



University of  
**Southern**  
**Queensland**



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## REPORT ON PHASE 3

Leading Queensland Primary Schools into the  
Future

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The report was prepared by Professor Dorothy Andrews and Associate Professor Joan Conway.

## BACKGROUND

This report presents the results of the third phase of a research project, Leading Queensland Primary Schools into the Future, commissioned by the Queensland Association of State School Principals (QASSP) and funded by the Principals Australia Research Foundation (PARF). The aim of the project was to explore a new narrative for Queensland Primary School Principals in three phases (literature review, survey, and interviews), guided by the research questions:

- Research Question 1 – In what ways does primary schooling impact the economic and social performance of a community/nation?
- Research Question 2 – What is the contribution of school leadership to the achievement of quality primary school student outcomes, academic and social?

Twelve capabilities emerged from the literature review of Phase 1 (Conway, Bauman, & Andrews, 2022) and provided the foundation of a proposed model of School Community-Orientated Leadership Capabilities. The proposed model is depicted in Figure 1. The literature review established “that courageous (Robinson, 2020) successful school leaders, who are open to a shift of mind – a new mindset (Dweck, 2006) – inevitably motivate themselves and others to collective actions (Conway, 2008; Conway & Andrews, 2016)” (p. 2). Phase 2 of the research tested the Capabilities Model by representing each Capability in terms of indicative qualities and then subjected these proposed indicators to quantitative analysis. The present report describes the process and outcomes of Phase 2. Phase 3 focuses on the Research Question 2 – What is the contribution of school leadership to the achievement of quality primary school student outcomes, academic and social by exploring the capabilities required for leading schools into the future?

First, we provide an overview of the findings of the literature review and the final Capabilities Model that emerged from Phase 2.

### PHASE 1: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRELIMINARY MODEL.

The findings of the literature review were prompted by the Turner (2021) white paper that called for the urgency of a new narrative in leading Queensland primary schools into the future. A summary of key findings from the literature review (Conway, Andrews, & Bauman, 2022, p. 25) was as follows:

- ❖ Acknowledge the pivotal role of education in Australia’s social and economic development –
  - Focus on the role of educational quality
  - Provide equitable educational opportunities for all students
  - Understand the far-reaching implications of primary education
- ❖ Value and invest in teaching as a profession in Queensland –
  - Strengthen the engagement and voice of the teaching profession
  - Enable time for teacher collaboration and professional learning
  - Invest in development of whole school wide approaches
  - Fund technology for all primary students toward enabling opportunities in the global economy
- ❖ View the primary student as a whole person –
  - Involve students as partners enabling voice in planning
  - Engage students in the learning process with meaningful opportunities
  - Ensure inclusive education for all
- ❖ Address current and emerging inequalities in education –
  - Develop comprehensive educational policy reform
  - Build and maintain positive community-wide relationships as partners

- Implement new school structures, such as community schools and resources. (p. 25)

Emerging from the analysis and synthesis of the extensive literature review, it was important to recognise the 12 School Community-Oriented Leadership Capabilities: Visionary; Relational Collaborator; Cultural Capacity Builder; Creative Innovator; Competent Carer; Adapter; Agile Creator; Emotionally Intelligent Influencer; Entrepreneur; Equitable and Inclusive Attender; Advocate; and Life-long Learner, with a capability defined as the leader’s power or ability to do something. This model (see Figure 1) provided the foundation upon which the survey was developed.

**Figure 1**

*12 School Community-Oriented Leadership Capabilities*



## PHASE 2 SURVEY FINDINGS

Whilst the expertise principals need for their complex work roles is not readily reduced to a mere checklist, we aimed to discern factors which are reflective of school principals’ professional capabilities. The survey focused on the 12 proposed Capabilities factors and their respective (proposed) 48 indicators derived from the literature review. The participants from QASSP membership and a broad representation of primary school (inclusive of P-6, P-10, and P-12) principals were invited to participate in the research. The final sample of participants retained after data screening was N = 217.

The research was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Southern Queensland. Participants were recruited from membership of QASSP, two Queensland Catholic systems (Brisbane Catholic Education, and Toowoomba Catholic Schools), and Queensland Lutheran schools. Participation was voluntary, there were no inducements or incentives to provide data, and participants were free to withdraw at any stage. The approach taken for this survey was to empirically test the proposed 12

factors and their proposed indicators. Participants were invited to complete an online survey hosted on the University's Lime Survey platform.

Data analysis involved four phases extending from data screening to ensure the dataset was amenable to analysis, through testing the proposed model, to explore the Capabilities' relations with demographic variables. Data analysis resulted in operational definitions of the final model's Capabilities (see Table 1). The final model with its eight factors was interrogated for clarity of meaning and consequently renamed: Agility, Relational Collaboration, Advocacy, Visionary Commitment, Creative Innovation, Life-long Learning, Culture and Capacity Building, and Courageous Communication, in recognition of the new clustering of indicators which were also reduced from 48 to 30. However, one factor (Culture and Capacity Building) collected indicators that did not align with the initial description of this capability named as the Cultural Capacity Builder. These indicators were distributed to the newly named Relational Collaboration factor. The newly clustered indicators under Culture and Capacity Building were deemed to be more aligned to concepts of management and decision making, resulting in a new labelled capability, Critical Decisiveness.

