding of school leadership succession practices, from those employees impacted by succession practices. These employees' knowledge, experience, and understandings may make significant contributions to the future development of school leadership succession practices, and as such, these respondent perceptions, taken from across three different hierarchical levels, will be a significant source of information for this study.

Understanding the drivers and barriers for considering school leadership and perceptions of present leadership succession thus becomes a key focus, one that will also contribute to the better formation of succession practices with the goal of improving future educational leadership outcomes.

1.2 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of the succession practices of Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), a faith-based education system, in order to enhance school leadership sustainability.

This study adopts a multi-level approach exploring the perceptions of succession practices of three ASA employee hierarchical levels: classroom teachers, school-based administrators, and system-based administrators. The study is directed by the following research question.

Overarching Question:

- What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels, with regards to Adventist Schools Australia succession practices?

This central research question encompasses both the perceptions of the influences on aspiration, and the impact of present succession practices on ASA employees in terms of considering school leadership. To explore these two components of the research question, sub-questions are made use of as identified below.

The following sub-question will direct the aspiration component of this study; adopting a survey based data collection approach:

- What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels of the factors that would influence their decision TO apply, or NOT TO apply for a school leadership position within the ASA education system?

The following sub-questions will direct the succession practices component of this study, utilising a semi-structured interview based data collection approach:

- What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels with regard to current ASA succession practices?
- What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels with regard to ideal ASA succession practices?

1.3 THE STUDY AND ITS CONTEXT

This study will explore perceptions of succession practices held by those working within the Australian private faith-based education system, Adventist Schools Australia (ASA).

Adventist Schools Australia oversees Seventh-day Adventist schools based in Australia. The first Australian Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) school was established in the early 1890s. In the time since, the Australian Seventh-day Adventist education system has grown to encompass 50 school campuses throughout Australia that provide a Christian education to over 13,000 students. Globally, a network of Adventist schools educates over 1.6 million students and employs more than 84,000 teachers (ASA website, http://asa.adventist.edu.au/). The aim of ASA is to provide

"Authentic Adventist education through quality sustainable schools supported by appropriate, systemic governance structures" (ASA website, http://asa.adventist.edu.au/). This would strongly suggest a desire to implement effective succession practices within this faith-based education system.

The Australian Seventh-day Adventist Schools education system functions within the overall worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church corporate structure. This is a complex corporate structure consisting of four regional-based levels with each level being a sub-group of the level above; General Conference, Division, Union Conference and Conference. The overall worldwide governing body is termed the 'General Conference' and is made up of a number of world geographical areas termed 'Divisions'. Each division is likewise divided into geographic regions called 'Union Conferences', and each Union Conference is subdivided into smaller geographic regions labelled 'Conferences'. The Union Conference responsible for the Australian region is the Australian Union Conference, and is divided into nine Conferences (regions). Each level in the Church corporate structure has oversight of the levels below, but are not linked to that level in an executive manner, but rather, linked by the policies of the General Conference and respective Divisions.

In Australia, Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), the national education department acting under the auspices of the Australian Union Conference corporate body of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Australian Union Conference) Limited, has the delegated responsibility for monitoring the operation of Seventh-day Adventist Schools in Australia. Within each Australian Conference, however, there is a school company that is its own legal entity, which operates those schools within the Conference on behalf of the respective Conference.

This structure can be considered as a fractured hierarchy, in that each higher level in the structure has oversight of the level below, but does not necessarily have executive authority as each Australian geographical schools' region (Conference) is its own legal entity. The consequence of this Church fractured hierarchy is that each Seventh-day Adventist school within Australia is overseen by both the local regional schools company and the national education department (ASA). It would appear this

has led to confusion as to who should take the lead in educational matters pertaining to ASA.

To investigate school leadership succession in the ASA context, this study draws on the experiences and perceptions of educators at three different hierarchical levels; system-based administrators, school-based administrators including school principals, and importantly, the classroom teachers' 'voice' from within the Adventist Schools Australia education system. Both perceptions of current practices and employee ideals for succession practices are explored. The understanding of perceptions across the hierarchical levels of current practice is important if the ASA system is to identify shortcomings of any process in place, as well as to begin systematic planning towards any improvement effort. The fact that classroom teachers, school-based administrators, and system-based administrators will have the opportunity to voice these perceptions is significant, as each group is inextricably impacted by the quality and planning represented by succession practices. The perceptions these hierarchical levels have of ideal practice are important in identifying what those most likely to be involved in this process consider to be key elements of meaningful succession practices. Gaining buy-in from all levels, and importantly younger generation teachers, will prove highly valuable to understanding how to attract and retain potential high-quality future educational leaders.

As noted in the literature, many of the younger generation do not perceive the roles of school leadership to be attractive (Fink, 2010; McKenzie, 2008; Mulford & Moreno, 2008). There is a need to explore whether this is also true within the ASA education system, as well as to attempt to gain an understanding of what incentives and disincentives to considering school leadership are perceived to exist that may impact on future ASA leadership aspirants.

Any succession model can only be effective if teachers are firstly, aspirational towards school leadership. Secondly, they must be willing to participate in succession practices. Finally, they must also consider the practices involved in leadership development and selection to be appealing, or at the very least, not 'off-putting'. That is, to aspire to school leadership positions, these individuals must feel

comfortable enough to be involved with and consider the respective succession practices to be appropriate.

1.4 PURPOSE

It is expected that this study will make a contribution to and add valuable insight for future succession planning within the Adventist School Australia educational system. It will do this by identifying both drivers and barriers for why ASA employees across three hierarchical levels (classroom teachers, school-based administrators and system-based administrators) do or do not give consideration to applying for school leadership positions, as well as provide an understanding of the ASA employees perceptions of present succession practices. Given the broad sweep this study has taken, covering such wide areas as barriers and drivers of school leadership aspiration, and a study of succession practices from the perspectives of three hierarchical levels, this limited the opportunity to explore some of the research question components in great depth. Both qualitative and quantitative research orientations were adopted to explore the perceptions of succession practices of the three hierarchical levels, as the qualitative sample being much smaller than the quantitative allows the researcher a rigorous, in-depth qualitative exploration, as well as a rigorous, high-powered quantitative examination of the research question.

1.5 THESIS OUTLINE

This thesis consists of six chapters. This chapter has articulated the purpose of this research, defined the aims and research questions, and outlined the significance of the study. Chapter two provides a review of the relevant literature around school leadership succession and provides an orientation for the investigation. Chapter three presents the theoretical framework for the research methodology, and includes discussion of the research design, participants, data collection and analysis methods. Chapter four discusses the results of Phase One of the study – quantitative in orientation centered on employee aspirations and the reasons for why these employees would or would not consider school leadership positions within the ASA education system. Chapter five discusses the results of Phase Two of the study – qualitative in nature focused around hierarchical level perceptions of current and

ideal ASA succession practices. Chapter six integrates the research findings from both the Phase One and Phase Two data, identifies challenges and opportunities facing the ASA education system, and presents the respondents' perceptions of an effective succession model.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The format of this literature review chapter was not predetermined, but rather, arose from the literature review findings themselves. This literature review was informed by the research question and focused on the literature relating to the drivers and barriers of school leadership aspiration, and research findings relating to the importance and need for effective school leadership succession practices. Particular emphasis was placed on reviewing the literature relating to the above concepts within a faith-based education context.

This review of the literature chapter will provide an overview of succession using a seven-dimensional framework:

1. Succession: Definitions and orientation;
2. Succession: The need;
3. Succession: The context;
4. Succession: Aspirations;
5. Succession: Leadership preparatory strategies;
6. Succession: Socialisation and post-succession support;
7. Succession: Suggested models.

The first dimension presents definitions and an orientation of educational succession, providing a platform for this review of succession literature. This leads to the second dimension, a discussion of the importance of having effective succession processes in place. The third dimension explores the context of school leadership with a focus on the role of principal and the current picture of school leadership, including demographics, the challenges of being a principal, the shortage of school leaders, perceptions of the role of principal, and the recruitment, retention and attraction of principals. Next, the fourth dimension considers the area of school leadership aspirations and the link this has to succession. The fifth dimension explores the literature that discusses the various preparatory strategies for leadership succession, such as preparation programs, the role of mentoring, school principal rotation,

selection of school leaders, the importance of leadership and leadership development, and potential biases in succession programs. The sixth dimension discusses the socialisation of new school leaders, and the important role this plays in effective succession programs is highlighted. Lastly, the seventh dimension outlines what a number of researchers believe to be key elements of effective succession programs.

2.2 SUCCESSION: DEFINITIONS AND ORIENTATION

2.2.1 Definitions

In the literature, there are a number of terms used to refer to the concept of succession and succession programs. Three of the most frequently used are the terms 'succession', 'succession management' and 'succession planning'. It would appear that there is significant overlap between the three terms, and so additional clarity would be beneficial. White and Cooper (2009, p. 44) provide a broad definition, stating that "Succession refers to the process in any organisation that marks the departure of one administrative leader and the entry of his or her successor". Macpherson (cited in Bennett, Carpenter & Hill, 2011, p. 31) delves a little deeper suggesting leadership succession does not end with preparing one's successor, but instead, developing and distributing leadership more widely in the school setting to "enable others to carry on the vision and build further on the work of the principal, beyond their tenure". Hargreaves and Fink (2006, p. 92) in their discussion of effective succession highlight that "succession means having a plan and making plans to create positive and coordinated flows of leadership, across many years and numerous people". The picture presented would suggest that the term 'succession', although it includes a singular transfer in leadership, includes much more. It includes processes that enable the continuity of vision and school improvement, and both the development of and distribution of leadership opportunities within the educational setting. But in each case, succession is defined as a deliberate and planned process. A number of writers, however, have seen succession consisting of two components; succession management and succession planning.

The term 'succession management' is often given a system [organisation] wide view, and encapsulates both the system's strategies for developing individuals and

strategies that enable continuity of the succession process. In the Bennett et al. (2011, p. 31) definition below, the ongoing nature of succession management is highlighted:

> *…succession management is an ongoing activity that starts with the construction of a plan; it then moves through the execution of the plan and evaluates the outcomes as part of strategic planning and review. Effective succession management should guarantee that the plan does not merely sit in a file gathering dust but forms part of regular discussion by the school's governing board and principal concerning future planning and leadership development.*

Further, Myung, Loeb and Horng (2011, p. 699) in their definition of succession management, acknowledge the multi-faceted nature of this term, but also note the focus is on the systemic [organisation] perspective of the process.

> *Purposeful succession management processes enable organizations to grow their own leaders by strategically selecting from the already existing talent pool within the organization and grooming those individuals through developmental experiences that will give them the skills they need to meet the future demands of their organization.*

From the succession literature, it is difficult to arrive at an accepted single definition of succession management. There are, however, a number of common elements that the various writers attribute to succession management. These include deliberate planning for succession events, and the development of ongoing processes and structures to enable effective transfer of educational leadership.

Succession planning, in contrast, takes a more specific approach, focusing on the filling of important leadership positions, while recognising it must be part of a wider organisational effort. Rothwell (2010, p. 6) describes succession planning as "a deliberate and systematic effort by an organisation to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future and encourage individual advancement". Bennett et al. (2011, p. 31), writes that succession planning refers to "the deliberate creation of a plan and processes to address a future succession event". Succession planning has also been defined as "any process that is designed to guarantee a continuous pool of qualified leadership candidates to maintain effective organisational performance" (Collins & Collins, 2007 cited in Bennett et al., 2011, p. 32). Quinn (2002) notes that succession

planning anticipates expected vacancies and ensures a process for the development of a pool of prepared and appropriately qualified leadership prior to the need for a new principal. Succession planning, however, should not be confused with its predecessor, replacement planning, which focuses on one individual replacing another individual (Fusarelli et al., 2018).

It is evident from these definitions that some researchers view succession planning as a deliberate process that fills key positions as they become available within schools or educational systems. Others view succession planning as emphasising the creation of a pool of future potential educational leaders. Adding to this confusion is that the literature often includes elements of both orientations when reporting on succession planning. What is noted in the overwhelming majority of succession planning definitions is that they still adopt a system perspective to the planning process.

In terms of the definitions of succession management and succession planning, even though there is significant overlap, succession management most often presents a wider view of succession than succession planning. As Leibman, Bruer and Maki (1996) note, at one level both succession management and succession planning have as the final outcome the development of leadership for the organisation. Yet on another level, succession planning is allocating a person for a specified position, whereas succession management is about preparing future leadership. This diversity in the definitions and the use of these terms without clearly defining them add to the difficulty of synthesising succession literature.

For this study, succession practices refer to a comprehensive, yet broad area, which encapsulates all planned, intentional processes designed to identify, prepare, select and provide a pool of suitable school leadership aspirants that can be utilised within the ASA education system for school leadership positions. Being broad, it considers elements prior to individuals taking on leadership roles, the succession processes and event itself, and aspects relating to post-leadership placement.

As has been noted, both succession management and succession planning definitions and explanations have adopted a system or administrative perspective. Nowhere in the literature reviewed was another perspective presented. There is an apparent lack

of input into the succession process, as highlighted by the succession definition literature, from a key stakeholder group: that of the classroom teacher's voice.

2.2.2 Orientations

Succession is a universal construct that is applicable to a range of contexts, and has evolved over time. As Lacey (2003c, p. 192) outlines:

> *Succession planning began in the corporate and business world as a reactive process of job replacement. Traditionally, it has been viewed as a top down process with little input from employees. This later evolved to developing the skills of a pool of individuals for future positions within the company.*

In each context, however, there are elements of succession that are unique to the respective context; education is no different. One explanation for this difference in the educational succession orientation, compared to the succession orientation in the corporate and business world, is the culture that exists within educational systems. The practice of formally identifying teachers with leadership potential from among teaching staff clashes with an egalitarian ethic among teachers, a long-standing norm among teachers that suggests all teachers should be seen to be equal and deserving of the same rewards and recognition (Childs-Bowen, Moller & Scrivner, 2000; Garchinsky, 2008; Lacey, 2003c; Lortie, 2009; Myung et al., 2011) Succession processes that "introduce status differences based on leadership potential stands to disrupt this status quo" (Myung et al., 2011, p. 700).

Garchinsky (2008) identified and contrasted the different approaches to leadership succession taken by the traditional business view and that of educational systems. His research identified three key distinctions between the two succession orientations:

- Businesses have historically identified leadership succession as an inevitable process, which can define the very life of a business, and plan accordingly. This succession allows the organisation to examine its values and beliefs. Schools, in contrast, see leadership succession as a 'necessary evil', and while recognising that it will eventually take place, view it as only to be addressed when the succession event arises.

- Education literature views leadership from the perspective of the successor, and the research in this space is aimed at what the successor can do to transition smoothly into their position of leadership. Business literature, in contrast, focuses on the predecessor's role in the process, and how they can make the transition process for the new leader more successful.
- Business and education view the relationship between succession practices differently, with business seeing the practice of identifying and supporting possible successors intricately involved with the process of sharing leadership responsibilities among various stakeholders. Some schools may participate in both practices, but may not see them as necessarily related.

Succession, in an educational context, while focusing on the development and allocation of leaders to specific leadership positions, emphasises the perspective of the successor, while playing down the role of the predecessor. There can often be an expectation that the successor will be a person external to the present school community, rather than from within it. Importantly, succession processes must overcome the reluctance of teachers to aspire to leadership roles.

This section has defined the terms that relate to succession, outlining the process as one that is deliberate, planned for, and allowing a change in leadership to occur. This process includes pre-succession, actual and post-succession activities. Also explored has been the succession orientation that the educational leadership literature has reported.

2.3 SUCCESSION: THE NEED

The literature is clear that leadership succession cannot be left to chance. As stated by Hargreaves (2005, p. 164) "One of the most significant factors affecting the life of a school, and the sustainability of its improvement efforts is leadership succession". Hargreaves (2005, p. 164) contends that successful succession depends on "sound planning, successful employment of outbound and inbound leadership knowledge, limiting the frequency of succession events, and preserving leadership in the face of movements toward more management". Hargreaves (2005, p. 163) also notes that "Failure to care for leadership succession is sometimes a result of manipulation or

self-centeredness; but more often it is oversight, neglect, or pressures of crisis management that are to blame". However, the literature paints a picture of succession planning processes in education systems as being unplanned for in many educational contexts.

Hargreaves (2005) indicates that schools do not experience leadership succession issues in isolation, but rather, it is indicative of problems within the education system. Macpherson (2009) found in a study of New Zealand school principals that the succession planning process often does not follow a planned process, but instead, is done in an ad hoc way that results in principals being appointed with little support, resulting in having to learn 'on the job'. Myung et al. (2011) undertook research in the United States and identified that most school districts do not utilise formal succession practices for school leadership; many instead using informal practices such as 'tapping' – identifying potential future leaders from current teachers, described elsewhere in this literature review. This lack of succession planning seems evident also in Canada, as Hargreaves and Fink (2003, paragraph 40) lament that planned succession "is one of the most neglected aspects of leadership theory and practice in our schools", and "one of the most persistently missing pieces in the effort to secure the sustainability of school improvement". These views are supported by Leithwood (2006, p. 181), who notes that "Unplanned principal succession is one of the most common sources of schools failing to progress". It is important to remember that deliberate and structured planning formalises the education system's commitment to the ongoing leadership needed in schools.

From the literature, it is evident that an education system that is utilising an effective succession planning program would continuously be identifying teachers who have high potential for school leadership early on in their teaching career, and be planning to provide the necessary leadership development training and opportunities to assist in their preparation for a career in administration. It is rare however, that such systematic processes are in place, particularly for school leadership positions (Doneley et al., 2018; Grunow et al., 2010). Thomson (2009, p. 32) suggests that "succession planning is a major plank in any cogent strategy to address the risks inherent in the 'supply problem'" – the supply problem being the difficulty of finding school leaders.

It is increasingly clear that a planned approach to ensuring that potential school leaders are identified and nurtured is important. Having effective succession practices in place can help to manage the collective knowledge and experience of staff, save costs, reduce staff turnover, assist in the provision of professional learning activities, and keep employees informed of opportunities for growth and development (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Friedman, 1986; Rothwell, 2011; Rothwell & Poduch, 2004; Schall, 1997). It is why organisations that fail to prioritise succession end up experiencing attrition of talent or retain people with outdated skills (Cohn, Khurana & Reeves, 2005). As noted by Renihan (2012), the sustainability of effective leadership for the long term is a strong argument for concerted attention being paid to leadership succession. This concept ties well to the five top reasons for having succession planning and management programs (Rothwell, 2010):

1. communicating career paths to each individual;
2. establishing development and training plans;
3. establishing career paths and individual job moves;
4. communicating upward and laterally concerning the management organisation; and
5. creating a more comprehensive human resource planning system.

Research has identified a relationship between the shortage of well qualified leadership candidates and the absence of written succession policies (Fusarelli et al., 2018; Stutsman, 2007). Bush (2011a) suggests that having a published succession planning strategy is important because it indicates wide spread support for the initiative and is likely to provide a sound basis for sustainability. Where no formal succession plan exists but strategies can be discerned, the failure to proceed to a published outcome may be indicative of difficulties in getting 'buy in' from internal or external stakeholders for the initiative, or it may be a product of limited capacity.

Thus, we have seen that succession practices cannot be left to chance, and it is of paramount importance that education systems develop succession programs that identify, prepare, place and support individuals as they enter the important area of educational leadership.

2.4 SUCCESSION: THE CONTEXT

2.4.1. The Role of School Leader

The role of the principal has changed dramatically in recent years, with the Australian context having largely been shaped by structural and policy reform. Increased competition, accountability, corporate governance, higher levels of curriculum and assessment regulation, increased teacher and principal standards, and increasing school comparisons based around student performance have shaped the nature of work in which school leaders operate (Ainley & McKenzie, 2000; Bush, 2009; Day et al., 2000; Dempster et al., 2011; Gronn, 2007). Increased authority and responsibility has been placed on principals, to the extent that Starr (2009) describes, for larger schools at least, the role to be like this:

> *The role now equates with that of a Chief Executive Officer of any organisation, with management of strategic planning, multi-million dollar budgets, industrial relations, facilities, marketing and public relations coming on top of the 'core business' of curriculum, pastoral care, teaching and learning. (p. 22).*

The result has been a leadership crisis developing in schools internationally (Bennett, Carpenter & Hill, 2011). The 'Baby Boomer' generation is retiring from school principal and leadership positions, and the evidence suggests the next generation are becoming increasingly less willing to take on leadership positions (Bennett et al., 2011; Fink, 2010). A desire for a better work-life balance is a major reason identified for this, as many potential applicants for principal roles believe the job responsibilities to be onerous (Baker, Punswick & Belt, 2010; Fink, 2010; Lacey, 2001). As Fink (2010, p. 69) lamented, "The combination of younger generations' reticence to assume leadership positions and their passionate desire to maintain a reasonable life-work balance compounds the problem".

Concerns relating to the demanding nature and complexity of the role have also contributed to the attractiveness of principalship being questioned, along with compensation that is not seen as commensurate with the work (Bengston et al.,2013; d'Arbon et al.,2001; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Fusarelli et al., 2018; Kruger, 2008; Leithwood et al., 1999; Lindle, 2004; McAdams, 1998; Mertz, 1999;

Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018; Portin et al., 1998; Pounder & Crow, 2005; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Thomson, 2009; Whitaker, 2001). Other reasons identified by a range of studies in the literature over an extended period of time for the decline in the number of school leadership applicants include: The changing role of the principal; little to no job security; demands of the position; long working days; gender issues; increased paperwork; pressure to reform the school; school board micromanagement; the impact on personal and family life; the presence of an incumbent; the size of the school; ongoing conflict; criticisms from internal and external publics; negative political climates; the nature of the selection and interview process; difficulty satisfying parents and the community; issues with school funding and resource levels; a lack of support from the external school environment; increasing violence in schools; creation of distance from their classroom roles; a noted lack of ability to exercise autonomy; a lack of professional support; stress caused by the role; occupational health, safety and wellbeing; and the time needed to complete the job (Barty, Thomson, Blackmore & Sachs, 2005; Beaudin, Thompson & Jacobson, 2002; Bezzina, 2012; Canadian Association of Principals, 2003; Cooley & Shen, 2000; Craven, 1989; d'Arbon et al., 2001; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Lovett & Cameron, 2011; McAdams, 1998; McLay, 2008; McCormick, 1987; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006; Pawlas, 1989; Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018; Riley, 2018; Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011; Thomson, 2009; Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998).

Cooley and Shen (2000) also found that pressures to reform schools, the politicisation of school districts, and the increased demands placed on principals have also contributed to the diminished number of principal applicants. Cooley and Shen (2000) found in their research of factors influencing the applying for urban principalship roles, that urban teachers were less concerned about the compensation and nature of the principal job than were urban principals – findings which suggest these teachers would likely be surprised by the demands of the job when they undertook this principal position. Barty et al. (2005) found that one of four categories of deterrents were generally involved with declining numbers of applications: location, size of the school, the presence of an incumbent, or difficulties arising from local educational politics. Simkins, Close and Smith (2009, p. 242) suggests that declining applicant numbers may be a problem relating "to a fundamental concern about the switch of identity from classroom teacher to school leader or manager".

2.4.2. Leadership Shortage

The literature is clear on the trends occurring in educational leadership, as baby boomers retire and exit these positions. In New Zealand, 53% of state and state integrated school leaders were over the age of 50 and their retirements were anticipated within a few years (Brooking, 2008). In Canada, the Ontario Principal's Council produced a study that showed close to 60% of principals and 30% of vice or assistant principals in public elementary and secondary schools would retire by 2005. Additionally, it was expected that by 2010, more than 80% of principals and about 50% of vice principals would retire (Williams, 2001). A subsequent journal article by Gallo and Ryan (2011) states that this has occurred. The Leadership Crisis Study, conducted by the Canadian Association of Principals (2003), demonstrated that retirements and an aging population of professionals in education would create a shortage of significant proportions and that this shortage was a national problem. As stated by Hargreaves (2005, p. 164) "Leadership succession is not just a temporary episodic problem in individual schools, but a pervasive crisis in the system". In Succession Planning: Schools and School Boards (Learning Partnership, 2008) it was predicted that beginning in 2018, 53% of elementary and 39% of secondary school vice principals in Canada will be eligible to retire, reaffirming that the most immediate need for succession planning concerns the role of the school principal. The Educational Research Service (2000) reported the average age of school principals globally to be 50 years or older. The National College for School Leadership (2007, p. 6) reported that the retirement boom being experienced in the UK means a need for a 15-20% increase in the number of school leaders to "maintain a healthy supply of good quality candidates for headship".

Australian studies also outline the increasing age of the principalship (Barty et al., 2005; Lacey, 2003a; Lacey & Gronn, 2005; Marks, 2013; McKenzie, 2008). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2009) found that the 'education and training' sector registered the largest proportion of workers who intended to retire within the next 10 years. Scott (2003) reported that by 2013, 74% of current secondary principals and 59% of current primary principals would likely have retired. In addition, over 50% of the deputy principals (logical replacements for these principals) also indicated that

they would retire by 2013. Such figures highlight a generic problem in educational settings: the entire leadership team of many schools belong to the baby boomer cohort and are due to retire at similar times. These figures place a particularly strong onus on the need for systematic succession planning in an Australian context.

Research from the Australian educational context supports the notion that there is a shortage of principal applicants (Barty et al., 2005; Bush, 2011a; d'Arbon et al., 2002; Lacey & Gronn, 2005; Lacey, 2006; MacBeath, 2011). d'Arbon and Dorman (2004), for example, found that Catholic schools within the Australian context consistently fielded low application rates for school principal positions, with the ratio of only 3.2 applicants for each advertised principal position within Catholic schools in New South Wales. Teasdale-Smith (2008, p. 3) stated "Australia, like most other industrialised nations, is expecting a school leadership crisis with fewer people showing an interest in leading schools".

In the Australian faith-based context, research undertaken by d'Arbon et al. (2001) aimed to identify why fewer people were applying for principal positions in New South Wales Catholic Schools. Findings showed that the most significant negative factor was the impact on personal and family life, as well as a lack of support from the external school environment, a salary that did not match the degree of responsibility, and the nature of the selection and interview process. There is some consistency in the literature here with regard to the global context:

> *a growing body of research evidence suggests that school education systems are experiencing difficulties recruiting principals … candidate 'pools' are diminishing, the supply 'pipeline' is sluggish and some employers are unable to replace current vacancies and meet projected demand. (Lacey & Gronn, 2006, p. 34).*

Barty et al. (2005) found in research undertaken in an Australian context, that smaller numbers of applications for principal positions does not necessarily mean there is a decline in interest in school leadership positions, but rather, principal aspirants are becoming more strategic in how they approach the application process. For example, their research suggests there is an unwritten code in the teaching

profession that you do not apply for leadership positions where an 'incumbent' is likely to reapply for the position. As stated by Barty et al., (2005):

> *The incumbent rule can also it seems produce a profound sense of futility in potential applicants. This is because incumbents are, most commonly, successful in regaining their positions. This phenomenon, widely observed and discussed, deters many an aspirant from putting in the time and effort to submit an application because to do so would be pointless. (p. 9).*

The shortage of principals is particularly endemic in districts perceived to have challenging working conditions, large populations of impoverished or minority students, low per pupil expenditures, and urban settings (Forsyth & Smith, 2002; Mitgang, 2003; Pounder, Galvin, & Sheppard, 2003; Pounder, Reitzug, & Young, 2002), with evidence to suggest that many high poverty districts field minimal applicants per principal vacancy (Roza, Celio, Harvey, & Wishon, 2003).

Additionally, other researchers have cited other reasons for the decline in the number of applicants for administrative positions, such as economic conditions which necessitate two family incomes, increased teacher salaries, the changing role of the principal, little to no job security, demands of the position and long work days, a lack of women and ethnic minority applicants, comparable compensation with teachers, increased paperwork, ongoing conflict, and criticisms from internal and external publics (Craven, 1989; McAdams, 1998; McCormick, 1987; Pawlas, 1989; Thomson, 2009; Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998). It is interesting to note that Howell (1981) was able to recognise many problems experienced by today's principals when writing of principals experiencing crisis management, suggesting that paperwork, discipline problems, parent conferences, and other duties conflicted with the traditional role of the principal as an instructional leader.

The University Council for Educational Administration reported that in 2007, 52% of principals leave their position within a three-year period (Fuller, Orr, & Young, 2008). As Fink and Brayman (2006, pp. 62-63) speculate, having been stripped of their autonomy, principals are frustrated, which has produced "an increasingly rapid turnover of school leaders and an insufficient pool of capable, qualified, and prepared replacements".

Normore (2004c) states:

> *...due to the mass of retirements of school administrators and the impending shortage of qualified candidates with experience to move into these leadership positions, school districts across North America are faced with the challenge of recruiting and preparing candidates for the administrator role. This trend is predicted to accelerate over the next several years. (p. 1)*

Bush (2011b, p. 186) described five consistent themes from case studies undertaken in England, highlighting the scale and nature of leadership shortage, while recognising local variables:

1. Recruitment to primary schools is more difficult than to secondary schools.
2. Faith schools, particularly in the Catholic sector, present particular problems.
3. Small rural schools are a particular challenge because of the demands on teaching heads and the low salary differentials.
4. Local authority branding, whether positive or negative, is perceived to affect the volume and quality of applications.
5. There are concerns about closure or reorganisation in some areas.

Jacobson (2005, p. 459) contends that administrator shortages result from "the combined effect of the willingness (or lack thereof) of individuals to take on the responsibilities of leadership and the adequacy of their preparation". Kruger et al. (2005, p. 241) report that in a number of US states "a leadership crisis exists in educational administration, in the sense of a shortage of qualified candidates for principals' positions and the same problem is perceptible in several European countries".

McAdams (1998) found that although more teachers are seeking administrative certification, fewer of these teachers are applying for administrative positions; a finding supported by more recent data reported in Succession Planning: Report of Ontario Catholic Educators Group (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008), which confirms that although there are considerably more teachers with principals' qualifications, they are not applying for vice principal positions. Cooley and Shen (2000) note that although a teacher might seek administrator certification, they may still opt to steer clear of the principalship. Indeed, it has even been suggested that

some teachers take on these administrative credentials simply to improve their pay in teaching (Levine, 2005). It is interesting to note that some American literature suggests there is not so much a shortage of qualified people who could fill available administrative roles - the United States generally certifies more administrators than principal vacancies - but rather, the demand is for principals with attributes and skill sets that go beyond simply possessing the relevant administrative credential (Copland, 2001; Fusarelli et al., 2018; Lankford, O'Connell & Wyckoff, 2003; Pounder et al., 2003). This is echoed by others outside the US. context, as they identify the need for leadership that manages schools in periods of rapid change, engages school stakeholders and continues to benefit both the school community and their students (Brundrett, Fitzgerald & Sommefeldt, 2006; Bush, 2008). There is clearly a disconnect between qualified candidates for principal positions and job applications, which is resulting in a shortage of candidates for leadership positions. If there are difficulties finding capable and willing applicants for principal positions, then school systems must make a priority of building leadership capacity.

There is a view that due to the low numbers of teachers coming forward for principal roles, as well as other key school leadership roles, an urgent systematic approach to finding leaders from within the profession must take place in order to ensure the next generation of educational leaders (Dempster, 2007, cited in Macpherson, 2009). As Quinn (2002, p. 24) notes, "The effort to identify tomorrow's principals cannot wait until tomorrow – the shortfall is today". The global picture of a lack of applicants for principal positions has been described as "a demographic time bomb ticking in many school jurisdictions" (Fink & Brayman, 2004, p. 431). This has placed this issue as an important area for further research, with education systems having a need to find ways to attract and recruit qualified, well prepared applicants for vacant principal positions.

2.4.3 Leadership Recruitment: Attraction and Retention

Recruitment appears to have become a much more predominant issue for school leadership in recent years. Normore (2004b, p. 3) outlines that finding effective school leaders has become one of the more "challenging human resource tasks in educational organisations. This challenge is due, in part, to the inexact science of

attracting, screening, and identifying candidates to fit the complex leadership needs of schools today". Literature also notes that there may be some suspicion of the principal recruitment process, with an Australian study undertaken by Neidhart and Carlin (2003) commenting that:

> *Recruitment problems include: concern about the transparency and fairness of the selection process; lack of constructive feedback to unsuccessful candidates; perception that males are advantaged; and concern regarding the knowledge and experience panel members have to make appropriate recommendations. (p. 12)*

The research indicates that many schools find it difficult to fill vacant school leadership positions (Bush, 2011a; Cooley & Shen, 2000; Fenwick & Pierce, 2001; Hammond, Muffs & Sciascia, 2001; Malone & Caddell, 2000; Whitaker, 2001; Winter & Morgenthal, 2002). Whitaker (2001) also found that principal shortages are more common in secondary schools than primary, or elementary schools. Bush (2011b, p. 182) suggested that in inner London, it is very difficult to find suitable principal candidates, with research from England outlining that almost 50% of schools need to re-advertise the role in order to secure a good appointment (NCSL, 2007).

A number of authors put forward the strategy of actively recruiting teachers to become school leaders, particularly those identified as having the greatest potential for effective leadership (Fusarelli et al., 2018; Myung et al., 2011; Pounder & Crow, 2005). This process is referred to as 'tapping', an informal recruitment mechanism with the goal of progressing school teachers - who demonstrate leadership potential - to take on leadership roles. Myung et al. (2011) underwent research that found a majority of principals reported being 'tapped' by their school principal when they were teachers. The following quote captures the viewpoint well:

> *Current school leaders may be well suited to recruit potential principals from their teaching ranks, as they are acquainted with the demands of the job. Furthermore, through day-to-day interactions with and observations of teachers, school leaders are uniquely positioned to identify and foster the intangible leadership skills in teachers, which are necessary to successfully lead a school but are particularly difficult to capture on standardised tests or resumes alone. (Myung et al., 2011, p. 699).*

Additionally, Myung et al. (2011) found that 'tapping' can positively impact the recruitment of teachers to become principals. As principals recognise they have the ability to motivate teachers to consider principal roles in the future, the principal themselves may 'tap' more, but they may also be more disciplined about who they 'tap'. It is likely that these teachers will have some school level leadership experience, whether that be as having acted as heads of departments, head of school or other areas of schoolwide demonstrated leadership (Myung et al., 2011).

Cooley and Shen (2000) recommend five policy areas be addressed, which they believe represent a systemic approach to recruiting and retaining quality principals. In summary, these are:

1. Develop policy frameworks for school boards, which assist board members to understand their role, responsibilities and the complexity of the principalship. The aim is to significantly reduce the political aspects, while improving the relationships between teachers, administrators, and boards of education. Increasing board awareness should help alleviate the pressure faced by principals.
2. Reengineer the principal's job description to help remove the barriers that teachers face so they can focus on effective teaching. These changes may need to address workload and length of workday in order to minimise stress, likelihood of burnout, the impact of the principalship on the family, and the reluctance of teachers to apply for principal roles.
3. Adjust compensation levels to provide incentives to better recruit and retain principals.
4. Boards and superintendents must understand that their action contribute to their reputations. Trust, credibility, integrity, and support must stem from the board.
5. Urban educators must actively market and recruit principals and other administrative staff. The plan should also include administrator identification and training programs, school-university leadership academies, internships, teacher-in-charge programs, and other measures designed to recruit quality administrators.

Purposeful succession practices allow organisations to grow their own leaders, by preparing an already existing pool of candidates from within the organisation for leadership. This is done by providing developmental experiences, skills training and leadership development that enable meeting the future needs of the organisation (Fusarelli et al., 2018; Grunow et al., 2010; Myung et al., 2011).

Attracting candidates presents an interesting picture. One area that stems from the research revolves around the need to perceive the role of principal as one that is rewarding, involving job satisfaction. Lacey (2003a) describes research where teachers made judgements on the appeal or otherwise of leadership positions from their perception of the visible role played by principals and assistant principals. The findings were that teachers did not see principals as having high levels of job satisfaction, and this had a negative impact on their own leadership aspirations. McKenzie, Weldon, Rowley, Murphy and McMillan (2014) undertook an Australian national survey and found that while school leaders reported high levels of job satisfaction with most aspects of their work, 38.2% of primary leaders and 29.7% of secondary leaders considered school leadership positions to be either 'unattractive' or 'very unattractive' to qualified applicants. Gallo and Ryan (2011, p. 7) describe the role of the principal as needing to be "demystified", which seems appropriate in light of the contrasting job responsibilities outlined in the literature.

In order to attract applicants, Lacey (2003a) believes principal positions need to be perceived as providing job satisfaction, and incentives to seek promotion need to be increased. Principals need to articulate and display a sense of job satisfaction, and flexible work options at all leadership levels should be promoted.

Studies of the school administrator selection process describe how perceptions among selection committee members of candidate fit in relation to personal attributes, as well as other unwritten criteria, can play a strong role in the determination of which candidates receive formal job offers (Baltzell & Dentler, 1983; Bryant, 1978; Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009; Tallerico, 2000). Such perceptions are identified in a number of studies to be disadvantageous to female candidates for principal positions (Baltzell & Dentler, 1983; Bezzina, 2012; Blackmore, Thomson, & Barty, 2006). Much literature suggests principal selection occurs on an ad hoc

basis, and identifies that processes should be structured to support both the application and selection of highly qualified and appropriate applicants. Fenwick (2000, p. 39) describes the selection of principals to be "haphazard and serendipitous". Links are made to professional development programs and the need to enhance these in order to address the skill development required for effective selection (Lacey, 2003a). It is very clear in the literature that selection processes need to be structured in order to support and encourage the application and selection of highly qualified and appropriate applicants.

An Australian study "School Governance and Succession Planning: Planning for the Leader You Need" (Independent Schools Queensland, 2003) identified a number of factors that curtail candidates from accepting leadership positions if selected. Most predominant among these factors were the need to relocate away from major centers, gender, a limited knowledge of leadership, selection processes that were considered to be both complex and intrusive, concerns regarding a lack of support after taking on the position, and a lack of life balance taking into consideration both personal and family situations.

Baltzell and Dentler (1983) suggested in the findings of a study that examined principal hiring practices that four models of principal selection processes occurred:

1. the social similarity model: hiring those that resemble the constituents;
2. the social similarity plus model: looking for extra credentials in addition to the resemblance;
3. the pluralistic model: selecting based on the fit or a school need; or
4. the reform model: hiring practices based on the criteria fit for a specific principal position.

Clearly the strengths and personalities of the principal applicants must also be taken into account when filling vacancies, as the skill sets needed in large urban secondary schools for example, would be very different to those of a small rural elementary school (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004). In addition, elementary principals generally need a stronger sense of familiarity with curriculum than secondary principals, who are able to delegate some of this awareness to department heads or directors of studies (Leithwood et al., 2004).

In the US, school district leaders, recognising the importance of the principal for school improvement, are considering current trends in attracting and retaining quality principals, such as creating incentives and conditions within schools that will entice applicants to give consideration to them (Wallace Foundation, 2009). Findings from a study on the retention of principals (Fuller & Young, 2009) showed that 90% of principals who leave a school actually leave the principalship. While this may include promotions to administrative office positions, it highlights the critical need for the existence of a clear principal succession plan.

Fink and Brayman (2006, p. 63) outline that the United States National Association of Secondary School Principals attribute a failure to attract quality leaders to:

> *…increased job stress, inadequate school funding, balancing school management with instructional leadership, new curriculum standards, educating an increasingly diverse student population, shouldering responsibility that once belonged at home or in the community, and then facing possible termination if their schools don't show instant results.*

Fuller and Young (2009) undertook research that focused on the retention and tenure of newly hired school principals in Texas public schools over a 12-year period. They identified a number of findings in their study which have direct impact on the principal succession planning process. Key findings included elementary principals have the longest tenure and greatest retention rates, while high school principals have the shortest tenure and lowest retention rates; just over 50% of newly hired high school principals stay for three years and less than 30% of them stay in the one school for five years; principals in the lowest achieving schools have the shortest tenure and lowest retention rates while principals in the highest achieving schools have the longest tenure and highest retention rates; and, principals in high-poverty schools have shorter tenure and lower retention rates than principals in low-poverty schools (Fuller & Young, 2009). A 2013 study conducted by the American Association of School Administrators with over 2300 respondents found that well over half (66.6%) of these respondents had been in their positions for less than a five-year period (McCord, Stream, Ellerson & Finnan, 2013), with the equivalent study in 2016 of 1392 respondents reporting this percentage was 60.1% (Finnan &

McCord, 2016). Literature suggests that effective principal tenures can only be achieved by having a coherent and systematic principal recruitment process (Chapman, 2005; Doneley et al., 2018).

Boesse (1991) put forward the idea of a rotation of school principals, which he suggested rejuvenated principals. However, there are scarcely any other studies to support the idea of planned rotations amongst school principals and an earlier study by Miskel and Cosgrove (1985) found no evidence at all that principal rotation increased organisational effectiveness. Macmillan (2000, p. 68) posited that the policy of regularly rotating principals within a system "is a flawed one, perhaps fatally so. When leadership succession is regular and routinized, teachers are likely to build resilient cultures which inoculate them against the effects of succession". Macmillan (1996) also outlined a view that principals tend to take fewer risks once they gain experience and begin to settle into their new schools, which can stagnate school improvement efforts.

Normore (2004b, p. 7), in research undertaken in a Canadian context, addressed school principal and administrator rotation, based around the belief that school communities benefit from administrators who have had leadership experiences in a variety of school settings. Decisions made around rotation took place at the system level. A district administrator is quoted as saying "We believe it's necessary to train our school administrators on a systems level so when we move our principals from one school to another every 3-5 years we do it with the intent of keeping them alert of the diverse experiences they can have from one school to another". Normore (2004b) also identified that no consultation took place with either the school administrator or the school community, nor were there planned opportunities for any type of handover discussion due to the uncertainty of school and time of placement. One principal notes the rotation of school administrators "sometimes has a negative effect on our schools because we may be in the process of a change innovation, or involved with a mentee, when suddenly we are transferred before we have finished what we were previously doing". Gallo and Ryan (2011, p. 149) outlines that principal rotation was "not seen as a positive practice, because it promoted a managerial response to school leadership rather than a vision, which requires sustained leadership over time". There is research to suggest that the practice of

principal rotation that results in a less experienced principal arriving in a school can actually undo much of the good work performed by the prior principal (Hargreaves, 2005).

2.5 SUCCESSION: ASPIRATIONS

It is interesting to note the motivations to become a school principal. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2006) commissioned a project that included reflections from school leaders as to what motivated them most to pursue the role of school principal. Reasons such as contributing to student achievement and growth, making a difference in young people's lives, providing instructional leadership to staff, working as agents of change, working with parents and communities, contributing to education system initiatives and professional challenges were all factors that were identified.

Thompson and Dahling (2010, p. 21) mention "high value for status in one's work and aspirations for advancement in one's career" as a motivation for aspiring to school leadership, while Simon (2015, p. 56) suggests that "the status in the community of a school principal is another potential catalyst for aspirations to the role". Simon (2015, p. 56) notes that those classroom teachers who prefer to stay in the classroom rather than aspire to school leadership "may perceive the role to be more to do with bureaucracy and less to do with student's learning". Simon (2015, p. 62) also suggests that the impact of current leadership can be significant on the aspiring leader's growth, with the aspirant relying to a significant degree on being in a school where "the principal encourages them generally regarding leadership ambitions, supports them specifically in their taking on opportunities for growth and delegates to them appropriate leadership responsibilities throughout their educational career progression". Townsend and MacBeath (2011) performed a study across 60 different countries with the findings emphasising that school leadership must be attainable to young, aspiring leaders. It is important that aspiring leaders are provided opportunities within their school setting in order to facilitate opportunities for growth and development.

Beaudin, Thompson and Jacobson (2002, cited in Ontario Ministry of Education 2006) administered a survey to new, aspiring and experienced administrators to determine attracting and detracting factors relating to leadership roles. Attractors included (in order) salary and benefits commensurate to the role, opportunities for new challenges, short travel, a climate of support for personal growth, and a supportive political environment. Detractors included inadequate salary, negative political climates, longer travel requirements, a lack of professional support, and longer days and hours. Some of these identified factors were also found to discourage people from seeking the job of principal in research done by the Canadian Association of Principals (2003), the top three factors of which were compensation that did not match the job responsibilities, too much stress caused by the role, and too much time required to complete the job. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2006) research also identified the following barriers towards the desire to become a vice principal or principal: people unwilling to move their families when opportunities arise outside of their communities, the negative perception that some teachers have of the administrative tasks associated with the job, a reduced salary gap between teacher and leadership roles, teacher's reluctance to leave seniority and their unions, a role that requires 10 to 12 hour days at work, and other obstacles including job stress, difficulty satisfying parents and the community, poverty and lack of family supports, issues with school funding and resource levels, increasing violence in schools, a lack of ability to exercise autonomy, costs associated with earning qualifications, and management-union relationships.

Historically, the group most likely to replace those leaving school principal positions has been middle leaders, given their exhibited leadership and current roles. Research in a number of different education contexts, both overseas and within Australia, suggest that there exists an unwillingness of assistant and vice principals, deputy heads and leading teachers to aspire to be in the principal role (d'Arbon et al., 2002; Fink, 2011; Lacey, 2003a; Lacey & Gronn, 2005). While the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) indicate that 3.6% of teaching staff positions are principal positions, only 1.1% of secondary teachers and 1.6% of primary teachers reported an intention to apply for a principal position in the next three years, according to a national Australian survey (McKenzie et al., 2014).

A number of Australian researchers have illustrated that while many beginning teachers consider themselves to be future school leaders, the numbers who apply for vacancies varies considerably (Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan & Neidhart, 2003; Cranston, Tromans & Reugebrink, 2004; d'Arbon et al., 2002). Research has identified that the rates of application for vacancies are generally better in secondary schools than in primary, and more common amongst younger teachers than more experienced teachers (Gronn, 2007). The imperative here is to provide some level of support to these younger teachers to inspire a willingness to give consideration to continuing their leadership aspirations.

Studies of the leadership pipeline in the United States shows differences by teaching level as current elementary assistant principals are almost twice as likely as their high school counterparts to pursue a principal position (65% to 34%) – a finding supported by an Australian survey undertaken by McKenzie et al. (2014), but seemingly in contrast to other research studies (Gronn, 2007). Principals identified stress (91%) and time required at work (86%) as the top deterrents for people who choose to opt out of school leadership after they have met the credential requirements. Other issues identified as a "primary barrier" by over 50% of principals were low pay (67%), and accountability mandates (64%), while 54% pointed to increasing disrespect from students (DiPaola & Tschannem-Moran, 2003).

The results of a study described in Gallo and Ryan (2011) reflect interesting findings around leadership aspiration. A survey of 2,000 teachers, followed by a series of focus group interviews, found that males and females had differing attitudes toward leadership; namely, more females than males wanted to remain in the classroom. More females aspired to the assistant principal role rather than the principal role, whereas more males aspired to the principal role. Aspiration to the assistant principal role increased over time for both males and females (Lacey, 2003a). Participants reported a high level of satisfaction from the following factors: a sense of achievement through work, the work itself, interactions with students, school policies and practices, and physical working conditions. The strongest sources of dissatisfaction included the effect of the job on one's personal life, supervision of work, adequacy of administrative support, and intensity of the job. Teachers did not see principals as having high levels of satisfaction, and this had a negative impact on

their own aspirations. Personal challenge was seen as a motivator for some, highly stressful for others. A strong disincentive to seeking promotion was the impact on personal life, especially for females. The selection process itself was seen as ad hoc and was a strong disincentive to seeking promotion, particularly by women. The literature suggests women, particularly, do not consider leadership until urged to by someone else to do so (Gallo & Ryan, 2011).

Lacey (2003a) found that the length of teaching experience appeared to affect career aspirations, as teachers with less than five years' experience were more likely to aspire to the role of principal, while those with more than ten years' experience are more likely to want to remain in the classroom. This research project also found that although there was a significant increase over time in the number of teachers aspiring to the assistant principal position, 50% of younger teachers who had aspired to the principal position at the beginning of their careers no longer did so. Another interesting finding of the Lacey study was that a greater percentage of primary teachers aspired to the principal role than secondary teachers, research backed up by the 'Staff in Australian Schools' national survey (McKenzie et al., 2014). McKenzie et al. (2014) also found that one third of principals and one quarter of the deputy principal respondents decided to seek a leadership post within their first few years of teaching.

There is some evidence in the literature that age impacts an individual's tendency to pursue school leadership positions, with both younger and older individuals less likely to do so than middle-aged individuals (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Joy, 1998; Walker & Kwan, 2009). This also links to the idea that age, or years of teaching experience, impacts on the decision or intention to seek leadership positions. Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) case study of 18 students in a principal preparation program suggests that differences by age and experience stem at least in part from individual's perceptions of readiness to assume or be selected for a principal role. Specifically, it was found that younger, less experienced participants expressed greater uncertainty about seeking leadership positions than older, more experienced participants – a finding seemingly in contrast with other studies (Lacey, 2003a). As Bush (2011b, p. 181) writes of the English context, "Heads serve a long apprenticeship (on average 20 years) as teachers and deputies, before becoming head

teachers". "Making the route to the top a swifter process would render it more appealing to younger teachers" (NCSL, 2007, p. 7).

One additional key point in relation to principals in faith-based education settings that will relate to this area of research is that, according to d'Arbon et al. (2001):

> *In addition to the normal administrative and leadership qualities required of a principal in any school system, those who decide on a career path in a Catholic school have the additional challenge of leading a faith-based school community in which their personal lives, faith-commitment and religious practices are placed under scrutiny by Church authorities as well as by the Catholic education system, the students and their parents. These additional expectations can be seen to be a deterrent to persons applying to become principals. (p. 13)*

2.6 SUCCESSION: LEADERSHIP PREPARATION

2.6.1 The Need for Effective Preparation

In light of the present and future leadership requirements, schools must answer the question: what type of leader will be needed in a period of time centred around accountability and the meeting of professional standards? There is no question that being a principal in the present time is more difficult than ever before. Quality leadership matters greatly, however, and is considered second only to classroom teaching among all factors that influence student learning (Fusarelli et al, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2004; Riley & Meredith, 2017). Principals face a number of challenges as they step into this role for the first time. Bengtson, Zepeda and Parylo (2013) indicate that while principals are not always provided with the support needed to mediate their transition, they are expected to possess the necessary skills and abilities to translate into success from day one. The learning curve can be quite steep. Walker and Qian (2006, p. 297) state "The energy previously needed to climb [to get the position] must be transformed quickly to balancing atop an equally tenuous surface – a spot requiring new knowledge, skills and understanding". Indeed, the very success of a school principal can often be determined by the quality of their preparation (McCarthy, 2015).

Macpherson (2009) identified that principals often had not prepared systematically for the role, and that in hindsight, they recognised that there were significant

limitations to ‘learning on the job’ and that a systematic process of learning management and executive skills prior to becoming a school principal would have been highly beneficial. Bush (2009) put forward a view that given the increasing complexity that school leaders work within, school systems have a moral obligation to ensure appropriate preparation and development for their positions. This moral obligation is for both those already in established leadership positions, but also for those who may have leadership aspirations.

While the body of research relating to succession planning in education systems is increasing, Bennett et al. (2011) note that the strategic aspect of preparing a pool of candidates as part of a system of school leadership succession planning is an area seldom covered and remains an area in need of further research. It is critical that appropriate planning and preparations are put into the future roles of school leadership, and those who may be ready to assume these positions.

2.6.2 Leadership Development

The literature around school leadership identifies what successful principal leadership should look like in practice. Recognising the complex and changing environments that these principals work within, it has been identified that to be successful in highly accountable policy contexts, school leaders need to create and sustain a competitive school, particularly where competition for students in education “markets” exists; empower others to make significant decisions, with particular relevance to situations with high numbers of community stakeholders; provide instructional guidance, particularly in the setting of professional standards; and develop and implement strategic school improvement plans, with which virtually all leaders will be involved (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Leithwood et al. (2004) outline three basic practices that need to be in place for successful leadership. First, clear goals or directions must be in place. This element accounts for the largest proportion of a leader’s impact. Principals still retain the responsibility for building a shared vision amongst the staff of a school. Second, staff must feel motivated and moved towards the completion of the goals. Setting goals is not enough; principals should have influence over their staff to want to attain these

goals. Thirdly, principals must be able to identify organisational and instructional structures and practices that need to be changed or redesigned.

Militello, Gajda and Bowers (2009) identified twenty essential skills (listed below) that were important for effective principalship and found that more than 50% of current school principal respondents in their research believed these were very important to be successful as a principal; however, respondents overwhelmingly indicated that their principal preparation programs did not prepare them in these skill areas. These twenty skills were identified by examining the research literature that targeted key or essential skills, knowledge or dispositions, and using two group interviews with current school principals and superintendents which reflected on these skills in both practice and the literature. Feedback via an online survey was also conducted of certification programs in the state of Massachusetts (Militello et al., 2009). The twenty skills identified were:

1. developing useful school improvement plans;
2. legal aspects;
3. evaluating current and new programs;
4. crisis management;
5. managing student discipline;
6. school facilities / operations;
7. family outreach response and involvement;
8. communication with central office;
9. public / community relations;
10. recognising undercurrents / climate in the school;
11. staffing recruiting hiring retaining firing;
12. developing and managing school budget;
13. involving teachers in decisions and policies;
14. celebrating / acknowledging;
15. providing effective PD for teachers;
16. managing use of assessments / data;
17. providing feedback on instruction regularly;
18. engaging staff in standards and curriculum development;
19. leading school change; and
20. developing a shared school vision.

Bennett et al. (2011) contend that developing leaders from within an education system, through education and leadership opportunities, benefits both the system and the individual. They also suggest that any organisation should be structured in a way that provides for individual growth and opportunity, thereby creating an environment where leaders can emerge. These shared leadership opportunities, along with purposeful leadership development strategies, can potentially ensure that suitable leadership candidates emerge from within the school community.

Reeves (2006) adds to the idea of leadership as needing to build relational trust and integrity, which is believed to be the foundation of any enduring relationship and facilitates the development of belief and values. The qualities demonstrated by such a leader include the ability to:

1. listen to colleagues without interrupting or prejudging their statements;
2. respect confidences and not betray private conversations;
3. practice empathy through deliberate inquiry, and
4. exhibit genuine passion for one's mission and the people around oneself.

Leadership development is a vital component of any succession planning strategy. Developing the skills, attributes and knowledge that is required to be an effective school principal requires systemic preparation (Bush, 2011a). Thompson (2010, p. 98) writes "leadership development should not be left to chance, but should be part of a planned effort at all levels from the broader organisation through to the leader. This [is a] call to grow your own leaders". Part of the plan of action for creating a formal leadership development plan at education system and school levels will address questions such as "Who is responsible for leadership development in our schools and systems? What are their specific roles and responsibilities? How will we develop all levels of leadership – at the instructional level, at the support level, and at the administrative level?" (Hall, 2008). Discussions will need to be had around support and resource allocation, as well as monitoring and reporting.

Stoll and Jackson (2009) argue for a system of distributed leadership within schools. Distributed leadership identifies potential future leaders, shares leadership responsibilities with them in meaningful ways, encourages them to pursue leadership opportunities, and actively supports the development of skills that would enhance

leadership ability. Spillane (2006, p. 144) defines distributed leadership as "a framework for thinking about and framing investigations of leadership practice" in which people, along with the identified leaders "… take on leadership responsibility within schools on their own initiative". The purpose of distributed leadership is multifaceted; it can help schools function more efficiently and assist in the ownership of improvement initiatives from staff, and additionally, develop tomorrow's leaders. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) indicate that planning leadership succession, and keeping this a focus and vision, can create a culture in which distributed leadership occurs. This then begins to develop future leaders. Once the practices of distributed leadership are established, schools can move from a focus of establishing succession planning to a focus on managing and refining the succession plan each year as part of the strategic planning cycle. As stated by Hargreaves and Fink (2003, para. 48), "The promise of sustainable success in education lies in creating cultures of distributed leadership throughout the school community, not in training and developing a tiny leadership elite".

This leads to the view that leadership must be sustainable. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) state the following:

> *… one of the best ways to secure successful succession is to spread and stretch leadership across people now, not just in the future, to distribute and develop leadership so that successors will emerge more readily and take over more easily. Distributed leadership develops capacity in others, so they can become as gifted as those who lead them and can build on their achievements. (p. 93)*

Hargreaves and Fink (2003) outline their premise that leadership must be a system, a culture. Leadership cannot be left to the roles and responsibilities of a select few, instead, it must be encouraged at all levels – principals, teachers, students and parents. An underlying current from within the literature suggests there needs to be opportunities for school leaders to dialogue with other leaders and to have frank and open communications, perhaps taking the form of peer support groups, online forums, mentoring relationships, pairing of schools and their principals, joint research and development projects and other opportunities (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). If the desire is there for sustainable leadership, then a focus and renewed attention to succession practices must also be present.

2.6.3 Preparation Program Orientations

Preparation programs often have a focus on either formal programs or programs that are based around on-the job experiences. While both orientations are noted in the literature, most often the literature highlights the advantages and limitations of each.

A number of authors from within the literature cite that principals feel they were not adequately prepared for the role from undertaking formal preparation programs (Bengtson, Zepeda & Parylo, 2013; Cowie & Crawford, 2008; Daresh & Male, 2000). This may well be owing to the fact that many principal preparation programs address generic content relating to school management and leadership or practices such as instructional leadership, but do not assure new principals will necessarily act this way when in the role (Nelson, de la Colina & Boone, 2008).

Levine (2005, p. 23) strongly takes aim at US educational administration and leadership preparation programs, stating "The majority of programs range from inadequate to appalling, even at some of the country's leading universities". Pounder and Crow (2005) identify one significant hurdle that many preparation programs encounter, that being the disconnect between theory and practice, with participants not having enough opportunity to apply leadership knowledge or to build administrative skills. As such, the authors go on to note that many administrator preparation programs are made to compromise between the integration of the skill and knowledge development activities found within the program.

Militello et al. (2009) posit that aspiring school principals need well-articulated, real world experience throughout their preparation program, not just at the end of it. The vast majority of programs are designed to permit students to maintain full-time employment as educators as they complete their coursework as part-time students (Hackman & Wanat, 2007). Preparation programs should address the procedural how terms such as data-based decision-making and instructional leadership that are operationalised in practice (Militello et al., 2009).

Farkas, Johnson, and Duffet (2003) reported findings that showed all but four percent of practicing principals believed that on-the-job training or help from colleagues had been more helpful in assisting them in their current role than their formal preparation program. This same study found 67 percent of principals reported that "typical leadership programs in graduate schools of education are out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today's school districts" (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffet, 2003, p. 39).

The literature suggests that even though formal preparation programs do help prepare school leaders, there is a need to mesh formal type programs with on the job type programs for effective school leadership preparation.

2.6.4 Preparation Program Designs

There has been value identified in having 'cohorts' come through principal preparation programs together. As found in the US-based Indian Hills School System, central office leaders and principals had developed an academy to develop internal leadership which they felt was 'stocked' with candidates to be developed into school principals. Candidates started and finished the one year program together, with principals suggesting that they 'never felt alone' in their jobs as principal, a finding that is opposed to the common acknowledgement that being a principal is a 'lonely' position. These principals spoke of regular meetings with other principals, and of having peers to contact whenever it was needed (Bengston et al., 2013). These cohorts provide an efficient structure as well as producing camaraderie and a professional network for education leaders (Hackmann & Wanat, 2007). It is important to note, though, that not all preparation program designs are suitable in all contexts (Sparks, 2017).

Bengston et al. (2013) outlined the specific steps that aspiring leaders had to go through before becoming a principal in the Indian Hills School System in the United States. In sequence, the steps were:

1. Obtain employment as an assistant principal within the system.
2. Have a leadership behaviour form filled out by an active principal(s).
3. Fill out an extensive application for admission into the leadership program.

4. Complete the year-long leadership program led by the system superintendent and other district leaders.
5. Interview with two screening committees and the superintendent for a specific opening.

The Indian Hills School System also emphasised the use of mentoring programs, both formal and informal. The formal mentoring systems was described by the district superintendent (Bengston et al., 2013):

> *Academy mentors are assigned to our new principals for two years. We use veteran, actually retired, principals [as mentors]. Principal retirees are principals that were respected, were in great schools, know what leadership is, and know how to do the management oversight responsibilities. They are also individuals who can really help the person develop [as principals]. (p. 155)*

Militello et al. (2009) undertook research in the United States that explored the types of preparation courses and perceived helpfulness of those courses to Massachusetts principals. Of the 605 respondents, more than 70% indicated taking four types of courses: school finance/budget, learning/instructional leadership, teacher supervision/evaluation, and school law, along with an internship process. Respondents least cited school accountability as an area of focus. Additionally, of the 13 courses that respondents indicated taking, only field internship, teacher supervision, and evaluation were found to be helpful by more than 50% of the respondents. Overall, the courses that appeared to be most helpful for a principal's practice were learning/instructional leadership, teacher supervision and evaluation, and school law, in addition to the field internship.

Literature consistently recognises the need for formal programs of preparation for school leaders, and the provision of learning experiences that are both formal and informal in nature (Table 2. 1). A compilation of research recommends that leadership programs have the following components, and should:

1. be long term in focus rather than one off events;
2. be job embedded rather than detached from the work place;
3. be carefully planned with a coherent curriculum which links to any relevant state certification schemes;

4. be focused around student achievement;
5. emphasise reflective practice and a utilise a variety of instructional methods;
6. provide opportunities for peers to discuss and solve problems of practice;
7. provide a context for coaching and mentoring;
8. be clear in mission and purpose and link leadership to school improvement;
9. incorporate relevant information technology (Bezzina, 2012; Brittingham, 2009; Peterson, 2001 cited in Leithwood et al., 2004; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000).

Table 2. 1 Preparation Program Designs

Program Elements / Authors	Peterson (2001), cited in Leithwood et al. (2004)	Sparks & Hirsh (2000)	Bezzina (2012)	Brittingham (2009)
Provides ongoing learning and leadership development opportunities	✓	✓		✓
Is job embedded		✓		
Emphasise reflective practice			✓	✓
Involves real-life problem solving		✓	✓	
Provides access to a mentoring relationship			✓	
Involves regular feedback and/or goal-setting				✓
Improves the candidate's sense of self efficacy		✓	✓	
Prior classroom experience		✓		✓
Relevant curriculum	✓	✓		✓
Program content delivered through a variety of methods		✓		
Offers perspectives on a wide range of approaches to leadership			✓	

Brittingham (2009) outlined some of the significant discoveries around operating a successful leadership succession program which included an aspiring leaders program as part of a large US school district, including: Establishing a clear process for selecting candidates for the program; requiring candidates to have at least five or more years of successful classroom teaching; offering 'Big Picture' opportunities to candidates; ensuring regular feedback, goal setting and self-reflection take place; identifying the districts needs and ensuring the program addresses those needs; and, gaining commitments to the aspiring leaders program from the top on down.

Less formal learning experiences that emphasise the building of knowledge for practical problem-solving are also found within the literature. They incorporate participation with others in what can only be described as non-routine activities, and provide for authentic learning activities that facilitates ongoing professional learning.

While leadership preparation programs are important for formalised learning experiences, Hall (2008) posits that leadership development should be every leader's responsibility. He suggests that every administrative and supervisory job description should have leadership development as an essential job function, and the results of this should be included in annual performance appraisals. Other researchers such as McKinsey and Company (2010, p. 7) support the idea that leaders should be effective developers of people, arguing "High performing principals focus more on instructional leadership and developing teachers... They believe their ability to coach others and support their development is the most important skill of a good leader".

Huber (2008) suggests six phases of leadership development.

1. A continuous development phase for teachers: providing them with continuous training and development in school effectiveness, school improvement and school leadership.
2. An orientation phase: where teachers interested in school leadership reflect on the role of the principal in relation to their own abilities and expectations.
3. A preparation phase: where new principals prepare to take on a position (before even applying for it).
4. An induction phase: to support transition into the role of principal.
5. A continuous professional development phase: to provide opportunities for established school leaders that meet their needs and the needs of their schools.
6. A reflective phase: where principals continue to grow through providing development for leadership opportunities within and across schools.

It is important that a board or education authority develop a profile of a leader so that all staff may understand what is expected. At the same time, opportunities need to be

provided at the school level for teachers to develop the requisite skills and competencies needed for the role of principal and vice principal (Gallo & Ryan, 2011).

It is clear from the literature in the area of leadership development, that both school systems and individual schools must be more committed to taking deliberate actions around leadership sustainability and succession practices, with particular emphasis placed around how teacher leadership development can increase the leadership pools available, as well as the quality of future school leadership (Dempster et al., 2011).

2.6.5 Mentoring

Increasingly the literature around principal preparation is making mention of the role of mentoring. Bennett et al., (2011) suggest that the changing nature of the demands present in the principal's job, along with a lack of mentoring or professional training to assist with the demands of the job, are creating additional stress to principals.

Mentoring has been defined as "a nurturing process in which a skilled or more experienced person teaches, sponsors, encourages, and counsels a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development" (Anderson & Shannon, 1988, p. 40). As such, mentoring is considered to be an important leadership process as it can play a significant role in principal identification, recruitment, socialisation, support, development and retention (Oplatka & Lapidot, 2017; Parylo, Zepeda & Bengsten, 2012). It is widely accepted that the use of mentors can have positive impact on the leadership development of the protégé (Smith, 2017).

According to Wallace Foundation (2007), over half of all US states and many districts in other states have adopted a mentoring program for school principals. Research also shows that teachers who receive mentoring during their first year in the classroom are less likely to leave teaching after this time (Wallace Foundation, 2007). It would, therefore, make sense that mentoring could also be a beneficial process for principals to undertake.

