Principals in remote New South Wales, Australia: The work lives of central school principals in the context of devolution reforms of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, and social and economic changes in remote Australia

By Bruce Pietsch

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Faculty of Education
University of Tasmania
Launceston, Tasmania

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Declaration of originality

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Acknowledgements

Glossary of Terms Used

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
Central school	New South Wales central schools have 13 Years from Kindergarten to Year 12. A very small number of central schools have 11 Years from Kindergarten to Year 10. The NSW DET plans to extend all central schools to Year 12
Deputy principal	The second level of promotion in a NSW secondary school. Only a small number of central schools had a deputy principal
Head teacher	First level of promotion in a secondary school or department. The majority of central schools have one head teacher, who is usually nominated by the principal as a de facto deputy principal in the school
HSC	Higher School Certificate, awarded at end of Year 12 and serving as the entrance examination for university
ICSEA	Index of socio-economic advantage used by ACARA as the provider of socio-economic information about schools and their communities
K (Kindergarten)	The first year of school in NSW
MCEETYA	(Australian) Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (from June 1993), now MCEECDYA – Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (from July 2009)
NSW	New South Wales
NSW DEC	NSW Department of Education and Communities (from 2011)
NSW DET	NSW Department of Education and Training (from 1998)
NSW DSE	NSW Department of School Education (up to 1997)
Primary school	NSW primary schools have seven Years from Kindergarten to Year 6
Secondary school	NSW secondary schools have six Years from Year 7 to Year 12
SED	School Education Director
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education Training

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Abstract

This thesis investigated the work lives of principals of central schools situated in remote inland areas of the state of New South Wales (NSW), Australia. This research considered how the situational contexts of central school leadership in remote NSW have affected the work lives of principals of central schools in remote NSW. These contexts included the education policy context of devolution of government school systems, the community context of remoteness and low socio-economic status (SES) and the specific school context of leading a small school and leading both secondary and primary departments.

Research literature such as Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008), Gronn and Rawlings-Sanaei (2003) and Southwell (2008) on the factor of the education policies of devolution in the work lives of principals described characteristics which match the attributes of work intensification including longer hours of work, more tasks to be completed in a day, and diversification of skills. However, current literature has much less data about the particular contexts of the work lives of principals living in, and working with the issues of, remote and low SES communities. There is even less data about the implications for principals attempting to provide secondary education in such communities.

This research study used a mixed methods design beginning with a survey questionnaire of all principals of central schools in NSW. Nearly half of the survey respondents then participated in a longitudinal program of interviews conducted in the schools of the principals. The rapport with principals developed by the researcher as an 'insider' facilitated the collection of rich data on the work lives of the principals. Many of the issues raised had not been fully researched in broader studies.

The study confirmed the research of Starr and White (2008) and Hatton (1995, 1996), who reported "massive intensification" in the work lives of principals in remote Australian schools. In addition, the study provided a more nuanced understanding of the work intensification of these principals as it reported on the many aspects and consequences of the personal, family, social and professional isolation of principals in remote schools as they responded to issues related to high welfare needs of students and of the community in general.. Principals were threatened with violence and, in several cases, were required to respond to high levels of child sexual abuse in their communities. Participant principals in this study were professionally isolated and faced limited career prospects. The data in this

study provided a greater understanding with respect to the issue of low numbers of applications for the principalship, particularly in remote areas.

Much of the literature on school leadership is generic in nature with considerable reliance on theories of leadership and management which have been developed in non-school contexts. This study suggested that there needs to be more research on the variety of educational and social contexts in which principals work in order to provide a more nuanced understanding of the work lives of principals of remote, low SES schools and the high stakes in the career prospects of these principals. For policy makers, a removal or amelioration of the disincentives in remote school principalship identified in this study would appear to be more urgent and more effective than the current policy of provision of incentives to work in such schools.

Chapter 1 Introduction and Background

Introduction

This thesis investigates the work lives of principals of central schools situated in remote inland areas of the state of New South Wales (NSW), Australia. In NSW, central schools provide both secondary and primary levels of education in small towns and villages, which are not large enough to justify having a secondary school as well as a primary school. Historically, central schools were created by extending existing primary schools in remote areas to include the early years of secondary schooling, that is, up to Years 7 and 8. However, at the time of this thesis, nearly all central schools in NSW had extended the provision of secondary education up to university matriculation level at the end of Year 12. Central schools in NSW have provided curriculum for the 13 years of education from Kindergarten (K) to Year 12 and are known as K-12 schools.

