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Values-virtues leadership & the Australian Professional Standard for Principals: Towards a distinctive touchstone for principals in Christian faith-based schools

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Key words: Values, virtues, leadership, Australian Professional Standard for Principals, moral principles, service, Christian faith-based schools

Abstract

The article challenges school leaders in Christian faith-based (CFB) schools to live Jesus' kingdom values and virtues in their daily professional working and personal lives. To further this, the writer proposes an ethics, moral and spiritual purpose lens to 'refract' distinctive leadership profiles — complementary to the published Australian Professional Standard for Principals (APSP) — to encourage principals to engage in reflection and renewal, and bridge the gap between leadership rhetoric and practice.

Introduction and background

Two seminal documents developed by The Australian Institute for Teaching and Learning (AITSL) have delineated clear criteria for practising educators in Australian schools: the Australian Professional Standard for Principals¹, following in the wake of its earlier counterpart for teachers.

What is the APSP essentially about? A précis might best describe it as, “a public statement setting out what principals are expected to know, understand and do to succeed in their work”² and in their leadership role, to guide, “develop and support teaching that maximises impact on student learning.”³ In the presented AITSL model (see Figure 1, next page), principals are called upon to view their role through three leadership lenses: a) Leadership requirements; b) Professional practices; and c) Leadership emphasis⁴ — each linked to its related focuses.

The outcome of using this ‘frame of reference’ is a set of detailed leadership behaviour, actions and descriptors, providing a comprehensive framework known as *Leadership Profiles*, with ascending levels of proficiency for a) and b) above, but not for c). Requirements and practices of the model are always situated in context and conceived as being “fully interdependent, integrated and with no hierarchy implied.”⁵ Perhaps, of particular interest, is the explanation:

The Standard [APSP] is applicable to principals irrespective of context or experience. What will vary is the emphasis given to particular elements of the standard as principals respond to context, expertise and career stage.⁶

Noticeably, principals’ work as set out by the APSP is characterised by a complexity that lies in the depth and breadth of tasks set in diverse social, economic, bureaucratic, financial, and political contexts, as part of the quintessential assignment of leading students’ education. Also, it is evident that AITSL’s APSP views schools implicitly as socio-technical organisations that conform to a social systems model, i.e. schools’ mutually interacting and interwoven parts are in continual, dynamic interaction with their external environments, all of which impacts leadership practice in achieving schools’ goals.

Historically, a draft of the APSP was initially piloted and subsequently endorsed for implementation by Ministers at the Standing Council of Education and Early Childhood. The present APSP (also referred to as *The Standard* in AITSL’s twenty-nine page document) is intended for use in *all* Australian schools and education systems. This raises important questions for principals in Christian faith-based

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schools: *Are these mandated APSP leadership requirements and professional practices, in addition to a 'veneer of religiosity', all that there is to being a quality educational leader; or is there more?* Moreover, what kind of narrative should shape leadership in CFB schools? — learning communities that have a Christian *spiritual* dimension.

In seeking to address the above posed questions, the article examines first the relevance and significance of values and virtues in leadership literature, initially from a secular perspective and then from a Christian viewpoint. This is the precursor to proposing a complementary modification to the existing AITSL model — to include an additional (fourth) lens — and thus, hopefully, offer enriched, transforming and more meaningful Leadership Profiles to principals in CFB schools. Ensuing profiles furnish insights about the relational side of educational leadership that give rise to a different narrative for leaders in CFB schools; before a general conclusion is presented.

A secular perspective

A scanning of current literature shows that the study of leadership is generally characterised by ambiguity, complexity and change (perhaps the 2016 US presidential election and its result being an interesting case in point). Contributing to this perplexity is the plethora of leadership styles and models that

exist. For instance, UCLA adjunct professor Murray Johannsen lists twenty,⁷ even which, by no means constitutes the full extent!

AITSL — probably wisely — neither endorses nor mentions a particular leadership style or model for educators. It leaves role incumbents free to choose and adapt, *inter alia*, to suit personal characteristics, circumstances, contexts and cultures; instead, focusing on specific, expected actions and behaviours.

In the category of vision and values (a subset of the AITSL leadership requirements), The Standard is noticeably (and perhaps understandably) not extensive. Why? First, The Standard's intentional primary focus is on the quality of learning. Second, 'the elephant in the room' is the prickly question of values — the principles, beliefs, convictions and standards that consistently guide personal behaviour — but more specifically, which values and whose? Alain de Botton, philosopher and author observes:

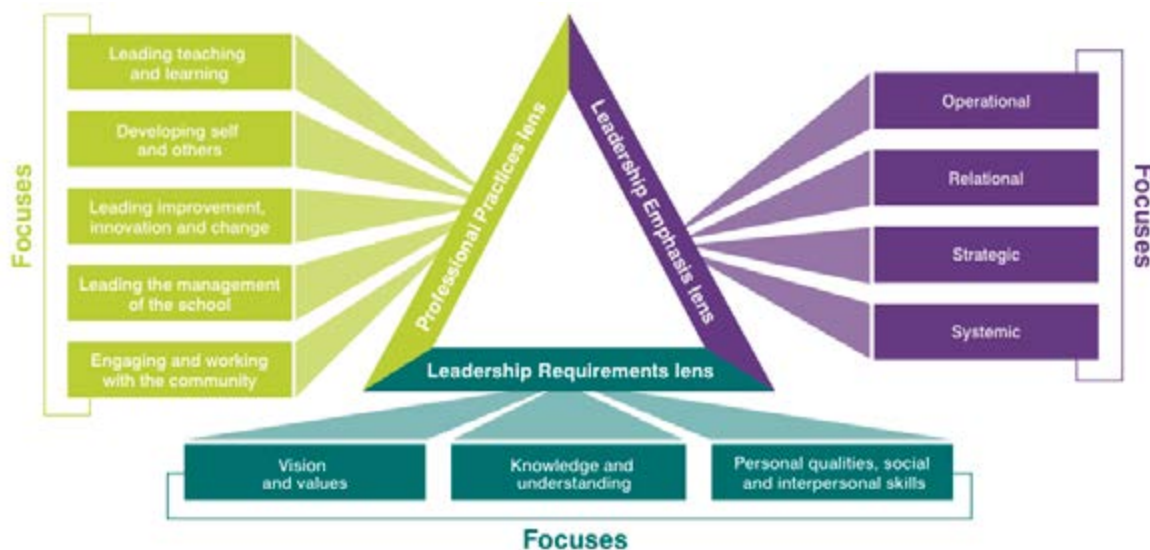
We are the inheritors of an idea, endorsed by both the right and left wings of the political spectrum, that the most fundamental reality of nations is their financial state⁸

Accordingly, it appears that education in many countries has increasingly become part of a pragmatic, economic efficiency paradigm.

In this context, The Standard for principals,

“*the elephant in the room' is the prickly question of values ... but more specifically, which values and whose?*”

Figure 1: Modelling of Australian Professional Standard for Principals (APSP) - lenses and focuses



The leadership lenses, Professional Practices, Leadership Requirements and Leadership Emphasis, and the focuses linked to each lens

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with the Leadership Profiles in particular, may be perceived as ‘performance genre’.⁹ Its language is one of competence, technical knowledge, skills and tasks together with audit requirements — much in the manner of the preceding APST document, standards for *teachers*. John Sullivan incisively comments on such language contexts:

The use of technical or instrumental language assumes that *ends or ultimate purposes and values are either already agreed upon and can be taken for granted or that they cannot be agreed upon and are best left out* [emphasis added].¹⁰

“the world at large, is ‘suffering’ not so much from a lack of knowledge and expertise, but experiencing a crisis of moral purpose.”

The Standard for principals appears to straddle both of Sullivan’s categories; although one could point to the nine values listed on the widely circulated poster, *Values for Australian schooling*.¹¹ But are these suggested values intended and/or sufficient for educational leaders? Furthermore, the diverse nature of multi-cultural societies (such as Australia) heightens the challenge to achieve a wide range of agreed, shared values; notably, to include those values that are perceived as moral or spiritual ones. Even acclaimed Canadian educational researcher and author Michael Fullan in his, *The moral imperative of school leadership* (2003)¹² and *Indelible leadership* (2016),¹³ deals only with generalities. Fullan points to principals’ need for a moral compass and exhorts them to consider and reflect on the purpose of life, work and being. For him, *moral imperative* is about commitment, identity and passion; he interprets *character* simply as *citizenship*. But beyond that, no further exhortation is presented, inevitably because of the wide variance in, or absence of clearly articulated agreed moral values in many western democracies.

Values are important. Especially is this the case when (not) espoused and acted upon by *leaders* — whether at a global, national or local level. The evidence provided at the hearings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuses (that included Christian education institutions) and separately, the reported cases of corruption and criminal behaviour in some state government education jurisdictions indicate, regrettably, the lack of integrity and ‘moral fibre’ by *some* leaders across the educational spectrum in Australia, and the need for, what noted psychologists Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman term “character strengths and virtues.”¹⁴

Extreme failures in leadership behaviour highlight the importance of moral purpose and the significance of values and virtues. Similarly, but contrastingly, noble and inspiring leadership underscores and embodies them. Thus, one might readily conclude that society and perhaps the world at large, is

‘suffering’ not so much from a lack of knowledge and expertise, but experiencing a crisis of moral purpose.