While formal and informal mentoring approaches exist, the literature appears to support the idea that informal mentoring is valued more by new personnel (Ragins & Cotton, 1999) and has been considered more advantageous for mentees (Kramer, 2010).

However, research identifies that there are potential shortcomings of mentoring programs, including creating reticence to do this given it can be viewed as adding to already excessive workloads (Simkins et al., 2009), and the following common concerns:

1. Vague or unclear goals.
2. Insufficient focus on instructional leadership and/or overemphasis on managerial roles.
3. Weak or non-existent training for mentors.
4. Insufficient mentoring time or duration to provide sustained support to prepare new school leaders for their multifaceted job challenges.
5. Lack of meaningful data to assess benefits or to build a case for sustained support.
6. Underfunding that contributes to all of these shortcomings (Wallace Foundation, 2007).

With regards to mentoring new school leaders, Leithwood et al. (2004) suggests four basic research-based goals that would also be appropriate mentoring focuses: creating and sustaining a competitive school – critical in a time where there are so many alternative options for school systems; empowering others in decision-making – significant when schools have so many differing stakeholder groups; providing instructional guidance – important in designing appropriate professional development based on the needs of the school; and, developing and implementing strategic and school-improvement plans - essential for all education system leaders.

Weingartner (2009) notes the importance of a district (system) wide provision of well-trained mentors for novice principals, noting that this may provide an environment "in which a principal could pursue questions, issues, concerns, and frustrations with an experienced peer whose sole purpose is to provide support, advice, and direction" (2009, p. 69). An additional succession view found in the

literature involves having the existing principal provide mentoring for emerging leaders or possibly even the incoming principal (Hartle & Thomas, 2003; Herbert, 2006), although it is noted that not all principals make good mentors (Petzko, 2004). It is rare that these opportunities are provided, however.

Closely related to mentoring is the concept of 'shadowing'. Shadowing has been defined as "a peer-related professional development activity in which an aspirant principal is placed with a host practicing principal for a period of time" (O'Mahony & Matthews, 2003 in Service et al., 2016). Essentially, it involves a learner staying close to the principal (thus, shadowing) over a period of time to learn about a particular job role (O'Mahony & Matthews, 2003 in Service, Dalgic & Thornton, 2016). As O'Mahony and Matthews (2003) note, it can provide a wonderful opportunity for the observer to reflect and ask questions, and can clarify for the observer the nature of the job role, as well as skills and knowledge required. One Australian study found that participants believed shadowing to be the most effective approach to principal preparation, followed by mentoring (Hogan, 2015). Shadowing, however, has received relatively little attention within educational research (Ferguson, 2016).

It has been suggested that any money invested in developing a quality mentoring program could be considered a cost-effective way to ensure district school campuses are run well (Wallace Foundation, 2009). Indeed, strong leadership development and mentoring programs not only provide valuable learning opportunities for leadership development, they also provide an opportunity for mentor growth.

2.7 SUCCESSION: SOCIALISATION AND POST-SUCCESSION SUPPORT

Socialisation is defined as "the process through which an individual learns or acquires the necessary knowledge, skills, and values needed to perform a social role in an organisation" (Bengston et al., 2013, p. 144). It is the concept of "learning the ropes" of a particular organisational role (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 211). The idea of socialisation is important when looking at school principal succession, as the

nature of the socialisation experience is likely to significantly impact on the retention of individuals who are either new to the organisation, or new to the role, making it a key aspect of organisational effectiveness (Allen, 2006). Cooley and Shen (2000) point out that teachers and administrators consider the extent of community support that exists when applying for administrative positions. This impacts on expected socialisation.

Succession and socialisation are part of the same process (Hart, 1993). Succession of leaders in organisations is unavoidable. By the same token, socialisation into new roles is inevitable. The degree to which a succeeding principal becomes acclimated to their new role, and the nature of their socialisation experiences are largely dictated by the organisation. School systems can support the meaningful succession of principals by recognizing the organisation's role in the socialisation process.

Hart (1991, p. 469) describes socialisation in this way: "Succession and socialisation are two sides of the same process involving the same people – the one side focusing on the group's influence on the newcomer, the other interested in the newcomer's influence on the group". This intimates that socialisation is a two-way process, recognising the impact that the school and staff have on the new principal, as well as the impact the principal will have within the school community.

Organisational socialisation is considered to be highly contextual and is strongly influenced by organisational culture. It is "most obvious when a person first enters the organisation—the outsider to insider passage" (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 6). Charan, Drotter and Noel (2011) refer to a similar series of passages in a corporate setting. Organisations influence how new workers learn and the skills they acquire as the cultural norms and values of the organisation interact with the job tasks and requirements.

There are generally accepted to be a number of socialisation stages, however Hart (1993, p. 28-29) asserts "Whatever their labels, three stages appear in the literature. They identify periods of learning and uncertainty, gradual adjustment during which outcomes (custodial or organisational change) begin to emerge, and stabilisation".

Gabarro (1987) outlined five stages that take place chronologically and in which the successor alternates between learning and action during the socialisation stages. Stage one is referred to as the '*Taking hold'* stage, a period of intense learning, which can last for up to six months. Stage two is referred to as *'Immersion'*, and can last 6-12 months in duration. The successor now looks more closely at issues in the organisational setting that are seen on a day-to-day basis. Weindling (1999) suggests this is a time where new leaders may start to challenge the climate of the school setting and initiate some changes. Stage three is referred to as *'Reshaping'*, and takes place around 12-21 months into the new principals' tenure. Here the focus is on implementing change on the basis of concepts brought to light in the *Immersion* stage. Stage four is considered a time of *'Consolidation'*, where the new principal assesses changes made and considers corrective actions, likely around the 21-27 month mark, and stage five is seen as *'Refinement'*, where the principal is considered to be familiar with the school setting and little additional learning occurs, but rather, fine-tuning. This is likely around the 27-36 month timeframe.

Before taking on a new role, a principal would encounter anticipatory or professional socialisation, a process that allows an individual to take on the values of the non-membership group to which they aspire to be a part of (Bengston et al., 2013; Glasspool, 2006; Hart, 1991; Hart, 1993; Merton, 1968; Steyn, 2013). This process would act as an informal preparation component. As noted by Bengston et al. (2013), in an educational setting anticipatory socialisation most commonly leads to professional socialisation, which is the pre-service formal training undertaken before entering a job role, such as completing a university qualification.

Wenger (1998) offered a more sophisticated stage theory that provides insight into the transition process from one leader to another for both the leaders involved in the transition as well as the school affected. He explains this as:

> *Developing a practice requires the formation of a community whose members can engage with one another and thus acknowledge each other as participants. As a consequence, practice entails the negotiation of ways of being a person in that context… . The formation of a community of practice is also the negotiation of identities (p. 149).*

Four of Wenger's (1998) trajectories are particularly appropriate for the discussion of principals' succession. *Inbound* trajectories refer to individuals who join a community of practice with the "prospect of becoming full participants in its practice" (p. 154). Their engagement may be peripheral in the beginning but in time they expect to be an insider. The appropriateness of a new principal's inbound trajectory to a new school setting can contribute to his or her success or failure. *Peripheral* trajectories never lead to full participation but are significant to one's identity. A person who remains permanently on the periphery, however, runs the risk of becoming marginal to the school's community of practice. *Insider* trajectories grow and develop over time as one becomes a full member of a community. The length of time to negotiate this trajectory will depend on the person and the context. Conversely, *outbound* trajectories apply to those who plan or expect to move out of a community at some point. Wenger (1998, p. 155) explained that what matters to a person and the community left behind is "how a form of participation enables what comes next". For a school leader, the question of legacy and of sustainability of important changes requires renegotiating relationships with the former community.

Researchers involved in the study of socialisation of principals call for attention to the way school systems approach the organisational socialisation of new principals (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Crow, 2006; Leithwood et al., 1994). Leithwood et al. (1994, p. 157) found that while "district effects on socialisation experiences were very strong . . . most aspiring and practicing school leaders experience a 'moderately helpful' pattern of socialisation; few experience a uniformly negative socialisation pattern whereas 19 percent experience a quite helpful pattern".

Crow (2006) supported the view that the organisational socialisation of new principals was often left to chance:

> *The typical organizational socialisation of beginning principals in the USA follows a format in which the new principal is bombarded with all the responsibilities that a veteran principal has. The lack of mediated entry creates burnout, stress, and ineffective performance as beginning principals develop quick fixes and unreflective practices – responses that are counterproductive to the type of leadership needed in a complex society (p. 318).*

Crow (2006) suggested that principals, for the most part, were socialised individually, informally, and with little attention paid to what could be learned from their teaching experiences. The creation of systematic approaches to the socialisation of principals could help influence the effectiveness of the succession process. Such approaches are identified as induction programs which should be considered as an intentional and planned approach by organisations to control the socialisation of newcomers. These induction programs are designed to support new employees in a time of intense learning, and mentoring is recognised in the research as a key component of the induction process (Fusarelli et al., 2018; Sciarappa, 2004; Villani, 2006; Weindling, 2004).

There is evidence to suggest that when a principal succession event occurs, and the successor fails to uphold the school's norms and established goals, tensions arise amongst the staff. Successors who hold to the norms of the school and act accordingly tend to be supported better and are viewed by the staff more favourably (Ogawa, 1991). It should be noted that while carefully planned succession does not guarantee successful continuity, it does heighten the possibility that the leader will resonate with the school community and increase the likelihood of connecting with the staff in a cooperative and constructive way (Fink & Brayman, 2004).

Table 2. 2 Responses to Socialisation (Adapted from Van Maanen and Schein, 1979)

Response	**Description**
Custodianship	Individual accepts the status quo to ensure the continuation of the existing knowledge, strategies, and mission of the organisation.
Content innovation	Individual seeks to change the knowledge and strategies that exist upon succeeding into the position while keeping the mission of the role intact.
Role innovation	Individual seeks to change the knowledge, strategies, and mission of the role.

Table 2. 2 outlines the theory of organisational socialisation developed by Van Maanen and Schein (1979). The assumptions of organisational socialisation theory are, firstly, organisations can and do influence the socialisation process of individuals who succeed into a new role, and secondly, individuals taking on a new position respond in one of three ways to the knowledge, strategies, and mission of the role. In education, new leaders may be charged with sustaining and nurturing the current

direction of the school (custodianship response) when they are taking over the leadership of a school that is perceived to be successful. New leaders may also be charged with changing the direction of the school (content innovation or role innovation response) when they are taking over a school perceived to be unsuccessful or struggling (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Role innovation may take place when a new principal is charged with being an instructional leader as they replace a leader-manager, changing the role of the principal for that particular school.

Having an organisational socialisation plan that is sequential and involves processes that can support the critical and sometimes fragile stages of socialisation experienced by new school principals is recognised as an important component of new school principals' experiences (Hart, 1993; Weindling, 2000). The structure of a defined sequence where aspiring leaders are able to go step-by- step through a process that allows them to gradually become acclimated to the new role by 'learning the ropes' as they prepare for entry into the principalship not only allows the newcomer to develop certain skills and awareness, but also can create a comfort level about divesting their old professional identity for their new professional identity (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Normore, 2004a).

School system leaders can implement practices that support socialisation with the understanding of how socialisation tactics lead to responses to socialisation experiences. For example, superintendents who desire to keep the culture, climate, and progress the same in a school with a new principal, may consider using socialisation tactics that solicit a custodial response (for example, sequential, serial, collective, divestiture). Highly successful school systems may provide strong internal mentoring programs and peer group training and development that reinforce the 'way things are done'; however, caution must be used with the custodial response as the business of schooling has changed considerably as a result of accountability mandates leading to a new conceptualisation of the principal role (Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins, 1994; Normore, 2004a). On the other hand, if a change in the school direction and new role conceptions are being sought, socialisation tactics that lead to content or role innovation responses may be needed (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Leithwood et al., 1994). Systems seeking a change may find value in outside mentors providing an individual approach to the socialisation of a new principal

where the context of the school is accounted for and new practices and risks can be taken.

Villani (2006) outlines five different stages that a new principal is likely to pass through as they gain a level of mastery in their roles. Firstly, 'survival, as the shock of the new leadership position begins to take hold. Secondly, 'control' where the new principal begins to get a handle on the scope of the role and goes about setting priorities for action. Thirdly, 'stability' as aspects of the day-to-day role they play come to be mastered. Fourthly, 'educational leadership' takes place, as the focus of the leadership changes to curriculum and teaching, and lastly, 'professional actualisation' as self-confidence and a personal vision is established by the leader. Villani (2006) does, however, add that the stages of this process are difficult to achieve without appropriate support. For new principals, the need for a strong mentoring relationship is evident early on as they grapple with the day-to-day tasks and the longer-term goals and objectives they are expected to gain mastery over.

It is worthwhile also to note that the staff of schools with a new principal also experience a number of stages of teacher adaptation. Daresh (1993) outlines the following five stages of teacher reaction to the new principal:

1. Denial and Isolation – Teaching staffs often act as though the previous principal was 'still alive and working', with references made to how the prior principal 'used to do it'.
2. Anger – Staff often reacted angrily as though the new principal had 'invaded their turf'. This anger appeared to be a 'quiet, understated type of behavior that appeared to be expressed mostly through non-verbal behaviours'. This stage appeared to be generally short-lived.
3. Bargaining – After some expressions of anger in the previous stage, this stage marks a clear 'backing off' from hostility directed toward the new principal.
4. Depression – Perhaps more closely associated with the dragging on of the school year, it represents recognition that the old principal is gone and the new one is 'here to stay'.
5. Acceptance – Teachers recognise they have 'survived' a rookie principal, with the new principal suddenly seen as 'their principal'.

2.8 SUCCESSION: SUGGESTED MODELS

While the literature clearly identifies the importance of the need for effective succession practices, the succession process is played out differently in different education systems, and in different national contexts. These allow the circumstances, planning, management and other localised issues to be taken into consideration providing the rationale for how succession planning is undertaken. In some contexts, such as New Zealand, principal appointments are made locally at the school board level, while in other countries, such as the UK and Canada, appointments may be made centrally by school districts or other education authorities (Bennett et al., 2011).

Broadly, the literature around secondary school principal succession processes appears to categorise two types of education system practices (Bush, 2011b). The first of these is referred to as a decentralised system; people self-nominate for leadership positions by applying for job vacancies where they exist. The identified weaknesses of this system however, are that insufficient numbers of well-qualified candidates may emerge and the career development of each applicant lies with that individual, an approach which research recognises cannot allow for a planned approach to take place (Bush, 2011a; Bush, 2011b). Thomson (2009, p. 36-37) believes that relying on potential leaders to identify themselves is a "risky assumption". A growing body of literature identifies that it is not considered a good practice to rely on individuals self-selecting themselves for leadership, and the successful utilisation of succession management ensures organisations have processes to both identify and promote high potential leaders (Bush, 2011a; Myung et al., 2011; Thomson, 2009). Basing his claim on research findings from Australia, Gronn (2007) states:

> *As a general rule, reliance on voluntarist succession systems based on self-nomination is satisfactory as a recruitment principle, provided that the number of those volunteering exceeds the number of vacancies to be filled, and provided the range of available candidate quality facilitates competitive options and choices for selectors... When the positions to be filled exceed the number of people willing to fill them, however, the principle of voluntarism becomes problematic. (p. 8).*

The second system is considered to be centralised; that is, a somewhat planned approach in which some criteria is utilised for leadership succession. This allows for a smooth leadership succession, as candidates are known to the system and can be prepared beforehand, eliminating much of the 'chance' element that exists in decentralised systems. The centralised system however, has been criticised because it does not facilitate equal opportunities (Bush, 2008), and also because it tends to replicate the qualities of the existing principals, what the literature has referred to as 'cloning' (Lacey, 2003a; Rothwell, 1994; Rothwell, 2010; Thomson, 2009). Research suggests that when succession planning is left to the individual to manage, discrimination can occur given that people tend to groom successors who have similar traits to themselves, notably in the areas of appearance, background and values (Loughlin, 2000; Rothwell, 1994).

While the educational literature generally provides little counsel on what successful leadership succession should look like (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Hart, 1993; Morris, Crownson, Porter-Gehrie & Hurwitz, 1984), there are a few exceptions to this. Hargreaves (2005, p. 164) identifies that successful succession depends on "sound planning, successful employment of outbound and inbound leadership knowledge, limiting the frequency of succession events, and preserving leadership in the face of movements toward more management".

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) identified six characteristics that are essential to good succession plans: they are prepared long before the leader's anticipated departure or even from the onset of their appointment; they give other people proper time to prepare; are incorporated in all school improvement plans; they are the responsibility of many rather than lone leaders who tend to want to clone themselves; they are based on a clear diagnosis of the school's existing stage of development and future needs for improvement; and they are transparently linked to clearly defined leadership standards and competencies that are needed for the next phase of improvement.

Further to this, Leibman et al., (1996) identify seven elements that assist in the development an effective succession plan: the plan identifies the future needs of the

organisation; the plan identifies potential future leaders; the plan inspires future leadership aspirations; selection process and program designs are based on future leadership capabilities; a pool of talent is created; multiple paths to leadership are recognised; and the plan provides for the development of future leaders and the retention of current leaders.

Hartle and Thomas (2003) identify a six-step cycle approach to succession planning: Creating a culture that propels growth in others through the use of collaboration, trust, and discussion; auditing the needs that are present and may be present within the next five years through the use of surveys and conversation; defining the type of leaders desired so that there is a systematic approach to growth; identifying current talent through the use of character traits in order to groom them and/or seek outside strengths; assess and monitor future leaders to see what strengths need to be developed and provide the necessary training; and, grows leadership talent through networking programs and mentorships to contribute to a wider pool of leadership talent.

Hall (2008) provides some practical strategies that can assist in the streamlining of succession planning, and also contribute to leadership development. It is worthwhile noting that the context of these leadership development strategies is in the ideal situation of a professional learning community where teachers learn alongside one another in order to build up the leadership capacity and sustainability that is so desperately needed in education systems. The strategies are: Firstly, create a formal leadership development plan –school systems should not leave leadership development to chance; Secondly, develop a succession plan – emphasise a formal process that spells out how leaders will be replaced; Thirdly, think laterally and vertically – use a leadership development framework that provides for both lateral and vertical capacity building; Fourthly, distribute accountability through guiding coalitions – establish collaborative leadership teams who trust each other and work towards a common goal. These guiding coalitions have the capacity to make needed changes happen despite the forces of inertia; and, Fifthly, make leaders responsible and accountable for leadership development – make leadership development an essential job function, developing leadership capacity in their own schools, departments or divisions.

White and Cooper (2009) outline seven areas that are recommended to be part of any school leadership succession policy-making model. The first recognises the need for flexibility in the process. Secondly, a high level of discussion around candidate availability, the circumstances of the available position, and any implications of the transfer that can be identified. The third involves a process of testing alternatives before, during and after the interview process to allow consideration of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses, the school culture and climate and any other factors which may identify reasons for why the candidate may not be suitable for the position. Fourthly, the development of a short list of candidates can provide alternatives to determine the best fit before, fifthly, a decision as to the best candidate is arrived at. The sixth step is determined as offers are accepted or rejected and provides an opportunity to refine the process. The final step involves the adoption of the policy and acceptance of the offer and may allow for contract formalisation.

Hanover Research (2014) identify a number of key stages of successful succession planning. These eight stages allow the opportunity to formulate the education system's objectives and to develop leaders who can help reach these. Stage one involves 'Setting the Stage', contemplating the purpose, goals and expectations of the succession process. This should culminate in the writing of a mission statement that captures why succession is urgent in the educational context. Stage two involves 'Planning for the Future', taking into account both endogenous factors (organisational changes etc.) and exogenous factors (demographics, economy, legislation etc.) to identify future needs given change in the organisation. Stage three involves 'Assessing current leadership requirements', whereby an assessment of the characteristics necessary for leadership in the education system context takes place and the development of a 'leadership code' that explains leadership characteristics and behaviours that drive success. Stage four involves 'Conducting effective evaluations' and is built around providing open and honest feedback about an emerging leader's performance. Stage five involves 'Assessing leaders' mobility', largely concerned with evaluating the depth of leadership talent within the organisation. Stage six focuses on 'Developing leaders to fill the gaps' and provides for potential leaders to have on-the-job learning and formal training opportunities. Stage seven involves the 'Creation of individual transition plans' which in part,

outline the process of orienting new school leaders, ensuring a smooth leadership handover. Stage eight is to '(Re)Assess your program' and recognises that succession is a fluid and continual process which requires monitoring and adjustment. Metrics such as the number of well-qualified candidates, records of promotions, plans for retaining high performing leaders, as well as perceptions of fairness, transparency, morale, confidence and competence would also ideally be captured.

Finally, Russell and Sabina (2014) outline five stages of a framework for succession model based on succession literature. Firstly, succession should focus less on the replacement of individuals for particular positions, and more on the systematic identification of high potential leaders. Secondly, the development of these high potential leaders should occur through challenging and authentic work based experiences, rather than professional development and coursework. Thirdly, succession programs should align to the goals, strategy, and culture of the particular organisation, ensuring critical competencies align with the current and future needs of the education system. Fourthly, it is imperative that top level management engage with the succession model, ensuring visibility and that developing leaders is a priority for the education system. Lastly, periodic review of succession programs and adjustments where necessary must take place.

Considered together, the elements found above provide an emerging model for succession practices (Table 2. 3). There were different succession elements identified by the various research studies, but these were mostly due to the difference in study focus. Even with such differences of focus, there was significant overlap in identifying the elements of effective succession models. Each element identified is worthy of consideration for those aiming to construct an effective succession model.

Table 2. 3 Succession Model Elements

Elements within the succession model / Author	Hargreaves & Fink / Fink & Brayman (2006 / 2004)	Liebman et al. (1996)	Brittingham (2009)	Hartle & Thomas (2006)	White & Cooper (2009)	Hall (2008)	Russell & Sabina (2014)
Is prepared well before a succession event takes place	✔						
Recognises the importance of sound planning	✔					✔	
Linked to clearly defined leadership standards	✔			✔			
Defines the type of leadership needed				✔			
Top down commitment to the succession program / facilitates a culture that promotes individual growth			✔	✔	✔		✔
Identifies the future needs of the organisation	✔	✔	✔	✔			✔
Identifies future potential leaders		✔		✔		✔	✔
Creates a talent pool		✔				✔	✔
Recognises the need for experience			✔				
Provides for the development of future leaders and/or retention of current leaders		✔	✔	✔		✔	✔
Selection processes are based on leadership capabilities		✔	✔		✔		
Recognises multiple pathways to leadership		✔					
Inspires people to become potential leaders		✔					
Present leaders accountable for others development	✔					✔	✔

2.9 CONCLUSION

The literature review of the educational succession literature lamented the impending exit of many current school leaders, and hinted at upcoming difficulties around school leadership staffing. A lack of proactive succession planning in many education systems was highlighted as a contributing factor to the anticipated future shortfall of school leadership candidates. These findings created the impetus for an exploration of the drivers and barriers potential school leaders encounter, framed within a faith-based education system; the focus of the aspiration component of this study. The seven sections of this chapter explored definitions and an orientation of succession, the need for effective succession, the current context of school leadership succession, aspirations for school leadership, leadership preparation strategies, school leader socialisation, and considered characteristics of succession models as presented in the educational literature. The review of the literature highlighted the need to view succession holistically, as a set of diverse interacting elements within this faith-based education context.

The following chapter, Research Design and Methodology, explains the methodological components which will be used to inform and direct the undertaking of this research study which explores hierarchical level perceptions of ASA succession practices. Specifically, it describes the theoretical framework for the research, the research design, the research participants, the data collection process and analyses, and the methods adopted to ensure the research questions are effectively explored.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study worldview and philosophical stance, before delineating the research methodology and the rationale for why this methodology was selected. It then outlines, and presents the research design implemented to undertake this study.

This research examines the perceptions of the school leadership succession process, both current and ideal, by accessing the experiences, views, aspirations and understandings of three hierarchical levels (classroom teachers, school-based administrators, and system-based administrators) of employees working within the private faith-based education system Adventist Schools Australia (ASA). The overarching research question is stated below:

- What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels, with regards to Adventist Schools Australia succession practices?

Embedded within the overarching research question are two distinct, but interconnected, sub-question areas which relate to the two phases of this study. The first phase examines hierarchical level perceptions of ASA employees school in regard to leadership aspirations, as an element of succession practices:

- What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels of the factors that would influence their decision TO apply, or NOT TO apply for a school leadership position within the ASA education system?

To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the collective view of ASA employees in terms of aspirations and influences on the decision TO apply or NOT TO apply for school leadership positions, a survey approach was seen to be the most effective instrument to enable a significant percentage of ASA employees to respond.

The second set of sub-questions aims to give direction to Phase Two of this study involving the exploration of perceptions of ASA employees with regard to current and ideal succession practices:

- What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels with regard to the current ASA succession practices?
- What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels with regard to ideal ASA succession practices?

In terms of exploring these Phase Two sub-questions, interviews were determined to be most effective in enabling the researcher to tease out the respondents' perceptions of succession practices, both current and ideal.

The research questions with two distinct orientations then suggested a 'fixed' mixed method approach (Bryman, 2006; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), where the use of both quantitative (online survey) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews) was predetermined and planned at the commencement of the research study. These two orientations, both Phase One and Phase Two, although distinctly different, were not seen to be mutually exclusive, and at times investigate the same aspects of the study, with both the quantitative and the qualitative data components speaking to the research question.

3.2 WORLDVIEW

Bennett et al. (2011, p. 31), looking at an educational context, suggests succession should include "the deliberate creation of a plan and processes to address a future succession event". Succession has also been defined as "any process that is designed to guarantee a continuous pool of qualified leadership candidates to maintain effective organisational performance" (Collins and Collins, 2007 cited in Bennett et al., 2011, p. 32). Quinn (2002) notes that succession anticipates expected vacancies and ensures a process for the development of a pool of prepared and appropriately qualified leaders prior to the need for a new school leader. In this educational context, effective

succession practices must also overcome the reluctance of teachers to automatically aspire to leadership roles (Dorman & d'Arbon, 2003; Lacey, 2003a).

Given the potential for difficulties in filling school leadership positions as outlined in the literature review and supported anecdotally in the ASA context, if succession processes are not seen to be reasonable and an aspirational element does not permeate throughout, ASA education system sustainability may be threatened. This research study aims to gain further understanding of and practical solutions for this 'real life' problem, and as such, adopts pragmatism as a philosophical stance. As Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) note:

> *This [pragmatism] is a deconstructive paradigm that debunks concepts such as "truth" and "reality" and focuses instead on "what works" as the truth regarding the research questions under investigation. Pragmatism rejects the either/or choices associated with the paradigm wars, advocates for the use of mixed methods in research, and acknowledges that the values of the researcher play a large role in interpretation of results (p. 713).*

Due to its emphasis on exploring social issues, a pragmatic approach has been adopted. As Greene and Hall (2010, p. 131) state: "Because of its epistemological and methodological flexibility, the popularity of and potential for pragmatism to become the paradigm of choice for mixed methods inquiry comes as no surprise".

A number of advantages to taking a pragmatic approach to research is evident. Firstly, pragmatism supports the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Secondly, pragmatists consider the research question as paramount to the research study, and finally, pragmatism avoids the use of metaphysical concepts such as 'truth and reality', that have historically created much discussion and debate, often unnecessarily (Tashakorri & Teddlie, 2003). These advantages are significant when the research aim is to facilitate human problem solving.

3.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts a systems approach to facilitate exploration of the research question. Systems thinking generates a greater understanding of complex issues and provides an opportunity for improving real life situations through the review of present practices (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014).

The systems approach includes the following:

1. Viewing the situation holistically, as opposed to reductionistically, as a set of diverse interacting elements within an environment.
2. Recognising that the relationships or interactions between elements are more important than the elements themselves in determining the behaviour of the system.
3. Recognising a hierarchy of levels of systems and the consequent ideas of properties emerging at different levels, and mutual causality both within and between levels.
4. Accepting, especially in social systems, that people will act in accordance with differing purposes or rationalities (Mingers & White, 2010).

This study takes a systems approach to the research question, which emphasises the study of the interrelation of the ASA succession practice components and the respective perspectives of different hierarchical levels, rather than studying these components in isolation (Owens & Valesky, 2011; Vogt & Johnson, 2011). Systems theory recognises and acknowledges the complexity of the ASA organisational system. It focuses on relationships among the elements and sub-systems within ASA succession practices as well as exploring the nature of the impact of external factors potentially impacting the ASA education system. Adopting this perspective, this study acknowledges that people will have different perspectives and the respective hierarchical sub-systems within ASA interact both within the respective hierarchies (Classroom Teachers, School-based Administrators, System-based Administrators) and across the organisations structural levels.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.4.1 Methodology

For this study, a 'concurrent' (Tashakkorie & Teddlie, 2003), or 'convergent' (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) mixed method design was adopted. This implies the research question is "simultaneously addressed by collecting and analyzing both QUAN [quantitative] and QUAL [qualitative] data, and then one type of inference is made on the basis of both data sources" (Tashakkorie & Teddlie, 2003, p. 686). Creswell (2012, p. 540) supports this, noting that the purpose of this concurrent, or convergent, mixed method design "is to simultaneously collect both quantitative and qualitative data, merge the data, and use the results to understand a research problem". The convergence of this mixed method design takes place at the level of data interpretation, when direct comparison of the two datasets is undertaken by the researcher (Figure 3. 1). As often touted by mixed methods proponents, the strengths of one data collection method counterbalances the weaknesses of the other data collection method, with the outcome being that a more complete understanding of the data is arrived at from having made use of both qualitative and quantitative data. Ultimately, as Creswell notes (2012, p. 542), the strength of this design is that "it combines the advantages of each form of data; that is, quantitative data provide for generalizability, whereas qualitative data offer information about the context or setting. This design enables a researcher to gather information that uses the best features of both quantitative and qualitative data collection".

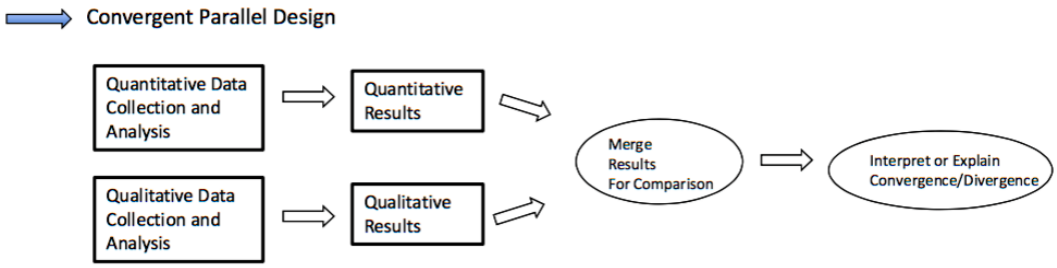


Figure 3. 1 Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design (Creswell, 2012)

Further, Johnson and Christensen (2008, p. 51) outline the fundamental principle of mixed method research, suggesting it is "wise to collect multiple sets of data using different research methods and approaches in such a way that the resulting mixture or combination has complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses". The belief here is that this mixed method approach to research actually improves the quality of the research due to the different strengths and weaknesses inherent within the different research approaches. It is perhaps best summed up by the following definition as to why this research method is considered to be the best fit for the context of this research:

> *Mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms. It involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the mixing of both approaches in the study. Thus, it is more than simply collecting and analysing both kinds of data; it also involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of the study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research. (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 5)*

In order to collect the data in this study, a mixed method design was identified as being the most appropriate, involving both quantitative and qualitative research. The use of both numerical data and statistical analyses in Phase One of the research, as well as narrative and descriptive data generated from interviews during Phase Two of this study, will provide information that will allow a rich, clear picture of ASA succession practices to emerge. It is noted in the literature that it is good for mixed method studies to have different sample sizes when using a convergent design, as the qualitative sample being much smaller than the quantitative allows the researcher a rigorous, in-depth qualitative exploration, as well as a rigorous, high-power quantitative examination of the research topic (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

A number of limitations acting as practical issues with mixed method research exist. Notably, the use of more than one research method increases the time required to collect both types of data and complete a study, and may well also increase the cost. Additionally, researchers often having training in one but not both of quantitative and qualitative methods, which can also lead to methodological bias. There also remains the challenge of combining two different types of data sets.

The quantitative approach enabled the study to effectively address the first research sub-question, which demanded a response from a large sample. Data from a large sample gives the researcher confidence to determine the perceptions of these respondents. A quantitative approach enables the exploration of relationships and links between respective variables, and comparison of data across respective demographics and differing hierarchical levels.

Given that the second set of sub-questions in this research deal with individual perceptions, the data collected was not testing an extant theory, rather, the data collected allowed the potential for a theory to emerge. This suggests that the present study adopt a grounded theory approach. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 23) note that with grounded theory, "One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge". This is the inductive nature of grounded theory. Johnson and Christensen (2008, p. 411) state that "grounded theory is based on concepts that are generated directly from the data" collected in the research study. Maxwell (2005, p. 42) adds to this idea of grounded theory, stating it takes place when "the theory is inductively developed during the study… in constant interaction with the data". Strauss and Corbin (1994, p. 273) suggest "grounded theory is a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed". As such, this study has adopted a grounded theory approach for the analysis of the qualitative data collected.

This study adopts a Straussian (1987, 1990, 1998) orientation in its ground theory use. "Strauss brought the pragmatist philosophical study of process, action and meaning into empirical enquiry through grounded theory" (Charmaz, in Luttrell, 2010, p. 184). With this approach, "the researcher adopts a more active and provocative influence over the data, using cumulative knowledge and experience to enhance sensitivity" (Jones & Noble, 2007, p. 93).

While grounded theory methodology is not without its criticisms, these most often are a result of "a lack of articulation or thought about the assumptions that underpin the methodology" (Waring, in Coe et al., 2017, p. 110). Commonly criticised for the lack of rigor associated with it, while no rigid divorce between discovery and verification exists, grounded theory does provide a rigorous method, but this needs to be

addressed by the internal logic of it as a method, not by criteria found in and appropriate to other methods. As noted by Waring (cited in Coe et al., 2017, p. 110), "The misinterpretations which form many of the criticisms are being eroded by researchers' (re)interpretation and greater clarification of grounded theory methodology".

3.4.2 Ethical Considerations

Creswell (2012) notes that when conducting mixed methods research, ethical aspects from both forms of enquiry must be given consideration. As such, quantitative issues such as obtaining the relevant permissions, providing for the anonymity of respondents, and communicating the overall purpose of the study were areas the researcher was particularly mindful of while planning the data collection process. Qualitative ethical concerns such as gaining participant permissions, eliminating risk to participants, protecting their identities, conveying the purpose of the study and providing opportunities to remove themselves from the study at any time were all identified and catered for in preparation for data collection.

Before this research could begin, formal ethics approval was necessary. The researcher completed an 'application for ethical clearance of research projects involving human participants' form, having read the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. The submission for ethics approval was lodged on January 28, 2015. Approval from the Avondale Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) was received on February 10, 2015 (Project number 2015:1) (Appendix B).

Approval to conduct this research project and to access ASA employees was sought prior to the ethics proposal being submitted. Approval was gained from the national office of Seventh-day Adventist Education on January 23, 2015 and regional education Conference directors thereafter (Appendix A). Prior correspondence between the researcher, principal supervisor and the National Education Director for Adventist Education had provided an overview as to the nature of the research, and a clear understanding as to the scope of the project was reached by all parties. Permission was given to approach ASA employees. It was acknowledged that the area of school leadership succession planning was of significance to ASA and the

researcher was assured of the full support of the national office of the Seventh-day Adventist Education system (Appendix A).

Additionally, it should be noted that the author of this study has previously been employed by the ASA education system, but is no longer in such a capacity, and as such has some understanding of the education system, but is able to review practices in a relatively objective manner.

3.4.3 Administration

3.4.3.1 Anonymity

Anonymity is important in order to protect the privacy of survey respondents. This allows a rationale for respondents to reveal information which cannot be attributed back to them. Some respondents may be reluctant to offer insight to the topic at hand without being assured of anonymity. As such, anonymity may also act as a motivational contributor for respondents to be involved in a research study (Kennedy, 2011).

The online survey respondents were assured of anonymity. This was achieved by the use of an online survey provider (Survey Monkey) that made use of a URL link to access the online survey and involved no login or authentication. All possible identifying characteristics were removed. Online survey respondents were able to exit the survey at any stage they wished.

3.4.3.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality was considered to be a paramount issue during the interview process, particularly in light of the ASA education system being a relatively small education system and the personal connection nature of this faith-based setting. Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland (2006, p. 51) note "One of the central obligations that field researchers have with respect to those they study is the guarantee of anonymity via 'assurance of confidentiality' – the promise that the real names of the persons, places, and so forth will not be used in the research report or will be substituted by pseudonyms".

Data from each interviewee was coded as 'Respondent 1' through 'Respondent 17' to ensure confidentiality, and the interview data stored securely both on a password protected laptop computer and interview transcriptions kept in a locked storage filing cabinet within the researchers' security card accessed office. Additionally, during the transcription process, where the interviewee identified ASA personnel by name, these names were edited out and replaced by '(xxx)' to reduce the risk of identification and any potential embarrassment to the respective ASA employee. Respondents were informed that this would take place, and indicated their approval of it.

3.4.3.3 Validity

Validity is concerned with whether the research is true and believable, or as Burns (1999, p. 160) states, "validity is an essential criterion for evaluating the quality and acceptability of research". As such the quality of the instruments used to collect data is of importance because "the conclusions researchers draw are based on the information they obtain using these instruments" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 158).

When undertaking a mixed method research project, it is important to counterbalance the weaknesses of one method with the strengths of another method (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). The instruments used in this research study, both online survey and semi-structured interviews (triangulation), assist in gathering data and work to supplement one another and, in so doing, increase the validity, authenticity, trustworthiness, and dependability of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To ensure the validity of the data and analysis of this mixed method study, the following procedures were adopted:

1. the researchers' objectives and purpose for the study were reviewed by the ASA head office, and communicated to all research participants, in both the qualitative and quantitative phases of this study;
2. care was taken to ensure that the results answer the research questions as well as to offer workable solutions;
3. the researcher made use of a mixed method approach which allowed strengths from both research methods to factor into both the analysis and legitimation processes;

4. the one-to-one semi-structured interviews followed a strict and consistent protocol, which is outlined in the data collection area of this chapter; and
5. data analysis adopted a constant comparative method approach, and tentative data was fed back for participant and external persons checking and feedback.

3.4.3.4. Reliability

Reliability of the data and findings is one of the key requirements of any research process. Reliability deals with consistency, dependability and the replicability of the research results. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Merriam (1998) suggest that reliability of results can be ensured through the use of three techniques. The first involves the investigator's position, and this involves explicit explanation of each of the different processes and phases of the research. Secondly, the researcher should make use of different data collection methods, such as surveys and interviews, as well as obtain information from different sources. Thirdly, the researcher should describe in detail how the data is collected, analysed, themes are derived and how the results are obtained. These steps were adopted in this study, as outlined in Chapters Four and Five. This detail assists in the replication of the research study and contributes to its reliability (Zohrabi, 2013).

3.5 PARTICIPANTS

Given that the context of this research study is the Adventist Schools Australia education system, all participants were ASA employees from the hierarchical levels of classroom teachers, school-based administrators and system-based administrators.

3.5.1 Participant Selection: Phase One

The target population for participants to be involved in Phase One of this study included all ASA employees from classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels. As such, when permission was obtained to access ASA staff, 1173 emails, representing approximately 90% of total ASA employees, were sent out inviting respondents to participate in an online survey. There were likely a number of employees missed because the email list provided from

their employers may not have been entirely up to date. It was hoped that sufficient numbers to represent a reasonable cross section of this population would complete this online. Five hundred and four respondents completed the online survey, representing a 42.9% response rate.

3.5.2 Participant Selection: Phase Two

In Phase Two of this research study, a number of ASA employees were interviewed. Criterion-based purposive sampling techniques, often referred to as nonprobability sampling, involve selecting particular cases "based on a specific purpose rather than randomly" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 713). The purpose of this sampling is to achieve representativeness or comparability, which may support transferability, or the ability to relate findings to the larger population. This technique is commonly used when the researcher wants to "select a purposive sample that represents a broader group of cases as closely as possible" (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 80). Seventeen participants were selected to interview on the basis of this purposive sampling. These seventeen participants represented particular criterion in terms of a range of ages, a range of teaching experience, gender distribution reflective of the hierarchical groupings, and near equal numbers of interviewees from each hierarchical level. When approached, all seventeen interviewees indicated they would be willing to participate in this study. These seventeen respondents were considered to cover the selection criterion and yet represented a total number of interviews that were manageable in terms of accessibility, timeliness, transcribing and analysis.

In utilising interviews as a data collection method, the number of interviewees selected was in part determined by the 'saturation of knowledge'. Bertaux (1981) described that interviewers often find that the first few interviews are highly informative, but as the number of interviews increases, the researcher begins to notice patterns in the interviewee's experiences. Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) undertook research which suggested that as few as twelve interviews from a number of people with similarities may provide for saturation. For this study, seventeen interviews proved sufficient to see re-occurring themes and minimal new variations to these themes.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

The overarching research question directed this study to explore classroom teacher, school-based administrator, and system-based administrator perceptions of ASA succession practices. The data collected for this study exploring the perceptions of these ASA employees was undertaken in two phases. Phase One involved collecting data via an online survey. Phase Two involved collecting data via a series of semi-structured interviews.

3.6.1 Phase One: Online Survey

3.6.1.1 The Online Survey: Development

Surveys can take a number of different forms, with closed-ended, open-ended and a mixture of both common types, with closed-ended surveys providing quantitative or numerical data, and open-ended surveys providing qualitative or text information. Zohrabi (2013, p. 255) however, concludes that "it is better that any questionnaire include both closed-ended and open-ended questions to complement each other". Such advantages are well documented: efficiency of collecting data on a large-scale basis; ability to be sent simultaneously to large numbers of people; anonymity allows respondents to share information more easily; time efficient as a data collection method; similarity of questions administered simultaneously to a large number of people provides data that is more identical, correct and standard; cost efficiency; and ease of data analysis for closed-ended questionnaires. Commonly noted disadvantages also exist, however, including the following: sometimes answers are inaccurate or questionable; potential for low return rates; ambiguity of some questions; and the potential for wording of questions to cause misunderstandings (Zohrabi, 2013).

The survey questionnaire used in this study was adapted from previous research undertaken by Tony d'Arbon, Patrick Duignan, Deirdre Duncan, Jack Dwyer and Kim-Maree Goodwin at the Australian Catholic University. d'Arbon et al. (2001) developed their questionnaire after a thorough review of the literature was undertaken, with a number of relevant stakeholder groups also consulted. Importantly, its initial development was also guided by four additional criteria. Firstly, it was important that it cover the concerns of aspiring principals with regard to succession

planning. Secondly, its structure needed to be consistent with the general principles of questionnaire development and be internally consistent. Thirdly, individual items within it must be sensitive to the differing levels of concern expressed by respondents. Lastly, ease of administration and considerations of statistical analysis were considered.

This d'Arbon et al. (2001) survey was adapted for use in an ASA education context, after consultation with people familiar with this educational setting. As noted below, this initial survey was then piloted. Responses from the pilot study resulted in further adaptations to the survey to ensure it was respondent appropriate.

3.6.1.2 The Online Survey: Pilot Study

Briggs, Coleman and Morrison (2012, p. 152) write "The single most effective strategy to minimise problems is to make sure you *pilot* your instruments". Draft surveys were piloted with a small group of people who had a good understanding of the three hierarchical levels considered in this study in order to test its reliability and validity. Current classroom teachers, current school leaders, former principals and regional (Conference) education directors were all consulted in an effort to test and modify the draft survey so as to identify any potential problems in its administration. The pilot study resulted in the revision of a number of the principal perception items found in questions nine and ten of the survey, as well as identifying structural issues and a much-needed correction to the layout of the Likert scale being made. These changes made the instrument more user-friendly, and the feedback aided in providing a more cohesive, concise instrument. The final survey was then ready for distribution to ASA employees via email, along with instructions on its completion and statements regarding the guarantee of anonymity (Appendix Items C, D).

3.6.1.3 The Online Survey: Content

The content of the online survey was divided into 6 dimensions. These are covered below:

Dimension 1 (Demographics) The region (Conference) the respondent works within; Which hierarchical level of education respondents currently work within; The

respondents' current working position; How long respondents have held this position; The highest qualification held by respondents; Gender; Age category.

Dimension 2 (Career Aspirations) Respondents' career aspirations (5 Items).

Dimension 3 (Perceptions of ASA School Leadership – Reasons NOT TO apply) The extent to which the listed perceptions would influence you NOT TO apply for a school leadership position within an ASA school (38 Items on a 4 point Likert scale).

Dimension 4 (Perceptions of ASA School Leadership – Reasons TO apply) The extent to which the listed perceptions would influence you TO apply for a school leadership position within an ASA school (12 Items on a 4 point Likert scale).

Dimension 5 (Open-ended statements) The three most important factors that would influence a decision NOT TO apply for a school leadership position in an ASA School.

Dimension 6 (Open-ended statements) The three most important factors that would influence a decision TO apply for a school leadership position in an ASA School.

3.6.1.4 The Online Survey: Data Collection

The survey was distributed to ASA employees over the one-month period February 16 - March 13, 2015. This timeframe was chosen in order to minimise the disruption to educators as they embarked on their teaching year, and aimed to catch these respondents at a time when they would be settling into the rhythms of their school term. An email was sent which included an information letter with more detail regarding the purpose of the study, a link to the online survey (Survey Monkey; www.surveymonkey.com) and an invitation to participate in the research project. All emails were sent as blind copies, which allowed anonymity to be maintained. Participants were informed that the survey would take 8-12 minutes of their time. 1173 emails were sent out in total, with 504 respondents completing the online survey, representing a 42.9% response rate.

3.6.2 Phase Two: Interviews

3.6.2.1 The Interviews: Development

The focus of these interviews was to gather information on ASA employee perceptions of both current and ideal succession practices. Interview respondents were purposefully selected based on the following criteria: age; hierarchical level; teaching

level; experience; and gender. This process of selection resulted in seventeen interviewees being selected for participation in this research study. The first step in the interview process was to make contact with those selected and gauge their willingness to be involved in this research study. This initial contact took place via email. With all selected participants willing to participate, dates, venues and times were then negotiated for the interviews to take place.

In preparing for the interviews, the researcher considered the overarching research question and identified that semi-structured interviews would be the most appropriate interview type for the second set of research sub-questions. This form of interview would allow the interviewee both time and scope to talk about their views and perceptions of succession practices, while allowing the interviewer to ask probing questions where appropriate in order to elicit further information, such as exploring content in more depth (elaborating) or asking for more detail relating to a response (clarifying) (Creswell, 2012).

In addition to a list of interview questions and probing questions being developed, a research information statement, interview participant consent letter, and interview protocol list, were also prepared in planning for these interviews (Appendix Items G, D1, E, F).

3.6.2.2 The Interviews: Content

All interviewees were asked five questions over the duration of the interview. Firstly, all interviewees were asked to share their experience or views of 'succession' within Adventist Schools Australia. This broad question allowed the interviewee to share their perceptions of succession from their lived experience. For each broad question a number of prompts were generated that could be used to solicit more information or seek clarification. Secondly, interviewees were asked from their perspectives, when thinking about current succession planning within ASA, what processes they currently saw as being in place. Thirdly, interviewees were asked what they thought succession planning within the ASA education system should look like. Fourthly, interviewees were asked whether they perceived that personal factors such as a balanced lifestyle, workload, family issues, preparedness for leadership or working in a faith-based

education system, for example, should impact on how they saw succession practices should be designed. Finally, interviewees were asked at the end of the interview if they had any other comments or thoughts on succession practices within the ASA education system that they wanted to make mention of at this point in time.

The full list of interview questions and associated prompt questions that could be asked if required can be found in the appendix (Appendix G). The purpose of these interviews was to collect data from three hierarchical levels on perceptions of ASA education system succession practices, both current and ideal.

3.6.2.3 The Interviews: Data Collection

All interviews took place within a three-month period between July and September of 2015. The interviews lasted for periods ranging from 23 minutes to 63 minutes in duration. The researcher travelled across both NSW and QLD for interviews that were conducted on site, and were typically either conducted in a classroom, often during a classroom teacher's free period or lunchtime, or the office of the interviewee. Three phone interviews also took place to enable the possibility of interviewing where face-to-face interviews were not possible due to geographical distance or other factors. These semi-structured interviews followed a consistent procedure: Greet the interviewee; outline the nature of this study and the purpose of the interview; clarify the topic under discussion; provide the format of the interview; leave time for the interviewee to read and consider, before signing, both the information statement and the informed consent form; assure confidentiality of information and highlight that the interview could be stopped at any time or questions declined to answer; provide some personal background of the interviewer; ask permission to commence recording the interview; start both audio recording and the interview.

The goal of the researcher was to have involvement through semi-structured questions, but probe for in-depth understanding. The semi-structured interview questions, and relevant prompts to be asked if required, are presented in Appendix G. The interviews typically consisted of four stages: (1) The informal or conversational stage that took place before the commencement of the official interview, (2) The presentation of the formal permission and information documentation and interview

purpose; (3) The semi-structured interview itself, and (4) The informal or conversational stage which took place after the completion of the interview.

The researcher completed an interview log directly after concluding each interview. The log contained details such as the interview location, date, respondent number, those parties present (in coded form), the time the interview commenced, the time the interview concluded, the device the interview was recorded on, and observations and reflections about the recently completed interview. The template used for the interview log is presented in Appendix H.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

In a mixed methods research study the analysis of data involves both the quantitative and qualitative data sets. While similarities exist in this process, such as data preparation, data exploration, data analysis, representation, and data validation, in mixed method research the data analysis is based on the design of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). As such, with this study making use of a convergent parallel design, a convergent data analysis process has been utilised. Analysing the data in this way emphasises the importance of both phases of this study, as well as both data sets.

3.7.1 Quantitative Data

The quantitative data analysis occurred after the administration of Phase One of this study. Once respondents had completed the online survey in Phase One of this study, the data was then exported into the software program IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 22). This resulted in 400 fully completed, usable responses, a number which would support the reliability of the research analysis (Field, 2013). The quantitative data (Dimensions 1-4) was then analysed using the statistical functions of the SPSS software package.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the nature of scales and groups, and the distributions across the scales and groups. t-Tests and ANOVAs were employed to determine points of difference within these scales and groups. Factor analysis was carried out to determine the nature of the influences that reflected the respondents'

rationale for their unwillingness or willingness to apply for school leadership positions. These influence factors were then tested for internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha. Finally, the impact of the respective unwillingness and willingness to apply influence factors, both within and across hierarchical levels, was explored.

3.7.2 Qualitative Data

The qualitative data derived from the survey open-ended responses found in Phase One of this study were analysed using a thematic analysis approach (Byrne, 2017; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) define thematic analysis as "A method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data". Using this inductive process, the textual data was first broadly coded and then these codes were refined into a smaller number of categories, and finally, these categories were coalesced into abstract themes.

A grounded theory data analysis approach was utilised for the Phase Two qualitative components in this study following the general principles outlined by Glaser (2005) and Corbin and Strauss (2008). This process involved the critical review of responses to determine appropriate coding, from which tentative conceptual categories were determined. Parallel with this process, memoing was conducted to explore for links between codes and to develop a deeper understanding of theoretical connections between codes and categories. These conceptual categories were then constantly compared with the data and other categories to ensure underlying uniformity. Nested categories, grounded from within the data collected, were then mapped into substantive themes. These abstract themes were then able to be used to construct a general theory relating to the overarching research question.

In Phase Two of this study, the qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were recorded on an Olympus WS-831 digital voice recorder and then transcribed by the researcher. The benefits of this process were the ability to ensure the confidentiality of the interviewees, as well as immersing the researcher in the data – a process that assisted in data analysis. During this time of transcription, memoing took place and became an integral part of the analysis process. Having transcribed the interviews into Microsoft Word documents, initial open coding (line by line coding)

commenced which enabled the identification of a number of similarities and patterns in the responses. The software package NVIVO was introduced at this stage, and this enabled the researcher to label, group, create nodes and define similarities and patterns from within this interview data. Processing the data using the NVIVO software package was useful in terms of grouping, storing and efficiently retrieving data, but the researcher felt it created a distance between the data analysis process and the researcher that had not been the case in the initial manual open coding process.

The next step in the data analysis process of converting codes into conceptual categories, and then categories into themes, was processed by the traditional manual approach rather than continuing with computer aided software. These categories and themes were then compared to the data and presented to a number of ASA employees, both individually and in group settings, to test whether they were intuitively consistent with their experiences of ASA succession practices. To a great extent, this feedback confirmed the initial themes, and connections between these themes, suggesting that at this stage the lines of enquiry had been saturated and the conclusions reached had a degree of validity.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has described the research methodology and the rationale for why this methodology was selected, and outlined a number of limitations associated with adopting a mixed method research methodology. It has outlined the study worldview and philosophical stance, and presented the research design implemented in order to undertake this study. Guided by the overarching research question "What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels, with regards to Adventist Schools Australia succession practices?", as well as sub-questions, the purpose of the study was to examine ASA employee perceptions of school leadership succession practices. The data analysis of both Phase One of this study (online survey) and Phase Two (semi-structured interviews) made use of a convergent mixed methods approach, which allowed the data to drive and direct this study.

The following two chapters present and discuss the findings of Phase One (Chapter 4) and Phase Two (Chapter 5) of this study.

CHAPTER 4: PHASE ONE – SURVEY DATA RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study employed a two-phase mixed method design. Phase One, the focus of this chapter, addresses the research sub-question:

- What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels of the factors that would influence their decision TO apply, or NOT TO apply for a school leadership position within the Adventist Schools Australia education system?

This chapter explores Phase One survey data, relating to aspirations of and influences on ASA employees with regards to the decision to apply or not to apply for school leadership positions. This study focuses on the perspectives held by three ASA employee hierarchical levels; classroom teachers, school-based administrators, and system-based administrators. In this phase, a survey instrument was used to collect both numerical and written data. The analysis of the numerical data includes response frequencies, exploration of relationships between items, generation of influence factor scales, various demographic differences and differences across hierarchical levels. The written data was generated by providing the respondents an opportunity to express their views, independent of the researcher's views, on the influences that would or would not influence them to pursue school leadership opportunities; perceptions captured by two open-ended questions in the survey. A thematic analysis approach was then adopted to analyse this data. Discussion of these results follows.

Phase Two of this study, involving semi-structured interview data collection and analysis of that data, focuses on perceptions of both current and ideal succession processes. This will be the focus of discussion in Chapter 5.

4.2 THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The survey instrument was divided into six sections (dimensions). Dimension one contained seven demographic items; respondent location, teaching level, position currently held, time in current position, qualifications, gender, and age category. Dimension two consisted of one question, which asked respondents to identify their career aspirations. Dimension three consisted of 38 fixed choice items related to factors that would influence respondents not to apply for principal positions. Dimension four consisted of 12 fixed choice items related to factors that would influence respondents to apply for principal positions. Dimensions five and six consisted of open-ended questions that asked respondents to identify THREE important factors influencing their decision not to or to apply for school leadership positions within the Australian Seventh-day Adventist education system (See Appendix C).

4.3 DATA COLLECTION

The aim was to collect data from as many current ASA associated school companies' employees as possible, by accessing current employee email lists provided by the respective school companies. Having been provided this information, 1173 emails were sent out to these employees with an overview of the research purpose, an information statement and the opportunity to respond to an online survey hosted by SurveyMonkey. This online link was left open for a one-month time frame. At the completion of the one-month (and subsequent three follow up emails), 504 responses were completed, representing a 42.9% response rate. The data, both the quantitative and the qualitative, from the survey was then exported into the software program IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 22. This resulted in 400 fully completed, usable responses. The quantitative data (Dimensions 1-4) was then analysed using the statistical function of the SPSS software and the qualitative data (Dimensions 5-6) was analysed, by adopting a thematic analysis approach.

4.4 SURVEY ANALYSIS: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

4.4.1 Introduction

Dimension one contained seven individual demographic items. The first of these related to geographic regions (Conferences) in which the respondent worked; the second related to the level of education respondents currently worked within; the third identified respondents' current working position; the fourth identified how long respondents had held this position; the fifth noted the highest qualification respondents held; the sixth identified gender; and the seventh identified the respondents' age category.

4.4.1.1 Respondent Location

There were respondents from every ASA region, and they reflected the relative distribution of ASA employees within these geographic areas. Adventist Schools Australia are located across nine different school companies which are defined by these geographic regions (Conferences): North New South Wales (137 respondents, 34.3%), Greater Sydney (51 respondents, 12.8%), South Queensland (58 respondents, 14.5%), Victoria (92 respondents, 23%), Western Australia (19 respondents, 4.8%), Northern Australia (9 respondents, 2.3%), South Australia (23 respondents, 5.8%), South New South Wales (6 respondents, 1.5%), and Tasmania (5 respondents, 1.3%) (Table 4. 1).

Table 4. 1 Respondent location (School company by Conference)

School Company	Number of Respondents	Cumulative Percent
North New South Wales	137	34.3
Greater Sydney	51	47.0
South Queensland	58	61.5
Victorian	92	84.5
Western Australia	19	89.3
Northern Australia	9	91.5
South Australia	23	97.3
South New South Wales	6	98.8
Tasmanian	5	100.0
Total	**400**	**100.0**

4.4.1.2 Teaching Level

One hundred and sixty eight respondents or 41.9% of valid respondents identified themselves as currently working at a primary level of education, 182 respondents or 45.4% identified as working at the secondary level of education. 51 respondents or 12.7% indicated 'other' (Table 4. 2). These 'other' responses largely reflected support staff or Conference/system administrators, many of whom identified as working at both a primary and secondary level.

Table 4. 2 Level of education currently working within

Teaching Level	Number of Respondents	Cumulative Percent
Primary	168	41.9
Secondary	182	87.3
Other	51	100.0

4.4.1.3 Position Currently Held

Two hundred and eighty two respondents, or 70.9%, identified their current position as classroom teachers. This was followed by a number of school-based administrator roles, such as deputy principals (16 respondents, 4%), assistant principals (A distinction is made between 'deputy' and 'assistant' principal within the ASA education system) (4 respondents, 1%), head of school (11 respondents, 2.8%), and Principal (18 respondents, 4.5%). System-based administrators included 12 respondents, or 3%, largely being made up of Conference education directors and ASA administrators. Fifty-five respondents identified as 'other', which included school bursars, librarians, school chaplains and other support staff (Table 4. 3).

Table 4. 3 Position currently held by respondents

Position Held	Number of Respondents	Cumulative Percent
Other	55	13.8
Teacher	282	84.7
Deputy Principal	16	88.7
Assistant Principal	4	89.7
Principal	18	94.2
Head of School	11	97.0
System Administrator	12	100.0

Following this initial data analysis, IBM SPSS was used to group the differing positions into the three hierarchical levels that were explored within this study. In order to do this, the data for this question was recoded into different variables. This allowed the data for deputy principals, assistant principals, heads of school and principals to be grouped together as school-based administrators. Thus, three groups or hierarchical levels were formed within the data: teachers, school-based administrators, and system-based administrators.

The frequencies thus showed 282 respondents (82.2%) fall into the hierarchical category of classroom teachers, 49 respondents (14.3%) are school-based administrators, and 12 respondents (3.5%) are system-based administrators (Table 4. 4).

Table 4. 4 Hierarchical levels

Hierarchical Level	Number of Respondents	Cumulative Percent
Teacher	282	82.2
School-Based Administrator	49	96.5
System-Based Administrator	12	100.0

4.4.1.4 Time in Current Position

Survey respondents were asked to identify how long they had held their current position. The five distinct groups were: 2-3 years (100 respondents, 24.9%), 6-10 years (95 respondents, 23.7%), and 10 plus years (105 respondents, 26.2%), 4-5 years (55 respondents, 13.7%) and 1 year or less (46 respondents, 11.5%) (Table 4. 5).

Table 4. 5 Time in current position

Time	Number of Respondents	Cumulative Percent
1 year or less	46	11.5
2-3 years	100	36.4
4-5 years	55	50.1
6-10 years	95	73.8
10 years plus	105	100.0

4.4.1.5 Respondent Qualifications

The respondents were well qualified. Two hundred and forty respondents, or 59.7% had completed a Bachelor's Degree, with another 48 (11.9%) adding either a post graduate certificate or diploma to that qualification. Eighty-eight respondents (21.9%) had gone on to successfully complete a Master's Degree, with four respondents identifying that they had completed a Doctoral qualification (Table 4. 6).

Table 4. 6 Highest qualification held

Qualification	Number of Respondents	Cumulative Percent
Other	8	2.0
Diploma of Teaching	14	5.5
Degree	240	65.2
Post Graduate Certificate	17	69.4
Post Graduate Diploma	31	77.1
Master's Degree	88	99.0
Doctorate	4	100.0

4.4.1.6 Respondent Gender

Two hundred and fifty-eight respondents, or 64.5% identified in this survey as female, with the remaining 142 respondents (35.5%) identifying as male (Table 4. 7).

Table 4. 7 Gender of respondents

Gender	Number of Respondents	Cumulative Percent
Female	258	64.5
Male	142	100.0

4.4.1.7 Respondent ages

When exploring the ages of respondents, the largest identifying group was that of the 41-50 years. This group accounted for 118 respondents (29.4%). This was closely followed by 31-40 year olds (103 respondents, 25.6%), 30 years or less (85 respondents, 21.1%), 51-60 year olds (68 respondents, 16.9%), and lastly the 60 years plus age group represented by 28 respondents, or 7% of total respondents (Table 4. 8).

Table 4. 8 Age of respondents

Age	Number of Respondents	Cumulative Percent
30 years or less	85	21.1
31-40 years	103	46.8
41-50 years	118	76.1
51-60 years	68	93.0
61 plus years	26	100.0

Following this initial data analysis, IBM SPSS was used to group the age categories into the four age groupings that are explored within this study. In order to do this, the data for this question was recoded into different variables. This allowed the data to be reduced to four similar sized age groups.

The frequencies thus showed 85 respondents (21.1%) fall into the less than 30 age category, 103 respondents (25.8%) are aged 31-40, and 118 respondents (29.5%) are aged 41-50, and 94 respondents (23.5%) are aged over 51.

4.5 SURVEY ANALYSIS: CAREER ASPIRATIONS

4.5.1 Introduction

Dimension two of the survey asked respondents to identify statements which best described their school leadership aspirations. Five options were provided in an effort to catch a snapshot of their present aspiration: Respondent has applied for a school leadership position in the past but will not do so in the future; have applied in the past but are unsure if they will in the future; have never applied and do not envisage doing so in the future; have not applied but do envisage doing so in the future; and, are actively seeking a school leadership position. An overview of employees within Australian Adventist Schools' desire to seek leadership positions within this education system (ASA) is shown in Figure 4.1.

4.5.2 Aspiration Levels

4.5.2.1 Overview

The data indicates 6.5% of respondents have applied for a school leadership position in the past but will not do so in the future. A majority (64.5%) indicated that they have never applied for a school leadership position and do not envisage doing so in the future. In addition, 6.7% indicated that they have applied for a school leadership position in the past but are unsure if they will in the future while 19% indicated that they have not yet applied for a school leadership position, but do envisage doing so in the future. Only 1.8% indicated that they are actively seeking (active aspirants) a school leadership position.

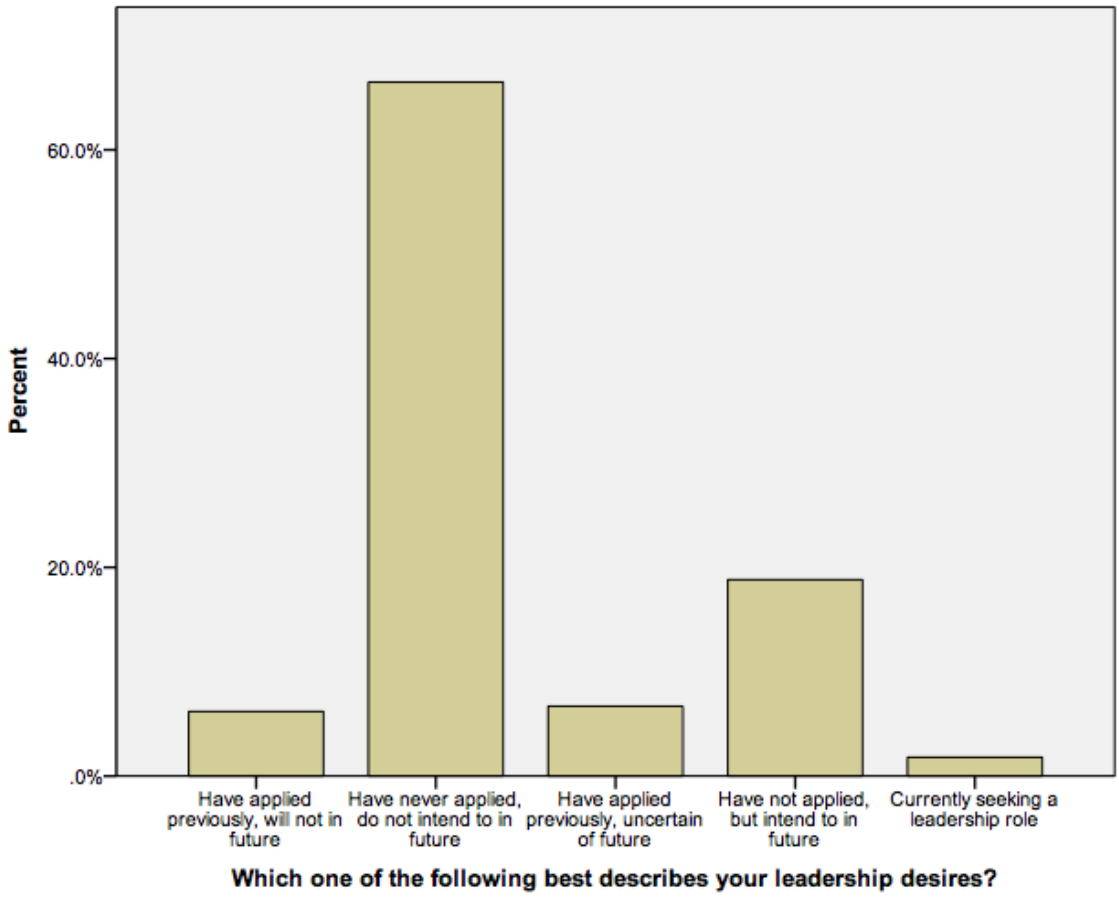


Figure 4. 1 ASA employees' school leadership application intentions

The desire to seek leadership positions was further explored in terms of gender, teaching level, and age differences.

