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Future leadership of schools in Australia: Employee perceptions of taking on the challenge

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Key words: employee aspirations, school leadership, leadership perceptions, succession planning

Introduction

Educational systems are experiencing a global leadership crisis. The literature around school leadership paints a clear picture: school leaders are an ageing population and there is a lack of willingness from classroom teachers to take on school leadership roles. Anecdotal evidence would suggest this is also the case within Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), however, there is a lack of research that has explored the leadership intentions of current employees within this education system. Through a review of school leadership literature, and ASA employee survey responses on the topic of school leadership, this study explores the views of these respondents to taking on school leadership positions, including the influences on their decision to further explore school leadership roles.

> *Australia, like most other industrialised nations, is expecting a school leadership crisis with fewer people showing an interest in leading schools*

Literature review

There is a leadership crisis developing in schools internationally (Bennett, Carpenter & Hill, 2011; Fink, 2010; Pont, Nusche & Hopkins, 2008). The 'Baby Boomer' generation (those born between 1946 and 1964) are increasingly retiring from leadership and principal positions, and the research suggests the next generation are becoming increasingly less willing to take on leadership positions (Bennett, Carpenter & Hill, 2011; Fink, 2010; Australian Principals Association Professional Development Council report, 2002).

Looking specifically at the Australian school leadership context, the literature identifies there is a shortage of principals (Barty, Thomson, Blackmore & Sachs, 2005; d'Arbon, Duignan & Duncan, 2002; Lacey, 2006; Lacey & Gronn, 2006; McKenzie, 2008). 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".

Dempster (cited in Macpherson, 2009) believes 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 to ensure the next generation of educational leaders. Myung, Loeb & Horng (2011) put forward the strategy of actively recruiting teachers to become school leaders, particularly those identified as having the greatest potential for effective leadership. The authors refer to this process as 'tapping', an informal recruitment mechanism with the goal of progressing school teachers, who demonstrate leadership potential, to take on school principal roles. Their research found that a majority of principals report that they were '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, Loeb & Horng, 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 school wide demonstrated leadership (Myung et al., 2011).

Barty, Thomson, Blackmore and Sachs (2005) identify in research, however, that smaller numbers of applications for principal positions does not necessarily indicate there is a decline in interest in school leadership positions. In fact, their research found that interest remains high but, interestingly, principal aspirants are becoming more strategic in how they approach the application process. For example, 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, p. 9):

> *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.*

Australian studies also outline the increasing age of the principalship (Barty et al., 2005; Lacey, 2003; Lacey & Gronn, 2005; McKenzie, 2008; Marks, 2013). 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. Studies from a 2007 national survey identified that more than 50% of school leaders were aged 50 years and older (Australian Government Department of Education, Science & Training, 2007; McKenzie, 2008). One report indicated that 25% of both primary school and secondary school leaders were aged over 55 years old (McKenzie, 2008). Internationally, Hargreaves, Halasz and Pont (2008, p. 71) note that "in many countries, almost half of the current generation of school leaders is due to retire within the next five years, creating significant challenges to leadership recruitment, stability and effective continuity". Such figures highlight a generic problem in educational settings: the entire leadership team of many schools belong to the baby boomer cohort and are approaching retirement at similar times.

There is some evidence in the literature that age impacts an individuals tendency to pursue school administrative positions, with both younger and older individuals less likely to do so than middle-aged individuals (Joy, 1998; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Walker & Kwan, 2009). This raises the idea that age, or years of teaching experience, impacts on the decision or intention to seek administrative 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 positions than older, more experienced participants. As Bush (2011, 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). Lacey (2003) found that the length of teaching experience appeared to impact on career aspirations, as teachers with less than 5 years experience were more likely to aspire to the role of principal, while those with more than 10 years experience are more likely to want to remain in the classroom. Additionally, 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 study was that more primary teachers aspired to the principal role than secondary teachers.

