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School leader identification: Perceptions of Australian faith-based education system employees

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Abstract

This article aims to contribute to the literature on school leadership identification. It adopts an Australian faith-based education system case study to explore classroom teacher and school-based administrator perceptions of both current and future school leadership identification practices. This research utilised a qualitative research design, adopting semi-structured interviews to collect employee perceptions. The respondents identify six areas of importance for school leadership identification. These include: 1) defining what constitutes excellence at classroom, school, and system levels of leadership; 2) formalising school leadership identification processes; 3) conversing with early career teachers around school leadership aspirations; 4) improving processes to communicate interest in school leadership roles; 5) heightened levels of communication between school principals and system administrators regarding high potential teacher leaders; and 6) providing school-based opportunities for school leadership development.

Introduction

The literature around school leadership identification is somewhat of a nebulous space. One consistent feature, however, is that the attributes a teacher possesses can be used to identify their potential to succeed in teacher leadership roles (Barnes, 2010; Killion et al., 2016; McCall, 1998). While much has been made of the 'leadership crisis' that exists in educational settings (Bennett et al, 2011; Fink, 2010; Fink & Brayman, 2004; Teasdale-Smith, 2008), the literature remains clear that identifying teacher leaders is key to educational system sustainability. This is because teacher leaders positively impact

teaching and learning programs, improve educational climate, create positive conditions where students can achieve, and contribute strongly to school development and improvement efforts (Bowman, 2004; Cranston, 2000; Killion et al., 2016).

In Australia, the NSW Department of Education defines a future school leader as "An identified teacher leader who is prepared to undertake a leadership development program" (2020a, p. 2). While much of the school leadership identification research lacks for clarity around exactly how future school leaders and teacher leaders are systematically identified. It is evident that effective education systems have the need to be continuously identifying teachers that have high potential for school leadership, and to be planning and providing the necessary leadership development training and opportunities to assist their preparation for school leadership positions.

Previous research in the faith-based education system that is the context of this research paper has identified that school leadership aspirations are at low levels, with only 1.8% of system-wide education staff indicating they were actively seeking school leadership positions (Williams & Morey, 2018). In light of such low levels of active aspiration, the question has been raised 'How does this faith-based education system identify future school leaders?'. The purpose of this article is to explore the perceptions of current and future leadership identification processes held by classroom teachers and school administrators in an Australian faith-based education system. It will outline a number of key considerations that may assist in the future identification of school teacher leaders.

Literature review

Teacher leadership is the term used to describe teachers "whose sphere of influence extends beyond themselves and their own students and impacts positively at a year or stage, school or even a system level" (NSW Education, 2020c). These teacher leaders encourage and influence their colleagues to broaden and enhance their teaching and learning

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practices by imparting their knowledge, skills and experiences (Lumpkin et al., 2014; Snoek, 2014; Wasley, 1991).

In literature exploring teacher leader attributes, Snoek (2014), described teacher leaders as those demonstrating “specific skills and knowledge related to building trust with colleagues, understanding organizational context and dynamics, managing change processes, supporting adult learning, designing curricula, and participating in action research” (p. 20). Collaboration has also been a hallmark of teacher leaders, acting as change agents to help improve educational practice by working collaboratively with peers (Lumpkin et al., 2014; Muijs & Harris, 2003). McCall’s (1998) research outlined 11 characteristics that may be used to identify teacher leadership potential (cited in Creasy et al., 2004, p.47).

Table 1: McCall’s (1998) teacher leadership potential characteristics

Teacher leadership potential characteristics	
• seeks opportunities to learn	• is insightful – sees things from new angles
• with integrity	• has the courage to take risks
• adapts to cultural differences	• seeks and uses feedback
• is committed to making a difference	• learns from mistakes
• seeks broad business knowledge	• is open to criticism
• brings out the best in people	

In the teacher aspirations literature, Townsend and MacBeath (2011) performed a study across 60 different countries with the findings emphasising that school leadership must be attainable to young, aspiring leaders. It is important that aspiring leaders are provided opportunities within their school setting in order to facilitate opportunities for growth and development. Lacey (2003) found that the length of teaching experience appeared to affect career aspirations, as teachers with less than five years’ experience were more likely to aspire to the role of principal, while those with more than ten years’ experience are more likely to want to remain in the classroom. Lacey’s research 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.