A revisit of the concepts of capacity building and organisational culture development from the phase one literature review highlighted the overall importance of, "Capacity building for ongoing improvement and learning requires a focus in the areas of intellectual, organisational, and relational capital" (Conway et al., 2022, p. 114). This was drawn from the elements of collaboration, collective intelligence, independency, collaborative individualism, communication, and organisational alignment as explored in the literature review and represented in the new set of eight capabilities (See Table 1). In conclusion, it was realised that the overall concept of this newly refined model highlights the eight capabilities) of a courageous leader building capacity for the emerging "new narrative". In so doing, the new narrative embodies the emergence of a culture exemplified by the School Community-Oriented Principal Leadership model (see Figure 2) . Inherently, this is a state of capacity-building that continually positions the school community into the future.

**Table 1**  
*Eight Capabilities of the School Community-Oriented Principal Leadership (SCOPL) Model*

Capability	Explanation
Agility	Readiness to balance the complexities of the high expectations of organisational effectiveness through continuous improvement, ongoing support, and monitoring of performance.
Relational Collaboration	Willingness to value the contribution of all through astute listening, sensitivity to differences, recognition of personal challenges, and mediation for collective intelligence.
Advocacy	Passionately promote the school in relationship with the wider community for enhanced cooperation and opportunities.
Visionary Commitment	Sharing of a preferred future through enabling the collective inspiration, articulation, mobilisation, and enactment of others.



Capability	Explanation
Creative Innovation	Encouraging of a collegial disposition to original, advanced, and shared pedagogical practice.
Life-long Learning	Enthusiastically inspire self and others to aspire to a continual professional learning mindset.
Critical Decisiveness	Systematically gather and evaluate information, make decisions relative to the context, and facilitate the outcomes.
Courageous Communication	Bravely acknowledge commitment, address the adversity, and accept the vulnerability.

**Figure 2**

*School Community-Oriented Principal Leadership (SCOPL) Model*



## SUMMARY

The key outcome of this research was the establishment of an empirical model of Principal Capabilities: Agility, Relational Collaboration, Advocacy, Visionary Commitment, Creative Innovation, Life-long Learning, Critical Decisiveness, Courageous Communication. This new empirical model provides

additional evidence for the original conceptual model of principals' capabilities. Overall, the refinement of the capabilities and the related indicators has led the researchers to reconceptualise the notion of capacity building for the School Community-Oriented Principal Leadership Model. This has given rise to a sharper definition of each of the eight capabilities, most of which remained syntactically similar in labelling, to those of the original model. Whilst the model does not deviate from being a capacity-building model, it became apparent that the indicators of one of the initial capabilities, Capacity and Culture Building, were dispersed across other capabilities and reinforced the notion of wholistic capacity building as the basis of this model. Also, what emerged was a new group of indicators of direction, authority, and management which were initially in other capabilities but clustered as a group and begged the identification of another capability. This capability has been labelled as Critical Decisiveness because of what is often required of principals in situations of complexity, and uncertainty, when a decision is demanded to systematically gather and evaluate information, make decisions relative to the context, and facilitate the outcomes.

It is anticipated that this model, underpinned by the rigour of the literature review, the survey and a qualitative component, that is, individual reflections and group discussion and individual interviews will be usefully implemented in varying contexts for the benefit of primary principals developing, critiquing, and living a new leadership narrative.

### PHASE 3 QUALITATIVE STUDY - PRINCIPAL FEEDBACK.

**Focus:** Exploring a new narrative for primary school leaders: The School Community-Oriented Principal Leadership Model

#### ***Background/Summary***

The aim of this phase was to explore the validity of the eight-capabilities structure and definitions underpinning the School Community-Oriented Principal Leadership (SCOPL) Model. UniSQ/QASSP purposefully sampled members of QASSP (primary principals) who indicated that they were willing to be interviewed about the capabilities they draw on to successfully lead in their respective context. The objectives were to:

1. Define aspects of school leadership that better account for schooling outcomes necessary for the 21<sup>st</sup> century to inform policy formation, advocacy, and professional learning activities in relation to school leadership.
2. Provide local examples and dissemination of this knowledge to promote the work of primary school principals.

#### ***Data Collection***

The Interviews were specifically targeted contexts and invited principals in those areas to participate in the interviews.

There were two stages of data collection:

## STAGE 3a A WORKSHOP

A workshop engaged School Leaders in reflecting on the model and mapping their actions within the context in which they worked (See appendix 1). They were then divided into groups to discuss the following questions:

- What is the future of leadership with a capability model like this?
- What challenges do you foresee?
- How well prepared are we for this future? Or are we there yet?
- What are the foreseeable benefits?
- What else.....?

Responses were recorded by the group and collated by the researchers.

