Deloitte.

Principal workload and time use study

Contents

1. Executive summary

Background

Principals are responsible for many areas of educational leadership. This includes: the education and wellbeing of students; educational programs; student progress and achievement; management and development of staff and staff wellbeing; financial management of the school; leading improvement, innovation and change; management of school property; and, engaging with the wider school community.

Emerging evidence, including from conversations with schools leaders, suggests that the NSW government school community is increasingly concerned about principal workload. Principals have reported their increased administrative workload is preventing them from fulfilling their core responsibilities as educational leaders. Further, principals are concerned with the rate of reform in NSW, their ability to keep up with changing responsibilities and, the seemingly expanding scope of their role.

The NSW Department of Education (the 'department'), through its Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE), commissioned Deloitte to conduct a research study into school principal workload and time use.

Methodology

The research was conducted in Term 2, 2017 and consisted of a mix of quantitative and qualitative techniques.

The quantitative research component consisted of a direct observation research activity in which researchers observed and recorded the tasks that the principal undertook and the time spent on tasks, recorded against an activity framework based on the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Leadership Profiles. These observations were conducted with a representative group of 119 NSW government schools, with coverage across a range of school and principal characteristics.

The qualitative research component consisted of three research activities: fourteen two-hour immersive contextual inquiries with principals in their own environment; four focus group sessions with a mix of executive and administrative support staff; and five industry subject matter expert interviews.

The researchers also interviewed sixteen key stakeholders, including department executives and representatives from the Primary Principals' Association (PPA) and Secondary Principals' Council (SPC).

Findings

Question 1: What tasks do principals spend their time on?

Analysis of the collected data reveals that: 30% of principal time is spent on leading teaching and learning; 9% on developing self and others; 6% on leading improvement, innovation and change; 40% on leading the management of the school; 11% on engaging and working with the community; and, 3% on other activities. As such, principals are spending more time leading the management of the school than leading teaching and learning.

Analysis of direct observation data has revealed that principals are completing a high number of activities during the school day that are varied in nature and often short in duration. Principals on average undertook 45 activities during the observation period of the school day, with 28 of these activities being unique. 43% of the activities principals were observed undertaking took less than 5 minutes. Principals experience multiple interruptions during the school day, which makes it difficult to complete activities that require longer periods of time and attention. These tasks, therefore, are generally completed before or after school hours, in the evenings, or on weekends.

Principals reported that they had reduced capacity to fulfil their role as educational leaders as they are spending a large proportion of time on activities that they classify as administration. Principals generally defined administration as all of the activities related to 'leading the management of the school' (comprising transactional and general administrative activities), as well as elements of strategic planning.

The transactional and general administrative activities are often unplanned, ad hoc and variable in nature, and contribute to the disrupted pattern of the typical day of a principal during school hours. Principals felt that time focused on these activities impacts on their capacity to complete activities that they see as core to their role, including but not limited to: curriculum planning; monitoring student progress; teacher/learning feedback; community engagement; and, teacher/student health and wellbeing.

Through the contextual inquiries it was identified that principals were spending time on activities that would not typically be expected to be undertaken by someone in a leadership position. Examples of these activities included: cleaning; undertaking minor asset repairs; fixing the plumbing; tree audits; and, troubleshooting technology issues. Principals often take on these activities as they tend to be the only person within the school with the flexibility within their day to do so. While research participants agreed that the principal's role includes being the manager of the site, manual, transactional or specialist tasks may be more effectively and appropriately carried out by other staff members.

Question 2: What are the enablers and barriers to principals managing their workload?

Enablers that contribute positively to principals managing their workload were: capable and available executive and administrative support staff, in an appropriate structure; targeted augmentation of capabilities to address gaps at the school level, including, but not limited to, the use of Business Managers, where appropriate; creation of formal and informal collegial networks that are key sources of information and support, including involvement in principal professional bodies; and, tools and frameworks such as the School Excellence Framework (SEF), the AITSL Framework and the Leadership and Management Credential for the principals to self-evaluate the effectiveness of their work and identify opportunities for development.

Key barriers that negatively impact on the principals' ability to manage their workload were: limited availability of administrative support and resources, including the lack of allocated administrative funding; inability to leverage executive staff for planned and ad hoc tasks; limited training and 'on the job' support available for the breadth and complexities of the role; coaching and support that is not sufficiently timely nor adequate in breadth; lack of functionality, and integration, of departmental systems and tools; insufficient support and training for systems and tools; no clear measures of effectiveness in the role; and, reduced department support services for specialist roles.

Question 2a: Could some tasks be delegated to other staff to help principals manage their workload?

Some tasks that are currently performed by principals could be delegated to other staff to help manage their workload. However there are a number of limitations currently experienced by principals that hinder their ability to do so.

These include: the capacity, availability and capability of staff in their school to undertake additional responsibilities including planned and ad hoc requests; the flexibility (perceived or otherwise) in the existing staffing models to enable principals to access specific/specialist skills to augment their teams; and, administrative support staff role descriptions not accounting for the nature and complexity of administrative tasks required to be completed – in particular tasks relating to leading the management of the school.

Q2b: Could department support materials and communications be improved to help principals manage their workloads?

Department support materials and communications are perceived by principals to be complicated, as well as lacking co-ordination, contextual information and a clear rationale for change.

Principals spend time filtering, interpreting, simplifying and re-crafting department communications to create information that is meaningful for their school and their context. Principals find that department support materials often take a long time to read and understand and can sometimes be out of date and not fit for purpose. The department intranet, despite recent improvements and updates, can still be difficult to navigate to find useful information and required materials. Principals will often turn to their colleagues for support and information as they find this faster than going through department channels.

Improvements could be made to enable principals to see the broader picture and intent of departmental communications, with greater clarity and transparency (including providing a forward view) to ensure principals are best positioned to absorb, manage and deliver on what is required.

Q3: Is the current principal workload achievable and sustainable?

Most principals reported that they consider their current workload to be unreasonable. While they acknowledged that working beyond standard hours is required to undertake their role, there is a general feeling that the current workload is neither achievable (75% reporting that their workload is 'difficult to achieve' or 'not at all achievable') nor sustainable in the longer term (77% reporting that their workload is 'difficult to sustain' or 'not at all sustainable'). For achievability, only one significant difference was found when looking at various school and principal characteristics. There is a significant difference in achievability across school locations (i.e. metro, regional, remote), more specifically between schools located in metro and regional locations. A larger proportion of metro school principals perceive their workload as more 'achievable' or 'very easy to achieve' (34%), than regional school principals (14%). While some principals have been successful in adapting to the changing nature of their role, the majority felt that they were unable to effectively complete the full range of work expected of them.

There are a number of factors around the changing nature, complexity and volume of work required in the principal's role that appear to be impacting on whether they feel that their workload is achievable and sustainable. One key factor is a lack of clarity around the scope of their role, which makes it difficult for them to evaluate what types of activities they should be prioritising (i.e. activities that contribute the most toward the desired outcomes for their role).

Principals report that their stress levels have increased due to a sense of consistent overload, and heightened expectations of workload. As a result, principals sometimes find themselves questioning their own competence and ability to do their job. Principals believe that this is having a negative effect on their health and wellbeing – and therefore impacting on their perception of the long term sustainability of their workload.

Furthermore, principals feel that, as a result of workload pressure, they are unable to prioritise important teaching and learning activities such as: observing classrooms during the school day; engaging with staff and students to evaluate learning outcomes; effectively engaging in professional learning; and, supporting staff wellbeing. They have found that some of these strategic activities can therefore instead become 'transactional' or 'administrative' in nature, or they are simply not undertaken or completed at all.

Overall, principals feel that the demands on their time associated with reforms and large scale initiatives affect their ability to make their workload more achievable and sustainable. They feel that the demands, and particularly the administrative burden of these demands will need to reduce in order for their workload to become more achievable and sustainable over time.

Q4: Has there been a change in either the quantity or nature of principals' work in recent years?

The scope of the principal's role has remained consistent over recent years, with a continuing focus on educational leadership, site management, and community engagement. However, the way that the components are required to be executed has changed, particularly in relation to planning, policy, finance, compliance, risk and work health and safety. This has been partially driven by the Local Schools, Local Decisions (LSLD) reform. As a result of these changes, principal workload has increased.

Principals also reported that they have felt increased pressure and expectations to act on issues related to the broader community; a further change in the nature of their role. Additional effort is required to manage the increasing demands and sense of accountabilities to respond to a broader range of complex community needs.

Changes in technology have meant that principals are now able to be accessed more easily and frequently than ever by the school, the department, and the broader community through a variety of channels such as e-mail, the school's website, text messages, and social media. The combination of transparency, accessibility, community expectations and the principal's sense of personal responsibility, has not only increased the pressure on principals as leaders, it has also increased their workload. Principals are increasingly expected to have a breadth and depth of capability and knowledge that was not required in the past.

As a result of new technologies and approaches to student assessment, and a greater emphasis on evidence-based practice, principals feel their role is more transparent than ever before. Principals feel a higher level of scrutiny, and have to justify more of their decisions and performance with evidence and data.

Systemic changes and reforms, increasing community expectations, and advances in technology, have affected the quantity and nature of principal workload. Overall, the changing nature of the principal's workload has placed increased emphasis on the need for advanced capabilities in leadership and management.

Q5: What are some examples of exemplary practice from which other schools could benefit?

Exemplary practices were identified across a range of areas, including: ways of working; approaches to leadership and learning and development; staff and budget allocation management; and, community engagement.

However, it is clear that while some exemplary practices will be beneficial for some schools, these practices may not be universally applicable.

Novel forms of communication and dissemination of exemplary practices such as storytelling and narrative, would assist principals in understanding the context in which a practice was applied, the challenges or opportunities it was intended to address, and the outcomes it achieved. This would enable principals to interpret and adapt practices to their own context.

Q6. Could the leadership or decision making culture of schools change in any way to help principals manage their workloads?

The research has identified ways in which the leadership and decision making culture of schools could change in order to enable more effective management of principals' workloads.

In response to this question, the research found that principals are affected by: limited clarity and certainty on how to be successful; a risk averse and compliance driven culture in response to challenges and opportunities; and, a perception that they are on their own in solving problems and making decisions without adequate support to do so. There is also a lack of trust between principals and the department: principals generally don't believe the department acts in their best interest or 'has their back' when something goes wrong. Within the current environment of reform and change, the ability for a principal to absorb and adapt to change in an agile way, and operate effectively as a leader and decision maker, is being increasingly challenged.

The following changes would assist principals to lead and make decisions, and therefore manage their workload, in a more effective way:

1. Provide a clear and holistic set of tangible, measureable outcomes for principals to: evaluate themselves against; take into consideration when prioritising workload and making decisions; and, more generally offer the principal a consistent frame for independent decision making

2. Articulate, with clarity and consistency, the 'success profile' of the principal role (and the roles of others such as the Director Public Schools and the school leadership/executive). This would enable certainty, and create a stable, reliable and supportive ecosystem more likely to produce high performing teams over time. More generally, consistency across the system will assist in the transition of principals that are new to the role, new to the school or relieving in the role. There is some evidence that the large number of relieving principals within schools may hinder or slow down decision making and create an unsettling environment

3. Ensure that principals have the capability, confidence, and ability to allocate resources towards the administrative aspects of their role. It is not unusual for principals to feel guilty when making choices that require a perceived trade-off between investments in school management and student learning. Some principals expressed a preference for assigning tied funds to avoid having to justify spending on non-student facing resources.

Opportunities

The research findings have highlighted the requirement for holistic, integrated, and contextualised responses to the challenges being experienced by principals. Opportunities have been identified in response to five focusing questions. These opportunities may help the department implement initiatives and interventions to improve principal workload and time use, thereby enabling them to more effectively carry out their role. These focusing questions are outlined below:

1. How could the department enhance the capacity of principals to operate successfully in an environment of constant change, so that they are able to evaluate, prioritise and implement improvements within their context, and with the support and commitment of their teams?

2. How could the department assist principals to structure and lead high performing teams so that they achieve the desired outcomes of their school?

3. How could the department coach, develop and support high performing principals so that they discharge their responsibilities and accountabilities to deliver against the success criteria of their role?

4. How could the department enable and support principals' formal and informal networks so that principals receive the exposure, education, experience and environment they need to be successful?

5. How could the department enable principals to execute the administrative components of their role in the most efficient and effective way, so that they are able to increase their focus on educational leadership?

A detailed summary of the opportunity areas, descriptions and rationale is provided in Section 4, Table 4.1.

2. Research methodology

The purpose of this research study is to gain an understanding of NSW government school principals' workload and how they spend their time, as well as the issues and challenges faced in their role that impact on the manageability of their workload. The study seeks to provide primary data and insight to inform an understanding of the manageability of NSW school principal workload.

The research seeks to answer six specific questions asked by the department, as outlined in Table 2.1. A Summary of Findings against these questions is included in Appendix 4.

Research approach
In order to answer these questions, a mix of quantitative and qualitative research techniques were used:

1. Quantitative research
    a. Direct observation
        (time and motion study)

2. Qualitative research
    a. Contextual inquiries
    b. Focus groups with executive and administrative support staff
    c. Subject matter expert interviews.

All research activities were undertaken between Week 5 and Week 10 (inclusive) of Term 2, 2017.

1. Quantitative research
a. Direct Observation (time and motion study)
Direct observations were conducted through the use of a time and motion study. Time and motion studies provide relatively unbiased insight into actual (rather than perceived) tasks undertaken, and the proportion of time spent on tasks, compared to other methods such as surveys.

Method
The tasks and activities observed were recorded against an activity framework developed based on the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Leadership Profiles[1]. A summarised version of the AITSL based activity framework is outlined in Figure 2.1. The AITSL based activity framework consists of six activity groups, each with a sub set of activities under each activity group. Researchers coded observed and recorded activity at the sub activity level. Activity category 6 'Other' was added in addition to the framework for the purpose of the direct observation activity, enabling the researcher to adequately record time spent during observation periods.

Table 2.1: Research Questions

Question	Page
1. What tasks do principals spend their time on?	19
2. What are the enablers and barriers to principals managing their workload?	24
2a. Could some tasks be designated to the school staff to help manage principal workloads?	30
2b. Could department support materials and communications be improved to help principals to manage their workloads?	31
3. Is the current principal workload achievable and sustainable?	33
4. Has there been a change in either the quantity or nature of principals' work in recent years?	39
5. Could some tasks be delegated to other school staff to help manage principal workloads? (E.g. School Administration and Support Staff, Business Manager, bursar, changed roles of DP/AP, additional DP/AP, other paraprofessionals shared across schools etc.)	42
6. Could the leadership and decision-making culture of schools change in any way to help manage principal workloads?	46

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[1] Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2014 Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the Leadership Profiles, Education Services Australia. Refer Appendix 1 for the full version of the activity framework

Figure 2.1: AITSL based activity framework

A summarised activity framework developed based on Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Leadership Profiles.

1. Leading teaching and learning	2. Developing self and others	3. Leading improvement, innovation and change	4. Leading the management of the school	5. Engaging and working with students and the community
Focus on leading quality teaching, student learning, development and improvement.	*Focus on managing and developing staff within the school (teachers and non teachers)*	*Focus on the future direction of the school*	*Focus on the day to day operations and management of the school*	*Focus on building relationships and engagement with internal and external individuals*
1.1 Student learning and outcomes	2.1 Staff performance management	3.1 Strategic planning	4.1 Financial management	5.1 Student relationships and engagement
1.2 Student development and well-being	2.2 Staff learning and development	3.2 Improvement and innovation	4.2 Reporting	5.2 Parent and carer relationships and engagement
1.3 Student behaviour and attendance	2.3 Staff health and well-being	3.3 Technology adoption and new systems	4.3 Internal communications	5.3 Community involvement and engagement
1.4 Teaching standards and pedagogy	2.4 Staff mentoring and coaching	3.4 Policy review and implementation	4.4 Department communications	5.4 Partnerships
1.5 Teacher/learning feedback		3.5 Seek advice and guidance	4.5 Staffing management	5.5 Staff engagement
1.6 Teaching			4.6 Complaints management	

4. (continued)	6. Other
	For coding purposes – relates to activities that are personal, time management or lost time
4.7 Infrastructure/asset management	
4.8 Other processes and procedures	
4.9 Compliance	6.1 Personal time
4.10 Student administration	6.2 Time management
	6.3 Lost time

The direct observations recorded activities undertaken over a 7.5 hour period, usually from 8:00am to 3:30pm. Approximately 30 minutes at the beginning and at the end of the observation period involved a 'brief' and 'de-brief' survey. The surveys were designed to capture the self-reported time principals spent on activities undertaken outside of the direct observation period. The timeframe covered by the direct observation period was focused on the busiest, most unpredictable times of the day, where self-reporting would be less likely to be accurate – during school hours. The median time of the observation period was approximately 6.1 hours.

The briefing survey examined school-related activities conducted that morning prior to meeting with the researcher and activities completed the previous night (or weekend if research was conducted on a Monday). It also collected a range of information about the principal's context (e.g. number of support and executive staff in the school).

The end-of-day debrief involved: defining the activities they planned to complete after the researcher departed; and their perception of the time spent on the various activities undertaken over the course of the observed day.

These different data sets are outlined in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Direct observation research data sets
An outline of the different data sets obtained through the direct observation research activity.

Reported   **Observed**   **Reported**   **Surveyed**

Indicative working day
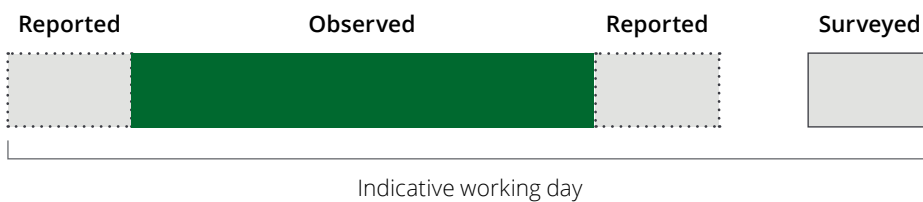
░ **Reported:**   Data collected from principals through brief and debrief sessions on work conducted before and after the observation period

■ **Observed:**   Data collected through recording tasks directly observed over an average ~6.1 hours

▢ **Surveyed:**   Data collected through survey questionnaire to understand principal perceptions, attitudes and preferences

Custom recording tools and templates were developed for data collection purposes. Further detail and templates can be provided by CESE upon request.

Sample selection
A sample frame was developed based on data provided by the department.

Balance was sought across the following criteria:

3. Operational directorate
4. School location
5. School type
6. Size of school
7. ICSEA group[2].

A sample size of 119 was developed. The sample was designed around a sensitivity (margin of error) of +/-9% at a 95% confidence interval.

The sample can be found in Table 2.2 below:

Table 2.2: Direct observation sample frame

Quota	Category	Sample size	% of population	
1. Operational directorate	Wagga Wagga	35	6.1%	
	Tamworth	34	5.6%	
	Macquarie Park	24	4.8%	
	Ultimo	26	5.1%	**5.4%**
2. School location	Major cities	62	5.2%	
	Inner regional	32	5.4%	
	Outer regional	20	5.7%	
	Remote	4	11.4%	
	Very remote	1	6.7%	**5.4%**
3. School type	Primary Schools	78	4.9%	
	Central/Community Schools	5	7.7%	
	Secondary Schools	30	7.5%	
	Schools for Specific Purposes	6	5.3%	**5.4%**
4. School size (FTE)	1-200	38	4.6%	
	201-440	33	5.3%	
	441-800	32	6.3%	
	801-2000	16	7.4%	**5.4%**
5. ICSEA group	557 to 936	36	5.9%	
	937 to 973	27	6.7%	
	974 to 1021	24	5.9%	
	1022 to 1247	26	4.3%	
	Missing	6	3.9%	**5.4%**

[2] ICSEA is a measure of the socio-educational advantage, or disadvantage, of the students attending a school. ICSEA values are calculated on a scale which has a median of 1000 and a standard deviation of 100. Lower values represent student bodies with relatively disadvantaged educational backgrounds; higher values represent student bodies with educationally advantaged backgrounds. The groupings can be summarised as 557 to 936, 937 to 973, 974 to 1021 and 1022 to 1247 as well as 6 SSP schools that do not have an ICSEA group.

2. Qualitative research

a. Contextual Inquiry (CI)

Immersive one-on-one contextual inquiries were conducted with principals to understand their context, perceptions and needs in relation to the research questions.

Method

These two to three-hour semi-structured interviews consisted of a blend of interview questions, observation and purposeful conversation and moved between observation and discussion about the topics being studied. The aim of this method is to observe what is "normal" as much as possible and to be immersed in the principal's world. Questions explored a range of areas relating to the research question, in particular: perceptions of achievability and sustainability of the principal's workload, challenges, barriers and enablers experienced by individual principals and leadership and delegation practices to understand how principals utilise their teams in the management of their schools. Researchers utilised stimulus materials to help principals outline their support networks and gain an understanding of the workload rhythms over a school year. Additionally, researchers sought to understand differing perceptions of what constitutes administration and to interpret and understand the way principals think about their time. Individual school cultures, systems and principal behaviour and beliefs were also able to be observed using this method.

Sample selection

Sample selection for contextual inquiries was intended to gain coverage of a range of demographic criteria as well as a range of principal scenarios or contexts; selection is random while seeking to achieve this coverage. Fourteen contextual inquiries were conducted providing coverage across a range of criteria (refer Table 2.3):

- School type
- Principal classification
- Location
- Operational directorate
- School size
- ICSEA group
- Principal experience.

Table 2.3: Contextual inquiry participant characteristics

Criteria	Description	Total	Participants													
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
School type	Primary	6	■	■			■	■					■	■		
	Secondary	4			■				■	■		■				
	Central/Community	2									■				■	
	SSP[a]	2				■										■
Principal classification	TP1-2/AP1-2	3											■	■		■
	P1	3				■					■	■				
	P2	1					■									
	P3	3	■					■	■							
	P4	4		■	■					■					■	
	P5	0[b]														
Location	Major Cities (Metro)	8	■		■	■	■	■				■		■		■
	Regional	4		■					■	■			■			
	Remote	2									■				■	

[a] Schools for Specific Purposes – these do not have ICSEA groups.

[b] Quota not met.

Table 2.4: Contextual inquiry participant characteristics

Criteria	Description	Total	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Operational directorate	Wagga Wagga	3											■	■	■	
	Macquarie Park	3	■		■											■
	Tamworth	4							■	■	■	■				
	Ultimo	4		■		■	■	■								
School size (FTE)	1-200 (1 x <150)	7		■		■					■		■	■	■	■
	200-400	1[c]	■													
	440-800	4			■			■	■	■						
	800-2,000 (1x>900)	2					■					■				
ICSEA	Lower	6	■	■	■	N/A[d]			■	■	■					N/A[d]
	Higher	5					■	■					■	■	■	
Overall experience	< 2 years	2												■		■
	2-5 years	3		■		■						■				
	> 5 years	9	■		■		■	■	■	■	■		■		■	

[c] Quota not met

[d] School for Specific Purposes

b. Focus groups

Focus groups were conducted to engage with relevant stakeholders in principals' school support networks.

Method

Semi-structured two-hour facilitated group discussions were conducted with six to eight participants from principals' support networks. The aim of this method was to uncover common themes or key differences across various individuals within the group around the topics covered. The discussions focussed on a range of areas relating to the principals workload including: perceptions on the role and workload of principals, delegation practices of principals and the behaviours and actions of what individuals considered to make up a great principal. The researchers further sought to uncover the cultural elements of leadership and decision making within schools.

Sample selection

Through consultation, a view of the support networks and key relationships for principals was developed (refer Figure 2.2). Based on this framework, representatives of those with the closest relationship with the principal were identified for inclusion in focus groups.

In total, four focus groups were conducted: two with administrative support staff (1 x regional, 1 x metro) and two with executive staff (1 x regional, 1 x metro). The participant characteristics are outlined in Tables 2.5 and 2.6.

Figure 2.2: Principal support networks and key relationships

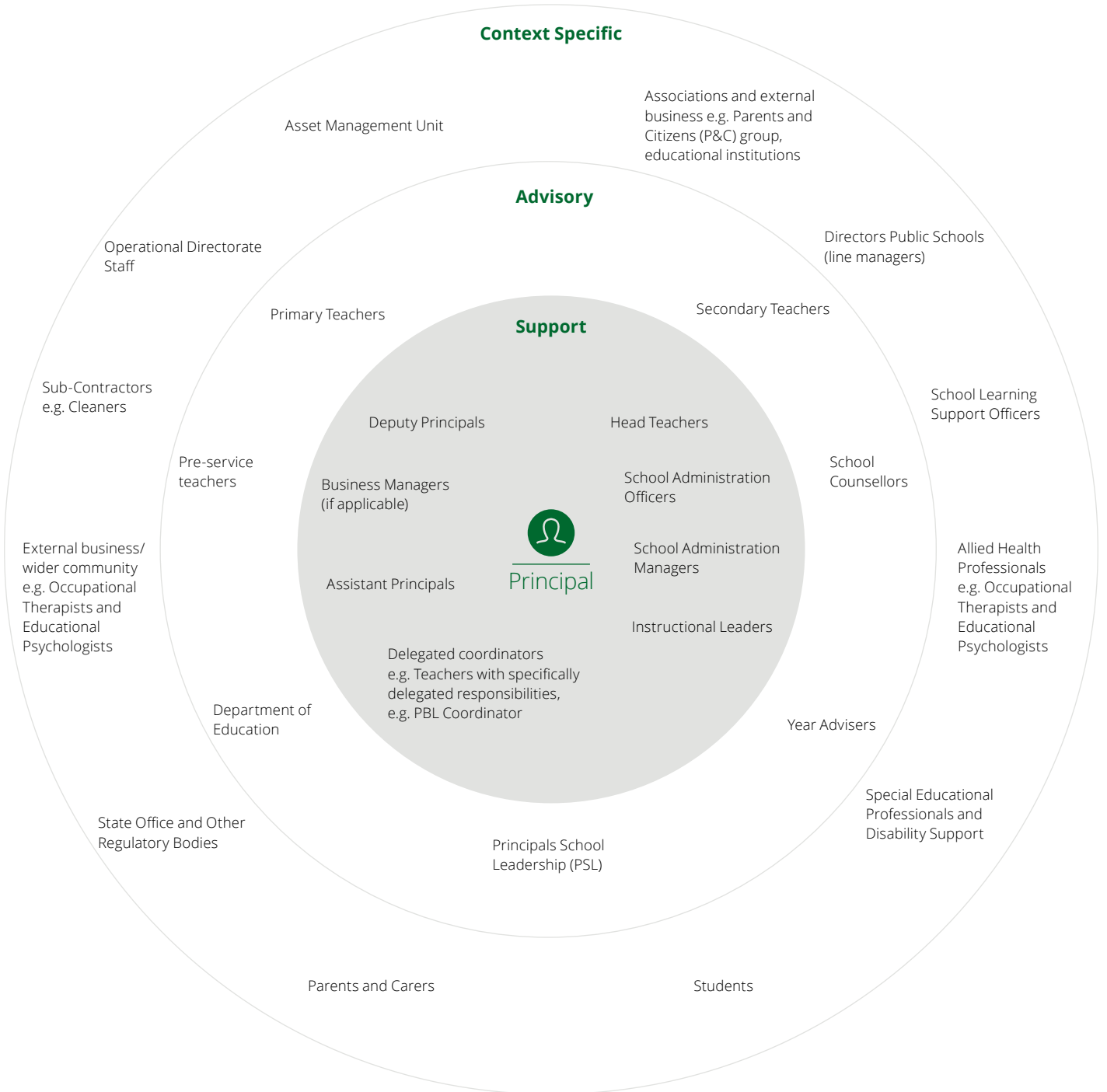A diagram of the principal support networks and key relationship developed through consultation.

Context Specific

Asset Management Unit

Associations and external business e.g. Parents and Citizens (P&C) group, educational institutions

Advisory

Operational Directorate Staff

Directors Public Schools (line managers)

Primary Teachers

Secondary Teachers

Support

Deputy Principals

Head Teachers

School Learning Support Officers

Sub-Contractors e.g. Cleaners

Business Managers (if applicable)

School Administration Officers

School Counsellors

Pre-service teachers

Principal

School Administration Managers

Assistant Principals

Allied Health Professionals e.g. Occupational Therapists and Educational Psychologists

External business/ wider community e.g. Occupational Therapists and Educational Psychologists

Instructional Leaders

Delegated coordinators e.g. Teachers with specifically delegated responsibilities, e.g. PBL Coordinator

Department of Education

Year Advisers

State Office and Other Regulatory Bodies

Special Educational Professionals and Disability Support

Principals School Leadership (PSL)

Parents and Carers

Students

Table 2.5: Administrative support staff participant characteristics (across two focus groups and two interviews)

Criteria	Description	Total	Participants												
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Role	School Administration Manager	6	■				■			■	■	■			■
	School Administration Officer	3		■									■	■	
	Business Manager	5			■	■		■	■					■	
School type	Primary	2		■							■				
	Secondary	10	■		■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	
	Central/Community	1													■
	Schools for Specific Purposes	0[e]													
Location	Major Cities (Metro)	9	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■				
	Regional/Remote	4										■	■	■	■
School size (FTE)	1-200 (1 x < 150)	2									■				■
	200-400	0[e]													
	440-800	1											■		
	800-2000 (1 x > 900)	9	■		■	■	■	■	■			■	■		

[e] Quota not met

Table 2.6: Executive and teaching staff participant characteristics (across two focus groups and two interviews)

Criteria	Description	Total	Participants									
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Role	Deputy Principal	2			■		■					
	Assistant Principal	3	■						■	■		
	Head Teacher	2						■			■	
	Instructional Leader	3		■		■						■
School type (FTE)	Primary	7	■	■	■	■			■	■		■
	Secondary	3					■	■			■	
	Central/Community	0[f]										
	Schools for Specific Purposes	0[f]										
Location	Major Cities (Metro)	6	■	■	■	■	■	■				
	Regional/Remote	4							■	■	■	■
School size	1-200 (1x<150)	0[f]										
	200-400	4			■	■			■	■		
	440-800	4	■	■			■					■
	800-2000 (1x>900)	2						■			■	

[f] Quota not met

Due to difficulty in recruiting for some roles to attend the focus groups, targeted follow-up interviews were conducted to address gaps in coverage. These are included in table 2.6.

c. Subject matter expert interviews
Structured one-hour interviews were undertaken with industry subject matter experts to provide independent, external insight into principals and the manageability of their workload. The researchers drew on the experts' knowledge and experience to further understand reasons for current workload, ways to improve workload and validate findings against existing research.

Through consultation, five subject matter experts interviewed were selected based on their relevant expertise and their knowledge of principal workload. They were:

1. Ann McIntyre, Australian Council for Educational Leadership (ACEL) NSW Branch President

2. Peter Cotton, Clinical and Organisation Psychologist, (Insight Social Research Consultants (SRC))

3. Phillip Riley, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership (Australian Catholic University)

4. John Fischetti, Head of School of Education (University of Newcastle)

5. Warren Marks, Leading Educators Around the Planet (LEAP) principal leadership program.

Other Stakeholder interviews
InIn addition to the core research activities identified above, sixteen interviews were conducted with key stakeholders within the department and with principal association representatives. These stakeholder interviews provided insight into the current state and future aspirations around the research study, helped to build on the existing understanding of the principal role and uncovered potential challenges and differing views for consideration.

