



Massey University

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Te Kupenga o Te Mātauranga

Centre for Educational Development

APs and DPs: their role and future development



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Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

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APs and DPs: their role and future development

There has been a significant turnover in secondary principals' positions (30%) in the Massey region over the last two years. There is concern regionally, nationally and internationally about the development opportunities, and the preparation given, to senior leaders who wish to become principals.

“ The senior leadership role of APs and DPs is crucial to the success of schools. ”

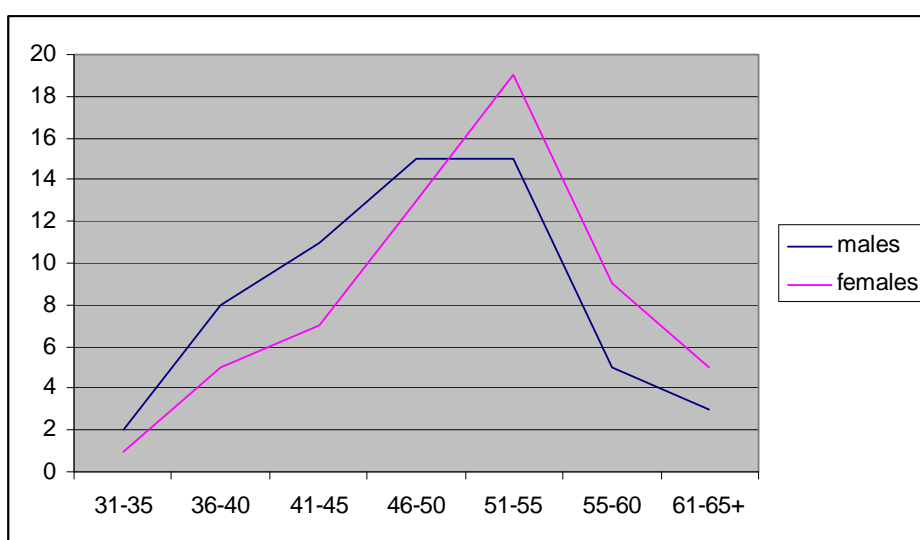
The senior leadership role of APs and DPs is crucial to the success of schools. A survey of the 159 APs and DPs in 71 secondary and area schools and wharekura in the Massey region gathered current data on their role. This data is being used to inform the planning of future support for senior leaders both regionally and nationally. There was a very generous response to the survey with 121 returned surveys – an 80% response rate.



The Profile of APs and DPs

Age and Gender

Interestingly, there were exactly equal numbers of males and females who responded. The ages of these senior leaders showed slightly different patterns.



Males reach senior positions at an earlier age and peak at 46-50, plateau and then the numbers decline, like the females, after 55. However females demonstrate a slower rise and peak more sharply at 51-55 years.

Female DPs and APs have lower rates below 50 years and higher rates than males over 55. This may reflect child-bearing patterns. When children become more independent, women can then focus more on their career and work as a senior leader, often when they are over 40.

Curriculum Area

The most common curriculum areas of expertise of the APs and DPs were as follows:

Most common Curriculum Area	No	%
Science	20	17%
English	19	16%
Social Science	15	13%
Maths	12	10%
Physical Education	10	9%

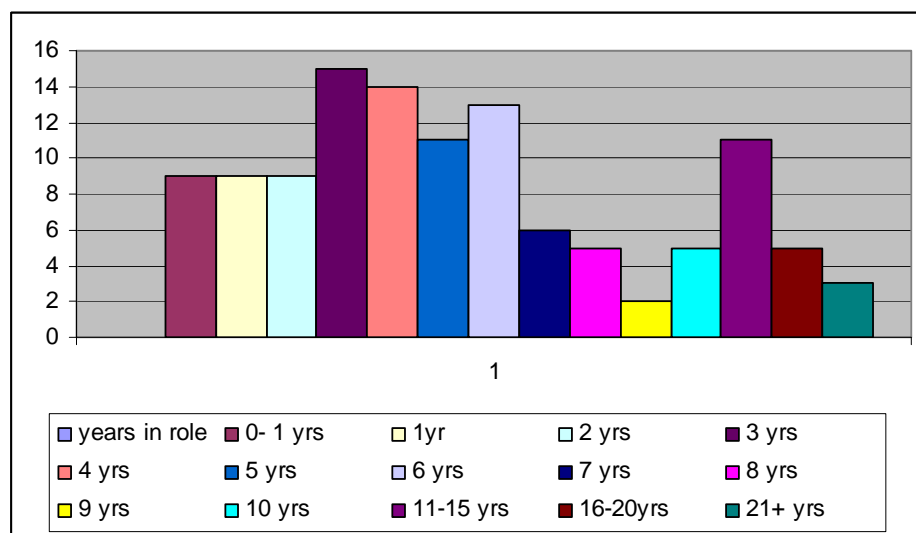
Least common Curriculum Area	No	%
Commerce/Economics	5	4%
Technology	4	3%
Languages	2	2%
Arts	1	1%
Special Education	1	1%

“... more than two thirds of APs and DPs have been in the role for less than six years.”