Jean McNiff, international educator and action research exponent, expresses a widely held view in asserting: “... values are the beliefs and principles we live and explain how the living of those values turns us into virtuous practitioners.”¹⁵ Ethicist Arthur Holmes contends that a virtuous nature covers not only one’s conduct; it also includes motives, intentions and underlying dispositions — inner states that are not merely cognitive but also affective.¹⁶

Among other voices that underscore the importance of values in the workplace¹⁷, Shari Baig argues: “*Both competency and character are emerging as an indispensable set of critical necessities of contemporary educators*” (emphasis added).¹⁸

When intentionally lived out, positive values (*vis a vis* vices) no longer remain abstractions and, when habitually embodied in an individual, they develop into virtues. These constitute *arête*, the moral excellence esteemed by classical Greek philosophers; the very essence of the notion of *character*; not to be confused with *personality*, however. The *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* puts it as follows:

On the assumption that what kind of person one is, is constituted by one’s character, the link between moral character and virtue is clear. We can think of one’s moral character as primarily a function of whether she has or lacks various moral virtues or vices.¹⁹

Shlomo Back, former president of Beersheba’s Kaye Academic College of Education, in Israel, also argues for the *embodiment* of morality. Referring to Aristotelian conceptions of life that is meaningful, is good, has purpose and leads to wellbeing, puts educational leaders on notice:

Educators have no option but to offer a personal example to their pupils who learn from their *behaviour* more than they learn from their words (emphasis added).²⁰

It has been argued thus far that in a socio-economic culture (such as Australia’s) steeped in *techne* — of technical competence and know-how — there is a critical need of *sophia* or *phronesis*; a need of wisdom that embraces values and virtues. It follows that the case for a fourth lens (an ethics, moral and spiritual purpose lens, additional to the AITSL model) which allows principals to view their decisions, actions, practices and behaviours, appears to be a valid and reasonable one. However, the question remains: Which values and whose?

For CFB schools, this does not represent a contested issue, but is worthy of closer examination.

A Christian viewpoint

Moral excellence is significant in the teachings of all major world religions. For Christians, virtues are those moral principles that are in harmony with biblical teachings and are best exemplified in the life and teachings of Jesus — someone who always ‘walked the talk’ — for whom proclamation was synonymous with incarnation and whose life was integrated and not compartmentalised. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matth. 5:3—7:27) Jesus clearly articulates the values and virtues he wants his listeners and followers to embrace and *practise*, a point not lost by New Testament gospel and epistle writers enjoining believers to being doers and not hearers of the word only (Matth. 7:24, Luke 6:47, James 1:22, 23).

Practising lawyer and legal philosopher Iain Benson,²¹ divides virtues into two major groups: natural and supernatural — those that are *perceived* by reason and those *received* by revelation, i.e. through the power of the Holy Spirit. By way of illustration, Benson²² refers to Aristotle who, in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, names practical wisdom, self-control, courage and justice as four cardinal virtues (among other virtues). These are regarded as belonging to the first group, whereas the apostle Paul’s admonition to the church at Corinth (1Cor 13), counselling his audience to practice faith, hope and above all charity (love) — later expanded in his letter to the church in Galatia (Gal. 5:22, 23) — belong to the second group, and are often referred to as the Fruit of the Spirit.

Benson also differentiates between values and virtues.²³ He claims, in post-modern society values have not only become relativised (a matter of personal preference), everyone has their own, with an origin in self, but they also have been trivialised. Trivialisation may vary from valuing a beautiful car, or the skill of playing Pokémon, to telling clever jokes. Hence, Benson counsels alertness to the possibility that values language-use in the domain of moral principles (*vis a vis* art, economics or music, for instance) can open the door to confusion. He argues:

... all of what used to be called virtues, are treated as values, makes no distinction between justice and the colour of a T-shirt ... Values language is an obscuring language for morality used when the idea of purpose has been destroyed.²⁴

Clearly, values language is not necessarily moral language and does not have to refer to something that is true. Virtues, in contrast, make a claim for objective truth,²⁵ a category that is central to the Gospel and supported by Jesus’ declaration: “... you will know the truth, and it will make you free” (John 8:32, NLT) — truth that will liberate people from being enslaved to sin and lead to freedom from falsehoods and vices.

Evidently then, it will be necessary for principals to “make sense of non-sense values that inhabit the cultural landscape.”²⁶

How should we regard values then? It is proposed that values being espoused by CBF schools’ leadership in essence are kingdom values — i.e. they should fit into a biblical framework; harmonise with Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount; and lead to shared purposes for human life and the particular community in which principals serve. Principals should also ensure that ‘values’ that are actually preferences — whether their own or those of others — do not pose as moral principles.

In their 2014 Australian research study of leadership in three faith-based schools, Striepe, Clarke and O’Donoghue report that participating principals’ values had a distinctly religious dimension. Principals stated that their “personal faith or spirituality was continually connected to their perspectives on leadership”²⁷ substantiating claims in the wider literature²⁸ that faith can transform the meaning of values “beyond how they are generally understood within society.”²⁹ The authors of the 2014 study dwell on the desirability for all leaders in faith-based schools to take time to identify their values and how these should inform and impact what they do. How then does one move from rhetoric to reality?