A body of literature also exists that explores formal and informal school leadership roles. Whilst teachers may exhibit leadership in a number of differing ways, some teacher leader roles are formalised and involve specific responsibilities, while others take on more informal roles which emerge as these teachers work alongside and interact with their teacher peers (Fitzgerald et al., 2006). Formal leadership roles are generally appointed through an official selection process and recognised with an official title and clear parameters, whereas informal leadership positions involve the delegation of leadership tasks in an unofficial capacity. These informal leadership roles provide teachers with the opportunity to develop their leadership skills, however where they are not supported or provided with the relevant training and guidance it can be seen that it can also dishearten future leaders. As a result, the teacher can be left feeling overwhelmed and discouraged from nominating for a formal leadership position when the opportunity arises, due to feelings of inadequacy and lack of confidence in their ability to perform the role. Often these teachers feel they weren’t adequately supported in their unofficial leadership role and therefore do not feel ready to pursue further advancement in their career development (Flückiger et al., 2015).

Research literature identifies that school principals are uniquely positioned to play a vital role in the identification, development and support of teacher leaders (Bredeson, 2000; Johnson et al., 2014). As stated by Creasy et al. (2004, p. 24), “Leadership is more likely to develop where the overall ethos of the school is supportive and encouraging”. As such, the role of principal in shaping the culture of the school is crucial, as “the most powerful means of developing leadership is to create an organisational culture that values the sorts of learning that are most likely to enhance the capacity of individuals to lead” (Creasy et al., 2004, p. 8). Such support provided by school principals can contribute meaningfully to both leadership and school development. Simon (2015, p. 62) suggests that the impact of current leadership can be significant on the aspiring leader’s growth, with the aspirant relying to a significant degree on being in a school where “the principal encourages them generally regarding leadership ambitions, supports them specifically in their taking on opportunities for growth and delegates to them appropriate leadership responsibilities throughout their educational career progression”.

Myung, et al., (2011) put forward the strategy

“*the most powerful means of developing leadership is to create an organisational culture that values the sorts of learning that are most likely to enhance the capacity of individuals to lead.*”

of 'tapping', an informal identification mechanism with the goal of progressing teacher leaders who demonstrate leadership potential, to take on school leadership 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, et al., 2011, p. 699)

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literature suggests a phenomenon known as 'cloning' can occur, where people tend to groom successors who have similar traits to themselves, notably in the areas of appearance, background and values.

Additionally, Myung et al. (2011) found that 'tapping' can positively impact the likelihood of teacher leaders to join the school leadership ranks. As principals recognise they have the ability to motivate teachers to consider school leadership 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 in formal roles such as having acted as heads of departments, or informally in other areas of school wide demonstrated leadership (Myung et al., 2011). It should be noted also, however, that literature suggests a phenomenon known as 'cloning' can occur, where people tend to groom (and thus identify) successors who have similar traits to themselves, notably in the areas of appearance, background and values (Lacey, 2003; Loughlin, 2000; Rothwell, 2010; Thomson, 2009).

Education systems in Australia have sought to address school leadership identification and development needs. The NSW Department of Education School Leadership Institute (2020b), developed the Leadership Identification Framework (SLIF) to identify and develop future school leaders in the education system. The first step in the SLIF process involves identifying a teacher leader who has the potential to develop into a future school leader. This process involves the teacher leader engaging in self-reflection and subsequent discussion with their supervisor as to their:

- i. Performance in terms of their leadership behaviours (referring to capacity as a teacher, as 'one cannot be an effective teacher leader if one is not first an accomplished teacher'); and
- ii. Preparedness (teacher leaders must also be prepared, or willing, to engage in leadership development) to become a future school

leader and undertake leadership learning. (NSW Department of Education, 2020b, p. 4).

As a result, the NSW Department of Education School Leadership Institute (2020) has developed the School Leadership Development Continuum, the purpose of which is to:

provide the foundation for a cohesive strategy to develop the leadership capacity of all school leaders at each stage of their career. The Continuum articulates opportunities for leadership learning through a well-defined and sequential pathway. At each stage, the learning focus is on developing skills and capabilities to enhance leadership impact to enable leaders to expand their sphere of leadership influence on the learning of teachers and students in NSW public schools. The Continuum also identifies key transition points into broader leadership roles (NSW Department of Education, 2020a, p. 3).

