8-2018

School Leadership Aspiration: Differences in Perception of Drivers and Barriers across Hierarchical Levels

Peter Williams
Avondale College, peter.williams@avondale.edu.au

Peter Morey
Avondale College, peter.morey@avondale.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: https://research.avondale.edu.au/teach

 Part of the Education Commons

School leadership aspiration: Differences in perception of drivers and barriers across hierarchical levels

Peter Williams
Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW
Peter.Williams@avondale.edu.au

Peter Morey
Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW
peter.morey@avondale.edu.au

Abstract

This article discusses the leadership crisis looming in schools. With fewer people aspiring to take on school leadership, school education systems must consider the drivers and barriers of school leadership aspiration. This article describes the perceptions of respondents from three hierarchical levels within a faith-based education system as to the factors influencing their willingness or unwillingness to consider school leadership positions. This research explored survey data, both quantitative and qualitative, relating to school leadership aspirations and influences with regard to applying for school leadership positions.

Five factors were found to influence the unwillingness of respondents to consider school leadership positions, while seven factors were identified to influence willingness to consider school leadership positions. Additionally, four influence factors were identified which, if significantly improved, would act to increase respondent aspiration and thus influence their willingness to consider school leadership positions in the future.

Introduction

There is a leadership crisis developing in schools internationally (Bennett, Carpenter & Hill, 2011). The 'Baby Boomer' generation are retiring from leadership and principal positions, and the evidence suggests the next generations are becoming increasingly less willing to take on leadership positions (Bennett, Carpenter & Hill, 2011; Fink, 2010; Marks, 2013). The global picture of this 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 leadership crisis, coupled with the lack of aspirations, has placed school leadership as an important topic area for further research, with education systems having a need to find ways to attract, recruit or develop, qualified and well-prepared applicants for vacant school leadership positions. This would suggest there may also be a potential problem in the filling of leadership within the Adventist Schools Australia (ASA) educational context, an Australian faith-based education system with over 50 schools and 13,000 students nationwide (Adventist Schools Australia, 2017). There is a need for a study into the present situation in terms of ASA employee aspirations and the drivers and barriers to school leadership aspirations in order to address any potential shortfall which may threaten ASA system sustainability (Renihan, 2012). This research focuses on these areas, from the perspective of three different hierarchical levels within the ASA education system: classroom teachers, school-based administrators, and system-based administrators.

Literature review

Historically, the group most likely to replace those leaving school principal positions has been middle leaders, given their exhibited leadership and current

> *Research … suggests that there exists an unwillingness of assistant and vice principals, deputy heads and leading teachers to aspire to be in the principal role.*

roles. Research in a number of different education contexts, both overseas and within Australia, suggests 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, Duignan & Duncan, 2002; Fink, 2011; Lacey, 2003; Lacey & Gronn, 2005). While the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in 2015 indicated 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, Weldon, Rowley, Murphy & McMillan, 2014).

Other research from the Australian educational context supports the notion that there is a shortage of principal applicants (Barty, Thomson, Blackmore & Sachs, 2005; Bush, 2011; d'Arbon, Duignan & Duncan, 2002; Lacey & Gronn, 2005; Lacey, 2006; MacBeath, 2011). 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".

Research indicates a desire for a better life balance is a major reason identified for the lack of school leadership aspirations, as many potential applicants for principal roles believe the job responsibilities to be onerous (Baker, Punswick & Belt, 2010; Fink, 2010). As Fink (2010) 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" (p. 69). Concerns relating to the complexity of the role of a principal have also contributed to questions about its attractiveness, along with compensation that is not seen as commensurate with the work, contributing to the decline in the number of school leadership applicants (Bengston, Zepeda & Parylo, 2013; d'Arbon, Duignan, Dwyer & Goodwin, 2001; Kruger, 2008; Peters-Hawkins, Reed & Kingsberry, 2018).

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) suggests that "the status in the community of a school principal is another potential catalyst for aspirations to the role"(p. 56). Simon 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" (p. 56). Simon also suggests that the impact of current leadership can be significant on the aspiring leader's growth, with the aspirant

> *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.*

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" (p. 62). Townsend and McBeath (2011) completed 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.