## STAGE 3b INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Based on the findings from Stage 3a, principals were selected according to the following two criteria:

1. Location
2. School Size

Each participant was provided in advance with the Model, the Definitions and the Interview questions. Each interview was approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The Interview questions were:

- What is the future of leadership with a capability model like this?
- What challenges do you foresee?
- How well prepared are we for this future? Or are we there yet?
- What are the foreseeable benefits?
- Do you see differences in schools in different locations and different clientele?
- What else.....?

## DATA ANALYSIS

### PHASE 3a

Individual Responses to Phase 3a were collated in a spreadsheet, and graphs, and reported as descriptive statistics.

Group response – was collated and reported as themes.

Phase 3b. Interviews transcriptions were analysed, coded and themed based on the individual research questions

## FINDINGS FROM STAGE 3a

### Participants

Principals – 48 consisting of 8 in rural and remote. The other 40 identified as schools in other areas.

Other participants were Deputy Principals (DP'S) = 15 and Heads of Learning (HOLs)/Heads of Departments (HODs) =6

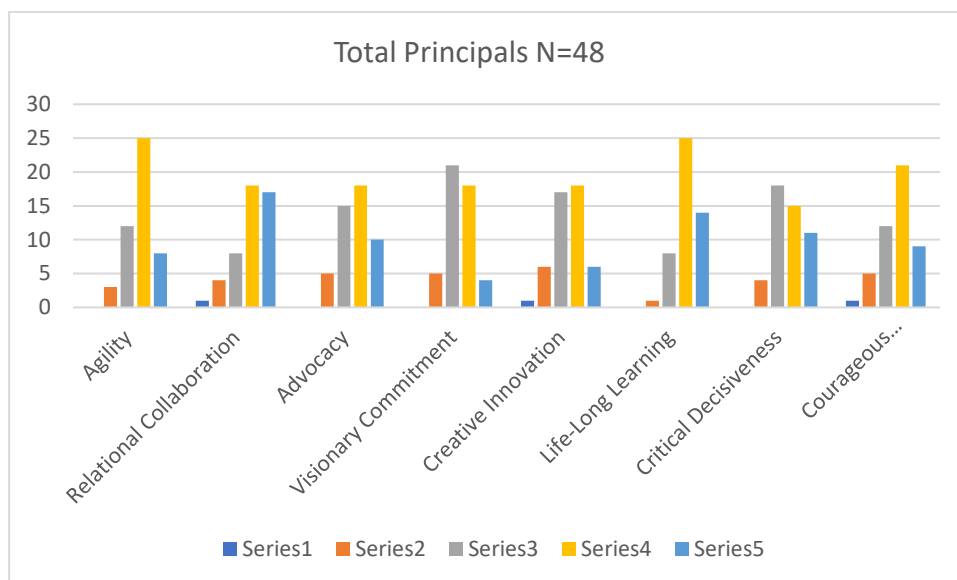
Responses based on the 1 – 5 rating scale (see appendix 1) where:

1 = Never (series 1) to 5 Always (series 5)

The Individual responses are presented in the following graphs.

Figure 3

#### Principals Responses

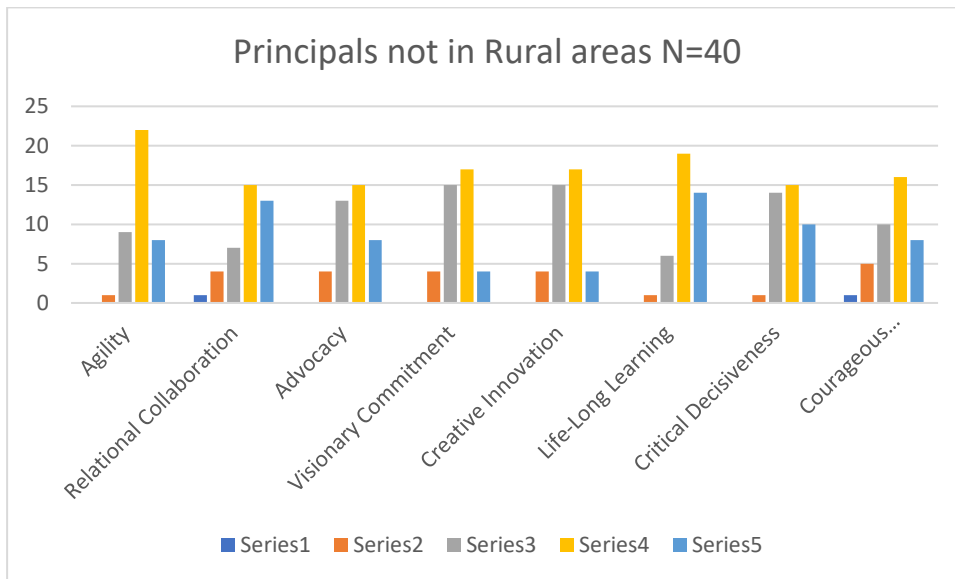


All Principals	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Agility		3	12	25	8	48
Relational Collaboration	1	4	8	18	17	48
Advocacy		5	15	18	10	48
Visionary Commitment		5	21	18	4	48
Creative Innovation	1	6	17	18	6	48
Life-Long Learning		1	8	25	14	48
Critical Decisiveness		4	18	15	11	48
Courageous Communication	1	5	12	21	9	48

For all principals Relational Collaboration and Lifelong Learning rated most highly with all others such as Agility, Advocacy and Courageous Communication viewed as important.