To live out virtues and noble values surely is a formidable challenge for CFB school principals. It is entirely a faith endeavour. For Christians, virtues are not self-generated, but grace-imbued (John 15:4). As also has been pointed out:

The Holy Spirit gently works on people’s hearts and minds. ...By reproducing Christ’s character in us, He thus brings to life Christlike virtues in our lives [if we choose to follow his prompting and leading].³⁰

This kind of values-virtues leadership ministry is grounded in service and stewardship. If its practice appears naive and unrealistic in the *milieu* of everyday school life, then leaders may take heart from the testimony of the apostle Paul who claimed the promise: “My grace is enough for you. For where there is weakness, my power is shown more completely” (2Cor 12:9, J.B. Phillips Translation).

Despite the perceived challenges, interestingly, there is also some encouraging research evidence from the Christian schools sector:

“... the gaining of status, power and financial benefit had very little influence on [questionnaire respondents’] decision to apply for school leadership positions ... [rather] ... being able to implement positive change, improve educational processes, and make a difference in the lives of students, were what prompted them [aspirants] to apply for leadership positions.”³¹

“Evidently then, it will be necessary for principals “to make sense of nonsense values that inhabit the landscape”

Having examined relevant literature from a Christian perspective, one can conclude again that there is a case for a fourth lens — an ethics, moral and spiritual purpose one — through which principals might view their practice. This idea is likely to resonate strongly with the client communities of CFB schools.

The fourth lens

A point of departure

Figure 2 shows an adaptation of AITSL's Australian Professional Standard for Principals model (depicted by Figure 1). The component parts of AITSL's model lead to sets of descriptors – Leadership Profiles — that delineate expected professional practice and specific actions by principals. The adaptation, represented by Figure 2 retains all of the categories and components of the original AITSL model; however it exhibits an *additional* fourth lens. If one were to use a photography analogy, it is intended to provide principals with a fast, wide prime lens i.e. with a focal length that gives a wide-angle perspective and an aperture that captures maximum light.

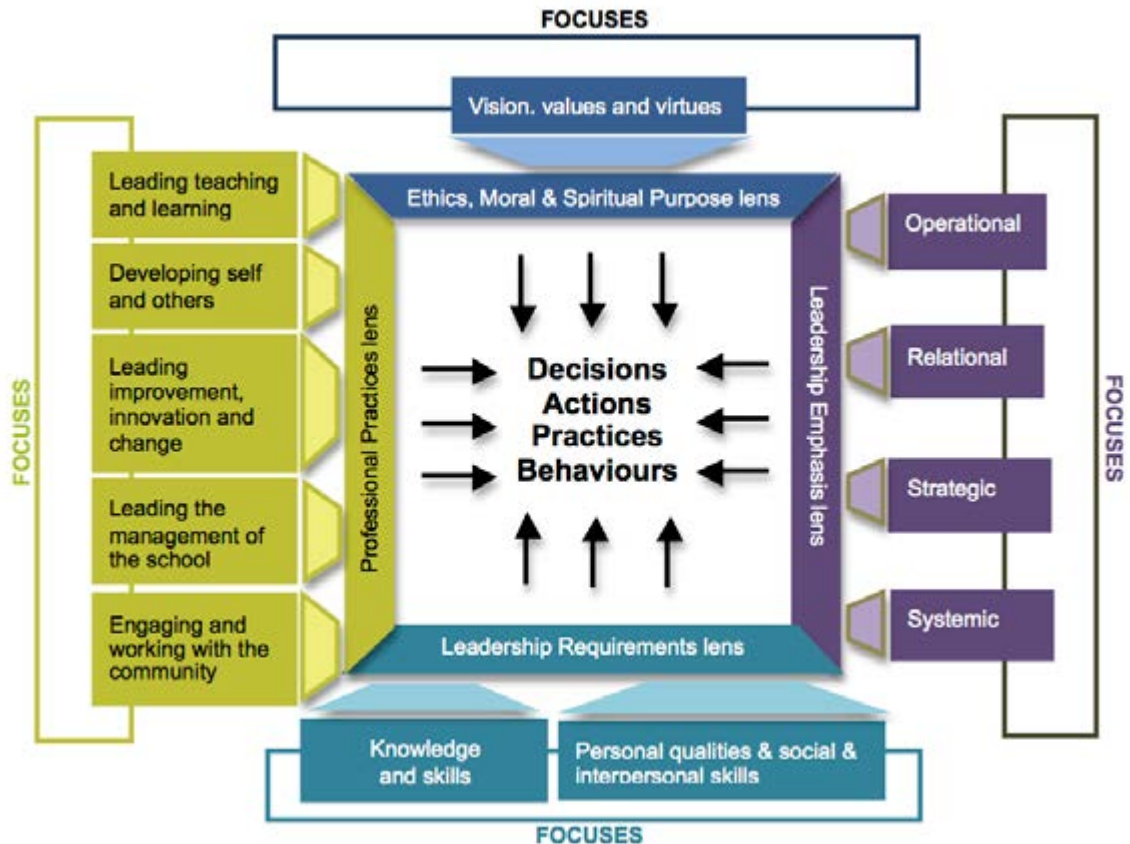
The posited fourth lens, in harmony with the AITSL model, also leads to a set of Leadership Profiles, as displayed in Tables 1a and 1b (See pages 29-31), which show a congruence between values and clear, specific actions. The Leadership Profiles for principals connect with the Lead career stage of the Teacher Ministry Standards 8, 9 and 10 for focus areas 8.1 to 10.6, as delineated in *TEACH Journal of Christian Education* 5(2), 8-14. In a sense, the profiles represent a Weberian *ideal type*, which does not refer to perfect things, morals or ideals that are mandated, but incorporates the common elements of the many phenomena of desirable moral and ethical leadership in CFB schools.