A number of Australian researchers have illustrated that while some beginning teachers consider themselves to be future school leaders, the numbers who apply for vacancies varies considerably (Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan & Neidhart, 2003; d'Arbon, Duignan & Duncan, 2002). There is some evidence in the literature that age impacts an individual's tendency to pursue school administrative positions, with both younger and older individuals less likely to apply than middle-aged individuals (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Walker & Kwan, 2009). This also links to the idea that age, or years of teaching experience, impacts on the decision or intention to seek administrative positions. Lacey (2003) found that the length of teaching experience appeared to affect 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. This same 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 confirmed by the 'Staff in Australian Schools' national survey (McKenzie et al., 2014).

Research has suggested 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 (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). However, there is no doubt that "Making the route to the top a swifter process would render it more appealing to younger teachers" (National College for School Leadership, 2007, p. 7). The imperative here is to provide an increased level

of support to these younger teachers to inspire a willingness to give consideration to continuing their leadership aspirations, especially given that "few teachers begin their careers with a vision of future leadership roles" (Quinn, Haggard & Ford, 2006, p. 55).

Methodology

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). This study explores survey data, both quantitative and qualitative, relating to aspirations of and influences on three hierarchical levels of ASA employees with regards to applying for school leadership positions: Classroom teachers, School-based Administrators and System-based Administrators.

The study adopted three specific questions to direct the research:

1. What are the aspirations of ASA employees with respect to school leadership positions?
2. What factors influence ASA employees' **unwillingness** to apply for school leadership positions?
3. What factors influence ASA employees' **willingness** to apply for school leadership positions?

The initial survey structure was based on previous research undertaken by d'Arbon, Duignan, Duncan, Dwyer and Goodwin (2001) in the 'Planning for the Future Leadership of Catholic Schools in New South Wales' project at the Australian Catholic University. The survey was adapted to the ASA context and then piloted to ensure its efficacy in this context. The survey instrument consisted of a questionnaire divided into sections. These sections included demographic items, career aspiration fixed choice items, and willingness/unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions open-ended items. Emails were sent to 1173 ASA employees with an online link to complete the survey via SurveyMonkey. This online link was left open for a one-month time frame. At the completion of the one-month (and subsequently three follow up emails), 504 responses were completed, representing a 42.9% response rate.

The data from the survey was then exported into the statistical analysis software program IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 22. Descriptive statistics were found for the fixed choice items and then further analysis using t-tests and Analysis of Variance located areas of difference in aspirations between respective demographic categories. Following

the general principles of thematic analysis the open-ended items were explored to gain a greater understanding of what factors influence ASA employees' unwillingness/willingness to apply for school leadership positions. In thematic analysis, the textual data is first coded, then these codes are refined into a number of smaller categories and finally, nested categories are mapped into substantive themes (Byrne, 2017).

Findings / results

Sample

Of the 400 ASA employee respondents that fully completed the survey, 64.5% were female and 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.

Present aspiration levels

The data from the quantitative component of the survey indicated 6.5% of respondents had applied for a school leadership position in the past but would 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. Those who indicated that they had applied for a school leadership position in the past (6.7%) were unsure if they would in the future. Those who indicated that they had not yet applied for a school leadership position (19%), envisaged doing so in the future. Only 1.8% indicated that they were actively seeking (active aspirants) a school leadership position.

In terms of gender differences, 74.7% of females compared to 51.1% of males indicated that they had never applied for a school leadership position and did not envisage doing so in the future. However, of those who indicated that they had not yet applied for a school leadership position, 13.4% of the females envisaged doing so in the future, compared to 28.9% of males.

Aspiration to apply for school leadership positions followed the trend that the willingness to apply for leadership positions decreased as age increased. The 'desire to seek leadership' data indicated that 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, had not yet applied for a school leadership position, but envisaged 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 were actively seeking a school leadership position.

> *Those who indicated that they had applied for a school leadership position in the past (6.7%) were unsure if they would in the future.*

Aspiration influences

Thematic analysis of the open-ended questions in the survey relating to the respective hierarchical levels perceptions of the factors that influenced them to apply or not to apply for school leadership positions, was undertaken.