It is not surprising that the largest curriculum areas contribute the greatest number of APs and DPs. In the less common curriculum areas, there are fewer teachers of these subjects and some of them have entry with non-degree qualifications. This type of qualification may influence selection by the Board.

Length of Time in Position

Time in the position ranges from a few months to 26 years and 20% of APs and DPs are in their first three years in the role. The most common time in the role is three to six years and more than two thirds of APs and DPs have been in the role for less than six years.



After two to three years in a senior leadership role, APs and DPs would be in a position to consider principalship.

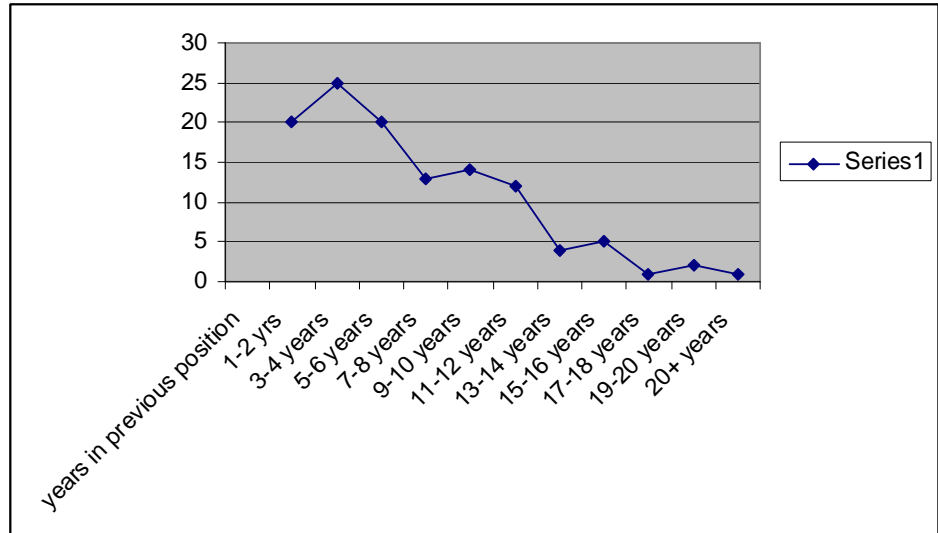
Previous Role and Time in that Role

The usual career step is to move to senior management from an HOD role – this was a path taken by 60% while 20% came from being in another role in the school and gained this role on promotion eg a Dean (5%), assistant teacher (9%) or for 6% a role like Director of Religious Studies, Specialist Classroom Teacher, SENCO or curriculum developer. The other 20% had changed from within the role from AP to DP (12%) or from another DP position (4%) or from a senior manager role (4%)

“... almost 60% of APs and DPs moved into that role from within the school.”

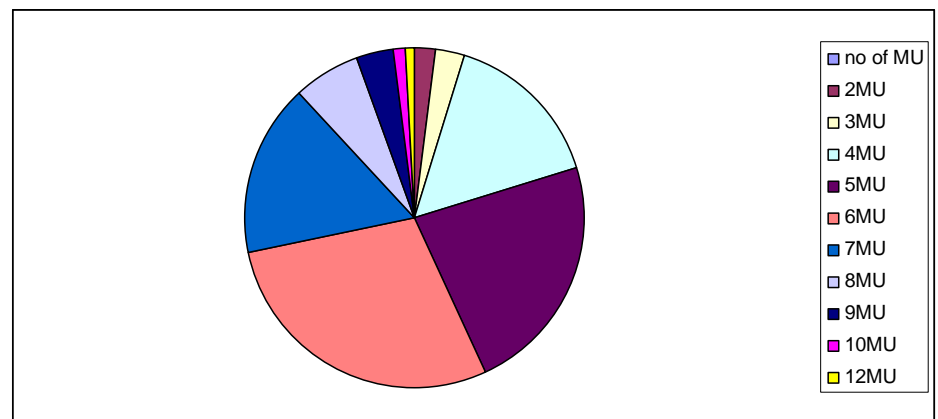
It was very interesting to note that almost 60% of APs and DPs moved into that role from within the school. While this was a real advantage in that they knew the school well, its disadvantage is that they hadn't had management experience in different schools or had reduced exposure to a range of different practices. The Aspiring Principals' Programme will address this by giving participants the opportunity to shadow another principal or change places with another senior manager on the programme for a period of time.