**Figure 4**

*Principals in Non- Rural Locations*

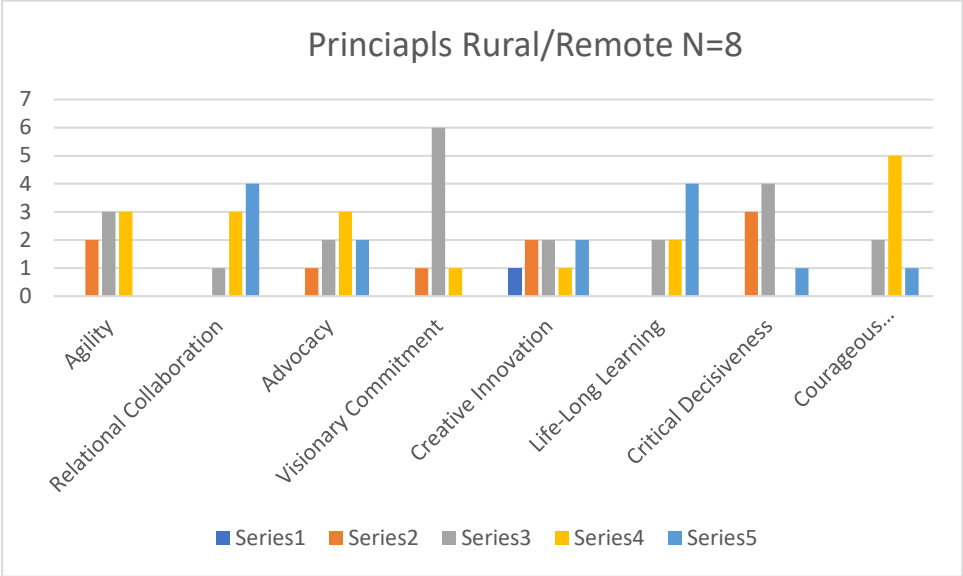


Principals in Non-Rural Areas	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Agility		1	9	22	8	40
Relational Collaboration	1	4	7	15	13	40
Advocacy		4	13	15	8	40
Visionary Commitment		4	15	17	4	40
Creative Innovation		4	15	17	4	40
Life-Long Learning		1	6	19	14	40
Critical Decisiveness		1	14	15	10	40
Courageous Communication	1	5	10	16	8	40

For this group Relational Collaboration and Life-long Learning were the most highly rated, however Agility, Courageous Communication, and Critical Decisiveness were also rated highly.

Figure 5

Principals in Rural/Remote Locations



Principals in Rural/Remote Areas	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Agility		2	3	3		8
Relational Collaboration			1	3	4	8
Advocacy		1	2	3	2	8
Visionary Commitment		1	6	1		8
Creative Innovation	1	2	2	1	2	8
Life-Long Learning			2	2	4	8
Critical Decisiveness		3	4		1	8
Courageous Communication			2	5	1	8

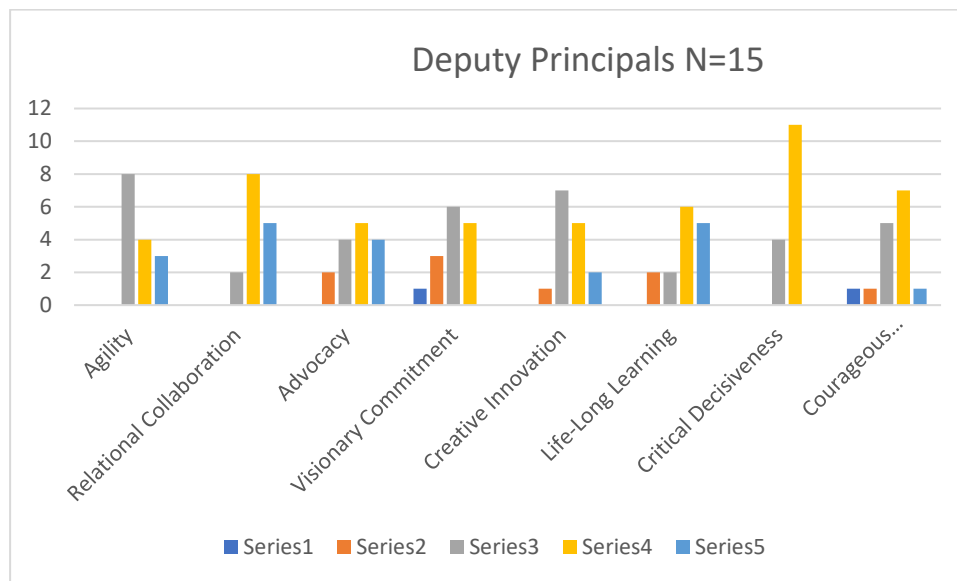
In Figure 4, Principals in Rural and Remote areas considered Relational Collaboration and Life-long Learning as well as Courageous Communication as the most highly rated. However, Visionary Commitment and Critical Decisiveness were also considered important.