The proposed adaptation does not claim to be or constitute a values-virtues model of leadership. Rather, the approach taken to leadership is an eclectic one, augmenting the AITSL model and underlining the critical importance that values and virtues play in effective, ethical educational leadership.

Also, a perusal of The Standard suggests that axiology is not one of its numerous strengths, i.e. in

“there is a case for a fourth lens — an ethics, moral and spiritual purpose one — through which principals might view their practice.”

Figure 2: Modelling of Australian Professional Standard for Principals (APSP) of Christian Faith-based schools (Adapted from Figure 1 Modelling of the APSP)



terms of moral purpose — what is of value? Under *Leadership Requirements*, AITSL's Standard paints “vision and values” in very broad brushstrokes. Leadership is perceived principally in terms of intellectual, organisational, technical and social competence. The use of a fourth lens should thus assist principals in CFB schools to set their sight in another direction; a new one. The specificity shown in Tables 1a and 1b — an ethics specificity not evident in The Standard — may be too large a

step for some leaders, but it should be noted that ethics commentators in the business world currently do not seem to have a difficulty in this respect, as the following *IVEY Business Journal* article abstract indicates:

The sum of virtues, values and traits equals character. ... For many, however, virtues, values and traits remain indefinable, even elusive. The authors define them; they also de-construct them, in the

Table 1a: Kingdom values, virtues & leadership profiles: The Australian Professional Standard for Principals viewed through a Christian biblical ethics, moral & spiritual purpose lens

Kingdom values and virtues	Kingdom leadership profiles
Examples of typical <i>biblical virtues and values</i> embodied by leaders in Christian faith-based schools	Examples of typical <i>practices and actions</i> of leaders in Christian faith-based schools
Leadership Requirements	
<p>Knowledge & skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependence on divine help and guidance, also human support; a recognition of our human limitations (Dan 1:17; 2Pet 1:5-6; Job 38: 4-41; Prov 3:6; Ps 119:73; Prov 15:22) • Accountability for mental, spiritual, artistic, technological, scientific, financial, inter-personal, and communication aptitudes and talents (Luke 12: 41,48; 1Tim 6:20) • Truth, discernment, and wisdom; these are gained from a study of, reflection on, and obedience to God's word (Prov 2:6; 2Tim 2:15; 3:16-17; James 1:5) • Others (as perceived) <p>Personal qualities, social and interpersonal skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendliness, approachability, sincerity and authenticity (John 15:15; Prov 17:17; Prov. 18:24; John 1:47) • Self-lessness and generosity (Phil 2:7; Luke 6:38; 1Tim 6:18) • Honesty and candour (Phil 4:8; Eph 4:25; 2Cor 6:11) • Courage (Deut 31:6; Josh 1:7; Ps 31:24, Rom 8:31) is an essential characteristic of effective leadership. • Humility (Phil 2:8; Col 3:12; Rom 12:3; 3:23; 1Cor 3:18) • Fidelity and integrity; these are integral to sound and enduring relationships; the recognition of clear ethical boundaries and biblical standards (Matth 5:8) • Self-control (Prov 16:32; Tit 2:12; 1Tim 3:8) • Resilience: the ability to recover from setbacks; to keep going in the face of adversity (Nehemiah 1:1-4; 2:3-5, 8-10; 6:6-9, 15-16) • Others (as perceived) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praying for Spirit-filled knowledge, skills and understanding, courage, patience and perseverance; accepting wise counsel from trusted friends and confidants • Recognising and modelling that God-given abilities and talents are to benefit community and humanity, and not for 'ego-tripping' • Deepening and applying one's knowledge and understanding of Old and New Testament scriptural teaching • Others (as perceived) • Connecting with people in a genuinely warm and friendly manner, listening to expressed perceived concerns & interests • Foregoing prerogatives is following in the footsteps of Jesus. • Truth-telling – done lovingly; a genuine concern for individuals • Acting and serving courageously; moving forward confidently in faith; not being 'risk averse' • Being humble, repudiating superiority and pretentiousness, for we all have sinned, being saved only by God's unmerited grace • Exemplifying healthy bonds/links with professional colleagues, students, and friends while <i>maintaining</i> established 'arenas of safety' in all relationships • Exercising and modelling self-control in all aspects of life • Believing God's promises and facing challenges with staunchness, yet an open mind; <i>improvising</i> to reach goals • Others (as perceived)