Similarities across hierarchical levels

There were *five factors that influenced the unwillingness* to apply for leadership positions identified by all hierarchical levels:

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

Seven factors that influence a willingness to apply for school leadership positions were identified. It is important to note that within these seven willingness factors there exists three distinct factor groupings *(Contribution factors, Christian Worldview factors and Potential Willingness factors)*. One of these, the Potential Willingness factors, are factors which would likely become willingness factors if there was improvement beyond what presently exists in these areas (System Support, Professional Support, System Staffing, Remuneration).

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

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

Potential Willingness factors
- Enhanced support from multiple education system levels (System Support).
- Professional opportunities to enhance the

leadership capacity of potential school leaders (Professional Support).
- Involvement in school staffing processes (System Staffing).
- Remuneration that is perceived to match the responsibility of the school leadership position (Remuneration).

Differences across hierarchical levels

Unwillingness factors
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. 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*".

For the school-based administrators, however, this lack of support included both an internal and external focus, and an emphasis on training, particularly when in the leadership role. Responses 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 both taking on, and while in such 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 perceived that schools were subjected to too many levels of authority, some of which took 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. Comments such as "*I want to spend more time with my family, not less*" (Classroom Teacher) were common across all

> *Within the Lack of Educational Support factor, classroom teachers identified a lack of training and preparation for leadership roles.*

hierarchical levels reflecting on the role of family influences. Likewise, for the Work-Life Balance factor, it was common for respondents within each hierarchical level to lament the extraordinary amount of "*time*" and "*size of the role*" (System-Based Administrator). Role Disconnect, "*No longer engaged with students on a day-to-day basis*" (School-Based Administrator) was also seen to influence their unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions to a near equivalent extent by all hierarchical levels.

The perception that the leader has to operate within restricting church structures and expectations (Religious Influences), were largely identified as influences on the unwillingness to apply for school leadership positions by classroom teachers and school-based administrators, 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.

Willingness factors
For the willingness factors, there were considerable hierarchical level differences. For the Contribution 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 in leadership 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, as illustrated in the following comments: "*Enjoy driving the whole program*" and "*Strategically directing school future direction*".

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 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 for 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.

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)