Stakeholders were selected to provide coverage of external and internal contextual factors affecting principal workload:

- 4 x Operational Directorate Executive Directors
- 10 x Department executives
- 1 x Primary Principal Association President
- 1 x Secondary Principal Council President.

Research Reference Group and Operations Reference Group
A Research Reference Group and an Operations Reference Group were also established by CESE to provide input and feedback on the research approach, activity framework and insights gathered through the research.

Data collection, synthesis and analysis
For the quantitative research activity, a custom data collection tool was used to record both the responses to survey questions during the brief and debrief sessions, as well as recording activities during the direct observation period. A weight for each school that participated in the direct observation was generated in order to balance the sample of the 119 schools to the population. This weight was applied to all calculations for quantitative analysis. The sample size presented in the charts throughout the report, reflect the unweighted sample size. Further information regarding the approach to quantitative analysis can be found in Appendix 2, including techniques used to analyse the data and weightings applied.

For the qualitative research activity, various tools were used to elicit findings against each of the research questions. For the contextual inquiries, individual participant profiles were developed to convert raw, unstructured data (in the form of notes) into a structured profile format consistent across all participants. Profiles were then synthesised to elicit the universal themes,

as well as variances and nuances across individual profiles. Synthesis activity took place weekly to identify key themes. Empathy mapping was also used to elicit the universal themes of what principals think, feel, say and do, based on the research insights. Insights were shared and reviewed with the Research Reference Group and an Operations Reference Group for further input and validation.

A Summary of Findings from the quantitative and qualitative research is included in Appendix 4.

Research considerations
When reading and interpreting the findings of this report it is important to consider the aim of the study. This study was designed to obtain data and insight from a representative sample of NSW school principals with adequate coverage across as many principal and school characteristics as possible. When interpreting the results, it is important to consider that data analysed was based off a sample of 119 (5% of the total population) and time use is based on observed and reported activities conducted by principals across 119 school days. The small sample size limits the statistical sensitivity of the data and does not allow for highly granular analyses. In addition, it limits our ability to make statistical inferences on the population. A larger sample size (of approximately 750 to 900) would be required to conduct more granular analysis e.g. understanding the drivers of how principals spend their time differently. It is also important to consider the non-statistical error in quantitative research presented (e.g. that arising from researcher error in data entry), however this is not expected to be more than 3%[3].

Additional research considerations and limitations can be found in Appendix 3.

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[3] Refer to Appendix 3 for additional information on the non-statistical error of quantitative research

3. Research findings

Question 1: What tasks do principals spend their time on?

Analysis of the collected data reveals that, overall, principal time is spent as: 30% on leading teaching and learning; 9% on developing self and others; 6% on leading improvement, innovation and change; 40% on leading the management of the school; 11% on engaging and working with the community; and 3% on other activities.

Variations in the proportion of time principals spent on activities were observed across different principal and school categories.

The distribution of principal time use was analysed to identify differences across school and principal characteristics. This includes school type, school location, school size, ICSEA group and principal tenure. Based on the data analysed, there is not enough evidence to suggest that the distribution of time across activities are significantly different by these various characteristics (95% confidence interval). There is however, a significant difference between teaching principals and non-teaching principals on the distribution of time use across activities.

Principal time use

Analysis of the collected data reveals that overall principal time is: 30% focused on leading teaching and learning; 9% on developing self and others; 6% on leading improvement, innovation and change; 40% on leading the management of the school; 11% on engaging and working with the community; and 3% on other activities (refer Chart 3.1.1). As such, principals are spending more time leading the management of the school than leading teaching and learning.

Chart 3.1.1: Time use on activities overall, and by teaching principals and non-teaching principals
% of total time by role, combined direct observation and reported data

Legend: Overall (n=119); Teaching principals (n=19); Non-teaching principals (n=100)
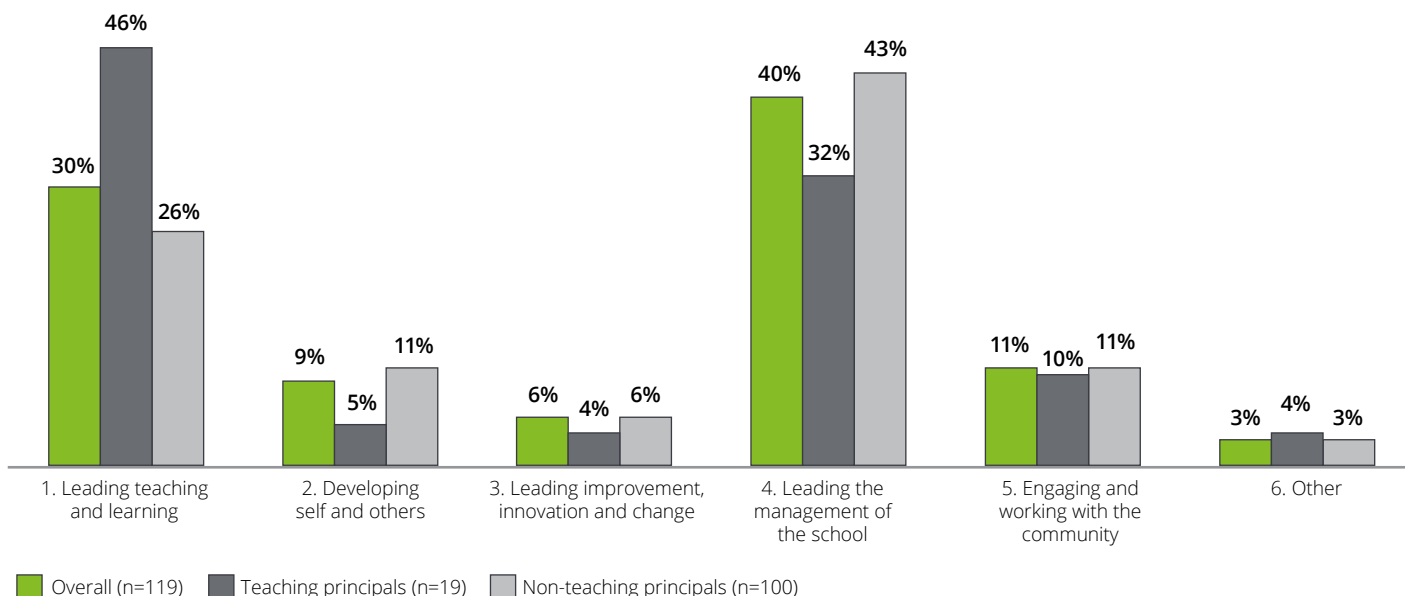
It should be noted here that, of the almost 1600 primary principals in NSW, approximately 600 are teaching principals. This reflects the large number of small primary schools, particularly in rural and remote areas. Evident in Chart 3.1.1, there is a significant difference between teaching and non-teaching principals on the distribution of time spent across activities. Teaching principals spent a larger proportion of time 'Leading teaching and learning' (46%) and less time 'Leading the management of the school' (32%) than non-teaching principals.

Further examination of the underlying sub-activities in Table 3.1.1 reveals that this is largely because of the teaching load of teaching principals as they spend 27% of their time on teaching (sub-activity 1.6) which involves planning and conducting lessons for students. Non-teaching principals comparatively only spend 4% of their time on this activity.

The table shows that, apart from teaching, principals spend most time on student development and wellbeing (7%), internal communications (9%) and e-mail management (7%). The table also highlights the sub-activities that principals appear to spend relatively little time on. For example, principals were observed, overall, to spend just 1% of their time on teacher/learning feedback, staff health and wellbeing, and staff mentoring and coaching. Principals were observed, overall, to spend just 2% of their time on strategic planning and 3% of their time on student relationships and engagement.

Table: 3.1.1 Time use on sub-activities by teaching and non-teaching principals (combined direct observation and reported data)

Sub-activity	Overall	Teaching	Non-teaching
1.1 Student learning and outcomes	6%	7%	5%
1.2 Student development and wellbeing	7%	6%	7%
1.3 Student behaviour and attendance	6%	3%	7%
1.4 Teaching standards and pedagogy	1%	0%	1%
1.5 Teacher/learning feedback	1%	2%	1%
1.6 Teaching	10%	27%	4%
2.1 Staff performance management	3%	1%	3%
2.2 Staff learning and development	4%	3%	5%
2.3 Staff health and wellbeing	1%	0.1%	1%
2.4 Staff mentoring and coaching	1%	0.4%	2%
3.1 Strategic planning	2%	1%	3%
3.2 Improvement and innovation	1%	0.4%	1%
3.3 Technology adoption and new systems	1%	1%	1%
3.4 Policy review and implementation	1%	2%	1%
3.5 Seek advice and guidance	1%	0.1%	1%
4.1 Financial management	3%	2%	4%
4.2 Reporting	5%	5%	5%
4.3 Internal communications	9%	4%	11%
4.4 E-mail management	7%	5%	8%
4.5 Staffing management	4%	2%	5%

Table: 3.1.1 Time use on sub-activities by teaching and non-teaching principals (combined direct observation and reported data)

Sub-activity	Overall	Teaching	Non-teaching
4.6 Complaints management	1%	0.4%	1%
4.7 Infrastructure/asset management	3%	2%	4%
4.8 Other processes and procedures	3%	5%	2%
4.9 Compliance	3%	6%	2%
4.10 Student enrolment	1%	0.1%	1%
5.1 Student relationships and engagement	3%	4%	3%
5.2 Parent and carer relationships and engagement	3%	3%	3%
5.3 Community involvement and engagement	5%	2%	5%
5.4 Partnerships	0.02%	0%	0.03%
5.5 Staff engagement	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
6.1 Personal time	1%	1%	2%
6.2 Time management (discretionary time)	0.4%	0.2%	0.5%
6.3 Lost time	1%	3%	1%

Principals reported that they had reduced capacity to fulfil their role as educational leaders as they are currently spending a large proportion of time on activities related to activities that they classify as administration. Principals generally defined administration as activities as either general or transactional in nature, all related to the 'Leading the management of the school' (activity 4), as well as elements of 'Strategic planning' (sub-activity 3.1). General administration includes; staffing management, complaints management, infrastructure/asset management, other processes and procedures. Transactional administration includes; reporting, internal communications, e-mail management, compliance, student enrolment. The principal definition of administration is important to consider when 'administrative tasks' or 'administrative burden/workload' is being referenced.

Transactional and general administrative activities were observed to be often unplanned, ad hoc and variable in nature, and contribute to the disrupted pattern of the typical day of a principal during school hours. Time focused on these tasks is felt to impact the capacity of the principal to complete activities that they see are core to their role, including but not limited to curriculum planning, monitoring student progress, teaching/learning feedback, community engagement and, student/staff health and wellbeing.

Through the contextual inquiries it was identified that principals were spending time on activities that would not typically be expected to be undertaken by someone in an executive/leadership position. Examples of activities observed include cleaning, undertaking minor repairs, fixing the plumbing, tree audits and troubleshooting technology issues. Principals often take on these activities as they tend to be the only person within the school with the flexibility within their day to do so. While there was agreement by participants that the principal's role includes being the manager of the site, the fact that this is translating into principals undertaking manual, transactional or specialist tasks that could be done by others, is not a division of labour likely to deliver the best outcomes. (Barriers to delegation of such tasks in particular, are explored further in question 2a).

Chart 3.1.2: Duration of individual observed activities

% of activities by time group, direct observation data

Activities	43%	39%	18%

■ Short (<5 mins)　□ Medium (5-20 mins)　■ Long (>20 mins)
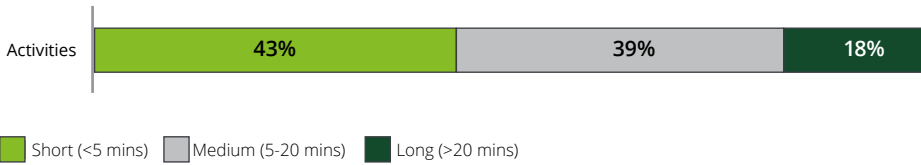
Analysis of direct observation data (i.e. the period in the day where the researcher was actively observing the principal) revealed that principals are undertaking a high number of activities during the school day that are varied in nature and short in duration. Principals on average undertook 45 activities during the observation period of the school day, with 28 of these activities being unique. Results show that 43% of the activities principals were observed undertaking, took less than 5 minutes. The duration of activities is shown in Chart 3.1.2 above.

Differences in the proportion of principals that undertook an activity and the time spent on the activity if undertaken across school and principal characteristics

Firstly, the proportion of principals that undertook each activity was analysed, to test whether there are significant differences in the proportion of principals that undertook a particular activity area, across principal and school characteristics. Secondly, time spent by those principals that undertook each activity was analysed to test whether there were significant differences in time spent within a particular activity area[1].

There was a significant difference in the proportion of principals that undertook

'Leading teaching and learning (only teaching)' across school types. Teaching principals at primary schools were the largest proportion of principals that undertook this activity (91%), while less than 30% of non-teaching principals at primary schools and secondary schools undertook this activity. Of principals that undertook this activity, there was a significant difference in the time spent as teaching principals at primary schools spent the most amount of time on this activity.

There was also a significance difference in the proportion of principals that undertook 'Leading teaching and learning (only teaching)' across school size. Principals in small schools, with 1 to 200 students, had the largest proportion of principals that undertook this activity (66%), with less than 25% of principals in larger sized schools undertaking this activity. A significant difference in time spent was also found across school size, as principals in these small schools also spent the most amount of time on this activity, when they undertook the activity.

There was also a significant difference in the proportion of principals that undertook 'Leading teaching and learning (only teaching)' across school location. 60% of principals in a regional location

undertook this activity compared to only 17% in a metro location. However, time spent by principals that undertook this activity across these locations were not significantly different.

There was a significant difference in the proportion of principals that undertook 'developing self and others' across school location and size. Metro principals had the largest proportion of principals that undertook this activity (97%) compared to principals in a regional location (85%). Principals in small schools with 1 to 200 students had the smallest proportion of principals that undertook this activity (80%), compared to 99% for schools with 201 to 400 students, 95% for schools with 441 to 800 students, and 100% for schools with more than 800 students. However, there was not a significant different in the time spent for principals that undertook an activity in this area.

All principals undertook the activity 'leading the management of the school', and a significant difference was found on the time spent on this activity across ICSEA groups. Schools that fall into the second highest ICSEA group[2] (974 to 1021) spend the most amount of time on this activity.

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[1] An F-test from a one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test for significant differences in the log transformed time per activity given a principal undertook the activity, by school and principal characteristics. The log of time was used given the heavy skew in the time per activity data.

[2] Lower values represent student bodies with relatively disadvantaged educational backgrounds; higher values represent student bodies with educationally advantaged backgrounds. The groupings can be roughly summarised 557 to 936, 937 to 973, 974 to 1021and 1022 to 1247.
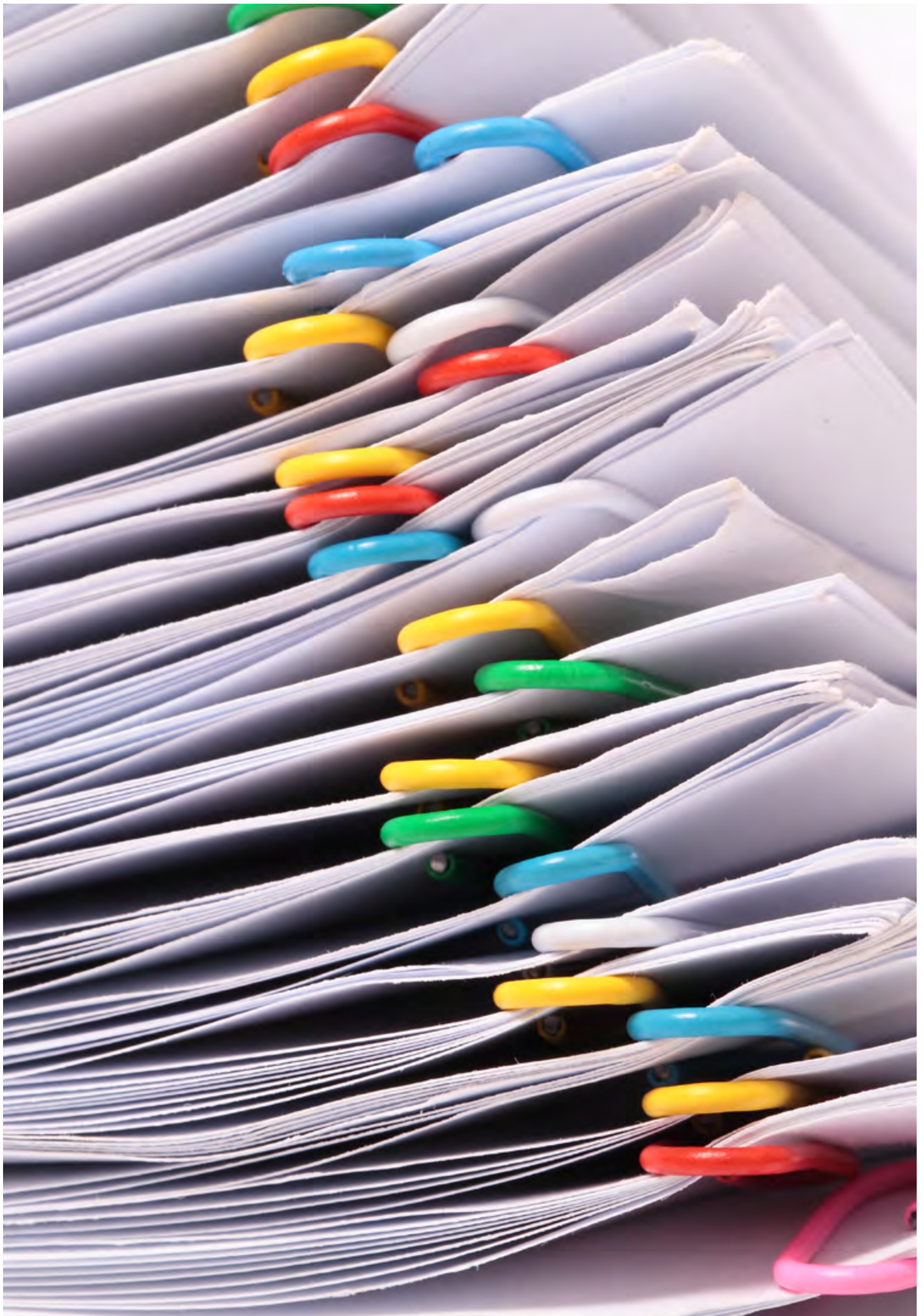
Question 2: What are the enablers and barriers to principals managing their workload?

Enablers that contribute positively to principals managing their workload were found to be: capable and available executive and administrative support staff, in an appropriate structure; targeted staff capability augmentation where necessary, including but not limited to the use of a Business Manager role; creation of formal and informal collegial networks that are a key source of information and support, including involvement in principal professional bodies; and, tools and frameworks for the principals to self-evaluate the effectiveness of their work and identify opportunities for development.

"We removed regions and downsized consultancy so the onus is more on schools now"
Principal, Central, Remote

Key barriers that negatively impact on the principals ability to manage their workload were found to be: limited availability of administrative support and resources, including the lack of allocated administrative funding; inability to leverage executive staff for planned and ad hoc tasks; limited training and 'on the job' support available for the breadth and complexities of the role; coaching and support that is not sufficiently timely nor adequate in breadth; lack of functionality, and integration, of departmental systems and tools; insufficient support and training for systems and tools; no clear measures of effectiveness in the role; and, reduced department support services for specialist roles.

"My ability to delegate is completely dependent on the capability and capacity of my staff – if they are overwhelmed I just won't give them anything else to do"
Principal, Primary, Metro

Enablers to principals managing their workload
Executive and administrative support staff capability and availability
When structured appropriately, with collective understanding of roles and responsibilities, executive and administrative support staff are able to autonomously execute a wide range of the ad hoc and reactive activities of a transactional nature. Various components of WH&S, asset management or student behaviour management responsibilities are often assigned to executive staff members. For administrative support roles, some aspects of budgeting/finance management or student enrolments are assigned to School Administration Manager (SAM) or School Administration Support Staff (SASS) roles where the staff members have the required capability. This reduces the level of disruption in the principal's day as well as reducing their workload overall, providing them the capacity to focus on tasks that might otherwise need to be undertaken after schools hours, in the evenings, or at the weekend.

The ability to augment capabilities not currently in existence at the school level allows the principal to allocate activities to those most suited to the task (the effective division of labour), thereby increasing efficiency. In some cases this involved the introduction of a Business Manager, in other cases a finance manager or asset manager. The ability of a principal to evaluate the skills necessary to deliver against the required outcomes for the school, and acquire the right combination of skills, capability, experience and capacity to efficiently deliver those outcomes, is a significant enabler to the management of not only their workload, but the workload across the entire school.

Observations identified that when principals are able to develop an executive team structure and establish ways of working (refer to question 5) that support collaboration, collective responsibility, and empowered decision making, this can have very positive impacts on, amongst a number of things, the overall operating rhythm within the school. This is due to minimising disruptions, enabling more planned activities, to allow better prioritisation of principal time towards more strategic activities. If desired, it should be possible for principals to set aside time on a regular basis (which could be weekly, monthly, quarterly) during standard hours to undertake activities that require longer periods of dedicated time and concentration – and for this sort of activity to not have to be completed in evenings or weekends out of necessity.

In addition to capability, principals cited staff availability to be an enabler to principals effectively managing their workload. The ability to have others available to be a point of triage and execution of the ad hoc and unplanned activities, is of particular benefit.

For smaller schools, where there is limited or irregular availability of executive and/or administrative support staff to be a first point of contact, the Principal becomes the first response to any and all interactions (regardless of topic, urgency, or priority) therefore increasing their workload and the level of disruption and interruption of their day.

Capable and available executive and administrative support staff can enable principals to more effectively manage their workload by being a point of contact, triaging, and executing, where appropriate, a range of planned, unplanned and ad hoc school related activities, thereby allowing the principal to focus on high value add interventions that are core to their role.

Involvement in principal professional bodies
The environments created by professional bodies such as the Principal Associations are seen as being collaborative and supportive, providing principals with opportunities for networking, learning and development. Information received through collegial support networks such as the Primary Principals' Association (PPA) and the Secondary Principals' Council (SPC) help principals to manage their workload. Principals often learn about department plans and initiatives that will have an impact on schools through these associations before hearing from the department. Principals are then able to use this knowledge to better plan for and adapt to upcoming change.

The associations further provide an environment in which principals can share their workload management practices and experiences with each other. For example, the SPC make available a distribution list for all principals to use when looking for support or advice, for example; obtaining a sample fire evacuation lock down procedure. While it is acknowledged that support materials being accessed through these networks are often available through the department, the difficulty in locating the material online, or finding the right person to ask within the department, means that going via your personal network is faster and easier.

> "So much of what you do you learn from your network"
> **Principal, Secondary, Regional**

Informal support networks
Outside of the professional associations, principals have also developed their own informal support networks that they can turn to for advice, coaching, help and support. These informal networks are often developed through previous working relationships (e.g. a principal that mentored them on their leadership journey), through their local principal network or through meeting colleagues at principal events. Principals typically turn to these networks as a first point of contact when they require general advice or support. For example, one principal outlined that a group of five principals meet regularly outside of formal network meetings to participate in structured sessions around areas of focus for the year and discuss each individual principal's 'greatest points of need'. In another instance, a similar network is convened and facilitated by the Director Public Schools. Advice from principals, who have previously experienced a similar situation or have a high level of understanding of their context, seems to be particularly useful in helping principals make decisions about how to manage challenges within their context.

> "I often use my mates (other principals) to sound check my ideas and evaluate my own work"
> **Principal, Primary, Metro**

Principals are generally more comfortable discussing their challenges with their colleagues as they feel that they are less likely to be judged for not having an immediate solution or response. This is in contrast to their reporting line relationship with the Director Public Schools, where they cite reluctance to share any challenges that could lead to a perception that they are struggling in their role or are incompetent. Principals often feel they can only turn to their Director Public Schools when they already have a strategy or solution to address the situation.

Frameworks and tools that can be used to evaluate effectiveness
Frameworks and tools, such as the department's School Excellence Framework (SEF), the AITSL Professional Standard for Principals and Leadership Profiles, and the department's Leadership and Management Credential, provide principals with a guide to better evaluate their current practices and capability. These are particularly useful as a frame of reference for principals to determine what their key responsibilities are, and therefore where to focus their efforts. These increase the confidence of the principal, helping them to identify and prioritise their workload demands based on what these frameworks and tools highlight is directly relevant to success in their role.

> "The SEF forced us to audit our practices and really enabled collaboration and team work"
> **Principal, Secondary, Metro**

School Excellence Framework
Principals found the SEF to be a helpful framework to guide their understanding of their schools performance. The SEF is designed to support schools and principals in their pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of the key elements of high quality practice across the three domains of learning, teaching and leading.

Principals were found to have adopted the framework to enable them to develop an understanding of their baseline of performance and to identify areas that they can target to improve overall school performance. Principals further found this information useful to design new initiatives and ways of working with their staff to improve overall school performance and to improve workload management across the school.

AITSL Professional Standard for Principals

Principals have adopted this standard as a way to provide clarity around what their role is and the outcomes that they should be focussed on achieving. In the absence of a role description and/or set of defined outcomes they should be measured against, principals use the Professional Standard to provide them with guidance on what they should be expected to know, understand and do in order to succeed in their work. The Standard was seen as relevant not only to new principals but also those who had been in the education system for many years.

The Leadership Profiles aligned to the AITSL Professional Standard also provide principals with a set of leadership actions that effective principals implement as they progress in their proficiency in the role, and provide a high level pathway for principals and aspiring principals in terms of the capabilities that will be required to succeed in the role.

It was observed throughout this research study that many principals kept a copy of the Professional Standard readily accessible within their workspace and often had a printed version on their wall for their reference. Principals also articulated their role and its scope using the language of the five key Professional Practices outlined in the professional standards: leading teaching and learning; developing self and others; leading improvement, innovation and change; leading the management of the school; and engaging and working with the community. A number of principals cited that the framework can be useful to managing and prioritising their tasks and activities across the five professional practices to achieve success.

NSW DoE Principal Leadership and Management Credential

Principals that are new in the role can find it difficult to meet the leadership and management capabilities that are required of a principal in today's environment. The Leadership and Management Credential established by the department (which principals are expected to complete prior to, or within 12 months of, their appointment to the role) better equips new principals with the knowledge and capability to take on the additional accountabilities and decision-making requirements of their role.

Principals involved in the research activities who were newer in role, commented that the Principal Credential made them feel better prepared for the leadership and management components of their role, citing the comprehensive nature of the training and their use of the credential training and support materials outside of the formal training sessions. Principals do, however, feel that they still require further support in developing capabilities for additional responsibilities that have evolved in the role-particularly in areas such as financial management and staffing management.

Barriers to principals managing their workload
Insufficient administrative support staff and resources

Principals consistently noted that they require additional administrative support to manage the volume of administrative work that is now required of them. While the provision of additional administrative support staff is one aspect of alleviating workload, a more holistic approach is required, that addresses: the inflexibility of the current staffing model (perceived or otherwise); the varying capability levels of existing administrative support staff; roles not having adapted to changing work requirements; and some principals' overall hesitation to allocate funding (even dedicated funding) to administrative support staff at the perceived expense of funding for staff or resources directly related to student learning.

Restrictions in the current resourcing model limit principals' ability to allocate resources according to need, due to SASS staffing entitlement allocations being based on the enrolment data. The use of this historical data to inform SASS staff requirements particularly impacts on quickly growing schools, as their allocations are often below what they would be if more recent enrolment numbers were used to drive the entitlement. This increases the workload on existing school resources. The current formula used to derive administrative support staff in SSPs also provides them with fewer resources than either a primary or secondary school.

The varying capability level of administrative support staff within a school can be a barrier to principals managing their workload. While there is some evidence of examples of individual underperformance in role, more broadly the challenge exists with regard to the roles themselves. Administrative support staff roles, and therefore the associated capabilities, have not evolved to cater for the changing nature of the skills required across a range of administrative tasks (use of technology, increased communication channels, as well as greater complexity in tasks related to budgeting and finance management).

Where the administrative support staff exhibit higher levels of managerial, financial and administrative capability, they are better positioned to share a greater level of responsibility with the principal for completing administrative tasks, which frees up principal capacity to focus on activities related to improving student outcomes through teaching and learning.

The Business Manager role has emerged in response to this dynamic, with the aim being that a capable Business Manager will be able to better support the principal in the efficient management of the school's business functions, including asset management, student and staff administration, workplace health and safety, and financial management.

Although evidence suggests that a Business Manager is able to ease the administrative burden on principals, some principals are uncertain as to whether they represent a worthwhile return on investment given that they are relatively expensive. In addition, the role is seen as relatively difficult to recruit for, in particular in remote and regional areas. The expense of employing a Business Manager also creates a barrier for adoption by smaller schools under their current budget and RAM allocation; although some schools have been trialling shared models in which a Business Manager can support a number of schools within the same network. The model for this, however, is relatively inflexible, as the Business Manager will often have specific dedicated days/time allocated to individual schools, meaning that they are unable to assist with and respond to ad hoc requests or issues.

It is also noted that not every school will benefit from engaging a Business Manager to the same degree. Depending on the mix of skills, capabilities, interests and strengths that exist within a school's executive and support team, there may be other roles of greater benefit than a Business Manager. The key is for Principals to have the ability to evaluate the capabilities and capacity required to deliver on the schools administrative needs, to then allocate budget accordingly, from within an envelope of funding.

Ability to leverage executive staff for ad hoc tasks
Whilst having capable executive staff is cited as an enabler, it is important to note however, that although this may alleviate some of the workload pressure on principals, reducing workload relating to unplanned and ad hoc tasks is best achieved when the executive staff have the capacity to take on additional responsibilities or tasks outside of what may be determined in their role statements or agreed upon between themselves and the principal.

Principals often cited that executive and administrative support staff were at capacity in their roles, therefore resulting in them not being able to take on any additional work, or principals being reluctant to delegate tasks to preserve staff wellbeing. This is further explored in question 2a.

"More money doesn't buy you more time"
Principal, Secondary, Metro

Lack of allocated funds for administrative support
Whilst LSLD could be seen as an enabler supporting principals to fund additional administrative staff or having the ability to use RAM funding to supply more technical administrative expertise in schools (such as a financial management expert shared amongst schools), without having 'allocated' budget for this, principals are concerned about the negative perception of spending money on administrative support rather than on areas that may be perceived as more directly relevant to student learning and wellbeing. This is particularly of concern when justifying this spending to their community. This can lead to allocation of funding to other areas relating to student learning, i.e. student support roles and therefore principals not being able to alleviate their administrative burden, adding to their own workload.

Coaching and support that is not sufficiently timely nor adequate in breadth
Principals noted that they feel there is insufficient training and 'on the job' support to prepare them for the breadth and complexities of the role in today's context (refer to question 4 for further detail on the changing nature and quantity of the role).

Principals particularly feel that leadership and management capabilities are becoming increasingly critical to achieving success in the principal role; however, they do not feel that they have adequate training and support to develop these capabilities.