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It should be noted that the above values and virtues (and leaders' practices/actions) will also intersect with the categories of Leadership Emphasis — operational, relational, strategic and systemic. Furthermore, they should be matched (according to AITSL's Standard for Principals framework) to the context, career stage and capabilities in, and with which principals exercise leadership.

Table 1b: Kingdom values, virtues & leadership profiles: The Australian Professional Standard for Principals viewed through a *Christian biblical ethics, moral & spiritual purpose lens*

Kingdom values and virtues	Kingdom leadership profiles
Examples of typical biblical virtues and values embodied by leaders in Christian faith-based schools	Examples of typical practices and actions of leaders in Christian faith-based schools
Professional Practices	
Leading teaching & learning*	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry, vocation and commitment (John 3:2; Ps 31:24) • Excellence in leadership & teaching; it is essential that all leaders & teachers support and model the values and mission of the school through best practice in their daily leadership/teaching and in virtuous personal conduct (Dan 6:3; 1Cor 4:1,2; Ex 31:2-6) • Curiosity, co-operation, collaboration, interdependence (Luke 2:46-47; John 4:9, 1Pet 1:10, 1Cor 12:14-25) • Meaning and wholeness in life, vis-à-vis compartmentalisation (Phil 4:9; Luke 10:27; Eccl 12:9-14; Ps 119:105) • Respect; recognition and appreciation of the individual giftedness of all staff and students (1Cor 12:28) • Joy, contentment and a sense of humour (Ps 126:2; 1Tim 6:6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modelling, promoting and advancing a relational school-wide servant-hood teaching ministry; making a difference • Prioritising the employment of leaders & teachers who are: committed, caring, Christians; competent; critical-reflective; collegial; creative; culturally aware; contemporary-workplace-oriented; and change-responsive • Questioning; action-researching; inspiring and applying a team approach and a spirit of fellowship to learning and teaching • Embedding the integration of a Christian worldview in the school's curriculum, learning and teaching, and 'daily life' • Respecting others, recognising and utilising the diversity of God-given gifts of members of the whole school community • Expressing a positive attitude and valuing the privilege of contributing to students' Christian education; seeing the 'lighter' side of life and not taking oneself too seriously
Developing self & others	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service, altruism, compassion and social justice (Gal 5:13; John 6:9; Luke 10:33-34; Micah 6:8) • Fraternity, community, yoke-fellowship (Phil 4:3-4; 1John 1:3) • Discipleship and personal growth; the Spirit's fruit characterises the Christian life (Matth 4:19, Luke 2:52, Gal 5:22) • Stewardship of, diligence in handling resources — physical, financial and human (including health and well being; spiritual retreats) — have been placed 'in trust' with leaders (Luke 16:2) • Discipline and forgiveness; restoration of wrongdoers (Gal 6:1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving others voluntarily; modelling and externalising God's grace; acting equitably • Building 'ministry of teaching' ties with other (particularly Christian) educational leaders/teachers/schools for mutual benefits • Promoting and celebrating students' character development and facilitating their free choice to follow Jesus • Demonstrating wisdom in developing human resources (self and staff competence and qualifications); monitoring financial matters, grounds and property development and maintenance • Counselling and restoring, disciplining (biblical) — when required — which is always redemptive
Leading improvement, innovation & change	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection on, and appraisal of the cultural, social and academic/learning environment in which we learn and live and in which the school operates (Romans 12:2; Dan 1:12-14) • Self-assessment and realistic evaluation that looks at the perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to the school community and its leadership (Gal 6:4) • Foresight — a valuable virtue ('A stitch in time saves nine') (Prov 30:24-25, Gen 41:34-36) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critiquing modern and post-modern claims, beliefs, values, assumptions and current teaching and learning methodologies, with a view to excellence and faithfulness to biblical ideals • Reviewing (involving the school community) the school's mission, goals and programs; its overall performance and progress relative to its sponsoring faith tradition; using Teaching Ministry Standards* to advance staff and student improvement • Acting proactively rather than reactively

“Promoting and celebrating students' character development and facilitating their free choice to follow Jesus”