Such frameworks can assist in the identification of potential school leaders and build education system leadership capacity, improving both the quality and quantity of applicants for school leadership positions.

Methodology

This qualitative study utilised semi-structured interviews to collect data and adopted grounded theory methodology for the analysis of these interviews. The study is directed by the following research question: **In what ways can talented individuals be identified for future leadership roles within this education system?**

The data for this study was collected as part of a larger research project exploring the perceptions of elements of school leadership development held by those working within this faith-based education system. Approval was granted to approach employees within a particular geographic region of this education system. Data was also accessed relating to the perceptions of a number of school-based administrators. Interviews were conducted in a face-to-face setting at a number of school locations, with the interviews lasting approximately 30 – 40 minutes in duration. The interviewees provided written consent for the interviews to be audio-recorded. Twelve employees, from seven of the ten schools within this education system district, were invited to participate in the open-ended interview process, all of whom agreed to be involved in this research study.

The interview data was first transcribed from the audio recordings, and then subjected to grounded theory processes. Grounded theory is an inductive process, "based on concepts that are generated directly from the data" (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 411). This allowed the textual data to initially be broadly coded, then these codes were refined into

a smaller number of categories, and finally, these categories were mapped into substantive themes (Byrne, 2017).

Findings and discussion

Leadership identification

There was a perception held by some respondents that future leadership identification is a “*major fail point*” (R7) in this education system. Interviewees reported that they did not currently see an intentional, proactive process in place which captured how future school leaders are identified in this faith-based education system. Comments such as “*I think primarily, it’s more based on people who willingly put their hand up for [leadership] rather than people necessarily being deliberately targeted and mentored into that*” (R5) identify a perception that intentionality is missing with regard to identifying future potential school leaders.

Other respondents, however, noted that in recent years they had observed changes relating to leadership identification, with more opportunities being presented for staff who have demonstrated themselves to be teacher leaders. Comments such as:

I think over the last few years, there’s been a little bit more pro-activeness in that space. Prior to that, I recall a leader of mine in my first couple of years reminding me that as much as I was doing great as a teacher, there was no room to move in that leadership space...So that really unsettled me in feeling I could progress through [into leadership].” (R11)

From interview analysis it emerged that a perception difference existed between the larger schools and the smaller schools. Respondents from bigger schools identified that more opportunities were being offered for staff to grow their leadership capabilities, while staff in smaller schools noted fewer opportunities existed in their school contexts. Staff in smaller schools also believed that it was harder to be recognised for their leadership potential, with a view presented by some that education system personnel may be somewhat disconnected to the day-to-day running of some of the smaller schools in this geographic region, and as such, may not be well placed to identify those potential leaders coming through the ranks. Comments included:

I think we’re fairly removed from the [regional] office here...I don’t know that the staff at the [regional] office would really be able to get to know our teachers up this far anyway, to know if they would make good leaders.” (R3)

Further, “*I think the people at [regional] level are too removed to really know who potential leaders may*

be” (R5). Both respondents reflect this thinking, while also highlighting that a role exists for school principals to assist this identification.

Interview respondents identified that there appears to be an intentional trend within the larger faith-based education system schools in this region towards broadening the middle layers of leadership. This is providing stepping-stone opportunities for staff to grow and get a sense of the responsibilities of leadership in a way that allows skills to be developed. Staff in these schools can identify that this is intentionally taking place. Comments such as “*I think one thing that is key, is to provide them with opportunities. I think individually, you don’t necessarily fully appreciate or understand what you’re getting yourself into until you have a trial [in a leadership space]*” (R10) identify this need to provide staff with opportunities at a school level first as a developing ground for leadership capability. Such viewpoints mesh with literature (Creasy, et al., 2004), suggesting that providing such varied opportunities aides in the development of leadership:

Developing leadership potential over time requires placing individuals in a variety of roles, with an expanding range of responsibilities and accountabilities. Historically, larger schools offered more scope for a variety of leadership experiences, whereas smaller schools often relied upon lateral movement. However, the expansion of initiatives such as networking and extended schools offers a number of new leadership opportunities in both small and large schools. (p. 41)

Current Identification of School Leaders

The use of an annual staffing form, used to confirm the intentions of staff with regards to returning to their employment or registering interest for leadership roles, was acknowledged by a number of respondents as the predominant current way of individuals self-identifying as having interest in leadership positions. This was, however, viewed by some respondents as not being appropriate for communicating leadership interest as there was a perception this may not be picked up on at regional level. Comment suggested:

Well, the only way [to indicate interest in school leadership] from my perspective, is you use a staffing form every year you tick leadership, but in my experience and I know others, they’ve ticked it and nothing’s happened. So, I don’t really know if those staffing forms have any weight. I don’t know how valuable that information is to them [system administrators]. (R2)

This suggests that staff have the opportunity to identify interest in leadership roles using this staffing form, but there was not a high level of confidence that this process is followed up on, with some staff acknowledging having indicated interest in leadership positions with no follow up from system

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administration. This may be hampered by the involvement of potentially two layers of education system, one at the regional level, and one at the national level.

There was also a view that those who wish to pursue school leadership roles actively make it known to relevant others. Given the relatively close-knit nature of this faith-based education system, it was acknowledged that informal conversations between leadership aspirants and regional system personnel can often take place, during which leadership interest may be conveyed. These informal conversations were seen to be an accepted practice, allowing aspirants to voice their desire or willingness to be considered for school leadership roles. This proved to be something respondents were keen to see continuing to take place. Such forms of self-nomination practice are also identified in the research literature, however, a body of literature exists which suggests it is not good practice to rely on individuals self-selecting as potential leaders, instead, they suggest education systems have processes to both identify and promote high potential teacher leaders (Bush, 2011a; Bush 2011b; Myung et al., 2011; Thomson, 2009). Additionally, respondents identified that word-of-mouth practices regarding individuals who exhibit leadership potential were assumed to be taking place, likely involving discussions between system administration personnel and local school principals, again highlighting the role of principals identified within the research literature.

A number of respondents raised the possibility that educational qualifications and additional study programs may evidence school leadership readiness, and thus assist leader identification processes. These qualifications, however, were not necessarily seen as a pre-requisite for gaining leadership roles. Comments identify the uncertainty that having completed further study has upon school leadership identification in this education system:

I don't know if they [system personnel] assess the people that are doing their Master's degree and specialising in leadership. In today's day and age, it would obviously be a good thing to have a Master's degree, and then out of that process, you've got potentially the skill set to do [school leadership] but I see many leaders in our system in leadership roles that don't have that. So, I don't know how much weight having your Master's actually holds in gaining those roles. (R1)

Respondents also intimated a view that new school leaders are regularly selected on the basis of willingness alone. Comments such as *"I think primarily, it's still often just – 'There's a need. Oh, this person's willing. Let's put them in there', sort of thing"* (R5) and *"I think oftentimes it's a case of people being selected simply because they were the ones that said, 'Yes', or they were the person who made themselves*

available" (R8), echo this sentiment. This appears to be both accepted and a source of frustration to these respondents, with the issue of transparency seemingly the difference between the two perspectives.

Transparency around school leadership identification was frequently raised, as some respondents identified uncertainty around how people are both identified and selected for leadership positions.

I think it's 'see a need, fill a need'. I know that there has been some work [at system level] and I know that a few people have been identified as future leaders and they've started that over the last couple of years. But I don't know where that comes from. I don't know who gets nominated for that. I don't know what the process is. So, currently, what I see is the practice is that – 'oh, someone's moving on, someone's retiring, someone's going to a different position or a different school, and now we have a vacancy', and it's basically whoever's in that administrative space, they're the people that go, 'You know what, I think that person has shown potential. Let's tap them on the shoulder and elevate them.' (R9)

This suggests a leadership identification and selection process that lacks transparency to those faith-based education system employees looking on.

Future identification of school leaders

Self-nomination is still seen as important to these respondents. Those who have leadership aspiration desire to see a process by which they can formally register their interest. However, it was acknowledged that there is a significant drawback to this, and that a role for regional administration personnel exists in curtailing the aspiration of those who are believed to not be suitable for school leadership roles. Additionally, there appears to be a shift in thinking taking place amongst staff from the older model of 'calling' (where both individuals feel 'called' to leadership positions and the education system 'calls' individuals to roles) to one involving more of a 'self-nomination' process.