4.5.2.2 Gender Differences

In terms of gender differences, 6.3% of females compared to 5.9% of males indicated that they have applied for a school leadership position in the past but will not do so in the future: 74.7% of females compared to 51.1% of males indicated that they have never applied for a school leadership position and do not envisage doing so in the future: 4.3% of females compared to 11.1% of males indicated that they have applied for a school leadership position in the past but are unsure if they will in the future: and 13.4% of females compared to 28.9% of males indicated that they have not yet applied for a school leadership position, but do envisage doing so in the future. Lastly, only 1.2% of females compared to 3.0% of males indicated that they are actively seeking a school leadership position (Figure 4.2).

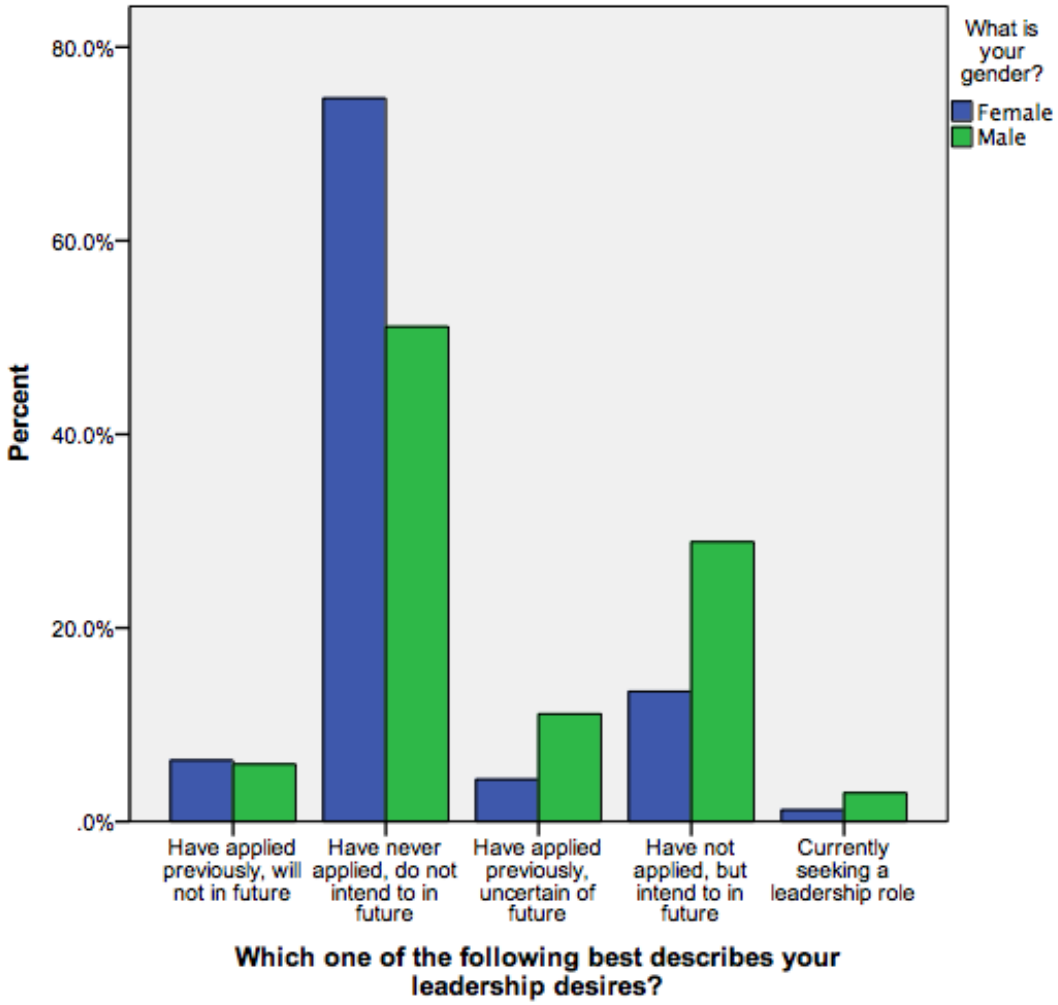


Figure 4. 2 ASA employees' school leadership application intentions: Gender differences

4.5.2.3 Teaching Level Differences

The data also indicated the following: 6.7% of primary level teachers compared to 4.4% of secondary level teachers indicated that they have applied for a school leadership position in the past but will not do so in the future: 66.3% of primary level teachers compared to 67.2% of secondary level teachers indicated that they have never applied for a school leadership position and do not envisage doing so in the future: 6.7% of both primary and secondary level teachers indicated that they have applied for a school leadership position in the past but are unsure if they will in the future: 18.4% of primary level teachers compared to 20.6% of secondary level teachers indicated that they have not yet applied for a school leadership position, but do envisage doing so in the future: and 1.8% of primary level teachers compared to 1.1% of secondary level teachers indicated that they are currently seeking a school leadership position (Figure 4.3).

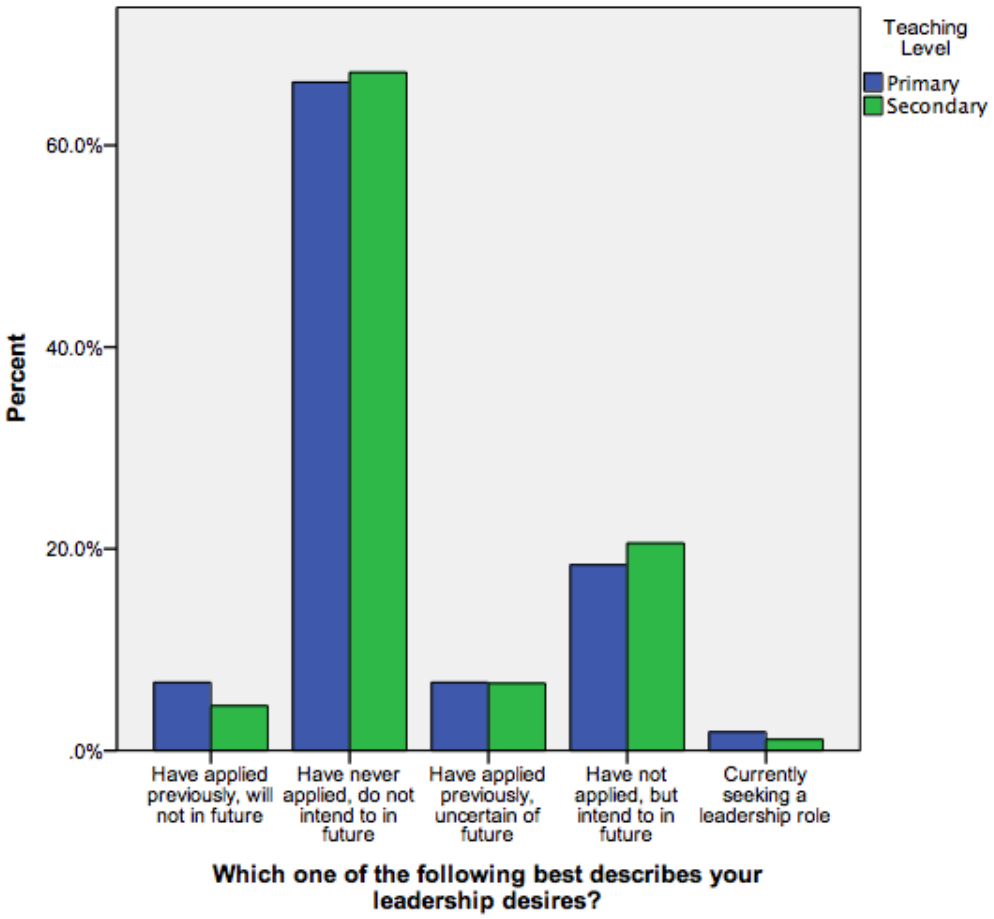


Figure 4. 3 ASA employees' school leadership application intentions: Teaching level differences

4.5.2.4 Age Differences

Finally, the 'desire to seek leadership' data indicated that 1.2%, 1.0%, 5.1%, and 18.8% of the less than 30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50 years, and 51 and over~~,~~ years' age groups respectively, indicated that they have applied for a school leadership position in the past but will not do so in the future: 70.6%, 66.3%, 65.0%, and 64.7% of the less than 30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50 years, and 51 and over years' age groups, respectively, indicated that they have never applied for a school leadership position and do not envisage doing so in the future: 1.2%, 5.0%, 10.3%, and 9.4% of the less than 30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50 years, and 51 and over years' age groups, respectively, indicated that they have applied for a school leadership position in the past but are unsure if they will in the future: 25.9%, 24.8%, 18.8%, and 4.7% of the less than 30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50 years, and 51 and over years' age groups, respectively, indicated that they have not yet applied for a school leadership position, but do envisage doing so in the future. Notably, 1.2%, 3.0%, 0.9%, and 2.4% of the less than 30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50 years, and 51 and over years' age groups, respectively, indicated that they are actively seeking a school leadership position (Figure 4.4).

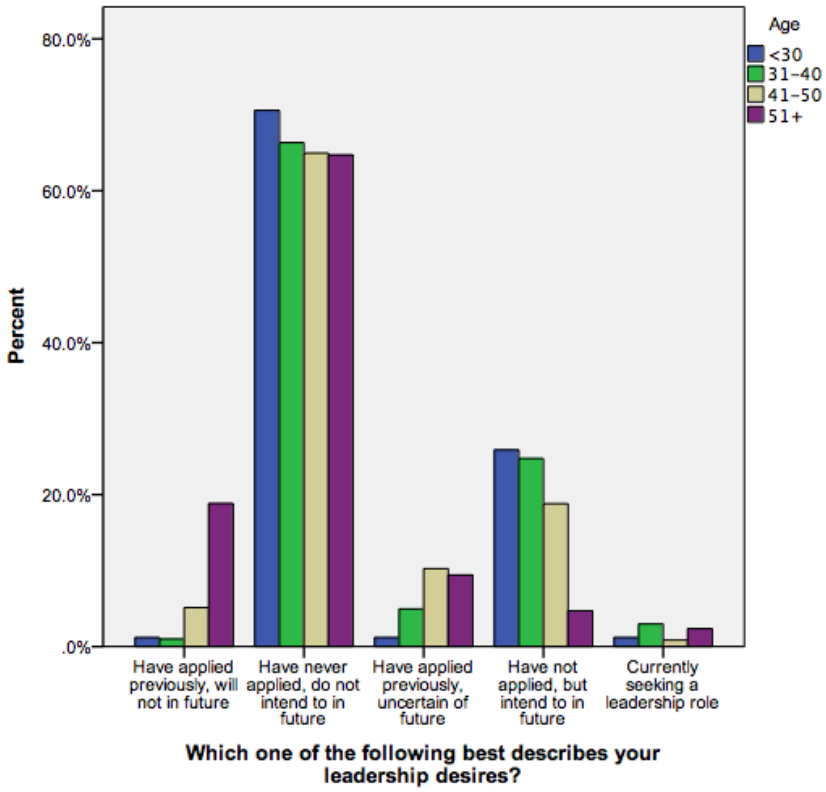


Figure 4. 4 ASA employees' school leadership application intentions: Age differences

4.6 SURVEY ANALYSIS: FIXED CHOICE RESPONSES

4.6.1 Introduction

The survey included 50 fixed choice items asking respondents to identify the extent to which the individual items relating to perceptions of school leadership would influence their:

1. Unwillingness to apply for a school leadership position;
2. Willingness to apply for a school leadership position.

4.6.2 Unwillingness Responses: Factor Analysis

Factors impacting teachers' unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions were determined by factor analysis of the 38 dimension three survey items. The data from these 38 items, selected on a 4 point option Likert scale which ranged from 'Low' to 'Medium' to 'High' to 'Very High', indicated the respondents' perceived importance of the item in influencing their decision not to apply for a leadership position. The data were near normal in their distribution and missing respondent data were randomly distributed in the database. The missing data were replaced by using the SPSS 'replace with a mean' option.

Principal factor analysis was conducted on the 38 dimension three unwillingness to apply for principalship items with oblique rotation (Direct Oblimin with Kaiser Normalisation). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was .904, which is greater than the minimum criteria of .5 (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999), indicative of sampling adequacy. The KMO for the individual items were all above .775, consistent with what the literature would describe as acceptable (Field, 2013). An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each factor in the data. The factors which had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criteria of one, of which there were seven, in combination explained 65.23% of the variance. The scree plot, however, suggested a five-factor model, which was adopted for this study.

Items with a loading of less than .40 or which exhibited significant double loadings were removed and the analysis repeated. The five-factor output of this analysis is shown in Table 4. 9 consisting of 28 items.

Table 4. 9 Exploratory factor analysis output

Pattern Matrix[a]					
	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Principals are expected to fulfil multiple roles		.530			
The time pressures are too stressful		.872			
Principals have less close relationships with students and staff					.717
The career path of a principal is a dead-end one					.500
The loneliness of the job does not appeal to me					.537
The education agenda is changing too quickly	.744				
The media over-scrutinises teachers, schools and the education process	.712				
The education profession is held in low esteem by the community	.562				
Schools are experiencing a decrease in parental support and cooperation	.689				
Principals are increasingly exposed to litigation	.682				
Outside bodies have intruded excessively on educational decision-making processes	.831				
Women with children are disadvantaged in terms of career opportunities			.807		
Principals have to deal with parents who are more critical and confrontational	.515				
Principals are often over-scrutinised by governing bodies	.702				
Principal's salaries do not reflect the complexity of the task		.497			
Men are valued more than women as principals			.916		
The role intrudes too much on personal and family life		.740			
There is too much responsibility involved in the role of principal		.723			
Competent women are often overlooked as principals			.909		
There is too much bureaucracy and red tape	.523				
The 'watchdog mentality' prevalent in the Church is 'off-putting'					.507
The principal is expected to be a 'practising' Adventist				.867	
Principals have to be accountable to too many 'bosses'	.457				
The expectations of the Adventist community are often unrealistic				.473	
There is an expectation for a principal to lead the faith community of the school				.835	
Too many significant decisions are made by bodies external to the school	.511				
The private life of a principal is very public					.501
Moving to a new location means suitable employment also has to be found for my spouse					.463
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.[a]					
a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.					

4.6.2.1 Unwillingness Responses: Factor Scales

The five unwillingness factors were determined by the following items, as outlined in Table 4. 10 below. Each factor represented a common theme; The External Environment, Work-Life Balance, Gender Bias, Religious Identity, and Leadership Detractors.

Table 4. 10 The five unwillingness factors descriptors

Factor	Factor Description	Number of items	Sample Item
Factor 1- The External Environment	The perception that the external environment is unsupportive.	11	Principals are often over-scrutinised by governing bodies.
Factor 2 - Work-Life Balance	The perception that work-life balance components add pressure to the role of school leaders.	5	The role intrudes too much on personal and family life
Factor 3 - Gender Bias	The perception that gender bias played a part in the appointment of school leaders.	3	Men are valued more than women as principals
Factor 4 - Religious Identity	The extent to which religious elements impacted on the role of school leaders.	3	The expectations of the Adventist community are often unrealistic
Factor 5 - Leadership Detractors	The perception that aspects of the role of school leader make the position unattractive.	6	Principals have less close relationships with students and staff

Factor 1, External Environment, represents a perception that respondents consider aspects of the external environment to be unsupportive (sample item: Principals are often over-scrutinised by governing bodies). Factor 2, Work-Life Balance, represents the perception to which respondents identify work-life balance components to add pressure to the role of the school leaders (sample item: The role intrudes too much on personal and family life). Factor 3, Gender Bias, represents the perception of respondents that gender bias played a part on the appointment of school leaders (sample item: Men are valued more than women as principals). Factor 4, Religious Identity, represents the extent to which respondents felt that religious elements impacted on the role of school leaders (sample item: The expectations of the Adventist community are often unrealistic). Factor 5, Leadership Detractors,

represents a perception by respondents that aspects of the role of the school leaders make the positions less attractive (sample item: Principals have less close relationships with students and staff).

A scale value for each of the factors was computed by adding the respective items and dividing the total by the number of items within the factor. The respective reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha), mean factor scales and factor score standard deviations were calculated (Table 4. 11).

Table 4. 11 The five unwillingness factor scales, means and reliability coefficients

Factors	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Factor Scale Mean	Std. Deviation
Factor 1 – The External Environment	9.7, 9.9, 9.10, 9.11, 9.12, 9.13, 9.16, 9.17, 9.24, 9.30, 9.34	.899	2.258	.68
Factor 2 – Work-Life Balance	9.1, 9.2, 9.18, 9.20, 9.21	.790	2.814	.74
Factor 3 – Gender Bias	9.14, 9.19, 9.22	.862	2.075	.97
Factor 4 – Religious Identity	9.29, 9.31, 9.32	.744	2.040	.89
Factor 5 – Leadership Detractors	9.4, 9.5, 9.6, 9.25, 9.36, 9.38	.719	2.259	.68

Analysis of the 'unwillingness to apply' data indicated it was the Work-Life Balance factor with a mean of 2.814 - indicating a high degree of influence - that the majority of the respondents considered to be the strongest influence on why they would not consider taking on school leadership positions. This was followed by the Leadership Detractors and The External Environment factors with similar means (M = 2.259 and M = 2.258 respectively), but of a magnitude indicating a medium degree of influence on their decision. Gender Bias (M = 2.075) and Religious Identity (M = 2.040) have similar medium level influence; however, these two factors have the least influence on the decision not to apply for school leadership positions (Table 4. 12).

Table 4. 12 Five unwillingness factors by weighted average

Factor	Scale Ranked by Weighted Average
1. Work-Life Balance	1
2. Leadership Detractors	2
3. The External Environment	3
4. Gender Bias	4
5. Religious Identity	5

An exploration into whether there was a significant statistical difference in these influence factors across gender, teaching level and age was conducted, using t-tests and/or a one-way ANOVA.

4.6.2.1.1 Gender Differences

Table 4. 13 provides data relating to the female and male respondents with respect to the five 'unwillingness to apply for leadership position' factors. There was a significant statistical difference in the Gender Bias factor, with the female mean (M = 2.394) indicating only a medium level of influence on their decision to not apply, but being higher than the male mean (M = 1.573), who considered this to be a lower influence on their decision-making [$t(391) = 8.231$, $p < 0.001$]. Additionally there was a significant statistical but smaller difference in The External Environment factor, with the females (M = 2.313) considering this to be a stronger influence on their decision not to apply, than males (M = 2.158), [$t(379) = 2.158$, $p = 0.032$].

There was no significant statistical difference in the male and female responses relating to the influence of the Work-Life Balance, Religious Identity, and Leadership Detractors factors in the decision not to apply for school leadership positions.

Table 4. 13 Scale means across the unwillingness to apply for school leadership position factors by gender

Factor	Gender	Scale Mean	Standard Deviation
The External Environment*	Female	2.313	0.658
	Male	2.158	0.709
Leadership Detractors	Female	2.246	0.654
	Male	2.282	0.715
Work-Life Balance	Female	2.852	0.733
	Male	2.742	0.737
Religious Identity	Female	2.018	0.847
	Male	2.078	0.951
Gender Bias*	Female	2.394	0.960
	Male	1.573	0.755

* Significant difference at 0.05 level

4.6.2.1.2 Teaching Level Differences

Of the five 'not to' apply for a leadership position factors only two registered significantly different responses between the primary and secondary employees (Table 4. 14). Even though the responses relating to the influence of Religious Identity indicated this factor only had a moderate influence on their decision not to apply, there was a significant statistical difference between the secondary level respondents and primary level respondents with the secondary teaching level (M = 2.190) considering this to be a stronger influence, than primary level respondents (M = 1.924), [t(343) = 2.862, p = 0.004]. There was also a significant statistical difference in the Leadership Detractors factor, with the secondary teaching level respondents (M = mean 2.356) considering this to be a stronger influence on their decision to not apply, than primary level teaching respondents (M = 2.164), [t(338) = 2.683, p = 0.008].

There was no significant statistical difference in the primary and secondary level respondents relating to the influence of The External Environment, Work-Life Balance and Gender Bias factors in the decision not to apply for school leadership positions.

Table 4. 14 Scale means across the not to apply for school leadership position factors by teaching level

Factor	Teaching Level	Scale Mean	Standard Deviation
The External Environment	Primary	2.268	0.690
	Secondary	2.261	0.644
Leadership Detractors*	Primary	2.164	0.639
	Secondary	2.356	0.680
Work-Life Balance	Primary	2.817	0.732
	Secondary	2.830	0.716
Religious Identity*	Primary	1.924	0.802
	Secondary	2.190	0.912
Gender Bias	Primary	2.051	0.965
	Secondary	2.124	0.975

* Significant difference at 0.05 level

4.6.2.1.3 Age Differences

There was no significant statistical difference between the respective age categories in terms of the influence of the five factors on their decision not to apply for leadership positions. What was noticed, however, was an age difference trend within the Work-Life Balance factor. Here, the perceived influence of the Work-Life Balance factor in their decision to not apply for positions of school leadership, increased over age as indicated by the change in the respective means (<30 = 2.724, 31-40 = 2.854, 41-50 = 2.927) until the 51 plus age group. This age group registered the lowest mean (2.701) indicating that the perceived impact of Work-Life Balance affects them the least.

4.6.2.1.4 Overview

When all respondents were grouped, the Work-Life Balance factor was considered to be the largest influence on their unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions, followed by Leadership Detractor and External Environment factors. Of least influence on their unwillingness to apply for school leadership were the Religious Influence and Gender Bias factors. Females felt that the negative gender bias increased unwillingness to apply to a greater extent than the males; likewise, with The External Environment factor. The secondary level teachers perceived that Leadership Detractors influenced their unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions to a greater extent than their primary level counterparts; likewise, Religious

Influence expectations. There were, however, no significant differences across the age groups of respondents with respect to the influence of the unwillingness factors on their decision not to apply for school leadership positions.

4.6.3 Willingness Responses: Factor Analysis

Factors relating to the willingness of respondents to apply for school leadership positions were also determined by factor analysis. The survey data obtained from the 12 willingness to apply for school leadership items were near normal in their distribution and missing respondent data were randomly distributed in the database. The missing data were replaced by using the SPSS 'replace with a mean' option.

Principal factor analysis was conducted on the 12 willingness to apply for school leadership items with oblique rotation (Direct Oblimin with Kaiser Normalisation). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was .869, which is greater than the minimum criteria of .5 (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999), indicative of sampling adequacy. The KMO for the individual items were all above .808, consistent with what the literature would describe as acceptable (Field, 2013). An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each factor in the data. The factors which had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criteria of one, of which there were two, in combination explained 51.84% of the variance. The scree plot agreed on a two-factor model, which was adopted for this study.

The exploratory factor analysis output is shown in Table 4. 15 consisting of two factors, each comprising of six items.

Table 4. 15 Exploratory factor analysis output: Willingness Factors

Pattern Matrix[a]		
	Component	
	1	2
Principals have an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others 10.1	.837	
The prestige offered by the role of principal is attractive 10.2		.739
Principals have the opportunity to make a difference to Adventist education 10.3	.745	
Principals have the opportunity for working more closely with students, staff and parents 10.4	.753	
Succession planning processes are clearly articulated in this education system 10.5		.479
Principals experience more positive and professional challenges 10.6	.408	
A principal is able to make important contributions to community life in general 10.7	.742	
The salary packages offered to principals are very attractive 10.8		.740
Principals can be effective change agents in schools 10.9	.805	
Principals have more power and autonomy 10.10		.591
The principalship is a natural career progression 10.11		.710
There is greater satisfaction in the job of the Principal 10.12		.621
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.		

4.6.3.1 Willingness Responses: Factor Scales

The two willingness factors were determined by the following items, as outlined in Table 4. 16. Each of these factors represents a common theme: Contribution, and External Rewards.

Factor 1, Contribution, represents a perception that respondents consider the potential to contribute to the school and its community to act as an incentive to apply for school leadership positions (sample item: Principals have an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others). Factor 2, External Rewards, represents the perception that respondents identify that external rewards act as incentives to apply for school leadership positions (sample item: The prestige offered by the role of principal is attractive).

Table 4. 16 The two willingness factors descriptors

Factor	Factor Description	Number of items	Sample Item
Contributions	The perception that the potential to contribute to the school and its community act as incentives to apply for school leadership positions.	6	Principals have an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others
External Rewards	The perception that external rewards act as incentives to apply for school leadership positions.	6	The prestige offered by the role of principal is attractive

A scale value for each of the factors was computed by adding the respective items and dividing the total by the number of items within the factor. The respective reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha), mean factor score and factor score standard deviations were calculated (Table 4. 17).

Table 4. 17 The two willingness factor scales, means and reliability coefficients

Factors	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Factor Scale Mean	Std. Deviation
Factor 1 – Contributions	10.1, 10.3, 10.4, 10.6, 10.7, 10.9	.798	2.802	.64
Factor 2 – External Rewards	10.2, 10.5, 10.8, 10.10, 10.11, 10.12	.750	1.854	.56

Analysis of the 'willingness to apply' data indicated it was the Contributions factor with a mean of 2.802 - indicating a high degree of influence - that the majority of the respondents considered to be the strongest influence on why they would consider taking on school leadership positions. The External Rewards factor registered a much lower mean of 1.854, which indicated that the majority of respondents did not see external rewards as a particularly strong incentive to apply for school leadership positions (Table 4. 17).

An exploration into whether there was a significant statistical difference in these influence factors across gender, teaching level and age was conducted, using t-tests and/or a one-way ANOVA.

4.6.3.1.1 Gender Differences

Table 4. 18 provides data relating to the female and male respondents with respect to the two 'willingness to apply for leadership position' factors. There was no significant statistical difference in the male and female responses relating to the influence of the Contributions and External Rewards factors in the decision to apply for school leadership positions.

Table 4. 18 Scale means across the TO apply for school leadership position factors by gender

Factor	Gender	Scale Mean	Standard Deviation
Contributions	Female	2.802	0.649
	Male	2.802	0.635
External Rewards	Female	1.836	0.566
	Male	1.887	0.538

* Significant difference at 0.05 level

4.6.3.1.2 Teaching Level Differences

Table 4. 19 provides data relating to the primary and secondary teaching level respondents with respect to the two 'willingness to apply for leadership position' factors. Of the two 'willingness to apply for a leadership position' factors there was no significant statistical difference in the primary and secondary level respondents relating to the Contributions and External Rewards factors in the decision to apply for school leadership positions.

Table 4. 19 Scale means across the to apply for school leadership position factors by teaching level

Factor	Teaching Level	Scale Mean	Standard Deviation
Contributions	Primary	2.793	0.616
	Secondary	2.745	0.648
External Rewards	Primary	1.819	0.545
	Secondary	1.860	0.537

* Significant difference at 0.05 level

4.6.3.1.3 Age Differences

There was no significant statistical difference between the respective age categories in terms of the influence of the two factors on their willingness to apply for leadership

positions. What was noticed, however, was an age difference trend within the Contributions factor. Here, the perceived influence of the contributions factor in their decision to apply for positions of school leadership increased over age, as indicated by the change in the respective means (<30 = 2.696, 31-40 = 2.729, 41-50 = 2.910) until the 51 plus age group. This age group registered a slightly lower mean than the 41-50 age group (M = 2.843). For the External Rewards factor, the 41-50 age group once again registered the highest mean (M = 1.919), followed by the <30 age group (M = 1.893) and the 31-40 age group (M = 1.828). The 51 plus age group registered the lowest External Reward factor mean of 1.764.

4.6.3.1.4 Overview

For all respondents, the opportunity to make a contribution to the school and its community was the largest influence on their willingness to apply for a school leadership position. While the external rewards factor also impacted willingness to apply, its influence was much smaller. There were no statistically significant differences in gender, teaching level, or age in terms of the willingness to apply for school leadership positions.

4.6.4 A Hierarchical Level Comparison: Unwillingness and Willingness To Apply

The means and standard deviations of the 'unwillingness' and the 'willingness' to apply factor scales were determined for each of the respective hierarchical levels: Classroom Teachers, School-based Administrators, and System-based Administrators, and are presented in Table 4. 20.

Table 4. 20 Scale means across the UNWILLINGNESS and WILLINGNESS to apply for school leadership position factors by Hierarchical level

Factor	Hierarchical Level	Scale Mean	Standard Deviation
UNWILLINGNESS TO APPLY: The External Environment	Teachers	2.391	.6624
	School-Based Administrators	2.064	.7054
	System-Based Administrators	2.275	.9937
UNWILLINGNESS TO APPLY: Leadership Detractors*	Teachers	2.208	.6592
	School-Based Administrators	1.937	.6433

	System-Based Administrators	2.250	.8935
UNWILLINGNESS TO APPLY: Work-Life Balance	Teachers	2.814	.6748
	School-Based Administrators	2.619	.7554
	System-Based Administrators	2.569	.8942
UNWILLINGNESS TO APPLY: Religious Identity	Teachers	2.061	.8597
	School-Based Administrators	1.876	.8525
	System-Based Administrators	1.889	.8914
UNWILLINGNESS TO APPLY: Gender Bias	Teachers	2.151	.9626
	School-Based Administrators	1.574	.7581
	System-Based Administrators	2.167	1.078
WILLINGNESS TO APPLY: Contributions	Teachers	2.749	.6513
	School-Based Administrators	2.913	.5318
	System-Based Administrators	3.409	.4780
WILLINGNESS TO APPLY: External Rewards	Teachers	1.863	.5506
	School-Based Administrators	1.800	.4823
	System-Based Administrators	2.030	.5517

* Significant difference at 0.05 level

It is important to note that even though there are differences across hierarchical levels, when the hierarchical levels are considered together, it is the Work-Life Balance factor (M = 2.778) that rates the highest in its influence on their unwillingness to apply for leadership positions. The next most influential factor was The External Environment factor (M = 2.340), followed by the Leadership Detractors factor (M = 2.171), then the Gender Bias factor (M = 2.069), and lastly, the Religious Identity factor (M = 2.028). All hierarchical levels agree that the perceived lack of work-life balance is the single most influential factor for why they would not apply for a school leadership position.

In terms of the factors influencing the willingness to apply for school leadership positions, the Contributions factor was perceived to be vastly more influential (M = 2.796) than the External Rewards factor (M = 1.860). This would indicate that the

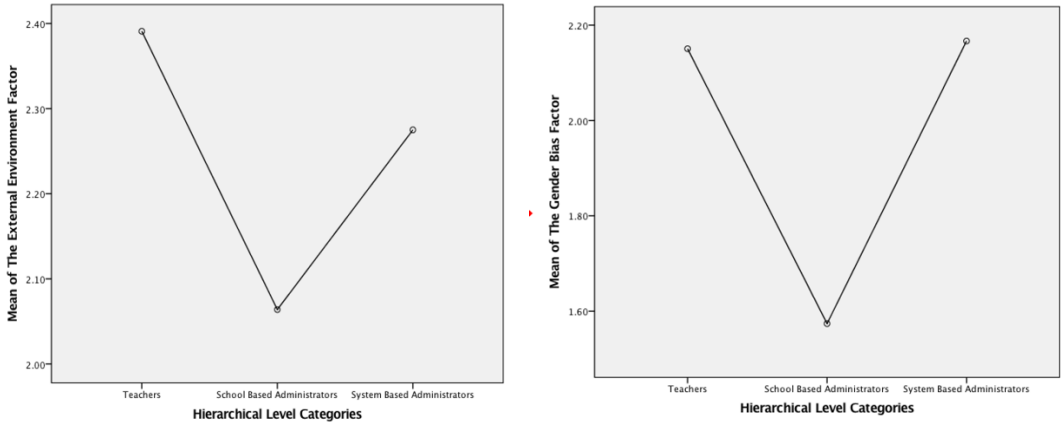
individuals desire to take on school leadership and contribute to the school as a driver to apply was much more influential than any form of external reward obtained from being in the school leadership positions.

4.6.4.1 Differences Within Factors Across Hierarchical Levels

A Kruskal-Wallis test was used to test for differences in the willingness/unwillingness factor scales across the respective hierarchical levels because normality of the distributions was questionable and considerable sample size differences existed across the hierarchical levels.

The Kruskal-Wallis test for the hierarchical level comparison indicates that there are statistically significant differences in four of the seven unwillingness factor scales (The External Environment, $p = .015$, Gender Bias, $p < .001$, Leadership Detractors, $p = .049$, Contributions, $p = .001$).

The impact of the External Environment factor on the School-based Administrators unwillingness to apply for leadership positions is significantly less than the perceived impact on both the Classroom Teachers and the System-based Administrators (Figure 4. 5a). This pattern is also exhibited in terms of the impact of both Gender Bias and Leadership Detractors on the unwillingness of Classroom Teachers and System-based administrators to apply for leadership positions (Figure 4. 5b, Figure 4. 5c).



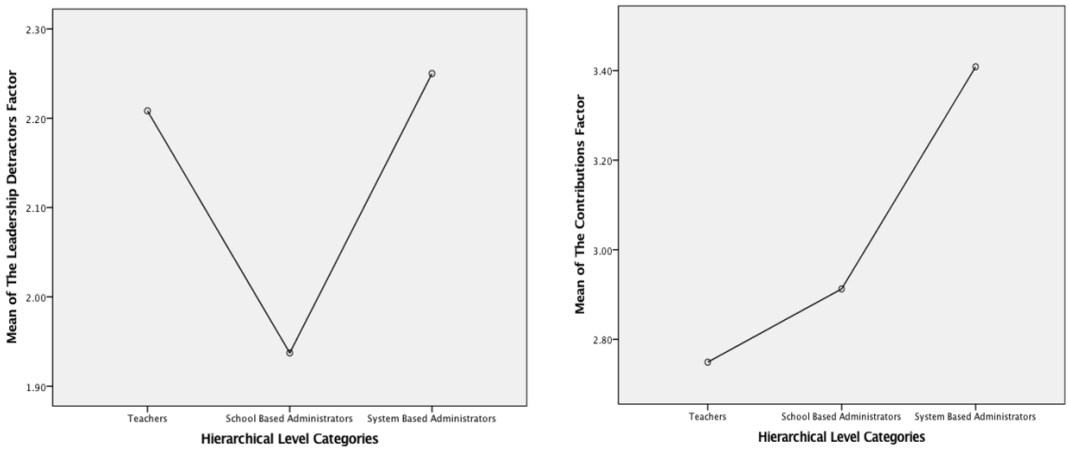


Figure 4. 5 a, b, c, d. Means plot for External Environment, Gender Bias, Leadership Detractors, and Contributions factors across Hierarchical Levels

For the willingness to apply factor, Contributions, the System-based Administrators (M = 3.409) scored significantly higher than both the Classroom Teachers (M = 2.750) and the School-based Administrators (M = 2.913) in terms of this factor's influence on their willingness to apply for leadership positions. There was however, no statistically significant difference between the Classroom Teachers and the School-based Administrators in this factor (Figure 4. 5d).

4.6.4.2 Ranking of Factors Across Hierarchical Levels

When ranking the factor scales by hierarchical levels, to determine the relative influence of each factor on the respondents' unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions, what was noted was the consistency with which respondents ranked these scales (Table 4. 21). The only difference that occurred was found with the school-based administrators, who rated Religious Identity as a greater disincentive to apply for school leadership positions than Gender Bias. For both the classroom teachers and the system-based administrators, the perception of Gender Bias was a greater disincentive to apply than Religious Identity in terms of their unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions. This difference in ranking by the school-based administrators may be related to the greater numbers of males than females in these positions, and further they are influenced by their experience with the Religious Identity pressures given their Church school leadership role.

Table 4. 21 Ranking of Unwillingness factor scales by Hierarchical Level

Scale	Classroom Teachers	School-based Administrators	System-based Administrators
Work-Life Balance	1	1	1
The External Environment	2	2	2
Leadership Detractors	3	3	3
Gender Bias	4	5	4
Religious Identity	5	4	5

When comparing the rankings of the two willingness to apply for school leadership factors, all hierarchical levels rated the Contributions scale, that is, their desire to make a difference in their school and local community, higher than that of External Rewards such as remuneration or the prestige associated with such leadership roles.

4.6.4.3 Overview

In summary, factor analysis of the fixed choice items in the survey firstly identified five factors consistent across all hierarchical levels that have an influence on the unwillingness of the respondents to apply and, secondly, two factors that influence the willingness to apply for school leadership positions.

In terms of the five unwillingness to apply factors, the following descriptors provide an understanding of these factors in the ASA context:

- The perception that the school leadership role makes it difficult to maintain quality of life outside of the role (Work-Life Balance).
- A perception that the external constraints on school practices overly impacts the role of the leader (External Environment).
- The perception that aspects of the role of school leader make the position unattractive (Leadership Detractors).
- The perception that males are looked upon more favorably as potential leaders than females (Gender Bias).
- The perception of outward expression of corporate Adventist values (Religious Identity).

The single most influential of these unwillingness factors was the Work-Life Balance factor, followed by the External Environment and Leadership Detractor factors, with the Religious Identity and Gender Bias factors perceived as having a much smaller influence on the unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions.

The data indicated there was no statistically significant difference in the perceived impact of the Work-Life Balance factor and the Religious Identity factor in terms of unwillingness to apply across the three hierarchical levels. For the Leadership Detractors factor, Gender Bias factor, and the External Environment factor, a statistically significant difference existed with the School-based Administrators perceiving that each factor had less impact on their decision not to apply than their Classroom Teacher and System-based Administrator counterparts. There are significant similarities across these hierarchical levels in terms of what factors influence their unwillingness to apply for leadership positions. There are differences, however, but what is noted is that the rating of the factors by classroom teachers and system-based administrators are often times similar and greater, from that of school-based administrators.

In terms of the two willingness to apply factors, the following descriptors provide an understanding of these within the ASA context:

- The perception that the school leader has the potential to contribute positively to the school and its community (Contributions)
- The perception that external rewards act as incentives to apply for school leadership positions (External Rewards)

For the willingness to apply factors, it was the potential to contribute positively to the school and its community that has the most impact on the willingness of all hierarchical levels to apply for school leadership positions. Interestingly, however, even though all hierarchical levels rated the Contributions factor highly, it was the System-based Administrators who consistently rated this factor even higher.
All hierarchical levels, however, agree that the potential to positively contribute to the school community is a much stronger influence than any external rewards on their likelihood to apply for school leadership positions.

4.6.5 Aspiration and Succession Practices

Within the survey, there were four items exploring the relationship between present ASA succession practices and school leadership aspiration.

The first item (Item 9.33) aimed to assess the perception that a lack of quality preparation programs was a factor that influenced their unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions. The mean response for this item was 3.228, with a standard deviation of 0.827. This indicates that the majority of respondents perceived the present lack of preparation programs as a significant factor in their unwillingness to apply for school leadership roles. The relatively small spread of responses indicated that there was considerable agreement about this factor's influence. The Kruskal-Wallis test for the hierarchical level comparison indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the hierarchical levels ($p = .751$) in their perception of the impact of the lack of quality preparation programs within the ASA education system on their unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions.

The second item (Item 9.28) aimed to assess the perception of the present level of recruitment and leader socialisation processes and their impact on aspiration. Socialisation here is defined as "the process through which an individual learns or acquires the necessary knowledge, skills, and values needed to perform a social role in an organisation" (Bengston et al., 2013, p. 144). This can be described as 'learning the ropes' within a particular organisational role. The mean response relating to the inadequacy of the present processes and aspiration impact was 2.427, with a standard deviation of 1.046. This indicates that this was a medium strength negative influence on the respondents' willingness to apply for school leadership positions. The relatively large standard deviation suggests that there was some divergence of views of this factor's influence across the respondents. The Kruskal-Wallis test for the hierarchical level comparison indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the hierarchical levels ($p = .516$) in their perception of the inadequacy of present recruitment, training and induction processes within the ASA education system on their unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions.

The third item (Item 9.27) aimed to assess the perceived impact of the interview and application process on respondents' unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions. The mean response relating to the interview and application process was 1.727, with a standard deviation of 0.847. This indicates that only a small number of the respondents perceived that these processes impacted their unwillingness to apply for leadership positions. The relatively small standard deviation for this item indicates that there was considerable agreement about this factor's influence. The Kruskal-Wallis test for the hierarchical level comparison indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the hierarchical levels ($p = .027$) in their perception of the interview and application process within the ASA education system on their unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions. This difference existed between the perceptions of classroom teacher and school-based administrator hierarchical levels. Even though all hierarchical levels rated this influence factor as minimal, the school-based administrators rated this lower than the classroom teachers.

The fourth item (Item 9.26) aimed to assess the perceived impact of the practice of, in some instances, bypassing formal succession practices of employee selection on the respondents' unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions. The mean response relating to the bypassing of formal selection processes was 2.369, with a standard deviation of 1.107. This indicates that this was a medium strength negative influence on the respondents' willingness to apply for school leadership positions. The large standard deviation, however, suggests that the practice of selecting the school leader prior to the advertising of the position, was seen as a considerable influence on the unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions for some, but for others it was not such a concern. The Kruskal-Wallis test for the hierarchical level comparison indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the hierarchical levels ($p = .012$) in their perception of the impact of bypassing these formal selection processes within the ASA education system on their unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions. It was the classroom teacher hierarchical level that perceived that the practice of selecting school leaders outside of the formal selection process impacted their unwillingness to apply the greatest.

In summary, the lack of established formal preparation programs is a significant inhibitor of leadership aspiration, with no significant difference between the three

hierarchical levels. The lack of appropriate recruitment and socialisation processes, and the bypassing of formal selection processes, have a lesser impact than the lack of formal preparation programs, but still a noticeable negative impact on leadership aspiration. There is, however, a statistically significant difference in the perceptions across hierarchical levels, specifically with the classroom teachers registering greater concern about the filling of school leadership positions prior to the position being advertised than school-based administrators and system-based administrators. The actual interview and application process was not seen by a majority of respondents to have much impact on their leadership aspiration levels, and this was particularly the case for school-based administrators.

Importantly, what is noted from this analysis, is that ASA succession practices are perceived by all hierarchical levels to impact on ASA employee leadership aspiration levels.

4.7 SURVEY ANALYSIS: OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

4.7.1 Introduction

The open-ended responses to the survey items, Question 11 and Question 12, were analysed by adopting a thematic analysis approach, which is a method used for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Using such an inductive process allowed the textual data to be coded, then refined into a smaller number of categories, and finally these categories were clustered into abstract themes. The results of this analysis are discussed in the following sections.

4.7.2 Unwillingness to Apply

The open-ended questions relating to influences not to apply followed the general principles of thematic analysis. In such an inductive process, the textual data were first coded and then refined into a small number of categories and finally nested categories, and then mapped to five substantive themes. Table 4. 22 provides the results of the analysis of the 353 responses from all hierarchical levels to the question which asked respondents to identify the ‘three most important factors that would influence a decision not to apply for a principalship in an Adventist School’. The table

shows five substantive themes that emerged from the data which were: Lack of Educational Support, Family Influences, Role Disconnect, Work-Life Pressures, and Religious Influences.

Lack of Educational Support is the perceived lack of support from all levels of the education system and the school community for the preparation for and carrying out of the leadership role; Family Influences is the perceived disruption to their preferred family circumstances; Role Disconnect is the perception that a school leadership role is not desirable and/or does not fit with their skill set; Work-Life Pressures is the perception that the school leadership role is too large and the responsibility and work pressures unreasonable; and, Religious Influences is the perception that the leader has to operate within restrictive church structures and expectations. Additionally, the table identifies the associated concepts within each of the major themes which were seen to influence the unwillingness of respondents to apply for school leadership positions.

Out of 942 references to these substantive themes, 259 were allocated to Lack of Educational Support, 129 to Family Influences, 168 to Role Disconnect, 341 to Work-Life Pressures, and 45 referred to Religious Influences.

Table 4. 22 Important factors influencing the decision not to apply for ASA school leadership positions

Theme	Descriptor	Associated Concepts
Lack of Educational Support	A perceived lack of support from all levels of the education system and the school community for the preparation for and carrying out of the leadership role.	Lack of preparedness for the role, lack of formal training, need for mentoring, system-based politics, school-based politics, lack of autonomy in the role, lack of decision-making authority, systemic issues, red tape and bureaucracy, selection practices, current educational leadership, salary not commensurate with the role, unsupportive staff, perceived quality of staff, unsupportive parental body, size of school, location of school, school community, school reputation.
Family Influences	A perceived disruption to their preferred family circumstances.	Impact of role on the family, loss of time spent with family, need to relocate, spouse employment, business relocation.

Role Disconnect	A perception that a leadership role is not desirable and/or does not fit with their skill set.	Content in current role, loss of student relationships, a calling to the classroom teaching role, relationships with staff change, discouragement, sense of loneliness in the role, age factors, confidence levels, gender issues, lack of interest in administrative roles, current skill sets.
Work-Life Pressures	A perception that the role is too large and the responsibility and work pressures unreasonable.	Pressure in the role, accountability, responsibility, time needed to undertake the role, time management, criticisms, constant change, unrealistic expectations, having to make difficult decisions, increased paperwork, constant scrutiny, role considered too large, workload unmanageable, perceived difficulty of role, threat of litigation, constant stress, health implications, likelihood of burnout, impact on social life, perception and uncertainty of what the role looks like, principalship being too diverse a role.
Religious Influences	A perception that the leader has to operate within restricting church structures and expectations.	Expectations of church community, Church politics, lack of spiritual conviction, not having been 'called' to the role, Church involvement, not Adventist, Adventist ethos of the school.

4.7.2.1 Hierarchical Level Perceptions

When assessed at the three hierarchical levels this study explores, the picture presented identifies that for classroom teachers, 770 references relate to the substantive themes, with 210 allocated to Lack of Educational Support (27.3%), 103 to Family Influences (13.4%), 144 to Role Disconnect (18.7%), 281 to Work-Life Pressures (36.5%), and 32 to Religious Influences (4.1%). At the school-based administrator level, 142 references related to the substantive themes, with 37 allocated to a Lack of Educational Support (26.1%), 21 to Family Influences (14.8%), 21 to Role Disconnect (14.8%), 52 to Work-Life Pressures (36.6%), and 11 to Religious Influences (7.7%). For system-based administrators, 30 references related to the substantive themes, with 12 allocated to a Lack of Educational Support (40.0%), five to Family Influences (16.7%), three to Role Disconnect (10.0%), eight to Work-Life Pressures (26.7%), and two to Religious Influences (6.7%) (Table 4. 23).

Table 4. 23 Unwillingness Percentage Category by Hierarchical Level

Unwillingness Theme	Hierarchical Level Percentage Response Category		
	Classroom Teacher	School-Based Administrators	System-Based Administrators
Lack of Educational Support	27.3%	26.1%	40.0%
Family Influences	13.4%	14.8%	16.7%
Role Disconnect	18.7%	14.8%	10.0%
Work-Life Pressures	36.5%	36.6%	26.7%
Religious Influences	4.1%	7.7%	6.7%

For the classroom teacher and school-based administrators, the highest proportion of references in the open-ended unwillingness to apply question related to Work-Life Pressures. For the system-based administrators, however, their highest proportion of references related to the Lack of Educational Support theme. For these system-based administrators, the Work-Life Pressure references were still substantial, but were second in rank order of response percentage. For the classroom teachers and school-based administrators, this order was reversed, with the Lack of Educational Support theme ranking second in response frequency. For all hierarchical levels, the Religious Influences theme recorded the lowest response frequency.

The following analysis further explores the open-ended responses from the perspective of each of the three hierarchical levels explored in this study; classroom teachers, school-based administrators and system-based administrators.

4.7.2.1.1 Classroom Teachers

The responses of the classroom teachers identified a range of influences within the respective themes that factored into their decisions to not apply for school leadership positions in ASA schools.

4.7.2.1.1.1 Lack of Educational Support

Of the areas identified within the Lack of Educational Support theme, response frequency most emphasised were (1) Lack of decision-making authority, (2) Lack of autonomy, (3) Staff selection practices, (4) Preparedness for the role, (5) Lack of

ongoing training and development, (6) Unsupportive school environments, (7) Salary concerns, and (8) System-based politics. However, as Table 4. 22 indicates, other concepts were also referenced, albeit with less frequency. Given that respondents had free choice as to what three factors influenced their unwillingness to apply for school leadership roles within ASA, the frequency of the eight identified areas above warrants some discussion.

When referring to the view that principals in the ASA education system do not have sufficient decision-making ability, responses such as *"Ultimately decisions are made by the ASA not the local school principal"* convey a perception by a number of classroom teachers that ASA have a strong influence in decisional matters.

A lack of autonomy within the ASA system in the role of principal was also identified by classroom teachers, clearly stated in quotes such as *"There is not enough autonomy allowed in the role"*, and *"Because you are just too over-governed by the Conference Office".* This perceived lack of autonomy overlaps to some degree with the lack of decision-making authority theme.

Selection practices appeared to be a point of contention for many classroom teachers, with responses such as *"It appears to be a selection process with very little, if any transparency, on the selection criteria--it is not always the most suitable person for the job--and at times, it seems like a promotion of incompetence — 'you are not really a great teacher but we [someone in authority] like you so we will make you a principal'".* Additionally, comments such as *"It is always 'jobs for the boys' - you wouldn't apply unless you were encouraged to do so. Even if they 'ask', the real people they want have already been sounded out, probably months before"* and *"Jobs in the system are often not advertised so positions rely on connections instead of the interview/application process"* paint a portrait of issues perceived amongst classroom teachers of shortcomings in selection practices.

Many teachers indicated that they felt unprepared to take on such a leadership role. Comments such as *"Not feeling adequately prepared for the role"* were quite common, while a number espoused the view that *"Great teachers and leaders are not invested in for these roles".*

A perceived lack of ongoing training and development was frequently referred to by classroom teachers as an influence in their decision not to apply for principal roles, with comments such as *"Lack of training and support before or while in the role"* and a view that there were *"Inadequate opportunities for leadership PD or training".* Comments such as *"I would only take this job if there were regular opportunities for professional development in the area of leadership etc"* summarised a view held by a number of respondents, with many indicating that a distinct lack of mentoring processes would factor in their unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions. It is noted that there is some overlap in this theme with the earlier lack of preparedness theme.

Unsupportive school environments were commonly alluded to also, with unsupportive parents and wider school communities cited, along with an undercurrent of system level support being absent. Comments such as *"Stress in dealing with the growing population of parents who appear to be uninterested in or uncooperative in wanting to work together with the school to educate their children",* summarised these areas well. Additionally, comments such as *"a lack of support from employing bodies for those who are new to management roles"* and *"lack of support from leadership at Conference level"* demonstrated additional concerns in taking on the role of school leadership.

Many responses relating to salary as an influence for why respondents would not apply for school principal roles were present, a common view summed up well by the comment *"Remuneration needs to better reflect the position and responsibility associated with the role".* One respondent identified that there is a lack of incentive in the remuneration to take on a principal position, stating *"The salary does not match the responsibility and the difference in salary between teachers/ deputies and principals is not enough".* Salary was an oft-cited influence for why respondents would not be willing to apply for school leadership positions. Additional comments such as *"Lots of stress and burnout, especially in a smaller school, which the extra pay is not worth"* addressed an issue raised frequently, i.e., that principals of smaller schools must take on more roles than their larger school counterparts. As one respondent stated *"There is much more pressure on a Principal of a small school than*

a big school, because they have to do everything - run the school, often do release, write up the newsletter etc. They are paid less than a Principal of a large school because remuneration is based on school enrolments".

Also present amongst the classroom teachers' responses was a view that politics at a system level weighed on their decision not to apply for leadership roles. Comments such as *"political red tape", "too much control is held by ministerial staff at Conference level, who have no expertise in education"* as well as a number of more direct, sensitive comments which plainly identified that political activity does not appeal to many and is a deterrent to applying for school leadership positions within the ASA education system. A number of respondents were quite critical of senior levels of Adventist education and expressed concern over the amount of politicking by these groups. Comments such as *"Top levels of Adventist hierarchy are distant, ineffectual and disconnected with current schools and trends in Education"* and *"Adventist politics"* provided insight as to why some chose not to consider school leadership in the ASA educational context.

4.7.2.1.1.2 Family Influences

Within the theme of Family Influences, classroom teachers repeatedly indicated that they had concerns over school leadership roles having too significant an impact on their family lives. Comments such as *"Too much pressure placed on personal relationships", "I would think that it would take too much of my family time away"* and *"I want to spend more time with my family, not less"* support the idea portrayed by many classroom teachers as to the impact of leadership roles on their family lives. Also identified were concerns relating to the likelihood of needing to relocate for such a role, with comments such as *"Relocating my family", "Relocation inconvenience", "Uprooting my children from a stable environment",* and *"Moving schools would disrupt the family"* illustrating the difficulty perceived by many as a reason not to apply for an Adventist School Australia school leadership position. Other concerns raised by classroom teachers in the theme of Family Influences included (1) The possible increased cost of housing in a new location, (2) Finding work opportunities for spouses, (3) The role likely requiring moving after a number of years, and (4) The need to relocate established businesses.

4.7.2.1.1.3 Role Disconnect

The theme of Role Disconnect identified a number of reasons identified by classroom teachers that would influence their decision not to apply for principalships as a result of something they perceived to be missing from the role. The most common reason identified related to the enjoyment of being in the classroom. Comments such as *"I am a classroom teacher and there-in lies my strength", "I would rather teach", "My passion is for the students in the classroom"* and *"I love teaching it is what I feel called to do"* clearly articulate the enjoyment many teachers have of being in the classroom. Also acknowledged, however, was the view that by entering a position of administration, a loss of close relationships with students would be encountered. Comments such as *"I would miss interacting with students and impacting their lives", "Being a teacher seems to be more rewarding day to day with students"* and *"I love to teach and interact with the students"* all echo this sentiment. Additionally, respondents identified (1) Contentment in their current role, (2) A lack of confidence in their ability to take on a school leadership role, (3) A current lack of the required skill set, (4) A lack of interest in the role, (5) Concerns relating to the dominance of males in these positions, (6) A perceived sense of loneliness in the role, and (7) The impact taking on such a role would have on relationships with colleagues, as reasons they would not apply for school leadership roles within Adventist Schools Australia.

4.7.2.1.1.4 Work/Life Pressures

The single biggest theme by response frequency identified by classroom teachers as to reasons for why they would not apply for school leadership positions, related to Work-Life Pressures. In total, 21 different associated concepts were identified with this category, a number of which also encompass family influences. Dominant amongst these was the perception that the principal's workload is increasing, with paperwork a key component. Comments such as *"I have to spend enough time wading through paperwork as it is and I believe that as a principal this would only increase"* captured the views of many. There was acknowledgement that school leaders of small schools, in particular, wear a number of hats and carry extra workload comparative to their larger school counterparts, with comments such as *"The workload – particularly in small schools – is enormous"* confirming this opinion. A view existed that there was *"Increasing liability and vulnerability to be attacked both personally and professionally by onlooking bodies"*, a sentiment echoed

by a number of respondents. Interestingly, a number of respondents identified the increased likelihood of litigation as a reason for why they would not consider school leadership in the ASA education system, perhaps a view best summed up by the statement *"A lot of responsibility legally".* There was consistent reference made to the fact that the workload size and complexity of school leadership roles was significant, with comments such as *"Time demands are huge", "Highly demanding and stressful", "An overwhelming workload"*, and *"Constant changes in legislation and policies etc"* indicating a consensus that the role of principal is considered a difficult one. One respondent, while noting this increased workload also suggested that while the role is growing in size, less administrative support is being made available, commenting *"Principals' workload is increasing yet administration support staff are not available at a local school level".* Additionally, respondents indicated that the close scrutiny principals come under, and the criticism that often exists for those in key leadership positions did not lend itself towards a desire to take on such positions.

A lack of balance was identified for many of those already in the role of principal; summed up in quotes such as *"Principals are mostly unhealthy in their life-work balance"*, and "*harder to separate work and home/family life".* Work-Life pressure terms such as 'stress', 'burnout', 'time consuming', 'responsibility', 'accountability', 'consequences', 'demands', 'too much work', 'red tape', 'unrealistic expectations', and 'workload' were very common in the open-ended responses, all of which painted a clear picture that the role of school leader is considered unattractive to the majority of ASA employees.

4.7.2.1.1.5 Religious Influences

A number of respondents identified religious elements which suggested that working within a faith-based setting such as the Seventh-day Adventist education system often proved difficult. Comments such as *"Dealing with constant criticism from staff or the Adventist community", "I don't like the pressure that the Adventist community places on principals"*, and *"Being held to an unachievable standard within the Church"* suggested there were religious influences that factored into why they were not willing to consider school leadership roles within the Adventist education system. One respondent stated *"The watchdog mentality' prevalent in the Church is 'off-putting'".* Also identified were the difficulties experienced at times in establishing distance

between one's personal and professional life within the Adventist community – *"Finding the boundaries between Church and School in a small community"* and *"Living within an Adventist fishbowl"* hinted at the challenges of working within such a close community.

Lastly, an undercurrent came through from respondents which questioned the extent of Adventist ethos in a number of Adventist schools, *"There are so many factors working against Adventist special character. Many teachers and administrators in our schools are not personally committed to Adventist lifestyle and beliefs".* This is seen by some to be a disincentive for taking on school leadership within the ASA education system.

4.7.2.1.2 School-Based Administrators

The school-based administrators also identified a number of important factors within these five themes that influenced their decision not to apply for school leadership positions. Many of these factors were also identified by the classroom teachers: however, a number were built on by these school-based administrators and will be discussed here. It is noteworthy that as school-based administrators, these respondents are either already in school leadership positions, or are possibly considered to be the next tier from which school leadership positions, particularly the rank of principal, are likely to be selected. As such, this places emphasis on their views of the factors impacting why they would not consider applying for such school leadership positions within the ASA education system.

4.7.2.1.2.1 Lack of Educational Support

As with their classroom teacher peers, a range of issues identified suggested that not all school-based administrators felt there were high levels of support for school leaders within the ASA education system. This perceived lack of educational support from various levels of the education system and school community were again considered as influential reasons for why these respondents would not apply for some school leadership positions within the ASA education system. A lack of preparation opportunities, and other administrative role reasons, were also highlighted as lack of educational support factors.

One concern steadily raised by these respondents involved a lack of support from the local Conference level. Comments such as *"Lack of support from the Conference personnel", "At times Conference leadership"*, and *"Top down decision-making processes from Conference"* suggest a number of school-based administrators see limitations as to the extent of support offered by personnel above the local school level. One respondent summarised the lack of support principals receive by stating *"The lack of credible education experience and skill of those who 'manage' Principals i.e., not up to date with current best practice and research therefore are not able to support in an authentic manner".*

It was evident that these respondents identified a shortfall of support from within the ASA structure, which included school leader peers. One respondent added *"Lack of collegiality amongst school leaders",* suggesting there may be some existing school leaders who are reticent to lend their support to other school leaders.

This lack of support was also suggested to exist within the school community setting. While some respondents identified *"non-committed staff"* as one group offering less than ideal support to school leaders, parents also were identified as a group who were perceived as lacking in support for school leaders. A key factor as to why some of these respondents were not willing to apply for school leadership was based on *"the abuse you receive from parents is too demoralising".* One respondent went as far as to describe this parental body as *"Critical, whining, helicopter parents"* – a scathing run down of a key group of stakeholders that could provide support to school leaders.

A number of school-based administrators identified that a distinct lack of preparation was offered to them prior to taking on school leadership roles. Comments such as *"Inadequate training and induction for the role",* and *"Lack of training and mentoring for new principals"* highlighted the view that some school-based administrators felt more could be done to prepare them for taking on such roles.

Broader views were also expressed as to why a lack of support exists for school leaders, with systemic politics, constant changes in registration requirements, and a seemingly unending burden of administrative paperwork, all identified as contributing

to an educational setting that does not appear conducive to effectively supporting school leaders.

4.7.2.1.2.2 Family Influences

Family again emerged as a significant reason for why school-based administrators would not be willing to apply for school leadership positions within the ASA education setting. Family related comments ranged from the need to find suitable housing, school locations unsuitable to family requirements, the impact of taking on such a role on the family, the age of children, the time demands of the role impacting family settings, and a general view that taking on school leadership positions would mean less time available for family. Of these, the comments most predominantly identified related to the perception that school leadership requires an unreasonable amount of time which, often, comes at the detriment of family. Comments such as *"Family too important", "Time it takes away from family", "Sacrifice of more family/private time", "Balancing family life with work life", "Impact on family"* and *"The time commitment is more than I am willing to sacrifice while I have a young family"* all clearly refer to the perception that school leadership is likely to impact negatively upon the family life of those who take these roles on.

4.7.2.1.2.3 Role Disconnect

School-based administrators also lamented the loss of student relationships and the enjoyment of teaching when reflecting on what they perceived to be a more administrative orientation in upper school leadership roles. *"No longer engaged with students on a day-to-day basis", "Less intense interaction with students", "Distance from students",* and *"My passion is teaching",* all highlight a major point of emphasis and significant factor in why this hierarchical level would not be willing to apply for higher school leadership positions, such as principal. As one respondent specified, *"I personally like the more connection with students and teachers that the Head of School leadership position provides in a larger school context".* This comment would indicate a Head of School position may be considered by some as a school leadership role where some semblance of the balance between relationship and leadership is perceived to be sustainable. This would appear well supported by another respondent who simply stated *"Lower levels of leadership allow me to feel I make a difference without all the headaches of the principalship".* This captured a unique take on lower

levels of school leadership, and suggested there may be a balance able to be struck between school leadership and some of the more intrinsic elements of those who take on school leadership.

A view that school leadership is not always necessarily a good fit with the individual's skill set also came across strongly, with comments such as *"Not a natural leader", "Need very strong business/financial skills",* and *"Not suited to the role"*, all highlighting the point that many do not believe they have the abilities perceived to be required of the job role.

Lastly, but perhaps tellingly, some school-based administrators voiced the thankless nature of some leadership positions, one respondent stating *"A lot of work – not much appreciation".* This emphasises a perception that school leadership can be an underappreciated role – a view that many teachers may obtain from school-based administrators and which may contribute to their unwillingness to consider such school-based leadership roles.

4.7.2.1.2.4 Work-Life Pressures

Similar to their classroom teacher counterparts, school-based administrators identified strongly with the perception that a lack of work-life balance exists within school leadership positions, and can overlap with family influences. Many references to this perceived lack of work-life balance placed the job role in direct contrast to personal life, such as the impact of the role on family and social interactions. Comments such as *"The time commitment is more than I am willing to sacrifice while I have a young family",* and *"The need to sacrifice more family/private time"* largely captured the view that the role of school leader takes away from other life domains. Many comments captured the view that the time needed to fulfil such a leadership role was not sustainable. Like their classroom teacher colleagues, the size and complexity of the job was also stated as a reason for why these school-based administrators would not apply for school leadership positions. Comments such as *"Too much to get done in the time allocated", "Demanding of time", "Too much administrative paperwork", "Multiplicity of roles", "Too much stress", "Too much red tape",* and *"The stress of needing to do more with less"* all capture perspectives of a role that is pressure packed, broad in nature, and increasing in complexity.

These comments are particularly relevant given that these respondents are school-based administrators, thus allowing them unique insight into a range of school leadership responsibilities and pressures faced by those who are already in school leadership positions.

4.7.2.1.2.5 Religious Influences

Again, school-based administrators acknowledged that there were a number of religious influences that factored into their unwillingness to take on school leadership positions within ASA schools. Largely, these influences revolved around expectations placed on school leaders within the Adventist community, or the watchful eyes of the Church as these school leaders undertook their roles. Church politics was also identified as a significant religious influence on respondent unwillingness to consider school leadership positions, and a decreasing Adventist identity within the ASA education system was also identified as a factor impacting the lack of willingness to apply for school leadership positions within the ASA education system.

The notion of 'calling', or specifically, the individual having not been called by God to a leadership role was also identified as a religious factor impacting willingness to apply for school leadership positions within the ASA education system.

4.7.2.1.2.6 Other Influences

Finally, outside of the five areas commented on above, two other school-based administrator comments stood out which are worth consideration. The first, *"Potential for issues with social media/parents primarily living out their lives in public and having a whinge about something a teacher does without even talking to the teacher to find out the real story. As a principal, it is hard to protect teachers from this type of silly and mostly petty behaviour"* gives rise to the fact that in this time and age, schools potentially battle organisational risk elements largely out of their control, with parents and social media in this instance perceived to potentially place the school at reputational risk. Secondly, the comment *"Policy says that primary teachers can't be principals of K-12 schools"* may not necessarily be true, but it portrays a theme covered elsewhere in this study that there is a view towards secondary school elitism,

or at the very least being held in higher esteem than their primary-based equals from a potential leadership perspective.