**Collation of comments principals provided as a rationale for assessment of their rating was:**

- Caught up in the day-to-day management which poses difficulty in setting strategic vision and improvement.
- Frequent change of principal – e.g., “I am the 9th principal in 18 months”.
- Challenge to creativity/creative innovation – often managing contextual complexities /staff issues.
- No time to collaborate with those other than senior leadership team – e.g., “I have had to change culture rapidly to comply with policy”.

**Figure 6**

*Deputy Principals*



Deputy Principals	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Agility			8	4	3	15
Relational Collaboration			2	8	5	15
Advocacy		2	4	5	4	15
Visionary Commitment	1	3	6	5		15
Creative Innovation		1	7	5	2	15
Life-Long Learning		2	2	6	5	15
Critical Decisiveness			4	11		15
Courageous Communication	1	1	5	7	1	15

For Deputy Principals, the highest rating were Relational Collaboration and Lifelong learning, with Critical Decisiveness and Advocacy also rated as important.

Collation of comments given as a rationale for assessment of their rating was:

- Lack of capability / no time to do this / lack of resources - Advocacy, Courageous Communication and Visionary Commitment.
- Complex demographics – no time due to student behaviour and lack of funds / emotionally challenged.
- Low Socio-economic areas means “I am reactive”.
- Frequency of change in principal – difficult to maintain singular vision – “feel I am waiting to see what next instead of staying the course for the community”.
- Mentoring has been of assistance to my growth.
- Need for professional learning to develop leadership capabilities.

## GROUP DISCUSSION RESPONSES

The total group was then asked to discuss the model given a series of questions. The responses have been collated and reported as follows.

### ***What Is the Future of a Leadership With a Capability Model Like this?***

Feedback included:

Community: Model challenges the perception of the role of the principal in the community – to be seen as a “community Leader. A reflective tool, simplified versions, acknowledging the connectedness of the work we do, crosses over the socio-economic areas, bringing the whole school community in on the decision making

Self-Awareness - Greater awareness of our own capabilities; self-aware leaders.

Development of Future leaders – more aligned professional development; potential support and direction for developing of capabilities

### ***What Are the Foreseeable Benefits?***

Feedback included:

Model enables aspiring leaders to develop capabilities.

May provide a useful reflective tool for principals who are seeking improvement in their school with school-community partnerships.

Highlights strengths and could be used as a diagnostic tool.

Useful tool to talk to my team about a set of actions for a particular context.

### ***What Challenges Do You Foresee?***

Feedback included:

Tension between conforming to Region/Department expectations and community context.

People thinking this is just another thing – it’s another agenda.

How do you get principals to bring this to the forefront as the relevant reflective tool?

Highlights the role of the school is different in different contexts (rural vs city).

### ***How Well Prepared Are We for This Future? Or Are We There Yet?***

Feedback included

Principals need clarity and consistency in departmental communication to have the courage and confidence to be courageous.

Working within a system that is not as progressive as these capabilities.

Prepared yes but not resourced.



## INTERVIEW FINDINGS

### Background

From the overall QASSP membership an initial list 32 Principals were purposefully selected based on school size and location which was reduced to 11 (see Table 2). These principals were approached to be interviewed, 10 agreed to be interviewed and one declined. Subsequently five were interviewed and the other five requested a delay in interviewing given the time of year and have volunteered to be interviewed early 2025. While this is beyond the timeframe for this report, the researchers will complete these interviews as a larger sample, thus ensuring that a good cross section of participants. (see Table 2). The five interviewed represented schools of varying size (200 – 360 to 670 and geographic location small and large regional schools to large metropolitan schools. Whilst the sample was small it should be noted there was considerable alignment in the participants' responses.

Table 2

### Participants

Region	School Band	Gender	Status
South Burnett Branch	3	F	Interviewed
Cairns and Cape York Branch	3	M	Yet to be Interviewed
Gladstone/Callide Branch	4	F	Yet to be Interviewed
South Burnett Branch	4	F	Yet to be Interviewed
Townsville Branch	5	M	Interviewed
Mt Isa Branch	5	F	Declined
Toowoomba Branch	5	F	Interviewed
Brisbane West Branch	5	F	Interviewed
Rockhampton Branch	6	F	Yet to be Interviewed
Sunshine Coast Branch	6	F	Yet to be Interviewed
Bayside Branch	6	M	Interviewed

Each participant generously consented to an online conducted interview which was recorded and subsequently transcribed. The five semi-structured interviews were conducted using the four questions used in the Group Discussion (see Phase 3a) as initial prompts for discussion. No identification of interviewed principals or their schools has been made in this report. Each participant was provided a copy of the university approved Consent form, the interview questions, the School Community-Oriented Principal Leadership Model, and the 8-capability definitions at least a week prior to their agreed interview time.

All transcriptions were coded according to the research questions which were looking for responses to the Model and the capability definitions with particular focus on the participants' experiences and aspirations.