It was also perceived by respondents to be worthwhile to tap into New Scheme Teachers (early career teachers undertaking mandatory accreditation processes) at the very start of their teacher accreditation process, and engage with them to see if school leadership was a 'space' they could see themselves having interest in. This was seen as a good starting point for new entrants into this education system, and this was something that could continue to be reviewed, including conversations as they progress in their careers so as to flag continuing school leadership interest or intention. Steps could be actively implemented to provide development and growth opportunities. Considering the literature covered earlier, targeting these early career teachers

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prior to any potential decrease of school leadership aspirations over their teaching career, would seem important to educational system leadership sustainability.

A view was presented that going forwards, a higher level of consultation between the education system administrators and school principals needs to take place. This was seen as a logical process that may assist the identification of future potential leaders, a typical comment being:

I think you'd probably just need to speak to the administration within a school because they probably very quickly notice the people who have the aptitude and skills for [school leadership] ... I guess primarily they'd just need to be speaking to the admin of our schools and getting from their perspective who they're seeing as potential leaders. (R5)

Further, "... at a system level, I think to work with your school leaders who are on the ground and know their staff, their colleagues best, that trickle-up effect" (R10) will support this ongoing dialogue between education system and local school levels. It would appear that these faith-based education system employees still largely espouse the view outlined below: "I think it still remains—the most effective way to identify potential leaders is through observation, conversation, working beside teachers and seeing their personality traits, attributes that are well-suited for leadership and having those conversations" (R10). This remains the case "even more so than people necessarily applying for positions or putting their hands up for positions - that doesn't necessarily guarantee that they've got the attributes necessary to be an effective leader" (R10). This again emphasises the role principals can play in the identification of potential school leaders.

Related to this was a view that the attributes of the current school principal played a significant part in the growth opportunities presented to staff, directly impacting on their chances of being identified for future school leadership opportunities. Comments such as:

I don't really know how to articulate it well, but I think sometimes principals are the current leaders in schools and admin teams and I don't know if they all have the skill sets of being good leaders. But then they are the ones assessing the new leaders and I think sometimes there's a disconnect from the principals always being the person[s] that are earmarking the talent coming through. I think things like their job security and seeing people that could come through as a threat, and so on, could actually be factors. I don't know if some of the current principals have the skill set to be good people to train people. Obviously, some are. I think it would be better to have someone at the [education system] level who has the skill set to guide, encourage and train leaders.

Even past principals like a recently retired principal that have been good or effective. If that's his skill set, then by all means he could mentor and nurture potential new principals or new leadership. (R1)

Such comments suggest that not all principals may be well suited to identify and nurture potential future school leaders, and that this may directly impact on the opportunities potential school leaders experience at the local school level. As identified elsewhere in this paper, the support provided by the school principal must be intentional, because as Fluckiger et al. (2015) note, "Teacher leadership needs to be fostered, supported and developed and not left to chance" (p. 60).

Respondents spoke of not only having dedicated roles such as deputy principals or heads of departments, and coordinators for example, but of creating opportunities for teaching staff to take on something akin to a project management role. In this role they focus on specific projects, providing the school with an opportunity to observe and support individuals as they develop leadership in specific areas within the school setting. It was asserted that this can provide further opportunity to assess individuals on their leadership capability and potential, leading to identification opportunities. Such opportunities link to research findings in the literature, and were asserted by respondents to facilitate school improvement initiatives. Matching people to projects of interest was deemed to heighten the likelihood of successful outcomes.

Interestingly, a theme emerging from respondents related to differences in leadership identification based on school size. Some smaller school respondents noted that there are fewer school-based leadership opportunities for staff to evidence leadership readiness than in larger schools where more positions exist (Stage Coordinator for example), positions that can provide growth opportunity for potential future leaders. These respondents raised the perspective that being in a smaller school often meant they had more scope to exhibit leadership in the roles they were in, but they appeared to form a view that this was not otherwise recognised, and indeed, education system personnel may have had no awareness of how these extra opportunities contributed to their enhanced leadership abilities. It may well be that broader faith-based involvement beyond the scope of the smaller schools could also be considered, such as involvement in Church-run activities or Children's Ministries, which may further evidence leadership ability and be factored into leadership identification processes.