The Texas (U.S.A.) based 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". Concerns relating to the complexity of the role have also contributed to the attractiveness of the principalship being questioned, along with compensation that is not seen as commensurate with the work (Bengston, Zepeda & Parylo, 2013; d'Arbon, Duignan, Duncan & Goodwin, 2001; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Kruger, 2008; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach,

"the 'education and training' sector registered the largest proportion of workers who intended to retire within the next 10 years."

1999; McAdams, 1998; Mertz, 1999; Portin, Shen & Williams, 1998; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Thomson, 2009; Whitaker, 2001).

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 merely possessing the relevant administrative credential (Lankford, O'Connell & Wyckoff, 2003; Pounder, Galvin & Sheppard, 2003). This is echoed by others outside the U.S. 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 (Bush, 2008; Brundrett, Fitzgerald & Sommefeldt, 2006). 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.

"the demand is for principals with attributes and skill sets that go beyond merely possessing the relevant administrative credential"

The results of a Canadian study described by Gallo and Ryan (2011) reflect interesting findings around gender differences and leadership aspiration. A survey of 2,000 teachers, followed up with focus group interviews, identified males and females as having differing attitudes toward leadership; specifically, more females than males wanted to remain in the classroom. Females tended to aspire to the assistant principal role rather than the principal role, while more males aspired to the principal role. "Aspiration to the assistant principal role increased over time for both males and females" (Lacey, 2003, para. 10), based on a commissioned Victorian Department of Education and Training research project in 2000.

Gallo and Ryan (2011) further noted that participants reported a high level of satisfaction from factors such as the sense of achievement through their work, interactions with students, school policies and practices, and the physical work environment. Factors which have been identified as working against a decision, included the effect of the job on the individual's personal life, the adequacy of administrative support, and the perceived intensity of the job. In an Australian context, D'Arbon, Duignan, Dwyer and Goodwin (2001) undertook research in the Catholic Education System, and found eight scales that related to an unwillingness for Catholic based employees to apply for leadership roles, and two scales that related to a willingness to apply from their factor analysis of survey data. The eight factors influencing the decision not to apply were: Personal and Family Impact, Unsupportive External Environment, Explicit Religious Identity, Interview Problems, Systemic Accountability, Lack of Expertise, Gender Bias and Loss of Close Relationships. The two factors influencing the decision to apply for leadership roles were Internal Rewards, and External rewards.

Additionally, the literature indicates educators in faith-based school settings face an additional deterrent when aspiring to leadership roles. According to d'Arbon, Duignan, Duncan and Goodwin (2001, para. 34):

> *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.*

The literature clearly emphasises that education systems must consider succession processes that create pools of potential leaders, or risk the shrinking of their educational relevance. This view is supported by Zepeda, Bengtson and Parylo (2011), who suggest that because school systems can no longer rely on an appropriate number of principal applicants, succession planning will be the life blood of educational systemic success. As 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".

Methodology and processes

The data for this study were collected as part of a larger research project examining the perceptions of the succession process held by those working within the private faith-based education system, Adventist Schools Australia (ASA). The research project employed a two phase mixed method design, consisting of both a quantitative component and a qualitative component. This study explores the survey data, from the quantitative component, relating to desires and influences impacting ASA employees with regards to involvement in school leadership positions.

The study adopted three specific questions to direct the research:

1. What are the desires of ASA employees with respect to school leadership positions?
2. What factors influence ASA employees

NOT to apply for school leadership positions?

3. What factors influence ASA employees **TO** apply for school leadership positions?

The questionnaire was developed after a thorough review of the literature was undertaken, with a number of relevant stakeholder groups also consulted. Its initial structure was based on previous research undertaken by Tony D'Arbon, Patrick Duignan, Deirdre Duncan, Jack Dwyer and Kim-Maree Goodwin (2001) in the 'Planning for the Future Leadership of Catholic Schools in New South Wales' project at the Australian Catholic University. Importantly, its development was also guided by four additional criteria. First, it was important that it cover the concerns of ASA employees with regard to leadership 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 aspects of statistical analysis were considered.