"You don't really know what it's like 'til you are in the role"
Principal, Secondary, Metro

Whilst the Principal Credential has somewhat addressed the development needs for the role of a principal today, principals feel there are still areas where further training and development could be beneficial, in particular in financial management, strategic planning, and staff performance management. A few principals who have been in principal roles within the department for some time felt that training and development programs provided by the department from the then Professional Learning and Leadership Development (PLLD) Directorate were highly beneficial in building capacity in staff to take on their roles.

This issue is not only limited to training and capability development but extends to ensuring that principals are 'leadership ready' by embedding these capabilities into principal pathways, talent identification, and transition and succession planning.

In terms of 'on the job' support, principals feel there is limited formal coaching or support available to help deal with complex decision making, implementing change within the schools or managing complex staff issues.

The support is often required in a timely manner or for the duration of 'difficult periods' within the school, in particular, if the support is for things that have a strong emotional impact on the principals or have cultural impacts within the school. Some examples of times where principals required on the job support included: times of strong community backlash, violence within schools or towards the principal and, complex staff performance management cases.

> "I only go to my Director about a particular challenge if I have already figured out how I am going to go about solving it"
>
> **Principal, Schools for Specific Purposes, Metro**

Where development support is sought, such as: sharing of challenges faced; seeking advice; and, being coached, existing departmental support does not always meet principals' needs, with some principals funding coaching or mentoring support themselves. Principal School Leadership (PSL) roles were cited as a good source of support for principals and executive staff, as they provided general advice and mentoring for areas of school leadership i.e. developing school plans, or support in resolving complex problems. However, there was still the view that there remains a gap in terms of: personalised coaching based on individual principals' development areas; and, support that covers the full breadth and complexities of the role.

Principals typically would not go to their Director Public Schools as their line manager for coaching or mentoring, as the role is seen as a reporting based relationship-heavily focussed on: compliance and performance; supporting with case management; complaints management; and, supporting teacher improvement plans.

Principals often expressed concern about raising things that they needed help with to their Director Public Schools or in other department forums. They were concerned about being perceived as incompetent or that they would be judged, and that that perception would translate to a limiting of career progression.

Not having the timely coaching and support required in the role, tailored to the specific needs of the principals, can lead to principals spending additional time and effort to complete the tasks at hand and increases the likelihood of instances of suboptimal outcomes.

Departmental systems and tools lack required functionality and support
The tools and software developed by the department that principals are required to use to complete their work are typically seen as lacking functionality, not user friendly, uncoordinated and lacking integration.

> "The biggest frustration has been introducing new initiatives that just don't work – like SPaRO"
>
> **Principal, Primary, Metro**

Some tools, when released, lacked the required functionality for effective workload management. Functionality issues range from connectivity issues i.e. the system not able to 'connect' or 'save' work, through to outputs, such as reports, not meeting specific needs. These are seen as adding significant frustration to the principal role with a lot of time wasted and sometimes, duplication of work. LMBR was a system particularly cited as lacking required functionality when released, effectively at beta stage, resulting in increased administrative workload on principals and staff to manage the transition, whilst the department was fixing bugs and making functional improvements.

Even though considered a useful resource, a tool that was cited as 'difficult to navigate' was the A-Z tool where functionality was not seen as 'user friendly' or enabling quick and easy locating of required reports.

The timing of department tool roll outs were cited to be highly uncoordinated adding to principals' workload and causing significant frustrations. An example includes the rollout of the SEF, which is a great enabler to developing the School Plan, being released after the reform of the School Plan was released, and therefore after plans had been submitted.

Overall tools were seen as poorly integrated to support principals in having a clear holistic view on operations within the school, i.e. data exists across multiple systems. Principals also indicated that whilst training was provided for the various tools and systems, the training was often not timely or did not provide a 'full' view of how to optimise the tools for each school and context. Further, the support provided to assist in using these systems was often inefficient and ineffective for principals themselves as well as their administrative support staff. Principals can find it difficult to locate or contact appropriate support resources when faced with a system issue, which can lead to further lost time.

No clear measures of effectiveness
Whilst there are tools and frameworks in place that help guide focus and discretionary effort, principals do not have key outcomes against which their effectiveness can be measured, which impacts on their ability to consistently and appropriately prioritise activities. In the absence of these outcomes, there is a sense from principals that their effectiveness might be measured by their ability to complete all of the administrative and compliance activities that are demanded by the department. Principals can increase their focus on these activities as they perceive that they may be seen as ineffective, however this can come at the cost of a decrease in focus on teaching and learning.

Reduced department support services

Principals cited that the support services available from the department as well as other government services have decreased over recent years, resulting in these services being either less accessible or more expensive to obtain. This has further resulted in reduced 'expertise' available in schools and a barrier to principals managing their workload.

A particular driver of this has reportedly been the removal of consultant and specialist support roles for students in schools, resulting in schools needing to source required skillsets; for example, LaST (Learning and Support Teacher) roles. While LSLD has provided more money as a resource, the required skillsets for key roles are less accessible, particularly for remote locations, and tend to be more expensive than when previously subsidised by the department. This has resulted in either diminishing alternative resources (funding) or principals spending additional time sourcing these skillsets themselves.

> "I needed a specialist skill-set for pedagogy so I went to a consultant not the department"
> **Principal, Primary, Metro**

Principal X is a secondary principal with many years of experience. This principal is proud of the many things they have been able to implement and achieve within their current school; in particular, having consistently low suspension rates for the area.

This principal has found the last few years more difficult to manage than ever before, predominantly due to the amount of extra 'stuff that has landed' on principals to manage without the required support. They believe the department employs good people who want to do good things; however, due to the siloed nature of the department's operations, the principal does not believe that the department is working well. This impacts on the principal's ability to carry out requests and implement change. One particular area of frustration articulated related to the management of the school budget. The tools provided were seen by the principal to lack the required functionality to enable effective budget planning and forecasting: they did not contain up-to-date information and did not reflect the accurate financial position of the school. This resulted in a 15-month period during which the principal did not have a clear view of the schools financials. This principal resorted to manual spreadsheet management and reconciled with systems when required. This was an intensive process that should have been able to have been completed in a fraction of the time, had the right tools and information been provided.

The principal also felt that the training provided by the department was less than optimal in supporting principals to make effective decisions: "The training really only focused on how the tool functions, not 'how to best interpret this report' or 'what should this look like?'" The principal ended up employing a local financial expert to upskill staff within the school and in other nearby schools by arranging various training and development sessions.

Question 2a: Could some tasks be delegated to other school staff to help principals manage their workload?

There is opportunity for the delegation of some tasks currently performed by principals, to help manage their workload. However, principals identified a number of limitations that currently hinder their ability to do so. A number of these have been highlighted as barriers in response to question 2, and are repeated here where they relate specifically to delegation.

The limitations faced by principals to delegate include: the capacity, availability and capability of staff in their school to deal with additional responsibilities including planned and ad hoc requests; the flexibility (perceived or otherwise) in the existing staffing models to enable principals to access specific or specialist skills to augment their teams; and, administrative support staff role descriptions not accounting for the nature and complexity of administrative tasks required, in particular tasks relating to leading the management of the school. Despite these limitations, some principals have been effective at delegation and structuring their teams to assist with completion of activities and thereby management of workload, where others have found this more challenging.

There are some tasks that principals felt quite strongly are theirs to own and therefore cannot be delegated. While these tasks may differ by principal, some examples consistently cited included tasks relating to community engagement or doing playground duty to remain visible to students and staff.

"I am lucky that my staff go over and above their role"
Principal, Schools for Specific Purposes, Metro

Barriers to delegation
Principal delegation approach
Some principals are more effective than others at delegating and structuring their teams to assist with completion of activities and the required workload. Those who have been effective at this have generally developed their own capability in influencing, engaging and motivating their administrative support staff with limited support from the system in doing so, irrespective of the nature of the task.

In relation to delegation of tasks, these individuals seemed to take a more hands on supportive approach and tend to role model desired behaviour and spend time building the capacity of their staff to undertake the required tasks. Less effective principals tend to be more controlling in their approach and are either reluctant to delegate tasks, and/or tend to push tasks onto staff members with little support to complete the work effectively.

Staff workload and capacity
Principals feel that they are unable to delegate additional tasks to their executive due to their executive's (such as Deputy Principals, Assistant Principals and Head Teachers) existing workload, capability and capacity. These tasks might include things like writing the school newsletter, dealing with asset management issues or resolving parent complaints. Principals often cited that executive staff were at capacity in their roles, therefore resulting in them not being able to take on any additional work required, or principals being reluctant to delegate tasks to preserve staff wellbeing. Executive staff usually have dedicated teaching and learning responsibilities, with principals often feeling reluctant to distract them from these high value add tasks.

The ability for principals to delegate is further hampered by the perceptions of scope of current roles for both executive and administrative support staff.

There are perceptions that it is not appropriate to delegate tasks that are not directly aligned to either executive or administrative roles, therefore in the absence of support, these tasks are taken on by the principal.

Administrative tasks not accounted for in roles
Principals are increasingly required to carry out a large number of administrative tasks that are repeatable in nature, in particular around site and asset management. Whilst it is acknowledged that some of these tasks are important for the management and running of the school, they have not historically been incorporated into role descriptions (or not in an explicit way) and have tended to develop organically. Some of the activities related to these tasks can be delegated i.e. carrying out a ground inspection, which can be delegated, versus signing off an inspection, which should sit with the principal. When identifying opportunities to delegate, this lack of clarity around which role is best suited to undertake these activities, results in the principal's interpretation of the existing role descriptions, and the need to develop their own rationale for what tasks belong to which role.

Question 2b: Could department support materials and communications be improved to help principals manage their workloads?

Department support materials and communications are perceived by principals as complicated and lacking co-ordination, contextual information and a clear rationale for change. This leads to an unnecessary burden on principals who are required to interpret and act on what they receive, often in unrealistic timeframes. In addition to the difficult nature of the communications themselves, the volume received from the department, and from a wide variety of sources within the department is problematic.

Improvements can be made to enable principals to see the broader picture and intent of departmental communications, with greater clarity and transparency (including providing a forward view) to ensure principals are best positioned to absorb, manage and deliver on what is required.

"There is no co-ordinated view of what lands on a principal's plate across the department"
Principal, Primary, Regional

Communications to principals often contain 'compliance-based' terminology which require principals to translate before they can communicate what is required to other school staff. For example; communications will clearly outline requirements and due dates for completion of required activity, however may not provide additional insight into the rationale or incentive for staff or principals to do so. For principals to encourage participation and willingness to complete the tasks required amongst staff (rather than it just seen as another tick box exercise), they often spend additional time crafting and communicating the messaging

of importance and relevance to the school. This takes time and effort to interpret communications and principals often feel the need to 'filter' through information to simplify and determine meaning to their school and context.

Similarly, department support materials (particularly training guides) are often perceived as 'complex' and 'impersonal'. Principals find that support materials often take a long time to read, interpret and understand and can sometimes be out of date and not fit for purpose. The department intranet, despite recent improvements and updates, can still be difficult to navigate to find useful information and required materials. Principals will often turn to their colleagues for support materials and information as they find this faster than going through department channels.

In addition to this, principals do not have the capacity to absorb and action the large number of communications, material changes related to initiatives, and policy updates that they receive from the department.

"There are no gatekeepers of communication"
Department Executive

Principals receive communication materials and requests from multiple directorates within the department, with no clear co-ordination of delivery between the various areas. There is also no mechanism for the areas to align and integrate, resulting in principals receiving a 'mixed bag' of communications and requests and no single contact point for support. There is also often not enough of a forward view of the timelines for these requirements, nor much consideration placed on aligning timelines with typical school rhythms, to minimise the impact on principals' workload.

There is limited clarity around how tasks requested by the department align to or add value to educational outcomes, which is needed for principals to effectively understand and implement new initiatives. This makes it difficult for principals to justify departmental motivations and requests to staff, but also to the broader school community.

"Everything you do seems to be priority"
Principal, Primary, Regional

When faced with multiple pressing deadlines, principals can find it difficult to prioritise initiatives, leading to a feeling of constant workload pressure and an inability to complete tasks within required timeframes. More experienced principals tend to infer what they believe to be the most important tasks, or what they believe aligns most closely to their school strategy to determine and prioritise what to act upon first, and what level of detail and effort is required, which enables them to better manage their workload. Less experienced principals tend to try and complete everything requested within given timeframes, adding to their stress and work overload.

In an attempt to better manage departmental communications and demands, principals have put in place informal collegial networks to communicate and share information and experiences.

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Question 3: Is the current principal workload achievable and sustainable?

Most principals reported that the current demands of their role result in workload that goes beyond what they consider reasonable. While acknowledging that activity beyond standard hours is required to undertake their role, there is a general feeling that the current workload is neither achievable (75% reporting their role to be 'difficult to achieve' or 'not at all achievable') nor sustainable (77% reporting their workload to be 'difficult to sustain' or 'not at all sustainable') in the longer term. Principal perception of workload achievability and sustainability was further analysed to identify differences across school and principal characteristics. There is a significant difference in achievability scores across different locations (i.e. metro, regional, and remote), more specifically between schools located in metro and regional locations. A larger proportion of metro school principals perceive their workload as more 'achievable' or 'very easy to achieve' (34%), than regional school principals (14%). For sustainability, there is not enough evidence to suggest there is a significant difference across any of the school and principal characteristics.

While some principals have been successful in adapting to the changing nature of their role, the majority felt that they were unable to effectively complete the full range of work expected of them.

There are a number of factors around the changing nature, complexity and volume of work required in the principal's role that appear to be impacting on whether they feel that their workload is achievable and sustainable. One key factor is a lack of clarity around the scope of their role, which makes it difficult to understand whether they are being effective and what types of activities they should be prioritising (i.e. that contribute the most toward the desired outcomes for their role).

Stress levels have become heightened as the sense of consistent overload, the perceived expectations and the workload, continue to increase. As a result, principals sometimes find themselves questioning their own competence and ability to do their job. Principals believe that this is having a negative effect on their health and wellbeing – and therefore impacting on their perception of the long term sustainability of their workload.

Overall, from contextual inquiries it was gathered that, while principals feel that their workload will not decrease over time, there is a general feeling that the number of reforms and large scale initiatives will need to slow down in order to make workload more achievable and sustainable.

## Achievability of current principal workload

In order to respond to work pressures such as the demands of leading and managing the school and achieve outcomes aligned with their strategic plan, the level of engagement expected by the community, and, the volume of the requests from the department, principals consistently work well beyond standard hours, including weekends. Principals acknowledge that to complete the activities required of them, additional time is required outside of the standard hours, however the extent of that additional time is beyond what most principals would ideally undertake.

Despite indicating that they are consistently working long hours, many principals feel they are still not able to get through the required workload. Principals perceive that regardless of how many hours they worked each week, they would still not be able to achieve all that is required.

Principals as a group feel overwhelmed by their workload. As observed in Chart 3.3.1, 75% of those who participated in the direct observation research activity indicated that their workload was either 'difficult to achieve' or 'not at all achievable'. Only 21% reported their workload as achievable, and only 4% as very achievable.

Chart 3.3.1: Principal perception of achievability of workload

% of observation participants, reported data

n=116
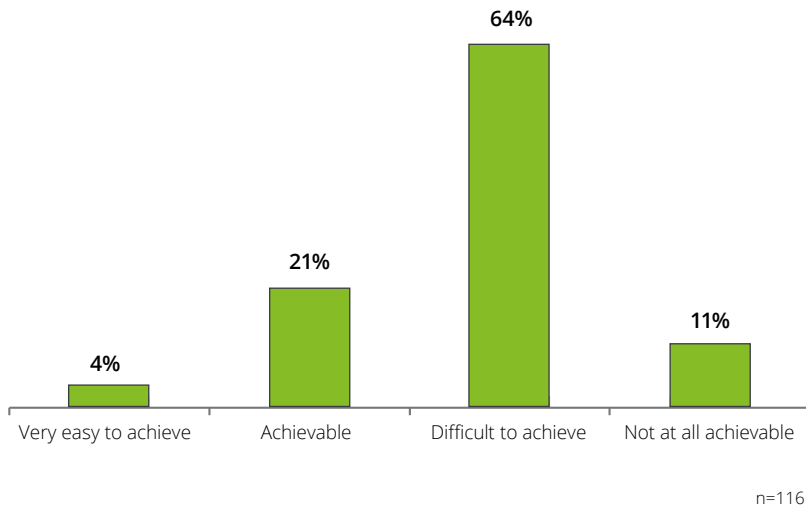
Principal perception of workload achievability was analysed to identify any differences across school and principal characteristics. This included school types, principal tenure, school size, school location and ICSEA group. There is a significant difference in achievability scores across different locations (i.e. metro, regional, and remote), more specifically between schools located in metro and regional locations. A larger proportion of metro school principals perceive their workload as more 'achievable' or 'very easy to achieve' (34%), than regional school principals (14% as outlined in Chart 3.3.2). However, there is not enough evidence to suggest that achievability is significantly different across school types, principal tenure, school size, or ICSEA group[3].

Chart 3.3.2: Principal perception of achievability of workload by school location

% of observation participants, reported data
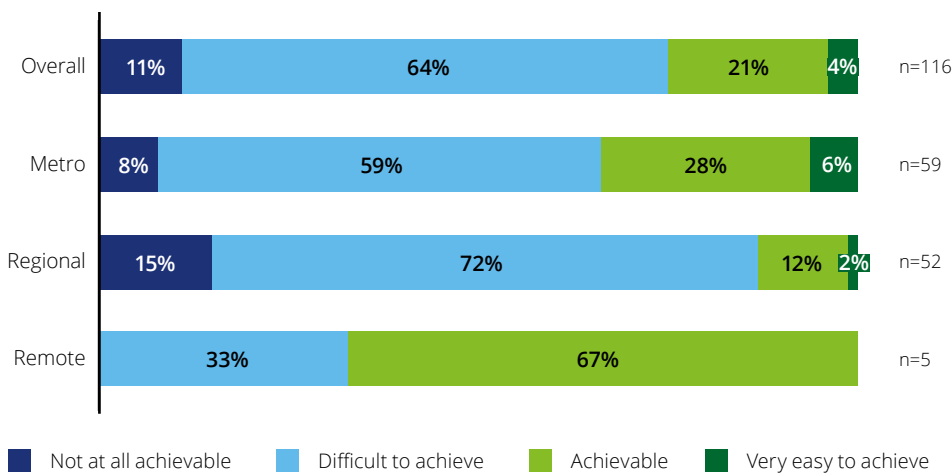
Note: The sample of Remote schools is very low

[3] Refer to Appendix 2 for additional information of achievability across school types, principal tenure, school size, or ICSEA group

There is a significant difference in achievability across school locations, more specifically between schools located in metro and regional locations. As seen in Chart 3.3.2, a larger proportion of metro school principals perceive their workload as more 'achievable' or 'very easy to achieve' (34%), than regional school principals (14%).

While only representing a small sample in the study (n=5), principals in remote schools overall felt that their workload was more achievable than not; with 67% reporting their workload to be 'achievable' (67%) versus 33% reporting their workload to be 'difficult to achieve'.

Even when tasks are achieved, there is a sense that principals are just 'getting by' when asked about the management and achievability of their workload. Principals report that tasks may either be rushed, or that the bare minimum is done to complete the tasks, with principals left feeling unsatisfied with the quality of their work. This has, at times, led to principals feeling a sense of incompetence for not being able to keep up with the demands of the role, or a feeling of guilt for not being able to complete activities.

In light of this, the activities that are most often de-prioritised appear to be those that either do not have pressing deadlines, do not require immediate attention, or are the types of activities that require larger chunks of dedicated time and effort to produce the required output. This is not an unusual pattern for those in a reactive time management pattern; however, this tends to drive a bias of time spent on the 'urgent' rather than the 'important'.

The most cited examples of activities unable to be completed due to other priorities are the teaching and learning components of the role; such as observing classrooms during the school day, engaging with staff and students to evaluate learning outcomes, effectively engaging in professional learning and supporting staff wellbeing.

"Mostly teaching and learning will fall by the wayside"
Principal, Central, Remote

Sustainability of current principal workload
Of the principals surveyed, a large proportion (77%) reported that their workload was either 'not at all sustainable' or 'difficult to sustain' with 23% of principals currently feeling that their workload is 'sustainable' or 'very easy to sustain'. This is presented in Chart 3.3.3.

Chart 3.3.3: Principal perception of sustainability of workload
% of observation participants, reported data

| Very easy to sustain | Sustainable | Difficult to sustain | Not at all sustainable |
| 4% | 19% | 66% | 11% |
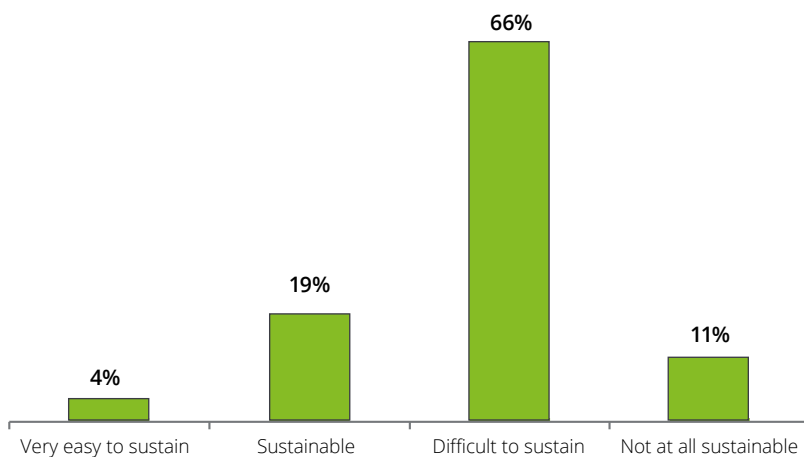
n=116

"I wish this can become a role that is sustainable with good health"
Principal, Secondary, Metro

Qualitative research also identified that many principals feel that the ongoing pressure associated with their workload is impacting on their health and wellbeing, and that to do well in their role comes at a cost to their personal health. A number of principals interviewed had received treatment for stress and anxiety, but had chosen not to claim this through workers insurance.

Principal perception of workload sustainability was analysed to identify any differences across school and principal characteristics. This includes school types, principal tenure, school size, school location and ICSEA group. However, there is not enough evidence to suggest that sustainability is significantly different across school types, principal tenure, school size, school location or ICSEA[4].

"When is enough enough?"
Principal, Schools for Specific Purpose, Metro

Factors influencing whether principals feel their workload is achievable or sustainable
As highlighted in Question 2, there are a number of enablers and barriers that support or hinder principals in managing their workload which would impact on how achievable and sustainable they feel their

workload to be. In relation to these, and in light of the changing nature and quantity of the workload referred to in Question 4, there are a number of additional factors influencing whether principals feel that the workload is becoming less achievable and sustainable.

"The expectation of the department has got lost. If the priority was just teaching and learning, it would be achievable. But the added responsibilities of wellbeing, community and issues outside core learning and teaching are, long term, not achievable"
Principal, Primary, Metro

Lack of role clarity
It is apparent that no clear, consistent or relevant role description exists for a principal. Without a role definition that articulates outcomes and success measures, principals struggle to understand what is expected of them in their role, including with regards to their workload. Similarly, there are no role descriptions for those in the principals' support network, impacting on the principal's ability to delegate tasks.

A lack of clear responsibilities and the changing nature of the role also makes it difficult for principals to determine what tasks they need to prioritise, often resulting in principals setting parameters as to what their role entails at their own discretion. Principals who find their work more achievable have: clearly defined

their role for themselves; clarity on their purpose; and, tend to be realistic about what they can and cannot achieve (i.e. they make peace with what they cannot achieve). For others, not having clear delineations of responsibilities and success measures can lead them to take on too much, resulting in an unachievable amount of work. A number of principals use the AITSL Leadership Profiles as a way to understand what their role should be, with printouts displayed close to their desk.

"These events really take a toll on you"
Principal, Secondary, Metro

Stress
Stress, particularly in relation to frequent and/or significant episodes, is likely to contribute to a principal's perception of their workload and its achievability and sustainability over time. The extent and nature of the stress experienced by principals takes many forms and is often situational. Principals report that the most frequent and highest impact triggers relate to staff welfare, violence amongst students, and a perceived increase in parental entitlement or community 'voice' which needs to be managed.

Acuity levels were elevated when these moments of higher stress occurred on top of challenges in achieving the daily tasks and pressures to prioritise workload. Principals reported suffering anxiety (sometimes even panic attacks) caused by particularly stressful events where they felt they were being personally attacked, blamed or reprimanded, or simply had pressure build-up over time without any opportunity to 'slow down' or de-stress.

[4] Refer to Appendix 2 for additional information of achievability across school types, school location, principal tenure, school size, or ICSEA group.

Chart 3.3.4: Principal stress levels by time of day
% of observation participants, reported data

	No stress	Mild	Moderate	Strong	Acute
Morning	34%	44%	15%	7%	
Midday	16%	49%	27%	6%	2%
Afternoon	16%	45%	25%	12%	1%

n=116

■ No stress ■ Mild ■ Moderate ■ Strong ■ Acute ■ Extreme
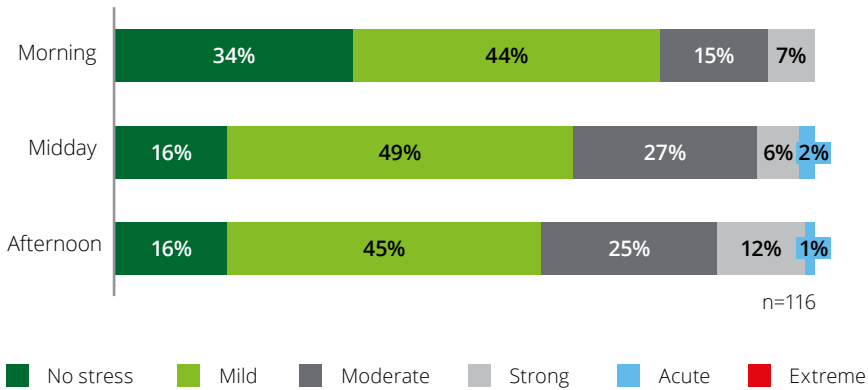
The level of stress that principals experienced during school hours was observed and recorded via the direct observation research activity. Participants were asked to rate their level of stress at three points in time – morning, midday and afternoon – using a 10 point scale[5] (0 = I feel completely relaxed moving up to 10 = highest level of stress/distress ever felt) which was then then grouped into six rating categories[6].

When looking at the stress scores across the three points in time, as outlined in Chart 3.3.4, the principals' stress[7] levels increased noticeably throughout the day. In the morning, 34% of principals reported that they did not feel any level of stress. When asked again at midday and in the afternoon, only 16% of principals reported no level of stress. An observable increase is also seen in the percentage of principals experiencing moderate levels of stress, increasing from 15% in the morning to 27% at midday. Moderate levels of stress was defined to principals as 'starting to feel uncomfortable but I can continue to function' to 'feeling really uncomfortable but I'm still managing to function'.

There was also an observable increase in the percentage of principals that report strong levels of stress in the afternoon (12%). Strong levels of stress was defined to

principals as 'I'm feeling overwhelmed' to 'my ability to function is becoming impaired. I can feel some physical symptoms'. While only representing a very small percentage of principals, it is important to note that 'acute' levels of stress were reported, meaning that 1 to 2% of principals selected the description 'my ability to function is impaired. I can't concentrate and I'm feeling many physiological symptoms'.

Principal capability
In leadership roles that experience high pressure situations and/or feel overwhelmed by the workload they face, the ability to develop coping mechanisms, resilience techniques and strong prioritisation skills, are key to being able to remain calm and make the decisions required as a leader.

When it comes to managing stress levels, a number of principals felt the need to set strong personal boundaries to manage work/life balance and restrict times that they are contactable via certain channels of communications.

Principals require relatively high levels of resilience to deal with the increasing internal and external pressures on schools. Principals who feel they have developed a greater ability to cope with pressures and setbacks, also feel they are better able to manage their workload.

"You start to build a tolerance for leaving things undone"
Principal, Schools for Specific Purposes, Metro

Another key capability impacting on whether workload is perceived as achievable or sustainable involves prioritisation and the ability to determine what tasks must be completed. Principals generally prioritise based on critical needs and ultimately focus on the core priority of the welfare of staff and students; however, the difficulty lies where the department doesn't often make it clear what they must do versus what they may do at their discretion. Some, often more experienced, principals are able to have a level of perspective and reference to context, and make prioritisation decisions based on what they believe to be best for the students, the staff and the school. This requires courage and confidence to make the decision to deprioritise or not complete other tasks.

[5] Subjective measure of stress which is not a psychometrically validated scale.

[6] See Table A2.5 in Appendix 2 for further information.

[7] Refer to Appendix 3 for limitations related to the subjective level of stress measure.

Question 4: Has there been a change in either the quantity or nature of principals' work in recent years?

While the overall components of the principals' role (educational leadership, site management, and community engagement) have remained consistent over recent years, the way that these components are executed has changed, resulting in increased workload. This is particularly driven by the Local Schools, Local Decisions (LSLD) reform.

"Principals are feeling pressure much greater than five years ago"
Subject Matter Expert

Principals also reported increased pressure and expectations from the broader community, changing the nature of their role. They are experiencing higher levels of accountability and feel responsible for delivering on a broader range of complex community needs, requiring additional effort to manage. Technology has provided greater levels of accessibility for the school, the department, and the broader community, resulting in increased expectations of the frequency of communication through a variety of channels (e.g. e-mail, website, text messaging, social media etc.). The combination of transparency, accessibility, community expectations and the principal's sense of personal responsibility has not only increased the pressure on principals as leaders, it has increased their workload and relies on them having a breadth and depth of capability and knowledge not previously required.

New technologies and student assessment approaches have also resulted in principals feeling that there is greater transparency in their role than ever before, with an increased focus on evidence-based practice. Principals feel increasingly scrutinised, and are having to justify more of their decisions and performance with evidence and data.

The impact of systemic changes and reforms, increasing community complexities and expectations, and advances in technology, have impacted upon the quantity and nature of a principal's workload. Overall, the changing nature of principals' workload has placed increased emphasis on the need for advanced capabilities in leadership and management.

Reforms
Principals feel they are operating in an increasingly complex environment, and are in a period that they describe as one of "unprecedented change". The volume and pace of reform in NSW public schools has been increasing, with principals citing the LSLD reform as having the largest impact on principal workload.

Principals greatly value these reforms and the increasing flexibility that they provide in some areas. All stated that LSLD was a move in the right direction; however, there were concerns expressed around the level of flexibility and responsibility in some aspects of their role e.g. asset management, which for some was not necessarily desired. They further questioned the approach to implementation of some of these reforms and policies, particularly in how the department had implemented approaches to managing risk and compliance. Not all areas of increased responsibility and accountability are equally welcome or valuable.

The responsibilities and accountabilities associated with the principal's role have expanded as a result of these systemic changes and reforms, with an increasing expectation on them around management of resources and greater decision making authority. In particular, the reforms have resulted in greater focus on administrative activities related to the expanded areas of responsibilities, with principals citing that these activities take up more time than they used to.