## **Responses**

### ***What is the Future of Leadership With a Capability Framework Like This?***

All participants focused on the centrality of the community orientation and the importance of that perspective in relation to building capacity for knowing the complexities of their context. This focus was reflected in varying ways. One principal reflected on the perspective of "school community orientated... framed around context... [able to] draw upon more of those capabilities at different times...[it's] a relational piece of work" which seemed to be an orientation of alignment where the principal has "a leadership stance or some courage around contextual information". The perspective of another principal built on this with the "first impression was that it's community centred. . . everyone on the same page and I feel like they have a say" and explained further that it allows the principal to "be creatively innovative. . . to fit in with what you're doing already, and I suppose leverage what's working". Two of the principals strengthened the community focus on the courage and mindset as illustrated by one with "[you have] got to have courage as a principal every day. and the mindset meeting there means you've got to have that positive mindset with all of those capabilities interacting", while the other shared, "first thing that stood out with the framework was that courage and mindset piece. . . leading through curiosity and building that readiness to balance those words [capability definitions]".

However, there was some caution shared by another principal who referred to the vulnerability of the framework "putting school community orientation in the centre. . .because the community is changing all the time, the values are changing all the time". This was firmly explained by the principal as not always being able to know how the community of parents/carers in particular instances might respond and then experiencing a lack of systemic understanding and support.

### ***What Challenges Do You Foresee?***

Three overall challenges emerged from this question:

1) courage to respond to contextual needs - as eloquently espoused by one principal "[it's] the professional autonomy to actually say this is what matters and this is the right work in this place. . . comes with inherent risk";

2) professional development - as two other principals lamented it is the "professional development for yourself and [time for] self-reflection" at all stages of leadership development where we "don't have that confidence. . .how do we develop knowledge of how to build that skill set?"; and

3) systemic support - shared by all was the tension experienced between responding to the needs of the immediate context (their school community) and the imperatives of the system where "regions will expect

different data captures. . .around their separate priorities” and it “requires a high level of agency in the ideal world and in the literature, [but] in the reality of working within the system it wouldn't work”.

### ***How Well Prepared Are We for This Future? Or Are We There Yet?***

Responses to this question merged with those of other questions in terms of the range of challenges and benefits. Overall, there seemed to be a despondency about the preparedness for the future expressed through issues related to:

1) systemic imperatives and performance directives frequently clashing with the principals’ perceived needs of their communities at large: “I find my vision and values in some ways sit outside [those of] the system”;

2) well-being expressed through disappointment and anxiety related to levels of desired autonomy and collaboration: “Let me be a part of future conversations that take place and are actually situated within the context”;

3) lack of support for professional leadership development at all stages of the leadership career: “relational collaboration is going to be a challenge in the future [when] we look at more and more of young principals coming to the fold”; “at no point along the journey are we provided support to know how to do that. . .don't feel that autonomy to have that creative innovation. . .varies according to the region's priorities, the support that principals feel from their system supervisor”, and particularly in relation to early career principals, “don't feel that they [principals] have the skill set in having that influence... don't have that confidence in themselves”; and

4) weak system-school professional relationship: “I doubt I'm ever going to have a conversation with a school improvement coach because I'm deemed in my school to have data that says we're doing well: ‘Well, if you're doing well, we're never going to be in touch with you, you're on your own.’ . . . I need development too and I need to explicitly talk about my practice and where's that for me. . . you need to have a framework around that so that you can engage in those conversations”; and “would be good to have professional conversations with our supervisors using this framework”.

### ***What Are the Foreseeable Benefits?***

In general, this question enabled the principals to build on their hope for the future as courageous leaders in response to the needs of their school communities. One principal expressed a strong desire for “having those deeper conversations about the realities of what happens within their own contextualised view. . .it's the language that I hear in those sacred conversations” which could appear to be the foundation of what several others were expressing:

“[In] different situations. I think it [the framework] does [help] because you could actually look and say, well, for this particular incident or thing I've gotta be courageous then let me go back to that [referring to a specific capability] and have a little look at that to be able to then see [the situation]. What does that mean then?”

"I think the mindset has to go before courage, because you have to have the mindset to be courageous. I suppose you have the mindset to be willing, to step out of your comfort zone and be OK".

"They [the capabilities] all connect to that school community. . . need to develop trust before you can create change, and you have to establish your why before you create change as well".

"It [framework] brings it [community] to the forefront, it probably does highlight just how important that school community piece is and how integral that particular element of the framework needs to be in developing a principal capability".

### ***Do You See Differences in Schools in Different Locations and Different Clientele?***

All principals acknowledged that different locations and different clientele contribute to the range of differences experienced and required from one school to the next: to use the clichés shared by several of them, "one size does not fit all" and "no two are the same". One principal very clearly expressed this perspective by referring to honouring the context, acknowledging the socio-economic impacting factors, and aligning the various aspects for school success:

"The only way a framework is going to be successful is if we honour the context of our communities, because every school is different. . . how we could align our context. . . given the vast range of socioeconomic demographics that would sit between us [regions and schools]".