Leading the management of the school

- **Culture-formation**, as modelled by Jesus and the apostle Paul; it forms the foundation stone of a Christian faith-based school (Luke 10:27; Phil 4:9)
- **Trust(worthiness) and acceptance**; important building blocks of strong and loving Christian school communities (John 4:7-9; Mk 10:14; Col 1:9)
- **Nurture and care**; characteristics of healthy schools — where people are enabled to contribute, learn, and are loved and valued (John 21:15; Matth 18:12)
- **Empowerment, encouragement, inclusivity**; ensuring **continuity** of leadership; 'power shared, is power multiplied' (Ex 18:18-22; 1Kings 19:19-21; 2Tim 1:3-4; Ruth 2:10)
- **Responsibility** for and **ownership** of actions and decisions (Jer 13:20; Gal 6:7; Ez 3:16-19; James 5:16)
- **Transparency and openness**, in decision-making processes and actions (Matth 5:37; John 18:20; Acts 5:1-4; 2Pet 1:16; Acts 15:4-31)
- **Goodwill and reconciliation** in cases of discord or conflict (Matth 5:9, 23-24; Rom 12:18; 1Cor 6:2,4,5)
- **Perceptiveness and sensitivity** in relation to the context of learning and leading (Acts 17: 22-31; 1Cor 9:19-23)
- **Discernment** in regards to the school's 'fruitage' and mission (1Kings 3:9; Heb 5:14)

Engaging & working with the community

- **Gratitude, thankfulness**; awareness of the source of our benefits, joys, successes and achievements (Ps 26:7; Eph 5:20; Ph'm 4,5)
- **Witness and proclamation to and worship with the community** (Isa 43:10)
- **Others (as perceived)**

- **Building, developing, advancing and practising** a culture of love of God, self, and others; also a love for continuous learning and spiritual growth
- **Creating and developing** relational trust; believing in and supporting and praying for each other
- **Sponsoring, enabling and supporting** the school's program of pastoral care and well-being
- **Sharing** power/authority with, and **mentoring** others
- **Evaluating** outcomes; **learning** from achievements, mistakes, or even failures; **engaging** in continuous learning from and about effective administrative and teaching practices
- **Practising** organisational and personal transparency, while preserving confidentiality; **being** open to new ideas
- **Mediating; restoring** organisational and/or inter-personal harmony
- **Contextualising** learning and leading; **adapting** to the socio-economic and cultural environment without engaging in syncretism and compromising the mission of the school
- **Monitoring and ensuring** that the outcomes of the school's policies & practices align with its mission
- **Expressing** thanks, publicly, for God's blessings and gifts; and **affirming** community contributors and helpers
- **Articulating** the mission and ethos of the school, from the perspective of the school's sponsoring faith tradition
- **Others (as perceived)**

“there is the real danger that Christian schools become driven by market forces; defined by national standards ... and formed by culture rather than acting to redeem culture”

It should be noted that the above values and virtues (and leaders' practices/actions) will also intersect with the categories of **Leadership Emphasis** — *operational, relational, strategic and systemic*. Furthermore, they should be *matched* (according to AITSL's Standard for Principals framework) to the *context, career stage and capabilities* in, and with which principals exercise leadership.

* See *TEACH Journal of Christian Education*, 8(5), 8-14

process demonstrating how character fuels people in their personal journey to become better leaders.³²

Similarly, there are some voices in academia that argue: “Character, not charisma is the critical measure of leadership excellence.”³³

Furthermore, the additional lens finds support in the 2008 *Melbourne Declaration*. The landmark declaration upholds the development of personal values; attributes such as honesty, resilience; empathy and respect for others; an expectation of acting with moral and ethical integrity, and an understanding of “*the spiritual, moral and aesthetic dimensions of life*.”³⁴ The lens thus serves as a reminder for the CFB schools sector of its *raison d'être* and the need for each school to have a clear mission and philosophy. Without these, according

to educational administrator Dr Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, there is the real danger that Christian schools “become driven by market forces; defined by national standards and accrediting agencies; and formed by culture rather than acting to redeem culture through the power of Christ.”³⁵

The Leadership Profiles, ‘refracted’ through the use of the fourth lens, largely speak for themselves. However, following their tabling, various observations, comments and explanations, some general and others specific, may be warranted to enhance clarity and comprehension.

Schools — learning communities living in relationship

Using the fourth lens intentionally not only accentuates the relational side of learning and

teaching, as pointed out by Professor Viviane Robinson: “Effective leaders do not get the relationships right and then tackle the educational challenges — they incorporate both sets of constraints into their problem solving;”³⁶ Also, in rightly incorporating the ethical, moral and spiritual dimension, the lens provides a wider perspective. Through the Leadership Profiles, the fourth lens shines a light on what it means to be human — to live in relationship with others (not forgetting God and the environment) — as underlined, for instance, by two educators; an author and a principal, respectively:

The quality of the relationship that students have in class with their peers and teachers is important to their success in school.³⁷

Positive educator and student relationships outweigh content knowledge. Content knowledge can always be learned and mastered. Relationships are built on respect and trust.³⁸

Practices should always be in congruence with claimed values, as the comments of a 2014 NSW Higher School Certificate student — whose school ranked in the top 40 in the state — reveal:

[The school] Manufactures students to only care about careers, nothing else matters to them but good grades. Not at all a nurturing environment. It's the kids who top the class who receive help. The rest drop right through the system. Unfortunate waste of what could be one of the best schools on the central coast [sic].³⁹

The student's comments should be seen in the wider context of the 2015 PISA⁴⁰ results. Australia has again dropped several places on some measures — behind Kazakhstan! Increasingly, there is a chorus of influential voices lamenting that Australia, inevitably, will be “left behind” in the educational Olympic gold medal count, as if scripted in some imaginary dispensationalist education narrative.