The draft questionnaire was piloted with a small group of ASA present and past employees who had a good understanding of this school system. Briggs, Coleman and Morrison (2012, p. 152) write "The single most effective strategy to minimise problems is to make sure you pilot your instruments". The pilot study resulted in the revision of a number of the items, as well as identifying structural issues and a 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 questionnaire was then prepared for distribution to ASA employees via email, along with instructions on its completion and statements regarding the guarantee of anonymity. The survey instrument consisted of a questionnaire divided into four sections (corresponding with dimensions). Dimension One contained demographic items. Dimension Two consisted of one question, which asked respondents to identify their career desires. 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.

Emails (1173) were sent out to ASA employees with an online link to the questionnaire via 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. Of these 400 responded to almost every item on the survey, and form the database for this study. The data from the questionnaire was then exported into the statistical analysis software program IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 22.

Results

Sample

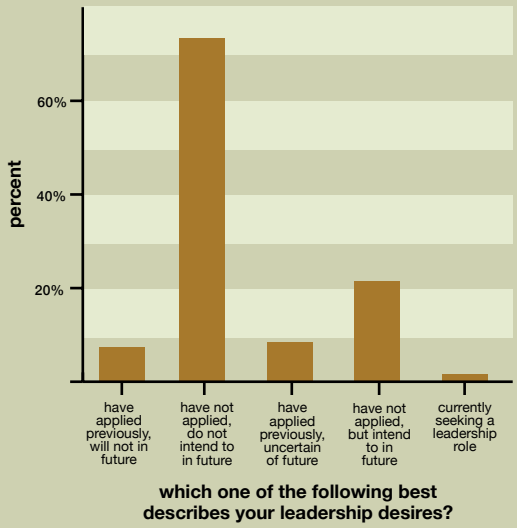
Of the 400 ASA employee respondents 258 (64.5%) were female and 142 (35.5%) were male; 21.3% were under 30 years of age, 25.8% were 31-40 years of age, 29.5% were 41-50 years of age and 23.5% were 51+ years of age; 48.0% were employed as primary teachers and 52.0% were employed as secondary teachers.

Desire to seek school leadership positions

Figure 1 provides an overview of ASA employees' desire to seek leadership positions within the ASA system. While 6.5% indicated that they have applied for a school leadership position in the past but will not do so in the future another 6.7% indicated that they have applied for a school leadership position in the past but are unsure if they will 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. About 19% indicated that they have not yet applied for a school leadership position, but do envisage

> *6.5% indicated that they have applied for a school leadership position in the past but will not do so in the future*

Figure 1: Employees' school leadership application intentions



doing so in the future. Only 1.8% indicated that they were actively seeking a school leadership position. The desire to seek leadership positions was further explored in terms of gender, teaching level and age differences.

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. Fewer females (4.3%) compared to males (11.1%) indicated that they have applied for a school leadership position in the past but are unsure if they will in the future. About three quarters of the females (74.7%) compared to half (51.1%) of the males indicated that they never applied for a school leadership position and do not envisage doing so in the future. Those that have not yet applied for a school leadership position, but do envisage doing so in the future included 13.4% of the females and 28.9% of the males. Lastly, only 1.2% of females compared to 3.0% of males indicated that they are actively seeking a school leadership position (Figure 2).

About three quarters of the females (74.7%) compared to half (51.1%) of the males indicated that they never applied for a school leadership position and do not envisage doing so

Teaching Level Differences

The data also indicated that 6.7% of primary level teachers compared to 4.4% of secondary level teachers reported that they have applied for a school leadership position in the past but will not do so in the future. Only 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. Similar majorities of primary level teachers (66.3%) and secondary level teachers (67.2%) indicated that they had never applied for a school leadership position and do not envisage doing so in the future. Comparable components of primary (18.4%) and secondary level teachers (20.6%) indicated that they had not yet applied for a school leadership position, but did envisage doing so in the future. Interestingly, 1.8% of primary level teachers compared to 1.1% of secondary level teachers indicated that they were currently seeking a school leadership position (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Employees' school leadership application intentions: Gender differences