The majority of central schools in the state of NSW are in small towns, which are located in semi-arid or desert regions of the state. Typically, residents of these towns require at least two hours driving to access the facilities of the nearest provincial city. They are typically located at least one hour's drive from the nearest rural town of over 1000 people making collegial meetings and professional development difficult, and constraining the use of personal services such as banking and medical services. Geographically, the 58 central schools considered in this research project are located in inland areas up to 1000 kilometres distance from Sydney, the state capital of NSW, and similar distances from the next largest cities, Newcastle and Wollongong. All three major cities are located on the NSW coast.

As the populations of remote locations has declined, central schools in remote inland towns with populations of less than 1000 people typically developed different characteristics from other groups of rural schools such as those in inland provincial cities, coastal growth cities or rural towns which had large enough populations to support at least one local high school. As a result, the work lives of the principals of these schools are characterised by different concerns from those of their colleagues in

metropolitan or larger rural centres. In this research, the group of remote central schools was considered as a distinct subcategory of rural schools. The overwhelming majority of the 2246 principals of NSW public schools work in metropolitan or provincial cities, which have over 95 per cent of the NSW population. School principals in rural centres constitute a minority of the total group of NSW principals and principals of central schools form a minority within the minority of principals of all rural schools. (See Table 1.1 for an indication of the small proportion of central schools in NSW)

Table 1.1   *NSW government schools, 2005*

Type of school	Years of schooling	Number of schools
Primary	K-6	1635
Separate Infants	K-2	17
Secondary	7-12	397
Schools for specific purposes (SSPs)	Various	108
Environmental education centres (EECs)	Various	23
Community	K-12	6[a]
Central	K-12 or K-10	60[b]
Total government schools		2246

Note. NSW government schools provide education in 13 years, from Kindergarten (K) to Year 12. At the end of Year 12, students are able to matriculate to university.

[a] Community schools are large schools in coastal, large city locations and are not included in the study. [b] Two central schools, one on an island and a large coastal school near the capital, Sydney, are not included in the study. At the time of the study, all except three of the central schools were K-12. Data were from NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) (2006b, p. 1, see Table 1.2) .

Locating central schools in multiple contexts

Central schools are located in several contexts that significantly affect the way in which they provide for students and the work lives of their staff.

These contexts include:

1. The broader educational policy context which governs the provision of education in 2246 government schools across NSW;

2. The particular geographic and socio-economic contexts which constitute the local community context in which central schools operate; and

3. The characteristics of the schools themselves in terms of their size and their structure.

Each of the above contexts has particular characteristics which have combined to form the unique conditions in which principals of central schools work:

1. At the systemic level, over the past two decades the NSW government has implemented a policy of devolving the government education system from a centralised system to a system of school-based responsibilities and accompanying accountabilities, particularly for principals;

2. Central schools usually are located in remote and low socio-economic status (SES) communities and;

3. They have a specific school context of being small and providing 13 years of education from Kindergarten to Year 12. Central schools are known as K-12 schools.

The three contexts will be described further in the first three Sections of Chapter 1.

Section 1: Education Policy Context of Devolution

The educational policy, community and school contexts in which NSW central schools are located has had many implications for the work lives of principals of these schools. Initial perceptions of the implications of these contexts for the work lives of principals provided the impetus for this research. This project explored the extent to which the work lives of principals of remote central schools have been affected by changes in state and national education policies, changes in the remote community context and the characteristics of a small K-12 school.

It is the principalship, particularly leadership of teaching in these schools combined with the situational context that has provided a rich area for study. However, this area of study is one in which there is a paucity of literature related to these types of schools and the literature on the work lives of principals has taken little or no account of the specific features of the work lives of principals in these school settings.

Education policy context: Devolution, accountability and performativity

There has been a significant body of literature which has dealt with the overall policy context of schools in general and the changes over the past two decades as school systems across the world moved from highly centralised to highly decentralised systems. This global trend toward decentralisation and, in some cases, to devolution of school systems, began in the late 1980s and continued into the 1990s (Bjork, 2003; Bottani, 2000; Caldwell, 2006a; Derqui, 2001; McGinn & Welsh, 1999; Pascoe & Pascoe, 1998; Sahid, 2004; Sayed, 2002; Wylie, 1995). Critics of previously established centralised systems of government education have expressed dissatisfaction with issues such as the lack of students' abilities in basic literacy, grammar, spelling and mathematics and school management issues such as student discipline (Barnett, 2001; Donnelly, 2004).