> "*classroom teachers and the school-based administrators saw that … emphasised identification of skills and selection of the best candidate, would increase their willingness to apply*"
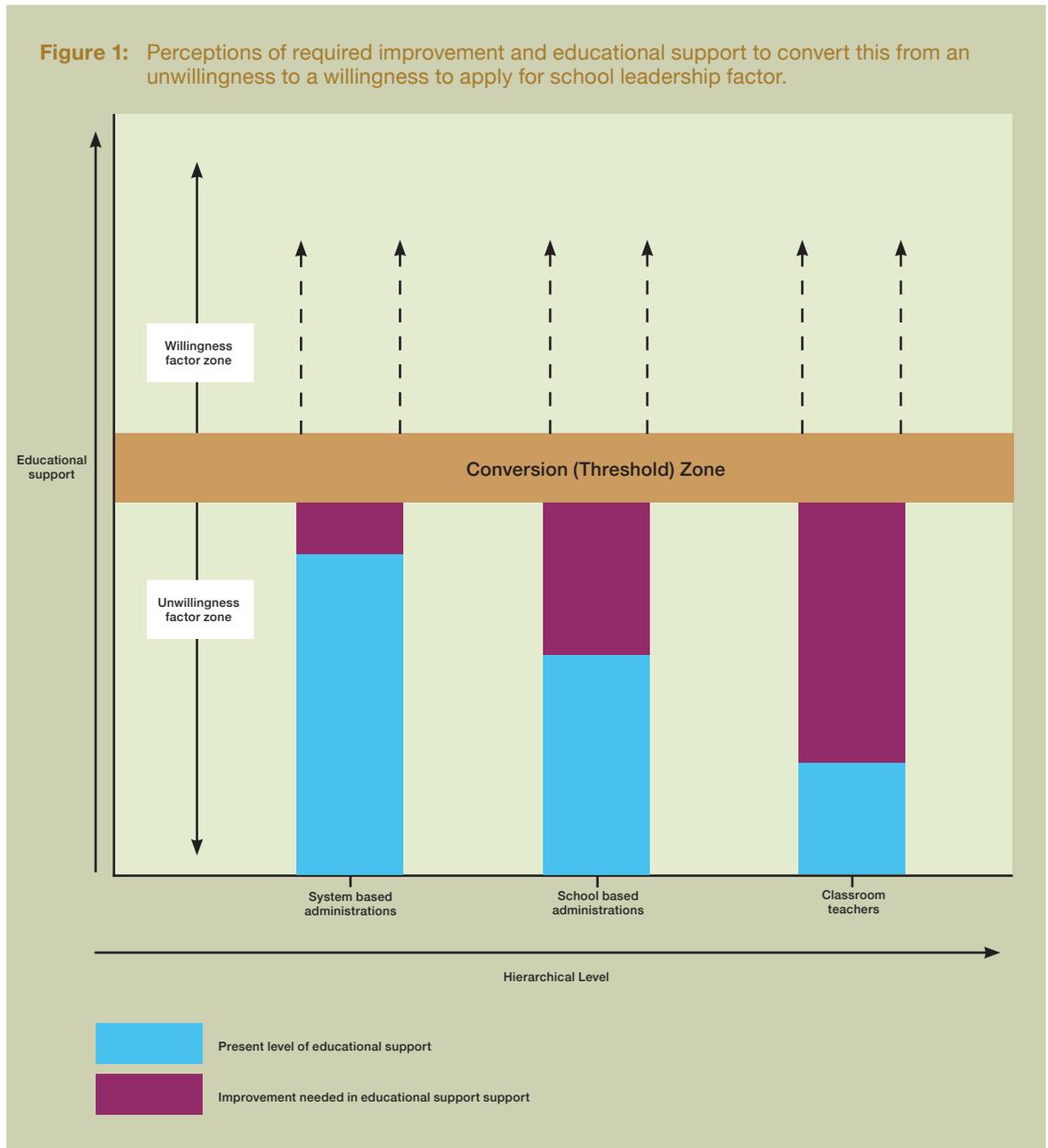
Lack of autonomy, 6) Lack of ongoing training and development, 7) Unsupportive school environments, and 8) System based politics. What is noticed is that these components are to a large extent parallel with the Potential Willingness factors:1) Professional Support, 2) System Support, 3) System Staffing and 4) Remuneration. Therefore, because of the similarities between the Lack of Educational Support factor and the Potential Willingness factors, the manner in which the Potential Willingness factors impact the respective hierarchical level groupings

would also be reflected in the impact on the Educational Support factor across these groupings.

This 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, however, is that within each

> *a 'threshold level' exists; a level of educational support that converts this unwillingness factor to a willingness factor, and then aspiration into application.*

Figure 1: Perceptions of required improvement and educational support to convert this from an unwillingness to a willingness to apply for school leadership factor.

hierarchical level, there was consistency of responses in terms of improvement needed to the 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 (see Figure 1), to convert this unwillingness factor, to a willingness to consider educational leadership factor. It is clear that different hierarchical levels saw the change necessary to reach this threshold differently. The system-based administrators perceived that the present levels of educational support were near to this threshold level. In contrast, the school-based administrators, and to an even greater extent the classroom teachers, perceived 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.

Discussion

As noted in the findings, the data indicates that 1.2% of ASA employees aged less than 30, and 3.0% of ASA employees aged 31-40, were currently applying for ASA school leadership positions; consistent with national figures (ABS, 2015; McKenzie et al., 2014). This suggests future leadership requirements would not be able to be met under the conditions prevailing at the time of the investigation. There were, however, 25.9% and 24.8% of the less than aged 30 and 31-40 age groups respectively, who expressed an interest in applying for leadership positions in the future, representing key groups who need to be convinced that it is desirable to aspire to school leadership. Additionally, of those ASA employees intending to apply for school leadership positions in the future, 68% were male, compared to only 32% being female.

This appears in contrast to the national figures which indicated an increasing prevalence of females in school leadership positions, with studies finding that 65.2% of all primary school leadership positions were held by females, and 47.8% of all secondary school leadership positions (McKenzie et al., 2014). This gender discrepancy may need to be addressed within the ASA education system. 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, as not all teachers begin their career aspiring to leadership (Quinn, Haggard & Ford, 2006).