When you examine how long people were in their previous position before becoming a senior manager, there are two key times when people gain this promotion: after two to six years or 10 to 12 years. Five people became an AP or DP after one year in their previous position.



Number of Management Units held by APs and DPs

There was a very wide range in the number of Management Units held by APs and DPs. The range was two -12 MUs. Those with two to three MU appear to be from very small integrated and area schools. Those with four MU are from small rural high schools or schools with a large flat management team. Those with 10 and 12 MU are deputy headmasters in large boys' schools and of the four with nine units, three are from very large co-ed schools and one from another large boys' school. Most commonly APs and DPs hold 5-7 MU.



Key responsibilities of APs and DPs

The jobs of senior leaders are multiple and complex. They range from the mundane - oversight of registers to high level leadership of teaching and learning. It was disappointing that only eight of the 652 responses from APs and DPs identified their role as a professional leader and three as a mentoring role.

Key roles identified are school organisation and responsibility for staff. The organisational tasks (118) specified in the survey were timetable (21), attendance and registers (15), day to day running (30), relief (31). Only two were involved with strategic planning and charter development. This is an area for development with aspiring principals supported by the First Time Principals' Programme and the Principals' Development Centre (PDPC) which both identify strategic planning as an area for development in their work with principals.

The other key area these organisations see as a development area for principals is the leadership of staff. Many senior managers had staff responsibilities -117 identified tasks such as staffing (8), appraisal (20), professional development (22), PRTs and new teachers (14) and leading the development of best practice teaching (8). These contribute to a learning culture as does the DP in charge of the social club!!!

It was interesting to note that 48 senior managers have specific curriculum responsibilities such as Head of Faculty/Department or leading initiatives eg Gifted and Talented, oversight of Centres such as Teen Parent Unit, Homework Centre, Alternative Education, and

“ The jobs of senior leaders are multiple and complex:

- school organisation and responsibility for staff
- leadership of staff
- specific curriculum responsibilities.”

Learning Support. Some others had as part of their role, extra and co-curricular responsibilities eg rugby (3), and magazine.

Pastoral (86) and year level responsibilities (26) are identified by the survey.

Year level responsibilities include Dean or SM for a year level(s) and pastoral care was mainly discipline (37), and student welfare (24).

“Many school leaders find connecting into the community and dealing with the media a challenge ... they enjoyed the job and found the challenge and variety satisfying.”

Curriculum (37) and assessment responsibilities (59) were included in senior managers' roles. Having the role of Principals' Nominee (34) is common for senior managers as is being in charge of assessment (12) and examinations (8). Five noted they were responsible for curriculum/staff handbooks and 16 commented on reporting specifically.

The other role identified by APs and DPs was property/resources(23) especially IT (11) . Only one person had responsibility for financial management. This is an area of development most strongly identified later in the survey.

Many school leaders find connecting into the community and dealing with the media a challenge and nine DPs and APs include these are part of their role.

Job Satisfaction

I was overwhelmed by how many senior managers said they enjoyed the job and found the challenge and variety satisfying. There were 246 responses. 212 of these related to how they enjoyed the job, the

school, the interaction and involvement, the teaching, the students, the challenge and variety and working with the principal.

From a random sample of 10 responses – these are very typical comments:

- *It is challenging and rewarding.* Female DP 41-45
- *Supportive leadership, have to work to my strengths, variety with the job - working with students (at risk) and leaders.* Female DP 46-50
- *Great school to work in.* Female DP 41-45
- *Probably to be at the coal face of change management.* Male DP 56-60
- *Enjoyment, capabilities, agreement within the senior management team.*
Male Associate P 56-60
- *I love it so much.* Male DP 46-50
- *Enjoy the senior role, different interactions with students, involvement in meaningful extracurricular activities.* Female AP 46-50
- *Each year is a challenge. I set myself goals in management and classroom practice and strive to achieve this goal. I feel I belong to a strong, dedicated team.* Female AP 46-50
- *I love the satisfaction of working with students and seeing them succeed. Developing from disruptive, uninterested students to responsible young adults.* Female DP 31-35
- *The ability and room to develop and implement new and innovative ideas, making a noticeable difference to student lives/achievement.*
Male DP 36-40

Only four felt they would not leave the position because of near retirement or inability to take a risk and for 12 there were financial considerations which kept them in the job.