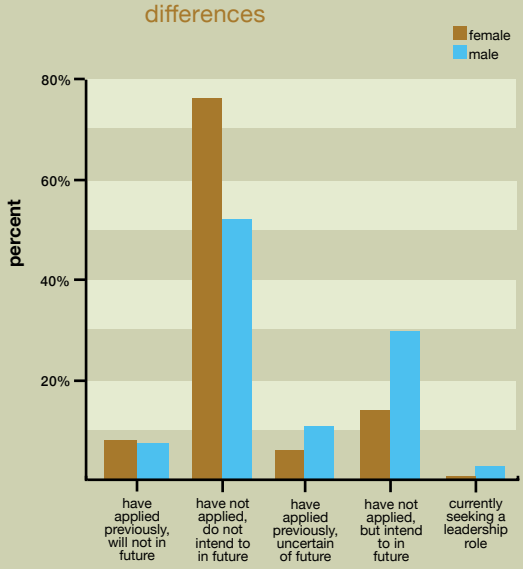
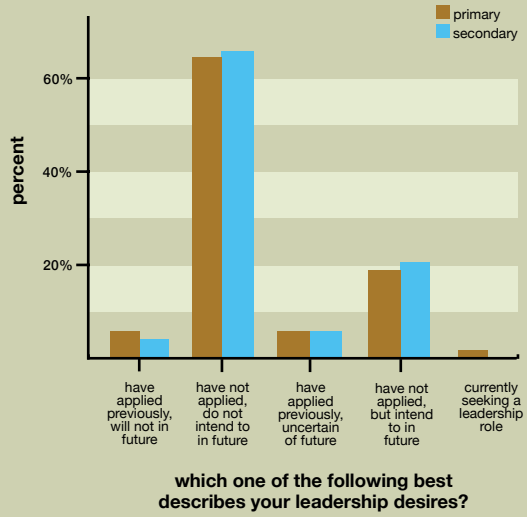


Figure 3: Employees' school leadership application intentions: Teaching level



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, year age groups respectively, indicated that they have applied for a school leadership position in the past but will not do so in the future. Comparatively 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. A majority in each age group (70.6%, 66.3%, 65.0%, and 64.7% of the same ordered age groups)

indicated that they had never applied for a school leadership position and do not envisage doing so in the future. Importantly, 25.9%, 24.8%, 18.8%, and 4.7% of respective age groups, indicated that they have not yet applied for a school leadership position, but do envisage doing so in the future. Notably only, 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).

Factors influencing teachers NOT TO apply for school leadership positions

Factors impacting teachers' unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions were determined by factor analysis of the 38 Dimension Three survey items. The responses for these 38 items, selected on a 4 option Likert scale, were near normal in their distribution. Missing data was randomly distributed in the database, and replaced by using the SPSS 'replace with a mean' option.

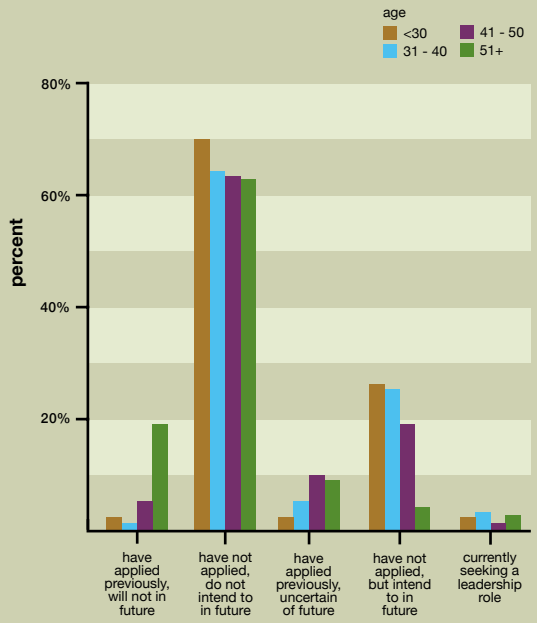
Principal factor analysis with oblique rotation (Direct Oblimin with Kaiser Normalisation) was conducted on the 38 items linked to unwillingness to apply for school leadership position. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was .904, which is greater than the minimum criteria of .5 (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999), 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 scree plot suggested a five factor model, and this was finally adopted for this study. These five factors, which in the analysis had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criteria of one, in combination explained 65.23% of the variance. Items with a loading of less than .40 or which exhibited significant double loadings were removed and the analysis repeated.