In response to how the framework might be used in different ways two of the principals offered their musings:

"The beauty of it is the simplicity. . . but the deep meaning of it there can draw so much to whatever level. . . you've got that centre and then you're going back and forth between [capabilities] doesn't say which way that you have to go first; it's not a step part it's about you drawing on something there and considering the others in the light of what decision you want".

". . . a really nice lens across different aspects of how schools are".

Another principal was also able to explain the dynamic way in which the framework might be used to respond in varying contexts:

"It provides you with a great frame of reference to consider how can I apply. How can I be more agile? Or how can I balance those complexities? How can I advocate for what this community needs? I think yeah, those elements would cross over any sector. Any context. I suppose it just comes down to experience and support from your region."

### ***What Else.....?***

Various parts of the interviews illuminated other perspectives related to the overall needs and aspirations for enhancing leadership of schools. The subject of emotional intelligence emerged in a few of the interviews related to the need for support in gaining experience and maturity for effective decision making:

“Emotional intelligence is also very pivotal for school leaders to understand, especially in this day and age, where differentiation diversity is. . .I really value that life experience piece in navigating those challenges, especially in those diverse contexts”.

“. . .we have to be innovative in our ways to create those opportunities for our teachers and for our kids”.

“Despite burning out three times, all that sort of stuff, . . .there's a deep commitment and passion that keeps us going”.

Another perspective worthy of report is that there was a lot of self-questioning amongst the principals with one succinctly stating it as:

“Am I courageous enough to take that jump? Am I willing to do things that sit outside that system box? Am I willing to voice my advocacy? Am I willing to be courageous, communicate all of those things you know? And I think once you get to that courageous piece. I'm ready to go?”

And yet, overall, most principals referred to their responsibility for ongoing self-learning:

“Share innovative practices and talk about new technologies. . .what it means for our staff, our communities. . .up to us to create. . .not necessarily the system”.

However, the thread of professional support permeated most of the interviews with a call out for elevated levels of systemic support and appreciation for the differences between contexts and personalities. This was also the overriding echo in the findings of phase 3a, the workshop.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of each of phases 3a and 3b have provided support for the adoption of the School Community-Oriented Principal Leadership Model and the 8-defined capabilities. Many participants focused positively on the centrality of the School Community Orientation and the circling of the capabilities to be drawn on as most relevant to the decision in-situ. Many also related to the courage and mindset required for the enactment of this model.

An interesting emergence was an apparent difference amongst individuals in understanding the scope of “community” – some referred to community as the parents/carers, others acknowledged the broader elements of society in relation to the school, and a few made inferences that included the staff and students. The model has been developed on an understanding of community as that which entails all human resources related to “the school” and is founded on theories of organisations (Morgan, 2006) and culture-building (Schein, 1985; Schein & Schein, 2023).

However, most participants raised a range of issues in terms of how the use of the model might be possible in the current era of systemic imperatives, rapid technological change, and increasingly complex societal influences. Uppermost in the conversations of the participants were:

- The urgent need for professional leadership development and support at all stages of their leadership career. This entailed opportunities to enhance self-awareness of their strengths and challenges in relation to the eight capabilities. Further, there were explicit references to opportunities for shared conversations and decision-making in conjunction with others, both school-based and systemic personnel.
- Recognition of their leadership position as best placed to make contextually related decisions in collaboration with systemic support. There was clear acknowledgement of their position as being part of a system, but reciprocally a call for recognition that each context is uniquely different in relation to each school's success.
- Acknowledgement of their responsibility for self-development of leadership. Participants clearly related to their commitment and compassion within their communities, and desire to be courageous and clear sighted: "having that lens of curiosity and courage to utilise the skills that I've developed . . . to lead the way I want to lead [with a] curious mindset of what next while balancing the competing demands of the department".

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The original research questions for this project were related to how primary schooling impacts the economic and social performance of a community/nation, and the contribution primary school leaders make to schooling outcomes. The work undertaken through this research project looked at international literature before examining what emerged to explore a new set of capabilities primary school leaders need to thrive in a new world.

There is certainly an increasing concern in the education community about the current misalignment between the ways in which educational systems operate and many challenges humanity is now facing. Issues including climate change, political polarisation, societal inequities, global conflict, the consequences on colonialisation on first nations peoples and the rise of Artificial Intelligence are converging in what some have described as a "metacrisis" (Donnelly, 2023; Rizvi et al., 2022; Stein et al., 2024). Despite the drive for educational system improvement "the cold fact is that despite continuous reforms and growing investments over the past two decades, educational performance – and especially equitable performance – of Australia's schools isn't improving. Indeed, in many ways it is getting worse" (Sahlberg, 2023). There is a need for a new approach in our schools and schooling systems that will allow students to thrive in a challenging world (Hannon & Peterson, 2021).