Principals did not previously have to go through the processes involved with making and implementing a range of decisions that were once undertaken within the department. For example, conducting detailed school planning, managing consultations and communications with community stakeholders, undertaking ongoing reviews, project managing activities, and managing the financial position of the school. In addition, principals have to demonstrate their completion of these activities to the department through a variety of compliance tasks, more than they had to in previous years.

The full range of these activities often falls on the principal, as no-one else has an obvious accountability for them. The alignment and relevance of some of these activities to the principal's role (particularly asset management) is also questioned by principals, the most common example cited being tree audits. There are also examples where there are common activities which may be required of principals across all schools (e.g. fire safety), yet they are required to complete these activities individually without a clear view or template examples provided of 'what good looks like'. Principals generally feel that they are not adequately qualified, prepared or supported to take on some of these responsibilities that have increased over the years, and must build their capabilities in whatever way they can.

> "The [Masters degree] qualification doesn't give you any extra credence when discussing the students' academic results or behaviour"
>
> **Principal, Central, Metro**

> "Being a principal is one of the most dangerous jobs today"
>
> **Principal, Secondary, Metro**

Increasing community complexity and expectations

The increasingly difficult and complex nature of school communities is placing added pressure on principals and schools, largely due to the changing nature and responsibilities of schools. In addition to the core business of learning and teaching, principals now feel that they must meet increased parental and community expectations, support more complex student and staff wellbeing needs and respond to or even be accountable for significant social issues.

The nature of schools and their role in the community has been gradually changing. Compared to the past, principals now feel responsible for much more than their students core educational needs. The divide between school and personal life for principals, teachers and students is blurring. Societal concerns are increasingly moving into schools, placing the spotlight on principals to take greater responsibility for building awareness and managing risk around these issues. Principals have to keep up to date with emerging social trends and develop and implement programs which support staff and student wellbeing accordingly. Examples include programs around cyber bullying, sexting, suicide, mental health and nutrition. General concern was expressed by principals that they are not able to spend time or resources on these increasingly important areas as required.

Alongside this broadening focus, the expectations and demands of parents has also increased, placing pressure on all school staff. Management of behavioural and student performance issues is perceived to be taking up more time than in the past, with parents more likely to question the judgements of teachers and principals. A number of principals outlined a belief that community respect for their role had decreased over time. Principals indicated that they have to spend more time justifying their decisions and carefully managing communications messaging and the reputation of the school than ever before. A number of principals even manage the school's social media presence personally in case any issue arises, which effectively results in them being on call 24/7. Some principals also reported increasing threats of violence, ranging from intimidation to physical assault, from both students and parents.

Advances in technology and changing assessment practices

Changes in the quantity and nature of principals' workload can also be attributed to advances in technology. Parents have greater access to information and are more aware of the performance and educational assessment results of the school. Principals are more accountable for the performance of their school than in the past, and this accountability is more public. Principals feel increasingly scrutinised, and are having to justify more of their decisions with evidence and data.

Principals cited cases of parents finding information about policy changes prior to the principal being informed by the department, in particular in highly educated communities. In these instances, principals had to 'firefight' i.e. find information and rapidly develop and distribute their own communication materials.

> "Data is king"
>
> **Principal, Primary, Regional**

Technology has also enabled more instant channels of communication, resulting in greater access to principals by parents and the school community, particularly through emails and social media. There is a greater propensity for parents to contact principals than ever before, with increasing expectations around timely consultation, personalised communication and the rapid response times that are generally associated with digital channels. As noted above, principals indicated that when these expectations are not met, parents are increasingly using social media channels to voice opinions that are either misleading or misinformed, having a detrimental impact on the school community. This has to be actively managed, and there is no logical owner for managing and overseeing these responses, other than the principal.

Technology is blurring the lines between school and personal time for both students and staff, which is also adding challenges and increasing workload.

Advances in technology have also enabled more effective data capture, driving a need for a higher level of expertise in principals accessing, assessing and evaluating data. Principals spend a lot of time reviewing and translating data gathered in many forms, for the use of the department as well as staff within the schools.
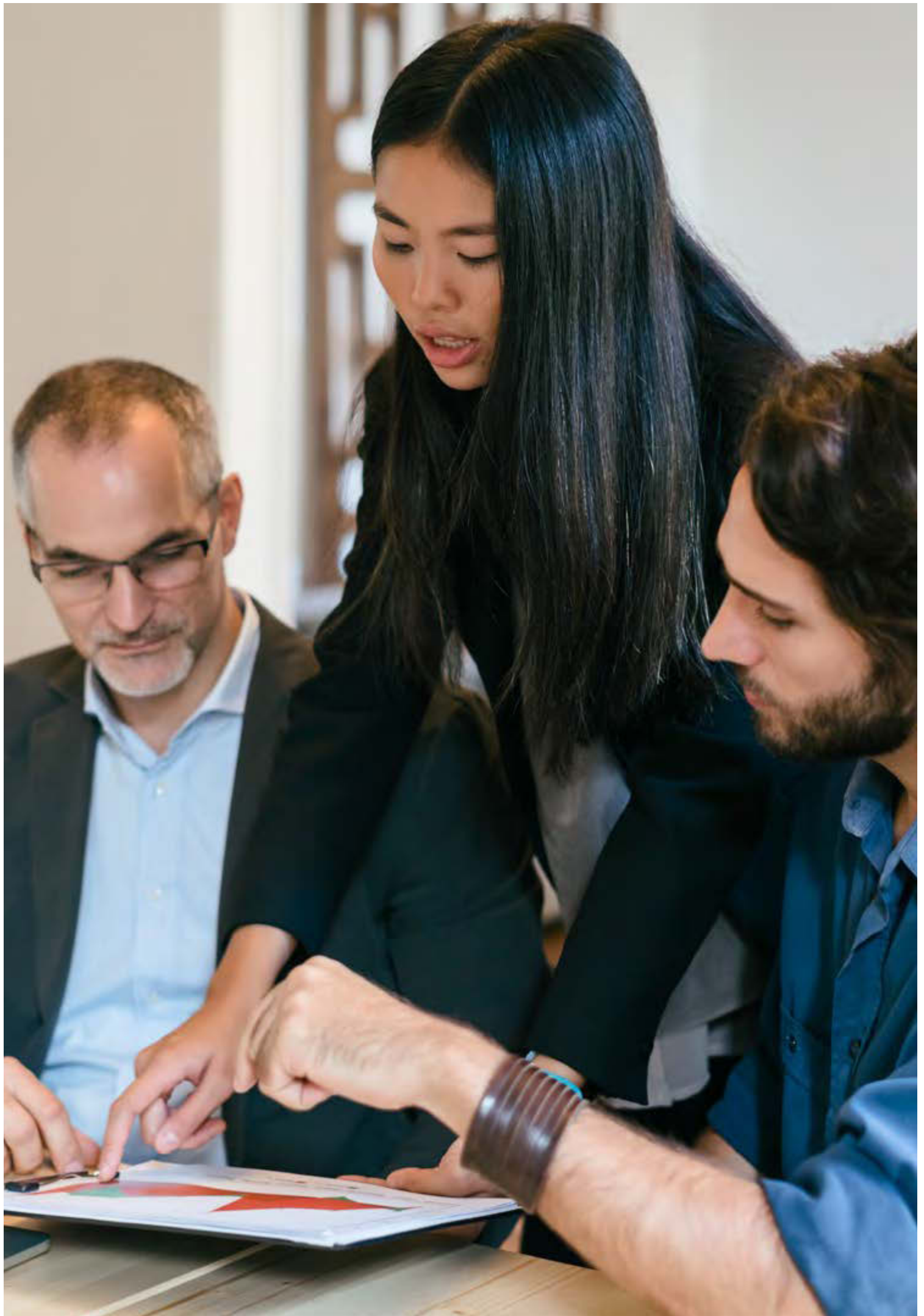
Question 5: What are some examples of exemplary practice from which other schools could benefit?

Through the various research activities, exemplary practices were identified across a breadth of areas including: ways of working; approaches to leadership and learning and development; staff and budget allocation management; and, community engagement. It is evident, however, that due to the complex and variable nature of individual schools and school communities, and the varying capabilities and leadership styles of principals, that the widespread application of specific practices must be carefully considered. It is clear that while some practices will be beneficial for some schools, they will not necessarily meet the needs of all.

Leveraging storytelling in the communication and dissemination of exemplary practices would assist principals in understanding the context in which a practice was applied, the challenges or opportunities it was intended to address, and the outcomes achieved, such that principals could interpret and adapt practices to their own context, with appropriate benefits identified.

While the practices listed in the body of the report were identified in conversation with principals as potentially being of benefit to other schools, it is important to qualify and assess the outcomes and benefits achieved as a result of the implementation of the practices prior to broader adoption. This level of evaluation was not within the scope of this research study.

"I encourage my staff to give it a try… we evaluate on the go"
Principal, Primary, Metro

New ways of working

In light of the differences in contexts and complexities across schools, some principals and staff were naturally inclined to review, tailor and adapt new approaches, programs, initiatives or ways of working to the needs of their students and school community. As a result, taking a test and learn (agile), evidence-based approach serves to quickly identify what did and did not work to improve outcomes in their context, in particular when looking to implement new programs or policies in schools. This test and learn approach can be applied to different practices, including the management of the school, leadership and teaching and learning. Test and learn approaches are typically more successful in management structures and systems that allow for and support collaboration, enabling an appropriate level of risk-taking. This serves to encourage flexibility and innovation, focusing on improved outcomes.

One principal went to considerable effort to cultivate an inclusive and collaborative culture, enabled through changes in the physical work spaces. The principal reconfigured office spaces (including their own) into shared rooms for staff, with some rooms assigned to specific activities (e.g. planning) optimising wall space for visual boards. This enabled staff to work more closely with others, with rooms becoming central knowledge 'hubs' for staff to track not only progress against daily tasks, but also longer term plans and strategies. Reportedly, the inclusive culture of the school was often commented on positively and was seen as unique by casual staff who were new to the school.

Leadership styles

The most effective leadership styles observed generally tended to be more flexible and adaptable in their approach as opposed to 'command and control'. The more flexible and adaptable leaders observed were able to take a more pragmatic view on leading and managing the school, were more willing to take calculated risks and demonstrated trust and empowerment of executive staff to take accountability and be involved in decision making.

Leaders enabled collaboration in work practices through proactive communication with staff and students (including corridor conversations and informal interactions), creating collaborative physical workspaces, encouraging team project work (e.g. teachers writing a stage program together), and building team morale through arranging group activities. These techniques have seen positive effects on engagement and inclusivity amongst staff, which reportedly had a flow on effect with teaching staff and students.

One principal placed materials in staff areas around the school that communicated the strategy and shorter term objectives of the school, highlighting key measures of school, student, principal and teacher performance and demonstrating performance against these measures.

Approaches to learning and development

Principals seem to engage in a range of formal and informal approaches to learning and development practices to suit their individual style, interests and needs. Outlined below are a few approaches that reportedly had positive outcomes on staff performance and morale and principals' ability to lead and manage the school.

One principal reported upskilling themselves in well-established leadership and management theory which they put into practice in their schools. This enabled them to upskill their own executive teams as they collectively applied the theory to suit their environment. This upskilling was predominantly completed at the principal's own initiative, outside of any formal training provided by the department.

Some principals found experiential training and learning beneficial. A principal had the opportunity to be involved in 'action based learning programs', as well as learning through examples, creating knowledge that could be adapted and applied to different contexts. Being involved in these development programs which included role plays and scenario based assessments, enabled the principal to rapidly upskill in areas of need as they received real time feedback on tasks performed.

Principals were found to be developing their own personal knowledge base of tools and frameworks to support them in their role, as well as identifying their own learning and development needs. Examples of tools included the AITSL Leadership Profiles which helped principals understand their role, the department's Leadership and Management Credential training materials, and other materials which were obtained through seminars, conferences, interactions with colleagues and were of general personal interest.

Some principals are cultivating structured 'learning communities' to tackle a range of areas such as complex problem solving or navigating specific issues relating to their school. One principal cited utilising a group of five principals within their network who they meet with regularly, outside of formal network meetings, to participate in structured learning sessions around areas of focus for the year, and to discuss each individual principal's 'greatest point of need'. They provide feedback and guidance to each other in a constructive way, track issues or concerns and bounce ideas off each other to help resolve difficult issues.

Management practices
Various management practices were observed that seemed to drive positive outcomes for staff and improved ability to manage workload. Practices often reflected individual principals' personalities and leadership styles. Areas of interest included practices in staff management, personal time management and budget management.

"I block out chunks of my diary wherever possible so that people know when I am working through my e-mails"
Principal, Primary, Regional

Staff management
Different approaches to staff management were observed, with one principal establishing an 'extended executive team' allowing teachers to opt in to take on leadership responsibilities for growth and learning opportunities. This enabled greater sharing of workload and responsibilities amongst staff and gave aspiring teachers a view into the roles and responsibilities of the executive. Interestingly, it did result in some individuals opting out of taking on leadership roles after having a realistic preview of what the role entailed, indicating a need for care in the design and implementation of this approach.

Principals were also observed giving staff opportunities to take on additional responsibilities based on their personal interests and strengths. This allowed assignment and allocation of activities that are rewarding to the individual, while developing capability in particular areas, such as wellbeing or behavioural management.

Despite the current staffing model being relatively inflexible, some principals have found mechanisms to share specialist skillsets and resources across schools where there may be mutual areas of need. One group of principals pooled funding to hire a 'financial expert' to be shared amongst them in a part time capacity, to not only provide additional support, but to upskill other staff within the school.

Personal time management
A common theme was experimentation with approaches to personal time management as principals struggle to get through their workload. Principals were seen trialling different approaches, ranging from the use of mobile applications to paper-based or visual diaries, with many methods trialled and evaluated. They seemed to be very conscious of how their personal time management affected others in their environment, highlighting the importance of context for this particular practice.

Perhaps surprisingly, approaches to managing the challenge of constant, non-urgent interruptions were not often noted; however, one principal did request staff place post-it notes with descriptions of the issue in a particular location for response at a time period that was blocked-out for the purpose.

Funding allocation in schools
A principal identified the need to re-shape their approach to allocating funding for programs of work within schools, to enable greater alignment to measureable outcomes and therefore realise the return on investment. Rather than assigning the same amount of money or 'a bucket' of money to each program or initiative of interest within the school, staff were encouraged and supported to put forward a case with detailed rationale for why they want the funding and what they want to achieve with the funding, aligning the objectives to improved student outcomes. This enabled the principal to prioritise and allocate funding to the programs that are proposed to have the greatest impact on student outcomes, and in turn upskilled the staff to use evidence-based practices in their approach to evaluating effectiveness of programs and initiatives.

Sharing resources and best practice

Principals have fostered personal support networks with colleagues to enable sharing of learnings and information. Some used these networks to share templates or re-use information, particularly in response to compliance requests from the department. Others shared documentation around well-designed programs and used these networks to test ideas with others.

"You gain more when you join other schools than you would if going at it alone"
Principal, Primary, Metro

Schools with experience in particular student learning areas were seen sharing their programs, helping to reduce time others would have had to spend developing similar content from scratch. One example of this was a school that was experiencing significant behaviour management issues; one staff member with interest in the area was supported by a principal (with departmental funding) to develop a program with tools and strategies to better support students with high needs. This program was implemented within the school, and was shared with principals for other teachers to use as a starting point in designing such a similar program for their context.

Community engagement

Principals who adopted a 'user centred' approach with their community, seemed to experience success in community engagement and collaboration. This requires investing time to listen to and use inquiry techniques to understand the needs, beliefs and values of the community, particularly in highly diverse communities. This played out in a number of ways, with principals allowing community members to have an open channel to voice their concerns or opinions, having 'community champions' or considering the needs of different segments and cultural groups within their community to better 'connect' and build trust with each group to increase engagement. Principals adopting this approach cited success in obtaining buy-in from the community, particularly when trying to implement new policies or procedures within the school. As noted in Question 4, however, this involves dedication of considerable time and effort.

Principal X is a primary school principal who has been in their current role for a long period of time and in a number of schools in different locations with varied socio-economic contexts. This principal is passionate about teaching and learning, focusing on achieving the best outcomes for their students.

This principal is highly attuned to the needs of the community and has spent several years cultivating respect through engagement. In their current school, involvement of parents had generally been low, and parents seemed to place little value in education.

For example, the principal observed that some families were struggling with the cost of uniforms, which impacted on student confidence. Some students were not 'fitting' in with others, and the punishment for not having correct school uniforms exacerbated the situation. The principal decided to implement more flexible guidelines around school uniforms allowing items to be purchased from local, cheaper outlets as long as they met a set of criteria. This alleviated cost as well as social pressures for parents to conform to the uniform requirements and improved fairness and equity amongst students.

Communications were carefully crafted and extensive consultation was undertaken as part of the change. Parents were able to see the benefits and students understood the guidelines. While this a small example, the principal also recognised and highlighted that the approach may not be applicable to other schools due to their context and believed it would not have worked in a previous school. The principal was proud to have been able to make a positive difference on student behaviour and the school culture: "You need to understand the community and parents you are dealing with and speak their language". The principal believed consultation and communication with the community was vital, but this involved considerable time receiving suggestions and providing a strong rationale for the decision.
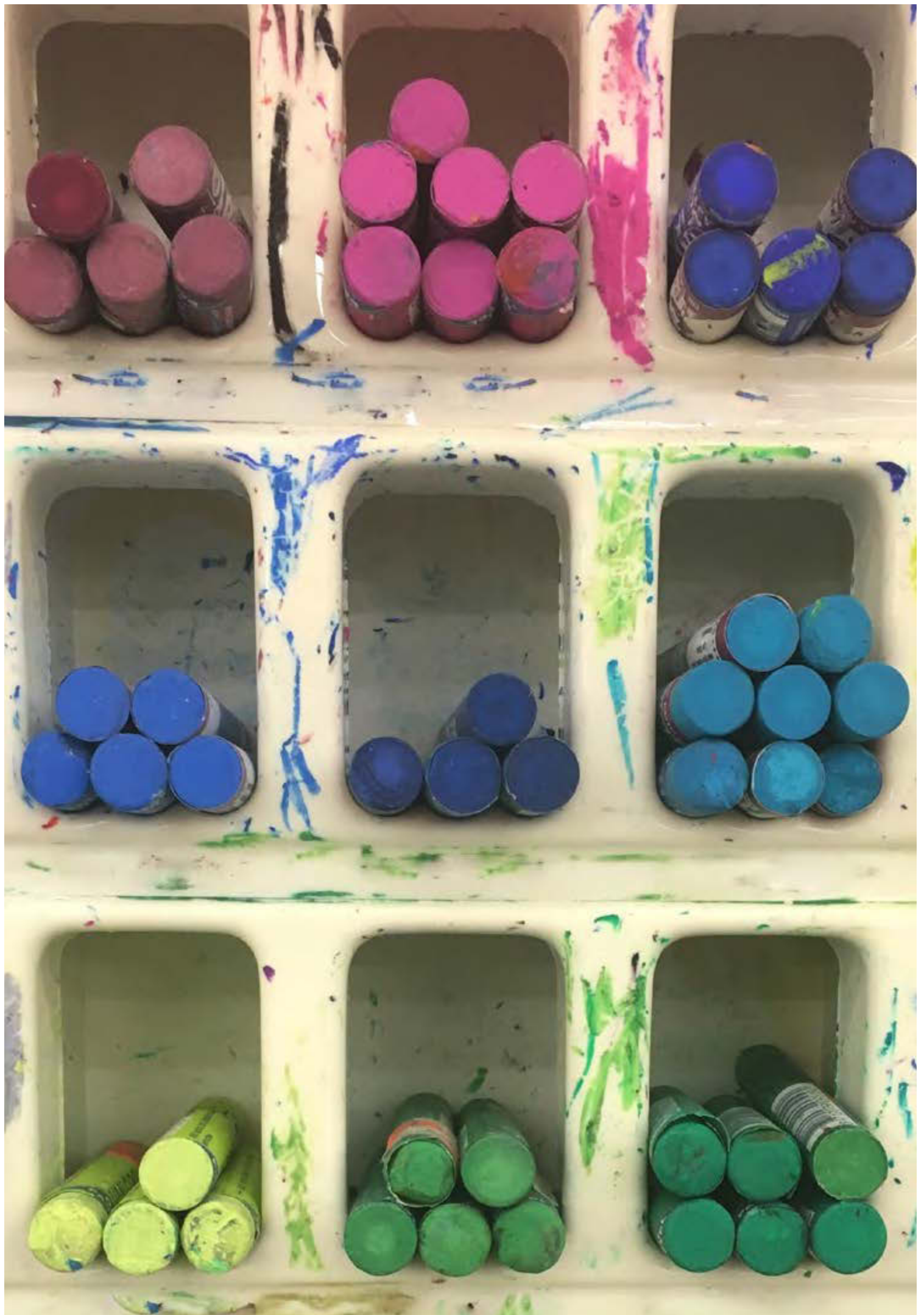
Question 6: Could the leadership or decision making culture of schools change in any way to help principals manage their workloads?

The research has identified opportunities for the leadership and decision making culture of schools to change, in order to enable the workload of principals to be more effectively managed. In distilling the insights from the research, why the leadership and decision making culture of today exists was examined. Furthermore, the impact of the current leadership, and the decision making culture, on the workload of the principal (or their ability to manage their workload), was reviewed.

Combining the drivers of leadership and the decision making culture ('why') and the impact that they have on principal workload ('how') provides the opportunities for improvement ('what').

These three elements are detailed below.

Why does the current leadership and decisions making culture in schools exist?

As identified in the responses to earlier questions, there are instances of exemplary practice across all aspects of the principal's role, including in the leadership and decision making culture. For a principal who is: less experienced; in a new environment; lacking in confidence of their own ability; less comfortable with ambiguity; and/or has a preference to be given processes to follow, having a frame of reference to refer to and take guidance from, is very important.

"All this compliance work drives behaviours of doing the minimum and doing less of what is 'adding value'"
Principal, Primary, Metro

While there are policies and procedures put in place by the department that cover virtually every aspect of a principal's role, there is no clear job description or profile to show what success as a principal looks like.

Without a clear and holistic set of tangible outcomes to work towards, there is no consistent frame for independent decision making. In lieu of such a frame, principals were found to have adopted a compliance-based mindset when making decisions, with a tendency to seek comfort in the 'norm' or 'standard' in the absence of any other indicator.

Further reinforcing a preference for conservative decision making in some principals, is the feeling of isolation that many feel in their role. This was expressed in two particular ways:

1. Principals generally don't believe the department acts in their best interest or has their back if things go wrong (e.g. the department 'conducts an audit' rather than 'provides support' when something goes wrong). This can result in very conservative responses to issues/problems or a lack of confidence in their ability to make the right decision. It may further result in avoidance of a problem or issue in the hope it will resolve itself or go away.

2. Principals often see their Director Public Schools as only a reporting line rather than also playing the role of a coach or mentor for advice and support. This may be due to the current span of control structure with 1:35 Directors Public Schools to Principals, limiting the capacity of Directors to play a coaching and supporting role which requires time, effort and flexibility to be available when needed. Positively, amongst other things, this has resulted in principals

developing formal and informal networks to share ideas, collaborate, and solve problems. Where the result is less positive is when the Director Public Schools is not leveraged for the resolution of issues, which means they either don't have visibility, are not able to bring the best of the department to bear on a problem, or are only accessed when things have gone wrong (further reinforcing the perception of the role they are there to play). While all leaders experience some level of isolation by virtue of their role, the lack of ability and willingness to confide in and seek support from their line manager increases a principal's feeling of isolation – when the one person they should be able to go to is not always seen to be a consistent and adequate source of support.

To this extent, it was found that leadership and the way decisions are made, in some schools, is currently undertaken by principals within the context of: limited clarity and certainty on how to be a successful principal; a risk averse and compliance driven culture in response to challenges and opportunities; and, a perception of being on their own to solve problems and make decision, often without feeling that they will be adequately supported. There is a lack of trust between principals and the department, where principals generally don't believe the department acts in their best interest or has their back when something goes wrong (e.g. the department conducts an 'audit' rather than providing a 'support team' when something has gone wrong'). Combining this context with the highly dynamic environment in which principals are currently operating, noted as a time of 'unprecedented change', the ability for them to absorb and adapt to change in an agile way, and operate effectively as a leader and decision maker, is challenged.

How does the leadership style and decision making culture impact upon the workload of the principal and/or their ability to manage it?

Those with a risk averse or compliance based mindset are less likely to be open to new ways of thinking and innovation, less likely to encourage diversity of thought, and/or are less willing to take a chance for fear of failure. This will result in them defaulting to what they know, taking traditional approaches, and reverting to how they have always done things. When faced with new challenges and different problems, this can also create more effort, more stress, and a risk of non-action due to uncertainty, which can further reduce confidence, and makes it difficult to move forward.

Even though principals believe that the department prioritises the role of educational leader, in practice, the actual priority of the department is perceived as 'management' of the school, particularly asset management, finances, administration and compliance. Without a frame of reference for what success looks like, and unless they have the ability, experience and confidence to develop their own frame, the response to each request made by the department is to execute it immediately – almost without question. The principal in this mindset sees everything that the department requests as being of equal importance and priority, creating a feeling of being overwhelmed and of being unable to control their workload.

We also observed that for some principals, some strategic tasks were at risk of being treated in a transactional way, as there is not the time nor the relative prioritisation to allow for the level of thinking, collaboration and communication required to execute the task effectively. This impacts on quality of output, engagement of others in the process, and ultimately performance.

Further compounding this focus on executing on everything with the same priority and importance is the perception of the threat of limitations to career progression for principals if they don't comply with requests or complete the tasks set. The pressures of timely completion of department requests is perceived as driven through the Directors Public Schools, who are the ones chasing principals in order to have 100 percent completion rates from all principals that report to them.

For those principals who welcomed the greater authority promised through Local Schools, Local Decisions, many feel that they are often not trusted to make the decisions that align to the authority they possess. Asset management was repeatedly cited as a key example of this. For example, while a principal has the authority to engage a contractor to paint a door, they are not able to do so without filling in a form 'in triplicate' and obtaining department approval to proceed.

Conceptually, the increasing decentralisation of decision making and levels of authority are appreciated by principals. In reality, however, the department does not seem to have struck the right balance between authority at the centre and authority for the principal. The current system limits principals' ability to make and implement decisions.

What could change to help principals manage their workload more effectively?

In specific response to question six, the following things could be changed to enable the principal to lead and make decisions in a way that would enable them to more effectively manage their workload:

1. Provide a clear and holistic set of tangible, measureable outcomes for principals to: evaluate themselves against; take into consideration when prioritising workload and making decisions; and, more generally offer the principal a consistent frame for independent decision making.

2. Articulate, with clarity and consistency, the success profile of the principal role (and the roles of those directly associated with the school including the Director Public Schools and the school leadership/executive). This would enable certainty, and create a stable, reliable and supportive ecosystem more likely to produce high performing teams over time. More generally, consistency across the system will assist in the transition of principals new to role, new to school or relieving in role. It is noted that the large number of relieving principals within schools seem to hinder or slow down decision making within schools, creating an unsettling environment.

3. Ensure that principals have the capability, confidence, and are empowered to allocate funds towards the delivery of the administrative aspects of their role. It was identified that it is not unusual for principals to feel guilt when making choices requiring a perceived trade-off between investments in school management vs student learning; some expressed a preference for assignment of tied funds to avoid them being put in the position of justifying the expenditure on non-student facing resource.

With clear outcomes to be achieved, including educational leadership, site management and community engagement, it is hoped that principals will feel better able to structure and access the support they and their school needs – enabling them to lead and make decisions to the greatest effect.
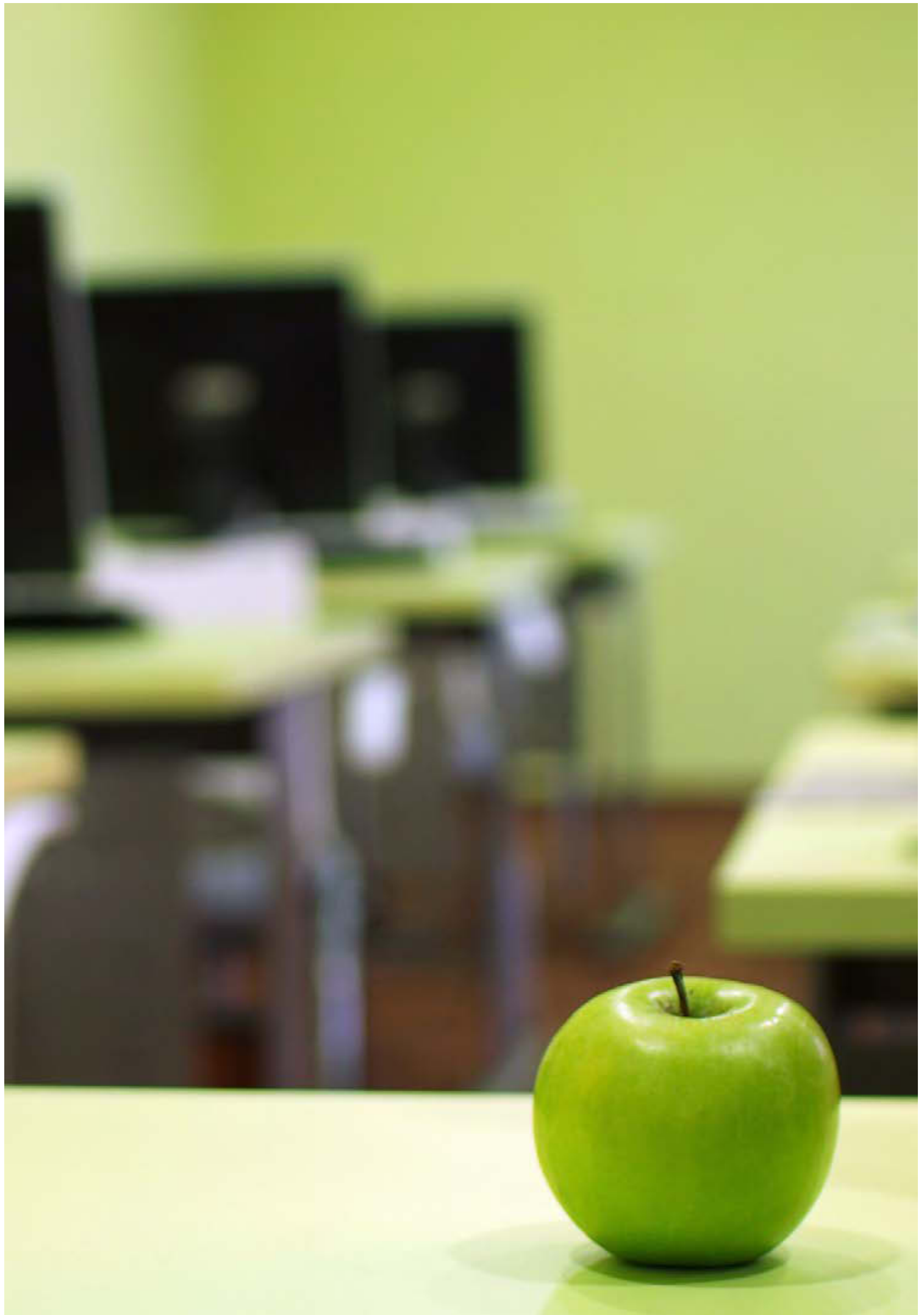
4. Opportunity areas

How could the department implement initiatives and interventions to improve principal workload and time use, thereby enabling them to understand, execute against and achieve, the desired outcomes of their role?