Internationally, the movement to devolution is characterised by a number of policy changes. These include the marketisation of schools and the introduction of competition amongst schools for students; the introduction of mechanisms which have given parents more choice of schools (Ladd & Fiske, 2001; Lidstrom, 1999; Lubienski, 2003; R. Morgan & Blackmore, 2007; Whitty, Halpin, & Power, 1998). Parents and communities are provided with more avenues for participation in school governance (B. W. Scott, 1989, 1990b) and financial and human resources are devolved to local management. The devolution of financial and human resources has been accompanied by an increasing focus on accountability and performativity and the requirement that schools satisfy a range of externally imposed standards. This move to devolution, in which devolved schools were given directions using accountability mechanisms, came to be seen as a process of "steering at a distance" (Kickert, 1995, p. 135). The same process has been referred to in the UK and New Zealand as 'new public management' (Goldspink, 2007, p. 27) and in Australia as 'corporate managerialism' (Hatton, 1995, p. 25).

Researchers, particularly originating in the Chicago school of economics, have argued that education services like other monopoly government services are subject to capture by employee or provider groups in a process described as 'rent seeking' (Tullock, 1988, p. 15) or profit seeking behaviour which do not result in public good

(Buchanan, Tollison, & Tullock, 1980; Chubb & Moe, 1988; Friedman, 1955). This process became known as 'provider capture' (Donnelly, 2004, p. 197). Their research has argued that the influence of the professional providers of school education should be balanced by greater consumer control, which can be achieved by increasing the role of parents and community members in school governance, the devolution of responsibility and resources to local schools and by subjecting government schools to market forces of competition.

In England and Wales, the reaction to provider capture led to the development of school-based management following the 1988 Education Reform Act. The Act initiated a version of market devolution in which parents were given more choice of schools for their children and schools were forced to compete for their clients. League tables comparing schools on the basis of student performances in national standardised tests were designed to assist parents in making their choice of school (Lingard, Hayes, & Mills, 1999). Levacic (1995) found that, of the four main criteria associated with intentions for the UK devolution of school systems (effectiveness, efficiency, equity and choice), efficiency was the one for which there was most evidence that local management had achieved the aims set for it by government (p. 190). The same concern for efficiency characterised much of the rhetoric around the devolution of management responsibility to local schools in NSW (B. W. Scott, 1989, 1990a, 1990b).

Devolution of New Zealand and Australian state education systems

During the 1990s, states across Australia made significant changes to their school systems, reflecting many of the international trends. Western Australia introduced its *Better Schools* program in 1987 (Angus, 1995; Western Australia Ministry of Education, 1987). This was followed by a change in the organisation of schools in Victoria. The Victorian government introduced the most comprehensive decentralisation program for any large education system in its *Schools of the Future* program in 1993 (Victoria Directorate of School Education, 1993) when as much as 90 per cent of the education budget was decentralised to the school level (Caldwell, 1997). New Zealand also made similarly major devolution reforms following the *Picot Report* (Picot, 1988).

Following the devolution reforms in Western Australia and Victoria, in 1997, Queensland announced the *Leading Schools* program to implement school based management (Education Queensland, 1998). South Australia launched its version of local school management referred to as *Partnerships 21* in 1999 (Sahid, 2004; South Australia Department of Education Training and Employment, 1999). Tasmania introduced local self-management in several stages after the *Cresap Report* (1990) by an independent firm of consultants, and the internal Department of Education review (DECCD, 1996).

As part of the "policy borrowing" (Lingard, 2010, p. 129), that was evident in the global and national trend to devolution, NSW also developed its model of school-based management (B. W. Scott, 1989, 1990b). In a white paper for the NSW government, the Minister for Education stated that his proposals for a more devolved system of NSW public education would achieve a variety of benefits for public schools (Metherell, 1989). Metherell maintained that these benefits included more efficient management of resources, a system of staffing schools which would be more responsive to local needs, improved staff morale, improved student achievement and a higher level of teacher professionalism. Some researchers, such as Riordan and Weller (2000), described the subsequent NSW Education Reform Act (1990) as being the most significant reform in NSW education in over a century, since Sir Henry Parkes introduced the Public Schools Act (1866) and the Public Instruction Act (1880) in the then colony of NSW.