One of the issues with trying to present a new narrative in education is the power of the status quo. It has been suggested that what stands in the way of meaningful change is not what we do not know, but what we do know that holds us in place. These are the prevailing mindsets and societal investments in systems arguably past their use by date (Turner, 2021). Sahlberg and Cobbold (2024) are among a growing number of influential educational leaders suggesting doing more of the same, but only more intensively, will not solve these problems. Some are now suggesting that "the vast majority of school communities around the world

have been turning away from, ignoring and/or actively denying the harsh realities' of the situation we find ourselves in" (Richardson, 2024, p.2). School leaders are where this complexity plays out as they expend enormous energy trying to maintain this system and respond to the pressures the "metacrisis" presents at the local school community level. In effect they do not need the next government directive or "next good idea". They need a renewed level of agency.

In presenting this final report we therefore propose that this work is not to be considered another framework about leadership, or a new model that might be imposed upon an already under pressure profession. Rather it is a mental model, a way to view our world and respond to it at the level of the school community.

Therefore, the central ideas in this report are that the school community must be central to school leadership, however, to achieve this, new mindsets are necessary along with galvanised individual and collective courage to clearly revisit the purpose of schooling. Eight leadership capabilities have the potential to move leadership beyond current frameworks and standards to empower principals and school leaders to respond in meaningful and powerful ways.

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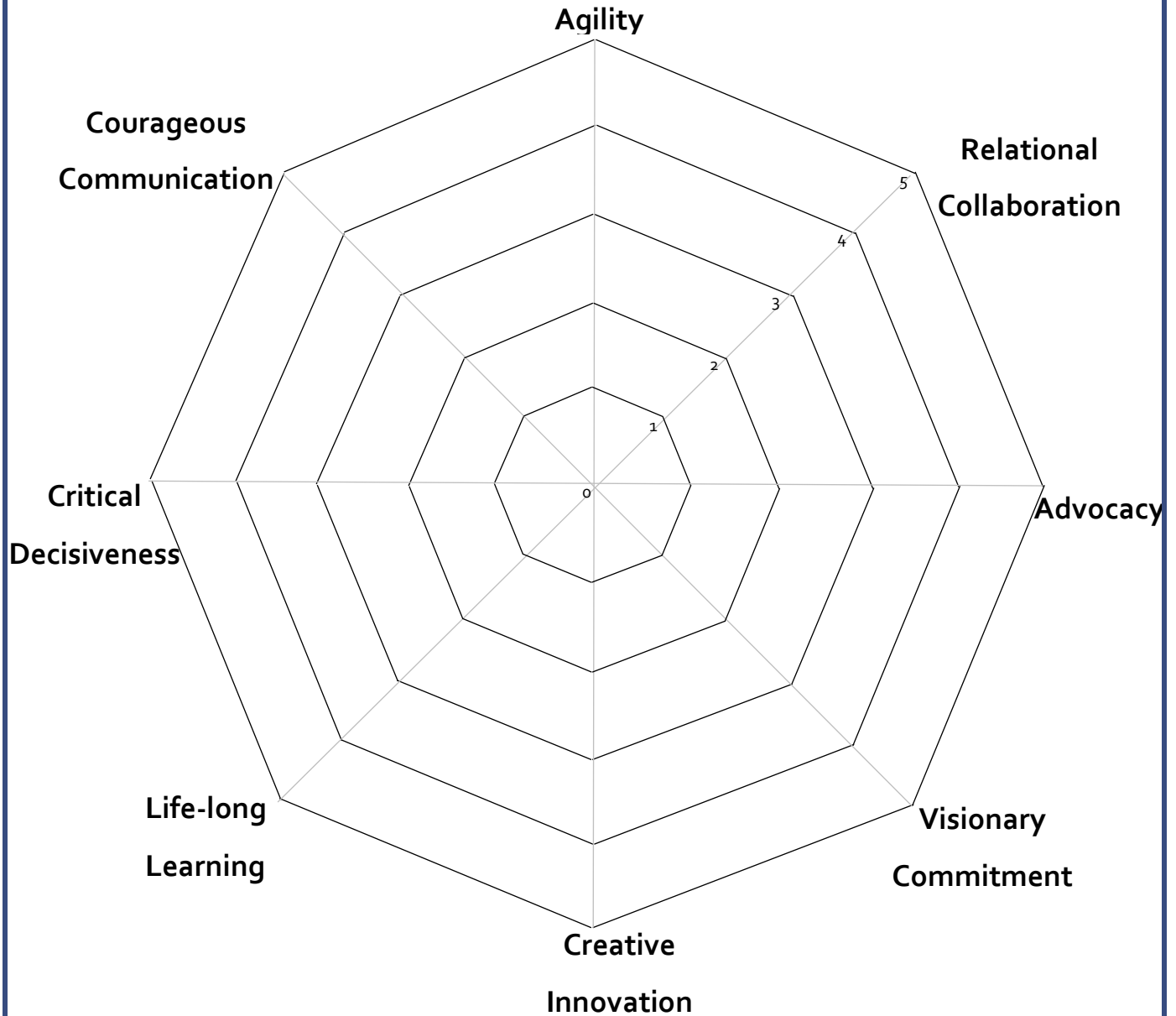


University of Southern Queensland



### School Community-Oriented Leadership Model

Relevance of this Model in relation to your context.



Rationale for this assessment

Role \_\_\_\_\_

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