The research findings[1] have highlighted the requirement for holistic, integrated, and contextualised responses to the challenges being experienced by principals. Opportunities have been identified in response to five focusing questions:

1. How could the department enhance the capacity of principals to operate successfully in the environment of constant change, so that they are able to evaluate, prioritise and implement improvements within their context, and with the support and commitment of their teams?

2. How could the department assist principals to structure and lead high performing teams so that they achieve the desired outcomes for their school?

3. How could the department coach, develop and support high performing principals so that they discharge their responsibilities and accountabilities to deliver against the success criteria of their role?

4. How could the department enable and support formal and informal networks for principals so that they have the exposure, education, experience and environment they need to be successful?

5. How could the department enable principals to execute the administrative components of their role in the most efficient and effective way, so that they are able to increase their focus on the educational leadership aspects of their role?

A detailed summary of the opportunity areas, descriptions and rationale is provided in Section 4, Table 4.1.

[1]A Summary of Findings from the quantitative and qualitative research is included in Appendix 4.

Figure 4.1. Opportunity focus areas overview
An overview of the detailed opportunity focus areas split into five focussing questions.

How could the department enhance the capacity of principals to operate successfully in the environment of constant change, so that they are able to evaluate, prioritise and implement improvements within their context, and with the support and commitment of their teams?

- Adopt integrated and user centred approach to change management approach
- Establish systemic approach to identifying and scaling innovation and best practice in schools
- Streamline, coordinate and simplify departmental communications
- Measure projects and initiatives roll out success based on rate of adoption and user feedback
- Improve community education, engagement, and management support.

STRUCTURE

How could the department assist principals to structure and lead high performing teams so that they achieve the desired outcomes for their school?

- Enable development of high performing teams
- Articulate outcomes and success measures for teams
- Optimise ways of working

How could the department develop, coach and support high performing principals so that they discharge their responsibilities and accountabilities to deliver against the success criteria of their role?

- Provide role clarity
- Articulate clear outcomes and success measures in role (success profiles)
- Improve succession planning and transition support
- Increase recognition of good practice
- Enable trusted and timely coaching
- Broaden learning and development opportunities
- Enable an effective performance experience
- Improve pathways and talent identification
- Improve wellness and resilience support provided

DEVELOP

How could the department enable and support the formal/informal networks for principals so that they receive the exposure, education, experience and environment they need to be successful?

- Articulate outcomes and success measures for Directors Public Schools
- Strengthen the principals' relationship with their Directors
- Foster an inclusive culture in formal networks
- Leverage and enhance positive Informal/collegial support networks
- Enhance sharing of ideas through storytelling
- Success measures for teams
- Optimise ways of working

LEAD

SUPPORT

How could the department enable principals to execute the administrative components of their role in the most efficient and effective way, so that they are able to increase their focus on the educational leadership aspects of their role?

- Apply user centred design to develop simple and accessible workflow tools, systems and processes
- Integrate and streamline tools, systems and support
- Review approach to service delivery; deciding which activities should be maintained centrally and which should be maintained in schools
- Provide additional administrative support staff and resources

Table 4.1. Opportunity areas: supporting management of principal workload and time use

Opportunity area	Description	Rationale
1. How could the department enhance the capacity of principals to operate successfully in the environment of constant change, so that they are able to evaluate, prioritise and implement improvements within their context, and with the support and commitment of their teams?		
Sustainable and integrated change management	Adopt an integrated and user-centred approach to initiative design, implementation and change management that considers the ability of principals to absorb the change. This could include packaging of policy changes and initiatives into similar themes before implementation.	• Increases the ability of principals to absorb the changes and to embed policy and behavioural change within their schools • Enable sustainable and integrated mechanisms of managing and implementing change.
Innovation and best practice in schools	Establish a systemic approach to identifying innovation and best practice within schools for dissemination and scaling to improve performance across the whole network. This would include utilising a trial, fast fail, refine and scale approach.	• Improves principal workload management practices and processes • Recognises and amplifies the effect of best practices across the network.
Departmental communications	Streamline the number of communications received by principals. Improve co-ordination of the release of departmental communications and initiatives across directorates. Simplify the format of departmental communications and ensure consistency of messaging.	• Increases the ability of principals to absorb and act on departmental communications and policy changes • Reduces the demands and expectations that are currently placed on principals' workload • Smooths out the current expectations placed on principals across the year • Provides principals with a forward view of what they will be expected to do, allowing them to plan in advance and optimise their time use • Adjusts the timing of communications so they are relevant, aligned and meaningful • Prioritises and smooths out communications and activities requiring a response from principals – potentially stopping, repurposing or rescheduling some activity.
Success measures for projects and initiatives	Identify and measure lead indicators of behavioural change and adoption rates in schools when evaluating the success of projects or initiative roll out, rather than measuring success on successful deployment or transition.	• Shifts the focus from successful deployment to whether the change or new initiatives has successfully been absorbed and actioned in schools.
Community education, engagement, and management support	Increase departmental engagement with parents to provide information about curriculum changes, supporting principals in the way that learning is delivered in schools. This would require an assessment of current and emerging social expectations.	• Assists principals with community engagement by increasing parent knowledge, and management of expectations • Align department governance structures to community demands.

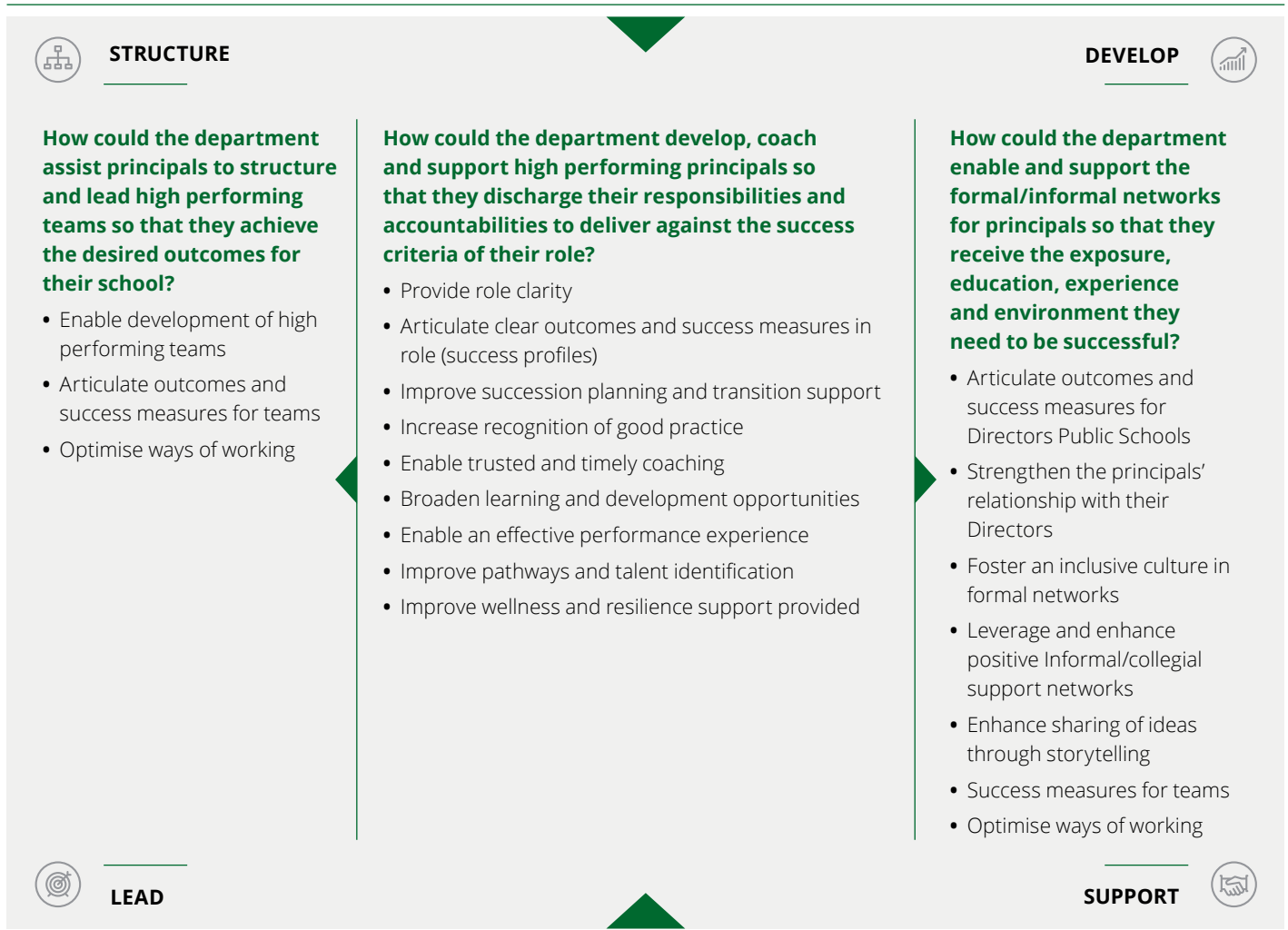**Table 4.1. Opportunity areas: supporting management of principal workload and time use**

Opportunity area	Description	Rationale
2. How could the department assist principals to structure and lead high performing teams so that they achieve the desired outcomes for their school?		
High performing teams	Consider ways to improve principals' ability to establish a culture of high performing teams in schools e.g. incorporating development and structuring of high performing teams as part of principal and Director Public Schools training.	• Inclusive, diverse, respectful, trusting and collaborative team environments are shown to be high performing.
Team based outcomes and success measures	Clarify and define the expectations of the executive and administrative support staff roles in schools, including the outcomes against which they will be measured which should incorporate elements of contributions to the school and the teams.	• Provides a framework for staff to better understand the key outcomes against which they can measure their effectiveness, thereby improving their ability to consistently and appropriately prioritise and manage tasks • Helps to define the activities that should and should not be the responsibility of individuals –clarity and focus • Place greater emphasis and value on teamwork and collaboration as success measures.
Ways of working	Provide principals with information on ways of working that they can adopt to optimise the operating rhythm the way of operating in the school, for example; through time management, management of interruptions, workflow management, scheduling, collaborative work spaces, governance structures etc. These methods and approaches can be adapted and customised by principals to their context.	• Helps principals to manage their workload by creating stability in the schools, reducing the number of interruptions or issues raised, that they experience and by increasing the efficiency with which school activities are completed.
3. How could the department switch develop and coach around high performing principals so that they discharge their responsibilities and accountabilities to deliver against the success criteria of their role?		
Principal role clarity	Clarify and define the expectations of the principal role, including the outcomes against which they will be measured.	• Provides a framework for principals to better understand the key outcomes against which they can measure their effectiveness, thereby improving their ability to consistently and appropriately prioritise and manage tasks • Helps to define the activities that should and should not be the responsibility of the principal, reducing the number of low value-add activities that principals complete.

Table 4.1. Opportunity areas: supporting management of principal workload and time use

Opportunity area	Description	Rationale
3. How could the department switch develop and coach around high performing principals so that they discharge their responsibilities and accountabilities to deliver against the success criteria of their role?		
Success profiles	Provide detailed "success profiles" for principals to improve understanding of what success looks like and to model their own practices and ways of working. Acknowledging and including different leadership styles will allow principals to align to the profile that makes the most sense in the context in which they currently operate. The success profiles can be supported by a set of resources and best practice guides that provide principals with a more granular understanding of the behaviours, mindsets and ways of working that are aligned to each profile.	• Principals can measure their effectiveness and model their behaviours and practices • Principals can customise behaviours, mindsets and ways of working to their school context.
Succession planning and transition support	Prepare principals to lead and manage the school by adapting the on-boarding/transition process for new roles. These may want to take into account specific contextual factors of schools i.e. established ways of working, cultural practices and other environmental factors. Improve succession planning, including the development of leadership and management capabilities in aspiring principals within the schools	• Improves the speed to readiness of principals to transition and adapt to new roles and enables a pipeline of leadership capability within schools.
Principal recognition	Increase recognition of good practice amongst the principal-ship and celebrate and share stories of success. This will increase the sense of value that principals feel in their role and will provide principals with examples and practices that they can adopt and customise to their own context.	• Increases the feeling of recognition that principals feel in their role • Provides principals with examples and practices that they can adopt and customise to their own school context.
Coaching	Enable trusted coaching relationships for principals that they can utilise for guidance and support when they require assistance or are faced with complex challenges, in a timely manner.	• Provides principals with a source of guidance and advice at a time that it is needed • Provides tailored coaching on individual development opportunities • Provides a trusted resource for principals to build leadership and management capability.

Table 4.1. Opportunity areas: supporting management of principal workload and time use

Opportunity area	Description	Rationale
3. How could the department switch develop and coach around high performing principals so that they discharge their responsibilities and accountabilities to deliver against the success criteria of their role?		
Learning and development	Build the capability of new and existing principals through the provision of ongoing learning and development programs that encompass the breadth and complexities of the role today. This includes training on leadership, strategic planning, and financial management as well as catering for the evolving responsibilities in community engagement and management (areas outlined in Question 3).	• Builds principal leadership and management capability as per current role requirements and responsibilities
Performance experience	Design a more effective performance management system that focuses on the performance and coaching experience. This system can also be leveraged by principals to address performance management in their own school and will help to reduce the emotional and administrative burden that principals experience under the current performance management practices. Apply this system across the organisation – aligned to the non-teaching staff program already implemented – for teachers, principals, Directors Public Schools and Executive Directors, will enable a consistent, empowering and inspiring experience.	• Provides principals with a more relevant and continuous performance discussion that is focussed on coaching them towards success in their role • Helps to reduce the emotional and administrative burden that principals currently experience during performance management processes • An inspiring performance experience implemented across the department will have a substantially positive impact on the culture.
Pathways and talent identification	Incorporate a more holistic understanding of the capabilities required to be a successful principal into the design of principal leadership pathways and the identification of talent.	• Helps new principals to be 'leadership ready' when they take on the role • Equips other roles in the school with the capability to assist principals with the management and administration of the school • Establish mechanisms to identify high performing principals.
Wellbeing and resilience	Consider the various ways principals can be supported through in their wellbeing and build resilience i.e. either additional resources, programs or wellbeing support services with the goal to help them manage their workload to improve their personal and professional wellbeing.	• Increase principal resilience and ability to cope to the emotional stresses that they are exposed to in their role and improve principal wellbeing overall • Improve perceptions of the role becoming more and more unsustainable.

Table 4.1. Opportunity areas: supporting management of principal workload and time use

Opportunity area	Description	Rationale
4. How could the department enable and support the formal and informal networks for principals so that they receive the exposure, education, experience and environment they need to be successful?		
Success measures and outcomes for Directors Public Schools	Clarify and define the expectations of the Director Public Schools role, including the success outcomes against which they are and should be measured.	• Better align what actually occurs in practice to the required roles and responsibilities outlined for Directors Public Schools • Provide greater clarity and set expectations for principals and the department on what is reasonable to expect from the Director Public Schools role.
Relationship management	Develop a more 'user-centric' mindset to strengthen the relationship between the department and principals, including the roles of Directors Public Schools, head office staff and Operational Directorates Executive Directors.	• Builds trust, loyalty and respect amongst the department and principals • Improves transparency and communications between parties.
Inclusive formal networks	Leverage and enhance collegial support networks for social learning opportunities amongst principals by providing greater channels of communication and mechanisms for social learning and collaboration.	• Have a more systemic approach to leverage the success of existing collegial support networks in providing support, advice and learning opportunities for all principals to engage in.
Informal/collegial support networks	Leverage and enhance collegial support networks for social learning opportunities amongst principals by providing greater channels of communication and mechanisms for social learning and collaboration.	• Have a more systemic approach to leverage the success of existing collegial support networks in providing support, advice and learning opportunities for all principals to engage in.
Storytelling	Enable the sharing of ideas and storytelling of initiatives or successful outcomes achieved in practice by principals addressing areas such as how, why, where, when in an engaging and informative manner.	• Improve communications through storytelling-which can be one of the most effective ways of getting new ideas or insights across to others. Principals are constantly seeking new ideas and successful outcomes achieved by others, to adapt to their context.

Table 4.1. Opportunity areas: supporting management of principal workload and time use

Opportunity area	Description	Rationale
5. How could the department enable principals to execute the administrative components of their role in the most efficient and effective way, so that they are able to increase their focus on the educational leadership aspects of their role?		
'User centred' design	Review current workflow tools, systems, processes and applications, targeted at addressing major pain points by principals in particular to improve accessibility and simplicity. Potential pain points that could be addressed include casual staffing, supplier credential checking, and procurement processes. Adopt a user-centred approach to tool and process design and implementation that considers how they will integrate into the current operating rhythm and ways of working within schools so as to improve alignment to user needs.	• Reduces principal time taken to complete administrative tasks and improves usability of principal work tools and systems to reduce lost time • Address administrative pain points and create administrative efficiencies.
Integrated and streamlined tools and systems	Integrate and simplify the current systems and tools that principals are required to use.	• Reduces the amount of time principals are spending on rework and finding support resources.
Service delivery model	Review the current approach for deciding which activities should be maintained centrally and which should be maintained in schools in particular the departmental expectation of principals to complete activities related to strategic planning, policy, finance, compliance, risk and WH&S. Review which activities should be maintained centrally and which should be maintained in schools, without compromising principal flexibility and authority to make decisions.	• Reduces the time spent by principals on administrative activities, creating additional capacity for them to focus on leading teaching and learning • Maintains principal flexibility and authority to make decisions.
Administrative support staff and resources	Provide additional administrative support and resources to reduce the administrative workload burden on principals.	• Increases principal capacity to take on the role of educational leader. Creates additional capacity in the school for principals to allocate responsibilities as well as delegate ad hoc requests (e.g. asset maintenance, technology issues) to others, allowing them to spend time on the activities that align more appropriately with their role.

Appendix 1: Activity framework

An activity framework was developed based heavily on the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's **Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the Leadership Profiles** (2014).

This framework was developed and tested with the Research Reference and Operations Reference Groups and formed the basis of the data collection for the direct observations activity. This framework, which can be found on the next page, was developed and tested.

Figure A1.1: AITSL based activity framework

A detailed activity framework developed based on the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Leadership Profiles.

1. Leading teaching and learning	2. Developing self and others	3. Leading improvement, innovation and change	4. Leading the management of the school	5. Engaging and working with students and the community
Focus on leading quality teaching, student learning, development and improvement.	*Focus on managing and developing staff within the school (teachers and non teachers)*	*Focus on the future direction of the school*	*Focus on the day to day operations and management of the school*	*Focus on building relationships and engagement with internal and external individuals*

1.1 Student learning and outcomes
Monitor and manage the effectiveness of student learning. This includes planning learning and curriculum, planning student assessments and monitoring and reporting on student progress and outcomes.

1.2 Student development and well-being
Developing students and managing their welfare

1.3 Student behaviour and attendance
Establish, implement, monitor and review behaviour and attendance standards

1.4 Teaching standards and pedagogy
Design, establish and monitor teaching standards. Research and implement new techniques and review teaching pedagogy and effectiveness.

1.5 Teacher/learning feedback
Set aspirations and expectations for teaching and learning, monitor performance through student and teacher feedback

1.6 Teaching
Plan and conduct lessons and complete other activities related to teaching (e.g. marking/ report writing)

2.1 Staff performance management
Design, manage and conduct performance management activities for staff, including induction. Conduct Performance and Development meetings and obtain and receive peer review and peer feedback.

2.2 Staff learning and development
Plan, design, conduct, track and participate in professional learning and development activities

2.3 Staff health and well-being
Monitor, review and take action to improve health and wellbeing of self and others. Manage workers insurance claims.

2.4 Staff mentoring and coaching
Conducting formal and informal mentoring of staff and other principals, focussing on development opportunities

3.1 Strategic planning
Develop school strategic plan, monitor progress against goals and evaluate the performance of strategic initiatives and programs.

3.2 Improvement and innovation
Identify opportunities for innovation and improvement at a whole of school level. Inspire staff to commit to evidence based improvement and collaborate to broaden contribution and involvement in innovation

3.3 Technology adoption and new systems
Identify and act on opportunities to implement new technologies and systems.

3.4 Policy review and implementation
Interpret and review new policies. Manage and implement policy change within the school. Develop strategic plan, monitor progress against goals and evaluate the performance of strategic initiatives and programs.

3.5 Seek advice and guidance
Seek advice from Department, principal network, peers and others on school strategies

4.1 Financial management
Prepare and conduct activities related to the financial management of the school including preparation and management of the budget, planning and forecasting and approving forms.

4.2 Reporting
Produce and review reports to assist in the management of the school, including identifying the relevant data required

4.3 Internal communications
Develop and/or review internal written communications and share information shared within the school. Sharing of important information through meetings, forums, assemblies

4.4 Department communications
Reviewing, receiving or developing communications from the department.

4.5 Staffing management
Day to day staffing allocation management including casual staff and leave management. This also includes organisational structure and recruitment of staff.

4.6 Complaints management
Formally managing complaints from internal or external parties and review complaints management guidelines

4.7 Infrastructure/asset management
Identify and review infrastructure needs, plan infrastructure activities and manage and report on assets

4.8 Other processes and procedures
Develop, communicate and review the effectiveness of processes and procedures related to the management of the school.

4.9 Compliance
Receive and act on compliance requests and monitor compliance activities

4.10 Student administration
Manage and co-ordinate current and future student enrolment requirements and any other administrative tasks relating to students

5.1 Student relationships and engagement
Engage with students through formal or informal interactions to build relationships

5.2 Parent and carer relationships and engagement
Engage with parents and carers through formal or informal interactions to build relationships

5.3 Community involvement and engagement
Develop and manage relationships with the community and other organisations. Includes involvement in community activities.

5.4 Partnerships
Develop and manage relationships with in the broader environment such as business

5.5 Staff engagement
Engage with staff and teachers through formal or informal interactions to build relationships

6. Other

For coding purposes – relates to activities that are personal, time management or lost time

6.1 Personal time

6.2 Time management

6.3 Lost time

Appendix 2: Quantitative analysis approach

Direct Observation (time and motion study)

Direct observations were conducted through the use of a time and motion study. Time and motion studies provide unbiased insight into actual (rather than perceived) tasks completed and proportion of time spent on tasks relative to other quantitative methods, such as surveys.

Quantitative data was collected through both direct observation of principal activities throughout the school day (median of ~6.1 hours) and through a brief (~0.5 hours) and debrief session (~0.5 hours) to capture additional activities completed before and after the observation period. The tasks and activities observed and reported on were recorded against an activity framework developed based on the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Leadership Profiles.

Figure A2.1: Direct observation research data sets
An outline of the different data sets obtained through the direct observation research activity.

Reported	Observed	Reported	Surveyed

Indicative working day
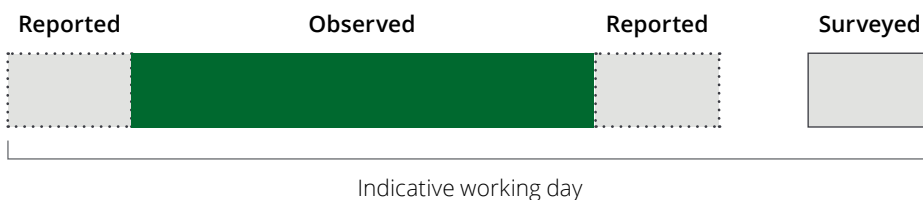
Reported: Data collected from principals through brief and debrief sessions on work conducted before and after the observation period

Observed: Data collected through recording tasks directly observed over an average ~6.1 hours

Surveyed: Data collected through survey questionnaire to understand principal perceptions, attitudes and preferences

Reported

Reported data consists of the briefing survey and end-of-day briefing survey. The briefing survey examined school-related activities completed prior to meeting with the researcher and activities completed the previous night (or weekend if research was conducted on a Monday). It also collected a range of demographic information about the principal's situation (e.g. extent of administrative support staff available).

The end-of-day debrief involved defining the activities they plan to complete after the researcher leaves, as well as their perception of the time spent on the various activities undertaken over the course of the day.

The reported data of school-related activities completed was used with the observed data to analyse the proportion of time spent on different activities.

Observed

The timeframe covered by direct researcher observation was focused on the busiest, most unpredictable times of the day, where self-reporting would be less likely to be accurate – during school hours. The start and end time of each tasks and activity observed were recorded through a tool.

Data capture

A tool was developed to enable researchers to capture reported, observed and survey data consistently and accurately on their smartphone or tablet. The tool prompted the researcher for all sections of the direct observation, and most fields were categorised and pre-defined. There were some free-text fields which allowed the researcher to describe the activity being performed, or response to a survey questions. The tool was further supported by a user guide.

Sample selection

A sample frame was developed based on data provided by the department. Balance was sought across the following five characteristics:

1. Operational directorate
2. Location
3. School type
4. Size of school (FTE)
5. ICSEA group.

Initial school structure

Schools are not evenly distributed across all combinations of the five characteristics above, and there is a structure to how these factors are grouped. For instance, some groups have small populations and little variation in student numbers and ICSEA groups. Outer regional areas only relate to the 'rural' directorates of Dubbo and Wagga Wagga, as well as Tamworth and Coffs Harbour. In addition, inner regional areas have many more schools in the 'rural' directorates than the metropolitan directorates of Macquarie Park and Ultimo.

Nested block design: sampling within the variation

The parameters defining the schools have a hierarchal or nested structure. A nested block design takes into account this structure in determining the blocks from which to sample.

The following sampling rules were applied when selecting a sample from the blocks defining the variation across the five factors:

- The total sample should be 110 to 120 schools
- There should be a minimum of four to five schools in each of the major characteristics (i.e. operational directorate, location, school type, size of school, ICSEA group)

- Where there are larger populations of schools, allocate sample within the nested hierarchy of:
  - Directorate within Rural and Metro
  - ICSEA group within the four major characteristics
  - FTE students in nine groups within the four major groups
- Where there is a large number of schools within a sampling block, more than one school is allocated within the overall sampling rate of one in twenty
- There is a preference for very large schools (over 1100 students). There are 52 schools with more than 1100 students (3 Central, 7 Primary, 42 Secondary). The sample includes 7 of these (1 Central, 2 Primary, 4 Secondary) which is a sampling rate of 13.5% compared to an average sampling rate of 5.4% (7.7% for Central schools, 4.9% Primary, 7.5% secondary)
- There is a bias from very small schools. We deliberately did not sample schools with less than 30 full time equivalent students, so small schools (1 to 80 students) have a lower sampling rate (3.5%) compared to the average (5.4% overall, or 4.9% primary schools).

Within the sampling frame, defined groups or buckets of schools are identified which meet the sample rules defined. Typically these groups are between four to ten schools. Within these groups or buckets, the school to be observed is selected randomly.

Figure A2.2: Diagram of the nested block design
A detailed diagram of the nested block design for the direct observation school sampling approach.

All Schools (2184)

Remote/Very Remote Schools = 50
Sample = 5 (min)

Primary/Infants (ex remote)
Schools = 1575

Central (ex-remote)
Schools = 51
Sample = 4 (min)

Secondary (ex-remote)
Schools = 395

Specific Purpose
Schools = 113
Sample = 6 (1:20)

Outer Reg

Inner Reg

Major Cities

Outer Reg

Inner Reg

Major Cities

Rural Schools = 403
(D=176 T= 227)
Cells=7
Sample=12

Metro Schools = 63
(M=28 U= 35)
Cells=4
Sample=4

Rural Schools = 192
(D=67 T= 125)
Cells=10
Sample=11

Metro Schools = 646
(M=318 U= 318)
Cells=13
Sample=28

Rural Schools = 46
(D=18 T= 28)
Cells=4
Sample=4

Metro Schools = 217
(M=111 U= 106)
Cells=10
Sample=14

Small populations   Large populations of schools   refer to the nested block design Table A2.1 below

Table A2.1: Nested block design table

Strata	Total (2184)	Dubbo and Wagga Wagga	Tamworth and Coffs Harbour	Macquarie Park	Ultimo	Cells	Sample (119)
Schools for Specific Purposes	113						6
Remote/Very Remote	50						5
Central/Community School (ex remote)	51						4
Primary School-Outer Regional	271	153	117	1		7	12
Primary School-Inner Regional (Rural)	403	176	227			12	20
Primary School-Inner Regional (Metro)	63	28	35			4	4
Primary School-Major Cities (Rural)	192	67	125			10	11
Primary School-Major Cities (Metro)	646			328	318	13	28
Secondary School-Outer Regional	41	26	15			5	5
Secondary School-Inner Regional	91	43	45		3	6	6
Secondary School-Major Cities (Rural)	46	18	28			4	4
Secondary School-Major Cities (Metro)	217			111	106	10	14

Final sample selection

A sample size of 119 was developed. The sample was designed around a sensitivity (margin of error) of +/-9% at a 95% confidence interval.

The sample can be found in Table A2.2 below.

Table A2.2: Direct observation sample

Quota	Category	Sample size	% of population	
1. Operational Directorate	Wagga Wagga	35	6.1%	
	Tamworth	34	5.6%	
	Macquarie Park	24	4.8%	
	Ultimo	26	5.1%	**5.4%**
2. School Location	Major cities	62	5.2%	
	Inner regional	32	5.4%	
	Outer regional	20	5.7%	
	Remote	4	11.4%	
	Very remote	1	6.7%	**5.4%**
3. School Type	Primary Schools	78	4.9%	
	Central/Community Schools	5	7.7%	
	Secondary Schools	30	7.5%	
	Schools for Specific Purposes	6	5.3%	**5.4%**
4. School Size (FTE)	1-200	38	4.6%	
	201-440	33	5.3%	
	441-800	32	6.3%	
	801 – 2000	16	7.4%	**5.4%**
5. ICSEA Group	0557 to 936	36	5.9%	
	0937 to 973	27	6.7%	
	0974 to 1021	24	5.9%	
	1022 to 1247	26	4.3%	
	missing	6	3.9%	**5.4%**

Data preparation approach

A process was followed to ensure the data was standardised and usable for analysis.
The process is defined in table A2.3 below:

Table A2.3: Data preparation approach

1. Prepare and cleanse	2. Restructure	3. Calculate	4. Consolidate	5. Decide
• Extracted the captured data from the tool into excel • Coded three pilot studies into the excel dataset • Assessed general data quality (e.g. application of the activity Framework) • Recoded where necessary based on description of the activity • Cleansed data (e.g. formats, consistency, missing values)	• Prepared data for upload into a software package, SAS, used for data management and statistical analysis • Restructured the dataset for analysis. This included creating a view of a whole day for each Principal • Created an identifier on the source of the data (i.e. before work, observed, after work, planned, incomplete)	• Calculated the time spent per activity. This was calculated by subtracting the activity finish time by the activity start time. However, there are four cases where the researcher ended the activity too early. To account for this, the time spent per activity for these cases were calculated by subtracting the activity start time of the next activity by the start time of the activity being measured • Calculated the weight applied to each school. This was done to balance the sample to the population • The weight of each school was generated based on strata, FTE and ICSEA. The weights are defined below	• Identified additional datasets that can be used for analysis (e.g. school characteristics, PMES scores) • Performed final checks on the data to ensure the successful transformation, consolidation and calculation of the data	• Conducted an overall assessment of all data fields available for analysis • Agreed on the approach for analysing different fields of data • Decided on which data fields will be used to construct an 'Indicative whole day'. It was decided that the reported data before work and after work will be used in addition to the observed data • Agreed that addition brief and debrief data will be reported on separately. This included the planned, incomplete and reported ideal and actual time

School weights

The weight for each school is defined below, balancing the sample of 119 schools to the population.