In 1990-1995, in the first stages of devolution reforms in NSW, many of the responsibilities of the Head Office and the ten Regional Offices of the NSW Department of School Education were devolved progressively into 40 education clusters. Each cluster of schools was supervised by a Cluster Director who was directly accountable to the State Office of the Department of School Education. School principals were mainly accountable to a single Cluster Director who was responsible for all schools and (nearly all) of the functions of the school in a cluster. At the time of this research, the title of the supervisor of school principals had changed to School Education Director (SED) and the state's government education system was known as the Department of Education and Training (DET).

Uniform standards of accountability

Mandatory Annual School Reports and school management plans

The NSW Education Reform Act (1990) required principals of NSW government schools to produce an Annual School Report, which had a standard template and principals were required to provide detailed information under specific subheadings. For example, principals of primary and central schools were required to publish comprehensive reports and statistics on school results in standardised testing in literacy and numeracy. Principals of high schools and central schools were required to publish achievement levels in School Certificate examinations (set at the end of Year 10) and the Higher School Certificate examinations (set at the end of Year 12) and to prepare school management plans with targets and strategies to achieve improved outcomes in student achievement levels based on data from standardised tests.

NSW standardised curricula and school exit point certificates

Summative testing, previously administered by the NSW Department of School Education, across a wide range of subjects at the end of Years 10 and Years 12 for the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate awards remained in place as before 1990. The Education Reform Act (1990) established an independent Board of Studies. The NSW Board of Studies (BOS) took over from the Department of School Education the responsibility of preparing curricula for both government and non-government schools in NSW and setting examinations for the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate.

NSW and national standardised testing: Publication of results

At the time of the research, the NSW Board of Studies (BOS) was responsible for the setting and marking of a range of standardised tests related to students' literacy and numeracy skills which were mandatory in all NSW government schools. These included Basic Skills Tests (BSTs) in literacy, numeracy and writing for Years 3 and 5; Secondary Numeracy Assessment Program (SNAP) and English Language and Literacy

Assessment (ELLA) tests in Years 7 and 9. In the process of reporting the results of these tests and examinations to individual schools, the BOS sent packages to schools which included student results and school statistics associated with these results. For the BSTs, SNAP and ELLA basic skills testing programs, the results were treated as formative and the BOS provided detailed analysis of responses to test items and resources to assist teachers in improving the basic educational skills of students.

In 2008, the standardised testing in NSW government schools was replaced by nationally uniform standards for all government and non-government schools using National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests. The results of the NAPLAN tests are published on the 'My School' website and the public are able to use the NAPLAN results to compare results of schools across Australia and within groups of schools with the same measurement on the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA).

Early studies and reviews of devolution reforms in NSW (NSW Director-General of School Education, 1996; NSW External Council of Review, 1994; Pietsch, 1993; Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision, 1998), Victoria (Caldwell, 1998; Caldwell & Hayward, 1998) and New Zealand (Wylie, 1997b, 2003) generally reported positive responses by principals to the devolution reforms. However, little account was taken in the implementation of devolution reforms of the differentiated contexts within which principals worked and accountability mechanisms were rarely adjusted to accommodate the exigencies of local contexts.

Section 2: Community Context – Remote and low-SES
Remote schools different from other rural schools in NSW

Australia has one of the more highly urbanised populations in the world and of the seven states and territories of Australia, the state of NSW is one of the most highly urbanised states. Nearly 90 per cent of the NSW population live in the metropolitan area of Sydney or growing city areas on the coastline (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2005b). Of the remaining 10 per cent of the state's population who live in inland NSW, less than half of the inland population live in villages or towns of less than 20 000

people (ABS, 2004). The overwhelming majority of NSW schools are located in the metropolitan area and other coastal cities which have continued to experience population growth in contrast to the towns and villages in which central schools typically are located.