Importantly, there appears to be some desire from these respondents to see the development of a minimum set of standards to assess the

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appropriateness of any identified potential future leader. This would provide a basis for a transparent and structured approach to leadership identification and succession. In Australia, AITSL (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership) is funded by the Australian Government to provide “excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership” (AITSL, 2012, p.13). They “work with the educational community to: set and maintain standards to promote excellence in teaching and school leadership; lead and influence excellence in teaching and school leadership; and support and recognise excellence in teaching and school leadership” (AITSL, 2012, p.13). The AITSL Principal standard was acknowledged by respondents to be a good indicator of this leader readiness, as meeting that standard was perceived to allow potential school leadership candidates to then be considered on a needs basis as it would no longer be a question of their leadership capability, but rather position suitability.

Another view expressed around any potential process of identifying future school leaders in this faith-based education system revolved around their suitability from a ‘special character’ perspective – that is, the ability of the individual to lead out in the school community spiritually. There was a perception amongst interviewees that effective leadership in the school setting must take spiritual leadership into account, with some respondents lamenting they saw this to be lacking in this faith-based education system as they reflected on differing levels of leadership.

Lastly, there is the major ‘takeaway’ point that while these current faith-based education system employees see an evolving model that is progressing from the traditional faith-based ‘calling’ model towards a more current industrial model, there is still importantly a role to be played by the education system itself with regard to future leadership identification. A number of employees felt that they themselves had leadership potential, but acknowledged they would never self-nominate, still clinging to a view that if they were asked to consider a school leadership role it would be because they were seen by the system as being capable and competent. Thus, a perception still exists that the employing entity is to play a role in identifying those with leadership potential with comments such as “*I guess I like the idea of trusting in the employer, trusting in the workplace, that they can identify potential and have the conversations*” (R2), clearly espousing this view. It is significant that while respondents did not emphasise the leadership attributes they saw as crucial to effective future school leaders, they did believe that this faith-based education system had the role of determining this.

Emerging identification themes

There is little doubt that a key to education system sustainability lies in the identification of future school leaders. While school principals remain important contributors, a number of other systemic interventions are identified by these respondents as being significant in future school leader identification. Firstly, there is a need to define the leadership qualities required in this faith-based education system, at classroom, school and system levels. Defining what constitutes excellence in leadership at each of these levels will allow for easier identification of the leadership talent pool within this education system, and more transparency within the process.

Secondly, there is an acknowledged need to formalise leadership identification processes. This may mean the adoption or creation of a framework which clearly stipulates how teacher leaders in this faith-based education system will be identified and which then outlines a plan for their continued development and growth. This, when combined with the earlier recommendation which would allow the distinctions between knowledge, skills and experiences at differing levels of leadership to be clearly seen, would enhance the effectiveness of the plans formed for these future leaders’ focused engagement with further leadership development.

Thirdly, conversations with early career teacher leaders are considered a crucial component of identification, particularly where the accomplished early career teacher leader has had opportunity to reflect on their performance and exhibited leadership attributes, as well as their willingness to engage in leadership development. Identifying any such individual aspirations and assessing the strengths and development needs of these candidates would be a significant step towards growing a pool of future leadership talent.

Fourthly, given that these faith-based education employees do not believe that the currently used staffing form is sufficient for communicating self-nominated interest in school leadership positions, it remains important that a formalised process is implemented that allows for this to take place, and equally important that those who register such interest receive feedback as acknowledgement that their interest has been received. Such a process would enable expressions of interest in school leadership positions at any stage of their career – a point that is particularly important given much of the literature identifies a focus on early career teacher leaders.

Fifthly, both the literature and respondents suggest a crucial role in school leader identification is played by school principals. Given the perceptions of some smaller school staff regarding the challenge of identifying leaders, there is a need for heightened

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levels of communication between principals and system administrators regarding high potential employees. Identification and development of future school leaders must be the responsibility of many rather than lone leaders who tend to want to 'clone' themselves.

Lastly, these faith-based employees also wish to see more school-based leadership opportunities for future school leaders—formal or informal. This may involve the use of temporary teams or specific projects run by teacher leaders, with such opportunities seen as a breeding ground for the skills and experiences required of developing school leaders. Importantly, school-based support is seen as crucial to ensure leadership aspiration is fostered. School size has been identified as a potential hurdle in the provision of such opportunities, and thought is required as to how such school-based opportunities can be provided equitably across the varying sized school settings presented in this faith-based education system. **TEACH**

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“employees ... wish to see more school-based leadership opportunities for future school leaders [involving] the use of temporary teams or specific projects run by teacher leaders”