Table A2.4: School weights

Strata	FTE	ICSEA	Population size	Sample size	Weight
Schools for Specific Purposes	1 to 200		113.0	6	1.03
Remote/Very Remote	1 to 200	557 to 936	26.8	2	0.73
Remote/Very Remote	1 to 200	974 to 1021	17.2	1	0.937
Remote/Very Remote	201 to 2000		6.0	2	0.163
Central/Community School (ex remote)	1 to 400	557 to 944	23.0	1	1.25
Central/Community School (ex remote)	1 to 400	882 to 1247	20.5	1	1.12
Central/Community School (ex remote)	441 to 2000		7.5	2	0.204
Primary School-Outer Regional	1 to 200	557 to 936	110.4	3	2.01
Primary School-Outer Regional	1 to 200	937 to 973	49.5	2	1.35
Primary School-Outer Regional	1 to 200	0974 to 1021	43.3	2	1.18
Primary School-Outer Regional	1 to 200	1022 to 1247	23.7	1	1.29
Primary School-Outer Regional	201 to 440	557 to 936	23.0	2	0.627
Primary School-Outer Regional	201 to 440	937 to 1247	16.0	1	0.872
Primary School-Outer Regional	441 to 800		5.0	1	0.272
Primary School-Outer Regional	801 to 2000		0.0		
Primary School-Inner Regional (Rural)	1 to 200	557 to 936	76.0	3	1.38
Primary School-Inner Regional (Rural)	1 to 200	937 to 973	53.0	2	1.44
Primary School-Inner Regional (Rural)	1 to 200	974 to 1021	63.0	2	1.72
Primary School-Inner Regional (Rural)	1 to 200	1022 to 1247	38.0	2	1.04
Primary School-Inner Regional (Rural)	201 to 440	557 to 936	54.0	2	1.47
Primary School-Inner Regional (Rural)	201 to 440	937 to 973	28.0	2	0.763
Primary School-Inner Regional (Rural)	201 to 440	974 to 1021	29.0	2	0.790
Primary School-Inner Regional (Rural)	201 to 440	1022 to 1247	12.0	1	0.654
Primary School-Inner Regional (Rural)	441 to 2000	557 to 936	15.0	1	0.817
Primary School-Inner Regional (Rural)	441 to 2000	937 to 973	13.0	1	0.708
Primary School-Inner Regional (Rural)	441 to 2000	974 to 1021	15.0	1	0.817
Primary School-Inner Regional (Rural)	441 to 2000	1022 to 1247	7.0	1	0.381
Primary School-Inner Regional (Metro)	1 to 440	557 to 973	21.0	1	1.14
Primary School-Inner Regional (Metro)	441 to 2000	557 to 973	0.0		
Primary School-Inner Regional (Metro)	1 to 440	974 to 1021	23.5	1	1.28
Primary School-Inner Regional (Metro)	201 to 800	974 to 1021	18.5	2	0.504
Primary School-Inner Regional (Metro)	801 to 2000		0.0		

Table A2.4: School weights

Strata	FTE	ICSEA	Population size	Sample size	Weight
Primary School-Major Cities (Rural)	1 to 200	557 to 936	26.3	1	1.43
Primary School-Major Cities (Rural)	1 to 200	937 to 973	15.8	1	0.859
Primary School-Major Cities (Rural)	1 to 200	974 to 1021	11.6	1	0.630
Primary School-Major Cities (Rural)	1 to 200	1022 to 1247	8.4	1	0.458
Primary School-Major Cities (Rural)	201 to 440	557 to 936	29.0	1	1.58
Primary School-Major Cities (Rural)	201 to 440	937 to 973	15.0	1	0.817
Primary School-Major Cities (Rural)	201 to 440	974 to 1021	22.0	1	1.20
Primary School-Major Cities (Rural)	201 to 440	1022 to 1247	27.0	1	1.47
Primary School-Major Cities (Rural)	441 to 2000	557 to 973	7.0	1	0.381
Primary School-Major Cities (Rural)	441 to 2000	974 to 1021	10.0	1	0.545
Primary School-Major Cities (Rural)	441 to 2000	1022 to 1247	20.0	1	1.09
Primary School-Major Cities (Metro)	1 to 200	557 to 936	17.4	1	0.950
Primary School-Major Cities (Metro)	1 to 200	937 to 973	16.3	1	0.886
Primary School-Major Cities (Metro)	1 to 200	974 to 1021	16.3	1	0.817
Primary School-Major Cities (Metro)	1 to 200	1022 to 1247	29.0	1	1.58
Primary School-Major Cities (Metro)	201 to 440	557 to 936	45.0	2	1.23
Primary School-Major Cities (Metro)	201 to 440	937 to 973	41.0	2	1.12
Primary School-Major Cities (Metro)	201 to 440	974 to 1021	45.0	2	1.23
Primary School-Major Cities (Metro)	201 to 440	1022 to 1247	144.0	4	1.96
Primary School-Major Cities (Metro)	441 to 2000	557 to 936	28.0	2	0.763
Primary School-Major Cities (Metro)	441 to 2000	937 to 973	31.5	2	0.858
Primary School-Major Cities (Metro)	441 to 800	974 to 1021	45.0	2	1.23
Primary School-Major Cities (Metro)	801 to 2000	974 to 1021	9.5	2	0.259
Primary School-Major Cities (Metro)	441 to 800	1022 to 1247	135.0	4	1.84
Primary School-Major Cities (Metro)	801 to 2000	1022 to 1247	43.0	2	1.17
Secondary School-Outer Regional	1 to 200		8.0	1	0.436
Secondary School-Outer Regional	201 to 440		19.0	2	0.518
Secondary School-Outer Regional	441 to 800		14.0	2	0.381
Secondary School-Outer Regional	801 to 2000		0.0		
Secondary School-Inner Regional	1 to 440	557 to 073	17.0	1	0.926
Secondary School-Inner Regional	1 to 440	974 to 1247	0.0		
Secondary School-Inner Regional	441 to 800	557 to 936	27.6	2	0.752
Secondary School-Inner Regional	441 to 800	937 to 973	14.9	1	0.814
Secondary School-Inner Regional	801 to 2000	557 to 973	16.0	1	0.872
Secondary School-Inner Regional	441 to 2000	974 to 1247	15.5	1	0.843

Table A2.4: School weights

Strata	FTE	ICSEA	Population size	Sample size	Weight
Secondary School-Major Cities (Rural)	1 to 200		0.0		
Secondary School-Major Cities (Rural)	201 to 800	557 to 936	16.0	1	0.872
Secondary School-Major Cities (Rural)	201 to 440	937 to 1247	0.0		
Secondary School-Major Cities (Rural)	441 to 800	937 to 1247	9.5	1	0.518
Secondary School-Major Cities (Rural)	801 to 2000	557 to 993	10.5	1	0.572
Secondary School-Major Cities (Rural)	801 to 2000	994 to 1247	10.0	1	0.545
Secondary School-Major Cities (Metro)	1 to 440	557 to 973	14.5	1	0.790
Secondary School-Major Cities (Metro)	1 to 440	974 to 1247	8.5	1	0.463
Secondary School-Major Cities (Metro)	441 to 800	557 to 936	30.8	3	0.559
Secondary School-Major Cities (Metro)	441 to 800	937 to 973	11.7	1	0.636
Secondary School-Major Cities (Metro)	441 to 800	974 to 1021	19.1	1	1.04
Secondary School-Major Cities (Metro)	441 to 800	1022 to 1247	24.4	2	0.665
Secondary School-Major Cities (Metro)	801 to 2000	557 to 936	11.3	1	0.616
Secondary School-Major Cities (Metro)	801 to 2000	937 to 973	15.4	1	0.841
Secondary School-Major Cities (Metro)	801 to 2000	974 to 1021	20.6	1	1.12
Secondary School-Major Cities (Metro)	801 to 2000	1022 to 1247	60.7	2	1.65
Total			**2184.0**	**119.0**	**119.0**

Data analysis

AA variety of different techniques were used to analyse the direct observation data. This is summarised in Table A2.5 below.

All calculations for the analysis are based on the weighted sample by applying the weight for each school to the calculation. The sample size presented in the charts in the report reflect the unweighted sample size.

The estimated non-statistical error of quantitative research presented in the report is not expected to be more than 3%. The non-statistical error captures a number of the quantitative research limitations in Appendix 3. This includes subjectivity of the coding, non-observed activities and the use of certain data sources for particular analyses (e.g. observed data and/or surveyed data).

Table A2.5 Analytical framework

Key question	Sub-question	Analysis conducted
What tasks do principals spend their time on?	What proportion of time do principals currently spend on different activities?	Descriptive statistics on % of time spent on each activity and sub-activity by: • Principals overall • Teaching principals • Non-teaching principals.
	How many activities do principals undertake in a school day?	An estimate on the number of activities a principal undertook in a day. Given the nature of reported data, only the direct observation data was used.
	How many unique activities do principals undertake and how long do principals typically spent on these activities?	An estimate on the number of unique activities a principal undertook in a day, across three time groups (short, medium, long activities). The estimated time of a short, medium and long activity was estimated using the median time in each group. Given the nature of reported data, only the direct observation data was used.
	How does the proportion of time spent on different activities differ across different principal/school characteristics?	Descriptive statistics on the % of total time spent on activities by: • Principal type-teaching, non-teaching • School type • School location • Size • ICSEA group • Principal tenure.
	Is there a difference in the distribution of time across activities by different principal/school characteristics?	A Chi-square test to test for significant differences in the distribution of time by school and principal characteristics. Ho: there is no difference in the distribution of time across activities by characteristic (a) (a) • Principal type-teaching, non-teaching • School type • School Location • School size • ICSEA group • Principal tenure. A 5% level of significance was used to test for significance in the distributions of time.

Table A2.5 Analytical framework

Key question	Sub-question	Analysis conducted
What tasks do principals spend their time on?	Is there a difference in the proportion of principals doing the activity?	A Chi-square test to test for significant differences in the proportion of principals that undertook the activity, by school and principal characteristics. Ho: there is no difference in the proportion of principals that undertook activity (b) across characteristic (a) (a) • School type • School Location • School size • ICSEA group • Principal tenure. (b) • Activity 1a • Activity 1b • Activity 2 • Activity 3 • Activity 4 • Activity 5 • Activity 6. A 5% level of significance was used to test for significance in the proportion of principals undertaking an activity.
	Given that principals did the activity, is there any difference in the time spent (minutes) on the activity by different principal/school characteristics?	An F-test from a one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test for significant differences in the log transformed time per activity, by school and principal characteristics. Ho: given principals did activity (b), there is no difference in time spent on activity (b) by characteristic (a). (a) • School type • School Location • School size • ICSEA group • Principal tenure. (b) • Activity 1a • Activity 1b • Activity 2 • Activity 3 • Activity 4 • Activity 5 • Activity 6. A 5% level of significance was used to test for significance in time spent by principals that undertook an activity

Table A2.5 Analytical framework

Key question	Sub-question	Analysis conducted
What tasks do principals spend their time on?	What are the major administrative/management activities that principals are spending time on?	Identify sub-activities that principals define as administrative. Group these sub-activities and provide descriptive statistics on the % of total time spent on administrative tasks by: • Principals overall • Teaching Principals • Non-teaching Principals.
	How many hours to principals typically work compared to what they would ideally work?	Descriptive statistics on the reported typical work day and ideal work day. This includes an average of the overall typical day and ideal day, and a breakdown by school type.
	What are the sub-activities that principals did not complete?	Descriptive statistics on the activities principals did not complete.
What are the enablers and barriers to principals managing their workload?	What are the enablers/barriers to principals managing their workload?	Descriptive statistics on the average number of employees (FTE) in a school, as reported by the principal, by the score categories across achievability and sustainability.
Is the current principal workload achievable and sustainable?	Is the current workload achievable?	Descriptive statistics on the frequency a category is selected.
	Is the current workload sustainable?	Descriptive statistics on the frequency a category is selected.
	How does the achievability and sustainability score change across different principal/school characteristics?	Descriptive statistics on the achievability and sustainability score by: • Principal type-teaching, non-teaching • School type • School location • Size • ICSEA group • Principal tenure.
	Is there any difference in achievability and sustainability by different principal/school characteristics?	Ordinal logistic regression was used to test for differences in achievability and sustainability, by school and principal characteristics. Ho: there is no difference in achievability across characteristic(a). Ho: there is no difference in sustainability across characteristic(a). (a) • School type • School Location • School size • ICSEA group • Principal tenure.

Table A2.5 Analytical framework

Key question	Sub-question	Analysis conducted
Is the current principal workload achievable and sustainable?	Is there any difference in achievability and sustainability by different principal/school characteristics?	Ordinal logistic regression was used to test for differences in achievability and sustainability, by school and principal characteristics. Ho: there is no difference in achievability across characteristic (a). Ho: there is no difference in sustainability across characteristic (a). (a) • School type • School Location • School size • ICSEA group • Principal tenure. Where a significant difference exists across a particular characteristic, the odds ratio between categories in that characteristic were analysed to see which pair/s are significantly different. Ho: odds ratio is equal to one . A 5% level of significance was used to test for significance.
	How does emotional stress change over the course of the day?	Descriptive statistics on the frequency a stress score was selected: • Morning • Midday • Afternoon.

Sum and proportion of total time

The sum of time was calculated by summing the time spent by each principal on the selected attribute (e.g. activity, sub-activity, tag, and channel).

The proportion of time spent on the selected attribute was calculated by dividing the sum of time of that selected attribute by the total sum of time.

This approach was used to look at the proportion of time spent on activity by different school and/or principal characteristics:

• Principal type (teaching, non-teaching)
• School type
• School location
• School size
• School ICSEA group
• Principal tenure

Number of activities undertaken by a principal

Only the observed data was used to examine the number of activities undertaken.

The number of activities undertaken was measured in two ways:

1. Activities undertaken – this reflects the average number of activities a principal conducts over the course of the day

2. Unique tasks – this reflects the average number of unique tasks a principal conducts over the course of the day.

To estimate the expected number of activities, the total number of activities undertaken for each principal was first calculated. This is then averaged across the 119 principals. This number reflects the frequency of changes in activity a principal experiences over the direct observation period.

In order to estimate the number of unique tasks undertaken by each principal, the observed data was categorised into groups where the activity, sub-activity, channel and tag where the same. Each category therefore represented a type of unique task. Once all tasks had been categorised, and the number of unique tasks identified, the estimated number per principal was calculated by averaging the total number of unique tasks across the 119 principals.

As only observed data is used for this analysis, the estimated total number of activities is slightly understated.

Expected time per activity

Only the observed data was used to examine the expected amount of time taken to conduct a unique activity. The expected time per activity was calculated for three time groups:

- Short – less than 5 minutes
- Medium – 5 to 20 minutes
- Long-over 20 minutes

The three groups were used for the analysis because the time per activity variable is highly skewed.

This is demonstrated in distribution (Chart A2.1) and cumulative distribution of time (Chart A2.2). The cumulative distribution of time per activity shows that over 40% of the time per activity data points are less than 5 minutes. The next cut-off at 20 minutes was chosen because this is where the frequency starts to drop, and increasing the time bracket any further results in only having a small number of observations.

Chart A2.1: Distribution of time of the observed data
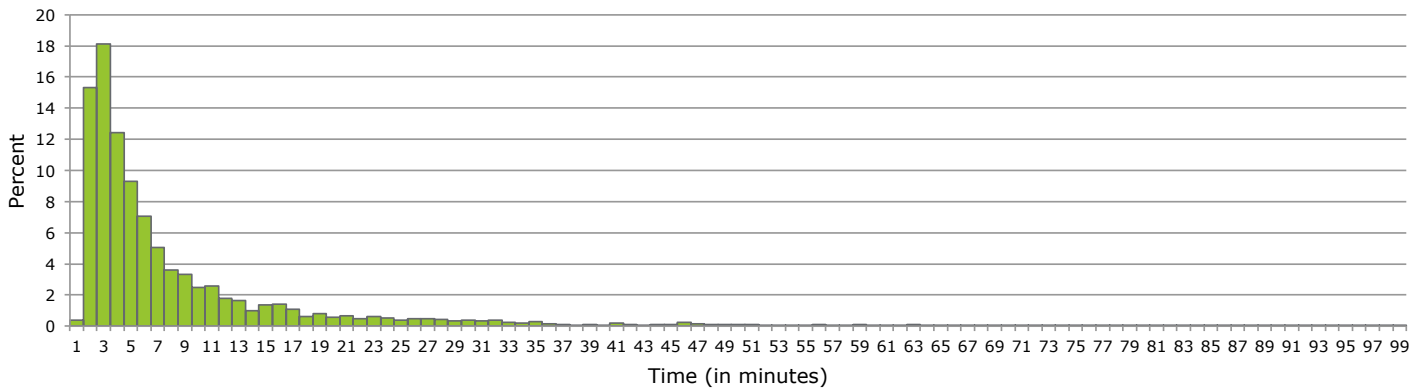
Chart A2.2: Distribution of time (cumulative) of the observed data
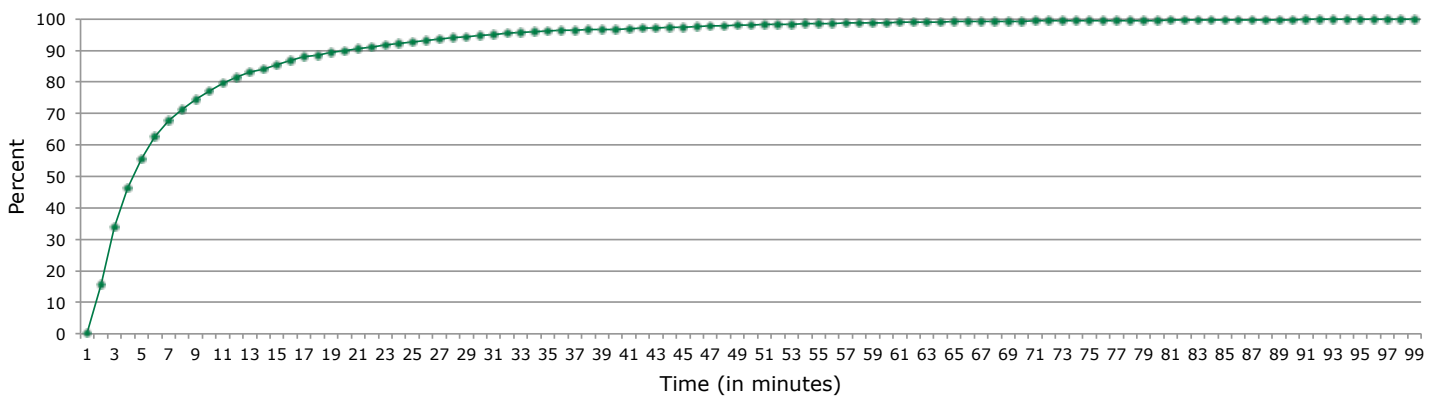
Once the three time groups have been defined, the estimated amount of time per activity reflects the median time per activity within each group.

The estimated number of activities within each time group reflects the average number of activities completed for each group across all 119 principals.

Subjective measures of stress

The subjective measure of stress scale measures cognitive and physical stress, as reported by the principal. The reported level of stress was captured at three times over the course of the day – morning, midday and afternoon.

The 10 point scale was grouped into five categories for analysis. This was done to increase the sample size of responses across each group.

Table A2.6: Scale

Group	Level of stress	Level	Definition
Extreme	10	Highest level of stress/ distress ever felt	Panic
	9	Extreme level of stress/ distress	I can't function at all
Acute	8	Acute level of stress	My ability to function is impaired. I can't concentrate and I'm feeling many physiological symptoms i.e. elevated heart rate, shaky, sweaty etc.
Strong	7	Strong levels of stress	My ability to function is becoming impaired. I can feel some physical symptoms i.e. elevated heart rate.
	6	Moderate-to-strong levels of stress	I'm feeling overwhelmed.
Moderate	5	Moderate level of stress	I'm feeling really uncomfortable but I'm still managing to function.
	4	Mild-to-moderate stress	I'm starting to feel uncomfortable but I can continue to function.
Mild	3	Mild level of stress	My ability to function is not impaired.
	2	Minimal level of stress	I'm functioning well.
None	1	Alert and concentrating well	I'm functioning really well.
	0	No stress	I feel completely relaxed.

The overall stress score for each principal was calculated by taking the average of the principal's three stress scores.

Statistical tests for significance in activity

Three statistical tests were used to test for significant differences time use and time spent by school and principal characteristics.

- Chi-square test on the distribution of time across activities
- Chi-square test on the proportion of principals that undertook the activity
- An ANOVA on log transformed time per activity as the dependent variable.

A Chi-square test was used to test for significant differences in the distribution of total time, by school and principal characteristics. A 5% level of significance was used to determine whether the differences in distribution of time were statistically significant.

The structure of the data is dichotomous with a sub-population of principals who completed the activity and another principals who did not. Thus two tests are required to evaluate differences in the time spent on an activity by characteristics of principals: a test for the proportion of principals who did/did not undertake the activity and the F-test to test for a difference in the log time given a principal completed the activity.

A Chi-square test was used to test for significant differences in the proportion of principals that undertook the activity, by school and principal characteristics. A 5% level of significance was used to determine whether the differences in proportions were statistically significant.

An F-test from a one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test for significant differences in the log transformed time per activity given a principal undertook the activity, by school and principal characteristics. The F-statistic for each activity by the selected characteristic was assessed using a 5% level of significance. The log of time was used given the heavy skew in the timer per activity data.

P-values that are significant (smaller than .05) are highlighted in **red** and an asterisk symbol (*).

Chi-square test on the distribution of time across activities

Table: A2.7: Chi-square tests by different school or principal characteristics

Characteristic	Degrees of freedom	Chi-square statistic	Prob> Chi-square
Principal type (Teaching, non-teaching)	6	12.63	**0.05***
School type (Primary teaching, Primary non-teaching, Secondary, SSP, Central)	24	14.10	0.94
School location (Metro, Regional, Remote)	12	6.01	0.92
School size (1 to 200, 201 to 440, 441 to 800, 801 to 2000)	18	8.21	0.98
ICSEA group (0557 to 936, 0937 to 973, 0974 to 1021, 1022 to 1247)	18	4.50	0.99
Principal tenure (Less than 1 year, 1 to 3 years, 3 to 5 years, over 5 years)	18	4.18	0.61

Chi-square test on the distribution of time across activities

Table: A2.8: Chi-squares test – school type (Primary teaching, Primary non-teaching, Secondary, SSP, Central)

Activity	Weighted sample size	Degrees of freedom	Prob> Chi-square
1. Leading teaching and learning (only teaching)	119	4	**0.00***
2. Developing self and others	119	4	0.33
3. Leading improvement, innovation and change	119	4	0.23
4. Engaging and working with the community	119	4	0.06
5. Other	119	4	**0.02***

Table: A2.9: Chi-square test – school location (Metro, Regional, Remote)

Activity	Weighted sample size	Degrees of freedom	Prob> Chi-square
1. Leading teaching and learning (only teaching)	119	2	**0.00***
2. Developing self and others	119	2	**0.02***
3. Leading improvement, innovation and change	119	2	0.33
4. Engaging and working with the community	119	2	0.30
5. Other	119	2	0.19

Table: A2.10: Chi-square test – school size (1 to 200, 201 to 440, 441 to 800, 801 to 2000)

Activity	Weighted sample size	Degrees of freedom	Prob> Chi-square
1. Leading teaching and learning (only teaching)	119	3	**0.00***
2. Developing self and others	119	3	**0.01***
3. Leading improvement, innovation and change	119	3	0.10
4. Engaging and working with the community	119	3	0.77
5. Other	119	3	0.87

Table: A2.11: Chi-square test – school ICSEA group (557 to 936, 937 to 973, 974 to 1021, 1022 to 1247, NA)

Activity	Weighted sample size	Degrees of freedom	Prob> Chi-square
1. Leading teaching and learning (only teaching)	119	4	0.16
2. Developing self and others	119	4	0.61
3. Leading improvement, innovation and change	119	4	0.12
4. Engaging and working with the community	119	4	0.35
5. Other	119	4	0.33

Table: A2.12: Chi-square test – principal Tenure (Less than 1 year, 1 to 3 years, 3 to 5 years, over 5 years)

Activity	Weighted sample size	Degrees of freedom	Prob> Chi-square
1. Leading teaching and learning (only teaching)	119	3	0.56
2. Developing self and others	119	3	0.29
3. Leading improvement, innovation and change	119	3	0.16
4. Engaging and working with the community	119	3	0.52
5. Other	119	3	**0.01***

As significant differences in the proportion of principals that undertook a particular activity area across principal and school characteristics were found, contingency tables on the weighted sample size used to test differences in the proportions can be seen in tables A2.13 to A2.18.

1a. Leading teaching and learning (only teaching):

Table: A2.13: Contingency table on principals that undertook the activity by school type

Undertook activity (weighted sample size)	Central	Primary (teaching)	Primary (non-teaching)	SSP	Secondary
No	1.82	2.25	49.52	6.18	15.99
Yes	1.12	23.18	13.24	0	5.68
Total	2.94	25.43	62.75	6.18	21.68

Note: The sample of SSP and Central schools is very low

Table: A2.14: Contingency table on principals that undertook the activity by school location

Undertook activity (weighted sample size)	Metro	Regional	Remote
No	53.32	20.65	1.79
Yes	10.93	31.35	0.94
Total	64.26	51.996	2.72

Note: The sample of remote schools is very low

Table: A2.15: Contingency table on principals that undertook the activity by school size

Undertook activity (weighted sample size)	1 to 200	201 to 440	441 to 800	801 to 2000
No	15.28	27.82	22.76	9.90
Yes	29.80	6.37	3.98	3.07
Total	45.08	34.19	26.74	12.97

2. Developing self and others

Table: A2.16: Contingency table on principals that undertook the activity by school location

Undertook activity (weighted sample size)	Metro	Regional	Remote
No	1.65	7.98	0.94
Yes	62.61	44.02	1.79
Total	64.26	51.996	2.72

Note: The sample of remote schools is very low

Table: A2.17: Contingency table on principals that undertook the activity by school size

Undertook activity (weighted sample size)	1 to 200	201 to 440	441 to 800	801 to 2000
No	9.17	0.46	0.94	0
Yes	35.92	33.73	25.80	12.97
Total	45.08	34.19	26.74	12.97

ANOVA F-test results on log transformed time per activity as the dependent variable, given principals undertook the activity

Table: A2.18: ANOVA – School type (Primary teaching, Primary non-teaching, Secondary, SSP, Central)

Activity	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	F	Pr>F
1a. Leading teaching and learning (only teaching)	3	34.86	6.96	0.00*
1b. Leading teaching and learning (excl. teaching)	4	1.19	0.49	0.74
2. Developing self and others	4	11.95	1.58	0.18
3. Leading improvement, innovation and change	4	6.22	0.90	0.47
4. Leading the management of the school	4	3.12	2.18	0.08
5. Engaging and working with the community	4	1.51	0.31	0.87
6. Other	4	8.85	1.45	0.22

Table: A2.19: ANOVA – School location (Metro, Regional, Remote)

Activity	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	F	Pr>F
1a. Leading teaching and learning (only teaching)	2	1.48	0.29	0.75
1b. Leading teaching and learning (excl. teaching)	2	2.86	2.48	0.09
2. Developing self and others	2	4.11	1.07	0.35
3. Leading improvement, innovation and change	2	4.99	1.47	0.24
4. Leading the management of the school	2	1.73	2.38	0.10
5. Engaging and working with the community	2	0.61	0.25	0.78
6. Other	2	2.59	0.83	0.44

Table: A2.20: ANOVA – School size (1 to 200, 201 to 440, 441 to 800, 801 to 2000)

Activity	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	F	Pr>F
1a. Leading teaching and learning (only teaching)	3	27.17	4.78	**0.01***
1b. Leading teaching and learning (excl. teaching)	3	0.12	0.07	0.98
2. Developing self and others	3	7.59	1.32	0.27
3. Leading improvement, innovation and change	3	0.96	0.18	0.91
4. Leading the management of the school	3	2.81	2.62	0.05
5. Engaging and working with the community	3	5.02	1.44	0.23
6. Other	3	1.15	0.24	

Table: A2.21: ANOVA – School ICSEA group (557 to 936, 937 to 973, 974 to 1021, 1022 to 1247, NA)

Activity	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	F	Pr>F
1a. Leading teaching and learning (only teaching)	3	10.43	1.46	0.24
1b. Leading teaching and learning (excl. teaching)	4	4.17	1.81	0.13
2. Developing self and others	4	11.70	1.55	0.19
3. Leading improvement, innovation and change	4	3.44	0.49	0.74
4. Leading the management of the school	4	3.83	2.72	**0.03**
5. Engaging and working with the community	4	5.66	1.21	0.31
6. Other	4	2.55	0.40	0.81

Table: A2.22: ANOVA – Principal Tenure (Less than 1 year, 1 to 3 years, 3 to 5 years, over 5 years)

Activity	Degrees of freedom	Sum of squares	F	Pr>F
1a. Leading teaching and learning (only teaching)	3	17.71	2.72	0.06
1b. Leading teaching and learning (excl. teaching)	3	1.36	0.76	0.52
2. Developing self and others	3	3.67	0.63	0.60
3. Leading improvement, innovation and change	3	1.50	0.28	0.84
4. Leading the management of the school	3	1.32	1.19	0.32
5. Engaging and working with the community	3	0.77	0.21	0.89
6. Other	3	10.71	2.40	0.07

As significant differences were found in the log transformed time per activity as the dependent variable, given principals undertook the activity, the log time used to test for these differences are summarised in tables A2.23 to A2.25

1a. Leading teaching and learning (only teaching)

Table: A2.23: Log(time) – School types

School type	Weighted sample size	Log(time)-mean	Standard
Central	1.12	3.74	-
Primary (teaching)	23.18	5.16	0.88
Primary (non-teaching)	13.24	3.21	1.51
Secondary	5.68	3.78	1.68

Table: A2.24: Log(time) – School size

School size	Weighted sample size	Log(time)-mean	Standard
1 to 200	29.80	4.71	1.33
201 to 440	6.37	2.46	0.62
441 to 800	3.98	4.34	1.67
801 to 2000	3.07	4.68	1.89

4. Leading the management of the school

Table: A2.25: Log(time) – ICSEA group

ICSEA group	Weighted sample size	Log(time)-mean	Standard deviation
0557 to 936	Deviation	5.13	0.68
0937 to 973	23.66	5.44	0.58
0974 to 1021	23.01	5.42	0.62
1022 to 1247	32.43	5.54	0.49
Missing	6.18	5.74	0.31

Distribution of time by school and principal characteristics that are not significantly different