Use of the broad category of 'rural' in socio-economic, and education studies, has often obscured the differences between various types of non-metropolitan communities. In 2013, the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC) advertised the benefits of becoming 'rural teachers' (NSW DEC, 2013a). In the advertisement, all four of the featured rural teachers worked in larger rural cities and towns. Two of the centres had access to local universities and two are in larger centres with resident SEDs and education offices supporting professional development. These descriptions of teachers' work lives do not adequately represent the experience of all teachers working in rural areas. In particular, the experience of teachers and principals in remote schools is often under-represented or not represented at all.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2001) and several Australian socio-economic studies (Haslam-McKenzie, 1998; Lloyd, Harding, & Hellwig, 2000; Vinson, 1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c) have attempted to address this problem by providing data on more refined subcategories of rural populations. Use of the undifferentiated term, 'rural', has led to misinterpretation of statistics. For example, although the ABS has described a steady population growth in rural areas over the previous 30 years, when 'rural' areas are limited to those depending on agricultural production and can be defined as entirely rural and remote, the ABS data for remote towns and villages shows that their populations has been steadily decreasing (Haslam-McKenzie, 1998). Residents of remote communities have believed they were the "forgotten people" (Haslam-McKenzie, 1998, p. 41) and that policy makers did not understand the issues and challenges of remote communities. They were concerned about the "continuing drain of young people" (p. 47) from their communities to Sydney, coastal areas and other larger rural centres in NSW.

As an indication of the level of remoteness of these schools at the time of this research, remote schools were considered 'hard-to-staff' and the NSW Department of

Education and Training (NSW DET), now NSW Department of Education and Communities (NSW DEC), allocated incentive points for appointments to designated hard-to-staff schools. Teachers with incentive points are awarded small supplements to their salary. In addition, those who accepted appointments to a remote school gained a right to transfer after two or three years. Of the 58 central schools in this study, 22 were assigned the highest incentive points, six or eight, for remoteness, which guaranteed teachers an entitlement to transfer after either two or three years at the school (NSW DET, 2005, p. 10). Although this policy was designed to attract teachers to isolated schools, it also had the effect of increasing the turnover or churning of staff as teachers took up more favoured positions after spending two or three years at the school. As a result, teachers and principals in remote schools tend to be less experienced compared to teachers in Sydney and larger rural cities (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), 2000b; Letts, Novak, Gottschall, Green, & Meyenn, 2005; Preston, 2000a, 2000b; P. C. Roberts, 2004).

As indicated by the reports of interviewed principals in Chapter 4, the social fabric and school environments for remote schools in Australia are quite distinctive when compared with the working environments of principals working in other rural centres which have populations of more than 1000 people. However, it has been common for Australian studies to use the terms 'rural and remote' or 'rural or remote' as a single phrase without differentiating between the two categories (Letts et al., 2005; Page, 2006; Sharplin, O'Neill, & Chapman, 2011). Sometimes broader studies have appended a sentence which has hinted that some of the issues raised by principals might be more substantial for principals working in remote schools (Gronn & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003). Wildy and Clarke (2005; 2008; 2009) examine specifically principals working in remote K-6 schools in Western Australia. However, literature, which identifies remote K-12 schools and the particular work life challenges posed for principals in these situations and contexts, is very limited and further research on the nuances of school leadership is required. It is in this space that this thesis is located. This research will examine the unique work life experiences of principals in remote central schools.

Population decline in remote towns

Central schools are located in towns and villages which have for some time been the sites of population decline in both farming populations and in the supporting towns and villages which are dependent on farms for their own livelihood. During the years 2001 to 2009 in the dry inland areas of NSW, Bourke and Central Darling populations fell by 22 and 18 per cent respectively; and the towns of Warren, Urana, Jerilderie and Walgett fell by 18, 15, 13 and 13 per cent respectively (ABS, 2010a). The decline in population was accompanied by a decline in facilities available for residents who remained. This decline has meant that school staff are not only increasingly professionally isolated by distances to colleagues and educational services, but are also isolated from mainstream personal services such as banking and medical facilities. After the devolution reforms in NSW, the DET state office still appointed classroom teachers to tenured positions. However, principals have had an increased responsibility to recruit short-term casual staff, executive staff and other staff in schools with special needs. In remote communities with declining populations and services and an aging population, it has been more difficult to attract and retain staff.

Decline in farm populations

Adding to the pressures in remote areas are deteriorating economic conditions for farming communities which are key to the survival of remote schools. Farming communities have been facing declining commodity prices, increases in productivity and capital intensity, parallel restructuring in service industries, and the restructuring and rationalisation of rural processing. Farm populations have declined. The number of farming families in Australia decreased by 22 per cent between 1986 and 2001 and the median age of farmers increased from 47 years in 1986 to 51 years in 2001 (ABS, 2003). In remote towns there was a "high cost of service delivery, declining population, declining property values [and] ageing population" (Worthington & Dollery, 2001, p. 60). The same declines have occurred in NSW (Judd, Cooper, Fraser, & Davis, 2006).