Qualifications

Only six senior managers have gained a Masters qualification either in Education/Educational Leadership (4) or MBA (2). Six are studying at Masters level: MEd (5) MBA (1). Five have already gained a Diploma in Education Management and three have a certificate.

“... approximately 25% of all the APs and DPs who responded to the survey have gained or are gaining post graduate qualifications.”

Some are in the process of gaining other qualifications as a further eight are studying Educational Management at diploma level and four are working on other qualifications.

Altogether 27 have gained or are gaining post graduate qualifications. That is approximately 25% of all the APs and DPs who responded to the survey. This is surprisingly low especially at a Masters level where it is 6%. Gaining credit for an Aspiring Principals’ Programme at Masters level would assist participants to gain further qualifications.



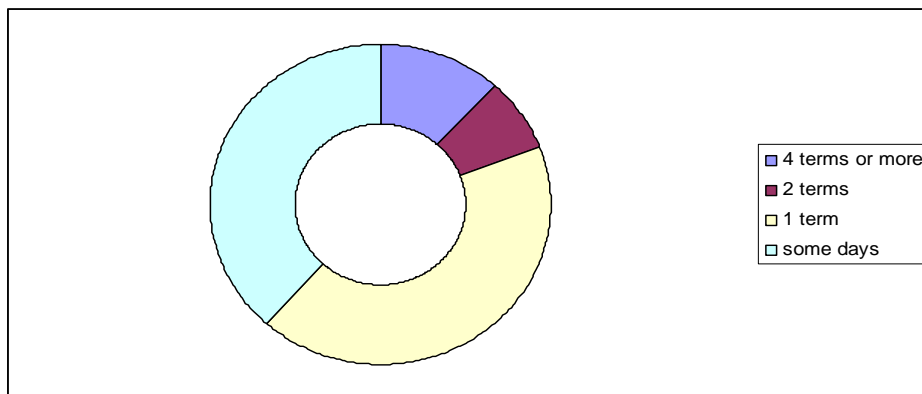
The Development of APs and DPs

The senior managers recognised that there was a variety of ways they could gain professional development . These ways were:

- being Acting Principal for a period of time,
- participating in AP DP Association activities,
- being supported/mentored by the principal,
- being part of a community of practice to bounce ideas,
- gaining qualifications,
- being given different jobs within the school,
- observing other principals.

Acting Principal

Sixty senior managers indicated that they had been acting principal for a period of time which ranged from occasional days to a year or more.



If a senior manager is in the role of the acting principal for a year they are eligible to enrol in the First Time Principals' Programme.

The key reasons for the acting position:

Study leave	4	Leave	5
Sick leave	6	Resignation	7
Sabbatical	13		

“The majority of principals ... do not actively prepare their APs and DPs.”

A number commented that they enjoyed their acting role. With principal sabbaticals, there is an increasing number experiencing this.

Principal Support

One section of the survey tried to gain an overview of the support principals give their senior managers to look at principalship as their next career move. The majority of principals (60%) do not actively prepare their APs and DPs.

The 56 people who gave details of how their principal supported their professional development noted a range of ways. These were:

- *Giving particular responsibilities* -15

This involved widening the responsibilities of the senior manager, giving them opportunities to do new things and discussion of processes as major issues are dealt with

- *Involving, communicating and including* -12

By having good communication, and passing on correspondence where appropriate, APs and DPs felt their principal was preparing them for principalship. One DP commented that the principal engaged them in full and frank discussion about the challenges he faces.

- *Professional development eg conferences, courses or study*-14

Those whose professional development was supported by the principal as a preparation for principalship, mentioned encouragement of post graduate study, and supporting conference and course attendance as the main support methods. One DP noted

they had *continuous professional development similar to the First Time Principals' Programme* but that it seemed to be the only long-term, strategically planned professional development programme.

- *Mentoring (ranged from encouragement to active mentoring) -10*

Some principals actively encourage their senior managers and do more than be encouraging. One DP noted:

- *I specifically asked her to be my mentor and she actively included me in all aspects of her role*
- *Very supportive wonderful role model*

- *Acting position -4*

The fact that a senior manager had acted in a principal role for a period of time was seen as very good professional development.