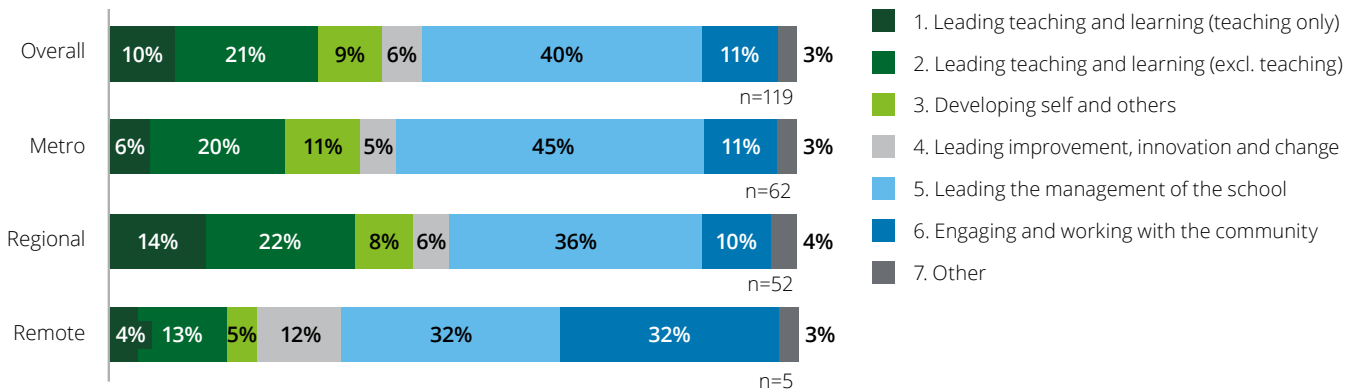**Chart A2.3 : Time use on activities by school type**
% of total time, combined direct observation and reported data

School type	1. Leading teaching and learning (teaching only)	2. Leading teaching and learning (excl. teaching)	3. Developing self and others	4. Leading improvement, innovation and change	5. Leading the management of the school	6. Engaging and working with the community	7. Other	n
Overall	10%	21%	9%	6%	40%	11%	3%	n=119
Primary (non-teaching)	4%	22%	11%	7%	41%	12%	3%	n=59
Primary (teaching)	27%	19%	5%	4%	32%	10%	4%	n=19
Secondary	6%	22%	9%	6%	45%	10%	2%	n=30
SSP		14%	17%	3%	51%	11%	3%	n=6
Central	2%	22%	14%	1%	52%	7%	1%	n=5

Legend:
- 1. Leading teaching and learning (teaching only)
- 2. Leading teaching and learning (excl. teaching)
- 3. Developing self and others
- 4. Leading improvement, innovation and change
- 5. Leading the management of the school
- 6. Engaging and working with the community
- 7. Other

Note: The sample size of SSP and Central schools is very low

Chart A2.4: Time use on activities by school location
% of total time, combined direct observation and reported data

School location	1. Leading teaching and learning (teaching only)	2. Leading teaching and learning (excl. teaching)	3. Developing self and others	4. Leading improvement, innovation and change	5. Leading the management of the school	6. Engaging and working with the community	7. Other	n
Overall	10%	21%	9%	6%	40%	11%	3%	n=119
Metro	6%	20%	11%	5%	45%	11%	3%	n=62
Regional	14%	22%	8%	6%	36%	10%	4%	n=52
Remote	4%	13%	5%	12%	32%	32%	3%	n=5

Legend:
- 1. Leading teaching and learning (teaching only)
- 2. Leading teaching and learning (excl. teaching)
- 3. Developing self and others
- 4. Leading improvement, innovation and change
- 5. Leading the management of the school
- 6. Engaging and working with the community
- 7. Other

Note: The sample size of SSP and Central schools is very low

Chart A2.5: Time use on activities by school size

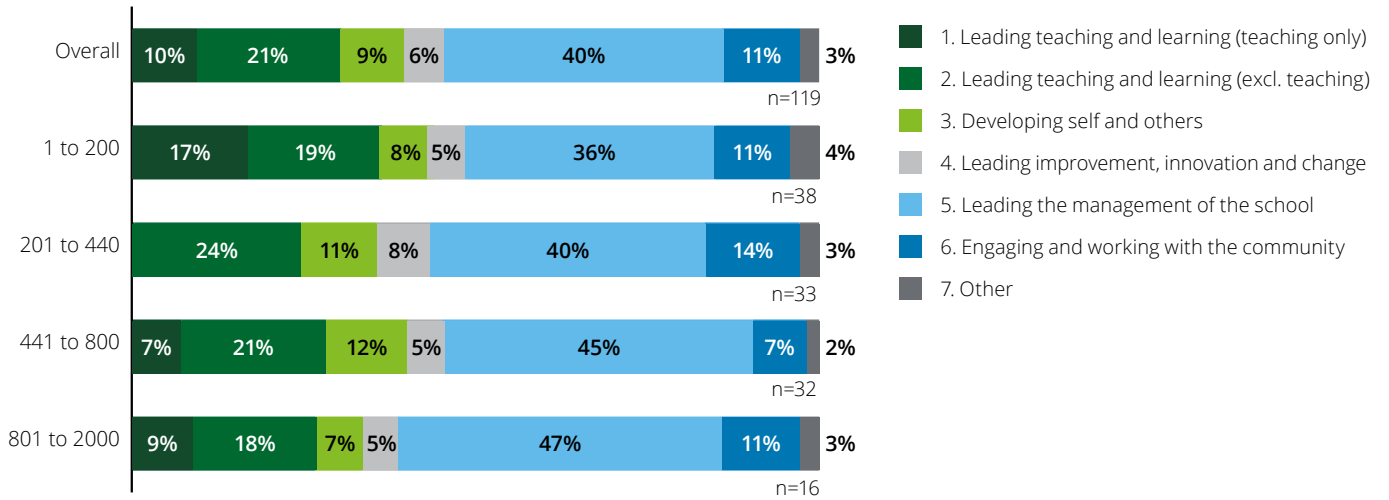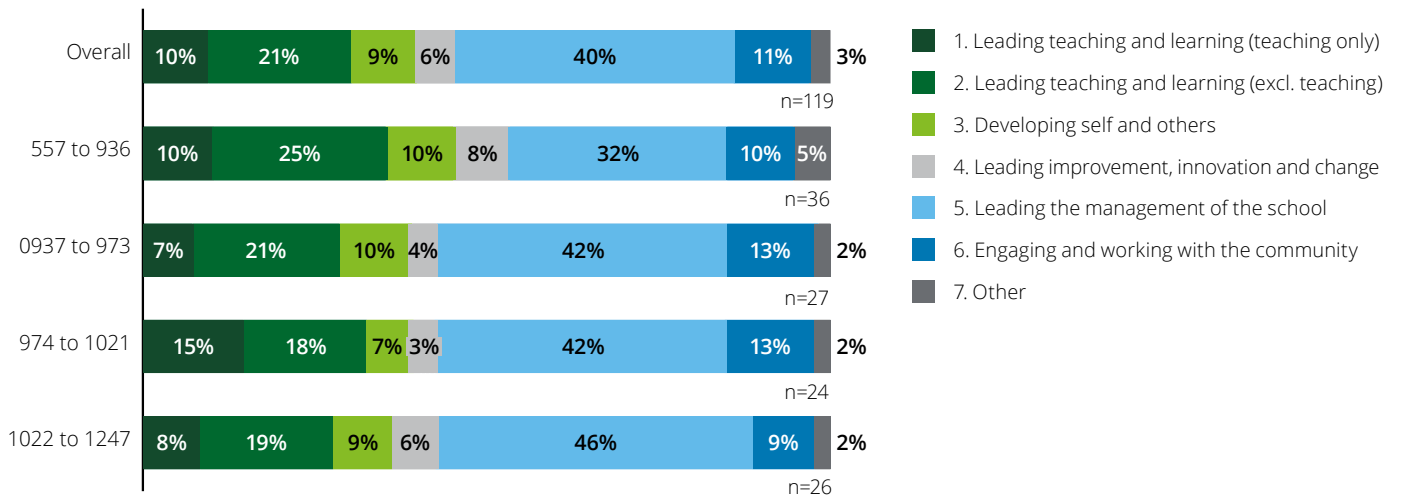% of total time, combined direct observation and reported data

	1. Leading teaching and learning (teaching only)
	2. Leading teaching and learning (excl. teaching)
	3. Developing self and others
	4. Leading improvement, innovation and change
	5. Leading the management of the school
	6. Engaging and working with the community
	7. Other

Overall: 10% | 21% | 9% | 6% | 40% | 11% | 3% n=119

1 to 200: 17% | 19% | 8% | 5% | 36% | 11% | 4% n=38

201 to 440: 24% | 11% | 8% | 40% | 14% | 3% n=33

441 to 800: 7% | 21% | 12% | 5% | 45% | 7% | 2% n=32

801 to 2000: 9% | 18% | 7% | 5% | 47% | 11% | 3% n=16

Chart A2.6: Time use on activities by ICSEA group

% of total time, combined direct observation and reported data

	1. Leading teaching and learning (teaching only)
	2. Leading teaching and learning (excl. teaching)
	3. Developing self and others
	4. Leading improvement, innovation and change
	5. Leading the management of the school
	6. Engaging and working with the community
	7. Other

Overall: 10% | 21% | 9% | 6% | 40% | 11% | 3% n=119

557 to 936: 10% | 25% | 10% | 8% | 32% | 10% | 5% n=36

0937 to 973: 7% | 21% | 10% | 4% | 42% | 13% | 2% n=27

974 to 1021: 15% | 18% | 7% | 3% | 42% | 13% | 2% n=24

1022 to 1247: 8% | 19% | 9% | 6% | 46% | 9% | 2% n=26

Note: SSPs do not have ICSEA values.

Chart A2.7: Time use on activities by principal tenure
% of total time, combined direct observation and reported data

	1. Leading teaching and learning (teaching only)
	2. Leading teaching and learning (excl. teaching)
	3. Developing self and others
	4. Leading improvement, innovation and change
	5. Leading the management of the school
	6. Engaging and working with the community
	7. Other

Overall: 10% | 21% | 9% | 6% | 40% | 11% | 3% — n=119
< 1 year: 2% | 20% | 15% | 7% | 43% | 12% | 2% — n=17
1 - 3 years: 13% | 18% | 8% | 6% | 39% | 11% | 6% — n=23
3 - 5 years: 15% | 19% | 7% | 3% | 47% | 8% | 1% — n=13
> 5 years: 9% | 23% | 9% | 6% | 39% | 11% | 3% — n=66
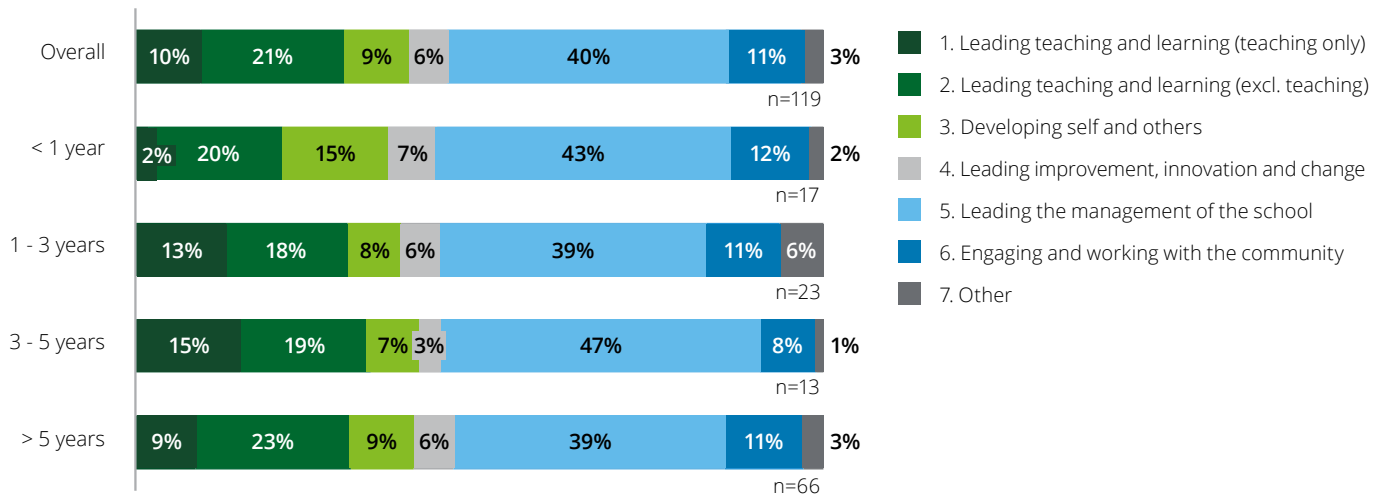
Statistical tests for significance in sustainability and achievability
Ordinal logistic regression was used to test for significant differences in achievability and sustainability by different school and principal characteristics.

Table: A2.26: Scale

Achievability	Sustainability
Not at all achievable (4)	Not at all sustainable (4)
Difficult to achieve (3)	Difficult to sustain (3)
Achievable (2)	Sustainable (2)
Very easy to achieve (1)	Very easy to sustain (1)

The Wald Chi-Square Test was used to test that at least one of the predictors' regression coefficients is not equal to zero in the model. A 5% level of significance was used to determine whether the differences in proportions were statistically significant.

P-values that are significant (smaller than .05) are highlighted in **red** and an asterisk symbol (*).

Chi-square test results

Table: A2.27: Ordinal Logistic Regression: Chi-squares test – Achievability

Characteristic	Degrees of freedom	Wald Chi-square	Prob> Chi-square
School type (Primary teaching, Primary non-teaching, Secondary, SSP, Central)	4	0.7716	0.942
School location (Metro, Regional, Remote)	2	8.2324	**0.016***
School size (1 to 200, 201 to 440, 441 to 800, 801 to 2000)	3	2.7952	0.424
ICSEA group (0557 to 936, 0937 to 973, 0974 to 1021, 1022 to 1247, NA)	3	3.4652	0.325
Principal tenure (Less than 1 year, 1 to 3 years, 3 to 5 years, over 5 years)	3	5.4281	0.143

Given a significant difference exists across school location on achievability, the odds ratios from the ordinal logistic regression was used to test for significant differences across the locations.

If the confidence limit does not include the value one, the odds ratio is significantly different from one. This means that there is a significant difference in the response between those locations (95% confidence interval).

Table: A2.28: Ordinal Logistic Regression: Achievability across school location

Location A	Location B	Odds ratio	95% Confidence Limits	
Metro	Regional	2.927	1.303	6.574
Metro	Remote	0.349	0.035	3.475
Regional	Remote	0.119	0.011	1.244

Table: A2.29: Ordinal Logistic Regression: Chi-squares test – Sustainability

Characteristic	Degrees of freedom	Wald Chi-square	Prob> Chi-square
School type (Primary teaching, Primary non-teaching, Secondary, SSP, Central)	4	3.2399	0.5185
School location (Metro, Regional, Remote)	2	3.9732	0.1372
School size (1 to 200, 201 to 440, 441 to 800, 801 to 2000)	3	5.8017	0.1217
ICSEA group (0557 to 936, 0937 to 973, 0974 to 1021, 1022 to 1247, NA)	3	1.8665	0.6006
Principal tenure (Less than 1 year, 1 to 3 years, 3 to 5 years, over 5 years)	3	5.4192	0.1436

Sustainability and achievability across school and principal characteristics that are not significantly different

Chart A2.8: Achievability and sustainability of principal workload against school FTE
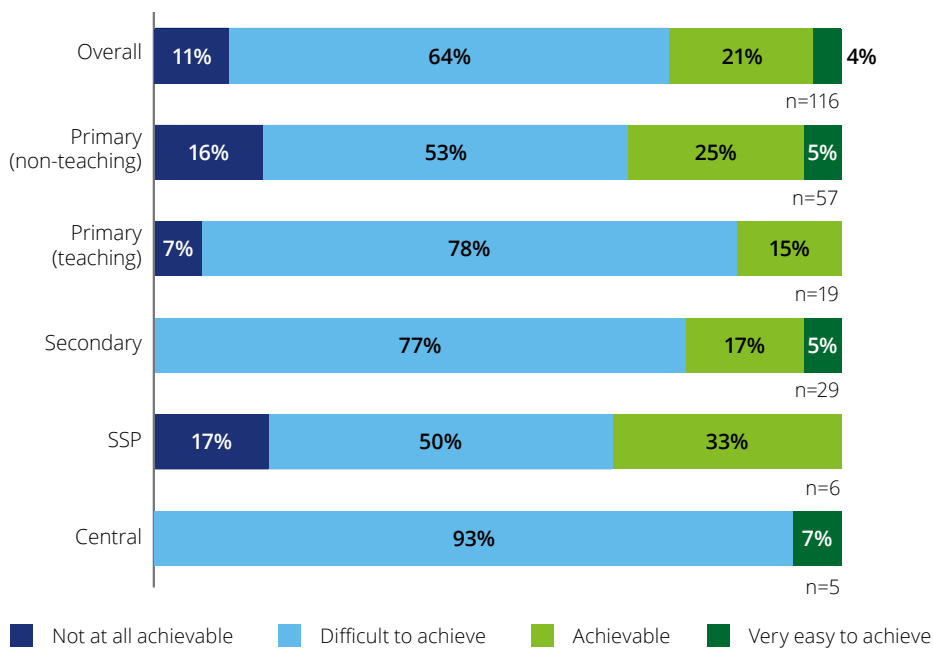Average[1] FTE of staff in the principals ecosystem (excluding FTE identified as other), surveyed data
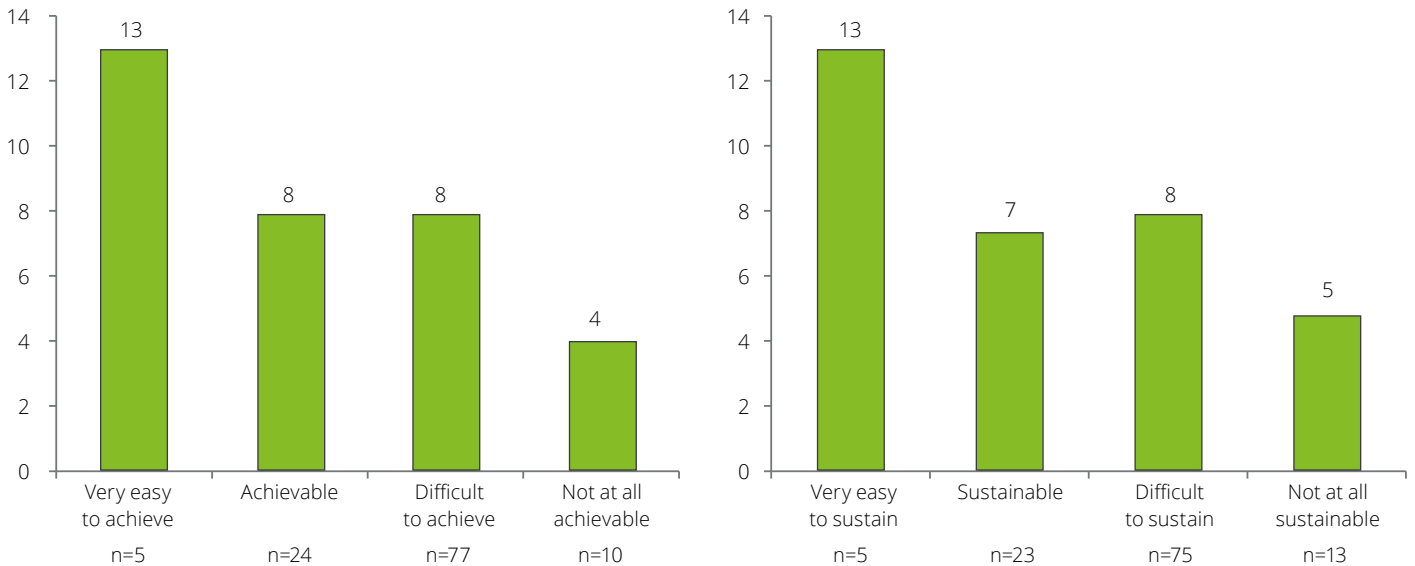
Note: The sample of principals that selected 'very easy to achieve/sustain' are very low

Chart A2.9: Principal perception of achievability of workload by school type
% of observation participants, reported data

Note: The sample of SSP and Central schools is very low

[1] Average FTE represents the arithmetic mean of reported executive and support staff FTE across principals that selected each achievability/sustainability score

Chart A2.10: Principal perception of achievability of workload by principal tenure
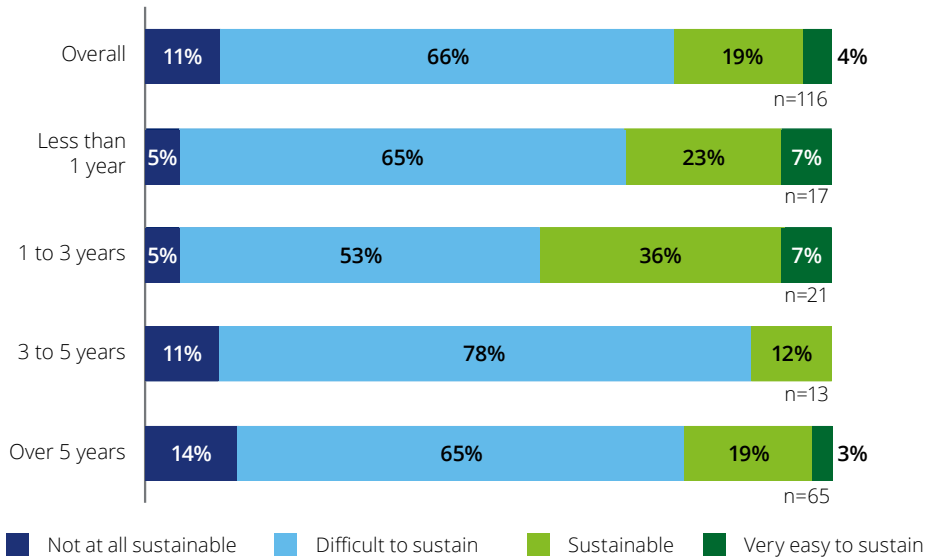
% of observation participants, reported data

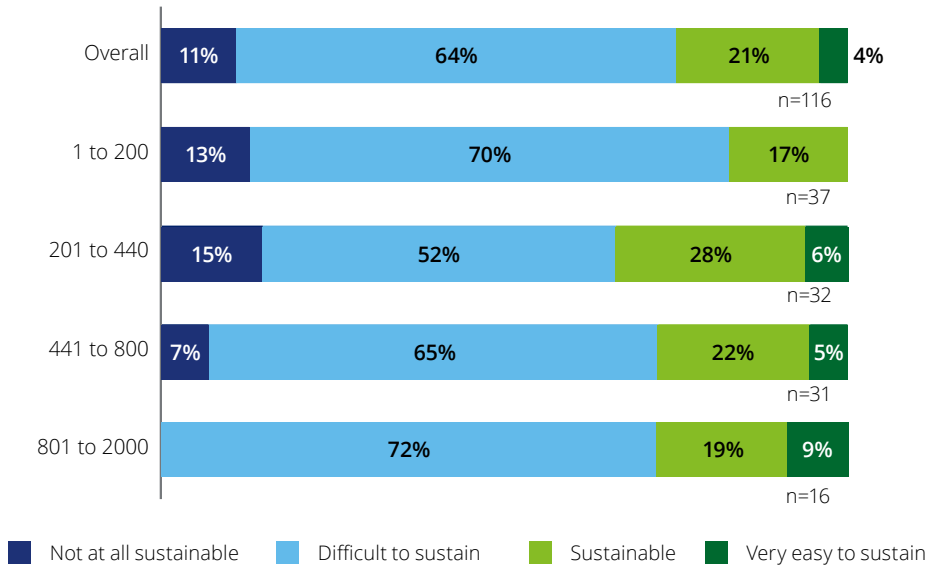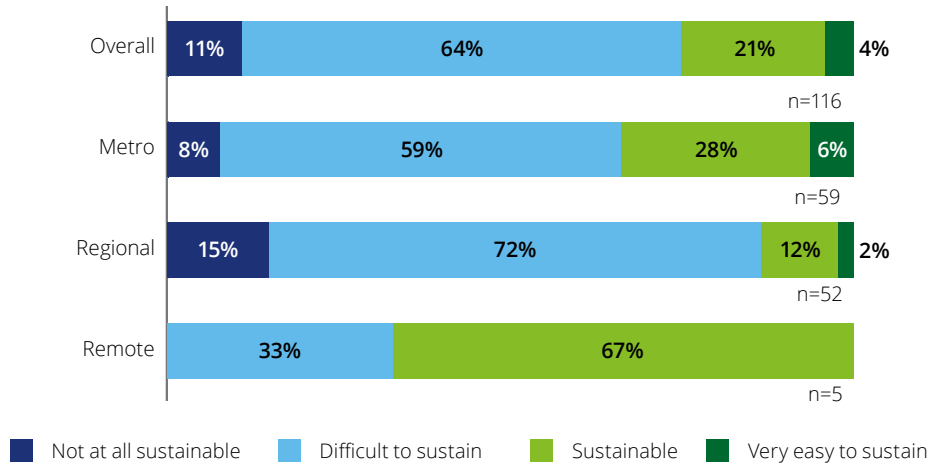|	Not at all achievable	Difficult to achieve	Achievable	Very easy to achieve
Overall	11%	64%	21%	4%
Less than 1 year	12%	57%	23%	7%
1 to 3 years	6%	54%	33%	7%
3 to 5 years	7%	81%	12%	
Over 5 years	14%	69%	14%	3%
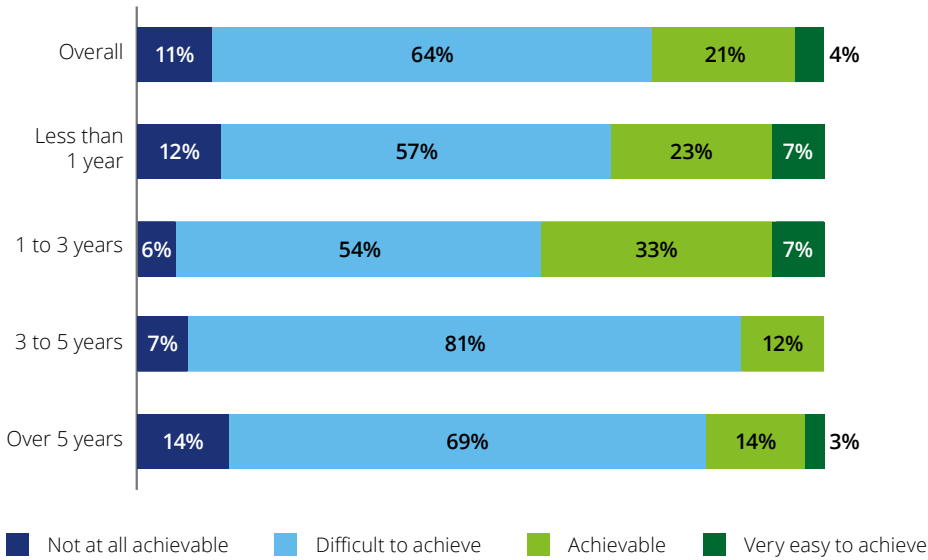
Chart A2.11: Principal perception of achievability of workload by school size

% of observation participants, reported data

	Not at all achievable	Difficult to achieve	Achievable	Very easy to achieve
Overall	11%	64%	21%	4%
1 to 200	13%	70%	17%	
201 to 440	15%	52%	28%	6%
441 to 800	7%	65%	22%	5%
801 to 2000		72%	19%	9%
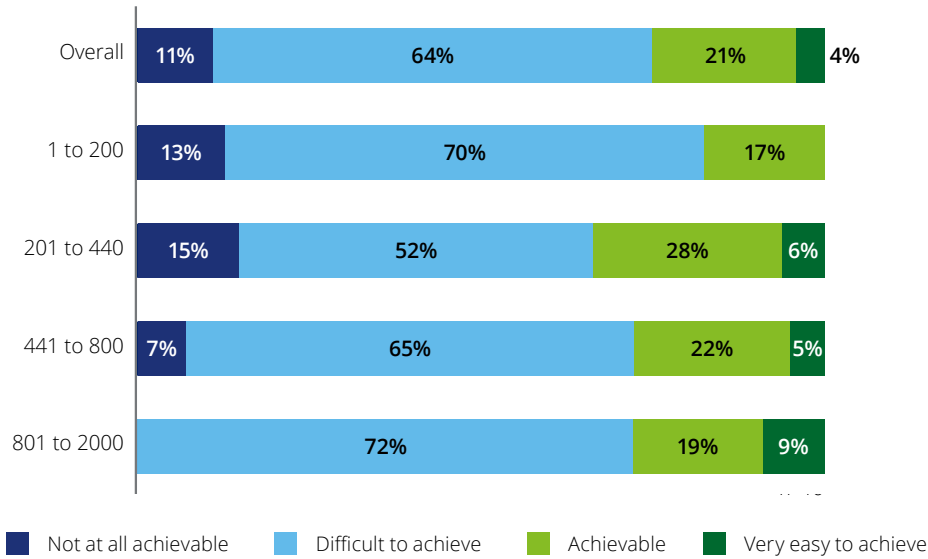
Chart A2.12: Principal perception of achievability of workload by ICSEA

% of observation participants, reported data

	Not at all achievable	Difficult to achieve	Achievable	Very easy to achieve	
Overall	11%	64%	21%	4%	n=116
0557 to 936	7%	68%	21%	4%	n=33
0937 to 973	9%	83%	8%		n=27
0974 to 1021	16%	61%	9%	14%	n=24
1022 to 1247	11%	51%	38%	1%	n=26

■ Not at all achievable   ■ Difficult to achieve   ■ Achievable   ■ Very easy to achieve
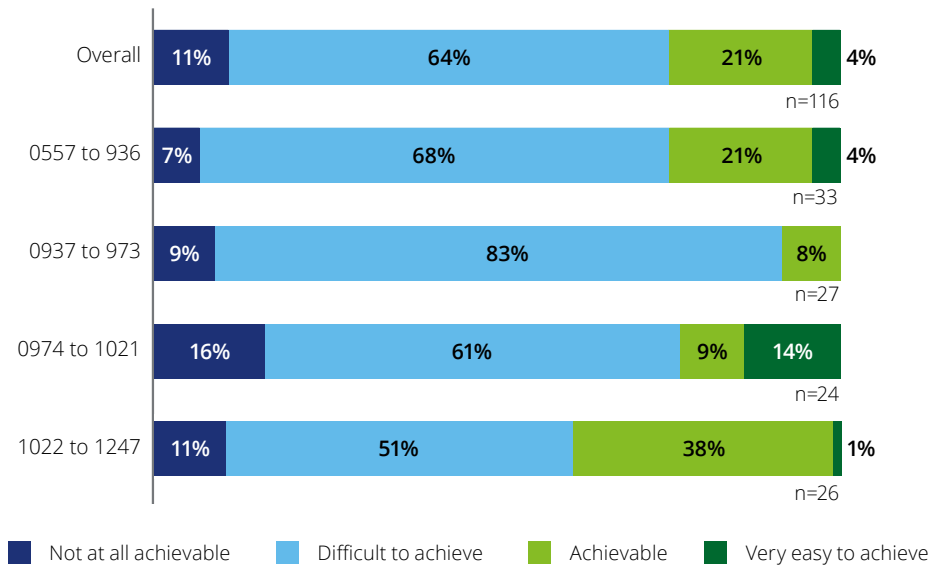
Note: SSPs do not receive ICSEA values