Five factors were identified and the respective reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) determined as outlined in Table 1. Each of the factors represents a common theme. Factor 1, Work-Life Balance, represents the perception to which respondents identify work-life balance components to add pressure to the role of principal (sample item: The role intrudes too much on personal and family life). Factor 2, Leadership Detractors, represents a perception by respondents that aspects of the role of principal make the position less attractive (sample item: The career path of a principal is a dead-end one). Factor 3, 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 4, Gender Bias, represents the perception of respondents that gender bias played a part on the appointment of principals (sample item: Men are valued more than women as principals). Factor 5, Religious Identity, represents the extent to which respondents felt that religious elements impacted on the role of principal (sample item: The principal is expected to be a 'practising' Adventist).

For the four option Likert scale (1-4) ranging from 'Low' to 'Medium' to 'High' to 'Very High' adopted by this study, the greater the mean of the factor scale, the greater the respondents' perceived importance of the factor in influencing their decision either TO or NOT TO apply for a leadership position.

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 external environment factors, with similar means ($M = 2.259$ and $M = 2.258$ respectively) but of

Figure 4: Employees' school leadership application intentions: Age differences



"Notably only, 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 … respectively, indicated that they are actively seeking … school leadership"

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, the latter having the least influence on the decision not to apply for school leadership positions (Table 1).

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 a one way ANOVA.

Gender Differences

Table 2 provides data relating to the female and male respondents with respect to the five 'not 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, 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 to not 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 in the decision not to apply for school leadership positions.

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 3). 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.

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 factor. Here, the perceived influence of the work-life factor in their decision

> *"it was the work-life balance factor … considered to be the strongest influence on why they would not consider taking on school leadership positions."*

Table 1: Unwillingness to apply influences: Factors, factor description, scale means, standard deviations and reliability coefficients

Unwillingness to Apply Factor	Factor Description	Scale Means	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1 Work-life Balance	The perception that work-life balance components add pressure to the role of principal.	2.814	0.73	0.790
Factor 2 Work-life Balance	The perception that aspects of the role of principal make the position unattractive.	2.259	0.67	0.719
Factor 3 The External Environment	The perception that the external environment is unsupportive.	2.258	0.68	0.899
Factor 4 Gender Bias	The perception that gender bias played a part in the appointment of principals.	2.075	0.96	0.862
Factor 5 Religious Identity Expectations	The extent to which religious elements impacted on the role of principal.	2.075	0.88	0.744

Table 2: Scale means across the NOT 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 Expectations	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

Table 3: 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 Expectations*	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 the 0.05 level

the perceived influence of the work-life factor in their decision to not apply for positions of school leadership, increased with age

to not apply for positions of school leadership, increased with 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 work-life balance affects them the least.

Factors Influencing Teachers TO Apply For School Leadership Positions

The survey data obtained from the 12 willingness 'TO' apply for school leadership position 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 with oblique rotation (Direct Oblimin with Kaiser Normalisation) was conducted on the 12 willingness to apply for school leadership position items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic 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 final two factor output of this analysis is shown in Table 4.