- *Part of good team -3*
- *Targeted development -9*

Nine DPs and APs reported that the principal targeted professional development to meet agreed development needs or gave more general development opportunities for example:

- *I have targeted finance as a weakness -am allowed to sit on asset subcommittee of Board*
- *Taking me through employment and budgeting issues*
- *Ex officio on BOT*

“... principals need some training in mentoring and ideas on how to develop their senior leaders.”

However, the senior managers also commented on the barriers - the busy job of the principal, little time available. For those who noted that the principal was not supporting their development, in some cases they said the principal would be willing but it hadn't happened, in other cases there was active gate-keeping perceived.

This is an area where principals need some training in mentoring and ideas on how to develop their senior leaders. If mentoring is to be included in the aspiring principals' programme then development for principals needs to sit alongside this.

AP DP associations

There are active associations in the main centres of our region and about two thirds of senior managers are involved in these. 18 people

“There are active associations ... and about two thirds of senior managers are involved in these. ... associations need to be kept well informed of aspiring principal initiatives.”

commented that they saw the association as offering professional development to them recently. The Massey leadership and management team is not actively involved in these organisations and may be able to participate/contribute. The associations need to be kept well informed of aspiring principal initiatives.

At a national association level, about half have been to a national conference at least once and 14% had been recently.

Other Professional Development

It was a concern that a third of APs and DPs had done no professional development recently. Massey needs to discuss with the regional AP DP associations the professional development we could offer to experienced senior managers. This is apart from the courses for new APs and DPs that we have been offering which were noted by six people.

It was encouraging to note that ten had been to a future principals' course and seven to an aspiring leaders' course. This may affect the numbers who want to be involved in the aspiring principals'

programme although the programme will build on existing skills and knowledge.

The main other sources of recent professional development were conferences (14), post graduate study (9) training around assessment (14), some curriculum or pedagogical development (17), IT training (9) and managing staff (14). Some of this was part of whole school development. Two people had attended the legal issues training. Only one considered the mentoring received from the principal as a source of professional development.

Specific Development Needs for Principalship

In looking at the principal's job and assessing their current skills and knowledge, APs and DPs identified some key areas for further development. These were finance (40) staffing/ HR (22), legal issues (20) leadership skills and strategies (charter, strategic planning change management) (12) MoE requirements (11) property (6).

“ ... APs and DPs identified some key areas for further development: finance, staffing, legal issues, leadership skills and strategies, MoE requirements ”

Professional development opportunities in these areas will be investigated for 2008.

Other development that senior managers felt they would benefit from involved working with other professionals: mentoring or shadowing (12), community of practice (7), on the job training/acting principal (7).

“... only five people thought there was a development need for leading learning. This is a reflection of the focus of the role ... but doesn't recognise the strengths and passion that senior managers have for teaching and learning.”

Nine people saw there was a direct need for aspiring principal training and an overwhelming majority (90%) thought there should be specific training to be a principal. Half thought it should be a prerequisite but only 30% thought it should be mandatory. Although people felt it set a standard for entry and gave good preparation for principalship, some others thought that a qualification doesn't necessarily make a good principal and that it should be only one factor.

Interestingly only five people thought there was a development need for leading learning. This is a reflection of the focus of the role in a number of schools being organisational but doesn't recognise the strengths and passion that senior managers have for teaching and learning.

A number of these ideas will be included in the 2008 aspiring principals' programme: mentoring, community of practice, on the job training and leading learning.

Although there was an even split about whether an aspiring course should be a combined primary and secondary one, a number commented that the two sectors were very different. Consequently, the course offered in 2008 will be focussed on secondary, although some sessions on specific topics could include both groups.

Future Career Directions

Principalship

Principalship was seen as a choice by 41 APs and DPS (25 males and 16 female). That is 35% of all who filled in the survey.

Age	number	out of	%
36-40	7	13	54%
41-45	9	18	50%
46-50	8	28	44%
51-55	13	34	38%
56-60	2	14	14%
61-65	1	8	13%

These figures show that between the ages of 36-45 at least half of the APs and DPs were considering principalship. Then between 46 and 56 that dropped to about 40% and post 55 the percentage was about 14%.

“Principalship was seen as a choice. ...The clear message .. is that they enjoy teaching, ... and the satisfaction they get from using their skills and experience to make a difference.”