Chart A2.13: Principal perception of sustainability of workload by school type

% of observation participants, reported data

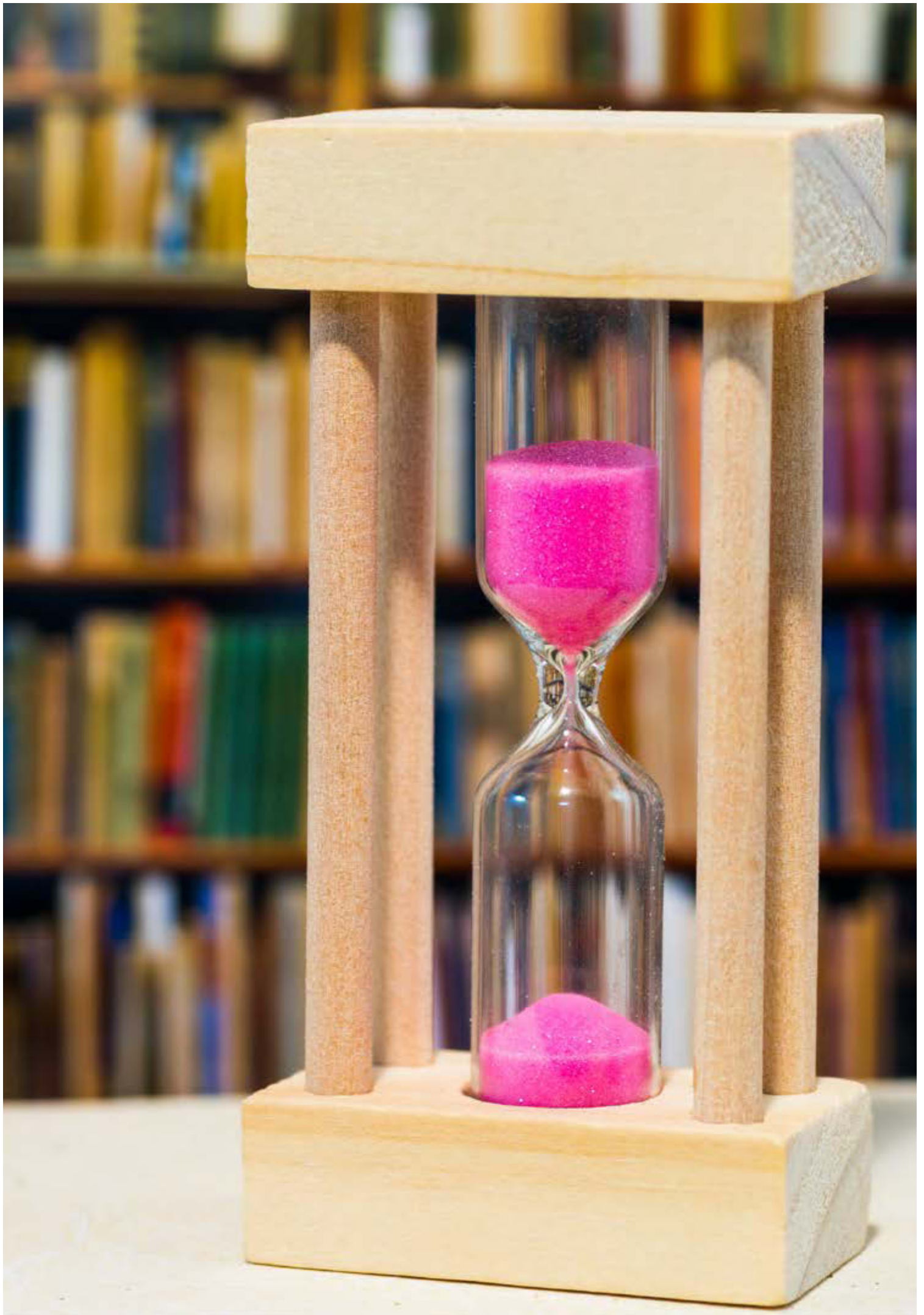|	Not at all sustainable	Difficult to sustain	Sustainable	Very easy to sustain	
Overall	11%	66%	19%	4%	n=116
Primary (non-teaching)	10%	64%	20%	5%	n=57
Primary (teaching)	20%	66%	14%		n=19
Secondary	4%	73%	18%	5%	n=29
SSP	17%	50%	33%		n=6
Central		88%	6%	7%	n=5

■ Not at all sustainable   ■ Difficult to sustain   ■ Sustainable   ■ Very easy to sustain
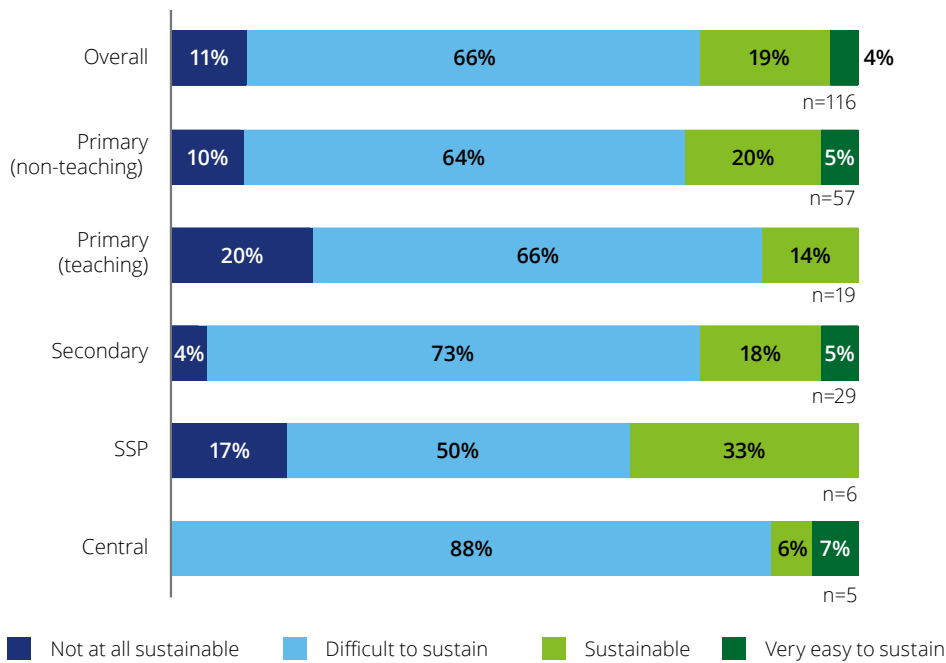
Note: The sample of SSP and Central schools is very small

Chart A2.14: Principal perception of sustainability of workload by principal tenure

% of observation participants, reported data

	Not at all sustainable	Difficult to sustain	Sustainable	Very easy to sustain	
Overall	11%	66%	19%	4%	n=116
Less than 1 year	5%	65%	23%	7%	n=17
1 to 3 years	5%	53%	36%	7%	n=21
3 to 5 years	11%	78%	12%		n=13
Over 5 years	14%	65%	19%	3%	n=65

Chart A2.15: Principal perception of sustainability of workload by school size

% of observation participants, reported data

	Not at all sustainable	Difficult to sustain	Sustainable	Very easy to sustain	
Overall	11%	64%	21%	4%	n=116
1 to 200	13%	70%	17%		n=37
201 to 440	15%	52%	28%	6%	n=32
441 to 800	7%	65%	22%	5%	n=31
801 to 2000		72%	19%	9%	n=16

Chart A2.16: Principal perception of sustainability of workload by school location

% of observation participants, reported data

Location	Not at all sustainable	Difficult to sustain	Sustainable	Very easy to sustain	
Overall	11%	64%	21%	4%	n=116
Metro	8%	59%	28%	6%	n=59
Regional	15%	72%	12%	2%	n=52
Remote		33%	67%		n=5

■ Not at all sustainable ■ Difficult to sustain ■ Sustainable ■ Very easy to sustain

Note: The sample of Remote schools is very small

Chart A2.17: Principal perception of sustainability of workload by ICSEA

% of observation participants, reported data

ICSEA	Not at all sustainable	Difficult to sustain	Sustainable	Very easy to sustain	
Overall	11%	66%	19%	4%	n=116
0557 to 936	9%	72%	15%	4%	n=33
0937 to 973	13%	70%	17%		n=27
0974 to 1021	20%	58%	9%	14%	n=24
1022 to 1247	5%	67%	28%	1%	n=26

■ Not at all sustainable ■ Difficult to sustain ■ Sustainable ■ Very easy to sustain
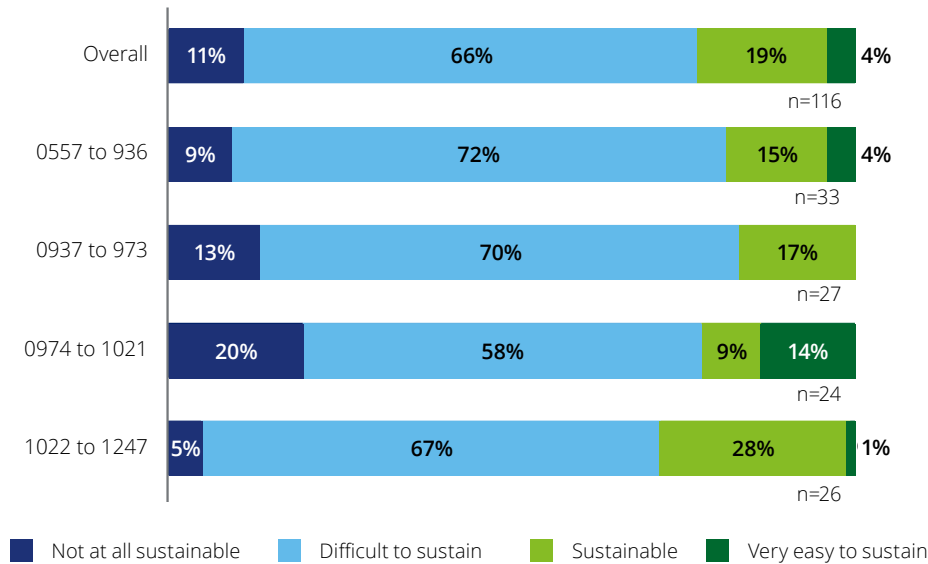
Note: SSPs do not have ICSEA values

Appendix 3:
Research limitations

Although this research has uncovered a range of insights into principals' workload and time use, there are some unavoidable limitations. The key limitations are outlined in Table A3.1 below:

Table: A3.1: Quantitative and qualitative research limitations

Limitation	Description	Potential impact or mitigation
Research period	The direct observation approach is not longitudinal in nature; observations measured a specific period of time in the school year (weeks 5-10 of Term 2, 2017).	**Impact** Certain activities may be over-or under-reported relative to activities undertaken by principals across a whole year (e.g. student report writing, external examinations etc.).
Awareness of observation	A general limitation of direct observations relates to participants' awareness of the observation activity itself.	**Impact** Principals may have consciously or unconsciously chosen to undertake activities during the observation period that they may not typically undertake, or undertake them in a different way. **Mitigation** Communications (including those from the Secondary Principals' Council and the Primary Principals' Association) sought to mitigate this and by encouraging principals to undertake tasks and activities as they 'normally' would.
Non-observed activity descriptions	Some activities undertaken by principals did not have a researcher present due to privacy or confidentiality requirements. While the nature of the activity was recorded, no descriptive detail was captured.	**Impact** Data was collected for these activities and included in the analysis. However, without a description of the activity conducted, coding cannot be validated in the same way as the activities with full descriptions.
Direct observation duration and survey-based data collection	It was not possible to follow a principal from and to home to get a complete picture of tasks undertaken in transit or at home. This was because of challenges on logistics and limitations on costs. In order to capture the activities completed in this time, principals were surveyed on the tasks completed before the researcher arrived and tasks they planned to complete once the researcher left. This was deemed sufficient for the purposes of answering the research questions, as these tasks are more predictable in comparison to hours at the school. In light of this, the direct observations were designed to focus on the times of day where the principal would experience the most disruption – during school hours.	**Impact** Self-reporting in brief and de-brief relies on the principal to recollect what they completed before the researcher got there, and to provide an honest and realistic view of what they plan to compete once the researcher leaves. While the responses seem reasonable, these responses are likely to be less accurate than the direct observation with the researcher present. **Mitigation** Only the 'observed' data captured by the researcher was used when looking at the number of activities undertaken and the expected time per activity. The implication of this is the total number of activities is slightly understated.

Table: A3.1: Quantitative and qualitative research limitations

Limitation	Description	Potential impact or mitigation
Non-statistical error in survey based data	The data reported in the brief and de-brief surveys is subject to non-statistical error, including researcher error in data entry and an inability to distinguish between activities completed before work, or the night before (over the weekend if observation was conducted on a Monday). In the brief survey, principals were asked to define activities they undertook and the time spent on each activity, before the researcher arrived and/or the night before. During the de-brief survey, principals were asked to define the activities they plan to undertake and the expected time on each activity, after the researcher leaves. Both the brief and de-brief required manual data entry on time reported by the principal. Within this data, there is the possibility for errors in data entry. A lack of specificity in the recorded data as to the activities undertaken the same day as opposed to the night before (over the weekend if observation was conducted on a Monday), has created some overlap of time in the reported data. In addition, vagueness in the question asked in the brief regarding work completed the morning of or night before, meant that some, but not all principals, included the work completed the night before or over the weekend in their response.	**Impact** There is a potential for overstatement or understatement in the number of activities and the time spent (at an activity level), within the 3% of non-statistical error. **Mitigation** Non-statistical error has led to a lot of variation across the sampled population on the time spent outside the direct observation period (reported time during brief and de-brief surveys). In five principal cases, the observed and reported time sum to over 18 hours because of potential errors in the data reported in the brief. Analysis on the impact of these five extreme cases was explored, and little difference was found in the distribution of time (not more than 3%) when these cases were excluded. It was decided to not cleanse the data by removing these observations, or anyway alter the raw data, as the insights generated from the analysis does not change. In addition, the variation makes it difficult to determine what values should be cleansed as some are large, whilst others very small. Cleansing would further require values to be identified as missing or replaced by an imputed value. Given insights do not change (more than 3%), the decision was made to leave the data as it was collected.
Linear recording approach	Data was collected linearly; recording of an activity started when the previous activity was recorded as complete. There was no provision for multiple tasks being completed simultaneously.	**Impact** There is a potential for overstatement or understatement in the number of activities and the time spent (at an activity level), within the 3% of non-statistical error. **Mitigation** Field researchers recorded the primary task being undertaken.
Subjectivity of the observation coding	The recording mechanism required a base level of knowledge to record the activities observed against the activity framework. This may be subject to human error.	**Mitigation** Field researchers were required to provide a description of the activity along with the activity coded. These were validated, with codes adjusted based on descriptions where there were discrepancies.

Table: A3.1: Quantitative and qualitative research limitations

Limitation	Description	Potential impact or mitigation
Subjective level of stress measure	Principals were asked to rate their level of stress at three points of time during the direct observation period – morning, midday and afternoon. There is a possibility that the direct observation conducted by the researcher impacted the level of stress reported.	**Impact** While there may have been an effect of the direct observation on reported stress, it is difficult to distinguish the impact this has on the reported stress. It is unlikely that this impact is substantial. In addition, descriptive statistics are inferred based on the proportional changes over the course of the day. The researcher is a constant variable in the three stress measures so will not have an impact on the insights drawn.
Out-of-office days	Principals occasionally spend full days offsite, or out of the office for work purposes. Observations were not scheduled on these days.`	**Impact** Certain activities may be over-or under-reported relative to activities undertaken by principals across the whole year (e.g. professional development).
Qualitative insights	While qualitative insights gained from contextual inquiry are rich in their depth, it is hard to assess how representative this is of the whole population.	**Mitigation** To determine the impact of certain insights additional qualitative research with the broader principal population may be required.
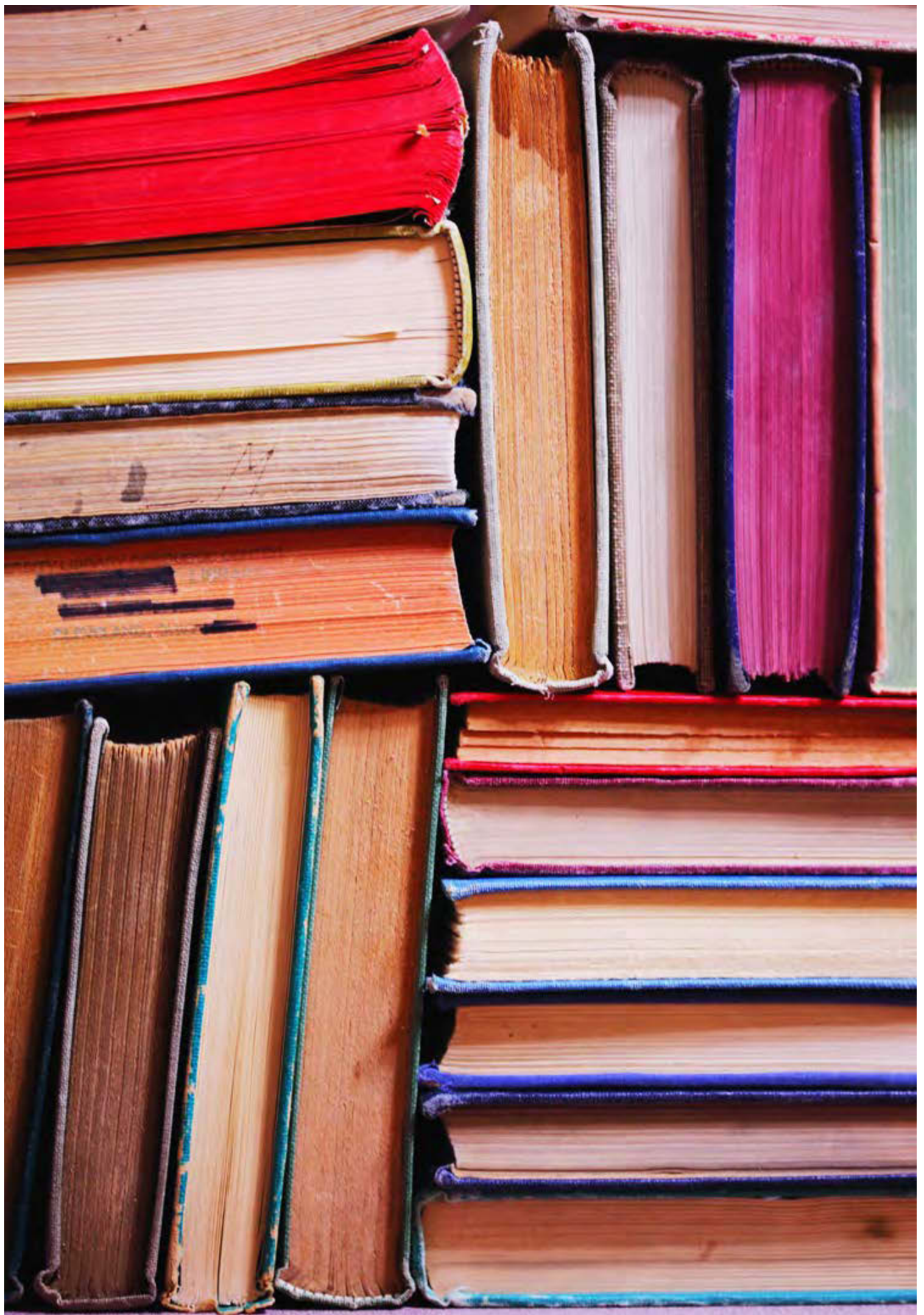
Appendix 4:
Summary of findings

Table: A4.1: Summary of findings

Questions	Findings
Q1.What tasks do principals spend their time on?	**1.1** Overall principal time is; 30% focussed on leading teaching and learning, 9% developing self and others, 6% on leading improvement, innovation and change, 40% on leading the management of the school and 11% on engaging and working with the community (and 3% on other activities).
	1.2 There is not sufficient evidence to suggest that the distribution of time spent across activities are significantly different by school type, school location, school size, ICSEA group and principal tenure.
	1.3 There is a significant difference in proportion of time spent between teaching and non-teaching principals on the distribution of time spent across activities.
	1.4 Principals on average undertook 45 activities during the observation period of the school day, with 28 of these activities being unique. 43% of the activities principals undertook, were conducted in less than 5 minutes.
	1.5 Tasks that require longer period of time and attention are often completed after hours or on weekends; with largest proportion of time spent on Email management, internal communications, teaching and reporting.
	1.6 Principals reported that they had reduced capacity to fulfil their role as educational leaders as they are currently spending a large proportion of time in activities they classify as administration.
	1.7 Principals generally defined administration as all activities relating to leading the management of the school, as well as strategic planning.
	1.8 Principals spent 43% of time on administrative tasks; with 6% considered as more strategic in nature, 12% as more general administration and 25% as more transactional.
	1.9 Transaction and general administrative activities are often unplanned, ad hoc and variable in nature.
	1.10 Principals were spending time on activities that would not typically be considered core to their role; such as cleaning, plumbing tree audits and troubleshooting technology issues.

Table: A4.1: Summary of findings

Questions	Findings
Q2. What are the enablers and barriers to principals managing their workload?	**Enablers** **2.1** Capable and available executive and administrative support staff, structured appropriately, enable principals to delegate and manage workload more effectively. Principals that have higher levels of executive staff are more likely to feel that their workload is achievable and sustainable. **2.2** Targeted augmentation of capabilities to address gaps at the school level – including, but limited to, the use of Business Managers, where appropriate. **2.3** Informal support networks are the greatest source of support for Principals (as are PSL's for advice and support). **2.4** Involvement and memberships of principals associations and collegial networks are a great source of support for principals. **2.5** Tools and frameworks such as the SEF, AITSL framework and the Leading and Management Principal Credential allow principals to focus and evaluate effectiveness of their workload. **Barriers** **2.6** Insufficient administrative support staff and resources to meet demands, have resulted in additional work for principals. **2.7** Administrative support staff roles, and associated capabilities, have not evolved to reflect the range of activities required. **2.8** Ability to delegate to executive staff relies on them having sufficient capacity to take on more responsibilities. **2.9** Concerns about perceptions of spending money on administrative support staff rather than on students lead to reallocation of admin funding to other areas (or non-spending). **2.10** There are varying levels of capability around structuring teams and delegation to most effectively deliver student outcomes and ensure efficient operation of the school.
Q2a. Could some tasks be delegated to other school staff to help manage principal workloads?	**2a.1** Some principals are effective at delegation and structuring their teams to assist with completion of activities. Those who have been effective at this have generally developed their own capability to do so, with limited support. **2a.2** A number of barriers to effective delegation were raised by principals including staffing structures, role description limitations, capacity and capability of executive and administrative support staff. **2a.3** Principals feel quite strongly that some tasks are theirs to own and should not be delegated. **2a.4** There are perceptions that it is not appropriate to delegate tasks that are not directly aligned to the other executives support roles, so in the absence of support, these tasks are taken on by the principal.

Table: A4.1: Summary of findings

Questions	Findings
Q2b. Could department support materials and communications be improved to help principals to manage their workload?	**2b.1** Department support materials and communications are perceived as complicated and lacking co-ordination (can change in flight), contextual information and a clear rationale for change. **2b.2** Principals do not have the capacity to absorb and action the large number of communications materials, changes related to initiatives and policy updates that they receive from the department – and often with very tight response/action/turnaround times. **2b.3** Principals receive communication materials and requests to complete activities from multiple business areas in the department, with no single point of contact to assist in resolving conflicts or questions between initiatives. **2b.4** Communications usually contain compliance-based and/or technical terminology, requiring principals to spend time interpreting, simplifying, filtering and re-crafting content in order to communicate within their school. **2b.5** Support materials often take a long time to read, interpret and understand and can sometimes be out of date and not fit for purpose. **2b.6** The department intranet, despite recent improvements and updates, can still be difficult to navigate to find useful information and required materials. **2b.7** There is often no forward view of the timelines for known changes, nor much perceived consideration for the typical school rhythms. **2b.8** There is limited clarity around how tasks requested by the department align to the department's objectives, nor how they add value to educational outcomes. **2b.9** Principals have put in place informal networks of their colleagues to share information and experiences. There are no formal mechanisms for principals to share learnings or leading practice with their colleagues.

Table: A4.1: Summary of findings

Questions	Findings
Q3. Is the current principal workload achievable and sustainable?	**3.1** Principals acknowledge that activity beyond standard hours is required.
	3.2 The majority of principals report that their current workload is neither achievable (75% reporting their role to be difficult to achieve or not at all achievable) nor sustainable (77% reporting difficult to sustain or not at all sustainable).
	3.3 Principals feel that the number of reforms and large scale initiatives will need to slow down in order to make their workload more achievable and sustainable.
	3.4 Tasks that require time and attention are often completed after hours or on the weekends (e.g. strategic planning, financial management and their learning and development).
	3.5 Tasks can be rushed, and the 'bare minimum done' before moving on – resulting in strategic activities becoming 'transactional' or 'administrative' in nature.
	3.6 The most cited examples of activities unable to be completed due to other priorities are the teaching and learning components of the role; such as observing classrooms during the school day, engaging with staff and students to evaluate learning outcomes or effectively engaging in professional learning; and supporting staff wellbeing.
	3.7 Principals can experience high levels of stress, in particular emotional stress; this can have an impact on their professional and personal wellbeing.
	3.8 Issues around health and wellbeing are not being consistently reported.
	3.9 Principals are fearful of being perceived as incompetent if they don't complete a task, despite an inability to articulate consequences of non-compliance with requests outside of limiting their career progression opportunities.
	3.10 Principals that have adapted to the changing nature of their work have achieved this through their personal innovation, learning and testing, with limited support.
	3.11 With a lack of a clear role definition that includes an articulation of outcomes, it is a challenge to understand what a principal should expect their role and appropriate workload should be.
	3.12 To deal with high pressure situations and work overload, principals have developed coping mechanisms such as setting work/life balance restrictions and developing strong prioritisation skills to stay calm in the role.

Table: A4.1: Summary of findings

Questions	Findings
Q4. Has there been a change in either the quantity or nature of principals' work in recent years?	**4.1** Whilst the overall components of the principal's role (educational leadership, site management, and community engagement) have remained consistent, the way that they are being executed (as a result of WH&S, compliance, risk, planning and policy changes) have changed. **4.2** While greater authority has been provided to principals, the level of compliance required around these activities also adds to the administrative workload (e.g. LSLD shift of funding from central to schools has moved aspects of some functions – asset management being most quoted). **4.3** Parental and community expectations of the levels of engagement and frequency of communication have increased, enhanced by the advances in technology. **4.4** The complexity of the social challenges within communities – from cyber bullying, radicalisation, to suicide and broader mental health – have all impacted upon the breadth of the principal workload. **4.5** The evolving role of the principal has increased the need for advanced skills in leadership and management. **4.6** Principals can be unprepared for the leadership and management aspects of the role when transitioning into it. Some principals cited the importance of former mentors (principals) giving them exposure to elements of the role; however, few cited any formal development approaches that built their capabilities in advance. **4.7** Principals feel more scrutinised and accountable than they have felt in the past. **4.8** Advancements in technology have enabled more effective data capture, driving a need for higher level of expertise in principals accessing, assessing and evaluating data – in addition to increased expectations of the information being made available to a wider group of stakeholders (including parents and the community).

Table: A4.1: Summary of findings

Questions	Findings
Q5. What are some examples of exemplary practice from which other schools could benefit?	**5.1** Exemplary practice needs to be contextualised as there is not a 'one size fits all' approach.
	5.2 Leverage storytelling techniques in sharing exemplary practice.
	5.3 Building more agile and flexible working practices: testing and learning, and increased collaboration to improve outcomes.
	5.3 Providing collaborate physical workspaces.
	5.4 Visual boards to communicate and track activities and initiatives.
	5.5 Proactive engagement and communication of school and principal priorities: corridor conversations, informal interactions, visualisations in key locations (e.g. staff rooms).
	5.6 Team project work.
	5.7 Building collaboration and team morale through group activities.
	5.8 Defining and sharing indicators of school and personal success (e.g. absenteeism, engagement, 360 feedback).
	5.9 Forming personal networks of colleagues and sharing information and learnings through these networks.
	5.10 In the absence of a knowledge base, principals develop their own personal knowledge base (e.g. AITSL framework to understand role of a principal, former training materials for specific purposes).
	5.11 Action based learning programs.
	5.12 Trialling different approaches to personal time management – from apps to paper based diaries; a lot of experimentation was observed.
	5.13 Collaboration across informal networks to manage workload (e.g. sharing templates with other principals for compliance purpose).
	5.14 Engaging in 'social learning communities' with other principals, utilising structured sessions focussed on complex problem solving or areas of support need.
	5.15 Extended executive team: allowing people to opt in to take on leadership responsibilities as a growth and learning opportunity.
	5.16 Resource sharing: sharing a BM across multiple schools.
	5.17 Principals leveraging interests of individuals to assign and allocate activities that are areas of challenge, while developing capability (e.g. managing behavioural issues).
	5.18 Mini-business case formats for requesting funding for programs or initiatives within schools.
	5.19 Customer centred design approach to community engagement.

Table: A4.1: Summary of findings

Questions	Findings
Q6. Could the leadership and decision-making culture of schools change in any way to help manage principal workloads?	**6.1** There is a lack of trust between principals and the department. Principals generally don't believe the department acts in their best interest or has their back if things go wrong (e.g. conduct an audit rather than provide support when something goes wrong).
	6.2 Principals often see their Directors as a reporting line and would typically only go to them for support once solutions have been considered.
	6.3 Principals can feel 'lonely' in their role and often feel isolated from and unsupported by the department.
	6.4 Principals are risk averse and often adopt a compliance based mindset when making decisions; they seek comfort in the 'norm' or 'standard'.
	6.5 There is currently a perception of the threat of limitations to career progression for principals if they don't comply with department requirements/requests.
	6.6 Providing a clear and holistic set of tangible, measurable outcomes for principals could enable then to evaluate themselves against and improve consistency of decision making.
	6.7 The department's goal for a principal is to be an educational leader; however, in practice, the priority of the department is perceived as focused on the management of the school, particularly strategy, finances, administration and compliance.
	6.8 Principals have been given greater authority; however, they are often not trusted to make decisions, with compliance approvals still needing to be sought (e.g. painting a door).
	6.9 Principals feel guilt when making choices requiring a perceived trade-off between investments in school management vs student learning; some expressed a preference for assignment of funds to avoid this decision. Ensuring principals have the capability, confidence and are empowered to allocate funds towards the delivery of the administrative aspects of the role could improve decision making in schools.
	6.10 The large number of relieving principals within schools seem to hinder or at times, slow down decision making within schools creating an unsettling environment.
	6.11 Clearly articulating the success profile of the principal role (and the roles of those directly associated with the school including Director and the school leadership) could enable certainty and create a stable, reliable and supportive ecosystem more likely to provide high performing teams over time, as well as supporting principals transitioning into role.

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