For these ASA employees across all hierarchical levels, firstly, the main barriers to school leadership aspirations were Work-Life Imbalance, followed by Role Disconnect and Family Life impact, resonating

with other Australian national research studies (McKenzie et al., 2014). To a lesser extent, the perceived restrictions brought about by working within a faith-based education system was also seen as a barrier to school leadership aspirations, a finding supported from within studies in the Australian Catholic education system (d'Arbon, Duignan, Dwyer & Goodwin, 2001). Secondly, a perceived Lack of Educational Support was seen as a barrier, but there were considerable differences across the hierarchical levels as to the extent of influence level of this lack of educational support.

All hierarchical levels agreed that there was a need for improvement in Educational Support. However, the degree of improvement in educational support levels was different across the hierarchical levels. The classroom teachers may have perceived many inhibiting issues with limited understanding of the broad organisational constraints informing principals and system administrators opinions. By contrast system administrators, and even principals, are distanced from the classroom teacher's microlevel engagement with stakeholders.

For all hierarchical levels, the most significant influence on their leadership aspirations was their desire to make a positive difference - an internal driver - in their respective hierarchical contexts. For the system-based administrators, this internal driver was perceived to be essentially large enough to overcome the perception of there being a lack of educational support. In contrast, for classroom teachers and school-based administrators, the desire to Make a Difference driver was not considered large enough to overcome the perceived lack of educational support and be motivated to apply for school leadership positions.

This research relating to barriers and drivers of school leadership aspiration provides the ASA education system with potential opportunities to increase leadership aspirations in their employees. But this study also acknowledges that these associated changes to remove barriers would be difficult because it would involve changing elements of the present ASA culture, which is difficult to achieve (Schein, 2016).

Conclusion

There is a concerning lack of leadership aspiration within ASA employees, and this study has identified a number of drivers and barriers to leadership aspiration that need to be addressed in order to assure ASA leadership sustainability into the future. The data indicated that all ASA employees perceived that a desire to positively contribute to the school community was the single most important influence on their desire to take up a school leadership

" for classroom teachers and school-based admini- strators, the desire to Make a Difference … was not … large enough to overcome the perceived lack of educational support "

position. All hierarchical levels, however, recognised that Work-Life Imbalance, Lack of Educational Support, Family Influences, Role Disconnect, and unrealistic Religious (Influence) expectations acted as barriers to this desire to pursue school leadership roles. Even though all hierarchical levels agreed on the nature of the drivers and barriers to leadership, there were considerable differences in the specifics and levels of some of these factors, across the respective hierarchical levels.

Even though this study identified there were relative differences in improvement needed in Educational Support to convert this from a barrier to a driver across hierarchical levels, this study was limited in that it was unable to determine the exact nature and level of the improvement needed. 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.

The difference in perspectives across hierarchical levels relating to perceptions of barriers and drivers of school leadership aspirations would suggest that unless the ASA education system consults widely with their employees from all hierarchical levels, it is unlikely that the ASA education system can effectively increase school leadership aspiration, perpetuating within ASA the leadership crisis also being experienced in other educational contexts. **TEACH**

> *Even though all hierarchical levels agreed on the nature of the drivers and barriers to leadership, there were considerable differences in the specifics and levels of … these factors*

References

Adventist Schools Australia. (2017). Retrieved 4th October, 2017 from http://asa.adventist.edu.au

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2015). *Schools, Australia, 2015*. Retrieved 27th September, 2016, http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS

Baker, B., Punswick, E., & Belt, C. (2010). School leadership stability, principal moves, and departures: Evidence from Missouri. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 46*, 523-557.

Barty, K., Thomson, P., Blackmore, J., & Sachs, J. (2005). Unpacking the issues: Researching the shortage of school principals in two states in Australia. *The Australian Educational Researcher, 32*(3), 1-18.

Bengtson, E., Zepeda, S.J., & Parylo, O. (2013). School systems' practices of controlling socialization during principal succession: Looking through the lens of an organizational socialization theory. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 41*(2), 143-164.

Bennett, F., Carpenter, V., & Hill, M. (2011). Passing the baton: Principal succession in schools. *Leading and Managing, 17*(1), 28-44.