Ubiquitous comparisons, particularly with south-east Asian countries, rarely provide a complete picture. The data with the attendant rankings can be misleading, to say the least. Rarely is there mention of the human cost of rankings and test cultures. Conversely, wise principals always are aware that the unceasing quest for success, when narrowly defined, is harming young people.⁴¹

A different drummer

Principals in CFB schools participate in a different narrative when they view their leadership practice through the fourth lens, and act accordingly. In embracing kingdom values and virtues, principals are committing to kingdom actions and practices in

keeping with their leadership ministry. They follow a different drummer on several major fronts:

Identity

Their *identity* and ground of their being is found in Jesus Christ, not in their knowledge and competence, important though these may be. A real danger exists that performance expectations and continual evaluation can result in identity formation that is dependent on comparison with pre-determined measures or standards based on unexamined assumptions.

Role

In their *role* as stewards, principals in CFB schools are entrusted with diverse responsibilities. These include human, physical and financial resources. As leaders they are expected to further the Kingdom of God, as they nurture, develop and grow their school communities. In so doing there is the ‘temptation’ that principals might see themselves as educational entrepreneurs rather than as servant-stewardship leaders. While there is a valid case for financial understanding and management, they may be attracted to buy into a business model for their school, replete with brand-type marketing and slick, feel-good slogans. CFB schools are faith projects (where the Gifts and Fruit of the Spirit are in evidence) and should never be confused with business enterprises.

Service

A calling to *service* is an integral part of values-virtues leadership that requires integrity and humility as manifested by Jesus' actions and words: “... the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many” (Matth 20:28, NIV). When a leader “who beautifully, though not perfectly exemplifies the life of a disciple of Jesus, we get the overwhelming desire to live such a life ourselves”.⁴²

Competence and expertise

For committed Christians, *competence* and *expertise*, in the form of abilities, accomplishments, expertness and skills, are means to an end — to serve the community — and acknowledge them as God's gifts. They may be developed to a high degree and accomplish much good.

Status and recognition

Pride goes before a fall, according to the book of Proverbs. Pride is probably the ‘genesis’ of all sin and perhaps the most destructive of all. Respect of persons should always be mutual. On the other hand, superiority, condescension or high-handedness have no place in CFB schools. Leaders should always be mindful that at the foot of the cross, all are equal, in case anyone may be enticed by *status* and *recognition*.

Power and empowerment

Power with others, and self-control accomplishes much more than power over and control of others. Thus power shared, is power multiplied. These principles from the secular and spiritual realms (Prov. 25:28, Matth. 28:18, Acts 1:8) are applicable

“There is a ‘temptation’ that principals might see themselves as educational entrepreneurs rather than servant-stewardship leaders.”

to Christian learning communities. As leaders, principals have the task to *empower* and mentor others in their learning community.

Culture and conduct

Culture and *conduct* are fundamental elements of CFB schools; elements that wise leaders will develop and maintain. An effective principal will foster, build on and shape the time-honoured and cherished narrative — the collective memories — that invigorate and motivate the school community to live out its mission. Similarly, the spiritual truism of, “belonging, believing and being”, will characterise the conduct of leaders and led.

Structures and communication

Effective principals will put in place organisational *structures* and *communication* channels that are in harmony with their CFB learning communities’ shared values. These are made visible not only in policy documents, directives and digital newsletters, but also in the lives of school community members. Furthermore, when the scriptural principle of contributive structuring (1Cor 12:14-27) is applied to schools’ various endeavours, principals should discover that the whole will always be greater than the sum of the individual parts.

Concluding thoughts

The proposal of using an ethics, moral and spiritual purpose lens to view the Australian Professional Standard for Principals has resulted in complementary, distinctive Leadership profiles. These should not be seen as dictated outcomes for leaders in CFB schools. Rather, they should be regarded as a challenge for *reflection*, a mirror for deep personal *self-examination* and/or an avenue for *renewal*.

It is hoped and it follows that principals in Christian faith-based schools are now challenged to ‘interpret’ this document, applying their own distinctive understanding of what comprises meaningful, holistic, values-virtues leadership practice, as servants and stewards to their own learning communities. **TEACH**

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