4.7.2.1.3 System-Based Administrators

With a smaller sample of system-based administrator responses to consider, it was interesting to note a change in response frequency by this hierarchical level comparative to that of classroom teachers and school-based administrators. While the preceding hierarchical levels identified work-life pressures as their most common theme by frequency of mention, the system-based administrators most frequently mentioned issues pertaining to an unsupportive educational environment. This was followed by frequency of mention by Work-Life Pressures, Family Influences, Role Disconnect, and lastly, Religious Influences.

4.7.2.1.3.1 Lack of Educational Support

System-based administrators identified four particular areas in which they perceived the ASA education system could provide additional educational support. The first of these related to the need for training; both prior to taking on school leadership positions, as well as once in these leadership roles. Comments such as *"Lack of two-year training for the role (as in other systems perhaps)",* and *"Need for further training in principal blind spots"* identify the importance of training to these administrators. The second area in which these respondents suggested additional support could be provided for school leaders related to mentoring, specifically that making formal mentoring available would provide a level of educational support for those in school leadership positions. Thirdly, the *"Confusing corporate structure"* was identified as an area perhaps in need of clarification, which may then allow also for a perceived better level of support for school leaders. Lastly, an *"Ongoing need/perception for 'better' credentials"* may need to be addressed by the ASA education system, and perhaps links back to the provision of further training being made available to school leaders.

One additional comment provided insight as to why some system-based administrators see a lack of educational support for school leaders from their perspective, this being *"A lack of clarity about the place of education in the mission*

of the church by senior administrators". Crystallising this may have a domino effect whereby renewed support may come about should this purpose be re-identified and made a focal point of the ASA education system, and this may positively impact those considering applying for school leadership positions in this education system.

4.7.2.1.3.2 Family Influences

These system-based respondents also identified Family Influences that factored into their decisions not to apply for school leadership roles. Again, a perceived loss of family time as a result of being in a school leadership role presented itself, with one respondent stating *"Family time is permanently lost".* Educational opportunities, such as children having access to University, were also identified as a factor contributing to an unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions. Lastly, one respondent identified a *"Family business that will cost to relocate with a move for (a leadership) role"* as influencing their decision not to apply for school leadership positions.

4.7.2.1.3.3 Role Disconnect

System-based administrator respondents also identified a role disconnect which, suggested that school leadership positions, and specifically the role of principal, was not for them. Comments such as *"Prefer to have more interaction with students and people than paperwork", "Not my chosen area of profession"," Prefer to be the assistant not the chief"*, and *"My first passion and love is the classroom"* all portray a preference for not taking on a school principal position, and thus factored into why they were unwilling to apply for school principal positions within the ASA education system.

4.7.2.1.3.4 Work-Life Pressures

System-based administrators, similar to their other hierarchical peers, outlined a number of work-life pressures impacting their decision not to apply for school leadership positions. Comments such as *"Time!", "Responsibility", "Time, effort and energy are not balanced with remuneration", "Extra roles to those expected of principles in other systems e.g., buildings and development responsibilities"*, "*Very long hours", "The principal serves too many masters"*, and *"Never enough pay for the time commitment"* portray a view by these administrators that school leadership carries responsibilities considered too large.

4.7.2.1.3.5 Religious Influences

System administrators identified religious influences as impacting their decision not to apply for school leadership positions, with expectations of leadership related *"Church involvement"* in addition to their work roles, and a view that "*Church politics"* are prominent, being largely the most accounted for issues raised.

Perhaps it is telling that there were only a small number of religious influences identified by these system-based respondents when compared to the perceptions of other hierarchical levels. The system-based administrators do not have a specific school-based community to which they belong, and as such, may well be less impacted by the religious based expectations to which their other hierarchical level peers are subjected.

4.7.3 Willingness to Apply

The analysis of the open-ended questions relating to influences impacting the decision to apply for school leadership positions again followed the general principles of thematic analysis. This being an inductive process, the textual data were first coded and then refined into a small number of categories and finally nested categories, which were mapped to seven substantive themes. Table 4. 24 provides the results of the analysis of the responses to the question which asked respondents across the three hierarchical levels to identify the 'three most important factors that would influence a decision to apply for a principalship in an Adventist School'. The table shows the seven substantive themes which were identified as influencing willingness to apply for school leadership positions. It is important to note that within these seven willingness themes there exist three distinct theme groupings. Firstly, the Challenge and Make a Difference themes were both internally driven reasons for these respondents to apply for school leadership positions. Secondly, Spiritual/Calling is a Christian Worldview based reason that the respondents indicated influenced their willingness to apply for school leadership positions. Finally, the Professional Support, System Staffing, Remuneration and System Support factors were seen only to influence willingness to apply for school leadership positions if they were significantly improved from what exists presently (Potential Willingness Factors).

Table 4. 24 Important themes influencing the decision to apply for ASA school leadership positions

Theme	Descriptor	Associated Concepts
INTERNAL DRIVER: Challenge	The perception that school leadership is **enticing** due to the various types of personal and professional challenges encountered.	Exciting challenge, New challenge, The challenge of leadership, Personal challenge/growth, Mental challenge, Professional challenge/growth, Career progression, New skill development, Heightened job satisfaction, Bringing about educational change, Variety of job roles, Influence the direction of the school, To grow a school, Building school culture, Strategic planning.
INTERNAL DRIVER: Make a Difference	A perceived **potential** to make a positive difference educationally, spiritually and holistically within their broader school community.	Fostering a positive work environment for staff, Positively impacting families and students, Improving school teaching and learning practice, Leadership with a people focus, To lead a vibrant positive environment, To drive change, To make an educational difference for students, To be an agent for change, To potentially change lives, Improve the spiritual tone of the school, Creating safe places for students, Developing positive relationships with stakeholders, Contribute to Adventist Education, To positively impact the broader community in which the school operates.
WORLDVIEW FACTOR: Calling/Spiritual	A perception that the willingness to take on school leadership is **a response** to God's voice.	God's leading, Being called to a leadership role by God, Helping others understand Adventist character and identity, Opportunities to contribute to and guide Adventist education, Development of safe Christian environments, Impacting the community for Jesus, To grow an Adventist presence in the community, Providing spiritual leadership, Use God-given spiritual gifts, Serve God, Convicted by God to apply for leadership, Mission/Service, To follow God's will, Supporting the spreading of the Gospel, Leading people to Jesus.
POTENTIAL WILLINGNESS FACTOR: Professional Support	A perception of the **need for** improved provision of formal training and development opportunities or support considered to further the leadership capacity of these individuals at the school level.	Leadership training, Leadership development, A developed mentoring program, Conference supported (financially) opportunities for professional development, Resolving conflict training, Succession training, HR training, Career pathways provided.

POTENTIAL WILLINGNESS FACTOR: System Support	The perception of the **need for** the different levels of the ASA education system to provide improved support to those in leadership roles.	Support from Conference level, Support from local church level, A supportive school board/council, Support from local education directors, Support from other levels of the education system, Supportive school and education system support personnel, Support from other ASA principals, Working alongside like-minded colleagues, Collaborative working, Supported autonomy, More of a focus on working as a team.
POTENTIAL WILLINGNESS FACTOR: System Staffing	A perception of the **need for** the ASA education system to improve the identification of suitable leadership candidates, and prospective leaders to have a greater voice in local school staffing decisions.	Desire to see more focus on HR practices, Being asked to apply for school leadership positions, Being recognised as the best candidate for a leadership position, Being recognised for their unique skill set, If school leadership team had autonomy in staffing the school.
POTENTIAL WILLINGNESS FACTOR: Remuneration	A perception of the **need for** improvements in how school leaders are financially compensated for their positions of responsibility.	Increased salary, Changes to the salary schedule, Remuneration to match responsibility.

4.7.3.1 Hierarchical Level Perceptions

4.7.3.1.1 Classroom Teachers

The classroom teachers identified a number of influences that would impact their decision to apply for school leadership positions within Adventist Schools in Australia. Discussion of these influences under the substantive themes identified in Table 4. 24 is outlined below.

4.7.3.1.1.1 Internal Driver: Challenge

ASA employee respondents identified that the challenge associated with taking on school leadership was something that would influence their decision to apply for such roles. It is interesting to note, however, that for the classroom teachers the Challenge which influenced their decision had a number of differing facets.

The notion of a generalised challenge was present. Comments such as "*The challenge", "A challenge", "Exciting challenge"*, and *"New challenge"* provide little insight into what exactly classroom teachers saw this challenge to include, but evidenced an interest in stepping into a leadership position and being challenged in new ways.

Some classroom teachers identified challenges associated with broader responsibility levels or specific aspects of the school leadership position for which they may apply. For some classroom teachers, this also encompassed personal growth. Comments such as *"The challenge of leading and empowering a staff", "The challenge of leadership", "Personal growth", "The ability to influence school direction",* and *"The huge challenge of successfully holding the position of principal"* provided a sense of the challenge that taking on leadership would mean for these classroom teachers.

Additionally, the challenge for some classroom teachers involved professional challenges, and career progression. Comments such as *"Extra challenge from the usual teaching role. Expand my skills and develop my career", "I would feel like I was progressing in my career",* and *"The principalship is a natural career progression"* emphasise that for many classroom teachers, school leadership is a logical next step in their career arc.

Lastly, some classroom teachers identified that job satisfaction, and the joy of leadership were aspects by which the challenge of school leadership provided an influence in any decision to apply for school leadership positions within the ASA education system.

4.7.3.1.1.2 Internal Driver: Make a Difference

Classroom teachers identified that the opportunity to make a difference was a significant influence impacting their decision to apply for school leadership positions. This difference was identified by respondents to impact educationally, spiritually, and holistically: *"Fostering a positive work environment for students, staff, families and the wider community".* Making a difference, as seen by classroom teacher respondents, largely fell into three separate categories: To the school educational community (including the staff), to the student body and their families, and to the wider community.

With reference to the difference made at the school community level, comments such as *"You can make positive changes in the school", "To make a change for the better, lead a staff AS A TEAM together", "The opportunity to lead people", "A desire to*

make a difference to the spiritual life of a school", and *"The ability to make a real difference across a whole school in terms of quality teaching and expectations for every teacher"* capture some of the drive experienced by these classroom teachers as far as the difference they believe they could make in the school community.

For students and their families, quotes such as *"Being able to make change in the lives of families in our schools and the holistic approach that is afforded to principals", "Being able to shape and lead the school in a Godly direction by reaching out to families and students", "Opportunity to create a safe haven for students and positive learning environment",* and *"To build positive relationships with the families and students of the school"* clearly capture the view that the opportunity to make a difference for these groups influences why these respondents might consider applying for school leadership positions.

Lastly, making a difference to the wider community in which the school operates was also identified as an influence in the decision to apply for school leadership positions. Comments such as *"The opportunity to make a difference and a contribution to Adventist education", "Making a difference in the community", "To make a difference in my community, lead a school back into revival of its purpose, and spread the Adventist message"* all indicate the desire of these classroom teachers to make a positive difference.

4.7.3.1.1.3 Worldview Factor: Spiritual/Calling

A number of classroom teachers emphasised that one influence impacting the decision to apply for school leadership positions was if they felt 'called'. While 'calling' is considered elsewhere in this study, it is important to note that a number of respondents felt they would apply if they felt a God-given impression or conviction that the leadership role was for them. This in many instances tied closely to a view that Adventist education was of value, and that some respondents felt inclined to contribute to the spiritual growth and leadership of the ASA education system. Additionally, other comments reflected a spiritual element, such as the synergy between education and ministry, the opportunity to impact the spiritual tone of the school, and a belief in Adventist education and the role it can play in bringing young people to Christ. Comments such as *"If I felt impressed that God was calling me to*

such a position", "Opportunity to guide Adventist education", "Opportunity to impact the community for Jesus", "Being a Spiritual leader", "Put Adventist character front and centre", "Working/serving God using spiritual gifts and talents", and *"To follow God's calling"* capture both the calling, as well as broader spiritual views as to why these classroom teacher respondents may consider applying for leadership positions within the ASA education system.

It is interesting to note a number of respondents identified that they would only consider applying for school leadership positions if 'called'. Comments such as *"If it was clearly God calling then I would have no choice. That's the only thing that could make me, and even then I would complain to Him about it"* identify that for a number of respondents, they would not likely apply for school leadership positions unless the hand of God intervened in their career via the 'calling' experience.

4.7.3.1.1.4 Potential Willingness Factor: Professional Support

A number of classroom teacher respondents wanted to know that professional support would be available to them, if they were to apply for school leadership positions. Professional Support was deemed to include additional training and development, mentoring, pathways to further leadership, or other support that may further the leadership capability of these individuals at a school level. Comments such as *"Adequate training and preparation in leadership, HR, Principalship", "Leadership training, mentoring for proficient teachers who are interested in future leadership", "Support and regular, thorough mentoring in the role*" and *"Opportunities for professional development"* emphasised that the provision of professional support would influence these respondents' decision to apply for school leadership positions within the ASA education system.

4.7.3.1.1.5 Potential Willingness Factor: System Support

For these classroom teachers, System Support encompassed a number of levels of the education system providing support in the leadership roles undertaken. A supportive school board or council, a supportive education director, supportive church administration, and evidence of supportive system processes were all examples provided of what these respondents would need to see in order to favourably influence their decision to apply for school leadership positions. Comments such as *"Support*

from Conference/Church Admin", "Supportive Church", "Support by Education Director", "Support from other levels of the education system", and *"A supportive network of system admin around me"* identify the importance these classroom teachers place on needing systemic support in order to consider applying for leadership positions within the ASA education system.

Also identified to influence the decision to apply for school leadership was *"The knowledge that principals across the Conference and the country could and would work collaboratively for the betterment of the system".* This type of support from fellow school leaders was identified as an ideal support structure elsewhere in this study.

4.7.3.1.1.6 Potential Willingness Factor: System Staffing

Classroom teachers identified a number of system-based staffing issues which would need to be addressed in order to influence their decision to apply for school leadership positions. From their perspective, having a voice in staff selected at the local school level, or preferably, total staffing autonomy, would be seen favourably when assessing whether to apply for school leadership positions. A desire to see a more specific focus on HR at the local Conference level was also voiced, but the largest element of system staffing identified followed on from more traditional staffing aspects of the ASA education system: being asked to apply rather than candidates applying themselves. Comments such as *"Being asked or recognised for my ability and strong leadership skills", "If I was given encouragement to take on the role because of my ability and not because they needed someone for the job", "If the school council and leadership team had autonomy to employ suitable staff to all positions",* and *"Employ someone for HR in each Conference"* illustrate these themes.

4.7.3.1.1.7 Potential Willingness Factor: Remuneration

Perhaps unsurprisingly, remuneration was identified as a significant influence in the decision to apply for school leadership positions within the ASA education system. Comments such as *"Pay rise", "If the pay was right", "Better salary", "Increased pay", "Huge increase in pay",* and *"Appropriate remuneration"* articulate a view

that school leadership positions currently pay less than the responsibility of these positions is perceived to warrant.

4.7.3.1.2 School-Based Administrators

The school-based administrators also identified a number of influences that would impact their decision to apply for school leadership positions within Adventist Schools in Australia. Discussion of the influences under the substantive themes identified by ASA employees in Table 4. 24 for the school-based administrators is found below.

4.7.3.1.2.1 Internal Driver: Challenge

School-based administrators saw the challenge of leadership as an influence in their decision to apply for school leadership positions. Similar to the classroom teachers, this challenge manifested itself in a number of ways: Personal growth, the challenge of growing a school or improving aspects of school culture and practice, career progression, the variety of skills required to perform the leadership position, and the challenge of managing change at the school level. Comments such as *"I like the challenge of trying to make a positive difference to school culture", "Big picture change in education practice", "The challenge, variety and opportunities to learn in this role are enormous", "Ability to influence the direction of a school", "Excellent and rewarding challenge", "Natural career progression",* and *"Constantly learning new skills"* encapsulate a range of challenges presented by these school-based administrators that are identified to act as influences in their decision to apply for school leadership positions.

4.7.3.1.2.2 Internal Driver: Make a Difference

Similar to their classroom teacher counterparts, the opportunity to make a difference at an individual, school, and community level acted as a significant influence on the likelihood of these respondents applying for school leadership positions within the ASA education system. Comments such as *"To make a positive impact on a school community", "The opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children", "Power to drive change and make a positive impact"*, and *"Agent for change – opportunities to work with students and families"* all outline a desire to make a positive difference

in the school or broader educational setting that act as influences in the decision to apply for school leadership positions.

4.7.3.1.2.3 Worldview Factor: Spiritual/Calling

Like their classroom teacher colleagues, school-based administrators identified a range of spiritual or 'calling' influences which impacted their decision to apply for school leadership positions. Comments such as *"Calling by God", "I would do it if God has called me to take up a Principal position", "If God calls one into a role, it is difficult not to take on the role", "Felt that God was leading me to fill the position",* and *"I see it as a calling to the role"* all reflect a spiritual or calling component. It is noteworthy that the focus of these school-based administrators was the 'calling' component rather than the spiritual dimension, in contrast to the responses from the classroom teachers.

4.7.3.1.2.4 Potential Willingness Factor: Professional Support

School-based administrators also recognised that a number of professional support elements would need to be either established or improved upon in order to favourably influence the decision to apply for school leadership positions. These professional support practices included access to mentoring, professional development, support coaching, adequate succession planning, and the provision of career pathways. Comments such as *"Support coaching and mentoring into this role and a career pathway provided"," Access to training and skill development courses"*, and *"Adequate mentoring and succession planning so that you could actually feel equipped to take on such a position"* indicate that to consider applying for school leadership, these professional support activities would need to be made available to these school-based administrators.

4.7.3.1.2.5 Potential Willingness Factor: System Support

School-based administrators identified that system support encompassed a number of levels of the education system providing support in the leadership roles undertaken. While this was not noted to the same extent as their classroom teacher counterparts, it was clear that evidence of this improved system support was required for them to demonstrate a willingness to apply for school leadership positions. Comments such as *"To work with other like-minded individuals every day", "I like to be part of a*

collaborative team where your ideas are valued and you feel supported", "Strong support with a good mix of autonomy/agency from those in positions of governance", "Systemic support from Ed Director etc", and *"A commitment from the School Council to support change"* all demonstrate a need to see enhanced system provided support in school leadership positions in order to create aspiration to apply for such roles.

4.7.3.1.2.6 Potential Willingness Factor: System Staffing

It is interesting to note that this hierarchical level identified significantly fewer issues associated with system staffing as influencing their decisions to apply for school leadership positions than their classroom teacher peers. Being asked to apply for the leadership role or being identified as the best potential candidate for the position would influence their willingness to apply for such roles. Comments such as *"I doubt I would apply, it's more if I'm offered* or *I'm asked to apply or told to apply by my Ed Director", "Matching my abilities and experience with the appropriate school",* and *"They call me"* reflect a desire by these school-based administrators to see a proactive system addressing the staffing requirements of this education system.

4.7.3.1.2.7 Potential Willingness Factor: Remuneration

Again, remuneration was identified by the school-based administrators as an influence in the decision to apply for school leadership positions. Comments such as *"Pay rise",* and *"Pay increase (if I'm being honest)"* reflected a view that remuneration did influence the application for leadership positions, but it is important to note that the frequency with which remuneration was mentioned was dramatically less than that of the classroom teachers.

4.7.3.1.3 System-Based Administrators

The system-based administrators also identified a number of influences that would impact their decision to apply for school principal positions within Adventist Schools in Australia. Discussion of the influences under the substantive themes identified by ASA employees in Table 4. 24 for the system-based administrators is found below.

4.7.3.1.3.1 Internal Driver: Challenge

For these system-based administrators, a sense of the challenge of school leadership existed which influenced their decision to apply for school leadership positions, but not to the same extent as their classroom teacher and school-based administrator colleagues. Comments such as *"Building school culture", "Learning, and therefore opportunities for professional growth", "Enjoy driving the whole program"* and *"Strategically directing school future direction"* still identify that a sense of challenge exists that does influence the decision to apply for school leadership positions.

4.7.3.1.3.2 Internal Driver: Make a Difference

For system-based administrators, a significant influence in their decision to apply for school leadership positions would be the positive difference they believe they could make in these roles. Comments such as *"Wishing to make a quality Educational difference", "Change agent", "Possible impact/positive outcome for students and community", "If I felt I could make a difference that added to the value of the school community", "Opportunity to build a top-quality school through building a positive school culture",* and *"Ability to make a difference in the lives of students"* all indicate the belief that having the opportunity to positively make a difference in the school and its community influence their decision to apply for school principal positions. It is worth noting that for the system-based administrator hierarchical level, this was the most often cited influence on the decision to apply for school leadership positions.

4.7.3.1.3.3 Worldview Factor: Spiritual/Calling

For these system-based administrators, a spiritual/calling dimension is clearly a significant influence on the decision to apply for school leadership positions. Second in frequency of mention only to the opportunity to make a difference, the spiritual/calling component resonated strongly with this hierarchical level. Comments such as *"A call for the role", "Adding Adventist Christian faith in the community to connect students, families and staff to Christ", "Sharing the love of Jesus to the students and families", "Opportunity to promote authentic Christianity",* and *"Feeling convicted that this is where God wants me to serve"* all illustrate that a significant spiritual component influences the decision of these system-based administrators to apply for school leadership positions.

4.7.3.1.3.4 Potential Willingness Factor: Professional Support

System-based administrators acknowledged that professional support elements would likely impact on their decision to apply for school-leadership positions. Opportunities for further study were identified, as well as the need to review the support given to new leaders. Additionally, these system-based administrators felt that clarifying routes to leadership would influence the decision to apply for school leadership, with comments such as *"…pathways need to be really clear"* and *"I'd like to see us map out some potential routes to leadership within our system"* indicative of this view. System-based administrators also expressed a desire to have a formalised, guided program for new principals as a support structure.

4.7.3.1.3.5 Potential Willingness Factor: System Support

Similar to professional support, these system-based administrators made no direct reference to the need for a supportive education system structure, or support needed by other system personnel. There was a desire expressed for a culture of *"collegiality"*, and being *"part of a team"* was mentioned, which implies a supportive environment, at least at the school level, but references were not given which indicated that a supportive education system at all administrative levels would influence the decision to apply for school leadership positions.

4.7.3.1.3.6 Potential Willingness Factor: System Staffing

The system-based administrators made numerous mentions of the desire to see acting positions made use of within the ASA education system. This was seen as something which may provide opportunities for developing leaders, and also to evidence leader readiness. While the challenges of staffing such acting positions was noted, these administrators were able to articulate the benefits of having acting positions included on personal service records. Additionally, it was perceived that implementing an appraisal system on a national level, would help to assist system staffing, and could be used to help identify, and again evidence leader readiness. Again, the challenges of this were noted, with system-based administrators identifying that with ASA having no real governance, rolling out such an appraisal system on a national level would be difficult.

A view was also presented by these administrators that there was often a lack of awareness of leadership positions that were vacant. There was some skepticism about the number of ASA employees who knew to look on the ASA website for positions available; this may need to be more widely communicated.

4.7.3.1.3.7 Potential Willingness Factor: Remuneration

While remuneration appeared to be a significant influence on the decision to apply for school leadership roles by the classroom teacher and school-based administrator hierarchical levels, it was far less of influence for system-based administrators. Only one reference was made to remuneration – *"Pay increase"* – suggesting remuneration is not considered by this hierarchical level to be a significant influence on their decision to apply for school leadership positions.

4.7.4 A Hierarchical Level Comparison Overview: Unwillingness and Willingness to Apply

4.7.4.1 Introduction

Thematic analysis of the open-ended questions in the survey relating to the school leadership aspirations of respondents across three hierarchical levels was undertaken. This analysis identified five factors that have an influence on the unwillingness to apply of these respondents for leadership positions, identified by all hierarchical levels:

1. A perceived lack of educational support from both the education system and the school community (Lack of Educational Support).
2. A perceived disruption to preferred family circumstances (Family Influences).
3. A perceived role disconnect that leadership is not desirable or a fit with their skill set (Role Disconnect).
4. The perception that leadership does not allow for appropriate Work-Life Balance (Work-Life Balance).
5. A perception that school leadership positions operate within limiting Church structures and unrealistic expectations (Religious Influences).

While five unwillingness factors were identified by all hierarchical levels, four of these unwillingness factors were seen to be particularly important in influencing the respondents' decision NOT to apply for school leadership positions: Lack of

Educational Support, the perceived lack of support from all levels of the education system and the school community for the preparation for and carrying out of the leadership role; Family Influences, the perceived disruption to their preferred family circumstances; Role Disconnect, the perception that a school leadership role is not desirable and/or does not fit with their skill set; and Work-Life Balance, the perception that the role is too large and the responsibility and work pressures unreasonable. The fifth factor was mentioned by all hierarchical levels, but the frequency of references in the Religious Influence factor across these hierarchical levels suggested it was not as significant an influence as the other four were in respondents' decision not to apply for school leadership positions.

Further, the willingness data analysis of all hierarchical levels identified seven factors that influence their willingness to apply for school leadership positions. It is important to note that within these seven willingness factors there exists three distinct factor groupings, one of which, the Potential Willingness factor, relates to the conversion of an unwillingness barrier to a potential willingness driver if modified from what exists presently:

Internal Driver factors

1. The challenge of successfully taking on school leadership and driving an educational program (Challenge).
2. The opportunity to make a positive, Christian focused difference for students, staff and the school community (Make a Difference).

Christian Worldview factors

3. The belief that God is both calling and enabling the individual to fulfil a leadership role (Spiritual/Calling).

Potential Willingness factors

4. Enhanced support from multiple education system levels (System Support).
5. Professional opportunities to enhance the leadership capacity of potential school leaders (Professional Support).
6. Involvement in school staffing processes (System Staffing).
7. Remuneration that is perceived to match the responsibility of the school leadership position (Remuneration).

Within these seven willingness factors there exist three distinct factor groupings. Firstly, the Challenge and Make a Difference factors were both internally driven reasons for these respondents to apply for school leadership positions. Secondly, Spiritual/Calling is a Christian worldview based reason that the respondents indicated influenced their willingness to apply for school leadership positions. Finally, the System Support, Professional Support, System Staffing and Remuneration factors were seen only to influence willingness to apply for school leadership positions if they were significantly improved from what exists presently.

4.7.4.2 Unwillingness Factors Comparison

The data indicated that there were considerable differences across hierarchical level perceptions within some, but not all, unwillingness factors.

Within the Lack of Educational Support factor, classroom teachers identified that this lack had an internal focus, with an emphasis on the limitations within the ASA education system and a lack of training and preparation for leadership roles. There was a view that teachers and leaders were not sufficiently being invested in, leading to a belief by many that they would be underprepared for the role of leadership.

For the school-based administrators, however, this lack of support included both an internal and external focus, and an emphasis on training and mentoring, particularly when in the leadership role. Many school-based administrators felt more could be done to prepare them for taking on school leadership roles.

System-based administrators also perceived this lack of training, when in the leadership role, as a significant influence on their unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions. Additionally, the system-based administrators identified that the current corporate structure within which ASA operates was not conducive to appropriate educational support for school-based leaders. They see the present corporate structure as fractured, and lacking executive authority across the various levels, generating a *"confusing corporate structure".* System-based administrators also perceive that schools are subjected to too many levels of authority, some of which take a ministerial focus rather than an educational focus.

Interestingly, analysis of respondent comments indicated that the differences between hierarchical levels for the Family Influences, Role Disconnect and Work-Life Balance factors influencing the unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions, were minimal. Respondents indicated a desire to spend more time with family, not less. Likewise, for the Work-Life Balance factor, it was common for respondents within each hierarchical level to lament the extraordinary amount of time required, and the size of the role of school leader. Role Disconnect, *"No longer engaged with students on a day-to-day basis"* was also seen to a near equivalent extent by all hierarchical levels to influence their unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions.

The perception that the leader has to operate within restrictive church structures and expectations (Religious Influences), was identified as an important factor in the unwillingness of classroom teachers and school-based administrators to apply for school leadership positions, evidenced by statements such as *"I don't like the pressure that the Adventist community places on principals"*, and *"Being held to an unachievable standard within the Church".* These pressures were perceived as having notably less influence on leadership aspirations for the system-based administrators.

4.7.4.3 Willingness Factors Comparison

For the willingness factors, there were considerable hierarchical level differences. For the Internal Driver factors (Challenge and Make a difference) and the Christian Worldview factors (Spiritual/Calling), it was the focus of these factors that represented the hierarchical differences. On the other hand, for the Potential Willingness factors (System Support, Professional Support, System Staffing, and Remuneration), factors which if improved would lend themselves towards an increased willingness to apply for school leadership positions, the difference across hierarchical levels was the extent of perceived need for improvement.

For the factors influencing the willingness TO apply, it was the potential to make a positive difference to the school and its community and the challenge to make a difference – both internal drivers - that most drove the willingness of all hierarchical levels to apply for school leadership positions. The Challenge and Make a Difference

factors, as identified by the respondents, were not always easily separated, rather, one often spilled over to the other. It is noteworthy, however, that the Challenge as seen by the system-based administrators, took on a broader perspective of school leadership, including a holistic and strategic orientation.

A desire to infuse the school with a spiritual tone, or the belief that they had been 'called' to school leadership, were also significant influences on the decision to apply for leadership positions for all hierarchical levels. For classroom teachers, this call was a 'God convicted' call to Adventist Education as ministry. School-based administrators were more likely to associate 'the calling' with a specific leadership role. In contrast, the system-based administrators saw the 'call' as having a Christian missional focus – that is, providing an opportunity to promote authentic Christianity whilst serving God.

The analysis of the four potential willingness factor elements highlighted the difference in perspectives of the three hierarchical levels. Each level suggested that different degrees of improvement would be needed to convert present educational support elements from currently acting as deterrents, to aspirational influences.

Professional Support - formal training and development, mentoring, and clear pathways to leadership roles - was seen by the classroom teachers as needing significant change to become an important influence on their willingness to apply for school leadership positions. The school-based administrators perceived that some change was needed; as a school-based administrator respondent noted, their aspirations would increase if, *"Support coaching and mentoring into [a leadership] role and a career pathway [were] provided".* System-based administrators, who also identified the need for improvement, in contrast, suggested only small changes were required in order to influence their willingness to apply for school leadership positions.

In terms of the System Staffing element, both the classroom teachers and the school-based administrators saw that any change that consistently emphasised identification of skills and selection of the best candidate would increase their willingness to apply for school leadership positions. The system-based administrators did not highlight the

degree of change necessary to improve the System Staffing element, or how this change would influence their willingness to apply or not apply for school leadership positions.

For the Remuneration element, the emphasis on the need for change was greatest for the classroom teachers, then followed by the school-based administrators, and only minor adjustment seemed necessary for the system-based administrators.

4.7.5 Unwillingness and Willingness: Connections

The data analysis for the unwillingness to apply for leadership positions factor, Lack of Educational Support, indicated that this factor consisted of the following components: 1) Lack of decision-making authority, 2) Staff selection practices, 3) Preparedness for the role, 4) Salary concerns, 5) Lack of autonomy, 6) Lack of ongoing training and development, 7) Unsupportive school environments, and 8) System-based politics. What is noticed is that these components are to a large extent parallel with the Potential Willingness factors: 1) System Support, 2) Professional Support, 3) System Staffing and 4) Remuneration. Therefore, because of the similarities between the Lack of Educational Support factor and the Potential Willingness factors, the perception of the Potential Willingness factors across the respective hierarchical level groupings will be reflected in the perceptions of the Educational Support factor across these groupings.

This link between unwillingness and willingness factors suggests that for educational support, a **threshold level exists;** a level of educational support that converts this unwillingness factor to a willingness factor, and then aspiration into application. That is, there is a perception of a need for appropriate improvement to Educational Support to a satisfactory level for this conversion to take place.

What is noted is that within each hierarchical level, there is consistency of responses in terms of improvement needed to the Lack of Educational Support factor. But across the three hierarchical levels, there were obvious relative differences in the perceived extent of improvement needed to the educational support elements to convert this unwillingness factor to a willingness to consider educational leadership factor. It is

clear that different hierarchical levels see the extent of change necessary to reach this threshold differently. The system-based administrators perceive that the present levels of educational support are near to this threshold level. In contrast, the school-based administrators, and to an even greater extent the classroom teachers, perceive that considerable systemic improvement to Educational Support (Professional Support, System Support, Staffing System and Remuneration), must be implemented in order to positively influence aspirations to apply for school leadership positions (Figure 4.6).

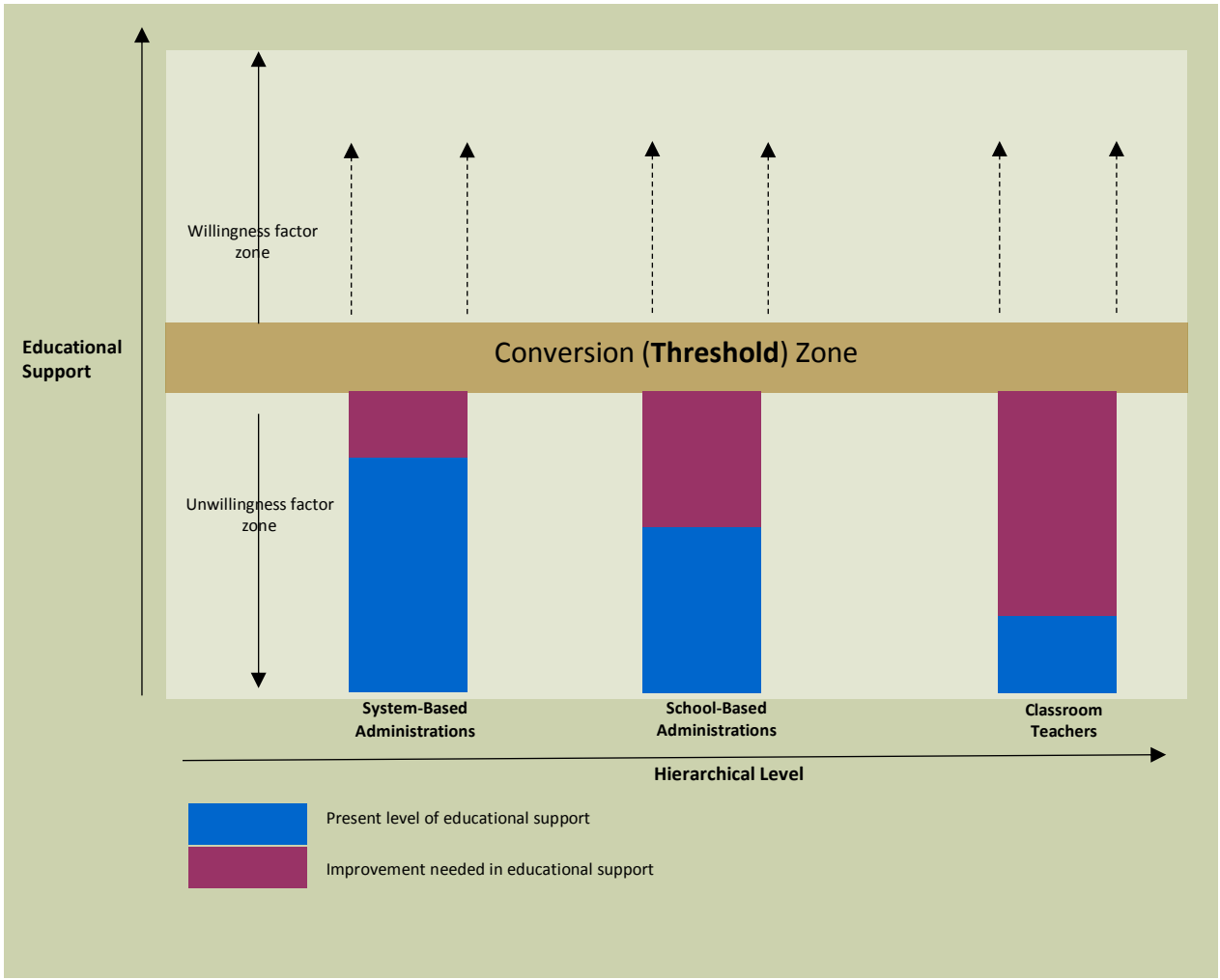


Figure 4. 6 Perceptions of required improvement to educational support to convert this from an unwillingness to a willingness to apply for school leadership factor

4.8 INTEGRATION ACROSS DATA SOURCES

4.8.1 Introduction

This chapter explored the aspirations of and influences on ASA employees with regards to school leadership succession practices by adopting a survey approach to data collection. This analysis focused on the different perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator, and system-based administrator hierarchical levels. The survey data source was comprised of a demographic section, a Likert scale data section which focused on aspirations, and two sections exploring the influences on the respondent's decision not to apply or to apply for school leadership positions. The first of these sections exploring influences on the respondent's decision consisted of 38 fixed-choice items that related to their unwillingness to apply for leadership positions, and the second section included 12 fixed-choice items that related to their willingness to apply for school leadership positions. Following this, the last section consisted of open-ended questions exploring factors influencing their decision not to, and to apply for school leadership positions, allowing respondents to present their perceptions without imposing restraints on responses.

The analyses from the fixed-choice and open-ended survey questions were integrated to gain a richer understanding of the research sub-question: What are the perceptions of the factors that would influence the decision of classroom teachers, school-based administrators, and system-based administrators to apply, or not apply, for a school leadership position within the Adventist Schools Australia education system?

4.8.2 Data Integration

4.8.2.1 Present Aspiration

When considering all ASA employees across all hierarchical levels, the data indicated that at present 71% of respondents indicated they had no school leadership aspirations. This percentage is to be expected as it is not realistic to assume that all ASA employees have a desire to pursue school leadership in the future. However, the remaining ASA employees indicate that school leadership is a possibility in the future. What is important to note though, is that of these remaining 29% of ASA

employees, only 1.8% are currently pursuing school leadership opportunities. It would appear that the remaining approximately 27% need certain circumstances, conditions or influences not currently in place in order to convert their aspirations into actions.

4.8.2.2 Influences Impacting the Decision to Pursue School Leadership

In this section, the influences impacting school leadership aspiration and resultant application determined from the integration of the analysis of both the fixed choice and open-ended survey items, are grouped, firstly, in terms of those influences that would contribute to an unwillingness of respondents to apply for school leadership. Secondly, the influences on the willingness to apply for school leadership positions are grouped together. These unwillingness and willingness influences are considered in terms of the perceptions of all ASA employees, and then in terms of the differences in the perceptions of each of the three hierarchical levels.

4.8.2.2.1 Unwillingness Influences: ASA Employees Overview

Considering the commonalities and unique concepts of the respective data source analyses, the following influence domains relating to the unwillingness of respondents to apply for school leadership positions emerged from the combination of the respective quantitative factors and qualitative themes previously identified:

1. Unsupportive Educational Environment
2. Leadership Role Detractors
3. Work-Life Issues
4. Gender Bias
5. Religious Expectations

The Unsupportive Educational Environment influence domain emerged from the combination of the External Environment factor stemming from the quantitative analysis, and the Lack of Educational Support theme identified in the qualitative analysis. This influence encompassed a perception that respondents consider aspects of the external educational environment to be excessively intrusive or uncooperative, including the media, regulatory bodies, threat of litigation and the parent body. Additionally, a perceived lack of support for school leaders from all levels of the ASA education system and school community for both the preparation for and carrying out of the school leadership role also influenced the unwillingness of respondents to apply

for school leadership positions. This lack of educational support was sometimes seen as a consequence of the current Church organisational structure, which often does not have education as its focus, but rather a Church ministerial orientation.

The Leadership Role Detractors influence domain emerged from the combination of the Leadership Detractors factor from the quantitative analysis and the Role Disconnect theme from the qualitative analysis. This influence stressed the negative affect that came with the leadership role in terms of loss of relationships with students and staff, the perception that the leadership role required a skill set that respondents felt they lacked, and the intrusive nature the role would have on their personal lives.

The Work-Life Issues influence domain emerged from the combination of the Work-Life Balance factor from the quantitative analysis and the Work-Life Pressures and Family Influence themes from the qualitative analysis. This influence represents the perception that respondents identify work-life balance concerns to add pressure to the roles filled by school leaders, and influenced their unwillingness to apply. These issues include the perception that school leadership roles are too large and the responsibility and work pressures considered unreasonable, as well as a perceived disruption to preferred family circumstances. The fact that respondents identified work-life issues strongly in both areas of the survey analysis signal the importance of this domain and clearly outlines that their concern over the perceived levels of work-life balance strongly influences their unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions.

The Gender Bias influence domain emerged from both the quantitative analysis factor Gender Bias and was also reported by respondents in the qualitative analysis component. This influence included the perception that women were disadvantaged in selection processes and that women were valued less in terms of their leadership capability and cultural fit. This perceived bias likely results in fewer women pursuing their leadership aspirations within the ASA education system.

The Religious Expectations influence domain emerged from both the quantitative analysis factor Religious Identity and the qualitative analysis theme Religious Influences. This influence included the perception that it was difficult to fulfil the

faith / leadership expectations within a faith-based education system, as well as the perception that respondents had not been 'called' to the leadership role.

While these influence domains were identified by all hierarchical levels, they are perceived differently by each of these hierarchical levels, and were considered to have differing levels of influence in terms of the overall unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions. The following section explores this in detail.

4.8.2.2.2 Unwillingness Influences: Hierarchical Level Differences

For all hierarchical levels, the Work-Life Issues domain was considered to be the strongest influence on ASA employees decision not to apply for school leadership positions. The Unsupportive Educational Environment domain was perceived by all hierarchical levels to be the next most influential on the decision not to apply for school leadership positions. The Leadership Role Detractors domain was seen by all hierarchical levels to be of medium influence, while the Gender Bias and Religious Expectations domains were perceived to have a minimal level of influence on the decision not to apply for school leadership positions, in that these were only considered an important unwillingness factor by a small subgroup of the respondents (Figure 4.7).

There were some notable hierarchical differences within the influences identified in the data analysis which impacted the unwillingness of these respondents to apply for school leadership positions. It was unanimous across all hierarchical levels that Work-Life Issues had the highest level of influence, but the classroom teachers perceived this influence higher than the school-based administrators, who in turn perceived this influence higher than the system-based administrators. The Unsupportive Educational Environment and the Leadership Role Detractors domains saw the classroom teachers registering similar importance to these influences to that of the system-based administrators, with both hierarchical levels seeing these domains to be more influential than their school-based administrator counterparts. Even though the Gender Bias influence domain was of minimal influence, Gender Bias is perceived by the classroom teachers and system-based administrators to be a greater influence on unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions than for the school-based administrators. Within the Religious Expectations influence domain, it was the

classroom teachers that perceived this to be the highest influence on their unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions, followed by the school-based administrators, with the system-based administrators considering this a minor influence on their unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions (Figure 4. 7).

It is important to note that there is also a difference in focus of the hierarchical levels within the Unsupportive Educational Environment influence domain. For classroom teachers, the focus was on the internal ASA educational environment, while the school-based administrators perceived that while both the internal and external educational environment were unsupportive, it was the lack of perceived opportunities for training once in a leadership role that was emphasised. For the system-based administrators, the lack of educational support for leaders was perceived to stem from limitations they saw within the fractured corporate ASA hierarchical structure.

Influence Domain / Influence Level	Work-Life Issues	Unsupportive Educational Environment	Leadership Role Detractors	Gender Bias	Religious Expectations
High Influence Zone	Classroom Teachers; School-Based Administrators; System-Based Administrators				
Medium Influence Zone		Classroom Teachers; System-Based Administrators; School-Based Administrators	Classroom Teachers; System-Based Administrators; School-Based Administrators		
Low Influence Zone				Classroom Teachers; System-Based Administrators; School-Based Administrators	Classroom Teachers; School-Based Administrators; System-Based Administrators

Figure 4. 7 Unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions influence strength by hierarchical level across respective factors

4.8.2.2.3 Willingness Influences: ASA Employees Overview

As previously outlined, the fixed-choice component of the survey identified two factors that contribute to the willingness of respondents to apply for school leadership positions: Contributions and External Rewards. The open-ended data analysis, in contrast, identified seven themes embedded within three distinct factor groupings: Contribution Factors (Challenge and Make a Difference), Christian Worldview Factor (Calling / Spiritual), and Potential Willingness Factors (Professional Support, System Support, Staffing Support and Remuneration) which the respondents indicate, if improved, would likely transition to become willingness factors. These seven factors were perceived by the respondents to positively influence their willingness to apply for school leadership positions. There was considerable overlap between these data sources, with the following influence domains emerging from the combination of the respective factors and themes as significant influences on ASA employee willingness to apply for school leadership positions:

1. Contributions
2. External Rewards
3. Improved Educational Support
4. Calling

Again, while these influence domains were identified by all hierarchical levels, they are perceived differently by each of these hierarchical levels, and were considered to have differing levels of influence on the overall willingness of ASA employees to apply for school leadership positions.

The Contributions domain, the perception that the potential to positively contribute to the school and its community acts as an incentive to apply for school leadership positions, emerged from the combination of the Contributions factor identified within the quantitative analysis, and the internally driven Challenge and Make a Difference themes identified within the qualitative open-ended analysis. This influence domain largely captures personal, professional, educational, spiritual, and holistic areas which allow the potential school leader to positively contribute to the school and its community.

The External Rewards influence domain, the perception that external rewards, such as power and autonomy, prestige and remuneration, was also found to influence the decision to apply for school leadership positions. This domain was most strongly identified by the quantitative analysis, although aspects of this were also identified within the qualitative analysis.

The Improved Educational Support domain, captures the perception that a number of areas also found within Lack of Educational Support, an unwillingness influence, if perceived by ASA employees to improve, may actually convert to positive influences on the willingness of these employees to apply for such school leadership positions. The willingness to apply data suggests that when the following components of Improved Educational Support **were modified**, each of these areas would actually positively influence respondent willingness to apply for school leadership positions: Professional Support, a perception of the need for improved provision of formal training and development opportunities or support considered to further the leadership capacity of these individuals at the school level; System Support, the perception of the need for the different levels of the ASA education system to provide improved support to those in leadership roles; System Staffing, a perception of the need for the ASA education system to improve the identification of suitable leadership candidates, and for prospective leaders to have a greater voice in local school staffing decisions; and Remuneration, a perception of the need for improvements in how school leaders are financially compensated for their positions of responsibility.

The Calling influence domain, a perception that the willingness to take on school leadership is a response to God's voice, is also identified as having a significant influence on the willingness to apply for school leadership positions. This domain was firstly and strongly identified in the qualitative analysis, but was also implied within elements of the quantitative Contributions factor.

4.8.2.2.4 Willingness Influences: Hierarchical Level Differences

For all hierarchical levels, the Contributions domain was considered to have the strongest influence on ASA employees' willingness to apply for school leadership

positions. Calling was also perceived by all hierarchical levels to have significant influence on the decision to apply for school leadership, although it must be recognised that individuals experience this with some degree of variance, and differently over time. External Rewards were seen as having only a low level of influence on the decision to apply for school leadership positions (Figure 4.8). The Improved Educational Support domain was identified as likely to influence the decision to apply for school leadership positions, however, exactly how much improvement in these areas was required to see respondent willingness increase suggests different thresholds perspectives existed for each of the three hierarchical levels, and this will be discussed separately in the following section.

There were some notable hierarchical differences within the influences identified in the data triangulation which impacted the willingness of these respondents to apply for school leadership positions. While all hierarchical levels identified that Contributions had the highest level of influence, this was particularly emphasised by the system-based administrators, who identified Contributions as influencing their decision to apply at levels above that of both the classroom teacher and school-based administrators – even though all hierarchical levels registered Contributions at extremely high levels of influence. Interestingly, and contrary to expectations, the system-based administrators also rated External Rewards higher than their classroom teacher and school-based administrator colleagues. The data analysis from the Improved Educational Support domain clearly outlined that classroom teachers and school-based administrators saw a larger threshold in need of improvement than the system-based administrators in order to influence their willingness to apply for school leadership positions. These system-based administrators were so strongly influenced by the Contributions influence domain that this, in many instances, was seen to overcome the limitations in terms of the lack of current educational support perceived by this hierarchical level. In terms of the influence of Calling, while this was determined to a large extent at an individual level, it was the system-based administrators who appeared to be most influenced by this, followed by school-based administrators and then classroom teachers (Figure 4. 8).

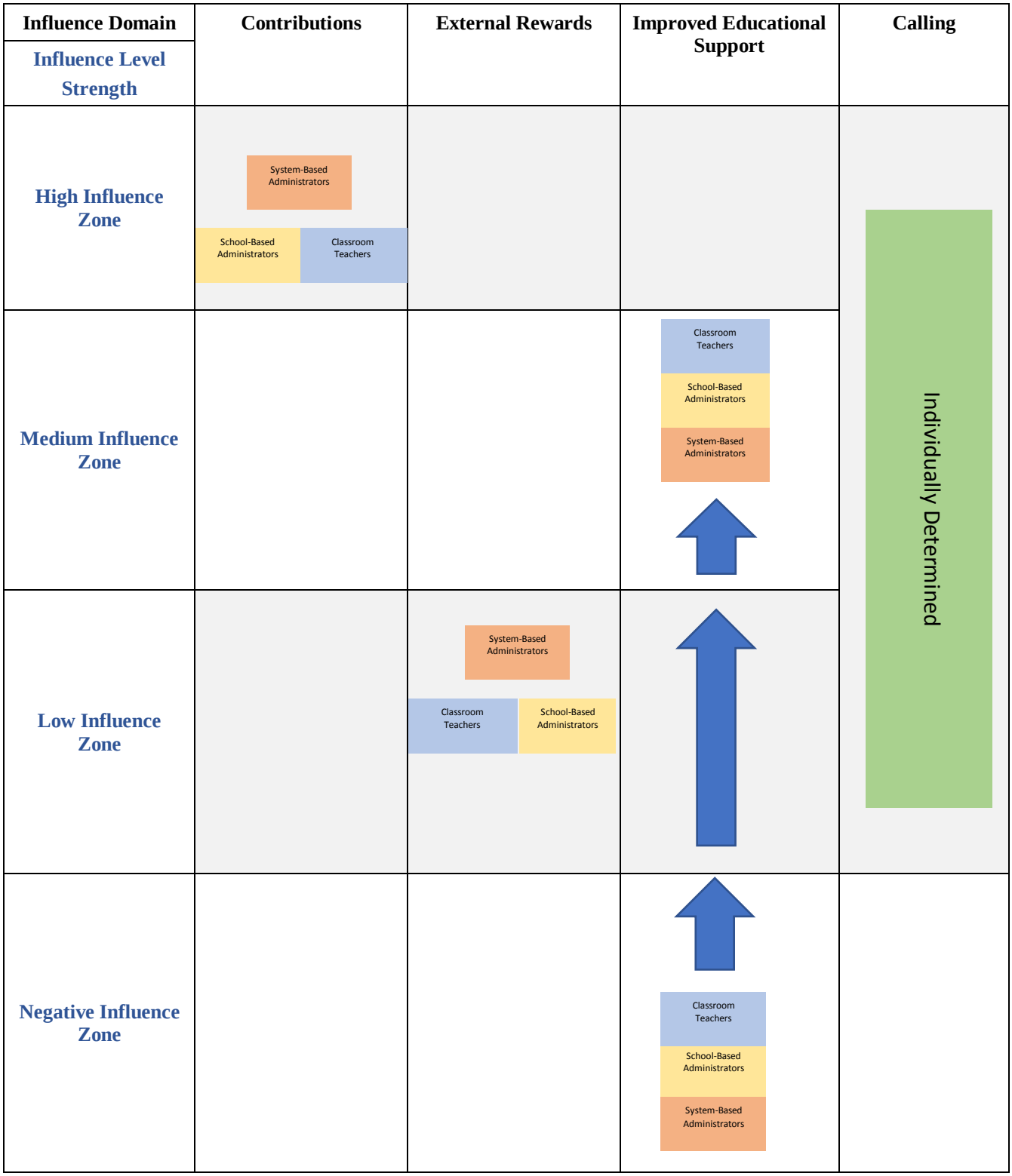


Figure 4. 8 Willingness to apply for school leadership positions influence strength by hierarchical level across respective factors

4.8.2.3 Threshold Perspectives

The data indicated that the Lack of Educational Support domain, found within the unwillingness to apply analysis, had significant commonality with the Improved Educational Support domain, identified within the willingness to apply for school leadership analysis. All hierarchical levels agreed that there was a need for improvement in educational support when discussing the unwillingness of respondents to apply for school leadership positions. When assessing the willingness to apply influences, the need for greater educational support to increase willingness was particularly highlighted by classroom teachers and school-based administrators. The system-based administrators' responses, however, were notable by far lesser emphasis on the need to improve educational support as a driver of willingness to apply for school leadership positions.

This suggests that for the system-based administrators, the present situation in terms of educational support, is not a hurdle considered too great for them to not consider leadership. That is, a willingness to apply threshold level, in terms of Improved Educational Support, is perceived by the system-based administrators to be close to having been reached. In contrast, the classroom teachers and school-based administrators, the data suggests, perceive that this threshold has not been reached, and there must be noticeable improvement in the area of Improved Educational Support, specifically to Professional Support, System Support, Staffing System and Remuneration, to create greater aspirations for school leadership.

For the classroom teachers, improvement in the Professional Support area meant earlier identification and pre-leadership preparation, whereas for the school-based administrators, the improvement was perceived to be needed to support a career pathway. In terms of System Support, both the classroom teachers and the school-based administrators perceived the need for greater support from all levels within the ASA education system, though the school-based administrators saw this as a lesser issue than the classroom teachers. For Staffing Support, the focus of improvement for the classroom teachers was an increased transparency in the staffing process, and for the school-based administrators, there was a desire for greater emphasis on being identified as a potential school leader based on their merits. Finally, the data indicated that the threshold level required to increase school leadership aspiration was higher

for the classroom teachers than that of their school-based administrator colleagues (Figure 4. 6).

Even though this study identified that there were differences in threshold levels between the respective hierarchical levels, this study was limited in that it was unable to determine the exact level of these thresholds. This could be an area of significance in ASA succession practice design or improvement, as it would appear to have the ability to impact on aspiration for school leadership.

4.9 SYNOPSIS

4.9.1 Introduction

This section summarises the perceptions of classroom teachers, school-based administrators and system-based administrators relating to their present school leadership aspiration and the factors that influence their decision to or not to apply for school leadership positions.

The survey approach, including both fixed choice and open-ended questions, was selected as a data collection instrument in Phase One of this study to enable a large reach for possible responses, in that aspirations and the influences impacting the decision to apply for school leadership positions were seen to be influenced by a range of factors. With a large sample, however, there is a possibility of detecting general trends across the population studied. To generate a meaningful analysis, emails inviting ASA employees to participate in the survey were sent to 1173 employees, approximately 90% of the total ASA staff population. Five hundred and four responses were returned and form the basis for this Chapter Four analysis.

4.9.2 Aspirations

The data indicates that 1.2% of ASA employees aged under 30, and 3.0% of ASA employees aged 31-40, are currently applying for leadership positions. This would indicate future leadership requirements are unable to be met under the present conditions. There are, however, 25.9% and 24.8% of the under 30 and 31-40 age groups respectively, who expressed a possible interest in applying for leadership

positions in the future. These are the key groups that need to be convinced that it is desirable to aspire to school leadership, in order to sustain ASA school leadership needs. Additionally, of those intending to apply for school leadership positions in the future, 68% are male, compared to only 32% being female. The gender bias appearing in this study would appear to be in need of further exploration. Finally, leadership aspirations were seen to decrease as age increases, emphasising the need to address this leadership aspirations component early on in the employees' career.

4.9.3 Leadership Decision Influences

The analysis identified five domains that influenced ASA employees' unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions: a perceived work-life imbalance, a lack of perceived educational support, leadership role detractors, a perceived gender bias, and religious expectations. All hierarchical levels agreed that the perceived work-life imbalance was the strongest influence on their decision not to apply for school leadership positions. This was followed by the leadership role detractors and unsupportive educational environment influences, which were both considered to be of medium influence in the decision not to apply for school leadership positions. The perceived gender bias and the pressure that stems from religious expectations were seen to be of only minimal influence on the decision not to apply for school leadership positions.

For both the work-life and religious expectations domains, it was the classroom teachers that perceived this to have the greatest influence on their decision not to apply, followed by the school-based administrators and then the system-based administrators. In contrast, the perceived lack of educational support, the leadership role detractors and gender bias domains were rated similarly by the classroom teachers and the system-based administrators, and higher than their school-based administrator counterparts in influence on the decision not to apply for school leadership positions. However, within the unsupportive educational environment influence domain, the classroom teachers emphasised a lack of internal support, while the system-based administrators included a lack of support both internally and externally but emphasised that there existed a lack of opportunity for training when in

the school leadership role. The system-based administrators emphasised within the unsupportive educational environment domain that there were difficulties in providing additional support initiatives due to the fractured corporate hierarchical structure. Within the religious expectations domain, it was the classroom teachers who perceived this to have the highest influence on their decision not to apply for school leadership positions, followed by the school-based and then system-based administrators.

While leadership role detractors and religious expectations were perceived to be influences that would increase the unwillingness of ASA employees to apply for school leadership positions, there exists little opportunity to make changes in these influence areas, as they are primarily experienced at an individualised level. It is the areas of work-life balance, the educational support, and gender bias that the ASA education system has the greatest potential to work with in order to increase aspiration. There is also a need to highlight the positive contribution that leaders can make within the school and wider community in order to increase aspirations, and a need to acknowledge the importance of 'Calling' at the individual level in leadership decision-making.

When given the opportunity to express what would influence a decision to apply for school leadership, all hierarchical levels indicated it was the potential to contribute positively to students, school and wider community that was of greatest influence to this decision. Seen to be of only minor influence was the external rewards factor, in particular remuneration and/or status, in this decision-making. Interestingly, the classroom teachers and school-based administrators also indicated a need for improvement in the areas of educational support within the ASA education system, and work-life balance in order to initiate their decision to apply for school leadership. For the classroom teachers, the focus of improvement related to professional support and system staffing, while the school-based administrators focused strongly on the need for improved system support. There was, however, only sparse mention by the system-based administrator hierarchical level of this need for improvement to initiate a decision to apply for school leadership positions. The hierarchical perceptions of the influence of calling on willingness to apply for school leadership positions saw the classroom teachers emphasise Adventist Education as a ministry, and the school-

based administrators most often link ‘calling’ to a particular role. The system-based administrators, interestingly, like the classroom teachers included acknowledgement of their Adventist Education ministry focus, but went further, likely as a result of their roles, to include the opportunity to embed Adventist special character within the schools and the school system.

4.9.4 Implications

The data suggests that even though these willingness and unwillingness to apply for school leadership influences were analysed as separate entities, their influence is further increased when taken together as a complete set of succession practices. This would indicate that a holistic approach to addressing the lack of active aspiration within the ASA education system is essential. It is also worth emphasising that certain unwillingness to apply for school leadership position influences can be converted to willingness to apply for school leadership position influences with relatively minor modifications.

In terms of the motivation for ASA employees to take on leadership positions, it is largely determined by the perception of the level of disincentives. If this disincentive level is perceived to be at a sufficiently low level, then employees will apply for school leadership positions, and then the opportunity to contribute positively in leadership roles becomes the driving force that sustains their motivation to pursue school leadership. The data suggests this threshold level, at which leadership aspiration turns to action, is different for the different hierarchical levels. In terms of the threshold levels for improvements across the identified influence domains, the data emphasises it is only the system-based administrators who perceive that the present system is either at or near appropriate threshold levels. Importantly, however, it is these system-based administrators, who, while in a position to advocate for these improvements, also happen to be the hierarchical level who least perceive that these improvements need to be made. This represents an area of significant risk to the ASA education system, as the recruitment and sustainability of a pipeline of potential school leaders is of clear importance.

Finally, what is noted from this analysis, is that current ASA succession practices are seen by all hierarchical levels to impact on ASA employee leadership aspiration. In particular, it was the lack of established formal leadership preparation programs which impacted leadership aspiration for all hierarchical levels. It is, however, important to keep in mind that succession practices are only considered of any worth if legitimate aspiration exists for school leadership.

4.9.5 Conclusion

This chapter documented the survey data analysis of the perceptions of ASA employee school leadership aspirations, and the influences on the decision to or not to apply for school leadership positions. The analysis adopted a three-hierarchical level framework to explore these employee perceptions. This chapter also identified implications for the ASA education system given the present aspiration levels and employee perceptions of school leadership.

Chapter five, adopting an interview data collection process, explores in detail ASA employees' perceptions of current and ideal succession practices.

CHAPTER 5: PHASE TWO - INTERVIEW DATA RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study employed a two-phase mixed method research approach. Phase Two, the focus of this chapter, addresses the research sub-questions:

- What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels with regard to current succession practices?
- What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels with regard to ideal succession practices?

This chapter explores the Phase Two data, collected from the interview component of this research study. For this study, the aspirations, identification, preparation, placement and post-succession support provided to leaders is termed 'succession practices'. Firstly, the chapter aims to explore the perceptions of Adventist Schools Australia (ASA) employees relating to components of current ASA succession practices with respect to identifying, preparing and placing people into leadership positions, and providing post-succession support within the ASA education system. Secondly, along with exploring perceptions of these current succession components, this chapter will also explore ASA employees' perceptions of what these practices would ideally look like in order to not discourage, but rather, to attract and retain quality leaders for the future. Finally, this chapter aims to investigate the different perceptions of succession practices across three different hierarchical levels of ASA employees: classroom teachers, school-based administrators, and system-based administrators.

It is important to note that participants' responses in this qualitative phase, some of which relate to influences impacting the decision to consider school leadership roles (the focus of Phase One), will not be excluded in this analysis. Indeed, the findings of

these two phases are not mutually exclusive, but rather, elements within the two phases may overlap and inform others.

5.2 SAMPLE

The sample consisted of seventeen semi-structured interviews across three ASA hierarchical levels. A purposive sampling approach was adopted in order to provide guidelines for the selection of appropriate respondents as related to the research question. The advantage of purposive sampling is to gain adequate representation in terms of gender, teaching experience, age and respondent hierarchical level. Of these, seven were classroom teachers, four were school-based administrators, and six were system-based administrators (Table 5. 1). Further, informal discussions were held with a number of ASA employees across the hierarchical levels to test that lines of enquiry were saturated. The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed.

Table 5. 1 Sample hierarchical level, age, gender, and years of experience

Hierarchical Level	Age Range	Gender	Years of ASA experience
Classroom teachers	28-57	4 Female 3 Male	5-34
School-based Administrators	38-63	1 Female 3 Males	12-35
System-based Administrators	48-65+	2 Females 4 Males	20-40

5.3 ANALYSIS OVERVIEW

Data for this phase of the study was obtained from semi-structured interviews and analysis of this data was undertaken by adopting a grounded theory approach (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Maxwell, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Analysis was commenced by using NVivo version 9 and line by line coding from which a series of categories were developed. Tentative themes were then developed from these categories. Then further data collection took place until lines of enquiry were saturated. These tentative themes were then adjusted to reflect the additional data

collected. Finally, the data was re-explored to ensure that these tentative themes that had emerged were substantiated and validated by the data.

5.3.1 Framework Development

From the initial analyses of the data, it was noted that respondents most often expressed their perceptions of succession practices by outlining a range of components they saw succession to include, followed by examples that depicted their involvement with ASA succession practices. Along with these, respondents unfailingly presented their perceptions and concerns with current ASA succession practices and their views of what would constitute ideal succession practices. This led to the adoption of the following four category framework: Scope; Involvement; Current practice; and Ideal practice.

'Scope', in this framework, describes respondents' perceptions of what succession practices include as well as links between the respective elements identified within their perception of succession practices. 'Involvement' communicates a perception by respondents of their level of interest and subsequent engagement with and/or desire to understand ASA education system succession practices. 'Current practice', in the participants' view, provides a picture of what the respondent's saw current succession practices to include and their evaluation of and interaction with such practices. In contrast, 'Ideal practice' describes a picture of what respondents believe should be considered in the development of a best practice ASA education system succession model.

Further, in both the Current practice and Ideal practice categories of the framework, respondents described these in terms of four sub-categories: Overview, Preparation, Process, and Post-Succession Support.

This proved to be a helpful framework to give context to the respective themes that emerged from the data describing the respondents' perceptions of ASA succession practices. The analysis of the data was carried out separately for each ASA hierarchical level, and the study adopted this category, sub-category, and theme

approach for the reporting of classroom teachers, school-based administrators, and system-based administrators' perceptions.

It is important to note that these categories and sub-categories, though distinct in their focus, at times overlap in terms of the themes, or aspects of the themes, that emerge from the data analysis, seemingly at times resulting in repetition of findings. This study takes a systems approach to the research question, which emphasises the study of the interrelation of the ASA succession practice components and the respective perspectives of different hierarchical levels, rather than studying these components in isolation. This systems approach recognises and acknowledges the complexity of the ASA organisational system. It focuses on relationships among the elements and sub-systems within ASA succession practices as well as exploring the nature of the impact of external factors potentially impacting the ASA education system.

5.4 CLASSROOM TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

Utilising the above outlined participant generated framework - Scope, Involvement, Current, and Ideal - the following outlines classroom teacher's perceptions of ASA succession practices.

5.4.1 Scope

Within the scope category of the framework - an overview of the respective components of succession practices and the connections between these - there emerged one major theme: A system focus.