Browne-Ferrigno, T. (2003). Becoming a principal: Role conception, initial socialization, role-identity transformation, purposeful engagement. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 39*(4), 468-503.

Bush, T. (2011). Succession planning and leadership development for school principals: Comparing English and South African approaches. *Compare, 41*(6), 785-800.

Byrne, D. (2017). What is thematic analysis? *Project Planner*. doi:10.4135/9781526408570.

Carlin, P., d'Arbon, T., Dorman, D., Duignan, P., & Neidhart, H. (2003). *Leadership succession for Catholic schools in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania* (Final Report). Strathfield: Australian Catholic University.

d'Arbon, T., Duignan, P., Dwyer, J., & Goodwin, K. (2001). *Leadership succession in Catholic schools in New South Wales: A research project on behalf of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales*. Strathfield: Australian Catholic University, School of Educational Leadership.

d'Arbon, T., Duignan, P., & Duncan, D. J. (2002). Planning for future leadership of schools: An Australian study. *Journal of Educational Administration, 40*(5), 468-485.

Fink, D. (2010). *The succession challenge: Building and sustaining leadership capacity through succession management*. London: Sage.

Fink, D. (2011). Pipelines, pools and reservoirs: Building leadership capacity for sustained improvement. *Journal of Educational Administration, 49*(6), 670-684.

Fink, D., & Brayman, C. (2004). Principal's succession and educational change. *Journal of Educational Administration, 42*(4/5), 431-449.

Kruger, M. L. (2008). School leadership, sex and gender: Welcome to difference. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 11*(2), 155-168.

Lacey, K. (2003). Avoiding the principalship. *Prime Focus, 32*, 20-24.

Lacey, K. (2006). Redesigning leadership. *Independent Education, 36*(3), 22-23.

Lacey, K., & Gronn, P. (2005). I'd rather be driving a bus. *Report from the ARC Discovery Project, Principal Aspiration and Recruitment amidst Disengagement*. Melbourne: Monash University.

MacBeath, J. (2011). No lack of principles: Leadership development in England and Scotland. *School Leadership and Management, 31*(2), 105-121.

Marks, W. (2013). Leadership succession and retention: It's time to get serious about a principal retention policy. *Leading & Managing, 19*(2), 1-14.

McKenzie, P., Weldon, P., Rowley, G., Murphy, M., & McMillan, J. (2014). *Staff in Australia's schools 2013: Main report on the survey*. Camberwell: Australian Council for Educational Research.

National College for School Leadership. (2007). *Leadership succession: An overview*. Nottingham: National College for School Leadership.

Peters-Hawkins, A. L., Reed, L. C., & Kingsberry, F. (2018). Dynamic leadership succession: Strengthening urban principal succession planning. *Urban Education, 53*(1), 26-54.

Quinn, C. L., Haggard, C. S., & Ford, B. A. (2006). Preparing new teachers for leadership roles: A model in four phases. *School Leadership and Management, 26*(1), 55-68.

Renihan, P. J. (2012). Leadership succession for tomorrow's schools. *Social and Behavioural Sciences, 55*, 138-157.

Schein, E. H. (2016). *Organisational culture and leadership* (5th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Simon, S. (2015). Fire in the belly or rocks in the head? Why do some teachers dream of becoming a school principal? *Leading & Managing, 21*(1), 53-68.

Teasdale-Smith, W. (2008). The best job in the world with some of the worst days imaginable. *Report for Australian Secondary Principals' Association*. Retrieved from www.aspa.asn.au/

Thompson, M. N., & Dahling, J. J. (2010). Image theory and career aspirations: Indirect and interactive effects of status-related variables. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 77*, 21-29.

Townsend, T., & MacBeath, J. (Eds.) (2011). *International Handbooks of Education*. The Netherlands: Springer.

Walker, A., & Kwan, P. (2009). Linking professional, school, demographic, and motivational factors to desire for principalship. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 45*, 590-615.

Author information

Peter Williams is a Lecturer and Course Convenor in the Avondale Business School.

Peter Morey is a Senior Lecturer and Course Convenor for the Masters Program at Avondale with expanding interest in mixed methods research.