Each of the factors represents a common theme. Factor 1, Internal Rewards (sample item: Principals have an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others), with a mean rating of 2.802 indicates that the great majority of the respondents perceive that internal rewards act as highly influential incentives to apply for the role of principal. External Rewards, Factor 2 (sample item: The prestige offered by the role of principal is attractive), with a mean rating of 1.854 indicates that the great majority of the respondents perceive external rewards acting as medium rather than strong incentives to apply for the role of principal.

the great majority of the respondents perceive that internal rewards act as highly influential incentives to apply

An exploration into whether there was a significant statistical difference in these 'willingness to apply' influence factors across gender, age and teaching was conducted, using t-tests and a one way ANOVA.

In contrast to the NOT TO apply for school leadership position factors there was no significant statistical difference in the influence on the ASA employees' decision TO apply for school leadership positions across any gender, teaching level and age category. Interestingly, however, it is the 41-50 age group that generated the highest rating for both of these TO apply factors; and the very low rating of the External Reward factor for the 51+ age group would suggest that these external rewards have very little influence on their desire to apply for leadership positions at this stage of their careers.

Discussion

In terms of leadership desire, it is important to note an overwhelming 64.5% of ASA employees who responded to the survey have not applied for school leadership positions, and do not envisage applying for school leadership positions in the future. Additionally, only one in four ASA employees (27.3%) would consider or anticipate applying for school leadership positions; and only 1.8% of these respondents were currently seeking school leadership roles. Significantly, 13.2% of respondents indicated they had applied for a leadership position previously, with some identifying no desire to apply again in future, and some indicating uncertainty about applying in the future. This reticence to apply again could well be an area worthy of further exploration. The ASA data reflects the situation in other Australian school systems and in most industrialised nations, which are also experiencing a leadership crisis with very few employees demonstrating interest in leading schools into the future (Teasdale-Smith, 2008). This study data would suggest that ASA, like other Australian educational systems reviewed in the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership report (Dempster, Lovett and Fluckiger, 2011), must review the present succession processes to ensure a future generation of educational leaders will emerge.

A noteworthy observation from the data is that male ASA employees more aggressively seek school leadership positions, with twice as many males (31.9%) as females (14.9%) indicating that they were either actively applying or intending to apply for school leadership positions. While other factors

Table 4: Willingness to apply influences; Factors, factor description, scale means, standard deviations and reliability coefficients

Willingness to Apply Factor	Factor Description	Scale Means	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1 Internal Rewards	The perception that internal rewards act as incentives to apply for the role of principal.	2.802	0.643	0.844
Factor 2 External Rewards	The perception that external rewards act as incentives to apply for the role of principal.	1.8537	0.556	0.743

such as gendered views of current ASA practices may impact this, it is still a noticeable difference in the desire to seek leadership positions. This reflects Canadian research findings (Gallo and Ryan, 2011), that more males than females demonstrate a desire to seek school leadership roles, and most specifically the role of principal.

Exploring teaching level, it is interesting to note that primary teachers are slightly higher represented than secondary teachers (8.5% compared to 5.5%) in currently applying or having previously applied for school leadership positions. This would suggest the ASA data is consistent with other Australian research findings in that more primary than secondary level teachers aspired to school leadership positions (Lacey, 2003).

ASA respondents indicated that intention to apply for school leadership positions decreases as age increases. This data contrasts the findings of other research which found that middle aged individuals were the most likely demographic to apply for leadership positions (Joy, 1998; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Walker & Kwan, 2009). These findings identified that younger, less experienced candidates expressed a greater uncertainty about seeking school leadership positions than older, more experienced teachers. ASA findings, however, show that younger employees (Age <30) ranked the highest in indicating an intention to apply for school leadership positions. But it is also worth noting that research undertaken in Australia (Lacey, 2003) identified that while younger teachers indicated very early in their career (less than 5 years teaching experience) a desire to pursue school principal positions, 50% of these younger teachers no longer did so after being in the classroom more than 5 years.

Factor analysis of the survey data generated five factors (Work-Life Balance, Leadership Detractors, The External Environment, Gender Bias, and Religious Identity) that influenced ASA employees in their decision NOT TO apply for school leadership positions. Three of the ASA factors (The External Environment, Gender Bias and Religious Identity) were similar to the D'Arbon et al (2001) Catholic education system leadership intention study.