5.4.1.1 Identification and Preparation: System Focus

Classroom teacher definitions of succession practices most often placed an emphasis on identification and preparation of current employees and teachers for future leadership roles by the ASA system. The two parts of this theme, identification and preparation, were identified by classroom teachers in isolation, but were lacking in their presentation as to how these were sequenced and how they contributed to an integrated succession program. There was very little reference to individual initiatives that classroom teachers would be involved in, but rather, a perception that the ASA

education system would initiate identification of future potential leaders and subsequent leadership training programs. Preparation was seen to include general training, professional development, planning and mentoring, all of which classroom teachers perceived is to be provided by ASA. The following two quotes are examples of the emphasis of these processes in succession practices presented by classroom teachers:

> *I think it's [the ASA system] preparing people for the role of becoming a principal. So, planning for when principals leave for someone else to take over that role. (Respondent 4)*

> *I guess when I think about succession planning, I think about, identifying people that, are already in our system, that can be mentored and trained to further their skills and, perhaps be mentored to take over from those that are already in administrative positions. (Respondent 8)*

Though the succession event was not excluded, there was little emphasis on the event itself in their discussion of succession practices.

This ASA led successor identification and preparation was often presented with a self-development orientation. As noted by one early career respondent, *"The [systems] plan of advancing my career … but also progressing to better myself in my teaching career" (Respondent 1).*

Classroom teachers struggled as a group, however, to identify formal preparation programs that exist within the ASA education system. The one program that was identified at this hierarchical level was the ASA 'Aspiring Leaders' program, believed by respondents to be offered every second year. They were not able to articulate much about this program, but the following quote captures much of what arose regarding this identified preparation program:

> *There was no formal training, actually no training whatsoever apart from being told that I was free to take up professional development courses in that area if I'd like to, and I found of my own accord one day on the Adventist website that they do a mentoring, ah, the Union runs a mentoring, or leade … you know, identifying future leadership program every second year, and that, going to that course can count as credit towards studying a masters in administration. So, I went to my head of primary and said 'Look, why were we not told about this, this is something that I would have been really interested in going to' and she*

said 'Well I've never heard of it'. So, there obviously was, or still is something in place from a Union level bi-annually, but it's never getting, well it hasn't gotten to the people necessarily that might want to be involved. (Respondent 8)

A number of classroom teachers were also able to identify that education systems outside of the Adventist system offer preparatory programs – specifically the independent schools leadership programs. However, none knew what these programs entailed.

In summary, as evidenced by the classroom teacher responses, although for these classroom teacher's succession practices included the standard components of identification, preparation and the filling of leadership positions, it had an emphasis on the ASA education system's role in the first two components in particular. A system focus theme was strongly identified by classroom teachers, emphasising their view that the ASA system should play a key role in identifying and preparing future education system leaders.

5.4.2 Involvement

A common question that arose from classroom teachers was 'Why should I be involved in leadership'? This is a particularly important question as the perceived level of interest in leadership of the classroom teachers appeared to influence their level of interaction with succession elements, and ultimately impacted their understanding of succession practices within the ASA education system. Within this category of the framework, two differing themes emerged: Those who were considered 'engaged' and those who were considered 'disengaged'. These two themes describe the perceptions of two contrasting groups of classroom teachers. Those classroom teachers who did engage in discussions around succession practices appeared more open to taking on leadership roles in the future, while those classroom teachers who did not engage and could not easily articulate succession practices largely indicated that they were disinterested in pursuing leadership roles.

5.4.2.1 Engagement

Engaged classroom teachers identified a number of incentives for why they did engage with and have some desire to pursue school leadership opportunities. For these

classroom teachers, the dominant area acknowledged for interest and involvement in succession practices was intrinsic incentives associated with leadership roles.

These intrinsic incentives included the opportunity to contribute to school and system improvement and development, impacting positively the lives of colleagues and students, and having an opportunity to demonstrate Christian values in leadership.

> *I think it's awesome [having a leadership role] that you can make big changes and that you can, really make some good decisions for the school and some good decisions for the community. (Respondent 4)*

> *… if you have a real passion for Adventist education, and you think that you could drive change, especially if you think there is a need for change, or that you could drive improvement, particularly if you're doing it internally, within a school, like you're, say the head of the department at a school and you'd like to become the vice principal or the principal at that same school, because you see a need that's not being fulfilled, or you see potential that is not being reached, or possibilities that aren't being pursued, so that's your non-material incentive, um, like an intrinsic incentive that I think some people do have, and they have a real, a real passion for that… (Respondent 6)*

There is no doubt that monetary incentives played a part in this engagement, but as noted in the quote below it was most often only a secondary incentive to taking on leadership positions.

> *There are [in leadership positions], there are some material rewards, and I think there are some people who really see it as kind of an extension of the mission that they've, they've done all this stuff in a classroom, and now they can have a bigger role in the future of Adventist education. (Respondent 6)*

In summary, while 'engagement' by classroom teachers in succession practices acknowledged extrinsic incentives (particularly pay), the primary focus for engagement was the desire to positively impact school and system improvement.

5.4.2.2 Disengagement

Disengaged classroom teachers identified a number of reasons for why they had a limited desire to take on school leadership. One reason provided reflected their views of compensation – notably, that the pay for such roles is inadequate. One teacher from

a smaller school addressed the lack of compensation and a rationale for why leadership may not be an attractive option in this way:

> *Compensation, for taking on those leadership roles, I mean if our school grew and I moved into a deputy's role, I wouldn't receive anything extra for it, I'd be very unlikely to get any extra time even, I'd still be teaching fulltime and doing deputy duties on top of that, it's not very, um, enticing to move into something like that. Once you go beyond deputy and you move into principal then obviously you're taken off class and you get paid more and that sort of thing, but I think that the, what's offered for leadership roles in the Adventist system is not very appealing to most people. (Respondent 4)*

Additionally, classroom teachers articulated concerns about the work-loads, *"huge workload, with not a lot of compensation" (Respondent 4),* taken on by administrators, a perceived sense of a lack of work-life balance, the heavy sense of responsibility that comes with a leadership role, and the perception of seemingly never-ending time required to perform the role of a school leader. Classroom teachers most often saw the role as a "thankless" one.

> *... there are a lot of people in our system that I know would not put their hand up for any type of leadership even though they have the skills for it, because the perception, and rightfully so at times, is that (pause), um, it's, an overworked, thankless job. That, no matter what you do, there's still more. (Respondent 8)*

Another aspect of this disengagement identified by classroom teachers relates to a perceived lack of opportunities that exist for leadership within the ASA education system. As one responded lamented: *"I do look at some of our administrators, whether they are at school level or Education Director level or a Union level and think 'well their position is not going to become available until they retire now'". (Respondent 8)*

In summary, 'disengaged' classroom teachers had minimal interest and involvement in succession practices because leadership positions are seen as too demanding. It was 'disengagement', rather than 'engagement', that was the dominant view taken by respondents within this classroom teacher hierarchical level.

5.4.3 Current Succession Practices

Within the current succession practices category of the framework, the respondents adopted four distinct sub-categories to present their perceptions of current ASA succession practices: Overview, Preparation, Process and Post-Succession Support.

5.4.3.1 Overview

For these respondents, overview consisted of a broad description of their perceptions of current formal ASA succession practices. Two themes emerged from the data that depict the respondents understanding of current formal succession practices: 'The Unknown' and 'The Unknowable'. Participants were either to a large degree unaware of formal ASA succession practices, or perceived there only to be ad hoc practices generating an informal series of succession practices rather than formalised systemic practices taking place.

5.4.3.1.1 The Unknown

Classroom teachers who have this perspective struggle to identify any formal succession practices that take place within the ASA education system. There has been no communication to them personally about pathways to leadership, or about preparation for leadership roles within this system. There is frustration because these classroom teachers do not have an understanding of the processes and pathways they can undertake to be considered for future leadership roles and consider this process to lack transparency.

This is vividly captured in the following quote when asked what the respondent saw when looking at current ASA succession practices:

> *I don't know any. They don't talk about it. It's not something that's ever talked about in schools, like, or it's not in my school. I don't know, I know that when (xxx) moved into (xxx) role that she was head-hunted, so to speak, I don't think anyone was ever given the opportunity to apply for that role, and she was fantastic and I'm glad they chose her. But the same thing happened with (xxx), like they, they chose her and asked her to take on that position, and even with (xxx) who was the principal previous, I know that he was working in (xxx) and they kind of head-hunted him, he was in the state system and they moved him to here, but I have no idea what the process involves, I don't see any formal structures in place. (Respondent 4)*

Other classroom teachers acknowledge that there may be formalised succession practices, but that the understanding of these practices may well belong to hierarchical levels above that of the classroom teacher. As respondent six notes when asked what they saw relating to formal succession processes within ASA:

> *[Are there formal succession processes?] Um, not that I've seen. Um, but there, there may be at a higher level than I'm privy to…. (Respondent 6)*

In summary, these classroom teachers could not identify the elements specific to the current formal ASA succession practices. The theme 'The Unknown' describes the fact that these classroom teachers were unaware of the formal ASA succession practices, but hinted that there might be processes that they have not been informed of at this stage of their respective careers.

5.4.3.1.2 The Unknowable

The theme 'The Unknowable' describes those classroom teachers who perceive an ad hoc nature to current ASA succession practices, and consequently take the position that there is no formal set of succession practices, and therefore formal ASA succession practices are unable to be known.

For these classroom teachers, the perception is that there are no formal ASA succession practices because there is no documented formal system, and very little communication to ASA employees about pathways to leadership. To quote respondent sixteen, a classroom teacher with over 30 years of ASA experience, *"I don't think we have a, um, a system wide approach to, to doing the succession planning".* Rather, as illustrated by this respondent, present ASA succession practices are essentially informal in nature:

> *Succession planning has been more of a, um, more a tap on the shoulder, rather than a deliberate act. It's not saying that it hasn't been a deliberate act from somebody to give you a tap on the shoulder, but it's been a very, I guess, ad hoc way of doing it. (Respondent 16)*

For classroom teachers whose perspectives are encased within 'the unknowable' theme, their conclusions have been shaped from their actual experiences or viewing of ASA succession practices over time. As one classroom teacher with over fifteen years of experience notes:

> *The only thing I've ever really seen as far as succession planning goes, is, um, (long pause), I would have to say that, in that, in the circumstances that I've been in, there's not necessarily a lot of succession planning that I've seen happen…. There's no real succession planning as such, it's just, ah, well I guess maybe they think it is. (Respondent 8)*

These classroom teachers take the perspective that ASA succession practices are ad hoc in nature, and consequently, perceive that there is a lack of formalised processes that pertain to succession practices, rendering them 'unknowable'.

Interestingly, the teaching experience of the classroom teachers appears to directly correlate to which of these perspectives, the unknown or the unknowable, the classroom teacher subscribes. Early career classroom teachers (less than 10 years of classroom teaching experience) largely take the perspective that ASA succession practices are unknown to them. More experienced classroom teachers (more than 10 years of classroom teaching experience), shaped by their experiences and observations of the succession practices witnessed in this education setting, tend to indicate a belief that such practices are unknowable, questioning that a formalised set of succession practices actually exists.

5.4.3.2 Preparation

For these classroom teacher participants, their perception of preparation was the combined processes that prepare an individual to take on a school leadership position. One major theme emerged from the data that describes this preparation process: Lack of Coherence.

5.4.3.2.1 Lack of Coherence

The classroom teachers acknowledged that there were a number of preparation programs that were episodic in nature, and from their perspective, seemingly disjointed. There was acknowledgement, however, that while components of

preparation programs existed within ASA, these were not widely known about, nor fully understood.

> *So, my head of primary said to me [in terms of leadership preparation], ah, 'We are sending people along to leadership training courses, and I have to nominate someone from our primary school, so I've decided to nominate you'. So, I went along with someone that was from the high school, and the two of us did this leadership training, and um, that was it. (Respondent 8)*

> *Um, it's [the preparation program] I think, I think it was called young aspiring leaders, I think that might be what it was called, and so, I guess it was about, I guess it was like to inform people who are interested in leadership, maybe it was to help them to understand what the processes were and that sort of thing. (Respondent 1)*

> *Uh, yes [there are preparation programs], but I can't name them. I know of them because I was asked to go to one of them. I know that there's the master program and people are sponsored to do it, so that's one, but then there was also this other one that was in Melbourne that I was asked to go to last year but I couldn't [go], but I don't know what that's called, I've forgotten what it is. (Respondent 1)*

Additionally, some classroom teachers recognised that preparation programs outside of the ASA education system were being utilised as well as the ASA based preparation initiatives.

> *Um. I know there's a lot of PD, like leadership PD that gets run like professional development stuff that gets run by, not just the Adventist system, but on a broader level, the independent schools QLD run stuff and so on, that I guess people who are looking towards that [leadership] for the future would go into. (Respondent 6)*

Even though there were acknowledged preparation programs in place within the ASA education system, these were strongly voiced by classroom teachers as not being a coherent set of programs that are well communicated or widely known about. In response to questions that asked whether respondents were familiar with a formal preparation process within the ASA education system, respondents typically replied with some uncertainty, as illustrated by the following quotes:

> *No, not really. (xxx) has mentioned to me, but again, I'm not, you know, hugely keen on the idea of moving into admin any time soon, but (xxx) has mentioned to me about a leadership professional development or something that she went to down in Melbourne last year, and she said that it would be awesome to send me*

to it, and I kind of laughed and said 'I'm not looking for, you know, moving into leadership or anything like that', but, I'm not sure if that was, I don't think that that was actually part of the Adventist system, I think that was maybe outside of the Adventist system, but I'm not sure to be honest. (Respondent 4)

One experienced classroom teacher summarised the classroom teachers' view of current leadership preparation practices:

Um. I think they've got, um, the concept of educating potential leaders, and I think that's a really good place to start, I think what they would probably need to do a little bit more intentionally…. Um. No. I'm not familiar with any formal programs. (Respondent 16)

Even though classroom teachers acknowledge that there are some preparation programs (e.g. Master's study, Aspiring Leaders) in place, a question arises as to whether or not these preparation programs are necessary to be undertaken as part of preparing for school leadership roles; anecdotal evidence, the teachers' note, suggests that such preparation programs may or may not be part of a pathway toward school leadership positions.

I see the Masters as a like, you can't necessarily, from my understanding you can't really be in administration without having further study, um, that would be one thing but I also think you're, I also know of other people that are in roles without doing their Masters or are now already in administration. (Respondent 1)

5.4.3.3 Process

Process here refers to the understanding that classroom teachers have as to how people are either placed in or are chosen for school leadership roles – the succession event. For these participants, the process is perceived to be somewhat informal rather than formal in nature. What emerged from the data is that the process of placing or selecting school leaders is perceived in terms of 'pathway confusion', 'opaque appointment systems', and the confusing influence of the historical faith-based 'calling' (God directed) system.

5.4.3.3.1 Pathway Confusion

The classroom teachers perceive the pathway to leadership positions as uncertain. Much of this, it appears, is due to the fact that succession practices are rarely talked

about within schools. As one classroom teacher stated when asked about succession processes, "*I don't know any. They don't talk about it. It's not something that's ever talked about in schools, or it's not in my school" (Respondent 6).* A number of teachers acknowledged that they do not insert themselves into conversations that may shed light on pathways to leadership.

There is an acknowledgement by classroom teachers that one aspect (the staffing form) of a potential pathway exists. Some, but not all, also acknowledge the presence of the ASA job website that outlines available positions within ASA *"…there's the website as well that talks about what openings there are…" (Respondent 6)*, which could also be considered a component of the pathway to leadership. These teachers, however, are not certain as to how these elements lead to leadership opportunities.

> *Um, actually, that does make me think when you said that [how would you be recognised as wanting to pursue school leadership?], it does make me think there is a formal thing in place, because each year we get a form [staffing form] that we fill out, that says 'are you available for employment next year, where do you see yourself in five years, do you see yourself moving into an admin role', so that would be a formal structure, I'd forgotten about that cause I never, I just sort of tick I'm, you know, available for employment next year, but that would be where people indicate that they're interested in moving into admin. I think that there needs to be a lot more opportunities for people to voice that they're interested in it and what areas that they want to move into, rather than just a form, that goes to the Conference at the end of the day. (Respondent 4)*

The staffing form, completed annually, appears to these classroom teachers to be part of a process of communicating an interest in pursuing school leadership, but these teachers still acknowledge informal discussions are perhaps even more powerful at communicating such interest:

> *Beyond that form, I'm assuming it just comes down to one on one discussions and things that happen. It's a big system in some ways but it's very small in others, and so you know a lot of the people in the roles above you, so if I was really interested in this, it would be quite easy for me to give (xxx) a call and say 'Hey, I've been thinking that I need to further my career or whatever and I'd like to move', and have that discussion. And obviously that would be me self-identifying, but like I said, you know, a few years in to my teaching I had people talk to me about it that would have been the leadership just of this school at the time. To see if I felt that was a path I'd want to pursue. And so I think between the staffing form, and sometimes people, yeah, tapping someone on the shoulder and saying 'Hey let's have a bit of a chat about what you're gonna do going*

forward', I think those are, that's the main process, to my understanding. I could be completely wrong. (Respondent 6)

Even though this staffing form is acknowledged, most classroom teachers are of the view that little emphasis is given to this document, and that seldom is feedback given in relation to it. As one classroom teacher states, when discussing communicating their interest in future leadership through the staffing form, "*I did it for ten [years]" (Respondent 8),* without hearing or receiving any feedback from the Conference administration. When an appropriate leadership position arose, this experienced teacher had to *"go after it myself" (Respondent 8).* This appears independent of what had been communicated on the staffing form.

In summary, there is confusion as to the pathway towards school leadership for these classroom teachers. This view is captured by an experienced classroom teacher who states:

Maybe if it [pathway to leadership] was known more widely, what requirements or what certifications or whatever were looked at, or were desired to move into an administrative role, then people who are currently not in an administrative role might know what type of groundwork they'd need to lay if they wanted to go that direction. I don't think that's very clear in our system. Part of that could be because there are none, because beyond a willingness and some experience in the teaching sphere, do you actually need more? I don't know. Like I said, it's not like 'Oh yeah you must have a masters to be a principal, or you must have a whatever to be this role, you must have a doctorate to be the Ed Director kind of thing', like that, I'm pretty sure we don't have hard and fast rules, even when things are advertised it probably says such and such is preferred, rather than is required. But I would have no idea what kind of educational achievements they would have wanted me to have or what kind of experience to move into that [administration], so I think that being clearer would be good, if they wanted to identify people or even have people self-identify as wanting to move that way. I think a lot of people would have no clue as to what the first step is beyond ticking 'yes' on the [staffing] form. (Respondent 6)

5.4.3.3.2 Opaque Appointment System

The classroom teachers often make reference to leadership positions being appointed. To these respondents, this process involves the relevant Conference education leader determining without the use of formal applications the individual to be placed into specific leadership positions, and then appointing them to these roles. At best, there may be some consideration given to the prospective leader's input. It appears to these

classroom teachers that some form of application process may be utilised if those whom they wish to appoint decline the opportunity. As respondent four states when asked about what the current succession processes looked like at their school:

> *They were just appointed. They were asked if they wanted the position, and they were just appointed. Yeah. I know that in (xxx) school, like in a bigger school, that people have had the opportunity to apply to become deputy, but in our school, it was just very much like, this person has worked alongside them, they're the obvious choice, they're really good, we're happy with them, do you want the position, and both of them have said 'yes', so they've moved into that position, I don't know what would've happened if they'd said 'no'. Then perhaps they would have gone to, opening it up for people to apply, but there was no application process in these cases. (Respondent 4)*

In other instances, teachers suggest that the position is advertised but only because it is 'protocol' to do so, but the individual is chosen via the appointment system.

> *I actually think that they've already chosen who they want before they've even put out the advertisement for the applicants. I've witnessed that first hand on a few occasions, where the person for the job's already been chosen, and the ad…. the advertisement's gone out simply because that's protocol to do so. (Respondent 8)*

Additionally, there were classroom teachers who expressed a view-point that some leadership or administrative positions may be chosen through personal connections, and not necessarily by merit. As one experienced teacher stated:

> *Often from what I've observed in terms of [leadership] positions, the good positions, you know, the second tier, third tier positions in terms of administration, you know, not the first guy who's going out to make his mark for the first time, but maybe the next job up from that, they tend to be, um, taken based on, um, who you know and not what you know. (Respondent 16)*

For these teachers, it is uncertain what criteria are adopted when determining these appointments. This lack of transparency for these teachers is apparent within the appointment process, and is a source of some frustration, often killing aspiration. In attempting to determine what criteria is made use of when deciding who should be appointed, classroom teachers can only identify that such applicants are seen to be 'good' by the Conference education personnel; however, 'good' may be defined.

> *I think the impression that I get just from what I've heard from people in other schools and in my own school is that they tend to look for people who are just 'good' at what they do. And, um, probably groom them a little bit for that position, even if the person has not said that they're interested, just they [Conference educational personnel], they see people that they think they would like in those positions in the future. (Respondent 6)*

The classroom teachers have a feeling that in some cases the Conference personnel may evaluate a teacher's ability to take on leadership based on input from school-based administrators, "*I'm guessing then that my, my merit is based on what my previous principal has passed on they think that I'm capable of…" (Respondent 8)*. This process is not openly acknowledged, and the teachers are unsure how often this may take place.

It appears to these classroom teachers that in some instances, school administration, particularly school principals, may act as gatekeepers and could possibly even play a role in limiting leadership opportunities. Often the teachers are unaware, the consequence of which, is once again the perception of a lack of transparency that exists within the appointments process.

> *… the person that's being asked to do something is not even always told, because the principal decides for them, 'No I don't want them to leave, so you can't ask them'. And that's frustrating. Yes. So, we've had situations where, I think it's two situations now that I've witnessed, where a person was to be called to a different Conference and either the principal has said 'No you can't take them' or the Education Director said 'I won't put the call through'. Yeah. I've even personally myself, I've been told, you know, 'Calls are coming through for you, I'll let them put through one or two and then that's it'. Um, and I've said 'Well isn't that really', I actually confronted my principal about it and said 'Isn't that really up to me to decide?'. (Respondent 8)*

Two other areas identified by classroom teachers that emerged from the data were identified to impact school leadership appointments. While these were not widely articulated, Phase One of this research identified these themes also. The first related to a gender inequity that is perceived to exist within the ASA education system, and the second perceived there to be a preference for appointing secondary trained teachers rather than primary trained teachers to both school and system leadership positions. One respondent, an experienced classroom teacher, captured both areas when asked whether they perceived current succession practices to be fair and equitable:

No, I don't [think ASA succession practices are fair and equitable] … I guess I look at it logically from a statistical point of view in that as a primary teacher, the majority of primary teachers are female, and yet the majority of administrators are not. And so, looking at it from that kind of level, it makes me wonder, are we actually taking into consideration, who our leaders are? The other thing is, often, and I don't know because I don't know enough about it, is that we often have as our Education Directors, are, more often than not high school trained rather than primary trained, and so then that idea of, a high school trained teacher making a decision about a primary school, um, what kind of training is there available for them to be able to actually know the ins and outs and the mechanisms of a primary school? So that for me is probably another area where I think, 'hmmm', our succession planning hasn't stopped to take those kinds of things into consideration either. (Respondent 8)

In summary, the selection and placement of school leaders is perceived to be dominated by an appointments system, which to these classroom teachers lacks stated criteria for selection and subsequent transparency. In light of this lack of criteria and transparency, classroom teachers are keenly aware that biases may result, and consequently, selection processes are not always considered to be fair and equitable.

5.4.3.3.3 The Role of 'Calling'?

The classroom teachers often make reference to what is widely believed to be a long-held tradition: the 'calling' system. Historically, positions were filled via a centralised staffing system which involved the prospective leader being called from a central staffing committee to take up the leadership position. There was an assumption behind this calling culture that these central administrators were doing this after having prayerfully considered who would be appropriate for the respective position. Today's classroom teachers perceive this calling to be directly related to the appointments process - even the rationale for an appointment made.

A tight definition of what classroom teachers perceive 'calling' to be proved difficult to articulate due to the broad brushstroke picture given by these classroom teachers. However, each of the respondents who made mention of it acknowledged a spiritual component. Following are two quotes used by classroom teachers in an attempt to provide a context for what is being referred to as 'the calling':

> *I think the calling process is always, you know, a difficult thing, because, you know, I mean, when people used to say 'Oh well, you know, I feel that you're being called to this position' you felt like, you know, they had a hot line to God there, and often if you prayed about it yourself, and, God said 'No, no, you shouldn't be there' then obviously we mustn't serve the same God. You know, so I guess we can be a bit cynical about that, but from a calling point of view, I guess it was more of a, you know, maybe we've got a little bit of faith in you…. (Respondent 16)*

> *…I think it is historically used, and that's always, like … if you got called there was no such thing as saying 'no', because a call was, you know, it's the Lord telling you that you need to go [to a position]. (Respondent 8)*

A number of classroom teachers identify that even in the current ASA context, the calling system is still made use of, as they consider the current generation of administrators to have been involved in the calling system previously, and as such, continue to perpetuate it, even though seemingly more use is made of application based processes.

> *There is a lot more of the calling mentality, I think even in leadership than there is interviews and applications and I think that's because, the people that are making those decisions are the old school people because they are the older generation generally, those that are in administration at this point in time are the people that have come through the calling system, and so they've, more times than not, it appears that that's the way that it still continues. (Respondent 8)*

One classroom teacher outlined what they saw as a meshing of the historical calling system with the movement towards more recent application processes, stating "*I see no problem with people being called to apply for a job, being, you know, 'We would like you to apply for this job because we believe you have the skills'". (Respondent 8)*

In summary, classroom teachers perceive that within current succession practices there is a conflict between the historical calling culture and its associated appointments process, and the recent inclination to use application based components to determine the staffing of leadership positions. This, combined with a perceived confusion around pathways to leadership roles, results in classroom teachers being of the view that the selection and placement of school leadership positions are neither transparent nor equitable.

5.4.3.4 Post-Succession Support

Post-succession support was perceived by these ASA participants as being ongoing support provided by the 'system' for those who have recently taken on school leadership positions and the socialisation stages they encountered in these organisational roles and school settings. One major theme emerged: Sink or Swim.

5.4.3.4.1 Sink or Swim

The classroom teacher hierarchical level, however, made either no mention or when it was addressed, only a passing mention, of post-succession support. When it was mentioned, the overarching perception was that it was very limited. The theme best describing the classroom teachers' perceptions of post-succession support was well captured by the quote *"sink or swim" (Respondent 16).* This would suggest that classroom teachers see no formal post-succession support to be in place, and new school leaders are largely left to their own devices to navigate the socialisation stages they experience in these roles.

5.4.4 Ideal Succession Practices

As with the current succession practices analysis, the data suggests that the adoption of the same four distinct sub-categories used there, is also an effective framework to describe the classroom teachers' perceptions of ASA succession practices ideals. That is, it is appropriate to use the Overview, Preparation, Process and Post-Succession Support sub-categories for analysis.

5.4.4.1 Overview

When communicating their ideal succession practices, classroom teachers emphasised two main themes: An 'Urgent Need' for improved formal succession practices, and 'Transparent and Communicated Pathways' to leadership.

5.4.4.1.1 Urgent Need

These classroom teachers identified that there was a need for formal succession practices that would support the ongoing provision of quality leadership within the ASA education system. Respondent sixteen, in response to a question inquiring about their perception of current formal succession practices, first describes a present

perception and then outlines the urgent need for formal succession practices that are strategic in orientation:

> *I think it's still relatively ad hoc, looking at the system as it is, add a year, or maybe, maybe a year in advance, but you know, not much more than that. So, I don't think there's a lot of strategic planning done on succession planning, you know, looking at schools, looking at principals, longevities, looking at retirement ages etc, I don't think there's a lot of, um, diligent work that goes on there. Maybe that might be, you know, the work that's over and above what our system can cope with, it could be the 10% extra on a 100% load that never gets done, but I think, looking to the future, it's probably the most important 10% that's probably not done. (Respondent 16)*

To this extent, the teachers acknowledge that the less formal process that was utilised when the ASA education system was smaller, now needs to be formalised to reflect the current setting.

> *I mean our system is getting bigger now, schools are multi-million dollar enterprises, and, um, we're not just, ah, I don't think some of these schools are in a position where they can just let somebody, ah, experiment, as a new leader, so I think there needs to be something done from a very, formal way of either identifying leadership, developing leadership, and possibly creating a track for leadership. (Respondent 16)*

For these teachers, this needed formal process should place an emphasis on the identification and preparation of future leaders, as illustrated by the following response:

> *I guess when I think about succession planning, I think about, identifying people, that, are already in our system, that can be mentored and trained to further their skills and perhaps, be, mentored to take over from those that are already in administrative positions. (Respondent 8)*

ASA classroom teachers recognise an urgent need for a formalised system that identifies, prepares and provides for a pool of quality leaders that can help to transition the ASA education system towards future leadership sustainability.

5.4.4.1.2 Transparent and Communicated Pathways

The ideal succession model, for these classroom teachers, needs to be open and each step able to be understood and clearly demonstrated. In addition, these teachers

perceive that this ideal system would be communicated to all ASA employees via multiple forums. Questions relating to the details of this system should be able to be asked, and consistent, documented responses across Conferences and other administrative bodies able to be provided. The following quote powerfully presents the view of the classroom teachers in regards to the need for the ASA education system to communicate the components of this ideal succession process.

> *... succession planning, for it to be more successful would have to be very clearly communicated that this is what the protocol is, this is how you would step through the ranks, we do want to encourage you, we do want to support you, this is how we provide support, this is how we do it, and that there will be positions available, because those that are in the current positions will hopefully be gracious enough to say 'I've had my turn, maybe I should step aside now or step onto something else and let someone else have a turn'. (Respondent 8)*

Classroom teachers perceive there to be a need for documented, clearly articulated pathways to leadership roles, and there is a view that this should be communicated in such a way that an intentional transparency exists in that process.

5.4.4.2 Preparation

In analysing the classroom teachers' perceptions of ideal preparations for leadership roles, what clearly stands out is their propensity to promote active participation as a way of developing the skills utilised in leadership roles. This theme, 'Active Participation', effectively captured their views. The overarching rationale of the classroom teachers is that preparations should allow them to feel adequately prepared to be able to successfully fulfil the job requirements of a leadership position, should they be provided the opportunity, as reflected in the following comment:

> *To be honest, it's not something I've thought about a lot, because it's not something that I'm looking to do soon, but, I think that there just needs to be, more opportunity for people to talk about what they want to move into, in the future, and then given the appropriate training to do so, so that when they do step into those roles they know what to do and they can do a good job of it. (Respondent 4)*

Active participation is seen by the classroom teachers as the major focus of their ideal preparation for leadership development, so that when these classroom teachers do

take on leadership roles, they know what the position involves and can be successful in undertaking these positions.

5.4.4.2.1. Active Participation

For these classroom teachers, active participation is seen as including opportunities at the school level to provide leadership in areas that may include departmental leadership, curriculum leadership, pastoral care leadership, or possibly even higher level administrative opportunities, including, for example, short term acting roles for deputy principals or other upper tier school leadership positions. Additionally, mentoring and shadowing were seen as effective preparation strategies and were also considered by the teachers to be a form of active participation.

For these teachers, acting roles need to be purposeful, acknowledged, and have both appropriate titles and remuneration associated with them. In this way, they have a certain status, and it formalises this process, allowing recognition for leadership experience to be acknowledged. Classroom teachers perceive that when this happens, the experience tends to be more effective, thorough and preparatory in nature.

This active participation preparation, reflected on by one experienced classroom teacher, highlights the contrast between current ASA system and school thinking regarding taking on of extra workload without recognition, and the ideal of having both opportunity provided and recognition given for performing these temporary roles:

> *I think, even getting down to, you know, subject coordinators in bigger schools, I think often, they're not clearly identified either, like, if you have a head of department and you have somebody you think that could take on that role, they're not really mentored either, and maybe it's because there's no incentive in doing that process, but often when somebody goes on long service leave, then often a staff member within the school will take on that role, and they'll take it on as an extra, they don't take it on as a paid work experience type role, and get somebody else taking over their role. Now in some cases, they have, but often it doesn't tend to be done that way. And so, if somebody stays a director of studies and they have a long service leave thing for half a term, then often, the administrators will soak up the excess or the pain in the system, take the role on, divide it up and just overload, whereas I think they could be using it as a good opportunity to give somebody a bit of a tap and say 'Hey, we think you've got potential, how would you like to take this role as 'acting'", and give them*

> *the title acting head of department, acting head of school, acting director of studies, and just see how they go with that, but also giving them some sort of mentoring support. (Respondent 16)*

The use of short-term, or 'acting' positions was seen by these teachers as an effective preparation strategy, and a perception held that there were opportunities for this to happen within the ASA education system. In an ideal setting, these opportunities would be proactively made use of to assist the development of potential future leaders. The following quote highlights the perception of the value of 'acting' roles:

> *Well I think a system-based approach to sharing experiences, I think, if you have a small [school] administrator and there's an opportunity for them to step up to a bigger school, if that could be made to happen, even as a covering time period, it might be a period of illness, or, might be a sabbatical, or something like that. I think that would be a good opportunity, I don't think we do that very well. (Respondent 16)*

Classroom teachers also acknowledged that there would be some value in a process termed 'shadowing' – essentially having a successor work closely with the outgoing leader. This was considered beneficial as a preparation element. Classroom teachers perceived this to be an effective way for the incoming leader to gain a good understanding of the leadership role to be undertaken, which they believed should help the transition to effective leadership. The following quote encapsulate the view that shadowing is perceived to be beneficial, as well as provide an example of this in action and how that has prepared the candidate for a leadership position:

> *I think that it is good [shadowing] in that, the people that are stepping into that role of principal have a really good insight into what the principal does, I know for (xxx), the way that she helped (xxx) is she did a lot of paperwork and a lot of policy writing and that sort of stuff, and she sat in on a lot of meetings and helped with enrolments and all that kind of stuff, so she knew a lot of what was involved in the job before she took on the position, and the same with (xxx). So, I think the benefits of the way it's sort of happening in our school, but I don't know if it happens like that in other schools, I tend to think it happens like this because it's a small school, and it's kind of a need for someone to be like the right-hand man of the principal. It's [shadowing] beneficial in that the person has a good insight into what the job involves before they step into that role. (Respondent 4)*

Classroom teachers often mentioned mentoring as both a preparation element for leadership, and a post-succession necessity. A view taken by these respondents also

identified that mentoring would ideally be provided in a number of different ways; by both current administrators and current principals, be ongoing in nature, and possibly be wider in scale for the mentee than in just one school setting. Mentoring is perceived as valuable as illustrated by the following comments:

> *Well I think one of the [ideals] would be to have a mentoring program in there, you know, often, a lot of these administrative positions within schools are given to people, and again, often it's a sink or swim or whatever, initiative that they have and whatever leadership skills they have, I guess, they need to display those, but I don't think there's a lot of mentoring that goes on that can actually make them better. (Respondent 16)*

> *I think then it [mentoring] definitely has to go beyond the school that you are working in at the time, so, if I wanted to move into the position of the deputy or a principal, it's great to work alongside the current principal that's there, because you need to know the local practices, you need to know how things work there, but you also need to kind of be a bit broader and outside of that school because, I think you need to see that things are different in other schools, that other schools might be doing things a whole lot better than you're doing at your school, so it needs to be more than one mentor involved in that planning and more than one school involved in that planning I think. (Respondent 4)*

Interestingly, classroom teachers did not unanimously perceive a need for formal study as part of a preparation process for educational leadership roles. The two quotes that follow identify that informal training (such as the mentoring identified earlier) can stir interest in leadership, and possibly then lead to formalised study options. However, some classroom teachers perceive formal study to be distant from the school setting, and as such, this may suggest that specific leadership training may be seen as more valuable to these teachers. This understanding is illustrated in the teachers' response to the question of whether classroom teachers believed formal study was a necessity to take on leadership positions:

> *I think with the formal study sometimes it can seem a little distant from the school, and may not be completely applicable to the school environment, but there's always good things that you can take from that, but probably the most beneficial is, like, a leadership, program in the local setting, but not necess … that doesn't necessarily have to be the actual school but within the Conference. (Respondent 4)*

> *I don't know because, well, yes eventually, perhaps, what would help with succession is that eventually if leadership is something that you have some informal training in and you are mentored in and you try and then you decide 'this is something that I certainly want to do or find is my strength' then, you*

know, 'alright, well then the next step is, we would like you to do some formal study', I think that could be very beneficial in having the right skill set to do the job. (Respondent 8)

In summing up the classroom teachers' perceptions of ideal preparations for taking on leadership positions, active participation clearly is the preferred method of preparation. It is worth noting, however, that teachers perceive that more opportunities to voice their interest in pursuing leadership positions, in addition to informal and possibly formal study as preparation processes, would ideally exist within a formalised preparation program:

I think that there just needs to be, more opportunity for people to talk about what they want to move into, in the future, and then given the appropriate training to do so, so that when they do step into those roles they know what to do and they can do a good job of it. (Respondent 4)

5.4.4.3 Process

Process refers to the perceptions held by ASA classroom teachers as to how in an ideal succession model potential leadership candidates are firstly, identified as a potential candidate for a school leadership position, and secondly, selected from the pool of candidates to fill these leadership positions. For these classroom teachers, three themes emerged from the data that effectively encapsulate their perceptions of the ideal succession process: Clear Selection Criteria, Teacher Input, and System Diligence.

5.4.4.3.1 Clear Selection Criteria

When communicating their ideals for succession practices, classroom teachers most strongly identified that they needed a well communicated and criteria led selection process that clearly articulated the elements used to determine the choice of school leader. As one classroom teacher noted, when discussing the ideal requirements for leadership selection, there was a need to be clearer in terms of what the criteria are and for these criteria to then be effectively communicated to all ASA employees:

But I would have no idea what kind of educational achievements they would have wanted me to have or what kind of experience to move into [leadership], so I think that being clearer would be good, if they wanted to identify people or even have people self-identify as wanting to move that way. I think a lot of

people would have no clue as to what the first step is beyond ticking 'yes' on the [staffing] form. (Respondent 6)

5.4.4.3.2 Teacher Input

From the data, the classroom teachers perceive that ideal succession practices should include their own ability to provide input in this process. Firstly, classroom teachers want a system that provides a job description which both clearly outlines the leadership position responsibilities, and which can be used to determine their level of interest in the position. As respondent eight notes:

I think there, first of all needs to be very clear job descriptions, I've found that's often not the case, for both, teachers that are wishing to get into leadership that there's a very clear communicated process of 'if this is something you would feel you would like to do, these are the steps towards that that you can do to achieve it'. (Respondent 8)

Secondly, classroom teachers perceive that ideal succession practices would enable them to better voice their interest in leadership positions. If the job description is appealing to them, classroom teachers perceive themselves as being able to put forward their names as a potential candidate for these leadership roles.

I think that there needs to be a lot more opportunities for people to voice that they're interested and what areas that they want to move into, rather than just a form [staffing form], that goes to the Conference at the end of the day. (Respondent 4)

These classroom teachers perceive that the staffing form, as referred to in the above quote, does not adequately provide for this at present. Classroom teachers perceive this staffing form to be so general that it is essentially meaningless, as it does not relate to specific leadership roles that may be on offer at any given point in time and appears to go nowhere.

Thirdly, classroom teachers perceive that ideal succession practices would enable the potential candidates to state their merits with respect to specific jobs. These teachers perceive that effective performance appraisal can support their suitability for leadership positions. They perceive that this use of appraisals can only be effective if

there is a consistent, ongoing and regular performance appraisal process within the school setting.

> *I think that's where first of all the personal appraisals, that are done each year, or at least, should be done each year by the leaders in the school to identify what an individual teacher's strengths are, then looking at those strengths and seeing how they can be utilised, then I guess I imagine it being a bit like a pyramid where those names would then be passed on to the principal of the school, or the education director, where we would say 'these are the skills that we have in our schools in this Conference, how can we utilise these skills as a system?'. And then, passing that on to the union so that there's, that identification process, and then also asking people, 'Are you interested?'. (Respondent 8)*

In summing up, it is interesting to note that while these three aspects of teacher input were clearly identified, there is still the absence of the exact nature, or who would be responsible for the implementation of these aspects in their ideal succession model.

5.4.4.3.3 System Diligence

For these classroom teachers, ideally the choice of successor from the leadership candidate pool would involve a high level of system diligence. This system diligence must include a choice of candidate by use of an established and communicated set of criteria, such as experience, qualifications, and individual characteristics. Such criteria, it is perceived, will also take into account both the local context and culture of the school setting when determining successful candidates for the leadership position. The following quote reinforces these teachers' views that the ideal system needs to establish clarity around the criteria used to determine the selection of these school leaders:

> *Maybe if it was known more widely, what requirements or what, certifications or whatever were looked at, or were desired to move into an administrative role, then people who are currently not in an administrative role might know what type of groundwork they'd need to lay if they wanted to go that direction. I don't think that's very clear in our system. Part of that could be because there are none, because beyond a willingness and some experience in the teaching sphere, do you actually need more? I don't know. Like I said, it's not like 'Oh yeah you must have a masters to be a principal, or you must have a whatever to be this role, you must have a doctorate to be the Ed Director' kind of thing, I'm pretty sure we don't have hard and fast rules, even when things are advertised it probably says such and such is preferred, rather than is required. But I would*

have no idea what kind of educational achievements they would have wanted me to have or what kind of experience to move into that, so I think that being clearer would be good, if they wanted to identify people or even have people self-identify as wanting to move that way. (Respondent 6)

Another aspect of due diligence identified by classroom teachers involves rigour to be undertaken during the choice-making component of this process. This is perceived to include time taken to assess the potential of respective candidates, the willingness to consider external successors, and consideration of timeframes for leadership tenure.

In terms of the due diligence element in selecting school leaders, the following quote captures the view of classroom teachers.

I've found that often the time period involved in the search for these replacements is a rather short period, and it's not really, you know, when you're looking for someone to lead a school for the next 10 years, if you only take three or four weeks to advertise and then you close applications, then maybe, that's a little bit constrained, and I think maybe somebody's already had an idea of who needs to be in that position, and I don't think it gives enough due diligence to the process. So, I think, one of the things I'd like to say about succession planning is that they need to give due diligence to the process, they need to make sure that they're getting the best people for the job, not just the most available people for the job, and I think sometimes we tend to choose the most available, and the least interruption to the system. (Respondent 16)

As far as consideration for external successors, the following emphasises a view taken by classroom teachers as to an ideal succession practice.

And I think it's probably good to bring people in externally… I think it gives a breath of fresh air and a new perspective, I would think if you were in a school for a long time, you could become jaded as to the direction of the school, or, this is how we've always done it so this is how we'll always do it. And you need to be finding a middle ground between this is how we do it, and change for change sake… I think someone coming in fresh to the situation can often do that better than someone who has been at the school for a decade or two. (Respondent 6)

Interestingly, there was a perception by some classroom teachers that a number of school administrators stay too long in their positions, and that this can stagnate their ability to lead school change and improvement. One view put forward introduced the idea of time frames for school leaders that may address the limited effectiveness of these leaders over a longer timeframe.

I think of it like the United States President, you get two terms and that's it. If you can't do what you're gonna do in two terms, then what will you be able to achieve after that? Give someone else a turn, but that's just a personal view, so that people are given an opportunity to be trusted and to use their strengths differently. (Respondent 8)

Once again, these classroom teachers identified aspects of ideal succession practices that were the domain of the ASA education system, but did not articulate who exactly would have the overarching responsibility or jurisdiction to implement these changes. It is interesting to note that while these classroom teachers were able to identify aspects of process that would be present in an ideal succession planning program, there is a lack of detail provided as to how these aspects would be planned and implemented, as well as what they would look like in practice.

5.4.4.4 Post-Succession Support

As described earlier, post-succession support was perceived by these ASA employees as ongoing support provided by the 'system' to assist in the transition and socialisation process for those who have recently taken on leadership positions. The major theme identified in the analysis for this hierarchical level was the 'Need for Mentoring'.

5.4.4.4.1 Need for Mentoring

While mention was made of the need for post-succession support, much of this was made regarding the perceived need for ongoing access to a mentor. A view provided by classroom teachers suggested that this mentoring should be in the form of a current administrator, or administrators, that would ideally be available for new leaders to solicit advice from or to draw on their experience in these leadership roles. The two quotes that follow reflect this perceived ideal:

I think there should be a mentor assigned just like they do with new scheme teachers, they're assigned a mentor teacher to help them through the process. I believe that if you're going to step into leadership that someone that's already in leadership should be assigned to you as your mentor, so that you can feel free to discuss everything and anything with them and, get their wisdom and insight. I think that would be beneficial. (Respondent 8)

> *I think the concept of having a cadre of people involved in this process, a pool of really good administrators, bringing different skills to the table, and being able to pass on a lot of this information, or skill, and experience, before they actually retire I think is probably a good thing to do. I don't think we've ever done that. (Respondent 16)*

There was a strong perception from classroom teachers that the need for post-succession support was important, as it was believed to be necessary that new leaders know there was support available to them – "*that they know that there is training, there is support" (Respondent 8)* - and to know there were opportunities for ongoing training to be provided during the various socialisation stages. This was perceived to be a necessity in order for these new leaders to be in the best position to encounter success in these school leadership roles. For these classroom teachers, mentoring was perceived to be one of the most effective forms of post-succession support.

5.5 SCHOOL-BASED ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS

Once again, utilising the participant generated framework of Scope, Involvement, Current and Ideal succession practices, the following outlines school-based administrator perceptions of ASA succession practices.

5.5.1 Scope

For the school-based administrators, within the scope category of this framework - an overview of the respective elements of succession practices and the connections between these - there emerged one significant theme: The need for linkages between elements of the succession process.

5.5.1.1 Lack of Linkages

Definitions of succession provided by school-based administrators used terms such as 'intentional', 'priority' and 'looking to the future' to signify important elements of succession practices. For school-based administrators, their definition of succession included similar elements to those of the classroom teachers, such as the identification and training of potential leaders, but, perhaps evidencing having been through a process of becoming a school leader, they additionally identified the need for a

transparent selection process. As respondent fifteen notes when discussing the selection process of succession, *"I think the employer needs to get the job description clear … and then there needs to be established some criteria, as to the sort of person they are looking for".*

Additionally, these school-based administrators included another element in their view of succession. Self-sought opportunities to learn and experience components of leadership were seen to be included within the scope of succession. This learning may take place by formal or informal means. Respondent fifteen identified a self-initiated 'critical friend' to help with the development of their leadership skills:

> *Now for me, in my role, I've always had a critical friend, if you like. Somebody who is not involved in the school, who is a professional, I can ring 'em up and say 'Hey, I've got this issue' or I can ring them up and I can say 'I just need to sound off for 10 minutes, I'm really frustrated about laladadad', and they just listen. And then they'll say to me, 'But have you thought of this?', this might've happened, 'have you thought of this, dadadadad?'. Now, that's my responsibility, I've set that up, I do that myself. (Respondent 15)*

Even though this hierarchical group has identified an extended set of succession elements from that of the previous hierarchical level, their emphasis is on the need for linkages to exist between the identified elements within the scope of succession practices. These respondents do not perceive it to be a system without linkages between these processes, but rather, just "*serendipity filling a hole*" *(Respondent 15).*

5.5.2 Involvement

Adopting the established framework, 'Involvement' communicated the perception by respondents of their level of interest and subsequent engagement with and/or desire to understand ASA education system succession practices. Only one theme emerged from the data here: Willing Participation.

5.5.2.1 Willing Participation

As may be expected, all school-based administrators were able to reflect on their observation and involvement with ASA succession events. Further, having had these experiences, each could articulate their having moved beyond questioning 'Why

should I be involved in leadership?' to determining they would take on school leadership positions. While their extent of involvement varied from recent placement into a school-based administrative role and subsequent recent direct contact with ASA succession practices, to input into appointments committees, the school-based administrators exhibited a high level of understanding of and involvement with ASA succession processes, and further, desired this involvement despite the perceived short-comings of current succession processes. This involvement potentially was both in terms of looking for and applying for a position of leadership, and the assessment of candidates for specified leadership positions.

5.5.3 Current Succession Practices

As with the classroom teachers, within the current practices category of the framework these school-based administrator respondents adopted four distinct sub-categories to present their perceptions of current ASA succession practices: Overview, Preparation, Process and Post-Succession Support.

5.5.3.1 Overview

For these school-based administrator respondents, overview consisted of a broad description of their perceptions of current formal ASA succession practices. A clear perception held by these respondents is that a lack of defined succession practices exists within ASA. As respondent three states when asked their view of current ASA succession practices, *"Well, I, I don't think there is anything official. Like it seems like it's a bit non-evident".* Following this thinking, the theme that emerged to describe their view of current succession practices was 'Reactionary'.

5.5.3.1.1 Reactionary

Rather than recognising that formalised succession processes existed, these school-based administrators perceived the ASA education system only reacted after the need for a leadership change event arose. This hierarchical level perceived that minimal pre-succession event work was undertaken that could ensure a smooth transition, such as the identification of an appropriate pool of potential candidates who were trained and willing to be considered as a successor.

The actual process seems to be 'random' with different circumstances seemingly having different approaches, and there is a perception that different geographic areas take different approaches, *"And that's different [appointment process], that's different in various Conferences" (Respondent 15).* Further, there was a perception that sometimes a reliance on God directing this process was used in place of a formalised system. Having been asked to share their view of current succession practices, another respondent reflected on ASA succession practices in the following way:

> *Um, I've, that it's not systemic [succession practices]. That it is, (pause) sometimes it feels truly by chance. And, even worse than that at times it feels like it may not even be led by God, that it's actually a scramble at the last minute, grab whoever's willing. And you know the great thing is, God still blesses in those situations and can help, but it's not ideal because it causes anxiety and all those sorts of things, and it seems to be reactionary instead of proactive, is probably the way I would describe it. (Respondent 5)*

This respondent went on to say the following about the reactionary nature of the succession process:

> *I don't think those sorts of things happen normally or naturally, we wait until a role vacates, and then we look frantically, 'Right, you'll do', 'Can we twist your arm and get you to come'. And, so I don't think there's necessarily that many structures in place at all. (Respondent 5)*

The reactionary nature of the process is likely due, in part, to the perception of a broader culture where it is considered not to be appropriate to put your 'hand up' for consideration when potential leadership opportunities arise.

> *It seems to me that the culture doesn't know what to do because are we called to those positions, do we apply to those positions, and what we'll do is instead of doing anything proactive about our own leadership, or aspirational about our own leadership, we'll stand back and wait and see if anyone asks, and anyone taps, but we're not in the process of consistent tapping, or strategic tapping, so it just fee … is awkward, is the best way I'd describe it. (Respondent 5)*

Interestingly, the school-based administrators, despite having positions of leadership within schools, perceive strongly a lack of incentives exist within current succession practices to aspire to such leadership positions. One school-based leader who had only

been in their role for 18 months reflected on this by saying *"I, I honestly don't [see incentives], now that I've been in a leadership position for a year and a half, I don't see a lot" (Respondent 3).* Every school-based administrator interviewed reflected on this perspective by emphasising only intrinsic factors such as a desire to make a difference, a sense of a 'calling' or other altruistic areas as contributing to their desire to enter school leadership positions within the ASA educational setting. This lack of incentives appears to impact the desire of younger ASA employees to aspire to leadership positions. These school-based administrators suggested that the younger teachers who will one day be the potential leaders in this education system have a different focus and shy away from the idea of leadership due to their perceived sense of a lack of work-life balance and the 'sacrifices' made by those in leadership positions.

Overall, school-based administrators perceive ASA succession practices to be *"ad hoc"* in nature, *"not systemic", "best intention random",* or the ASA education system's *"best guess"*. Comments such as *"I don't see a really strategic approach to any of it yet", "I think there's no formal process", "I don't think they [succession processes] actually exist", "I don't think there is anything official", "There isn't a process",* and finally if there is a system, *"Nobody's ever talked about it" (Respondents 3, 5 and 15)* emphasise the reactionary nature of current succession practices. This hierarchical level acknowledges the lack of a formalised succession process, but indicates a desire to see improvements come about.

5.5.3.2 Preparation

Preparation is defined as the combination of elements that prepare an individual to take on a school leadership position. School-based administrators perceived that while at least one formal program was currently in place, albeit minimal in nature, their understanding of these programs is limited. The theme 'Known, but Unknown' best captures the school-based administrators' view of these formal preparation programs.

5.5.3.2.1 Known, but Unknown

While each school-based administrator identified at least one formal preparation program administered by the ASA education system, the specifics of these programs were not articulated.

When asked whether the respondent was aware of any formal preparation programs that exist within ASA, lesser-experienced school-based administrators were able, with some prompting, to identify the 'Aspiring Leaders' program. More experienced school-based administrators could readily identify the Aspiring Leaders program, but both seemed to be unaware of the specifics of what this program entailed. While these specifics were unknown, the more experienced school-based administrators acknowledged that the Aspiring Leaders program is a preparation program, but raised concerns that it did not appear to be linked to other overarching succession elements, as noted in the following quote:

> *"But I don't, my difficulty is that I don't see that as, yes, it's a preparation program and yes, it's formal, but it's not linked, either time or appointment wise to a job. (Respondent 15)*

Expanding upon this in a follow up question, respondent fifteen had this to say regarding their experience of the Aspiring Leaders program as a formal preparation program:

> *I mean, they talk about a potential leaders one day thing that they run, but it really doesn't have any connection between, people can nominate to go to their one day workshop on being potential leaders in February, March, but there's no link to, 'they've gone to that, so therefore they're the ones that get to be a principal'. Um. (Pause). Serendipity, it might happen, it might've happened, but I don't know, in my memory, I don't know any connection, you know, in staffing a school, they never ask the question 'Has this person done this course?'. So, it's not a pathway. So, they talk about, and they write a letter out to us asking us to nominate potential leaders, and my difficulty is that, the guys that I've had working for me over the years I've asked them whether they'd want to go, and they don't. Because they don't see value in it, they don't see the link between what they're gonna do and any improvement in their, either financial status, or the potential for getting a job. (Respondent 15)*

So, while some respondents perceived there to be value in attending the Aspiring Leaders program, others perceived it to lack credibility when it came time to pursue

school-based leadership positions. However, this program was the only formal preparation program for which ASA were perceived to be entirely responsible.

Also identified as a preparation element was the ASA sponsored Masters of Education program run in partnership with Avondale College of Higher Education. Further, respondents saw value in the Aspiring Leaders program, believing this could act as a catalyst for continuing formal study in the Master's program – in fact one respondent was of the understanding that by attending the Aspiring Leaders program and completing aspects of this program, this could contribute towards academic credit in this post graduate course of study.

There was also a perception held by some school-based leaders that they have a responsibility to contribute to the growth of potential future leaders within their own schools. This concept of 'home grown' leadership development, *"start sharing your load [making known what you do] now*" *(Respondent 5)* was seen as a way of providing a sustainable source of leadership within the school itself, and was inferred to be taking place in some schools. One school-based administrator described this process in the following way:

> *I think that principals need to understand the importance of it [preparing leaders in-house], and then actually put it into place as a priority, having those conversations, 'Alright, all of you might be deputies now, but who are you tapping on the shoulder?', giving them permission and opportunity to then grow the people into those roles, and I think it has to be, a priority, at the moment for me it's just, I'm working on instinct, I've said to my princ … my deputies, my academic team, 'I could lose any of you at any time, that's what this system is like, and I don't want to be scrambling for who to replace you, I want you to tell me'. Now, that person may not necessarily get the job, but we need to be transferring our skills, this is the intellectual property of this organisation and I feel my job is to protect that, and that means that we need to have mechanisms in place for the safety of the school, as well as skilling up these people, and either tapping them and saying 'have you thought of', or skilling the ones who naturally are inclined, as well. (Respondent 5)*

Interestingly, school-based administrators often reflected on their journey of moving towards a desire to prepare for leadership, noting that the aspiration to be in leadership roles had not always been there. This desire to take on leadership responsibility develops differently for different people, and for some, an extended

period of time including exposure to and involvement in administrative tasks itself is often a preparation for the decision to pursue leadership. As one respondent outlined, it was a 'call' to leadership that ultimately determined their willingness to take on a school-based administrative position:

> *Something's changed now because I feel that that's what I'm meant to do [school leadership], not that I necessarily feel capable, but I do feel absolutely called to do it … (Respondent 5)*

Unanimous among school-based administrators was the perception that a high level of personal preparation was required to be effective in these leadership roles. For newly appointed school-based administrators, formal study was a consideration to broaden their understanding of leadership and what this truly means in their context. For experienced school-based administrators both a desire for more formal study at an earlier stage of their career, as well as the need to tap into self-identified 'critical friends' or regulatory body networks that could provide advice and direction were considered important preparatory components.

In summary, while it was perceived by these school-based administrators that ASA did provide at least one formal preparation program, these initiatives were considered to be isolated, one off and limited programs that were not perceived to link strongly to influencing the likelihood of being offered formal school-based leadership positions. School-based administrators are of the view that some informal preparation elements such as leadership modules offered outside of the ASA education system, as well as mentoring or the development of networks that could be utilised for advice or information, were also considered highly valuable in the preparation and development of leadership skills. While the formal offerings of ASA for leadership preparation were known to exist, the exact nature, and how these contribute directly to leadership preparation, were not clearly known or understood.

5.5.3.3 Process

This section will explore school-based administrators' perceptions of how people are either placed into or are chosen for school leadership roles.

School-based administrators perceive that there is no formal succession system but there is, instead, a series of informal systems that are accessed by different people at different times, with the cumulative result being an ad hoc succession process. One experienced school-based administrator sums this up in the quote below:

> *I would say that, it's fairly random [placed or chosen]. I, 'best intention random' is probably the phrase that I would use, because people have the best of intentions and they want to work with people, but both parties get busy, and then it becomes random, because I've got a job that needs to be filled, let's look around, there's this name, there's this name and there's this name, ok, which one best suits on the basis of their experience or their qualific …. Righto, they've got the job. End of story. Now tell me that's a formalised system. It's not. (Respondent 15)*

These school-based administrators' perceptions of this ad hoc succession process can be illustrated through the following four themes: Appointment not Application, Connections, Self-Initiated, and the Calling - Application Tension.

5.5.3.3.1 Appointment not Application

School-based administrators used the terms 'appointment' and 'application' to describe the method whereby people were selected and placed into leadership positions. For these school-based administrators, the term 'appointment' most often refers to a situation where the successor is selected by and placed in this leadership position without having gone through a formal process. Whereas 'application' is seen as a formal process that includes the registering of interest, presentation of their suitability for the position and finally, assessment of applicability by some official body who has the discretion to make a final determination for the position. These school-based administrators perceive this official body to be based at the local regional (Conference) level.

It is evident from the data that these school-based administrators see the succession process as an appointment, rather than a formal application based process, as illustrated in the following:

> *… principalship is normally by appointment, it's not by application. (Respondent 15)*

> *People can apply, but they'll make the appointment. You can apply, but that doesn't, there's no guarantee if you apply that you'll get an interview, or that you'll be appointed to the position. (Respondent 15)*

> *I think there's no formal process in place, (pause), sometimes there's an interview process, sometimes there's not, I think, often they have people earmarked for jobs before the process even happens, so yeah … I don't actually think there is a formal process in place …. (Respondent 3)*

These school-based administrators acknowledge that there are some elements currently made use of that appear somewhat token in nature, but admit that system administrators may view these as formal. The two elements identified at this hierarchical level are the annual staffing form filled out within the schools, based at the local Conference level, as well as the ASA website where vacant positions are listed. From the perspective of school-based administrators the staffing form appears to seldom play any role in identifying future potential leaders, despite this form having a section whereby people can express their interest and in future leadership positions.

> *I know there is a yearly survey that comes around that asks you what you would like, full time employment, moving schools and so on, and there is a spot there that asks if you're interested in leadership, but to my knowledge nothing ever happens from that, people have ticked boxes and, for numerous years and nothing happens or no questions are asked, so to my knowledge there is no ear-marking of younger people saying, 'you know, we think you're going to be good at leadership, are you interested, would you like more study, would you like to sit in on some committees' and so on, I think it, to me it appears like its token, and there is nothing kind of official or structured in there at all. (Respondent 3)*

Similarly, school-based administrators question the role of the ASA website in that it does not seem to be an element within the identification, selection and placement process.

> *… with the job website that's up there, you will often see a job come up and then, an enquiry will be made about that job, but it's already been filled [a candidate has been ear-marked for the position]. (Respondent 3)*

A flow-on effect of this is that school-based administrators perceive that where a lack of opportunity for candidates to formally apply and subsequent appointments take place, questions arise regarding the fairness and equity of this process. For these

school-based administrators, a perceived consequence of an appointments process is that that they consider the succession process to not be fair and equitable. In the following two quotes, respondents were asked whether they saw the current succession process to be fair and equitable:

> *No, but, I don't think they actually exist, so, I think there's no formal process in place, I think (pause) sometimes there's an interview process, sometimes there's not, often they have people earmarked for jobs before the process even happens, so yeah, I don't think it is, but I don't actually think there is a formal process in place, so, it's kind of like no on two levels. (Respondent 3)*

> *(Pause). It's not a good question, because there isn't a process. Um, so therefore, no, the selection process for leaders is not fair and equitable, because it's based on hunches, and best guesses. (Respondent 15)*

School-based administrators perceive there to be an ad hoc process for succession practices, and for appointments to school leadership positions to be commonplace. Based on this appointments process, there is a perception that ASA succession practices are not considered to be fair and equitable.

5.5.3.3.2 Connections

A common perception held by school-based administrators was that having connections within the ASA system could assist the likelihood of being provided opportunities to take on school leadership positions. It would appear that appointment to such positions relied less on the individual candidates' skills or job-related knowledge, and in many instances, more on the personal connections of the candidate. The following quotes are in response to interviewees being asked how they believed an aspiring leader would be recognised within the ASA education system:

> *... it's just seemed like if you know someone, you kind of get promoted, or if there has been an issue you get promoted, to remove a problem. (Respondent 3)*

> *Um, to be honest, family, family friends, a name, I think there is becoming more of a chance to get into leadership because of the age of the current leaders, and if people are doing masters and things like that, then obviously your chances in the future of becoming a leader are heightened, but, I think in the past it's been, a lot of, I wouldn't say luck, but, um, yeah just who you know and … yeah. (Respondent 3)*

> *It's just sometimes a sense of who you know…. (Respondent 5)*

From this, it seems pertinent that those seeking leadership positions have personal connections within the ASA education system, and specifically with those people who may be able to influence the thinking behind the filling of such positions. From the perceptions of school-based administrators, decision-making appears to be made at the relevant Conference level where the position is located, and the two people that appear to be most persuasive in providing input appear to be the school principal and the Conference education director. The following quote illustrates the significance of these two parties in the succession process:

> *And, he (Conference system-based administrator) and I (School principal), probably next term will go out and have a meal and we will talk about a shortlist (Leadership candidates). And then he will probably have conversations with those people, but because it's a small pool, another job may come up at the end of the year for one of those people, and everything has to be rejigged again. (Respondent 15)*

As such, and perhaps contributed to by the relatively small size of the ASA education system, there is a perception held by school-based administrators that having connections to people with influence in the staffing decisions of schools can be a contributing factor to the appointing of school leadership positions.

5.5.3.3.3 Self-Initiated

An interesting point emerging from the data relates to the extent that individuals actively seek out leadership positions and initiate ways to be considered for such roles. While a perception exists that many school leaders are 'earmarked' for leadership and provided opportunities based on this, for those who are not identified by the system, a need arises for them to be proactive about initiating consideration. The following quote outlines for one school-based administrator what that process looked like as they themselves sought out a particular school leadership position known to be available:

> *I saw the job on the available, the Adventist Schools website. I enquired, emailed a friend who was at the school, and (pause) he said, apply [informally] for it or, talk to the principal so I did that, and then they contacted the principal of the school that I was at, and then things progressed, and then it progressed to*

an interview stage where I came for an interview, and the rest is history. (Respondent 3)

Following up on this, the respondent was asked why it was that they themselves had to be proactive in this area as far as getting their name out there for consideration. Their reply simply captured a perception of the need to self-initiate seeking leadership roles:

The squeaky wheel gets the oil. (Respondent 3)

In summary, there is a perception amongst school-based administrators that if individuals have not been identified by system personnel as having future leadership potential, the only other option is to self-initiate consideration for school leadership positions.

5.5.3.3.4 The Calling-Application Tension

Historically within the ASA education context, positions were filled by a God-directed 'call' from the central staffing body and contributed to the development of a 'calling' culture. Many of these school-based administrators obtained their positions of leadership through the calling system. They now realise that there is a change taking place, as the leadership position decisions are now typically made at locations other than the centralised staffing body. At the present time, these school-based administrators see that there are elements of an application-like process in place (staffing form and ASA job vacancy website) and that the future appears to be moving more in this direction. This generates a tension within this hierarchical level as to whether it is appropriate or not for an individual to initiate their interest in a position, or rather, to wait for the God-directed 'call' from the relevant decision-making bodies. In response to the question about registering interest in leadership roles via the staffing form, respondent five highlights this tension between waiting for a call versus initiating a desire to present themselves as a potential candidate and apply for a leadership position:

I believe that there's a culture of, well even if you wanted to you might not tick that box [registering interest in leadership roles], the other issue that we have, I believe, when we're looking for education director levels, is that, you've got a real tension between this whole idea because some positions are still called and

> *some positions are application, so there was advertised the job for the education director, and we discussed it as a group of principals, there's not one principal there that have got, either the courage, the inclination, the confidence, whatever you might want to call it, to actually go through the application process. It seems to me that the culture is just, doesn't know what to do because are we called to those positions, do we apply to those positions, and what we'll do is instead of doing anything proactive about our own leadership, or aspirational about our own leadership, we'll stand back and wait and see if anyone asks, and anyone taps, but we're not in the process of consistent tapping, or strategic tapping, so it just fee … is awkward, is the best way I'd susc … describe it. Yeah. (Respondent 5)*

Interestingly, there was a question as to whether the calling system is necessarily a poor system because it limits one's control of their future roles, or whether it is letting God lead in one's life. Further, this tension is seen as a reason for why the ASA education system has not already formalised and implemented an application-based succession system. The following quote highlights this tension:

> *I think, we're seeing a little bit of that [the movement from calling to application], and, as I said, the pervading culture though is, very, uneasy and doesn't know what to do with that. Because, in some regards then, people don't feel that they're necessarily in control of their careers, but then you'll have the whole other side of it, should they, if they're being led by God, it's a very uncomfortable place to be, which adds to, I think, the reasons behind the fact that we don't have great succession planning, but … yeah. (Respondent 5)*

To further complicate matters, the calling system can also be seen from the potential candidate's perspective. In this situation, the candidate feels called by God to pursue school leadership, resulting in the self-initiated exploration of leadership opportunities. This is somewhat in opposition to the other view – one emphasises the wait for the call from God through the system, the other emphasises that the call from God comes directly to the leadership candidate but requires them to pursue leadership opportunities. This tension is sometimes resolved when both the individual call and the system call are parallel and take place at the same time.