The remote areas fall in the category of dryland farming areas, which are dependent on wheat growing and wool production. Although larger centres in inland

NSW with over 20 000 people still experienced population growth, the aggregation of data for rural regions that included growing provincial cities, coastal resort growth areas and remote villages has obscured the specific data that scattered small towns and localities in inland NSW have continued to experience substantial population decline (McKenzie, 1996, p. 207). Remote area employment, especially for school leavers and younger people with families, has become much more limited and has led to a significant reduction in the numbers of young people residing in remote towns.

The continuing deterioration in terms of trade for farmers' agricultural produce, combined with the increasing use of on-farm technologies and withdrawal of previous government support for closer settlement and farm subsidies has led to farm amalgamations and a decline in the on-farm labour force (Higgins, 1998, p. 21). Higgins described the process as a "vicious cycle", a "dynamic of decline" in which populations decreased, services decreased and residual communities found it difficult to remain economically and socially viable (Higgins, 1998). The typical farmer now manages a larger area on his or her own, in some cases with the support of a marriage partner or family member, and needs extra labour only during occasional times of peak activity.

Declining services and facilities in remote towns

Rationalisation of services: Concern for "sustainability of rural life"

The rationalisation of services has resulted in the loss of essential services and concomitant employment loss. The impact of these losses on the quality and sustainability of life in rural communities has led to a rise in rural dissatisfaction and there are genuine concerns over the "sustainability of rural life" amidst a growing outflow of essential public and private services (Argent & Rolley, 2000, p. 183).

Between 1988 and 1995, 5,000 hospital beds were closed in NSW and 30 hospitals, the majority in rural areas, were closed, downgraded or privatised ("The Land", cited in HREOC, 1999, p. 4). Health services in more remote locations had difficulty in recruiting and retaining an adequate number of qualified professional staff, resulting in concerns about the health and wellbeing of residents in remote areas (Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute et al., 2009, p. 8). Of particular

concern has been the high rate of suicide in remote NSW towns (Judd et al., 2006) and the lack of available maternity services (C. Roberts & Algert, 2000). Women living in remote areas have often had no option but to travel during pregnancies and such concerns have led some to suggest that this is a factor in a reduction in the number of people who want to raise families in remote areas (Dietsch, Davies, Shackleton, Alston, & McLeod, 2008).

Although mining activity has generated employment opportunities and population growth in some remote centres in states such as Queensland and Western Australia this has not been the case for inland NSW. The remote areas of inland NSW have remained dependent on farming and farm services as the main source of employment.

The decline resulting from rationalisation of services has been more acute in remote towns compared to other rural centres. In 1997-98, during a period of general bank closures, 199 bank branches were closed in NSW, the most in the nation (Iemma, 1998). Residents of remote towns worried that closing the only bank in town would eventually create a "ghost town" (Beal & Ralston, 1998, p. 55) and when people were forced to travel to larger towns to obtain cash and do their shopping it spelt "death to local businesses, local services and local communities" (p. 59).

In addition, Beal and Ralston (1998) noted that the social fabric of these towns was affected by the movement of population to larger centres. During the previous decade, the reduced populations of people working directly on farms or in farm service industries resulted in a reduced number of people available to support the local school. Women, in particular, were predominantly involved in contacts with teachers in the school and in voluntary activities, such as staffing a school canteen or organising a school fete. In the changed economic conditions of the previous decade, women are now more often employed directly in farm work or supplementing the reduced family incomes with casual work. Hence, they are less available to spend time on voluntary community work, such as the Country Women's Association (CWA), church auxiliaries, sport support committees or school-based activities. All the remote towns considered in the Beal and Ralston study were served educationally by either a central school in NSW or its equivalent in the state of Queensland.

Low socio-economic status (SES) of remote NSW towns

Remote central schools are located in towns and villages which share some of the characteristics of rural locations but which also demonstrate more starkly the effects of population decline and the emergence of distinct issues which differentiate remote communities from larger rural towns and cities. Most of the remote communities that are served by central schools have a low socio-economic status (SES) profile and are characterised by declining population and services.

Nearly all remote NSW towns with central schools have populations of only 200-999 people, although some central schools serve even smaller villages. When local government areas of rural populations were examined by (Lloyd et al., 2000), remote towns were found to be not only more disadvantaged when compared to capital cities but also when compared to towns and cities in other groupings of larger rural centres. In non-metropolitan areas of Australia, the groups with greatest disadvantage were "residents of small rural towns rather than residents of rural areas" (p. 22).