Of the unwillingness to apply factors, it was the Work-Life factor that the majority of ASA respondents most strongly identified as an influence in their decision NOT TO apply for school leadership positions. This factor emphasised the perceived negative impact on personal and family life, the multiple roles that needed to be played by school leaders, significant time pressures, and the heightened level of responsibility of school leadership. Interestingly, and in contrast to the D'Arbon et al (2001) faith-based study findings, the Religious Identity factor, which emphasised Adventist faith-related pressures, was not seen by the majority of ASA respondents as a strong detractor in applying for school leadership roles.

In relation to the Gender Bias factor, there was a perception by the female ASA respondents that this was a strong deterrent in their decision NOT TO apply for school leadership positions, but the male ASA respondents were rather dismissive of this being a negative influence in their decision to apply for school leadership roles. Additionally, the female ASA respondents perceived the External Environment factor, having to deal with various external regulatory bodies or communities, was a stronger influence on their decision NOT TO apply for leadership position than their male counterparts. This may reflect a difference in leadership styles between males and females, but this needs further exploration. It was noted that the Religious Identity, faith-based pressures that arise from accepting an Adventist school leadership position, and Leadership Detractor factors, a perception of having to assume a managerial rather than relational role with the school community, students and colleagues, were stronger influences on secondary level teachers in their decision NOT TO apply than what was perceived by the primary level teachers.

No statistically significant differences amongst the factors influencing the decision NOT TO apply for school leadership positions was found across the four age categories, though a trend was noted that the Work-Life factor influencing the decision not to apply increased steadily for each age group, until the 51 plus age group, who indicated that the Work-Life factor affected them the least.

Factor analysis also generated two factors influencing the decision TO apply for school leadership positions: Internal Rewards and External Rewards. The large majority of respondents indicated that the Internal Rewards, that is, being able to implement positive change, improve educational processes, and make a difference in the lives of students, were what prompted them to apply for leadership positions. However, the a large majority of respondents indicated that the External Rewards, that is, the gaining of status, power, and financial benefit, had very little influence on their decision to apply for school leadership positions. No statistically different responses to these factors were found across the gender, teaching level and age demographic differences.

Despite some clarifying findings emerging from the data, this study is limited in a number of ways. Firstly, the respondents did not have the opportunity to present their views on factors

"younger teachers indicated very early ... a desire to pursue school principal positions, 50% of these younger teachers no longer did so after being in the classroom more than 5 years."

that influenced their desire to apply for school leadership positions outside of the factors presented in this survey. There is a need to follow up this study with an exploration of ASA employees' views adopting a less restricting methodology. A qualitative oriented study would enhance understanding of ASA employee motivations for exploring leadership possibilities. Secondly, the study is restricted to the Australian Adventist School system, but further study into Adventist School systems would increase understanding of the applicability of the findings to other Adventist educational contexts. TEACH

Overview

The data collected in this research project indicates a significant shortage of ASA employees willing to undertake school leadership positions. This shortage of applicants must be addressed by ASA to ensure the future of appropriate leadership within the ASA education system. This lack of desire to take on school leadership, the data suggests, is due to the perception of many ASA employees, firstly, that a leadership role within ASA cannot co-exist with an appropriate work-life balance. Secondly, there are a number of leadership detractor factors identified, such as the disruption to family life in accepting such a position, a perceived loss of close relationships with staff and students, a perception of having to assume a managerial rather than relational role within the school community, and a reduction in what many ASA employees consider to be a meaningful interaction with fellow staff members, students, and the broader school community. Thirdly, if there is to be an increase in the numbers of applicants for school leadership positions, the gender bias perceived by females must be addressed. Finally, the internal rewards associated with taking on positions of leadership, that is, being able to implement positive change, improve educational processes, and make a difference in the lives of students, must be more strongly emphasised by school and system level administrators.

> *the gaining of status, power, and financial benefit, had very little influence on their decision to apply for school leadership positions.*

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