> *I know looking back on it talking to the principal that they weren't really interested in me at the start because they wanted someone more experienced, someone older, someone who had been in an admin role before, but once they'd interviewed me and prayed about it they felt that I was the right person for the job, so it wasn't necessarily, what they wanted, but just they felt impressed after praying and an interview that, I could do what they wanted. (Respondent 3)*

I don't actually think there was any process, looking back on it I feel like it was just a God-led thing. (Respondent 3)

In summary, the historical calling culture from the school-based administrators' perspective has impeded the introduction of an open and transparent identification and selection process. School-based administrators question whether a formal system reduces reliance on God's leading in the staffing process. At the same time, individuals who feel God's calling to leadership, are wanting a process that allows them to register this with the decision-making bodies.

5.5.3.4 Post-Succession Support

As with the classroom teachers, post-succession support was perceived by these school-based administrators as being ongoing support provided by the 'system' for those who have recently taken on leadership positions. This acknowledges that the socialisation of these new leaders is a process that takes time and which can be assisted in the organisational setting. The predominant theme expressed by this hierarchical level was that there was minimal ongoing support for new leaders.

5.5.3.4.1 Minimal Support

One respondent, when asked if they saw any type of support networks currently in place within ASA for new leaders, stated *"I don't think so".* When pressed for more detail, this respondent replied with *"I don't think so. I'm not aware of it, you know. I've just got to say, I'm not aware of it". (Respondent 15)*

However, there were school-based administrators who identified a program that, while one-off in nature, provided new leaders with some leadership advice and the potential to engage with current leaders, and possibly keep some of these connections going. It did become clear that this program was for 'young leaders' and was not a recurrent program able to be utilised by experienced school-based administrators. The following quote captures the viewpoint of a new school-based administrator with regards to this program:

I think last year in my first year of leadership I attended a young leaders conference run by the national body, and I found that very helpful and effective, there was current principals there and education directors, and they shared

very meaningful and helpful advice, and they were very willing to keep the connection going. (Respondent 3)

A number of school-based administrators identified that they had developed their own support networks while in their leadership roles. These relationships were either referred to as 'critical friends' or 'mentors'. These people provided advice, a listening ear, intentional leadership perspectives or general support to these leaders, but were the result of individual initiatives, and not provided by the ASA education system. The following two quotes identify the nature of these relationships that offered support and guidance to these leaders:

... there was one [support person], a very capable, very educated, very aware, woman who 'tapped' me on the shoulder, she actually said to me, explained to me what mentoring was, and she said to me 'I would like to mentor you, not incidentally, I would like to intentionally mentor you as a leader'. And, I think this is very rare, I don't think it happens very often. (Respondent 5)

Now for me, in my role, I've always had a critical friend, if you like. Somebody who is not involved in the school, who is a professional, I can ring 'em up and say 'Hey, I've got this issue' or I can ring them up and I can say 'I just need to sound off for 10 minutes, I'm really frustrated about laladadad' and they just listen. And then they'll say to me 'But have you thought of this?', this might've happened, 'have you thought of this, dadadadad?'. Now, that's my responsibility, I've set that up, I do that myself. (Respondent 15)

While there is minimal post-succession support offered by the ASA education system for new leaders, a number of school-based administrators identified a range of external development opportunities which offered some form of support, such as leadership programs run by the Association of Independent Schools. These non-ASA run programs, though somewhat limited in number, were considered to be of value to these respondents as they started out in their school-based administrator roles.

5.5.4 Ideal Succession Practices

As used with the classroom teacher hierarchical level, the use of the overview, preparation, process and post-succession support framework for analysis will likewise be employed here to present the perceived ideal succession practices of these school-based administrators.

5.5.4.1 Overview

When communicating their ideal succession practices, school-based administrators emphasised two main themes: A focus on future leader identification, and a willingness to talk openly and transparently about succession planning.

5.5.4.1.1 Identification

One area highlighted in the data was the need for the ASA system to improve ways to identify those employees who have the potential to be future school leaders. Further, it was implied that the education system should identify these individuals, rather than individuals' self-identifying future leadership ambitions. One respondent described a process whereby talented leadership candidates could be identified, and notification of these individuals' potential provided to higher levels. It was noted that further consultation with these individuals could lead to the provision of leadership opportunities that may establish a pathway to future leadership positions:

> *I think there should be young talent identified at schools, and those names forwarded to the national body or database, there should be consultation and discussion with those potential leaders, they should be potentially interviewed by, the national body, about their suitability, they should be asked if they want to do further study, maybe included in on some meetings, some admin meetings, or some sort of finance meetings, or just things like that to give them a bit of a taste and an eye to it, there should just be a recognition of talent as it comes through … (Respondent 3)*

Taking a focused, intentional approach to succession planning is also seen by this hierarchical level as being important. In addition to the need to identify early in their career those who have leadership potential, having done this, an ideal succession planning system, as perceived by these school-based administrators, would go one step further and create an individualised plan or pathway for how they will prepare for leadership positions in the future.

> *I see succession planning as something that's a priority. And something that is, I guess, yes, has to be intentionally done. That means identifying people that either are aspirational, or, have the skills and don't know it, and being able to identify both of those groups of people and then giving them opportunities to, to learn and to, opportunities to experience, just small supportive ways, and talking to them openly about, to the ones that aren't aspirational, why are you, could you see yourself, giving them the confidence, and the ones that are aspirational sometimes don't always have all the skills, well maybe our*

> *conversation then is different. Um, what sort of skill set do you need, which ones do you need to actually improve, and then coming up with an individualised plan for their leadership. (Respondent 5)*

For these school-based administrators, the ideal succession planning system both intentionally and systematically identifies potential leaders, and further, provides individualised pathways to develop leadership skills with a view towards taking on school leadership positions in the future.

5.5.4.1.2 Open and Transparent Conversations

A perception amongst some school-based administrators is that succession practices are not often spoken about within the ASA education system. It appears to be a tricky subject for many, as those employees who have been identified as having leadership potential are scrutinised by their colleagues, who often reflect on the fact that certain people have been 'tapped' but others have not been. This can lead to a certain amount of animosity between colleagues, and impact on staff morale. Additionally, it has been identified that it can be hard to have open and honest conversations about leadership aspirations with current leaders in such a small system, as registering interest for these types of positions can be seen as a 'threat' to the incumbent leader.

> *I think, to begin with it has to be open and transparent that, and talked about amongst the staff in a school that says, succession planning is something that we do here, part of the, the issues that you have sometimes is this, unsafe, cause we want a safe and collaborative environment, so you want to be transparent… So I think first of all, getting it out and open so you get this, sense of trust and safety and transparency, and everyone knows that it's something that's, that's just the way we do things. That's the first thing I think we need to do. Because we don't talk about it with our, down in the staff room it's just and you can get people closed and talking behind their back 'well why did they get a job offer?' and, so I think it needs to be an issue that we'll talk about. (Respondent 5)*

School-based administrators perceive an ideal succession model would identify those potential leaders who could fill key leadership roles in the future; it would be spoken about in schools openly and safely; and additionally, acknowledge the need for succession planning, skill people (school administrators, conference administrators and national administrators) in how to go about it in their areas of influence, and create expectations that current leaders will play a role in the development of future leaders. These points are summarised in the following quote:

Yeah, I think that we need to, number one, acknowledge that it needs to happen, number two, skill the leaders in the various institutions into how to do it, and number three, mandate that that's something that they have to … you know, that's something that is vital for them to do. (Respondent 5)

5.5.4.2 Preparation

For these school-based administrators, their ideal succession model included a number of preparation elements for what they saw to be effective school leadership. These elements are best captured in two themes that emerged from the data: Empowerment of School Leaders, and A Role for Formal Learning.

5.5.4.2.1 Empowerment of School Leaders

School-based administrators believe an ideal succession model should empower current school-based leaders to develop and work with potential leaders within the school in order to familiarise them with leadership roles. This practice is not widespread within the ASA system, and would appear to be unique to only a few schools within the ASA education system. Having these individuals take on a heightened level of understanding of certain leadership roles would enable them to identify and potentially take on the skills required to perform these roles, but also to observe and understand what the role entails. This would additionally provide the impetus for sustaining future leadership within the ASA education system, by providing a greater number of ASA employees with exposure to school leadership roles. The following quote captures these points:

I think that principals need to understand the importance of it [preparing leaders in-house], and then actually put it into place as a priority, having those conversations 'Alright, all of you might be deputies now, but who are you tapping on the shoulder?', giving them permission and opportunity to then grow the people into those roles, and I think it has to be, a priority … and that means that we need to have mechanisms in place for the safety of the school, as well as skilling up these people, and either tapping them and saying 'have you thought of', or skilling the ones who naturally are inclined, as well. So, it's really rare to get the combination of both of them work well, the skills and the aspiration, but, I think it's got to be something that we do, that we put into priority …. (Respondent 5)

This empowering may also include assigning mentors to potential leaders. Being able to ask questions and draw from the experience of these mentors would accelerate leadership development, and also provide meaningful direction and support. This mentoring may also take the form of a practice referred to as 'shadowing', whereby an individual works alongside of or is included in actual work-related functions in order to better understand the job requirements and to be prepared to take the position on if needed. The following quotes address these components in more detail:

> *We should be doing that especially with young principals, we should be providing either a mentor or a critical friend, so that they've got somebody that they can go to, to get advice. (Respondent 15)*

> *I went over and visit … sat down with the principal, said 'What's involved with the job', he talked me through the stuff, then the year before I was appointed as the deputy principal, he calls me down, he said 'I've got an hour to spare, I want you to come down', I want you to sit in the board meeting while we deal with this decision', so, just about all of his job, I knew about because he had let me shadow him, invited me to shadow, for the 12 months prior. (Respondent 15)*

5.5.4.2.2 A Role for Formal Learning

The school-based administrators' ideal succession planning system also included a role for formal learning as a preparation element. This could include an appropriate Master's degree program, or even include the types of leadership programs provided by Independent School type associations. Furthermore, there was a unanimous view that formal learning programs were considered to be an important preparation component for future school leaders. This is encapsulated in the following quotes, which arose from a question asking if these respondents saw a role for formal study in an ideal succession process:

> *I do actually. I know that I'm doing my masters at the moment in leadership, and I haven't studied masters level before, but I think that, it's required in other education areas, like, to have a principal that's not got a masters is … ridiculous really, and, I've been told time and time again like I don't need to, but I can't not do it, because I think it's the right thing to do. (Respondent 5)*

> *Yeah, I definitely think the Masters program is a good thing, it helps. I think the national body should be getting a pool of potential leaders early on, and sort of guiding them and recommending them through that Masters program. (Respondent 3)*

5.5.4.2.3 Summation

In summary, school-based administrators perceive that empowering current school leaders, such as deputy principals, to identify and work with potential leaders, providing insight into what their roles entail, is an ideal way to prepare these individuals for future leadership positions. The use of mentoring or shadowing is perceived to be highly beneficial to both the development of and transition to leadership and are seen as ideal preparation components. Furthermore, these school-based administrators see a role for formal learning in an ideal succession model.

5.5.4.3 Process

This section will explore school-based administrators' perceptions of how people would ideally be placed into or selected for school leadership roles. Two themes emerged from the data: The need for clear job descriptions and criteria, and the need for transparency in this process.

5.5.4.3.1 Clear Job Descriptions and Criteria

One ideal element perceived as a necessity by school-based administrators involved the determining of clear job descriptions for new leaders. Additionally, it was perceived that some criteria should be established which would provide detail as to the nature of the candidate being sought for leadership positions.

> *I think the employer needs to get the job description clear, and not just getting a name to fill a role, there needs to be a clear job description, and then there needs to be established some criteria, as to the sort of person they are looking for, that's what happens outside [of the ASA system], you know …. And I just think that there could be some more work done in teasing out that rather than saying 'We've got a principal, we haven't got a principal for (ASA School A) or (ASA School B), who are we gonna get, who's around, who's in the other Conferences that we can pinch' and then go from there. Well to me, that's not a process, that's just the serendipity filling a hole. (Respondent 15)*

5.5.4.3.2 Need for Transparency

School-based administrators perceive a greater need for clarity and transparency in the leadership selection process; specifically, they want clarity around how school leadership positions available within the ASA education system are known about, and

the processes utilised for selecting individuals for these positions. This would include defined timeframes where available positions are advertised, opportunities where interest can be registered and applications provided, and a confidence that all applications will be considered equally, rather than a perpetuation of the current perception that there are often people in mind for these positions rather than providing genuine consideration of all applicants.

> *I just think there needs to be a clarity where, you know, a job is advertised and there's a two week, three week, month process where someone can apply, there's an interview process, and, there needs to be transparency, and often they advertise a job and its already filled and someone's already been ear marked for it, so I think, one of the big things I think is important is, to be transparent with it, and also, it helps the younger staff coming through feel, like a sense of loyalty, so yeah, I think it's really important that that process is a lot more clear and a lot more transparent. (Respondent 3)*

5.5.4.3.3 Summation

There is a perception from these school-based administrators that clear job descriptions and an established criterion as to the type of candidate being sought for leadership positions would improve the staffing of leadership roles within the ASA education system. Additionally, providing transparency in relation to the selection for these positions, to ensure candidates feel there is equity in the staffing process, is likewise seen to be part of an ideal process.

5.5.4.4 Post-Succession Support

Post-succession support was perceived by these school-based administrators as being ongoing support provided by the ASA education system during the various socialisation stages for those who have recently taken on leadership positions. The two predominant themes expressed by this hierarchical level in terms of their ideals for post-succession support, were reduced new leader workloads, and appropriate support mechanisms.

5.5.4.4.1 Reduced Loads

A point of emphasis noted by respondents was that new school administrators step immediately into a role that most often does not take a reduced workload into consideration – a first-year teacher would be provided this, but not a first-year school-

based administrator. There is seen to then be a need for someone within the system who could provide some support to these new administrators, and in doing so, aid the smooth transition into the leadership role. The following quote captures this perception:

> *And, my difficulty is that, with a number of the positions, with a first year teacher, they go into a school, they're given a mentor, they're given a reduced load, tell me that happens with a principal. When they go into a school, are they given a mentor? Are they given a reduced load, in their first year? No. It's, foooof, straight into it, but my other point is, they don't back them, in terms of, they're expected to sink or swim. You go and do the job, whereas, I think that there ought to be somebody in their nominated job description in administration, who, by personality and experience, is the sort of person, who could go into a school and be a sounding board. (Respondent 15)*

5.5.4.4.2 Support Mechanisms

For school-based leaders, mentoring was considered to be one of the more crucial support processes for new leaders.

> *We should be doing that [mentoring] especially with young principals, we should be providing either a mentor or a critical friend, so that they've got somebody that they can go to, to get advice. (Respondent 15)*

Related somewhat to mentoring, an ideal was put forward to provide opportunities for semi-regular, ongoing communication between new school leaders, such as Skype or another online communication tool, that allowed an open dialogue relating to problems encountered, or ways of dealing with particular issues.

> *I actually think it would be very good to have a system in place where young leaders can, kind of Skype, or, have like a communication of once or twice a year where they can get together and just sort of feed off each other and find out what struggles they're having, and how they can help each other and learn from each other and so on. I think that would be beneficial. (Respondent 3)*

One respondent perceived a different set of challenges faced by new leaders who work in small schools. These small schools require leaders to wear a number of different hats, and suggests that some financial assistance be planned and provided to such schools to provide supporting personnel to help in areas where new leaders have limited experience.

> *I think there needs to be something done to allow leaders to have more time and more support, especially in the smaller schools, where they're left to be a jack of all trades and a master of none, and, just time pressures of, especially leaders with young families, they definitely need more support and more help, and there should be more finance assistance given to those smaller schools to allow them to have an extra staff member or office person to assist in those ways. (Respondent 3)*

5.5.4.4.3 Summation

In summary, a perception amongst school-based administrators of an ideal post-succession support process is that consideration should be given to the potential of reducing a new leader's first year load, similar to that of a first-year teacher, in order to allow them to familiarise themselves with the responsibilities of the role.

Additionally, a view exists that there should be a designated person within the ASA system, at either the national or Conference level, who has a dedicated supporting role for these new leaders built into their own work loads. These people would ideally be available to offer support, advice and direction on a range of matters relating to school leadership, which would assist the socialisation process. Furthermore, the structured and regular use of mentoring is perceived to be a valuable process for supporting these new leaders in their transition to roles of school leadership responsibility. Parallel to this, opportunities for ongoing communications between new leaders can provide both support, and also a valuable learning experience as they encounter many of the same, and some different, leadership issues. Consideration should also be given as to how to support new leaders in small schools where the perception is these individuals take on much more diverse positions of responsibility, with financial backing for additional administrative support being seen as something that could be beneficial in these situations.

5.6 SYSTEM-BASED ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS

Again here, as utilised in both the previous hierarchical levels of classroom teachers and school-based administrators, the participant generated framework will cover the

system-based administrators' perceptions of ASA succession practices in the following areas: Scope, Involvement, Current and Ideal practices.

5.6.1 Scope

In terms of this hierarchical level's understanding of the components of succession practices and the connections between these, the system-based administrators took an organisational future proofing theme to a number of similar elements to those of prior hierarchical levels, emphasising the need for future sustainability of the ASA education system.

5.6.1.1 Future Proofing

These respondents identified a number of components involved within succession processes, but their broad emphasis was on the long-term sustainability of the ASA education system. The following quote relating to scope of succession practices, emphasises this clearly:

> *I see it [succession practices] as the intentional future proofing of an organisation by supplying sustainable quality leaders. (Respondent 14)*

Interestingly, this group extend their view beyond that of prior hierarchical levels by identifying the need to first encourage leadership consideration from younger potential leaders. Again, this has sustainability of the education system as a point of emphasis.

> *… encouraging young people to think about, move into, and prepare for leadership within our program, because it means that we then have a sustainable program for the long term. (Respondent 12)*

As with prior hierarchical levels, system-based administrators identify two important components of the succession process, identification of potential leaders, and providing training and preparation opportunities to these individuals. Once again, these participants perceived that in doing this, they were contributing to school and system improvement and sustainability.

Identifying employees with a capacity and the ability and perhaps the desire to make a difference in a leadership position [school improvement], and then, first of all, identifying those people, or acknowledging their applications, and then, seeing what you can do to help them to achieve that goal. (Respondent 13)

I see in our schools' system we have many leadership positions, and we just need to make sure that we train people so their skills are not lost when others move on or change, so that the program of the school runs seamlessly without too many interruptions with changes. (Respondent 2)

In its most simplistic form, these system-based administrators see an effective succession process as one that prepares potential leaders in advance so that they can take on future positions of school leadership, and perform well in these roles. The consequence of which may well be "*training oneself out of a job". (Respondent 17)*

5.6.2 Involvement

5.6.2.1 Significant Involvement

'Involvement' communicates the level of interest and subsequent engagement with ASA succession practices perceived to be held by these system-based administrators. This hierarchical level acknowledges that they have significant involvement in the succession process, both as designers of components of succession processes and as participants within these processes. As participants, they are succession event decision makers and as employees of this education system, they themselves may be subjected to this succession process.

Even though these system-based administrators perceived they were significantly involved in many components of the succession process, there was a question mark from these respondents as to whose role it was to design and implement an overarching succession framework that could be enacted to improve current process. Thus, the dominant theme emerging from the data here questions who performs this role.

5.6.2.2 Who's Role

While these system-based respondents have acknowledged having either designed or inherited some components of the current succession model, there is confusion or

uncertainty about who's role it should be to generate an overarching succession framework. As one respondent noted:

> *So at the moment, yes, overall, it's fragmented. Because, whose role is it? …. And that's where the whole area of succession planning has never really been high on the agenda. And that's where there's a big gap, because whose role is it to do it at the office? (Respondent 13)*

While the question of who is to develop and implement this overarching framework still remains, there seems to be a consensus amongst these hierarchical level respondents that logically it should be based at the national level (ASA).

> *Alright, so if we go ideal, of course ideal is that it is a national model. We are so small, that, for each of us to look after ourselves becomes incredibly problematic, so, I think a national model would be very, very important. (Respondent 14)*

While this role is seen to be best placed at the national level, this hierarchical level also indicated that because of the fractured organisational structure in which the ASA system functions, there is no executive authority of ASA and its leadership to enforce adoption of this framework by the regional bodies; a major impediment to the development and implementation of effective succession practices.

5.6.3 Current Succession Practices

Within the current succession practices category of the framework, four distinct participant generated sub-categories were again adopted to present the system-based administrators perceptions of current ASA succession practices: Overview, Preparation, Process and Post-Succession Support.

5.6.3.1 Overview

For these respondents, overview again consisted of a broad description of their perceptions of current formal ASA succession practices. Due to their significant experience within the ASA education system, these system-based administrators had well-developed views of current succession practices within this education system. Four themes emerged from the data that overarch the system-based administrators views of current formal succession practices: Working with Limitations, Pathways not Understood, A Process Undergoing Transition, and A Leadership Crisis.

5.6.3.1.1 Working With Limitations

System-based administrators perceive that although current succession practices are best described as ad hoc, they are still seen to be functioning, albeit amidst limitations. Some respondents have gone so far as to suggest it is only by the 'Grace of God' that the Adventist education succession system has functioned as well as it has:

> *It is absolutely astounding, and it is very sincerely by the grace of God and his blessing, I have no doubt, that, our education system not simply, ah, flourished, but I'd even take a step back and go survived. (Respondent 14)*

System-based administrators tend to be experienced educationalists who have acted in a number of roles including those of classroom teacher and school-based administration. Their experience is generally measured in decades, uniquely placing them to share perceptions of both historical and current succession practices. An area with a high level of consistency in system-based administrator perceptions involved their reflection on the challenges of getting people interested in taking on school leadership positions. Most respondents acknowledged the difficulty of this, and provided insight to a number of perceived reasons as to why this is the case: generational differences, a negative perception of these leadership roles by some, questions surrounding remuneration, perceived work-life balance issues, long-term commitment, increasing expectations, a more litigious environment, and a heavy emphasis on compliance. These reasons were raised by system-based administrators as to why fewer potential leaders are emerging. The following quotes emphasise that the question of 'why become a leader?' is still acting as a disincentive for many to consider leadership. The ad hoc nature of current succession practices is perceived by system-based administrators to be working, but there are concerns about the limited talent pool from which to draw future leaders.

> *Yeah I think the work life balance, it's a current trendy concern, that 'I don't need this, so I'll just stay where I am'. 'I want a life', you hear that often. 'No, I don't want to be a principal, I want a life'. And so that's something we have to address I believe. I believe that the expectations of a principal in the world of compliance in [our region], are scaring some off, because there is more and more expectations and the litigation side of things is stronger, and so it's 'Well do I really want to put myself in that position?'. … it's trying to inspire them*

[potential future leaders] to want to lead, more than actually teaching them skills for some of them succession planning, succession planning is more about, it's even trying to train our principals to not always go into the staff room and whinge about how busy you are, and so sometimes we actually, talk about the job in seriously boring terms for want of a better word. (Respondent 2)

... middle management is perceived to be more work for not necessarily more remuneration, or, it's actually, the young ones you see, 'Why would I want to do that?'. (Respondent 7)

These system-based administrators perceive that generational differences are impacting on the desire of many to consider leadership opportunities, with extrinsic motivators such as release time and particularly remuneration being perceived to have become more of a key consideration for younger potential leaders. The following quotes drive at these issues:

There are some generations who would be inspired to make a difference, there were some who would be inspired to say 'Well if I get a fat salary, that will keep me going'. To me, the first point that I made, inspired to make a difference, is really the only true measure, or the most rewarding position to take. I think leaders should be paid fairly, but they shouldn't be enticed into leadership by fat salaries. (Respondent 12)

The moment you step into principalship in any of our schools ... a deputy in one of our schools knows, if they become a leader, expectations will be increased and be the same as, their state and catholic peers, but the remuneration will not be the same. And it's not because we can't afford it, it's because we don't allow it because of the pastoral comparison. So, I think that's a fundamental concern inside the succession planning model. (Respondent 14)

As alluded to above, the work-life imbalance perceived by some also appears as a limitation to encouraging a new generation of potential leaders to consider such positions. The following quote emphasises what is perceived to be a culture of work within Adventist education:

I think in our systems, our systems actually create a culture that is centred around, that your rewards are actually, 'sorry you're not perceived to be a good worker unless you're working really, really, really hard', and, you know, 'How you going?', 'Oh yeah, nah things are really busy mate, I was up til 11 o'clock and I was back at school at six o'clock', we say it with a tone of it's a bad thing, but we actually put it out there as a good thing. (Respondent 7)

These factors are considered to act as barriers to the desire to take on leadership and are seen as limitations to the current succession process. System-based administrators acknowledge that succession practices need to better understand and consider these elements if the ASA system is to continue to attract and prepare a pool of effective future potential leaders.

5.6.3.1.2 Pathways Not Understood

There is a perceived need to more clearly define routes to leadership, particularly in light of the movement away from using such practices as field choices, to place individuals in leadership positions.

> *One thing that I think is critical here is the lack of clarity around defined routes to leadership. Pathways to leadership is not a clear run, it's not clearly understood by many of us in leadership, and it's not clearly understood by those who aspire, or even are potential leaders. And I put those in two groups, sometimes aspirants are not the right type, and sometimes those who are retiring that are not forthcoming are actually the right type … but they won't put their hand up, we've got to get beside them and encourage them. (Respondent 12)*

A misconception is that such pathways would lead only to a school principalship – but system-based administrators perceive there to be a range of leadership opportunities that allow for individuals to make a difference within the ASA education system.

> *And then a really clear pathway, I don't think it's clear. A really clear pathway, and also the recognition of different leadership styles, and, knowing what you can do to succ … if you're talking about succession, you know, where can it lead? Cause at the moment, and I thi … and again, I'm just generalising, but this, this is just an impression, when you say succession planning they all think it leads to principalship. But it doesn't. A significant range of leadership roles where people can make a difference. (Respondent 7)*

These system-based administrators acknowledge that while at present there are no clearly defined routes to leadership, there is still an expectation that leadership successors have undertaken the appropriate preparation and have the requisite experience and qualifications, despite the system not having articulated this pathway.

> *I see nowadays we've actually probably jumped too far the other way and expect the perfect leader to be trained and to have everything in place before they are put into a leadership position …. (Respondent 2)*

Historically, from the perspective of those system-based administrators interviewed, succession planning was seen as an 'accidental' process, as school leaders were left to either 'sink or swim', with those being able to 'swim' becoming the logical choices for further leadership opportunities.

> *I'm not sure that we've had enough time as a system to allocate to how leadership develops. We've tended to rely on accidental routes into leadership, and we work with those, and, to some degree we do a reasonable job, but being proactive, is something we haven't seemed to put the resources into …. (Respondent 12)*

More recently, system-based administrators were able to reflect on 'field choices' – that being the recognition of individuals with perceived leadership ability, not necessarily experienced or formally prepared - having success when 'plucked' from within the ranks of lower-level administrators and provided opportunities to take on higher levels of leadership. There is also acknowledgement that *"sometimes you get that [field choices] wrong" (Respondent 2)*. There is still a view that exists that it could be beneficial - if God led - to continue to do this. The following quotes capture these ideas:

> *I do believe that, the bigger the schools, the more you're not willing to give an inexperienced person a try, and that's a concern that I have, we would, for example, happily taken [someone] out a while ago and plonk [them] in a small school, and [they] did really well. You know, would we pick out [someone] now and plonk [them] in a school now? No way, it's too big. You know, they'd have to have experience, and all of a sudden, we've limited our pool to this big [hand gesture, tiny]. (Respondent 2)*

> *I think we need a fairly clear plan, but at the same time, we need to allow God to also lead us too. And to appoint people that, you know, the Noah's of this world that maybe nobody had thought of, and 'why on earth would you appoint them to a big school like that?', because that's where some of our biggest successes have come from, from their [a system administrator] field choices. (Respondent 2)*

5.6.3.1.3 A Process in Transition

There is growing recognition from system-based administrators that a transition process is being encountered when determining the selection of leadership roles, one that is moving from the historical calling process to one more application driven in nature. This has led to a tension within the ASA system, as some Conferences are making extensive use of the application process, while others, often due to their geographic position, are having to often make use of the calling system in order to staff leadership positions.

> *So, for me personally, I do see quite a tension between putting your hand up and saying 'Consider me', and I understand that that's how it is and that's probably how the market is. I see a tension between that and simply being asked 'Would you consider being this, you know, moving into this role'. (Respondent 17)*

> *So, no, in some parts we can use the applications method, and sift people through, but in some places we cannot do that. It's just impossible because people don't put up their hand. (Respondent 12)*

A perception held by some system-based administrators is that the calling system is an outdated, inefficient model for the contemporary time frame the ASA system finds itself in. The growth in industrial Enterprise Agreements, and less acceptance that you could be asked to uproot and move has hastened in a growing acceptance that the application method is becoming more appropriate. Again, however, there remains the prickly issue of how to staff leadership roles in places where few, if any, applications will be tendered. The quote that follows illustrates further this tension:

> *… it's really complex how it works and I think the mechanism [the calling system] is outdated, but I think there's a reluctance, and I'm not sure whether it's division or union, are from the old school, to actually call serious question on it, because they've still got to find a way of, getting placements, into remote and hard to staff areas. (Respondent 7)*

Also changing is how education directors in the various Conferences communicate about the potential leaders found within their Conferences. There has long been acknowledged a limited exchange between education directors when it comes to the staffing of school leadership positions, but the present transition is seeing more of a willingness to not only identify potential leaders, but share these people as possible

future leaders – even though this could mean losing talented staff to other geographic regions should opportunities arise for them elsewhere in the ASA education system.

> *There's a fairly significant network between Education Directors, which is, I think, a tribute to [current ASA leadership], cause in the old days, I've been principal under different other union Ed Directors, in the old days we tended to go 'I've got a really bright person here, I'm not telling anybody cause I want them at some point to take over'. That's no longer the case, one of the first questions we actually do at our staffing, [is ask] 'Ok, who are the bright spots?', for the first time this year, actually, [we asked] 'Who are the people who are potential leaders in years to come?'. But I think we're at the stage where we are comfortable enough with each other to share that. (Respondent 17)*

Amidst this broader transition, however, there is acknowledgement that the personalities of those currently in leadership are still playing a very active role in shaping successor development, with recognition that some current leaders are doing this better than others. However, there is a push by current ASA leadership to encourage the development of aspirants. This does not appear, however, to be in a formalised way, but rather, quite informally, with the end result being it is left to these individual leaders to determine the process at school level for how or whether this is enacted. These personality variations are directly impacting upon the leadership development at school level, as illustrated in the following quote:

> *Depending on the principal, depending on the person, it's a personality thing rather than an intentional. [ASA leadership] is certainly encouraging us to do that more, no question, certainly driving that agenda of 'What are we doing to bring on our, aspiring people'. In terms of how it is effected in the schools … It heavily depends on the personality of the people who are in admin. (Respondent 17)*

As explored above, it is perceived that the current succession process is ad hoc at best, and entering a period of transition that is seeing a tension exist between the historical calling approach and the more recent application-based approaches. This is further compounded by the transition from personalities driving the development of successors to a perceived need for a formal system for this future leadership candidate development.

5.6.3.1.4 A Leadership Crisis

System-based administrators are becoming increasingly aware of the need for quality future leadership, and that importantly places a focus on whether current succession practices are meeting this need. As perceived by this hierarchical level, current succession practices are limited in their ability to generate leadership aspirants. Recognition of the increasing age of current administrators, as well as growing awareness that fewer potential leaders desire to enter into leadership roles is perceived to be placing more of a focus on leadership moving forwards. The following quotes capture the awareness of system-based leaders as to the future challenges of sustaining quality leaders within the ASA education system:

> *They [ASA] are very aware of the, potential need of leaders in the future. (Respondent 2)*

> *We are talking at a director level about the sorts of strategies that we need to be putting in place to, to manage leadership. Now, one thing that we've done some research on in the last three months, is, and this came out of, what I was saying before about the stats on, the ageing status of directors, that made us think about 'Maybe we should know this sort of stuff about all leaders', so we now know that, of the 120 people researched out of that, 17 will be retiring within the next five years …. So, it's 17 plus that we've got to replace over the next five years in significant leadership roles, this is first and second tier school and Conference leadership. (Respondent 12)*

However, the significant challenge of providing these future leaders again ties back to the aspiration levels of potential leaders. Additionally, there is a perceived question mark with regards to how prepared the next level down, and thus logical future candidates for leadership positions, actually are. The following quote hints that this group may be under-developed and as a result, suggests a leadership crisis is emerging within the ASA system:

> *I know that looking across our Conference there's a leadership crisis, in that we haven't developed, middle management. (Respondent 7)*

A number of system-based administrators, when addressing the topic of future school leadership, note that some of the bigger schools in prominent Conferences often 'bleed' the smaller Conferences of up and coming leaders.

> *Look, something I've noticed going around our system, the small Conferences, we home grow our leadership. We've got no choice. We home grow our leadership, we get really good deputies happening, we get new principals happening. Something I've noticed as I've travelled around, is the bigger Conferences then bleed the smaller Conferences for leadership. Our system is not growing succession planning with the bigger schools, which it ought. But it's not. It's the smaller schools that grow the admin and then they get bled out. And we've got to start that process all over again. (Respondent 17)*

Also noted by the system-based administrators was that certain schools stockpile 'ex-admin' within their teaching ranks. As Respondent 17 comments, "*And then we get an enormous number of ex-admin who get grabbed into bigger schools, and never ever want to come back out to contribute again*". These are staff who are considered to be capable of continuing in leadership positions, but choose to remain in the classroom, compounding the difficulties already being faced by ASA in providing quality leaders within school leadership roles.

5.6.3.1.5 Summation

In summary, system-based administrators perceive that present ASA succession practices are at best ad hoc in nature, and are believed by some to be functioning by God's grace more than effective succession practices. Succession practices are seen as currently being in a transition period; specifically moving away from the traditional 'calling' system, to a more contemporary, application-based approach. Amidst this, there is growing recognition that specific limitations to current succession practices are hurting the aspiration levels of potential future leaders, who see no clear pathways to leadership, and is thus contributing to a growing leadership crisis within the ASA education system.

5.6.3.2 Preparation

5.6.3.2.1 Not Enough

There is an understanding amongst system-based administrators with regards to what formal training programs currently exist within the Adventist Schools Australia education system. An Aspiring Leaders Conference was mentioned by the majority of respondents as presently being the flagship formal preparation program for aspiring school leaders. This 'aspiring leaders' conference is a recent initiative, and it appears to be run biennially, over a period of days.

> *They [ASA] have put in the aspiring leaders program, that's been good. That's been able to target folk who probably wouldn't have put their hands up otherwise, there was no venue for them to do that. (Respondent 17)*

There still appeared to be a shortage of detail that these system-based administrators were able to provide in relation to the specifics of this preparation program, including its time frame, with comments such as "*They [ASA] also have their annual leadership program where they invite people who are interested in becoming leaders to leadership training. I think it's for a three-day session near the start of each year" (Respondent 13)*

There is a perception amongst system-based administrators however that those who are invited to attend this Aspiring Leaders conference may not necessarily be representative of those who may be best served to attend. These administrators acknowledge that there may be shortcomings in how these invitees are selected. It would appear that principals are simply asked to nominate names, or in some instances, individuals are asked to self-nominate. These administrators acknowledge that there may be a need to build more of a structure around how these individuals are chosen for this formal preparatory program.

> *Another area that we've now run two of these events in association with Avondale College, this is the aspiring leaders program. Now this is run, biennially … and this is where Conferences nominate people within their patch who could be aspirant leaders, they'll either get alongside them and say "How about it, would you like to come", or they'll ask people to put up their hands. Different Conferences have different strategies with that, and maybe there's scope for us to build in more structure around how those people are chosen. (Respondent 12)*

System-based administrators also made mention of an advanced study program currently being run by Avondale College, where participants could take units that contributed to a Master's degree in Education. Additionally, some respondents who were able to provide more description of how formal preparation programs were made available to ASA employees, such as the Aspiring Leaders conference as well as the Masters of Education program, acknowledged that there are differences among these administrators in their promotion and selection of personnel for these

opportunities. Beyond the yearly staffing form where employees are asked to indicate their interest in leadership positions, the follow up from these administrators appeared to be ad hoc in nature. An additional challenge indicated was "… *unfortunately there's not too many positions available for them to step into, and so, that's one challenge, and the other challenge is not too many people want to be principals" (Respondent 13).*

In addition to the formal preparation programs provided by ASA, system-based administrators perceive there to be significant value in both Conferences and individuals making use of leadership development programs currently being run by independent bodies, such as the Association of Independent Schools. The ASA education system does not see themselves in competition with these programs, but as part of the broader education community who may be able to participate and benefit from such programs.

> *… a number of our companies, have strong links with their Association of Independent Schools group, and certainly in New Zealand this is happening too. Anyone who takes on a new leadership role, joins in with a leadership development program. People come in and get trained and their awareness is built through those programs, so, we don't feel we need to compete against that, we accept that as we are part of the broader educational community, we need to be participating. (Respondent 12)*

It is clear that risk exists when this education system does not take the opportunity to provide preparation opportunities to potential leaders, but rather, places people in positions without the requisite experience or training. As one experienced system-based administrator describes:

> *I've seen it work well, I've seen it go disastrous when somebody hasn't been trained up and they've said 'Well let's have a crack at this, we'll put this person in'. They have no training and through no fault of their own it goes belly up. (Respondent 17)*

In summary, while there is a perceived need for formal preparation training programs within this education system, there is a view that what currently exists is only a step in the right direction, and that either more forms of training or other leadership opportunities could be of benefit to the ASA education system.

I affirm ASA for the commencement of the leadership program, that I think they are running every couple of years, where, middle management are encouraged to participate so that they can health check whether they are interested in more senior roles, where those of us looking on can look at possible candidates, I really affirm that. I think, it's a good first step. (Respondent 14)

5.6.3.3 Process

From the analysis of the responses of these current system-based administrators, it would appear that there is some variance in the administrators approach to the current succession process. There are a number of reasons for why a lack of consistency exists in this area, and these will be discussed in the themes below. Five significant themes emerged from the system-based administrator responses here that help to provide an understanding of the current processes used to fill school leadership positions: The role of the annual staffing form; the use of formal applications and the need and use, in some areas, of appointments; the various decision-making parties involved; and the current role of the traditional calling system and governance concerns.

5.6.3.3.1 Annual Staffing Form: Use Variation

System-based administrators believe the current process for filling school leadership positions is largely determined at the Conference level. For these administrators the annual staffing form, completed by current ASA employees, was most often considered a starting point for this staffing process. This staffing form, however, is initiated by the ASA, and then passed down to the Conferences for distribution to the schools within that region for completion by current staff. This form documents the employment intentions of staff for the following year, and includes a question that allows respondents to provide an indication of a willingness to be considered for leadership roles. These forms are then returned to the relevant Conference administrators, where, most commonly, the Conference Education Directors review them.

Subsequently, most often Conference education administrators initiate conversations with those individuals who nominated interest in future leadership positions, and the exact nature of the employee aspirations unearthed. Following this, information about

opportunities such as formal study possibilities or other preparation plans may be discussed, where seen as appropriate by the particular Conference Education Director(s). This allows for the selection of potential leadership candidates to take place at Conference level. As a result of this staffing form analysis process, it would appear that Conference level administrators are currently responsible for evaluating those individuals who have nominated leadership aspiration interest in this way, and determining those who are perceived to have or not to have leadership abilities.

This staffing form, some of the system-based respondents noted, may also prompt these Conference administrators to consider whether there are some individuals who did not acknowledge leadership aspirations, but who are perceived to have a suitable skill set to be considered for leadership roles. This may then potentially result in leadership positions being offered to selected individuals who did not indicate leadership aspirations on the staffing form. The following system-based administrator quote outlines in some detail this post-staffing form process:

> *… every year I talk to every single teacher, so I go around staffing time, so when the [staffing] form comes out from [ASA] and I'll go and talk to every single teacher, ask them about their dreams, study plans, any skills they want to do, do you want to upgrade, do you want to be a leader, when do you see that happening, do you want to do advanced study etc. So we have that conversation it all goes on the bit of paper, and then from that, through the year, I get a list typed up and I send out the study information and then we talk more about do you want to take it up do you want to do this, we've got a, position, a long service position available as a, head of school, would you like to give that a go for six weeks, so from what they have told me, but it's also, look I look at, coming back to the calling part, I might not advertise that through all the ten people that have said they would like to be a head of school, I'll pick the person that I believe will possibly fit in a little easier, just looking at personality, emotional intelligence, how they work, so looking at things that because sometimes (pause) a few times, more than you believe, people put up their hand to say they want to be a leader but they show no skills in being a good leader with the whole package, and so they need a lot more training, and may not even get there, but they don't recognise it and that's why they're not, they wouldn't make a good leader. (Respondent 2)*

Additionally, there appears to be a role played by current principals who may be asked by the Conference level administrator to have input regarding the candidates' suitability for leadership. A view put forward by some system-based administrators is that principals should be identifying those individuals with leadership potential –

"Initially it will depend on the awareness of the principal …" (Respondent 17).
Accessing the principal's view and its integration into the evaluation of candidates is highlighted in the following quote:

> *Oh, it's on the staffing [form] that ASA send out every year, are you willing to go to the islands, are you willing to move, do you want to change, do you… want to do advanced study, interested in …. I would follow that up and talk to them, and see what, it very rarely comes up, but if they do, then I talk to them and see if they want to do advanced study or what sort of position they'd be looking for, and, so it just depends on the person, we talk to the principal about it too, to see if the principal thought they had the skills and the capacity to do it, or if it was just a dream that they want more money or whatever. (Respondent 13)*

There would appear to be some variance, however, in the extent that this process is presently followed up after an individual registers interest via the staffing form. Not all Conference personnel follow this exact process as outlined above.

From analysis of the data, system-based administrators appear to have the ultimate determination in which individuals may be considered for job openings. This 'Gatekeeper' role played by Conference administrators, and in some instances, school principals, would appear to indicate that this process currently has a degree of personality bias, and it appears consistency in process is not a certainty. Administrator personalities may also play a factor in the 'assessment' of candidates, and the system currently made use of would appear to allow for bias in the determination of who 'gets a look in'.

There is acknowledgement by system-based administrators that Conference education personnel still wield the ability to offer, or withhold, the provision of opportunities to grow future leaders. Asked whether current succession practices were fair and equitable for everyone, one system-based administrator responded with the following:

> *No. Um. (pause). I know in my own Conference, we will encourage anyone that wants to [pursue leadership], but if we have seen personality traits that don't make a good leader we don't encourage it either. Now is that fair and equitable to everyone? No, probably not. But it's more identifying who we believe have the greater potential for success. Um, and sometimes you get that wrong. (Respondent 2)*

Further to the annual staffing form data, ASA also send out a complete ASA staffing list identifying Conference, school, and teaching field, to the Conference education personnel which some Education Directors use to begin short listing candidates whom they would consider for leadership positions as they became available.

> *What we do is, well what I do, we have the complete list of all staffing in Adventist Schools Australia. So, all Ed Directors get blessed with that. And it's about a twelve-page document, with every school, every Conference, all teachers there, every teaching area and principals and so on …. I immediately began going through that complete list and making up a list of about a dozen, of my short list, looking at the names, 'these are the people I want to tap into'. I think they've got the things that I'm looking for. (Respondent 17)*

Within the current succession process there is an increasing tension between the needs of the respective Conferences and the need to take a national perspective to this process. As detailed earlier, there was suggestion that the bigger Conferences with their size related influence sometimes placed the needs of their Conference above the national need for staffing, and rather than 'home grow' their own potential leadership were seen by some smaller Conferences to 'bleed' talented staff from these smaller Conferences.

There is, however, growing acknowledgement that each Conference needs to also include the national perspective in their deliberations of succession planning. While this has improved in recent years, there is still some hesitancy for some Education Directors to offer the names of all promising future leaders in informal and formal staffing discussions.

> *There's a fairly significant network between Education Directors, which is, I think, a tribute to [current ASA leadership], cause in the old days, I've been principal under different other union Ed Directors, in the old days we tended to go 'I've got a really bright person here, I'm not telling anybody cause I want them at some point to take over'. That's no longer the case, one of the first questions we actually do at our, staffing, [is ask] 'Ok, who are the bright spots?', for the first time this year, actually, [we asked] 'Who are the people who are potential leaders in years to come?'. But I think we're at the stage where we are comfortable enough with each other to share that. (Respondent 17)*

In summary, there is acknowledgement that almost all system-based administrators make use of the annual staffing form in the present succession process, but there are

differences in how this is used. The extent of follow up with aspirants, evaluation of these respondents, and involvement in the staffing form analysis process by either Conference level administrators or current school principals, remains an area most often determined by the personalities in current leadership rather than the consistent use of any formalised process. Or, as one system-based administrator suggested when asked whether leadership appointment was determined by formal process or personalities, their reply was "*Personalities. I would say currently it's more personality, in leadership roles…" (Respondent 2).* Additionally, linked to the staffing form is the ASA distribution of an additional document providing all employee position information which allows Conferences to give consideration to individuals not necessarily placed within their own Conference for leadership positions. The staffing process across Conference boundaries, while improved in recent times, is still an area where tensions exist.

5.6.3.3.2 Applications/Appointments Tension

The system-based administrator respondents acknowledge that within the ASA education system there is now the use of both an application process, as well as an appointment process, utilised to fill school leadership positions. There is perceived to be a tension between these two components within the succession process. The application process includes responding to a formal listing or informal acknowledgement of a job vacancy. An appointment process, in contrast, takes place when no applications have been received or considered for a job vacancy; rather, system-based education administrators make direct contact with individuals relating to interest in these school leadership vacancies.

5.6.3.3.2.1 Applications

These system-based administrators are coming under pressure from both external bodies, as well as current ASA staff and school communities, to provide a system allowing individuals to formally apply for available job vacancies. This system is seen to represent a more modern approach to the filling of school leadership positions, and while some administrators put this down to growth in the use of enterprise agreements or other recent industrialised processes, there remain many system-based administrators who have concerns regarding the limitations of the present application

processes. As one system-based administrator illustrates of the pressure to follow process for applicants:

> *… my job is to look at the process and make sure it's advertised, to make sure there's a group looking to interview people, but if there's issues, then the head office will be called in, but I can't guarantee that, the people, that they choose is totally fair and open, because it might be that the group, and I've got to make sure the group is impartial, so it's a process as much as we can to ensure fairness, and I think, we had one situation once where the union were involved, but because we were able to show that the process was fair and open, even though the person and other people thought that there was favouritism, but process was implemented according to what was written, so there was really no evidence to show that the person had a right to be disgruntled, except they and others felt that there was favouritism. (Respondent 13)*

At the current time, the application process, limited though it may be, is through the Adventist Schools Australia website which has a 'positions vacant' listing. This is available for all to access, but is not necessarily known to all. There is a perception held by most system-based administrators, that this website is not well known about, or communicated to, the broader ASA employee base, and that many potential future school leaders may not know to explore this forum in order to be considered for these available leadership positions:

> *I think they [positions vacant] go on the website …. Yeah, the vacancies are on the website, but who checks that? And who knows to go there? You know what I'm saying? (Respondent 7)*

Interestingly, at the time of writing, a link found on the ASA available vacancies website indicates an application form is to be completed and forwarded to the national office where the applicant is not currently employed by ASA. The application form link on the website for those not presently employed by ASA, however, was not working and the application form unable to be accessed. If the applicant is a current ASA employee, the website directs them to email the relevant Conference Education Directors to register interest in the position. The website had the following statement relating to this process:

> *Written applications or expressions of interest should be forwarded to the National Office (download an employment application form), or in the case of current employees considering an internal transfer, to the State director of*

> *education listed below. Please note that the employer reserves the right to fill this position prior to any stated closing date.*
> (http://asa.adventist.edu.au/index.php/Employment/Current-Vacancies)

Additionally, some school-based administrators consider positions being advertised on the ASA website to provide a reactionary model (a rapid position filling response without taking the time, as this process does not make use of cut off dates, to include as many suitable applicants as possible) to succession planning regarding the staffing of school leadership positions.

> *So, again, especially with the website, it's a reactionary model. "Ooh, Fred put his hand up, ok, he's a possible leader, oh look at that we've got a vacancy this year in (School A), let's put Fred there". (Respondent 14)*

The current system also allows for the informal registering of interest in a position, at times made directly to a Conference education director, which may potentially be subject to personal connections rather than transparent processes. This is identified as taking place because of the small, and at times, personal nature of the ASA education system. The following quote identifies that this may be taking place informally alongside more formal processes:

> *... a lot of us are scrambling to just find somebody who will put up their hand, and this comes back to what I was saying before, there are some positions within our system that, the position will be advertised, we've got one on the database at the moment, I know of four or five from one area who've either put up their hand either formally or said 'Gee I'd love that job', so there's probably 10 or 15 people who are seriously looking at that, saying 'I wouldn't mind that'. (Respondent 12)*

While ASA system-based administrators have touted the application procedure as an important aspect of filling school leadership positions, they have also acknowledged in practice there are certain limitations in adopting a formal applications process.

One particular difficulty encountered in the current process of filling school leadership positions takes place with regard to certain geographic areas. It is clear that some Conferences find it easier to staff leadership roles in their schools, while others are not always given strong consideration by quality applicants. System-based administrators do not find it practical to use an application based process in some

areas, as it can be widely expected there will not be applicants for some 'tricky to staff' locales. Where this occurs, the need for a calling or recruiting of individuals takes place. There are hard to staff areas within the ASA system, as the following quote outlines:

> *But for some other places, nobody applies, nobody registers interest, and we might go through asking 20-25 people before we stumble on somebody who says 'oh yeah, alright, ok, maybe God is calling me'. So, there's not fairness and equity, certainly to the places that need good leadership. … there are some parts [geographic areas] that actually get lots of inquiry and some parts that don't. So, no, in some parts we can use the applications method, and sift people through, but in some places, we cannot do that, it's just impossible because people don't put up their hand. And it doesn't really set up that equitable arrangement. You know, some places don't even rate when it comes to getting the best people aspire to be in those places. (Respondent 12)*

Another perceived limitation of the application process held by system-based administrators is that a culture change needs to take place that would allow for individuals to more fully embrace the move towards this application-based process. A view held by these administrators is that the current application system is not being made use of to the best possible capacity because many ASA employees still recognise the 'calling' system and prefer to be asked or appointed to a position rather than to formally apply for the role. It is acknowledged that this may be a generational view point, as more senior potential leaders experienced this calling system and have not needed to go through an application process for previous leadership roles. Additionally, there is a reticence also to apply because of the stigma attached to self-promoting for a role from within the ASA education employee culture, a view that some administrators believe is impacting the quality of applicants coming forward to be considered for school leadership positions.

> *I think, the creation of a culture where, where they can put their hand up [is needed]. And, this thing of, everyone, it's kind of a su … we think it's an Americanism to self-promote, we're very, self-deprecating, you know, everyone likes to be the reluctant leader that was asked, rather than to put your hand up, so the creation of a culture where it's easy to put your hand up. Where there's no issues around it. (Respondent 7)*

For these system-based administrators, the application process as currently presented lacks a number of key components that one would expect to find in a formal

application-based staffing process. Firstly, there appears to be no application form for present ASA employees to fill in when considering a specific school leadership position. Without this, it is likely to be perceived that the application process is both open to bias and at best considered a dubious system. Secondly, there is an absence of any job description attached to any of the vacant and currently advertised leadership roles for an applicant to consider. Along with this, no selection criteria such as experience, qualifications or skills required to fill such positions are provided anywhere in this process.

Finally, the system-based administrators perceive the present application process to have a number of flaws. While they acknowledge the application process to be an important aspect of the succession process, they currently see this process as not being well known about or communicated, not being consistently made use of and open to the potential for misuse. They also perceive that a culture change is needed to transition from one of 'I don't need to apply' to one that more closely resembles 'this is accepted practice' if this process is to function effectively.

5.6.3.3.2.2 Appointments: 'Conditioned'

These system-based administrators indicated there were times when an application system was not necessary or would not work in practice and consequently felt the need to also consider an appointment process to fill school leadership positions. This is acknowledged on the ASA staffing vacancies website, which states: *"Please note that the employer reserves the right to fill this position prior to any stated closing date" (*http://asa.adventist.edu.au/index.php/Employment/Current-Vacancies*).*

It is also not uncommon – these respondents believe it may even be 'conditioned' – for administrators to turn to their own confidants in order to solicit recommendations for who may be considered the 'pool' of candidates for leadership positions, and thus bypass the application process. This appointment style approach appears to be utilised less and less in comparison to the extent of its historical use. It would appear that there is now sometimes a dual application/appointments process, whereby individuals are approached by system-based administrators and encouraged to apply for school leadership positions.

> *You could be the best candidate, but you may not even be considered, because it's not been advertised, and quite often, I know from my own experience here in the short time I've been here, we're looking for, a principal, to hire … hypothetically maybe looking for a principal, and I even think that I've been conditioned to this, even though I have, obviously an opinion on it, but I'm actually conditioned to think in my head 'Who do I know who could fit this', or 'Who, who is someone that I trust that I could ask a recommendation for this position'. (Respondent 12)*

One clear drawback of the appointments process when the application process is not made use of is that there appears to be some individuals who are appointed without the requisite background and experience for such leadership positions. Deputy Principal is a position where this has been identified to occur, along with some principal positions in small rural schools. In such occurrences, these positions have been filled with people perhaps not best placed to positively lead in the role:

> *People were thrown into the job without any background, and, that's when I got this job. Why would they ask me to apply for a job like this? And I think, the same thing with deputies, it seems to be very, at the head office level, like 'Who can we get?'. 'Who's willing to take it on?'. Um, so you're thrown into a position knowing nothing, and it's still the case in some situations. (Respondent 12)*

> *And sadly in small, rural schools, that tends to be the case, we tend to go 'Ok, it'll be a first time principal', and, we'll just grab whoever we think will, at least put their hand up and go 'I'll have a crack at it'. (Respondent 17)*

It was noted by system-based respondents that a perceived need for spiritual leaders still very much exists within the ASA education system. A number of system-based administrators reflected on this, from recognising the daily need for God's leading right through the actual staffing of a leadership role within a school. From these system-based administrators' perspective, it may be seen to be appropriate to appoint an individual so that the spiritual aspect within the school setting keeps the ethos of Adventist education without necessarily having been through an applicant-based process. The following quotes outline thoughts in relation to the spiritual journey of school leadership candidates:

> *Bottom line for me in our Conference, the very first question we actually ask, 'What's your spiritual journey?', and if there's a question on that I won't go any further, oh I'll complete the interview but I won't pursue that person in terms of placing a call. (Respondent 17)*

> *I think effective leaders really have a sense that God is leading them, God is calling them to be this leader. And, that sense of God's leading will be more powerful than the sense of, 'I need to be rewarded with the highest salary in world record history', that's far more significant than that, and I think, by a person maintaining that sense of God's leadership on a daily basis, is very critical to effective leadership. (Respondent 12)*

In conclusion, a perception held by ASA system-based administrator respondents is that there is currently a tension between the more historically utilised appointment process, and the more current direction involving application for school leadership positions. While some geographic areas and corresponding Conferences find most school leadership positions to be easily filled, the same cannot be said for other geographic areas that often find staffing these positions to be a difficult proposition. In these situations, the appointment system is seen to help resolve such issues. Some school-based leadership positions, however, result in underqualified staff being appointed due to unwillingness by many to apply for such positions. Finally, these administrators maintain a desire for suitably qualified candidates who remain steadfast in their spiritual journey. The appointment process is perceived to be an effective pathway to ensuring such leadership positions are filled with leaders who have the appropriate spiritual values.

5.6.3.3.3 'Calling': Confusion

Adding to the staffing process complexity is the intertwining of the historical 'calling' culture with the application and appointment processes.

This adds to the difficulty of teasing out the system-based administrators views of this already convoluted and both poorly defined and communicated school leadership staffing system.

The calling system historically used within the Adventist Schools Australia education system utilised a central staffing committee (staffing for Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Nations) to 'call' individuals to specific job roles. The calling concept was based on the idea that the individual was 'called' by God, through human agency – in this instance, the central staffing committee – and was adhered to by all Seventh-day

Adventist administrators, regardless of career orientation. To further complicate an understanding of the 'calling', the term is also used to describe the individual's response to an invitation to take up a leadership position. That is, is God 'calling' me to accept this position, and do I feel a sense of His leading? As one system-based administrator describes the historical use of the 'calling' system:

> *I'm only talking about, 20, 30, 35 years ago, it was all about people believing that the committee (pause) through God's guidance, would call different people to positions and if you offered to want to go there, it was seen as being a bit pretentious, because 'we know who the best person is for positions'. And so, you would do that as a good, Adventist person, you would just allow them to call you. (Respondent 2)*

In this centralised and calling oriented staffing system, these individuals had no need to apply for such positions, as a determination had been made by this central staffing committee, often prayerfully, that they were the right person for the position. Because of the short time period that has existed from the extensive use of the 'calling' system to the more current time frame where applications are the preferred method of filling school leadership positions, a conundrum has occurred whereby some senior and thus suitably qualified leaders who are familiar with the workings of, and who have adopted the culture of this 'calling' system, will not apply for school leadership positions. Their stance appears to be that if they are wanted in a role, then they will be asked to take it. Thus, a tension exists within the ASA education system between the historical calling process and the desired application based process:

> *I still do believe that many of our good leaders will not apply for, an interview, or a position, because they still have, they still believe ultimately if somebody, if God wants me in that position, then, they'll call me to that position. And I think, some companies that only have the application process miss out on a lot of good people because they still philosophically agree that if God wants me in that place he will call me. (Respondent 2)*

System-based administrators are aware of the tension that currently exists between this historical calling culture and the current movement towards a more application-based process for staffing school leadership positions. The calling culture was based on a call from God, but the mechanics of the calling system required that before a new leadership position be filled, there was a need for one church entity to process this change by communicating a 'call' to another through the non-education system

administrators. Elements of the mechanics of this system are still being required of present education system-based administrators. Asked about this tension, one system-based administrator respondent offered the following perception:

> *I think, they're integrally connected [application and calling]. And I don't think, we'll ever get a totally robust system with putting your hand up until we've addressed the call system, and call question. I'll give an example [of this tension], we could have someone start work in a school here, I still have to log a call, I still have to send an email, to log a call, so that it's recorded that the call was made, and accepted, and that's apart from a contract being generated, signed, at the local level, you're generating a, a contract, that legally binds and connects them to this company, but then the [ASA] level, we have to place a call. … It's really complex how it works and, I think the mechanism is out dated, but I think there's a reluctance, and I'm not sure whether it's Division or Union, are from the old school, to actually call serious question on it, because they've still got to find a way of, getting placements into, into remote and hard to staff areas. (Respondent 7)*

While acknowledgement of both the historical calling culture and the more recent application process is being made use of by system-based administrators, a perception held by these respondents is that succession planning is ad hoc at best, with neither the 'call' system or the current application system helping to improve succession practices within the ASA education system:

> *I think it's [succession practices] been fairly ad hoc, at best. I don't think the call system, and the current staffing system has helped, I think it's had a wonderful intent in that, over the years it was developed to ensure that, a talent and human resource was shared across, not just the main centres but across, across the islands into the regions. Um, but I actually think it hurts, it hurts succession planning. I think it's killed aspiration, and I think there's a lot of guilt around laying yourself open to a call from God, (laughs), and I believe very firmly in God calling you, but, often it's, people are moved because they know someone or, and I think we just mix it up. (Respondent 7)*

Some system-based administrators have worked in other systems or locations that made use of formal application-based processes, allowing them insight into what the application process looks like without the influence of 'calling' in the staffing process. This has allowed contrast to take place, and the complexity of the current system to be contextualised. One such system-based administrator reflected on this experience in the following way:

> *… our positions [in another education system] had to be advertised, they had to be, applied for, short listed, appointed, published, announced, that's very different to how we do things here. So, coming back here [ASA], it's like, going back to a sc … to where I started, and I've got a point of reference, I can actually compare and contrast, and, yeah, it's really complex, and it's not very objective. I don't think it's objective, and I think we do a lot of things in the name of God's will, that aren't necessarily, fair or as best practice as they could be. It tends to be fairly ad hoc, it tends to be very subjective … I've seen a few key decisions that have been made, only post decision to find that there have been better candidates, but they didn't know that the position was even available. (Respondent 7)*

There are system-based administrators, however, who believe that the use of the term 'calling' should perhaps no longer be made use of in the current ASA setting, which has modernised in its legal form. As such, the terms 'application', which refers to general staffing within ASA and 'succession planning' which takes a leadership needs orientation, are terms preferred by these system-based administrators, rather than the more historical use and consideration of the term 'calling' given the current landscape:

> *I would even suggest to you it's perhaps a nomenclature change, 'calling' was a catch all phrase, not, and I'm not being disparaging about its usage in the past, nor am I doubting God's involvement, I think, in this contemporary context we find ourselves in now, I think there are two pieces of language we should be using, one being of course the application process, where people apply for roles… and I think 'calling' needs to be rephrased and referred to as 'succession planning' and relate to our leadership. I would encourage us to move to language where, yes, we have succession planning when we look at our leadership needs, and we have a staffing process that is application-based when we look at our general staffing. (Respondent 14)*

In conclusion, these system-based administrators acknowledge that aspects of the calling culture are still in place due to its historical significance and there being no point in time where its use has been made redundant. There remain aspects of the mechanics of the calling system in place that are perceived by these administrators to be 'outdated'. As such, the language of 'calling' often generates confusion for both those administering the succession process and those applicants participating in the current succession process. The term 'calling' is often used to mean different things at different times. Further, there are times when the term 'calling' is used to describe what is essentially the application process, but there are times when it is used to

describe the appointments process, and to further complicate matters, it is sometimes used to emphasise the view that God is leading in the succession process.

5.6.3.3.4 Decision-Making Parties

Once the short-list for a particular school leadership position has been established via the process noted above, which is usually initiated and driven by the respective education director, a decision on which of the candidates is chosen takes place. Most often this decision involves the input of a number of different parties. The Conference Education Director still plays a key role in the selection of the new school leader; however, the non-education Conference administration (Conference President, Chief Financial Officer and General Secretary) and the local school advisory council Chair also have significant input into this process. As one system-based administrator noted, the non-education Conference administration typically "*discusses short-listed names, assists with the interviewing and presents the recommended name to the Board [The Board of Directors for the respective School Company]" (Respondent 2).*

For a number of these system-based administrators, the presence of non-education personnel having considerable input into education specific decisions, particularly the selection of school leaders, is not always perceived to be what is best for the education system context.

5.6.3.3.5 Governance Concerns

These system-based administrators see the current organisational structure, the result of the Australian Seventh-day Adventist Church restructuring its education arm into incorporated companies, as one of the factors that contribute to the view that there is a need for further organisational structural change in the ASA education system. As one system-based administrator notes:

> *... I just pray that we have church leaders willing to release, us, and whoever the 'us' is, just to be released to look after our industry context, that being education, and take it somewhere (Respondent 14).*

The above quote would suggest the removal of non-education personnel in ASA educational decision-making matters. There remains a view, however, that within the current corporate structure of ASA, involvement in staffing by the national ASA body

has less relevance than ever before, with the individual Conferences, again, now structured as individual education companies, taking on more importance in this process. Currently, the ASA system is attempting to modernise and update the present succession process by making use of such things as a staffing website, an annual staffing form, and the linking of staff development to staff appointments. But the present Seventh-day Adventist Church organisational structure with the Australian Union Conference (AUC) having limited executive control over the regional education bodies (Conferences) makes this difficult as the local bodies cannot be made to introduce succession process strategies. Even though the local areas support many ASA initiatives, there is still confusion over who should promote, communicate and initiate some of these ideas.