Vinson (1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c) observed similar contrasts when he examined small population divisions based on postcodes. Rural areas outside the capital, Sydney, and the second city, Newcastle, had only 30 per cent of the state's population yet the rural areas had 77 per cent of the most disadvantaged areas (Vinson, 1999). Eighty per cent of central school communities were in the 49 per cent of postcode areas with most disadvantage in NSW. Over half, 52 per cent, of the central school communities were in the 29 per cent of post code areas of most disadvantage (Vinson, 1999, pp. 68-80). Seven out of ten post code areas with the highest ranking mortality ratio scores in NSW were the communities of Brewarrina, Collarenebri, Goodooga, Ivanhoe, Lightning Ridge, Menindee and Wilcannia, which had matching central schools (Vinson, 1999, pp. 36-38).

This level of disadvantage in remote areas was further confirmed in Vinson's (2002b) report, "Inquiry into the provision of public education in NSW". Vinson found that income levels for remote communities are well below the Australian average, and work is increasingly undertaken on a casual basis with high levels of chronic

unemployment. At the same time, there are reduced levels of services, such as banking and health services (p. 110), to provide support for an increasingly disadvantaged population.

The Australian Senate Community Affairs References Committee (2004) found that in remote areas average incomes have declined, populations have aged and newer residents who had moved to remote towns have high welfare needs. In addition, the Committee heard submissions about the consequences of economic deregulation, industry restructuring, the withdrawal of government services, such as hospitals and schools, and the closure of banks and other businesses (pp. 323-324) and deleterious consequences of the prolonged drought, such as increasing levels of family breakdown and crime (p. 327).

New residents of remote towns on welfare

Many low-income households are attracted to declining or static rural towns because housing is cheaper or public housing waiting lists are shorter and consequently these towns have increasing numbers of households on social security payments (Fincher & Wulff, 1998). During 1990-1992, nearly half of 340 movers into six remote communities were dependent principally on social security payments (Budge, 1996, p. 200). Budge identified an alienation of newer residents from the traditional community base of towns, increased demands on declining social services and increased isolation from access to services in distant regional centres (p. 201). Similar issues have been evident in remote schools which have had higher proportions of students needing specialist assistance. Such problems have been exacerbated by the issue of accessing such assistance when specialist support staff are located in larger regional cities at some distance from remote schools. In addition, the DET requires evidence of diagnosis by a suitably qualified medical specialist before schools can obtain additional funding to support children with special needs. In remote areas, principals need to wait longer periods for such support funding while parents attempt to find and travel to suitably qualified medical specialists who can diagnose their children.

Changing demographic nature of student cohorts in remote schools

The nature of student cohorts in remote schools across the state also has changed. These changes include an increased proportion of students in the secondary levels of the school who require teachers with specialist subject skills. In addition, the increased proportion of students from low-SES backgrounds with special needs has required teachers to exercise special skills in classroom management and social and cultural awareness of students whose backgrounds are different to that of teachers at the school.

Remote NSW schools have had an increasing proportion of their enrolments who are Aboriginal students. For example, from 1993 to 2008 the proportion of Aboriginal students at Boggabilla Central School had increased from 60 per cent to approximately 80 to 90 per cent (Patty, 2008b). Likewise, between the early 1990s and 2006, although the total enrolment of Mungindi Central School had decreased from 200 to 80 the proportion of Aboriginal students had increased from 60 per cent to 100 per cent (Patty, 2008a). Another medium-sized central school, which in earlier years had had a mixed enrolment of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, had no enrolments of non-Aboriginal students at the time of the study. The increasing proportion of Aboriginal students in remote school populations presented mainly novice principals of central schools with the particular challenges of accommodating specialist Aboriginal cultural knowledge within curriculum provision and developing cultural awareness and competence in teaching staff, as well as managing a range of social and economic issues associated with entrenched social and economic disadvantage.

Aboriginal population an increasing proportion of total population

In some remote western NSW towns with central schools, such as Boggabilla, Collarenebri and Wilcannia, the trend to a smaller and older population have been partly balanced by an increase in the younger-aged Aboriginal population. Between 2001 and 2006, the non-Aboriginal populations of Boggabilla and Collarenebri fell by 22 and 18 per cent respectively, while the Aboriginal population of both communities rose by 11 per cent. Although the Aboriginal population in Wilcannia declined by 8 per cent, the non-Aboriginal population fell much more, by 32 per cent, in this period (NSW

Government Office of Communities – Aboriginal Affairs, 2006a; 2006b; 2006c). In each of the three remote communities above, the proportion of Aboriginal people in the total population has increased significantly over the five-year period.