Of the 41 considering principalship, 11 were also considering positions outside teaching. This is a concern. The clear message coming through is that they enjoy teaching, the interaction with staff and students and the satisfaction they get from using their skills and experience to make a difference. Is there a way of giving APs and DPs a wider experience apart from the aspiring principals' programme eg Leadership and Management advisory for a year or sabbatical? Very few had a linear path.

“The positive aspects of principalship included the opportunity to be a leader.”

Those who were considering career paths other than principalship were mostly either going to retire (16%) or remain in schools in the same or another role (26%) eg return to classroom, another senior management role or continue in their present role.

Five would look at a job outside schools and/or education. About 10% were not sure what their next move would be if any. This may be an area where principals can take the initiative and use the discussion to look at medium and long-term development plans and needs for their senior managers.

What Perceptions do Senior Managers have of the Principal Role?

This question drew a large and varied response. There were 354 responses 143 about the positive aspects of principalship, 183 about the negative aspects and 28 put in a nil response.

The positive aspects of principalship included the opportunity to be a leader. APs and DPs found the prospect exciting. They wanted to give educational leadership (23) with comments like:

- *improving student success in life*
- *influence the provision of education*
- *follow my own educational beliefs and ideas.*

They used words like *passion* and *inspiring* and *rewarding* (12).

These senior managers wanted to implement their vision of how teaching and learning should be (14)

- *big picture*
- *vision for the future*
- *able to pursue own vision*

and set the strategic direction for the school (12)

- *freedom to do what I think is important.*

The role as principal would provide a challenge (9) and more importantly provide an opportunity to make a difference:

- *help kids and community.*

“ They saw the collegial nature of the principal with their senior management team and staff as a positive aspect of the role. ”

They saw the collegial nature of the principal with their senior management team and staff as a positive aspect of the role.

- *positive working relationships with community staff and students,*
- *guide a professional team to better serve students.*

APs and DPs liked the idea of being in charge as a principal and having the ultimate responsibility and there were only six comments about pay.

However, some of the attractions were also seen as detractors from the position. Although having the responsibility was exciting and challenging, others also saw it as being a terrible responsibility within the current climate(19). They looked at the demanding hours with the out of school meetings and

- *lack of time to do the educational leadership of the job well to be frustrating.*

They thought the expectations on a principal were high and that it was difficult for principals to maintain a work/life balance because of the high workload and the stress and pressure of juggling between the demands of individuals and groups. Many felt there were unrealistic expectations:

- *need to be an accountant and magician*
- *need to be a wonderful non-judgmental communicator.*

“ ... the expectations on a principal were high ... it was difficult ... to maintain a work/life balance ... ”

“There is a responsibility for all the agencies who support schools ... to examine what their role could be in enhancing the positive aspects of being a principal and addressing some of the factors which are contributing to the high turnover of principals in our region.”

They recognised the personal cost of principalship was high – the role could be *lonely, frustrating, daunting, demanding*.

A part of the principal role which is seen as unattractive is the paperwork and compliance demands:

- *too many compliance issues*
- *deadlines*
- *lot of admin that detracts from real issues of leading staff and school.*

Dealing with staff, students and community is a challenge for any principal and they recognised that the principal was often dealing with negative issues like underperforming or stressed staff and uncooperative parents. They recognised that there were sometimes more personnel issues than academic issues and that there were *too many issues with young people that the principal was responsible for*.

All of the negatives were represented evenly:

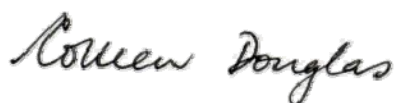
Responsibility	19
Demanding hours	21
Pressure and stress	15
Workload	10
Expectations and balance	14
Paperwork/admin	16
Compliance bureaucracy political community	10
Personal cost	13
Personnel and HR	10

There is a responsibility for all the agencies who support schools - School Support Services, the Ministry of Education, Principals' groups to examine what their role could be in enhancing the positive aspects of being a principal and addressing some of the factors which are contributing to the high turnover of principals in our region.

The proposed themes of the aspiring principals' programme are:

- managing and leading change
- leading learning
- future-focussed schools
- understanding self and others

An Aspiring Principals' Programme would assist in areas like visioning, strategic planning and leadership of people and teaching and learning. It would also provide training in a developmental and mentoring role for current principals. Strengthening the senior management team through the aspiring principals' development would benefit all schools and provide aspiring principals with the skills to enhance the positive aspects and reduce the impact of the negative aspects of the principal role when they gain a position.



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August 2007