> *I affirm ASA for its endeavour to maintain involvement in the staffing process, however, I am of the opinion that ASA's current relevance in helping achieve optimal staffing is becoming less and less possible based on the individual nuances and strengths of the education companies. (Respondent 14)*

It is this variance of the process between regions that has these system-based respondents concluding that this system is flawed and in need of restructuring to assist ASA in improving the consistency of the leadership succession process. Reducing this variance, however, would be a difficult proposition given the fractured hierarchical organisational structure of the Australian Seventh-day Adventist education system. This is illustrated by the following quotes from three different system-based administrators:

> *Yeah, the bottom line is I think there is a need for consistency, one of the problems we have with that at the moment, relates to a matter of governance. [ASA] can talk about the sort of [processes] that [it] wants to see across all nine (9) companies, but ASA has no real governance authority to dictate what should happen, and so [it] can bring people to the table, and they can be part of that conversation, they can even say 'Yeah we think it's a good idea', but they can go away and do something else. So, you know, that's a really significant hindrance, it's probably the one unspoken issue that doesn't, it's there all the time, it's around us controlling what we do, but it helps us fail so often. (Respondent 12)*

> *I think there is some great ideas that I've heard articulated what ASA would 'like' to do, but it's that key word, 'like', they would 'like' to do things, but ASA are condemned to an existence not that dissimilar to the UN. They're in charge of just talking a lot, and not really getting a lot done, because they're not*

empowered to get anything done, they have to negotiate and get a coalition of the willing on every single thing that they think is a good idea, and, that is a really difficult way to run an organisation. (Respondent 14)

I think it, what makes it difficult too, is that, the policy around it [succession planning] can't be necessarily centralised because [ASA] doesn't have "control" in inverted commas. It can't set a policy that is, cause each company, is now ... so the horse has kind of bolted, and what we have is little silos of how we operate. (Respondent 7)

It is evident that governance concerns play a role in the current lack of consistently utilised ASA leadership succession practices, and would need to be addressed in any improved ASA leadership succession model.

5.6.3.3.6 Summation

These system-based administrators perceive that present succession processes are ad hoc in nature, and access multiple components: the annual staffing form, the applications process, the appointments process and the involvement of education and non-education personnel in the final decision-making process, as well as the overarching 'calling' system. All of these components are available to be made use of in the filling of school leadership positions, but different educational administrators, and geographical areas make use of these in differing ways. These system-based administrators acknowledge there is no consistently utilised approach within the ASA education system to present succession processes.

5.6.3.4 Post-Succession Support

5.6.3.4.1 No Formal Support Structure

Currently, there is perceived to be no clearly defined formal process provided within ASA regarding the ongoing support provided for new school leaders. System-based respondents were unanimous in their perception that there is currently an ad hoc approach to the support provided to these individuals as they encounter organisational socialisation. The following two quotes sum up the current process as perceived by these system-based administrators:

So, at the moment we're pretty ad hoc with the way we support new leaders, it's a visit now and then from the director, we haven't got a structure around how

> *that works, and I would love to see that change. Get some formality to it. (Respondent 12)*
>
> *Generally, what happens is we say 'Yep, here's your new principal' and we'll spend, somebody will spend, maybe a day or two with them initially, they may, if they are fortunate, get another visit within three or four months, and generally the Ed Director or the whoever's up there, gets so busy they go 'Oh well, I've spent time, they should be good now'. We don't do a lot of extended follow up. (Respondent 17)*

When asked about the current post-succession support processes in place, most system-based administrators identified a clear lack of mentoring. One respondent stated "*Mentoring, we don't do a lot of that officially …. No, we really don't have a formal principal mentor (Respondent 17)"*, while another identified that some leaders were developing their own mentoring structures. One system-based administrator, when reflecting back on their time as a school principal commented "*I created my own peer support network, outside the system, with my peer professionals …. So, um, yeah, I ended up building my own (Respondent 14)".* It would appear, however, that ASA once attempted to get a mentoring initiative up and running within their system, but for reasons not clearly expressed, likely a shortage of time, workloads or uncertainty again over exactly who would take on this role due to a lack of clarity in respective job descriptions, this process never took place. There is a perception nevertheless, that this may be taking place informally, and that there may be communications taking place between principals, with more experienced principals being leant on by less experienced principals as they gain experience and encounter new situations.

> *At one stage we tried to get mentors from principal to principal across our system, it sort of fell through the hoops, I think they got too busy. You know, sort of setting up partnerships with say somebody like (xxx) and a small country school, I think that's going on informally, because a lot of them just ring him up, or ring (xxx) and say 'Oh what about this, or what about that', so I think there's been an informal collaboration, but we did try a formal one, one time for mentoring and support, but that hasn't sort of been my role because traditionally the, director of education was the one that worked with principals, so, you can only suggest ideas, but (nervous laugh) …. (Respondent 13)*

There is a perception amongst system-based administrators that the current programs in place to support school leaders, such as principal's conferences that are run in some areas, should not be open to school-based leaders at levels below that of the principal.

One senior administrator perceived that, while it is important to have something specifically for these principals, by allowing lower leadership levels to be involved, it removes the perceived benefits of being in leadership:

> *I think, we've done a disservice to our self in that, (xxx) likes to invite all leaders to the principals conference, for example, and I'm saying but if we're trying to have something that's special for principals and if you want to go to that you've got to be a principal, you know, the carrot, if you invite anyone down as low as three levels below the principal, well they're not going to want to move up any further than that because what is there different for them, I get you're doing it to train them, but at the same time they're getting all the benefits of what a principal gets. (Respondent 2)*

In conclusion, it is clear that system-based administrators perceive there to be a shortage of ongoing support for leaders having newly taken on their positions. Mentoring, however, was an area identified by these respondents as an aspect of post-succession support that would be considered valuable for leaders who have been recently appointed to their positions and who lack experience. At present, post-succession support is seen as ad hoc and insufficient to support new leaders.

5.6.4. Ideal Succession Practices

As with the classroom teacher and school-based administrator hierarchical levels, the data supported the use of the Overview, Preparation, Process and Post-Succession Support framework sub-categories for analysis to present the perceived ideal succession practices of these system-based administrators.

5.6.4.1 Overview

For system-based administrator respondents, overview here consists of a broad description of their perceptions of ideal succession processes. A number of areas are discussed, with the themes that emerged from the data relating to ideal succession practice being: a culture of openly acknowledging aspirations; a clarity of pathways to leadership; a need to address issues pertaining to remuneration; and present organisational structure.

5.6.4.1.1 A Culture that Acknowledges Aspiration

Central to any ideal succession model, as seen by these respondents, is the development of a culture that is supportive of those who demonstrate a willingness to be considered for school leadership positions. Reducing the difficulties and usually negative judgement experienced by those who voice a desire and willingness to pursue school leadership opportunities is an ideal outcome. Currently, voicing such a desire is seen as a form of self-promotion, with these individuals in many instances seen as being too forward, resulting in them being considered 'upstarts'. This is likely the result of the traditional calling system, aspects of which still exist, within the ASA education system where people were not encouraged to apply, but were rather 'approached' or appointed to such leadership positions.

> *I think, the creation of a culture where, where they can put their hand up [is needed]. And, this thing of, everyone, it's kind of a su … we think it's an Americanism to self-promote, we're very, self-deprecating, you know, everyone likes to be the reluctant leader that was asked, rather than to put your hand up, so the creation of a culture where it's easy to put your hand up. Where there's no issues around it. (Respondent 7)*

The creation of a safe and candid environment, free of ridicule for those who aspire to school leadership appears to these system-based administrators to be an important element of any ideal succession-planning program. In this more supportive culture, system-based administrators identify the need to promote and advocate a culture that encourages a willingness to voice leadership aspirations. As one system-based administrator notes:

> *And the other one [ideal] is that culture of, you know, and we actually physic …, we actually intentionally say to them, 'we're looking for leaders, we're looking for people who are aspirational'. (Respondent 7)*

5.6.4.1.2 Further Clarity of Pathways to Leadership

A significant ideal voiced by a number of system-based administrators related to clarifying the pathways to leadership within the ASA education system. Previously, promising potential leaders were given opportunities to take on leadership positions without having to follow a specified pathway. This does not appear to be an option in the current system, as school leadership positions are expected to be filled with

candidates who have followed a pathway and gained the requisite skills and experience needed for the role. However, how these individuals gain such experience within the present ASA succession system is not clearly identified by these system-based administrators. As such, any ideal practice is considered to establish both clear and articulated pathways towards leadership positions.

> *I'd like us to really clarify how leadership succession actually works now within our system. Cause we've moved away from that small school leadership into mid-level leadership, bigger school leadership, and, directorship or whatever, I'd like to see us map out some potential routes within our system if you're going to get into leadership. (Respondent 12)*

> *I think there are two really critical things that it [an ideal succession process] needs. One is clarity, so pathways need to be really clear, and the other one is a safe and candid environment. And I think both of those things are lacking in what we currently have …. And I think if you've got clarity in why we do it and how we do it and what's available, and the pathways to get there, I think that's one really, really big thing that could help. (Respondent 7)*

It is clear that system-based administrators perceive there to be a need for pathways that are clearly articulated for aspiring school leaders to move towards leadership positions. These administrators perceive that such pathways do not have to culminate in a principalship, but rather, may lead to a number of different leadership roles within the ASA education system. The question of who is responsible for generating clarity in these leadership pathways - national, regional or local administrators - was not explicitly addressed by these system-based administrator respondents, but national administrators were sometimes implied to be the most appropriate level to initiate such pathways.

5.6.4.1.3 Remuneration Issues

System-based administrators acknowledge that an ideal succession-planning model would appropriately remunerate those who are in positions of responsibility. Interestingly, there was not a clearly articulated definition of what is 'appropriate' remuneration. They have, however, identified a need to financially reward those in leadership better than the present system provides. Additionally, there was also a perception by these administrators that remuneration was only one factor influencing aspirations, and that well-being and time provided to perform the job role also

influenced aspirations. The following quotes capture both the commonalities and differences of the system-based administrators' views relating to the ideal with respect to these issues:

> *The other thing is that I think we're behind in our thinking, in that we think more money gets more work. It doesn't, time does. So, the money has to be for the responsibility that's carried, but you must create time for them to do their job, and, I guess [another] element is, in our succession planning we think that the higher you go the harder you work and the longer the hours. I think well-being, I think if young, capable, teachers saw that they could actually have balance, and maintain well-being because we're giving them time to do their work, I think that would really create a culture of aspiration. (Respondent 7)*

> *The moment you step into principalship in any of our schools … a deputy in one of our schools knows, if they become a leader, expectations will be increased and be the same as, their state and Catholic peers, but the remuneration will not be the same. And it's not because we can't afford it, it's because we don't allow it because of the pastoral comparison. So, I think that's a fundamental concern inside the succession planning model. (Respondent 14)*

While the actual nature of the ideal remuneration system is not clearly articulated, it is evident that these system-based administrators are of the view that the current remuneration system is not financially rewarding the responsibility of leadership positions enough. It would appear that these administrators are of the view that if this remuneration was appropriately linked to responsibility, there would be greater leadership aspiration within the ASA education system. Related to this view is that, ideally, remuneration would be appropriate, but also the time allocation provided to effectively carry out the leadership role would also allow for an improved work-life balance for these leaders.

5.6.4.1.4 Organisational Structure

As has been noted, the ASA education system is a department of the incorporated company Australian Union Conference Limited, which acts as an operational entity of the Australian Union Conference (AUC). The AUC organisational structure consists of a number of Australian geographical regions referred to as Conferences, which have a relationship with the AUC via general policies. The AUC does not, however, have executive control over the functioning of these respective Conferences.

Further, each of these Conferences has created in recent years three company structures to carry out many of its functions through a trustee relationship with their respective companies: SDA Conference Limited, SDA Schools Limited and SDA Aged Care Limited. The school companies within the Conferences have a relationship to ASA both via policy and common industry contexts, but ASA has no executive authority over the various school companies.

Such an organisational structure has the potential for independent entities, such as respective regional SDA Conference entities and SDA schools to function as separate entities rather than gaining the benefits of a national collective orientation.

Structural reform was identified by these system-based administrators as being needed to allow broader change to take place within the ASA education system. Succession planning and more collegial work were identified as specific areas to benefit from this potential restructure. The ideal succession planning process would foster collegial relationships across both schools and school companies (regions). It was acknowledged by some respondents that this collegiality might only come about by changing the present Church organisational structure, so as to free the education companies from the present Conference constraints to driving improvement in the education industry context. It is worth noting that these system-based administrators see a strong link between organisational philosophy, culture and structure, and at times use these terms interchangeably.

> *… we need organisational cultural reform as a platform for everything from succession planning through to collegiate work, and moving from, this is my language, moving from independence, to interdependence between our schools and our school companies, so I think you're speaking into one of the key, potential, benefits, of organisational reform, and I just pray that we have church leaders willing to release, us, and whoever the 'us' is, just to be released to look after our industry context, that being education, and take it somewhere. (Respondent 14)*

> *Because the education arm, whilst it is incorporated and seen as a different company, is perceived by the clergy and the church arm, as still departmental work … we face a fundamental belief perception issue between the church companies and the school companies about their purpose and their identity. (Respondent 14)*

These system-based administrators are of the view that a philosophical, structural and cultural change is needed in order to move ASA closer to a perceived ideal education system, and in particular to be able to establish an ideal succession practice. There is a perception that there is a need to address the tyranny of hierarchy encountered within the present Church organisational structure. There is a desire to work within a flatter hierarchical structure, which these administrators perceive would provide for improved communication and consequently, improved succession processes.

> *I also think forums to talk, because we're a small church, and we're really a small system, only 48 schools, but we're really steep in our hierarchy, and I think we need to flatten it, because, these guys here [hand gesture] need to be able to talk to these guys here [hand gesture], but we never do. (Respondent 7)*

One system-based administrator, to demonstrate the challenge of attempting to implement large-scale change while the current situation is continuing, used the analogy of 'trying to change a tyre on a bus while the vehicle is moving'. The result of this ongoing process is that real change is not occurring, rather, the fact that change is needed is acknowledged, but nothing is actually done in order to facilitate this change.

> *I think it [development of a collegial based succession program] will come naturally, when we get our philosophy right. And, it needs someone at the top to actually stop the bus; it's really hard to change a tyre when the vehicle is moving. And, I think we need to change the tyre, or change our thinking in that space, because we give it lip service, but we don't actually, you know [do it]. (Respondent 7)*

These system-based administrators perceive that for an ideal succession process to function effectively, there needs to be a modification to the present AUC/ASA/Conference (Schools) organisational structure which allows for greater collegiality and a move from independence to interdependence of the respective entities (national, regional and local) within ASA.

5.6.4.1.5 Summation

To summarise the overview of the ideals as perceived by these system-based administrators, there is firstly, a view that a cultural change within the ASA education system is needed to allow individuals to confidently put themselves forward for

consideration for school leadership positions, without fear of rebuke or stigma. Secondly, there is a perception that improved clarity surrounding pathways to leadership, together with appropriate remuneration for positions of responsibility, are necessary to establish an ideal succession process. These system-based administrators note that remuneration in itself is not sufficient, though necessary, and that time needs to be allocated for leaders to perform these roles to enable a better work-life balance. Thirdly, the present organisational structure of the Australian SDA education system is perceived by these system-based administrators as difficult for ASA to work as an integrated system. Finally, organisational structural and cultural reform may provide opportunities for more in depth open and frank discussions around topics such as leadership aspirations, and allow for a wider pool of potential aspirants to emerge for leadership training and selection.

5.6.4.2 Preparation

These system-based administrators identified a number of possible preparation strategies for potential leaders that were loosely connected, but not all respondents acknowledged each of these strategies. A need for a coherent, but flexible and context driven structure to the preparation program was the dominant theme.

5.6.4.2.1 Flexible Structure

The identification of future potential leaders, interim school-based opportunities, shadowing (often confused with 'mentoring'), leadership capacity building involving current school principals, and other school or school system visitations were all identified as ideal preparation components. These system-based administrators focused on practical experience as the dominant leadership preparation strategy, with passing reference to formal academic study or professional development type courses. These components seemed to lack a coherent structure, but rather, would be provided in a flexible manner as opportunities arose, and on an individual case-by-case basis.

It was acknowledged that the first step in preparing future leaders is to identify those to be involved in this process. This will involve communicating to these individuals that they are being considered as future leaders, enabling them to respond to this identification and to consider their willingness for involvement in subsequent

preparations. Once identified, and having indicated willingness for involvement, opportunities for leadership preparation may be afforded to them, enhancing motivation to pursue such pathways.

> *I would, love to see that in every age group, and let's talk in terms of five year age groups, so 20-25, 25-30 and so on right up to 60-65 and 65 plus cause some people stay on past then, sometimes past their used by date, but what I'd love to see, is a significant cohort of people identified in each of those age groups, as being either current leaders, or potential leaders. And I'd love to see that the people on those lists are actually identified, that those people know themselves that they're on that list. I'd like to see them encouraged to be going through the process … let's identify them at least so that we can be encouraging them to develop their skills, to hone their focus on leadership requirements … so that we can either encourage them to put up their hand and apply for a job, or we can come to them and challenge them with the needs of a particular location. (Respondent 12)*

A number of system-based administrators reflected on interim opportunities as a means of pathway to school leadership. These opportunities were identified to include *"providing opportunities at the school level for, for taking over the school for two weeks or three weeks or four weeks, if a principal is sick, or away"* or *"get them involved in those schools in just minor ways so that they can get a feel of, is this something that I want to do?" (Respondents 13 and 2).* These interim positions should be documented in their personal service records and given recognition, including the salaries and entitlements linked to these positions for the time they are filled.

> *I personally have a passion for restructuring how we go about replacing people who are off for a short period. I spent some time in the public service and it was a well-established routine that, somebody who was being replaced, was filled by somebody in an acting role, and that acting role brought all the privileges of the person who had vacated the role for that temporary period, including salary, and entitlements, the whole thing, was part of that acting positions. So the personal service record, it's acknowledged, it's on your history, it's there, you've done this, you've completed this, you've been acknowledged for it, and you've also been given the salary for that. So, I'd be really keen for us to adjust our processes so that acting roles become formalised right across the system. (Respondent 12)*

It was acknowledged, however, that inappropriate placement of individuals, whether temporary or for longer periods, could be potentially damaging to both the individual and the school. Operational difficulties were cited, with the feasibility of such

placements questioned, even though this was seen to have potential for leadership preparation. One major reason identified for why such preparation opportunities are currently limited is the disruption that such an arrangement may cause to school operations.

> *You can't beat on the spot training so some of the strategies that we used in the past of putting these graduates into sole charge schools where you sink or swim, that's a bit precarious, because it can mean the demise of a school if it goes bad. But in a school setting where you've got strong support structures, putting somebody in to fill a role and do this, and we'll support you by the way, that can be really useful. Something like learning on the job. (Respondent 12)*

> *So, there's not a lot except for short long service leave, and then to take a person, a leader out of a school to be an acting person for the six weeks, is very disruptive to the school program. So, feasibility, I don't know, but I think that process of not having acting positions doesn't help our cause … and it always comes down to, to give someone a chance to step up it would be disruptive to the school. (Respondent 2)*

Another ideal preparation strategy identified by these system-based administrators involved the idea of shadowing. In this scenario, potential leaders, having been identified in their school contexts, are invited to develop a better understanding of the role of principal by observing these administrators in a number of different situations. Opportunities to be present when budgets are worked on, school advisory council meetings, parent interviews or grant writing; all of these provide the potential future leader opportunity to both better understand and prepare for the role of school principal. This was considered by these respondents to be a training program for potential principals outlining aspects of the day to day running of a school setting.

> *So, I think, it gets back to training principals, training people who want to be principals, in how to run a school, and I think it needs more than just the formal training for that, it really needs mentoring [shadowing], learning in a middle management leadership position. I'm just thinking as I go, [but] if I saw somebody who could be a really fantastic principal, when they were in a deputy principal position, they should be involved in being with a principal when a budget's being done, going to school council meetings, sitting in when he's dealing with frantic parents, being part of that whole scenario of learning what the principal's role includes, being there if he's applying for a Commonwealth grant, for building, being there as part of that, and so getting that on-site training with things that are coming up all the time. (Respondent 13)*

A further preparation strategy presented by these system-based administrators continued principal focused preparation, but emphasised capacity building in the local school context. Here, current principals would enact a distributed leadership model whereby they provided opportunities for potential leaders to gain experience while developing skills through involvement with aspects of the school program. Practical components, such as running a school speech night, or leading various school committees allow for a better understanding of leadership roles and aid in the development of skill acquisition.

> *I would encourage a school to develop a distributed leadership model within the program so that they can actually recognise a greater number of people …. Flat leadership model, which gives these people a role, and they are inspired to do what they do. So that's another thing, encourage schools to go that way. (Respondent 12)*

> *Yeah, if the principal's doing a good job in this area, they will allow their competent staff to, you know, run the speech night, stand up to the parents at the year 12 night and talk, not the principal, 'we need to do WHS better, how about you run that committee?', and then just encourage them with the skills along the way, like the mentoring bit, and I see a good principal would do that. (Respondent 2)*

It was acknowledged that an ideal preparation program would include workshops with current principals that encouraged them to develop a mindset of building capacity amongst their staff. The ultimate compliment to leadership, suggested by this ideal, was for multiple future school leaders to have emerged from the one school setting. It appeared to these administrators that there needed to be a change of focus from current principals who build their school but do so without developing a pipeline of future potential leaders, to a more intentional focus on capacity building amongst their potential leaders on staff.

> *… start some kind of intentional workshops with the principals, the existing principals, and get the existing principals into a mindset of training themselves out of a job. I actually think we're running a step later than we should. Our Ed Directors could convey to our existing principals that information is power, share with your staff, grow their capacity, I think the greatest complement you could pay somebody was to say 'Out of our school staff we've grown 10 principals'. Now that's hard work, but at the same time, that's what we should be doing. We should be affirming the folk who train, the most. The measure of success of administration, to me, is when you, increase administration capacity multiple times within your staff. That's what a principal should be doing; seeing*

> *themselves out of a job or training others to take over other schools. (Respondent 17)*

Another ideal that emerged from the data focused on the provision of informal opportunities to experience other schools or other school systems. These were recognised to be beneficial as a preparation strategy as the potential leader had opportunity to broaden their knowledge and experience by exploring a different education system. These individuals could then reflect on this experience, possibly bringing elements back to assist them in their present role or for implementation in their own school setting.

> *I really do like the idea of a focused study time, not formal say, but, in, informal inquiry if you like … I'd love, for us somehow to incorporate a system whereby a new, or aspiring leader, gets to become familiar with systems elsewhere. I'd love some of our people, to actually see that firsthand, to actually go into a school, and to talk to the mentor and the mentee leader, and discuss how it's working, and bring those learnings back to their role. (Respondent 12)*

One senior administrator reflected on the notion that preparation processes should begin early for those individuals who demonstrate clear leadership potential. According to this administrator, the training and preparation required to successfully transition a person into a leadership role should ideally take place well before the succession event actually occurs. The following quote reflects this ideal of early intervention:

> *Ah, much more than a handover, it's training well before you get to the handover part. For me it's empowering people, so that if the handover happens before you anticipated, there is still a lot of training and discussion happened in that whole process, so they don't feel unable to do it, even if it's earlier than anticipated. (Respondent 17)*

In summary, these system-based administrators placed an emphasis on early potential leader identification, and practical preparation processes, such as interim leadership roles or school-based opportunities. Interestingly, there was a consistent lack of emphasis by these administrators on the need for professional development courses and formalised study programs as part of a preparation program. There was a clear absence of established order in the various processes identified. Perhaps most glaring was a distinct ambiguity of who within the ASA education system should take

responsibility for the development of a sequence of preparation processes, an overall program, and the delivery of respective preparation processes, all of which these system-based administrators expected would need to be clarified for an ideal preparation program.

5.6.4.3 Process

In analysing the responses of these system-based administrators, it is clear that there is a lack of details as to what an ideal succession process should look like. It is evident, however, that while specifics are hard to come by, there is a desire for more clarity and transparency around the process itself. Additionally, there is some overlap as to what may be seen to fit as preparatory elements, such as the identification of potential leaders, and what is considered an ideal succession process. However, a number of processes were perceived by these administrators to be necessary in any ideal model, and these will be discussed. Four themes emerged from these respondents as to ideals of a succession program: a national model for the development of succession practices; an emphasis on the identification of high potential leaders; flexibility and transparency within succession processes; and the need for established leadership selection criteria.

5.6.4.3.1 A National Model

System-based administrators, when outlining their perceptions of an ideal succession process, indicate a preference for a national model to establish procedures that could then be followed through at a more localised level. It is interesting to note, that while these administrators prefer the idea of there being a national model for use as a succession process, they do not articulate exactly how this would function in practice. This is illustrated by respondent fourteen, who while indicating a national model is preferred, presented no specifics of how this may be achieved:

> *Alright, so if we go ideal, of course ideal is that it is a national model. We are so small, that, for each of us to look after ourselves becomes incredibly problematic, so I think a national model would be very, very important …. So I think, number one, I think a national approach to senior leadership, and I'm talking, principals at this stage, cause that would be 48 individuals, I think we start small, but even if we go the layer above them and you look at say nine directors, I'm a big believer in, some sort of relational logic, and I'd almost be going 'well, let's bite off what we can chew, let's start with what can we do*

> *nationally to grow nine directorial leaders to take over the nine companies that we have, and once we've got an idea about that why don't we bounce back with what we've learned, and have a crack at the 48 principals'. (Respondent 14)*

Another system-based administrator agreed that the succession process could be a national model, but identified that what was needed in the process was to allow local level input from school-based administrators into the development of such a process. This input would consider their school contexts and ideally establish some common succession practices within the ASA education system.

> *I think if you looked at it from a top down model, ASA could draw up a procedure, and say, 'here's a procedure that we think might work for you'. If we looked at it from a bottom's up process, then I think we need to listen to principals, and get a whole lot of input from principals, how they see things working according to their situation, and then trying to put it all together to get some commonality for the school system, because every school system is different too, depending on the directors, and their approach, and their ideas about employment and, so, it's fine to have an overall process with ideas, but in reality to make it specific to a system, I would like a lot of input from the principals, and the deputy principals …. (Respondent 13)*

Thus, it would appear that system-based administrators were of the view that a succession process initiated at national level would be the ideal, but felt that consultation would be a necessary component in the development of such a process. Again, the lack of detail regarding how this would function in practice is worth noting, suggesting such a national succession process had not been a primary consideration. The fractured nature of the Adventist education system structure provides a hint at why this may be the case: what role the ASA (national) education directors, company (regional) education directors, or principals (local) themselves may have in such a national model was not outlined.

5.6.4.3.2 Identification of Potential Successors

While this theme has the potential to be considered as overlapping with preparation, the identification of potential successors was raised by these administrators within an ideal succession process. These system-based administrators were of the view that an ideal succession process would be forward thinking about who future successors would be, so as to ensure potential leadership successors are given consideration well in advance of the need to fill school leadership positions.

> *I think our Conferences ought to be thinking well ahead of who, in summary it's called 'who would they go with?'. I think, our Ed Directors aren't thinking ahead enough. Or it's 'So and so's been called', 'Oh, what am I gonna do now?'. We're not forward thinking enough. (Respondent 17)*

This identification process was not a feature of their discussion of preparation elements, where by definition in this study it would belong, but it became important to these administrators when they were asked to discuss the selection and placement of leadership successors. Within the preparation framework, these system-based administrators appeared to assume that potential successors had been identified through their current involvement in specific leadership roles. Those in this potential pool, however, are most likely not guaranteed to become future top-tier school leaders. These system-based administrator respondents appear to acknowledge that the current system, given its reactionary nature as outlined by respondents previously, is unable to prepare a sufficiently large pool of applicants for future school leadership requirements.

Included as part of this identification process was the need for an effective appraisal system to be implemented and conducted across the ASA education system. Such a system was seen by these administrators as an ideal component of a succession model given its ability to both assist in the identification of high calibre individuals, but also to potentially prompt these individuals as to areas where further development of their leadership skills could take place.

> *I've just been jogged here, we were talking about the strategies that are being used, to encourage people to come into leadership, the appraisal system that we have, is being used to greater or lesser effect in different places. Um, and I believe there is huge potential in an effective appraisal system, prompting people in leadership, prompting them to focus their skills, so appraisal done well will be a great source of support for that. (Respondent 12)*

While the ideal is to generate a consistent appraisal system across regions, the current structure of there being nine education companies presents a significant challenge to the development of a consistent appraisal system. ASA has no real governance authority to generate buy in to such an appraisal system, meaning the education companies would not have to make use of such a system, decreasing the likelihood of successfully implementing a consistently used appraisal process.

> *Yeah, the bottom line is I think there is a need for consistency, one of the problems we have with that at the moment, relates to a matter of governance. [ASA] can talk about the sort of [processes] that [it] wants to see across all nine companies, but ASA has no real governance authority to dictate what should happen, and so [it] can bring people to the table, and they can be part of that conversation, they can even say 'Yeah we think it's a good idea', but they can go away and do something else. So, you know, that's a really significant hindrance, it's probably the one unspoken issue that doesn't, it's there all the time, it's around us controlling what we do, but it, it helps us fail so often. (Respondent 12)*

For these system-based administrators, the ideal succession program could only come about if it was linked to ideal leadership identification and preparation. Their focus on the identification process when asked about the ideal selection and placement process, suggests they have not given considerable time and thought to the specifics of an ideal selection and placement process as part of a broader succession model.

5.6.4.3.3 Transparency and Flexibility of Process

Respondents also perceived that an ideal succession process would involve a high level of clarity and transparency. This would be present throughout the process, from clarifying the criteria for how individuals are identified as being potential future leaders, through the various forms of training these individuals would be encouraged to take part in, and into the placement of individuals to school leadership positions. These system-based administrator respondents perceive that, having identified high calibre potential leaders, a clearly documented and articulated pathway through preparatory programs, and open processes relating to how individuals are placed into school leadership positions, would be present in an ideal succession process.

> *I think [one] thing we are in desperate need of is, absolute transparency and clarity about the process, about the identification, about what training, about what preparatory stuff we put people through. (Respondent 14)*

System-based administrator respondents also noted that flexibility was required as part of any ideal succession process. This flexibility was identified in the context of being able to take individual circumstances into account; the most prominently identified being family commitments. While it was acknowledged that this is very difficult to do, the age group often targeted for leadership means family circumstances will likely impact on the vast majority of potential future leaders. As such, the need to

be able to consider the individual circumstances of each potential successor remains part of any ideal succession process. Many of these administrators have been in this position and thus see the real importance of its consideration in any ideal succession process, as evidenced in the following quote:

> *So that's one area where there's a fair bit of need, in the family area, I know of three or four people, who I believe are in the prime target area, age wise, and I'm talking now about, from about 38-48, I call that the prime target area for people to step into leadership in significant roles, I'm talking about senior leadership, principalship. These few people in that role, are impacted by their family circumstance. There's some, with young families, kids that are not even at school yet, there are others with children who are in their teenage years, and they know that as parents, they need to be there for those years, from 13-17 to really guide them through those tricky times. Will a leader have the time to be able to do that? So, our succession planning routines need to allow some flexibility for families in that circumstance. … I know that's not straight forward, but every circumstance needs to be looked at and understood, and there needs to be empathy towards families, understanding their needs. (Respondent 12)*

5.6.4.3.4 Established Leadership Selection Criteria

Respondents were of the view that an ideal succession model would include clearly defined criteria for the selection of school leaders. Personality–Job fit theory was hinted at: the idea that organisations and individuals have particular characteristics or aspects of personality, and thus, the closer the alignment between the individual and organisational setting, the higher the likelihood of a successful match between successor and school environment. This matching of person to role, as well as a consideration of emotional intelligence, was suggested to potentially be part of an ideal succession model.

> *I think sometimes we do better doing a bit more of the, looking for the person with the right emotional intelligence rather than the right (pause) job. I think we sometimes would do better with that. For example, when you look for an Ed Director you often go to the big school principals, but do they actually have the right emotional intelligence to do a different role? Anyway, yeah. (Respondent 2)*

Additionally, a commitment to the Adventist ethos was perceived to be part of a criterion used to determine suitability for leadership positions within the ASA educational context. Given the acknowledgement that the principal plays such a vital role in the shaping of school culture, this spiritual dimension of potential school

leaders is emphasised as being part of any ideal succession selection criteria. One senior system-based administrator went so far as to say that if the spirituality of the potential successor was questioned, they would see no reason for continuing to consider that person in a leadership context:

> *And for me, because the principal really shapes the tone of the school without question, their spiritual journey is critical. If you want the school to have a strong Adventist ethos and be a place where spirituality is just, that's why we, which is why we run it. If you don't have that, from my perspective, I wouldn't be pursuing any further discussion about having them into our school system. (Respondent 17)*

While system-based respondents acknowledge the need for established criteria in the selection and placement of school leaders, there is again a lack of detail relating to what these criteria may include. Some respondents suggested to base part of this criteria on Personality-Job fit theory. There was, however, agreement that a commitment to the Adventist ethos was one significant element of any such criteria.

5.6.4.3.5 Summation

In conclusion, while these system-based administrators' respondents lacked the specifics and detail as to what they saw an ideal succession process to look like, it is clear that a number of components are suggested which are perceived to be part of such an ideal. Firstly, a national model was seen to be the preferred option for establishing an ideal succession process, despite the acknowledged limitations of the ASA organisational structure to require the consistent use of any such process within the various education companies. Secondly, improving mechanisms for identifying potential future leaders was seen as important, with emphasis on education directors being more forward thinking with regards to who these individuals may be, as well as considering performance appraisal processes that may also help to identify potential future leaders. Thirdly, transparency and flexibility need to be part of any ideal succession model, clarifying the identification and selection processes used in the succession process, and providing opportunity to consider the potential leader's individual circumstances. Lastly, the provision of clear criteria outlining the nature of preferred leadership candidates needs to be developed, with emphasis on a spiritual dimension given the important role of leadership in shaping the spiritual texture of the school community. While a number of these areas overlap with components of

preparation covered previously, these system-based administrators perceived these components to be worth consideration in the development of the ideal succession process.

5.6.4.4 Post-Succession Support

5.6.4.4.1 Additional Support

These system-based administrator respondents were of the view that the socialisation support given to school leaders, particularly new school leaders, could be significantly improved. Ideally, a review of current support structures would allow for additional support to be provided lessening the intensity of the school leadership role. Considering a personal assistant role is a noted ideal, as this would provide significant support to school leaders, lessening the day-to-day workload and heightening the likelihood of allowing these leaders to be more visionary in their school-based roles. The following quotes capture these views:

> *I think we need to review the support given to leaders, so that the role isn't quite as intensive as it currently is. (Respondent 2)*

> *… but I do believe that we don't give our principals enough PA support, or even believe in the concept of a PA, you know, I have a secretary etc, but who's the one who does the nitty gritty everyday stuff to assist a principal? And I think if we put more into that we might allow the principal to be more the visionary thinker…. (Respondent 2)*

Mentoring was also a point of emphasis by these respondents for consideration in any ideal succession model. It was identified that reviewing what currently exists in this area may be of benefit to not only school leaders, but possibly classroom teachers also, providing a more comprehensive mentoring structure within this education system.

> *Well that brings to mind the whole mentoring structure, which we need as well. I'd love to change how mentoring works within our system. Not just for classroom teachers, but for leaders as well. (Respondent 12)*

It is clear that these system-based administrators perceive that a lack of post-succession support currently exists for new leaders within the ASA education system. Considerable review of this support, specifically giving thought to providing administrative assistance as well as providing formal mentoring, is needed so as to

move closer towards establishing an ideal post-succession support system which would assist in the socialisation of new school leaders.

5.7 DISCUSSION

5.7.1 Introduction

This discussion will firstly collate the themes identified by each hierarchical level in terms of their perceptions of the respective respondent generated framework categories for current and ideal ASA succession practices. This will then be followed by a discussion of the major commonalities and differences across these three hierarchical levels for each of these framework categories: Scope, Involvement, Current Practice, and Ideal Practice.

This discussion will consider the perceptions of the classroom teachers, school-based administrators, and system-based administrator respondents firstly in terms of an overview of the respective components of succession practices and the connections between these (Scope), then explore their level of interest and subsequent engagement with and/or desire to understand ASA succession practices (Involvement). This will be followed by analysis of the perceptions of the respective hierarchical level respondents to current ASA succession practices (Current Practice), and finally respondent perceptions of ideal ASA succession practices (Ideal Practice).

The participant perceptions of Current and Ideal ASA succession practice categories from each hierarchical level (classroom teachers, school-based administrators, system-based administrators) will be discussed and contrasted using the previously established sub-categories: Overview, Preparation, Process and Post-Succession Support.

5.7.2 Scope

The themes identified by the three hierarchical level respondents related to the Scope category of the framework, and the major points of emphasis within these themes, are presented in Table 5. 2.

Table 5. 2 Scope by Hierarchical Level – Current ASA Succession Practices

Framework Category	**Themes by Hierarchical Level**		
Scope	**Classroom Teachers**	**School-Based Administrators**	**System-Based Administrators**
Definition An overview of the respective components of succession practices and the connections between these	***System Focus*** • A focus on preparation and identification of individuals by the ASA education system. A perception that ASA would initiate identification of future potential leaders and subsequent training programs. • Self-development was necessary due to the limitations of the ASA procedures.	***Lack of Linkages*** • A perceived need to tighten the connection between succession process components. • The need for a transparent selection process. • Self-development was included within the scope of succession practices.	***Future Proofing*** • Broad emphasis on the long-term sustainability of the ASA education system. • Perceive the need to encourage leadership consideration and aspiration as an element of leadership practices.

Whilst all three hierarchical levels included the succession processes of identification, preparation and selection, each level emphasised different components or added additional components to their understanding of the scope of these practices. All three hierarchical levels also acknowledged that a component of any succession practices would include some form of self-development. For the classroom teachers, succession practices were mainly concerned with identification and training. In contrast, school-based administrators, although acknowledging the identification and preparation components, added to this by emphasising the need for a transparent selection process within succession practices. The system-based administrators, while acknowledging that succession practices should include identification, preparation and the selection process, were keen to add a component that focused on developing leadership aspirations.

These differences can be to some degree understood by the context in which the respective hierarchical levels function. Classroom teachers saw leadership development being dependent on effective identification and preparation by the ASA

education system. School-based administrators, however, had experienced first-hand these succession processes, but had failed to see consistent linkages or a logical sequencing between these processes and leadership appointments. The current leadership crisis being experienced in Australian schools generally, and ASA itself, and the expectation that it will only worsen, provided the context for the system-based administrators understanding of Scope. They perceived that this leadership crisis will not be solved without an increase in leadership aspirations among ASA employees, and hence their inclusion of this component within Scope.

5.7.3 Involvement

The themes identified by the three hierarchical level respondents related to the Involvement category of the framework, and the major points of emphasis within these themes, are presented in Table 5. 3.

Interestingly, although some classroom teachers were not interested in pursuing leadership roles, and therefore were somewhat uninterested in gaining greater understanding of succession practices within use, most classroom teachers were willing to have some level of involvement with ASA succession practices. All of the school-based and system-based administrators exhibited a willingness to be involved and to further their understanding of details of ASA succession practices. The classroom teachers desired a better understanding of what succession practices existed within this education system, whereas the school-based administrators wanted greater clarity of particular components of succession practices, so as to increase the effectiveness of their involvement in ASA succession practices. System-based administrators focused their interest and involvement around wanting to improve those succession practices that were already in place within the education system.

Table 5. 3 Involvement by Hierarchical Level - Current ASA Succession Practices

Framework Category	Themes by Hierarchical Level		
Involvement	**Classroom Teachers**	**School-Based Administrators**	**System-Based Administrators**
Definition A perception by respondents of their level of interest and subsequent engagement with and/or desire to understand ASA succession practices	***Engagement*** • Those teachers who *did engage* in discussions around succession practices appeared more open to taking on leadership roles in the future. ***Disengagement*** • Those teachers who *did not engage* tended to be disinterested in pursuing leadership roles.	***Willing Participation*** • A wide range of involvement with current succession practices – from recent succession to input in appointments committees. • Involvement both in terms of looking and applying for positions of leadership.	***Significant Involvement*** • Involved as both designers of succession processes and participants within these processes. ***Who's Role?*** • Confusion and uncertainty over who is to generate an overarching succession framework. • Consensus it should be a National model.

The system-based administrators raised an important question as to who should be involved in constructing and implementing what they perceived should be a National model of succession practice. It appeared that this confusion regarding what role each Church organisational level currently plays (National, Regional, and Local), was linked to the perceived fractured nature of the overall organisational structure of the broader Seventh-day Adventist Church organisational system, of which they are a part.

5.7.4 Current Succession Practices

Discussion of current succession practices will follow the same sub-categories used in the analysis of the respondent data: Overview, Preparation, Process and Post-Succession Support. This discussion will focus on the commonalties and differences of each sub-category across the respective hierarchical levels.

5.7.4.1. Overview

The themes identified by the three hierarchical level respondents related to the Overview sub-category of the current succession practices, are presented in Table 5.

4. This table outlines the respective overview themes and the major points of emphasis within these themes by the respective hierarchical levels.

Apart from a sub-group of classroom teachers who perceive that there may be formalised succession practices in existence that are unknown to them, the remaining classroom teachers, school-based administrators and system-based administrators describe the current succession practices in use as being ad hoc in nature. The classroom teachers perceived these succession practices to be ad hoc because there was no formal system. The school-based administrators perceived succession practices to be ad hoc in that they were reactionary and processes were only ever put in place to fill available leadership positions. This was exacerbated by a perceived culture whereby ASA employees were reluctant to 'put their hand up' for leadership roles. System-based administrators also described current succession practices as ad hoc, but still functioning in the filling of leadership positions.

Table 5. 4 Overview by Hierarchical Level – Current ASA Succession Practices

Framework Sub-Category	**Themes by Hierarchical Level**		
Overview	**Classroom Teachers**	**School-Based Administrators**	**System-Based Administrators**
Definition A broad description of their perceptions of current formal succession practices	***The Unknown*** • Teachers who take this perspective struggled to identify any formal succession practices within the ASA education system. They hinted that there may be processes unknown to them currently. ***The Unknowable*** • Teachers who take this perspective perceive an ad hoc nature to current ASA succession practices and consequently take	***Reactionary*** • Perceive that the system only reacts after the need for a leadership change event arises. They perceived that minimal pre-succession event work was done which could aide a smooth transition. • Perceive that succession practices are ad hoc in nature. • Perceive that different geographic areas take different approaches to succession. • Perceive that a	***Limitations*** • Consider current succession practices to be ad hoc, but seen to be functioning amidst limitations. • 'Why become a leader?' still acting as a disincentive. ***Pathways Not Understood*** • A perceived need to more clearly define routes to leadership. It is still expected that leaders will have appropriate preparation, despite pathways not being articulated.

	the position that there are no formal set of succession practices and therefore, formal ASA succession practices are unable to be known.	'reliance on God' often replaced a formalised system. • Perceive that this reactionary nature is likely due to a broader culture of not 'putting your hand up'.	***A Process in Transition*** • From historical calling process to a more application based process. • Personalities play a significant role in the succession process. ***Leadership Crisis*** • Recognise the increasing age of current administrators, as well as there being fewer potential aspirants.

School-based administrators, as well as system-based administrators, acknowledge that current succession practices appear to be ad hoc because of the ongoing transition from a strong reliance on the 'Calling' (from God) to an application-based process. Because of this ad hoc nature, both the school-based administrators and the system-based administrators acknowledge that the present system does not present clear pathways to leadership positions.

An additional difference between the school-based administrators and that of their system-based counterparts, was that the school-based administrators saw the ad hoc nature of current succession practices was partly due to different approaches taken in different geographic regions. The system-based administrators, on the other hand, saw the personalities of key people in administrative positions contributing to the ad hoc nature of current succession practices.

Finally, it was only the system-based administrators who commented that there was a problem with the current succession system, due to a lack of leadership development involvement and aspiration amongst ASA employees. This is perceived to be contributing to a growing leadership crisis. This lack of aspiration is amplified by a lack of willingness of these employees to be involved in a succession process that is perceived by them to be ad hoc in nature and that lacks clarity of detail.

5.7.4.2. Preparation

The themes identified by the three hierarchical level respondents related to the Preparation sub-category of the current succession practices, and the major points of emphasis within these themes, are presented in Table 5. 5.

Table 5. 5 Preparation by Hierarchical Level – Current ASA Succession Practices

Framework Sub-Category	**Themes by Hierarchical Level**		
Preparation	**Classroom Teachers**	**School-Based Administrators**	**System-Based Administrators**
Definition The combined elements that prepare an individual to take on a school leadership position	***Lack of Coherence*** • Perceived there to be a number of preparation programs that were episodic in nature and seemingly disjointed. Perceived that these preparation programs existed, but were not widely known about, nor fully understood. • There was not currently perceived to be a coherent set of preparation programs that are communicated or widely known about. • Questioned whether these preparation programs were necessary to be undertaken as part of preparing for school leadership roles.	***Known, but Unknown*** • Perceive that while some formal programs were in place, they were minimal in nature, and their understanding of these programs was limited. • The Aspiring Leaders program was identified – but very little was known about it. This initiative was considered to be an isolated, one-off, limited program, which was not perceived to link strongly to influencing the likelihood of being offered formal school-based leadership positions.	***Not Enough*** • The Aspiring Leaders program again identified, but a shortage of detail as to the specifics of this program remained. • Perceive that those invited to attend the Aspiring Leaders conference may not necessarily be representative of those who may be best served to attend. There were perceived shortcomings in the selection of these individuals. • Perceive there to be significant value in individuals making use of leadership development programs being run by independent bodies, such as the AIS. • Perceive that what currently exists is only a step in the right direction.

All hierarchical levels agreed there were elements of preparation programs currently in place, but perceived that the preparation process was episodic, disjointed, and not well known or understood. In the present system respondents at all hierarchical levels were unsure what type of or how many preparatory programs one needs to undertake to be considered eligible for leadership positions. Further, the school-based administrators did not even consider the programs currently in place to be a minimum set of preparatory steps, and perceived that they would not likely influence prospective candidates' chances to be considered for future school leadership positions. Some system-based administrators, however, were of the view that participation in such programs is influencing the selection of school leaders.

The system-based administrators acknowledge that the present preparation programs have a number of limitations, but they form a starting point to be improved upon as clearer routes to leadership positions are identified. One such limitation perceived by the system-based administrators related to the identification of those with leadership potential to determine participation in such preparation programs. This identification process was considered open to criticism as either these individuals were nominated without robust evaluation of their future potential for leadership, or individuals in some instances self-nominated without any supporting recommendations provided.

5.7.4.3. Process

The themes identified by the three hierarchical level respondents related to the Process sub-category of the current succession practices, and the major points of emphasis within these themes, are presented in Table 5. 6.

Table 5. 6 Process by Hierarchical Level – Current ASA Succession Practices

Framework Sub-Category	**Themes by Hierarchical Level**		
Process	**Classroom Teachers**	**School-Based Administrators**	**System-Based Administrators**
Definition The understanding as to how people are either placed in or chosen for school leadership roles	***Pathway Confusion*** • Classroom teachers perceive the pathway to leadership positions as uncertain. The staffing form appears to be one element of this though most teachers perceive little emphasis or follow up to this. ***Opaque Appointment System*** • Classroom teachers perceive that appointments are taking place without the use of formal applications. • Personal connections can play a role. • Gatekeepers such as principals and Conference Education Directors may be involved. • Classroom teachers perceive a lack of transparency in process. ***Role of 'Calling'?*** • Classroom teachers perceive this to be related to the appointments process. They identify a conflict or tension between the appointments process and the application based process.	***Appointment not Application*** • School-Based Administrators question the fairness and equity of the current process. They perceive an ad hoc process for succession planning to be taking place, with appointments to school leadership roles commonplace. ***Connections*** • School-Based Administrators perceived that having connections with people of influence in leadership staffing decisions can be a contributing factor to the appointment of school leadership positions. ***Self-Initiated*** • If individuals are not identified by the system for future leadership roles, individuals must self-initiate consideration for school leadership. ***Calling-Application Tension*** • School-Based Administrators perceive that the historical calling system has impeded the introduction of an open,	***Annual Staffing Form:*** ***Use Variation*** • System-Based Administrators consider the staffing form a starting point, but acknowledge there is significant variance in how this is followed up. Discussions with potential leaders take place in some cases, and principals can be involved in this process. ***Applications/ Appointments Tension*** • System-Based Administrators perceive both of these processes are made use of. A tension is perceived to be present as to which should be followed. There are pressures to move towards an application process. However, difficulties staffing some geographic areas exist. Perceived to be a need for a culture change. ***Appointments: 'Conditioned'*** • System-Based Administrators perceive they have been 'conditioned' to

		transparent, identification and selection process.	seek recommendations for filling leadership positions. Some individuals are appointed without appropriate backgrounds or experience. ***'Calling': Confusion*** • System-Based Administrators perceive the traditional calling system to not be helping improve succession practices. Its use was acknowledged, but largely considered to be 'out-dated'. There appears to be a lack of clarity around the term 'calling'. ***Decision-Making Parties*** • System-Based Administrators perceive a short-list of candidates is prepared by the respective education directors, with the final decision made by the Conference education director in consultation with the non-education Conference administrators and the school board chair in some instances.

Both the classroom teachers and the system-based administrators acknowledged the annual staffing form is part of the staffing selection process. For the classroom teachers, however, the importance of this staffing form is unknown; from their experience, it did not seem to be closely linked to the selection of individuals for leadership positions. The system-based administrators on the other hand, saw that this staffing form played a role in the selection process, but acknowledged that it was used differently in different circumstances.

All hierarchical levels were clear in their understanding that currently there were two distinct possible selection processes for leadership positions: Firstly, the application process, which included in their view, submission of an application form and subsequent choosing of the best candidate for the position. Secondly, the appointments process, which in their view, resulted in an individual being placed into a leadership role without having formally applied for the position. For classroom teachers and school-based administrators, most school leadership positions were seen to be filled by appointments, but the classroom teachers in particular were uncertain of the details of this process. The school-based administrators saw that within the current practice of leadership selection a connection with system administrators or people who had connections with these system-administrators was perceived to be beneficial, which resulted in them questioning aspects of fairness and equity in this process. Further, these school-based administrators also saw self-initiation as a part of the current informal appointments process.

The system-based administrators perceived that both appointment and applications processes were being used for the selection of leadership positions, even if the application process approach was in its early stages. These system-based administrators acknowledged, however, that for many of them, they had become ‘conditioned’ due to the historical ‘calling’ culture to seek out potential personnel rather than accept applications for respective leadership positions.

For both the school-based administrators and the system-based administrators, appointments describe the situation where personnel from a higher organisational level decree that an individual should be placed into a school leadership position. The

term ‘calling’ has often been used to describe this process, with the implication that God is directing the appointment. The school-based administrators perceive that the use of the ‘calling’ system has impeded the growth in use of the application process, and as a consequence, the current system lacks transparency and established criteria in the identification and selection process. The system-based administrators also perceived the calling/application tension to have impeded the improvement of succession practices, but they were also concerned that the current process, with its use of a mixture of calling, appointments and applications, had the potential for conflict with the current education context and its movement towards more current industrial based enterprise agreements. They perceived there was a need for a cultural change within ASA relating to succession processes.

5.7.4.4. Post-Succession Support

The themes identified by the three hierarchical level respondents related to the Post-Succession Support sub-category of the current succession practices, and the major points of emphasis within these themes, are presented in Table 5. 7.

All hierarchical levels acknowledge that ASA provided post-succession support is very limited. Both the school-based administrators and the system-based administrators recognise that current post-succession support comes predominantly from self-initiated support activities. School-based administrators emphasise the current practice of new principals gaining support through attendance at non-ASA leadership professional development programs. These school-based administrators also perceived that current principals were soliciting support through developing wider support networks that may consist of individuals either inside the ASA education system, outside of the ASA education system, or both. These networks can allow the principal to ask a range of questions to one or more of the respective network participants.

System-based administrators perceive that the current ASA initiated standard practice is to spend a day or two with the new principal reasonably early in their tenure, but essentially no continued follow-up thereafter. It was acknowledged however, that this was not sufficient. It was perceived that current principals were also obtaining post-

succession support through informal mentoring with other more experienced principals who were also employed within the ASA education system. Such a 'mentoring' relationship allows for an ongoing dialogue with a particular mentor about all aspects of the principal's role, and was likely to be based on personal connection or relationship.

Table 5. 7 Post-Succession Support by Hierarchical Level – Current ASA Succession Practices

Framework Sub-Category	**Themes by Hierarchical Level**		
Post-Succession Support	**Classroom Teachers**	**School-Based Administrators**	**System-Based Administrators**
Definition Ongoing support provided by the ASA education system for those who have recently taken on school leadership positions	***Sink or Swim*** • Classroom teachers either did not mention, or provided only a passing mention of post-succession support. • Considered to be very limited.	***Minimal Support*** • School-Based Administrators perceived that ASA provide minimal support for new leaders. • A 'Young Leaders' program was identified as potentially being considered a support program. • A number of respondents touted non-ASA programs as being beneficial to attend. • It was noted that new leaders often develop their own support networks.	***No Formal Support Structure*** • Currently there is no clearly defined formal process regarding the ongoing support provided for new leaders. • There is currently an ad hoc approach to the support provided to these individuals. • Mentoring was identified as being valuable for leaders who are new to their school leadership positions but no formal process for this exists.

5.7.5 Ideal Succession Practices

Discussion of ideal succession practices will again follow the same sub-categories used in the analysis of the respondent data: Overview, Preparation, Process and Post-Succession Support. Similar to the discussion of current succession practices, this discussion will focus on the commonalties and differences of ideal succession practices in each sub-category across the respective hierarchical levels.

5.7.5.1 Overview

The themes identified by the three hierarchical level respondents related to the Overview sub-category of the ideal succession practices, and the major points of emphasis within these themes, are presented in Table 5. 8.

Each of the hierarchical levels perceived that ideal succession practices would be formal and transparent, and outline clear pathways to leadership positions. Additionally, all of these hierarchical levels saw that in an ideal system that succession practices would be effectively communicated to all ASA employees.

Both the school-based administrators and the system-based administrators saw aspirations as important in an ideal model. The school-based administrators perceived that this ideal system would allow for open and accepting conversations to take place around leadership aspirations. The system-based administrators added to this by outlining a culture that is both supportive and encouraging of those ASA employees who indicate leadership aspirations.

The classroom teachers and school-based administrators perceived that ideal succession practices would include an early and definitive leadership identification process, coordinated by the ASA education system. This would allow for the development of individualised leadership pathway plans for these aspirational individuals.

Table 5. 8 Overview by Hierarchical Level – Ideal ASA Succession Practices

Framework Sub-Category	**Themes by Hierarchical Level**		
Overview	**Classroom Teachers**	**School-Based Administrators**	**System-Based Administrators**
Definition A broad description of their perceptions of ideal formal succession practices	***Urgent Need*** • A need for a formal succession process to support the ongoing provision of quality leadership within the ASA education system. • Emphasise the identification and preparation of future leaders. ***Transparent and Communicated Pathways to Leadership*** • The ideal succession plan has each step able to be understood and communicated. • Intentional transparency exists.	***Identification*** • Perceived a need to improve identification of potential school leaders. • Implied that the ASA system would identify, rather than self-identify. • Create individualised plans or pathways. ***Open and Transparent Conversations*** • Leadership aspirations spoken about safely and openly.	***A Culture That Acknowledges Aspiration*** • Perceived ideal to develop a culture that is supportive of those who demonstrate a willingness to be considered for school leadership positions. ***Further Clarity of Pathways to Leadership*** • Any ideal system is perceived to establish both clear and articulated pathways to leadership. ***Remuneration Issues*** • A need to remunerate better than the current system allows for. • Perceived that if remuneration were better linked to responsibility, greater aspiration would exist. ***Organisational Structure*** • Structural reform required, with the aim of greater collegiality.

System-based administrators were adamant that ideal succession practices would include a remuneration system that was linked to positions of responsibility, and that takes into consideration issues of work-life balance for those who accepted leadership positions within the ASA education system. It was perceived by these respondents

that such a remuneration system and the acceptance of the need for work-life balance would encourage significant numbers to include leadership as part of their career plan and enhance leadership aspiration.

System-based administrators also perceived that ideal succession practices would have significant school-to-school, school-to-school company, and school company-to-ASA communication and collaboration. These administrators, however, perceived that this may only come about if there was a change in the present Church organisational structure, which would ‘free’ the education companies from the constraints of working through the respective Church incorporated and unincorporated bodies, to allow improvement to come about in the educational context. These improvements specifically related to the development of collegial relationships and a system-wide view towards staffing.

5.7.5.2 Preparation

The themes identified by the three hierarchical level respondents related to the Preparation sub-category of the ideal succession practices, and the major points of emphasis within these themes, are presented in Table 5. 9.

Table 5. 9 Preparation by Hierarchical Level – Ideal ASA Succession Practices

Framework Sub-Category	**Themes by Hierarchical Level**		
Preparation	**Classroom Teachers**	**School-Based Administrators**	**System-Based Administrators**
Definition The combined elements that would ideally prepare an individual to take on a school leadership position.	***Active Participation*** • Provision of opportunities for skill development in order to prepare individuals for leadership roles. • Recognition for roles undertaken, including pay, entitlements and personal service records. • 'Acting' positions. • Mentoring and shadowing opportunities considered valuable preparation components. • More opportunities to voice interest in pursuing leadership roles.	***Empowerment of School Leaders*** • Empower current school leaders to develop and work with potential leaders within the school to familiarise themselves with leadership roles. • May include mentoring or shadowing for potential leaders. ***A Role for Formal Learning*** • Perceived to be an important component for future school leaders.	***Flexible Structure*** • Ideally, the respective components of preparation would be clearly identified, and both coherent and flexible in structure. • An ideal preparation program would include clear identification, interim opportunities, shadowing, distributed leadership, workshops with current principals, and informal opportunities to experience other schools or school systems. These components would be accessed on a case-by-case basis. • The ideal preparation program would have clarity as to who should be responsible for the development of these preparation components.

In terms of the overall focus of the ideal preparation program, it is interesting to note that both the classroom teachers and the system-based administrators emphasised a 'hands on' approach to preparation. The system-based administrators, however, did not discard the place of some role for formal study within preparation programs. Even though the school-based administrators also acknowledged the benefits that come from a 'hands on' approach within a preparation program, they also saw an important role for formal study and focused professional development programs.

Both the classroom teachers and the system-based administrators indicated that the first element in any ideal preparation program would be to identify potential leaders. For the classroom teachers, this also involved a self-identification process, which would allow them to voice their interest in future school leadership. For the system-based administrators, this identification process was seen to be system directed, with the ASA education system identifying these future leadership candidates.

All hierarchical levels were able to agree that particular components were necessary for an ideal preparation program. These components included active participation in leadership roles in middle management or temporary school-based activities. The classroom teachers perceive that an ideal preparation program would formally document these activities and they would become part of each potential leader's personal service record and thus, able to be presented or reviewed when exploring available leadership positions. The school-based administrators perceived that the current principals should be the ones to initiate the provision of opportunities for participation in such ideal preparation activities. The system-based administrators, however, perceived there would be a greater role for the ASA education system to provide these opportunities for potential leaders to participate in such activities. Additionally, the system-based administrators included experience in other schools and workshops with other current school principals in an ideal preparation program in order to provide a broader perspective of school leadership. These system-based administrators saw the ideal preparation program to be one where the respective components were accessed on the basis of the individual's skill sets and the context in which they were working.

Finally, it was the system-based administrators that perceived an ideal preparation program would be overseen by the ASA education system with other hierarchical levels also cognisant of the role they played within this ideal preparation program.

5.7.5.3 Process

The themes identified by the three hierarchical level respondents related to the Process sub-category of the ideal succession practices, and the major points of emphasis within these themes, are presented in Table 5. 10.

In terms of an overarching succession process, the system-based administrators were of the view that the ideal process would be a national model. They were able to identify however, that the development of a national model would need to allow for input at both regional and school level. These system-based administrators identified an obstacle that would need to be overcome, the present Church organisational structure, to enable the development of this ideal national model. Therefore, the ideal identification and selection process would be part of this national model.

All three hierarchical levels acknowledged that an ideal selection process would include known and communicated selection criteria, most often with established job descriptions that would be both transparent and accessible to all ASA employees. The system-based administrators went a step further than the other hierarchical levels by suggesting elements that may be included in such criteria. Firstly, they put forward the idea of job-fit theory, which would allow for the inclusion of criteria that may produce a better match between potential school leaders and the school and community context. Secondly, these system-based administrators acknowledge that the Adventist ethos be a paramount consideration in generating criteria for the selection process.

For both the school-based administrators and the system-based administrators, the ideal process included a high level of transparency about how school leaders are identified, selected and placed into leadership positions. The system-based administrators were particularly of the view that an ideal process would allow for the

consideration of potential leaders' individual circumstances in the selection of leadership candidates.

The system-based administrators made little to no mention of the mechanics or fine-detail of an ideal process. They were either unable or disinterested in discussing what the details of such a process may include. In particular, there was no direct mention of an application process as part of this ideal model. It appears, however, that the application process was implied in some of their comments relating to the selection of leadership candidates.

Both the classroom teachers and the system-based administrators perceived that an ideal selection process must be preceded by an effective identification of potential leaders. For the system-based administrators, this identification should happen well in advance of the potential succession event so that there is an opportunity for these individuals to develop through training, formal learning, mentoring or other preparation strategies. The difference between these two groups was that the classroom teachers put forward the ideal as self-identification, whereas the system-based administrators perceived the ideal to include a role for the system in the identification of potential leaders. Interestingly, both the classroom teachers and the system-based administrators saw a role for an appraisal system in the selection process. The classroom teachers, however, saw the appraisal system as something to be used in support of their self-nomination for leadership roles, whereas the system-based administrators saw the role of appraisal as being linked to their identification of potential leaders.

Table 5. 10 Process by Hierarchical Level – Ideal ASA Succession Practices

Framework Sub-Category	Themes by Hierarchical Level		
Process	**Classroom Teachers**	**School-Based Administrators**	**System-Based Administrators**
Definition The ideals as to how people are either placed in or chosen for school leadership roles	***Clear Selection Criteria*** • A well communicated and criteria led selection process. ***Teacher Input*** • A job description that outlines responsibilities, which may be used to determine interest. • Opportunities to voice interest in leadership positions, or state their merits. • An appraisal system that may be used to support their suitability for leadership roles. ***System Diligence*** • Established criteria such as experience, qualifications, individual characteristics etc. • Time taken to assess candidates. • Time frames considered for leadership tenure.	***A Need for Clear Job Descriptions and Criteria*** • Perceived that both clear job descriptions and some criteria for the type of candidate being sought be established. ***A Need for Transparency*** • Perceive a greater need for clarity and transparency in the selection process, specifically around how positions are known about, and the selection of individuals. • Equal consideration for all applicants.	***A National Model*** • A preference for a national model to establish succession planning procedures. • A perceived need to allow for local level input from school-based administrators in its development. ***Identification of Potential Successors*** • The ideal system would be forward-thinking about who successors would be. • An effective appraisal system to be implemented and conducted (structure a challenge) ***Transparency and Flexibility of Process*** • Transparency in criteria for the identification, training and placement of school leaders. • Flexibility to take individual factors into account. ***Established Leadership Selection Criteria*** • Including job-fit theory and Adventist ethos.

5.7.5.4 Post-Succession Support

The themes identified by the three hierarchical level respondents related to the Post-Succession Support sub-category of the ideal succession practices, and the major points of emphasis within these themes, are presented in Table 5. 11.

Every hierarchical level perceived that an ideal succession system would have a significant post-succession support component. The support component for each hierarchical level consisted of slightly different mechanisms. A mechanism that all hierarchical levels identified as necessary within an ideal post-succession component was that of mentoring. For classroom teachers, this was the only mechanism presented and they suggested that the mentor could either be a system-based upper level administrator, or a current school principal. The school-based administrators saw mentoring as one of a number of mechanisms that could support the transition of a new school leader, with an emphasis on this mentor being from an upper level hierarchical level. Additionally, linking with other school administrators was seen to be an important supporting element in their role as new school leaders. System-based administrators perceived that mentoring served an important part of post-succession support, but did not define who would do this or what this mentoring relationship would look like.

In terms of support for new school leaders, the school-based administrators and the system-based administrators also perceived an ideal system would provide a greater time allocation to the personal assistant of the new school leader. The school-based administrators saw this additional support as allowing the workload of the role to be realistic, allowing them to fulfil their job description. The system-based administrators on the other hand, highlighted that this additional support provided to them would free up opportunity for the school leader to take a more visionary and reflective approach to the leadership role, increasing the likelihood for school improvement.

Table 5. 11 Post-Succession Support by Hierarchical Level – Ideal ASA Succession Practices

Framework Sub-Category	Themes by Hierarchical Level		
Post-Succession Support	**Classroom Teachers**	**School-Based Administrators**	**System-Based Administrators**
Definition The ongoing support ideally provided by the ASA education system for those who have recently taken on school leadership positions	***Mentoring*** • Ideally a current administrator that could provide advice or support. • A view that post-succession support is important, but also necessary for success in leadership positions.	***Reduced Loads*** • Perceived to be a need for new school leaders to have a reduced workload. ***Support Mechanisms*** • Mentoring • Ongoing communication between new school leaders, ie Skype meetings to discuss challenges etc. • Financial assistance to provide supporting personnel.	***Additional Support*** • Personal assistant roles considered. • Perceived that support given, particularly to new school leaders could be significantly improved. • Mentoring also a point of emphasis.

5.8 SYNOPSIS

5.8.1 Introduction

This section summarises the perceptions of classroom teachers, school-based administrators, and system-based administrators relating to elements of both current succession practices and characteristics identified as part of an ideal succession model within the ASA education system.

5.8.2 Current Succession Practices

The following meta-themes integrated the perceptions of current succession practices within the ASA education system by each of the respective hierarchical levels. The meta-theme that summarises the classroom teachers' perceptions of current succession practices was 'Lack of Awareness', for the school-based administrators it

was ‘Lack of Transparency’, and the system-based administrators was ‘Individual Ownership’.

5.8.2.1 Classroom Teachers

The meta-theme ‘Lack of Awareness’ - indicative of the limited view and understanding of current succession practices - reflects these classroom teachers’ overarching view of current succession practices. Given this, the following outlines the classroom teachers’ perceptions of current ASA succession practices:

1. The ASA education system is leading and playing a significant role in succession practices.
2. There is no formal succession, but rather, an ad hoc set of succession practices.
3. There is no certainty relating to what preparation components are required for consideration for school leadership.
4. There are no clear pathways to school leadership positions.
5. There is acknowledgement that the annual staffing form plays a role, but the specifics of how are not known.
6. Selection practices are predominantly appointments (selection without a formal application process), but are unsure of details as to how this process works.

Classroom teachers had a somewhat limited view of current succession practices, and they perceived there was a need for better communication relating to this. They saw no clear processes related to the identification of potential leaders, and their preparation for school leadership. It is evident that this hierarchical level desires a clearer understanding of ASA succession practices, and are willing to be involved in these practices when opportunity allows.

5.8.2.2 School-Based Administrators

The meta-theme ‘Lack of Transparency’ - indicative of the potential for bias and questionable practices - reflects these school-based administrators’ overarching views of current succession practices. Given this, the following outlines the school-based administrators’ perceptions of current ASA succession practices:

1. The succession process is reactionary, responding only after the need to fill school leadership positions arise.
2. There is a lack of transparency in the respective components of succession practice.
3. No transparent pathways to school leadership exist.
4. There is a lack of consistency in terms of what preparation components are required, and they do not see current preparation programs as always being a criterion for leadership positions.
5. The staffing form is presently part of the process, but it's use is not consistent and transparent in terms of the selection process.
6. School leadership selection is predominantly appointment focused, which lacks transparency and generates perceptions of bias and inequity.
7. Position selection is often influenced by personal connections to school administrators, school community representatives, or system-based education administrators.
8. Position selection is at times influenced by non-education organisation administrators (i.e., Church-based unincorporated entity administrators), which may generate perceptions of bias and inequity as well as take a non-education perspective into school leadership decision-making.
9. Succession processes are utilised differently in different geographic locations.
10. The historical 'calling' system continues to play a role in current selection of leadership, but at the same time, generates tensions with the use of the more formal 'application' process adopted in some regions, creating a perception of a lack of transparency.
11. Post-succession support is barely functioning, and limited mainly to self-initiated networks and non-ASA professional development programs.

School-based administrators perceive that the current succession practices lack transparency, and there were times when they were uncertain of the details of the succession process. They saw succession practices as largely focused on the selection process used to fill school leadership positions, but acknowledged that the present succession practices included elements of post-succession support; even though respondents saw this area as barely evident and predominantly self-initiated. These school-based administrators were not totally unaware of the actual mechanisms that

are utilised in the selection process, and acknowledged that biases and inequity may take place within these. It is evident that this hierarchical level desires more transparency than the current ASA succession practices allow, and are wanting to be involved in these practices to a much larger degree than the current corporate structure affords.

5.8.2.3 System-Based Administrators

The meta-theme 'Individual Ownership' - indicative of succession practices being influenced by local administrators and somewhat different for different regions - reflects these system-based administrators' overarching views of current succession practices. Given this, the following outlines the system-based administrators' perceptions of current ASA succession practices:

1. Each system-based administrator had initiated a system which was somewhat ad hoc in nature, and included system-wide components. These system-based administrators saw that their own regional-based system was currently functioning, albeit amidst limitations.
2. The exact nature of succession practices depended to a large degree on the personalities of the respective system-based administrators.
3. A lack of a formal, organisation wide, system of succession for which they can take ownership, which in turn causes frustration.
4. The annual staffing form, initiated at system level, is a significant element in the identification and selection of potential leaders, but is not used consistently.
5. ASA preparation programs are seen to influence the selection of school leaders, but valued differently across differing regions.
6. Both the appointments process and the application process operate with regard to leadership selection within current ASA succession practices, though the application process, initiated by system-based administrators, is in early stages of development and use.
7. The past succession emphasis of 'calling' has conditioned them to 'seek' particular personnel rather than 'seek' applications.

8. Post-succession support was provided by the ASA education system administrators, but they acknowledge that this was very limited, and self-initiated mentoring is encouraged.

These administrators acknowledge that there is not a formalised set of succession practices in consistent use across the ASA education system. This has resulted in each region generating its own particular set of succession practices, which are somewhat dependent upon the personalities of those administrators in these positions. Each system-based administrator, however, is quite attached to their own set of succession practices and enact them accordingly. These system-based administrators acknowledge that an effective set of succession practices include identification and preparation, appropriate selection procedures and post-selection support. Even though identification was identified as a component of current succession practices, this important component was not structured, and appeared as something that took place in response to the reactionary need to fill leadership positions. However, they acknowledge that present succession practices lack strategies to increase leadership aspiration and development. System-based administrators saw that they were leading out in succession practices, and should in the future continue to play this leading and initiating role.

5.8.3 Ideal Succession Practices

The following meta-themes integrated the perceptions of ideal succession practices within the ASA education system by each of the respective hierarchical levels. It is important to note that in terms of the ideal succession practices, all hierarchical levels only provided a limited amount of details pertaining to ideals. The system-based administrators, however, provided a somewhat more expanded view of the ideal succession practices, but all of the respective components were presented in a very generic form, lacking operational details. The meta-theme that captures the classroom teachers' perceptions of the ideal succession practices was 'Formal and Communicated', for the school-based administrators it was 'Involvement', and the system-based administrators was 'National Ownership'.

5.8.3.1 Classroom Teachers

The meta-theme 'Formal and Communicated' - indicative of a desire to see succession practices codified and accessible - reflects these classroom teachers' overarching view of ideal succession practices. Given this, the following aspects outline the classroom teachers' perceptions of ideal ASA succession practices. The ideal succession model would:

1. Formally document succession processes, which outline the nature of the respective inclusions of each succession component.
2. Have ASA playing a nationally significant role in the development and implementation of the ideal succession process.
3. Involve an application-based approach to school leadership selection and include both job descriptions and selection criteria.
4. Provide early identification of high potential school leaders, and work with these candidates to create individualised pathways towards leadership.
5. Include the option of self-nomination for school leadership, as well as a formal, consistently applied appraisal system to be used to support one's self-nomination for leadership.
6. Include a 'hands on' approach which would see leadership candidates involved at the school level in responsibilities that assist the development of leadership skills, and that are formally recorded so as to show evidences of leadership development.
7. Include a mentoring process as part of post-succession support.

Classroom teachers had a limited, but definite, view of those elements they identified as contributing to ideal succession practices. They were adamant any such ideal succession model would be documented and well defined. Classroom teachers were clear that selection criteria and job descriptions needed to be included in ideal selection practices. Their emphases, however, within the ideal succession practices were the identification and preparation of potential school leaders. Should the ASA system fail to identify early on their leadership potential, classroom teachers perceived that self-identification should be able to take place, and wanted other system-wide processes, such as the appraisal process, to support their self-nominations. For these classroom teachers, an application-based process appeared to be their preferred model of registering interest in leadership positions.

5.8.3.2 School-Based Administrators

The meta-theme 'Involvement' - indicative of their desire/willingness to be involved in the development and implementation of their ideal succession practices - reflects these school-based administrators' overarching views of ideal succession practices. Given this, the following aspects outline the school-based administrators' perceptions of ideal ASA succession practices. The ideal succession model would:

1. Generate an environment where staff develop aspirations for school leadership roles.
2. Encourage and support staff communicating with colleagues about school leadership positions, both present and future, and allow staff to present their suitability to those involved in selection when leadership roles are available.
3. Involve ASA staff in assisting the development and implementation of an ideal succession model.
4. Involve 'hands on' preparation processes and be school-based, with principal involvement in determining such opportunities for these leadership development roles.
5. Allow classroom teachers to have a role to play in the selection and placement decisions of school leadership positions, but this hierarchical level remain uncertain exactly what this would look like.
6. Include transparency as a crucial component of the selection process, although this hierarchical level has not defined the mechanics of this selection process.
7. Include mentoring as an element of post-succession support, as well as a time allocation for administrative support for new leaders.

School-based administrators want a high level of involvement in most aspects of succession practices. Their emphasis was on the development and promotion of a culture of acceptance of aspirations, and opportunities to present these aspirations to those involved in leadership decision-making. Preparation would be significantly school-based, with opportunities provided by the school principal to take on such responsibilities as part of leadership development. School-based administrators also wanted considerable involvement in the selection process. While no details of what this involvement would look like in practice were provided, it was clear that input in this area would be an essential part of their ideal succession process. School-based

administrators saw that ideally, both mentoring and a reduced workload would enable them to effectively complete the enormity of their job requirements.

5.8.3.3 System-Based Administrators

The meta-theme 'National Ownership' - indicative of a desire to see succession practices enacted nationally given that the ASA employees are geographically dispersed - reflects these system-based administrators' overarching views of ideal succession practices. Given this, the following aspects outline the system-based administrators' perceptions of ideal ASA succession practices. The ideal succession model would:

1. Involve a national model of succession planning, developed with a high level of collaboration across ASA, with a view toward overcoming existing organisational structure limitations.
2. Foster an ASA education system culture that both encourages and supports aspiration for school leadership.
3. Include a national remuneration system that is linked to positions of responsibility, and consider time allocations for the support of leadership positions to enable a better work-life balance.
4. Establish both clear and articulated pathways to leadership positions.
5. Include a formalised, national level initiated, leadership identification process that is linked to a nationally implemented appraisal system.
6. Have a nationally defined set of preparation components which includes formal study in addition to other leadership development initiatives.
7. Make use of school leadership selection processes that are application based.
8. Articulate clear school leadership selection criteria that would include aspects such as job-fit and Adventist ethos.
9. Provide a consistently utilised, high level of post-succession support for new leaders, including both time release and a formalised approach to mentoring.

System-based administrators are of the view that an ideal set of succession practices must emanate from a national model. As with the school-based administrators, this hierarchical level wanted ideal succession practices to include a cultural shift towards a supportive and aspirational ASA setting, highlighted by clearly defined routes to leadership positions. Remuneration would be linked to the responsibility levels of

positions held, which would result in an increase in leadership aspirations. For these administrators, there would also be an employee appraisal system implemented across the ASA education system, which would assist in identifying potential leadership candidates. Preparation components, while not detailed, were seen to include a role for formal study alongside of other professional development activities. Selection criteria would include consideration of candidate suitability in light of the needs of the school community, as well as an assessment of the candidates' skills and experiences, and a commitment to the Adventist ethos inherent to the ASA education system considered essential. Post-succession support would be enhanced, with a focus on mentoring, and consideration of time or administrative assistance for new leaders as part of this ongoing support. While the ideal was seen to be a national model, its development was seen to need a significant level of collaboration from local and regional levels, both for buy-in and also to build a more collaborative culture.

5.8.4 Current and Ideal Succession Practice: Links

It is interesting to note clear and logical links are present between each of the hierarchical levels perceptions of current and ideal succession practices. This reinforces that their perceptions are considered, logical and arise from a general theoretical base which gives credence to consider their views in the generation of an effective model of succession practices within the ASA education system.

Classroom teachers had a limited view and understanding of current ASA succession practices, but perceived that this was the result of an incomplete and poorly communicated set of succession practices, and in some instances, an unwillingness to engage with succession related topics. From this viewpoint, this hierarchical level perceived that the ideal set of succession practices would need a high level of formalisation, and a need to be communicated broadly throughout the ASA education system. In terms of post-succession support, classroom teachers implied by their lack of direct references that they perceived nothing formalised to be taking place for new school leaders. These classroom teachers envisage an ideal post-succession support system as being formalised, with an emphasis on mentoring relationships. This illustrates that there is a logical link between the lack of formality, communication

and post-succession support they see in current succession practices, and the need for these characteristics in an ideal set of succession practices.

School-based administrators had a reasonably sound grasp of current succession practices but acknowledged that within these existed a lack of transparency, which had the potential for bias and questionable practices to arise. Their ideal set of succession practices were couched in terms of ASA employees' involvement, which in their view, would limit the potential for bias and questionable practices. Further, this involvement would increase the buy-in and knowledge base of both applicants and contexts, thus increasing the likelihood of improved succession outcomes. These school-based administrators saw post-succession support as barely functioning, and consisting mainly of self-initiated support networks. Their ideal consisted of a formalised mentoring program, as well as extra time allocation provided to new school leaders. Once again, the rational link between the lack of transparency and post-succession support they currently see and the involvement in succession practices and increased post-succession support they recommend for the ideal succession model, is able to be seen.

System-based administrators had a good working knowledge of current succession practices and perceive the need for modifying elements of current succession processes. They perceived that present succession practices were being significantly influenced by local administrators and administration, which resulted in a series of different practices being adopted by different regions across the ASA education system. These differences, and consequent lack of consistent application of succession practices, were perceived to cause tensions and inhibit the development of effective succession practices. As a result, the link established is the need to move from a succession process influenced by individuals and particular regional administration, to one that was designed for, and consistently applied across, all ASA school companies. Similar to the school-based administrators, these system-based administrators perceived that the current post-succession leadership support was very limited, and an ideal system of post-succession support would include both mentoring and opportunity for time release.

5.8.5 Informing an Effective Succession Model

It was acknowledged by respondents from all hierarchical levels, however, that the present overall Church organisational structure, with its fractured hierarchy, was a significant barrier to the implementation of an effective national succession model. Also acknowledged was the tension that exists between the appointments and application orientations for succession practices. Further, all hierarchical levels perceived that any effective succession model would include articulated pathways to leadership.

Even though there are many components within a succession model, the understanding of succession in this study was explored by considering the interaction of these respective components. From this interaction, this study found that classroom teachers were to a large extent unaware of many of the current ASA succession practices, the school-based administrators perceived that current ASA succession practices lacked transparency, and system-based administrators perceive current ASA succession practices to be school company rather than national in orientation. Following this, it was found that classroom teachers perceive that ideal ASA succession practices would be formal and effectively communicated, the school-based administrators perceive that effective ASA succession practices would allow significant involvement in elements of succession practices, and the system-based administrators perceived that an effective succession model needs national ownership. Further, the differences in perceptions of the respective hierarchical levels can be largely explained by the contexts in which each level functions. An understanding of these differences, however, enabled a greater understanding of the current succession practices and has the potential to inform the construction of a more effective succession model.

What is also noted from this two-phase study is that succession practices clearly influence aspirations and aspirations represent the starting point of engagement with succession practices. Understandings of aspiration, then, are needed to inform the development of effective succession practices.

5.8.6 Conclusion

This chapter documented the analysis of interviews of ASA employees' perceptions of current and ideal succession practices. The analysis adopted a three-hierarchical level framework to explore these employee perceptions. This allowed all levels of ASA employees, and importantly the 'teacher voice', to offer contributions to any potential improvements to ASA succession practices.

Chapter Six integrates the findings of Chapter Four and Chapter Five, and presents the classroom teacher, school-based administrators and system-based administrators school leadership aspirations within the ASA education system. It also presents their perceptions of current and ideal ASA succession practices, and identifies challenges and opportunities for future modifications to ASA succession practices.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with a brief description of this research exploring the succession practices of the faith-based education system, Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), and links to findings drawn from a review of the educational succession literature. This study is unique in that it considers the succession practice perceptions of three distinct hierarchical levels of ASA employees: classroom teachers, school-based administrators, and system-based administrators.

Research findings relating to school leadership aspirations, factors which influence both the decision TO and NOT TO apply for ASA school leadership positions, and perceptions of current and ideal succession practices, are then presented. Respondents suggestions for an ideal succession model, in the ASA context, based on a synthesis of the respective hierarchical level perceptions, is then outlined. These 'ideal succession model' perceptions are then considered alongside ideal models as suggested in the school leadership succession literature. Additionally, this chapter outlines challenges and opportunities facing the ASA education system both currently and in the development of a best practice succession model. Finally, the chapter notes both limitations of this study and suggestions for further study, and concludes by emphasising the need to continue to improve ASA succession practices in order to ensure leadership sustainability into the future.

6.2 STUDY ORIENTATION

This mixed method research study, consisting of a quantitative focus in Phase One, and a qualitative focus in Phase Two, aims to address the following overarching research question:

- What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels, with regards to Adventist Schools Australia succession practices?

Succession practices, defined for this study as encapsulating all planned, intentional processes designed to identify, prepare and provide a pool of suitable future school leaders that can be accessed within the ASA education system, are seen to be of particular importance due to the need to ensure the sustainability of the ASA education system. Literature consistently shows that educational systems spend minimal time in planning for future school leaders (Fuller & Young, 2009; Hargreaves, 2005). Studies have identified that in educational settings, the succession planning process often does not follow a planned process, but rather, is done in an "ad hoc" way (Canavan, 2001; Macpherson, 2009). It is rare that any types of systematic processes are in place, particularly for school leadership positions (Grunow et al., 2010). When exploring the literature in a faith-based setting, a limited body of research exists. In the Australian context, the Catholic education system's school leadership succession planning has been reviewed (Canavan, 2001; Carlin et al., 2003; d'Arbon, 2004; d'Arbon, 2006; d'Arbon et al., 2002; d'Arbon et al., 2001; Dorman & d'Arbon, 2003), and the overarching findings of this literature would suggest succession practices have not been consistently utilised, but rather, the process has often consisted of "an ardent prayer that there will be someone out there, somewhere, who will be able to fill the vacancy" (Canavan, 2001).

Identifying and establishing succession practices that strongly consider the needs and ideals of classroom teachers, and that inspire leadership aspirations is crucial in the development of a pipeline of future potential school leadership applicants. Understanding the incentives and disincentives for giving consideration to school leadership thus becomes a key consideration, one that will also contribute to enhancing succession practices with the goal of improved educational leadership outcomes.

In addition to the overarching research question, sub-questions were designed to direct Phase One and Phase Two of this mixed-method research study. Phase One of this study, which utilised a survey questionnaire, was framed by the following sub-question:

- What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels of the factors that would

influence their decision TO apply, or NOT TO apply for a school leadership position within the Adventist Schools Australia education system?

With school leaders, and particularly school principals, being placed under increasing pressures, many principals are reflecting on why they wish to continue in school leadership positions (Bengston et al., 2013; d'Arbon et al., 2002; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Kruger, 2008; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999; Lindle, 2004; McAdams, 1998; Mertz, 1999; Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018; Portin et al., 1998; Pounder & Crow, 2005; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Riley & Meredith, 2017; Thomson, 2009; Whitaker, 2001; Williams & Morey, 2018). With research indicating that many classroom teachers do not see principals as having high levels of job satisfaction and acceptable levels of work-life balance, this group, being the logical group to draw leaders from, is currently viewing school leadership as being too demanding, negatively impacting their own aspirations (Cooley & Shen, 2000; Bush, 2011a, Lacey, 2003a; Gallo & Ryan, 2011). This reduced aspiration amongst the ranks of classroom teachers, and an increasing number of principal retirements being experienced both domestically and globally within educational leadership, suggests there are likely to be sustainability risks within the ASA education system. These sustainability risks are supported by findings from this study, which identifies a lack of active school leadership aspiration existing within the ASA education system.

Phase Two of this study, a qualitative approach, utilising semi-structured interviews, adopted the following sub-questions:

- What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels with regard to current succession practices?
- What are the perceptions of the classroom teacher, school-based administrator and system-based administrator hierarchical levels with regard to ideal succession practices?

This study draws on the experience and perceptions of ASA educators at three different hierarchical levels: system-based administrators, school-based administrators including school principals, and importantly, classroom teachers. The understanding of perceptions across these hierarchical levels of current succession practice is important if the ASA education system is to identify shortcomings of any process in

place, as well as to begin systematic planning towards any improvement effort. The fact that classroom teachers, school-based administrators, as well as system-based administrators, will have the opportunity to voice their perceptions is significant, as each group is inextricably impacted by the planning and quality represented by succession practices. Likewise, school leader preparation and readiness is dependent on succession practices. The perceptions that these hierarchical levels have of ideal practice are important in identifying what those likely to be involved in this process consider to be key elements of meaningful succession practices.

The 'voice' of the classroom teacher is unique to this study, as literature on the topic of school leadership succession practices has predominantly adopted a system or administrative perspective. Nowhere in the literature reviewed was another perspective presented. There is an obvious lack of input into succession practices, as highlighted by the succession literature, from this key stakeholder group, the classroom teachers.

In light of concerns highlighted by the literature in the area of school leadership aspiration and school leadership succession, this study has sought to add to the existing body of research by providing coverage to these topics within a specific faith-based education setting, that of the Adventist Schools Australia (ASA) education system; topics which have not previously been researched. By exploring the aspiration levels of ASA employees, the factors influencing the decision TO apply or NOT TO apply for school leadership positions in this education system, and perceptions of both current and ideal succession practices, it is expected that this research study can add to an understanding of succession issues specific to the ASA education system, as well as wider education systems.

6.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.3.1 Integration

The following research findings are derived from the integration of the data analysis stemming from Phase One and Phase Two addressed in chapters four and five of this study. These findings address the research questions, in terms of hierarchical level perceptions of ASA employee aspiration levels, factors that influence the decision TO or NOT TO apply for ASA school leadership positions, and perceptions of current and ideal ASA succession practices.

6.3.2 Aspirations

This research found that active aspiration levels are very low amongst ASA employees. Across all ASA employees only 1.8% were active aspirants, that is, actively looking for school leadership positions. This low level of active aspiration represents a sustainability issue for the ASA education system and indicates future leadership requirements may be unable to be met under present aspiration levels. For example, in 2016, fifteen school leadership positions were indicated to have been filled – or 3.8% of respondents in this study - in the ASA education system for the 2017 school year, yet only 1.8% (seven people) of ASA employees indicated they were active aspirants and seeking leadership positions. This would suggest that fewer ASA employees actively sought school leadership positions than was required by the ASA education system. As the literature indicates, we are seeing an exodus of school principals (ABS, 2009; Barty et al., 2005; Bennett et al., 2011; Brooking, 2008; Fink, 2010; Gallo & Ryan, 2011; Lacey, 2003a; Lacey & Gronn, 2005; Marks, 2013; McKenzie, 2008; Quinn, 2002; Scott, 2003; Williams, 2001; Williams & Morey, 2018). Given such circumstances, will the ASA education system be able to annually find upwards of fifteen, high quality, adequately prepared, experienced and willing individuals, who are considered by selection criteria as able to take up such school leadership positions? And if not, from where do they draw such a pool of potential applicants?

Only 1.2% of ASA employees aged less than 30, and 3.0% of ASA employees aged 31-40, are currently applying for leadership positions. This figure then drops to 0.9%

for the 41-50 years' group. This suggests if the ASA education system does not adopt strategies that address aspiration before employees are approaching 40 years of age, only a minute pool of applicants will exist from which to select future school leaders. This is consistent with other Australian based research findings, which suggest that leadership aspiration drops away for teachers with more than five years of experience, particularly if there has been no indication given to them they may be in line for leadership opportunities (Lacey, 2003a).

This study data found that the situation is even more drastic for females, having less than half the active aspirants of their male counterparts across all respondents in this study; 1.2% for females compared to 3.0% for males. Within this active aspirant category, it was also found in this study that there were more primary level active aspirants (1.8%) than secondary level active aspirants (1.1%) – consistent with Australian Bureau of Statistics findings (1.6% Primary, 1.1% Secondary) (2015). These two findings are interesting given that respondents perceived it to be advantageous to have come from a secondary background, and more favourable to be a male than a female, when applying for ASA school leadership positions, consistent with other research findings in the literature (McLay, 2008; Bezzina, 2012). One study in the literature that references gender notes that the selection process is seen as being ad hoc and thus acting as a strong disincentive to seeking school leadership positions for women, with the same research study suggesting women, particularly, do not consider leadership until urged to by someone else to do so (Gallo & Ryan, 2011).

Of all ASA employee respondents, 71% indicated they have no intention to apply for school leadership positions in the future. There are, however, 25.9% and 24.8% of the under 30 and 31-40 age groups respectively, who expressed an interest in possibly applying for school leadership positions in the future. These ASA employees need to be convinced that it is both worthwhile and desirable to aspire to school leadership. Findings from this study also found that, of those intending to apply for school leadership positions in the future, 68% are male, with only 32% being female. This confirms that the gender bias reported earlier in this study is in need of addressing. Finally, the leadership aspirations of respondents were seen to decrease as age (and therefore teaching experience) increases, again emphasising the need to address

leadership aspirations earlier in the employees' career – a finding consistent with other Australian based school leadership succession literature (Lacey, 2003a).

6.3.3 Influences on the Decision to Consider School Leadership

This research study also included an exploration of factors that influence the decision NOT TO apply (**unwillingness**) or TO apply (**willingness**) for school leadership positions.

Firstly, from the integration of the quantitative and qualitative data it was found that five predominant factors influence the **unwillingness** of ASA employees to apply for school leadership positions. Across all hierarchical levels, in order of influence impact, these factors were:

1. A perceived lack of work-life balance suggesting school leadership roles make it difficult to maintain a high level of quality of life outside of the role, and identifies the perception that school leadership roles are too large, with responsibility levels and work pressures considered unreasonable.
2. A perception that the external education environment constraints impacting school practices overly restricts the role of school leader, and are seen to be excessive and unhelpful.
3. A perception that a lack of educational support for school leaders from all levels of the ASA education system and school community exists regarding both the preparation for and carrying out of the school leadership role.
4. A perception that the skill sets of individuals are considered to not be a good fit for leadership roles or that such roles are not desired, as well as the increased likelihood of reduced connections with students and staff.
5. A perception that unreasonable religious expectations from the faith community also influences them NOT TO apply for school leadership positions.

All hierarchical levels indicated that by far the largest influence on their unwillingness to apply for school leadership roles related to a perception of a lack of work-life balance (factor one, above) for school leaders. Compounding this were perceived external educational constraints (factor two, above), and the lack of internal

educational support (factor three, above), seen by all hierarchical levels to be of medium influence on the decision NOT TO apply for school leadership positions. Lastly, it was perceived that the religious expectation factor (factor five, above) had a significantly lower level of influence on the decision NOT TO apply for school leadership positions.

The most significant unwillingness factor for all hierarchical levels, was the perception that school leadership as experienced today, results in a lack of work-life balance. The impact of this influence, however, was rated highest by the classroom teachers (66% of classroom teacher respondents identified this as a disincentive), followed by the school-based administrators (51%) and then system-based administrators (33.3%). The classroom teachers' extremely high rating of the disincentive value would suggest this is one of the most important factors that the ASA education system needs to consider in order to alleviate potential leadership shortages. Addressing this factor in the context of this hierarchical level specifically, may go a long way towards addressing a potential leadership crisis.

Secondly, research findings from this study identified four predominant factors that influence the **willingness** of ASA employees to apply for school leadership positions. These were:

1. The opportunity to positively contribute to the school and its community.
2. External rewards, such as remuneration, power, autonomy, status or prestige.
3. A perception that if improved, essential support as seen by the employee, consisting of professional support (in the form of training and development opportunities), system support (improved ASA education system support to those in leadership roles), system staffing (improved leadership identification and allowing school leaders increased voice in local school staffing decisions), and remuneration (improvements in financial compensation for positions of responsibility) would influence a decision TO apply. That is, if improvement reached a threshold value, this would increase willingness TO apply for school leadership positions.
4. The perception that God's leading in the form of a personal 'Calling' to leadership positions also positively influences the willingness of respondents TO apply for school leadership positions.

There were some notable hierarchical differences within the willingness TO apply for school leadership area. While all hierarchical levels identified the internal influence of the desire to contribute to the school community had the highest level of influence, this was particularly true of the system-based administrators – 100% of these respondents identified Contributions as an incentive TO apply for school leadership, levels above that of both the classroom teacher (60.6%) and school-based administrators (77.6%) – even though all hierarchical levels registered Contributions at extremely high levels of influence. Another internal factor identified in this faith-based study was that of the influence of a personal 'calling' for leadership from God. This influence was rated the highest by system-based administrators, followed by school-based administrators and then classroom teachers.

Interestingly, the willingness TO APPLY findings also indicated the system-based administrators rated External Rewards higher (16.7% saw External Rewards as an incentive to apply for school leadership positions) than their classroom teacher (10.3%) and school-based administrator colleagues (6.1%) – even though all hierarchical levels perceive External Rewards to be a minor influence on the decision TO apply for school leadership positions. This difference in the hierarchical level ratings of the impact of External Rewards was not predicted, and is somewhat difficult to interpret. The unique ASA pay structures where the system-based administrators do not necessarily have a higher remuneration package than the school-based administrators may be one such reason for this unpredicted result. It is clear that further study is needed in this area.

It is important to note that all hierarchical level respondents identified systemic components that needed improvement in their **unwillingness** to apply comments, but suggest that if these components were improved, these would become influential **willingness** to apply factors. This points to the existence of a 'threshold value', at which point unwillingness factors are converted to willingness factors. That is, there is a perception of a need for appropriate improvement to these components in their current form to a specified level; the current lack of appropriate levels of these elements acts to reduce aspiration to take on school leadership positions.

It is clear, however, that different hierarchical levels see this threshold differently. For example, the system-based administrators perceive that the present system generates near to these threshold values. The classroom teacher and school-based administrators, in contrast, perceive that substantial, specific, systemic improvement to Professional Support, System Support, Staffing System and Remuneration, must be observed in order to further influence aspirations to apply for school leadership positions. Also, the data indicated that the threshold level required to increase school leadership aspiration was higher for the classroom teachers than that of their school-based administrator colleagues. The system-based administrators, however, were so strongly influenced by their desire to make Contributions to the school community that this was seen to overcome many of the limitations identified by the other two hierarchical levels. This is consistent with, and reinforces, the threshold concept identified in the unwillingness analysis of the data.

Further to this, no comments, however, exactly quantify both the nature and extent of improvement of these systemic elements from which willingness would increase as a direct result of any improvement.

6.3.4 Perceptions of Succession

6.3.4.1 Current Succession Practices

Classroom teachers were the most diverse of the hierarchical level respondents encountered in this study in relation to their attitudes, understandings and perceptions of current ASA succession practices. Varying degrees of knowledge and awareness of current ASA succession practices were encountered, with those classroom teachers who already had interest in pursuing school leadership roles proving to be more aware of current practice.

From the analysis of the data, a meta-theme relating to the perceptions of current succession practices for each of the three hierarchical levels emerged. For the classroom teachers, the meta-theme was Lack of Awareness. For the school-based administrators, this meta theme was Lack of Transparency. For the system-based administrators, this meta-theme was Individual Ownership.

The classroom teachers saw no clearly defined sequence of processes relating to the identification and preparation of potential school leaders. They genuinely wanted to understand succession practices better, and were willing to be involved in succession practices. The school-based administrators perceived there to be uncertainty around a number of succession practices, and tended to focus their attention around the school leadership selection component. They also acknowledged that in current practice there existed the potential for bias and inequity to exist within selection practices. Additionally, they perceived a significant lack of post-succession support in existence for new school leaders. Again, like their classroom teacher colleagues, school-based administrators exhibited a willingness to be involved in succession matters. The system-based administrators acknowledged that a formalised set of succession practices is not currently utilised within the ASA education system, identifying that both regions and individuals are enacting their own set of succession practices. Importantly, this hierarchical level is keenly aware that current succession practices being used within the ASA education system are lacking strategies to increase leadership aspiration and development. These system-based administrators see themselves as leading out in succession practices, and are keen to continue playing a leading and initiating role in succession related events, but are frustrated by the tension in the Church organisational structure between the Education and Church arms.

When considering the three hierarchical levels perceptions of current succession practices, it was evident that all levels perceived this current system, while acknowledging some succession elements were functioning adequately, lacks formalisation and effective communication to ASA employees of the present set of succession practices. It was also implied by all hierarchical levels that the Church's fractured hierarchical organisational structure limits the consistent application of current succession practices. Further, it was perceived by the three hierarchical levels that the 'calling' culture inherent within the current system at times clashes with the movement towards the application process involved in succession practices.

6.3.4.2 Ideal Succession Practices

From the analysis of the data, a meta-theme relating to the perceptions of ideal succession practices for each of the three hierarchical levels emerged. For the classroom teachers, the meta-theme was Formal and Communicated. For the school-based administrators, this meta-theme was Involvement. For the system-based administrators, this meta-theme was National Ownership.

All hierarchical levels, in general terms at least, agreed that a number of common elements should exist within ideal succession practices. The common elements of the ideal succession model included:

1. A systematised model which includes job descriptions, selection criteria, and documented pathways to further leadership positions.
2. A transparent and well communicated model, which encourages the development of a culture of open discussion about school leadership aspirations with colleagues and administrators.
3. An application based model, along with acknowledgement of the need to adopt an appointment orientation for a limited number of leadership positions where the application process may not lead to an appropriate pool of potential applicants.
4. A supportive model which enables professional development both before and after accepting the leadership position, and the provision of and access to internal support mechanisms such as mentoring.

There were, however, differences in focus across the hierarchical levels. It is evident from this study, that the classroom teachers have a very narrow ideal succession model focusing around only two key components – the identification and preparation of future leaders, and transparency within succession practices. This hierarchical level emphasised the need for these succession elements to be both formalised and communicated. School-based administrators did not detail a complete ideal succession model, but they did stress the need for both clearer job descriptions and transparent selection criteria, as well as a participatory approach to the further development and implementation of ideal succession practices which would involve more than just the system-based administrator hierarchical level. System-based administrators had a firm idea of the nature of a number of elements of ideal

succession practices, although their ideal system was largely reactionary in nature, rather than proactive. These system-based administrators wanted criteria for leadership selection to follow a 'job-fit' orientation, which would include an Adventist Christian ethos element. The emphasis of this hierarchical level included a need to be more forward thinking about potential leadership candidates and how to establish clarity of pathways to leadership, and the need for the development of an appropriate organisational structure in which to base the succession model; with an overarching view that this structure be nationally oriented and involve educational personnel empowered to make educational decisions.

Importantly, all hierarchical levels lacked details of each component of their ideal succession practices. There was, moreover, no determination as to who would take on a leading role in the development and implementation of this ideal succession model, although there seemed to be a consensus that the model be national in nature, but allow for input from all hierarchical levels. There appears to be little emphasis on the development of a pool of potential leaders – but the aspirations findings of this study suggest this should be paramount. Again, it was noted that the present fractured hierarchical Church organisational structure, along with the existence of both an individual and system 'calling' culture, was perceived as a significant obstacle to generating a set of ideal succession practices – obstacles identified within the ASA faith-based education context, but likely also encountered by other faith-based education contexts.

6.4 TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE SUCCESSION MODEL

What is noticeable from this study was that all hierarchical levels found it difficult to concisely articulate the details of any ideal succession model. It was evident, however, from the participants' responses to the research questions in this study, that they identified a number of elements that would need to be present to approach this ideal. The succession model characteristics outlined in this section take into consideration participant generated data relating to leadership aspirations, factors influencing their decision to apply for school leadership, and views of current and ideal succession practices, each of which are considered alongside educational succession literature.

As indicated in this research study, the perceptions of ASA employees suggest there is scope for the improvement of succession practices within this education system. It is clear that any improved school leadership succession model would need to increase employee aspiration, and the data from this study would suggest that this may be improved by addressing role detractors; specifically, by improving work-life balance and educational support levels. The respective views of the different hierarchical levels as to the extent of improvement required to educational support (threshold level) needs to be considered, with the classroom teachers and school-based administrators suggesting greater improvement is needed than the system-based administrators, as this appears to impact on the aspiration levels of respondents. Additionally, any improved succession model would need to include cross-hierarchical input, as the need to have buy-in from each of the hierarchical levels addressed in this study is significant to creating aspiration for school leadership positions, and for converting aspiration into application.

The elements identified by ASA respondents, though broad in nature, alongside key characteristics outlined in the literature as being essential to good succession practices, are categorised into the following six areas:

1. Aspirational Attractors
2. School Leadership Work-Life Balance
3. Documented Processes
4. Resolution of Organisational Structural Impediments
5. Pre-and-Post Leadership Support
6. Elements not identified by respondents but found within educational succession literature.

6.4.1 Aspirational Attractors

As stated previously, any effective succession model should have an aspirational effect on employees. Within the ASA context, an effective succession model would:

1. Place emphasis on inspiring people to consider school leadership, increasing employee aspiration and generating a potential talent pool (School-Based

Administrators, System-Based Administrators). These elements are also identified by Bruer, Liebman and Maki (1996) and Hall (2008) in their suggested approaches to succession.

2. Reduce the threshold levels pertaining to the lack of educational support experienced by the classroom teachers and school-based administrators that impedes those with leadership aspirations from applying for school leadership positions (Classroom Teachers, School-Based Administrators).
3. Create an ASA system-wide culture of open discussion about school leadership aspirations and positions with colleagues and administrators (Classroom Teachers, School-Based Administrators, System-Based Administrators).
4. Encourage more female employees to consider school leadership positions (Classroom Teachers, School-Based Administrators).

6.4.2 School Leadership Work-Life-Balance

A recurring theme from respondents in this study involved apprehensions over the complexity and workload associated with the roles of school leaders, and how this would likely impact their quality of life. It is important that effective succession practices would attempt to alleviate concerns over work-life balance within school leadership positions. Within the ASA context, an effective succession model would:

1. Consider the workloads and responsibilities of school leaders with a view towards improving perceived work-life balance.

6.4.3 Documented Processes

Additionally, and as evidenced by respondents in this study, effective succession practices need to be clearly documented and effectively communicated. Within the ASA context, an effective succession model would:

1. Enable the development of a transparent and well communicated succession model, with which all ASA employees would be familiar (Classroom Teachers, School-Based Administrators, System-Based Administrators).

2. Emphasise the identification and preparation of early career potential future leaders (Classroom Teachers, School-Based Administrators, System-Based Administrators).
3. Generate job descriptions for school leadership positions that reflect a reasonable work-life balance. (Classroom Teachers, School-Based Administrators, System-Based Administrators).
4. Document clear and transparent pathways to school leadership positions (Classroom Teachers, School-Based Administrators, System-Based Administrators).
5. Prioritise the filling of leadership positions with those aligned to the faith-based values of this education system (System-Based Administrators).
6. Contain clear selection criteria based on both management ability and leadership potential (Classroom Teachers, School-Based Administrators, System-Based Administrators). A number of authors from within school leadership succession literature also emphasise the need for selection processes that are based on management and leadership capabilities (Brittingham, 2009; Fusarelli et al., 2018; Hanover Research, 2014; Liebman et al., 1996; White & Cooper, 2009).
7. Be linked to clearly defined leadership standards and define the type of leadership needed (System-Based Administrators). This is also mentioned within school leadership succession literature (Fink & Brayman, 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hartle & Thomas, 2006).
8. Be predominantly an application based model, but also provide the flexibility to allow appointments where the application process may not lead to a pool of selection candidates (School-Based Administrators, System-Based Administrators).

6.4.4 Resolution of Organisational Structural Impediments

It was identified in this study that the existing ASA organisational structure does not currently assist the development and implementation of an effective and consistently utilised succession model. Within the ASA context, an effective succession model would:

1. Involve a national model of development, with further input solicited from differing hierarchical levels, focussing on overcoming the difficulties presented by the current ASA and Church organisational structure (Classroom Teachers, School-Based Administrators, System-Based Administrators).

6.4.5 Pre-and-Post Leadership Support

Respondents in this study perceived the need for more pre-and-post leadership support to be provided within the ASA education system. Within the ASA context, an effective succession model would:

1. Provide increased levels of educational support from both local region (Conference) and ASA levels, which would include training and development opportunities, improved support from system-based administrators, and input into the staffing of positions within the leaders' school setting (School-Based Administrators, System-Based Administrators).
2. Provide a remuneration system that is appropriately linked to the responsibility of the position (Classroom Teachers, School-Based Administrators, System-Based Administrators).
3. Enable leadership development for those either in leadership roles or those in the leadership potential pool, and provide for access to a formalised and extensive system of support for new school leaders which may include mentoring, formal training and professional development. Further, an effective succession model would also provide for the retention of current leaders (School-Based Administrators, System-Based Administrators). The need for these development and retention elements are clearly identified in succession literature (Brittingham, 2009; Fusarelli et al., 2018; Hall, 2008; Hartle & Thomas, 2009; Liebman et al., 1996).

6.4.6 Educational Succession Literature

In addition to the points raised above by respondents in this research study, a number of further elements are found within educational succession literature which it is

suggested, if considered in the development of an effective ASA succession model, would be highly beneficial. These include:

1. Clarifying the future leadership requirements of the ASA education system. This is an important element identified in the literature (Brittingham, 2009; Fink & Brayman, 2004; Fusarelli et al., 2018; Hall, 2008; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hartle & Thomas, 2006; Liebman et al., 1996) and must be considered at an early stage in any improved succession model.
2. Implementing effective performance management practices and regular performance appraisal. (Lacey, 2003a)
3. Holding present leaders accountable for future leadership development. This is echoed by Lacey (2003a), Hargreaves and Fink (2006) and Hall (2008) in their discussion on the challenges of school leadership succession and streamlining of succession.
4. Recognising the importance of sound planning and the need to be prepared well before a succession event takes place (Fink & Brayman, 2004; Hall, 2008; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).
5. Having top down commitment to the succession program, aiming to facilitate a culture throughout ASA that promotes human capital growth (Brittingham, 2009; District Management Council, 2009; Fusarelli et al., 2018; Hartle & Thomas, 2009; White & Cooper, 2009).

While not an exhaustive list of necessary components, the broad characteristics listed above would move ASA towards an effective succession model and include a number of the perceptions of ideal succession practices as identified by the respective ASA hierarchical level respondents within this study. It is important, however, to note that effective succession planning is a "fluid and continual process" (Hanover Research, 2014), one which requires regular assessment and adjustment as necessary.

6.5 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A number of significant challenges and opportunities are identified for the ASA education system in this research study with regards to the development or improvement of succession practices. Presently many of these hurdles are being worked around rather than confronted, but these challenges to current succession

practices need to be faced and solutions sought if significant improvement is to take place. A number of opportunities are also presented which have the potential to improve succession practices.

Firstly, while there appears to be some recognition of the lack of leadership capacity within the ASA education system, particularly by system-based administrators, there does not appear to be the recognition of the need to urgently improve both current leadership aspiration levels and succession processes. This represents a challenge to the development of potential leaders and indeed the very sustainability of the ASA education system. Respondents indicated that present succession practices do not encourage their decision to consider school leadership roles, particularly the classroom teacher hierarchical level. The data from this study indicates that the present aspiration levels of ASA employees would be unable to fulfill the future leadership requirements of the ASA education system.

Secondly, the issue of work-life balance was strongly identified by all hierarchical levels as a disincentive to considering school leadership positions. Those respondents who offered potential solutions to this, often-referenced additional support for school leaders at the local school level. Clearly there are financial implications in providing such additional support. It is plain to see, however, that the ASA education system must address this disincentive and improve this perceived lack of work-life balance.

Thirdly, there appears to be much confusion over exactly whose role it would be to develop and enhance succession practices that relate to the ASA education system. Some individual respondents are of the view it is a matter best taken up at the regional level (Conference), while the majority see the development of succession practices as the domain of the national level (ASA). There appears, however, to be a lack of consensus as to whether this succession model development should be driven by a top down, or bottom up process.

Fourthly, the current organisational/hierarchical structure is identified to be a challenge in the area of establishing a national approach to succession practices. Specific to ASA, their organisational context lacks the ability to enforce practices, meaning that each education region (Conference) is not under compulsion to follow

any set of 'national' practices. As one system-based administrator respondent in this research study stated, ASA rely on a "coalition of the willing" in order to see consistency of practice, as each geographic region is essentially its own educational entity with the ability to decide whether or not it will support ASA initiatives. Clearly this represents a huge challenge in gaining consistency of practice on a national level.

Fifthly, the presence of the traditional 'calling' system is seen to represent a barrier to the transition towards a more transparent, application based set of succession practices within the ASA education system. Elements of this 'calling' culture are perceived to still be enacted to fill some school leadership positions, and perceived to have been utilised by the system-based administrators and their Church-based administrator colleagues, to 'justify' selection processes for positions that have not been made more widely available for application, to the chagrin of many classroom teachers and school-based administrators. This represents a particular challenge as the system-based administrator hierarchical level acknowledge that in some schools or geographic regions no applicants may apply for school leadership positions and the 'calling' system is often resorted to in order to fill these.

Sixthly, an ideal model would take into consideration the perceptions of the different hierarchical levels. There are challenges in attempting to accommodate the perceptions across all hierarchical levels, in that these perceptions can be in conflict. This same challenge, that of differences within and across hierarchical levels, may represent barriers to the development of an acceptable and workable ASA succession model.

Finally, the ASA education system's appetite for change to succession practices may represent a barrier to the development and implementation of an improved set of succession practices. Given that this system is faith-based, there is a likely a belief that 'ardent prayer' may suffice in the challenge to find suitable school leaders. While this may suffice for the occasional 'replacement filling' of leadership positions, it does not represent a proactive way to create a pool of suitable leadership applicants that will ensure a leadership pipeline for years to come. Some elements of an ideal succession model, as suggested by respondents in this study, would require substantial planning and implementation, and most likely represent significant cultural shifts.

Schein's (2016) work on organisational culture change - and redesigning ASA succession practices is indeed change - suggests implications that may be subtle, deep and complex.

This research study also identifies a number of improvement opportunities to current leadership aspiration and development practices, which could be of benefit to the ASA education system.

Firstly, the opportunity to communicate the benefits of considering school leadership exists, something that may act to change the perceptions many have of such leadership positions. Encouraging present and past leaders to talk in more positive terms about their roles, the data suggests, may go a long way towards impacting school staff perceptions of leadership positions and acting as a driver of leadership aspirations.

Secondly, this review of present succession practices provided an opportunity to include the 'classroom teachers voice' to the development of an improved set of succession practices. Gaining 'buy in' from this hierarchical level is important, as they represent the most likely future leadership pool. Any improved succession model must create aspiration and be designed to appeal specifically to classroom teachers.

Thirdly, with 25.9% and 24.8% of the less than aged 30 and 31-40 age groups expressing an interest in possibly applying for school leadership positions in the future, a significant opportunity exists to begin transitioning 'interest' towards 'active aspiration' from within this wider aspirant group. Again, communicating reasons to consider leadership, ideally alongside of staff suggested changes as identified in this study, may trigger a greater extent of active school leadership interest.

Fourthly, opportunity to audit the current and future leadership requirements of the ASA education system exists; an important but straightforward undertaking. Additionally, by implementing effective performance management practices and regular performance appraisal, a significant opportunity exists to begin identifying high caliber individuals who can be added to the talent pool of future potential

leadership candidates and thus made eligible for preparatory and professional development opportunities.

Lastly, the opportunity to implement a systems approach which emphasises the interdependence of succession elements exists. A focus on the relationships that exist within elements of ASA succession practices, and acknowledging the impact of the interrelatedness of the respective succession practice elements, and at the same time, recognising the different perspectives of each of the respective hierarchical levels (Classroom Teachers, School-based Administrators, System-based Administrators) and across the organisation's structural levels is important if ASA is to improve succession practices.

Provided these challenges are overcome and the opportunities presented are grasped, ASA would ultimately be well positioned to ensure the sustainability of effective school leadership in a changing and unpredictable educational environment.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY/SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

Although this study has further contributed to the research on perceptions of school leadership succession practices, including school leadership aspirations, it clearly represents only a snapshot in time. This study has, however, captured the perceptions of a wide range of ASA employees in terms of age, teaching level, experience, gender, and hierarchical level.

This study took place in the context of the Adventist Schools Australia education system, and many of the findings reported here may or may not be applicable to other education systems. Such a limitation suggests that it is important for studies of this nature to be undertaken in other education system contexts in order to explore the applicability of this study's respective findings.

The aspirations component of school leadership succession practices was not a focus of the qualitative phase interviews, and as such, this study was not able to more

extensively investigate the topic of aspiration. Further study on the topic of aspiration within the ASA education context would prove valuable. Additionally, there would appear, from the interview data, to be a difference across age levels within hierarchical levels involved in this study around respondent perceptions of succession practices, which needs further exploration and analysis. While mixed method research enables one to collect data from a large sample on some elements of succession practices, and in depth understanding of other elements, this also highlights a limitation of this research design.

The area of role detractor threshold values, as identified in this study, would also benefit from further exploration. This is particularly important in light of the significant link found between the unwillingness factors of ASA employees regarding the decision NOT TO apply for school leadership, and those factors that, if addressed by the ASA education system, would likely influence and impact the willingness of ASA employees TO apply for school leadership positions. It was evident that a threshold level was required to overcome specific disincentives in order to improve leadership aspirations. Even though this study identified that there were broad differences in threshold values between hierarchical levels, this study was limited in that it was unable to determine the exact nature of the improvement needed to reach these threshold levels. This could be an area of significance in ASA succession practice design or improvement, as it would appear to have the ability to impact on aspiration for school leadership.

Finally, this study did not access the non-educational Church-based administrators, who, because of the organisational structure, regularly contribute in a decision-making context and interact with the system-based educational administrators in certain ASA succession practice elements. Future study which incorporated the perceptions of these Church-based administrators may lead to an enhanced understanding of the system-based administrator perspectives.

6.7 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Succession practices cannot simply consist of the 'replacement filling' of outgoing school leaders. The challenge for ASA administrators is to address the future sustainability of this faith-based education system, by ensuring that a pool of high potential school leadership candidates exist and can be readily identified. This research has discussed ASA employee aspirations, ASA employee hierarchical level perceptions of the factors that would influence their decision TO apply, or NOT TO apply for a school leadership position within the Adventist Schools Australia education system, as well as ASA employee hierarchical level perceptions with regard to both current and ideal succession practices. The findings presented provide clear indication that each of these ASA employee hierarchical levels believe there is scope for improvement to ASA succession practices.

The data indicated that there was significant commonality across the hierarchical levels regarding the broader aspects of an ideal succession model. There is evidence to suggest that this, in part, arises from the acceptance of a faith-based educational culture by many ASA employees. Differences across hierarchical levels exist, however, when discussing specific succession elements.

Classroom teachers desire ASA succession practices to both identify potential future leaders and communicate succession practices, including pathways to leadership, while the focus of school-based administrators is around the school leadership selection process, where they want increased transparency and clearly stated selection criteria, as well as the potential for input into succession practices from all hierarchical levels. The system-based administrators placed emphasis on there being a national approach to succession practices, and organisational structure. It was in this latter space – structure – where the potential for tension most clearly exists. At the local Conference level, while a national model is still preferred, these administrators appear to want the opportunity to modify these practices, maintaining flexibility in their implementation. At the ASA (national) level, the desire is to see a nationally consistent model developed and utilised. As such, the potential for conflict will exist while ever these structural levels fail to be in harmony.

While classroom teachers indicated the greatest amount of change was required, this is tempered by their limited view and experience of ASA succession practices. Their voice in this study, however, offers important suggestions that if acted upon, may increase ASA employee leadership aspirations in the future. In contrast, system-based administrators perceived a lesser amount of change was required to succession practices, but had a much greater understanding of the present system and the requirements of an ideal model. Importantly, it is the system-based administrators who have the most ability to affect change, but see less need than the classroom teachers, who the system depends on for future school leaders.

While the subject of remuneration was at times raised by respondents, it remained the 'elephant in the room' throughout this study; perhaps because this research took place in a faith-based setting where the prevailing culture is missional and one of going 'above and beyond', perhaps because concepts such as 'calling' have such historical and spiritual meaning, or possibly because of the egalitarian nature of teaching. Whatever the reason, it remains clear that respondents, and particularly the system-based administrators, perceive that current remuneration did not always seem appropriate, and they expect remuneration should reflect the responsibility and workload inherent within contemporary school leadership positions. If remuneration was seen as appropriate, this may overcome some barriers, or perhaps even act as a driver, for some to pursue school leadership positions.

Two elements suggested in the educational succession literature as important aspects of ideal succession practices, the clarification of future leadership requirements within the ASA education system, and the implementation of effective performance management practices, were not stressed by ASA respondents in this study. Clearly these elements represent important starting points for the development of an effective succession model, as recognising the number and nature of required future school leaders, and identifying present leadership candidates for development are cornerstones of school leadership sustainability.

Finally, it is paramount that gaining a greater understanding of, and significantly more buy-in to, the design and development of future ASA succession practices from all hierarchical levels take place, and importantly that it inspires younger generation

classroom teachers, if ASA are to improve the attraction, development and retention of high-quality future educational leaders; and thus future-proof this special character infused education system.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: ASA Permission

Daryl Murdoch 23 January 2015 at 1:07 PM

To: Peter Williams Cc: peter.morey@avondale.edu.au

RE: School Leadership Research

DM

Hi Peter,

Great to hear that your research proposal has progressed. I believe the area of succession planning is of significance to Adventist Schools Australia (ASA). Hence I fully support the thrust of your research.

Thank you for your request in relation to ethics approval to approach key personnel in ASA in relation to your research in the area of succession planning. Please be assured that you have the full support of the national office of the Seventh-day Adventist education in relation to your research.

Clearly personnel whom you approach will be given a choice in regards to participating and on this basis I am more than happy to give you permission to progress your research in our school system.

May I wish you God's blessing and every success as you progress your research.

Kind Regards,

Daryl

Appendix B: Human Research Ethics Committee Approval

Avondale
COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Human Research Ethics Committee
Telephone: 02 4980 2121
Fax: 02 4980 2117
Email: research.ethics@avondale.edu.au

10 February 2015

Peter Williams
Avondale Business School
Avondale College of Higher Education
PO Box 19
COORANBONG NSW 2265

Dear Peter,

Thank you for submitting an application for ethics approval for your project *School Leadership Succession in a Faith-Based Education System: Perceptions of Different Hierarchical Levels*.

Your application was deemed to be of a low-risk nature and eligible for expedited review. I am pleased to advise that your project is granted ethics approval for the duration of your project to 31 December 2017, project number [2015:01].

The following additional standard conditions apply:

1. That you notify the committee of any changes to circumstances or research design, which might require a review of the ethics approval.
2. That you provide an annual interim report of your progress to the committee, and a final report once this project is completed. The first report will be due twelve months from the date you commence the research.

We wish you well in this valuable research endeavour.

Sincerely

Roberta Matai
Secretary
Avondale Human Research Ethics Committee

Appendix C: Survey Questions

Leadership Succession Survey

Demographic Information

1. In which conference do you work?

- ○ North New South Wales Conference
- ○ Greater Sydney Conference
- ○ South Queensland Conference
- ○ Victorian Conference
- ○ Western Australia Conference
- ○ Northern Australia Conference
- ○ South Australia Conference
- ○ South New South Wales Conference
- ○ Tasmanian Conference

2. At which level of education do you currently work?

- ○ Primary
- ○ Secondary
- ○ Other (please specify)

3. Which of the following best describes the position you currently hold?

- ○ Teacher
- ○ Deputy Principal
- ○ Assistant Principal
- ○ Principal
- ○ Head of School
- ○ System Administrator
- ○ Other (please specify)

4. How long have you held this position?

- ○ 1 year or less
- ○ 2-3 years
- ○ 4-5 years
- ○ 6-10 years
- ○ 10 plus years

1

5. What is the highest qualification you hold?

- ○ Diploma of Teaching
- ○ Degree
- ○ Post Graduate Certificate
- ○ Post Graduate Diploma
- ○ Master's Degree
- ○ Doctorate
- ○ Other (please specify)

6. What is your gender?

- ○ Female
- ○ Male

7. Your age category is

- ○ 30 years or less
- ○ 31-40 years
- ○ 41-50 years
- ○ 51-60 years
- ○ 60 + years

Next

Leadership Succession Survey

Career Aspirations

8. Which one of the following best describes your career aspirations?

- ○ I have applied for a principalship in the past but will not do so in the future.
- ○ I have never applied for a principalship and do not envisage doing so in the future.
- ○ I have applied for a principalship in the past, but am unsure if I will apply again.
- ○ I have not yet applied for a principalship, but do envisage doing so in the future.
- ○ I am actively seeking a principalship.

Prev Next

3

Leadership Succession Survey

Principal Perceptions

9. The following is a list of perceptions about the role of the Principal. If you were to decide whether or not to apply for a Principalship, to what extent would the following perceptions influence you NOT to apply?

	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Principals are expected to fulfil multiple roles	○	○	○	○
The time pressures are too stressful	○	○	○	○
The role of the HOD/assistant/deputy principal already allows the exercise of adequate leadership	○	○	○	○
Principals have less close relationships with students and staff	○	○	○	○
The career path of a principal is a dead-end one	○	○	○	○
The loneliness of the job does not appeal to me	○	○	○	○
The education agenda is changing too quickly	○	○	○	○
There is not enough autonomy allowed in the role	○	○	○	○
The media over-scrutinises teachers, schools and the education process	○	○	○	○
The education profession is held in low esteem by the community	○	○	○	○
Schools are experiencing a decrease in parental support and cooperation	○	○	○	○
Principals are increasingly exposed to litigation	○	○	○	○
Outside bodies have intruded excessively on educational decision making processes	○	○	○	○

	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Women with children are disadvantaged in terms of career opportunities	○	○	○	○
The indigenous enrolment of a school would discourage application for principalship	○	○	○	○
Principals have to deal with parents who are more critical and confrontational	○	○	○	○
Principals are often over-scrutinised by governing bodies	○	○	○	○
Principal's salaries do not reflect the complexity of the task	○	○	○	○
Men are valued more than women as principals	○	○	○	○
The role intrudes too much on personal and family life	○	○	○	○
There is too much responsibility involved in the role of principal	○	○	○	○
Competent women are often overlooked as principals	○	○	○	○
Relocating to take up a principalship is too disruptive to family life	○	○	○	○
There is too much bureaucracy and red tape	○	○	○	○
The 'watchdog mentality' prevalent in the Church is 'off-putting'	○	○	○	○
The position of the principal is often "filled" prior to advertising	○	○	○	○
Interview processes are often too demanding, intensive and rigorous	○	○	○	○
The recruitment, training and induction processes are inadequate	○	○	○	○

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	Low	Medium	High	Very High
The principal is expected to be a 'practising' Adventist	○	○	○	○
Principals have to be accountable to too many 'bosses'	○	○	○	○
The expectations of the Adventist community are often unrealistic	○	○	○	○
There is an expectation for a principal to lead the faith community of the school	○	○	○	○
Quality leadership preparation programs are provided in this education system	○	○	○	○
Too many significant decisions are made by bodies external to the school	○	○	○	○
The role of principal is now more managerial than educational	○	○	○	○
The private life of a principal is very public	○	○	○	○
The Adventist identity of the school is becoming more difficult to sustain	○	○	○	○
Moving to a new location means suitable employment also has to be found for my spouse	○	○	○	○

Prev Next

6

Leadership Succession Survey

Principal Perceptions

10. The following is a list of perceptions about the role of the Principal. If you were to decide whether or not to apply for a Principalship, to what extent would the following perceptions influence you TO apply?

	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Principals have an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others	○	○	○	○
The prestige offered by the role of principal is attractive	○	○	○	○
Principals have the opportunity to make a difference to Adventist education	○	○	○	○
Principals have the opportunity for working more closely with students, staff and parents	○	○	○	○
Succession planning processes are clearly articulated in this education system	○	○	○	○
Principals experience more positive and professional challenges	○	○	○	○
A principal is able to make important contributions to community life in general	○	○	○	○
The salary packages offered to principals are very attractive	○	○	○	○
Principals can be effective change agents in schools	○	○	○	○
Principals have more power and autonomy	○	○	○	○
The principalship is a natural career progression	○	○	○	○
There is greater satisfaction in the job of the Principal	○	○	○	○

7

Leadership Succession Survey

Applying for the Principalship

Finally, we would greatly appreciate if you would provideYOUR THREE most important reasons for why you WOULD NOT apply or WOULD APPLY for a Principal position in an Adventist School.

11. The three most important factors that would influence my decision **NOT TO APPLY FOR A PRINCIPALSHIP** in an Adventist School:

12. **The three most important factors that would influence my decision TO APPLY FOR A PRINCIPALSHIP in an Adventist School:**

Prev Next

Leadership Succession Survey

FINISHED!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your voice has been added to this research project!

Prev Done

10

Appendix D: Information Statement For Leadership Succession Research Participants (Survey)

Information Letter for Leadership Succession Research Participants

Date: February 16, 2015.

Dear Colleague,

You are invited to participate in a research project exploring perceptions of succession planning practices and leadership aspirations. This research will form the basis for a PhD study on this topic.

Participation in this study involves completing and returning the anonymous online survey via the link in this email. Completion of the survey should take no more than 8-12 minutes. Additionally, an interview component to this research will be undertaken at a later stage in this year, with potential participants approached directly at that time.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may choose not to participate at any time. The survey is totally anonymous and no identifiable data is collected or retained. Data will be reported in aggregate form and a copy will be available to all participants.

By completing the survey you are giving consent for your responses to be included in this research.

Please complete the survey by clicking on the enclosed link. If you have any questions regarding the nature of the study or research procedures, please contact Peter Williams at Avondale Business School on 02 4980 2175 or email peter.williams@avondale.edu.au.

This research project has been approved by the Avondale College of Higher Education Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). Avondale requires that all participants be informed that if they have any complaint concerning the manner in which a research project is conducted it may be given to the researcher, or if an independent person is preferred, to Avondale's HREC Secretary, Avondale College of Higher Education, PO Box 19, Cooranbong NSW 2265, or phone (02) 4980 2121 or fax (02) 4980 2117 or email: research.ethics@avondale.edu.au

Thank you for your assistance with this project.
Sincerely,

Peter Williams
Lecturer
Avondale Business School

Appendix D1: Information Statement For Leadership Succession Research Participants (Interview)

Information Statement for Leadership Succession Research Participants

Date: July 2, 2015.

Dear Colleague,

You are invited to participate in a research project exploring perceptions of succession planning practices and school leadership aspirations. This research will form the basis for a PhD study on this topic.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may choose not to participate at any time. Your involvement is totally anonymous and no identifiable data is collected or retained. Data will be reported in aggregate form and a copy will be available to all participants if desired.

By participating in this interview, you are giving consent for your responses to be included in this research.

If you have any questions regarding the nature of the study or research procedures, please contact Peter Williams at Avondale Business School on 02 4980 2175 or email peter.williams@avondale.edu.au.

This research project has been approved by the Avondale College of Higher Education Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). Avondale requires that all participants be informed that if they have any complaint concerning the manner in which a research project is conducted it may be given to the researcher, or if an independent person is preferred, to Avondale's HREC Secretary, Avondale College of Higher Education, PO Box 19, Cooranbong NSW 2265, or phone (02) 4980 2121 or fax (02) 4980 2117 or email: research.ethics@avondale.edu.au

Thank you for your assistance with this project.

Sincerely,

Peter Williams
Lecturer
Avondale Business School

Appendix E: Interview Participant Consent Form

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

School Leadership Succession in a Faith-Based Education System: Perceptions of Different Hierarchical Levels

Researcher: Peter Williams peter.williams@avondale.edu.au

I agree to participate in the above research project and I give my consent freely for involvement in this interview.

I have read and understand the information provided in the Information Statement.

I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have been given to keep.

I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing. I will not be disadvantaged in anyway by withdrawing.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved (maximum interview time of 1 hour) have been explained to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to

- Participate in an interview that will be audio-tape recorded.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researcher.

Print name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Interview Protocol List

Interview Protocols

1. Before the interview commences:

1. **Critical details:**
- What I am studying and why….
- Purpose of the interview is to attempt to understand the perceptions of teachers, school-based administrators and system-based administrators with regard to ASA succession practices, both current and ideal.

2. **Clarifying the topic under discussion:**
- For this study, succession practices include all deliberate and planned processes that influence leadership change events.

3. **Format of the interview:**
- Semi-structured interview, up to 1 hour in duration.

4. **Informed consent:**
- Leave time to read and sign
- Information Statement provided

5. **Confidentiality**
- We can stop any time you determine it is appropriate
- Feel free to decline to answer any question

6. **About me**
- Background

7. **Ask permission to use the digital recorder**
- Explain who will listen to it – I will be transcribing all interviews.

8. **Start audio recording**

2. Interview Questions

3. After the interview is completed:

1. **Contact Information**
- Business card / email

2. **Subsequent contact**
- Follow up questions
- To ask for any clarification
- To consider the transcript

3. **Thank you for your willingness to be involved in this study**

Appendix G: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1) Tell me about your experience / views of 'succession' within Adventist Schools Australia?
    a. Is there a reason for why you did not get involved with pursuing leadership roles within ASA? (Teacher)
    b. Do you think it is likely that in the future you would have interest in a school leadership position? (Teacher)
    c. What incentives do you see currently in the succession process that may appeal to potential future school leadership candidates? (School and System-based Administrators)

2) When you think about succession planning within Adventist Schools Australia currently, from your perspective, what processes are currently in place?
    a. Do you know of / Are you aware of any formal preparation programs that exist in this education system?
    b. How would you imagine an aspiring leader being recognised in this system?
    c. Do you think current succession processes are fair and equitable for everyone?

3) What do you think succession planning in the Adventist Schools Australia system should look like?
    a. Can you think of any elements that should be present in a succession planning program?
    b. Do you think study/mentoring/school-based leadership programs etc should be present?

4) Do you see personal factors such as work-life balance, family issues, preparedness for leadership and working in a faith based system impacting on the way you see that succession practices should be designed?

5) Do you have any other comments or experiences about succession planning in the Adventist Education system that you want to share?

Appendix H: Interview Log Template

PhD Interview Log

Interview Location:	
Date:	
Respondent Number:	
Present:	
Time Commenced:	
Time Completed:	
Device Recorded On:	Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS-831
Observations / Reflections:	
Transcription Time	