The ageing of the non-Aboriginal population in remote areas was partly hidden in aggregated population statistics by the influence of a significantly younger median age of the Aboriginal population. In 2006, the median age of the Aboriginal population of Australia was 16 years less than that of the non-Aboriginal population (ABS, 2006). Aboriginal families had a higher birth rate than the average non-Aboriginal family and the teenage fertility rate of Aboriginal women was almost five times the teenage fertility rate of all women (ABS, 2011). In addition, the average life expectancy for Aboriginal people was much lower than the Australian average (ABS, 2009). In some remote towns, and in their schools, the increasing levels of social disadvantage are accompanied by the emergence of an undercurrent of racial tension.

Decline in social capital

Social capital has been broadly defined as "the norms and social relations embedded in the social structures of societies that enable people to co-ordinate action to achieve desired goals" (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2003, p. 1). The use of the term 'social capital' and its association with social cohesion, personal investment in the community and the quality of education in schools, particularly in rural communities, has had a long history. Hanifan (1916) demonstrated the importance of social capital and community involvement for students to achieve success in the remote schools of West Virginia. In the United States context, a decline in social capital has been expressly linked to falling parent participation in schools and was associated with and measured by the decline in community participation in Parent Teacher Associations from 12 million in 1964 to approximately 7 million in 1995 (Putnam, 1995).

Alongside the decline in populations of remote towns in NSW, the withdrawal of commercial and professional services has reduced the proportion of professional people such as banking officers, medical and school staff who traditionally have supported

community groups with their professional skills and thereby increased the social capital available in small communities. In addition, as populations in remote communities have become older and a greater proportion of women have elected to work outside the home, rural community groups such as the Country Women's Association and school Parents and Citizens Associations have found it increasingly difficult to recruit people for voluntary work or holding office in such organisations.

The Scott Report (1989) on NSW education aimed to "Promote more active involvement by the community, parents and industry in the delivery of education" (B. W. Scott, 1989, p. 3). However, such involvement appears to be problematic in declining communities with limited social capital. Vinson (2002) cited Squires who, in his role as a consultant in Distance Education and Vocational Education for the NSW DET, identified a declining self-efficacy or sense of confidence about residents' ability to hold office or offer advice in community organisations. The decline in remote town populations was exacerbated by a "dynamic of decline" (Squires, cited in Vinson, 2002b, p. 110). The place of the local school as a focus for community activity has changed and community commitment to, and capacity to ensure, the school's survival and success has been curtailed significantly (Vinson, 2002).

<div align="center">Section 3: School Context - Small and K-12</div>

At the school level, school management and the work lives of principals of central schools are affected by the small size of both the student population and the staff of the school and by the requirement by the DET that the school provided for the 13 years of combined primary and secondary education from Kindergarten to Year 12 (K-12).

Context of a small school: Central schools have decreased in size

At the time of this study, the majority of NSW central schools were very small with combined primary and secondary enrolments of fewer than 100 students. In the 20 years between 1987 and 2007, the proportion of central schools with more than 100 students has declined from 75 per cent to 19 per cent of all central schools, while the proportion of small-sized central schools consequently has increased (NSW DET, 1998;

NSW DET, 2008, see Table 1.2). Despite some improvement in retention rates of students staying at school to matriculation level the total population of students in remote schools has declined at an even faster rate than the decline in the population of local remote town communities. In some cases, such as in Hatton's studies (1995, 1996), remote central schools have been reduced to primary schools providing education to Year 6 only. The typical central school in a remote town is considerably smaller than was the case 20 years previously.

Table 1.2   *Number of central schools in Classes 1 and 2*

Class of central school	1987	% of all central schools	2007	% of all central schools
Class 1: More than 300 students	11	17	4 a	6
Class 2: 100-300 students	38	58	9	13
Central schools with more than 100 students	49	75	13	19
Total number of central schools	65		67	

Note. [a] The larger schools were in coastal regions near higher growth areas.
Data from NSW DET, 1998; 2008.

Lower school retention rates

In addition to a decline in the general student population, the proportion of students staying at school until matriculation remains at low levels. Remote town students are less likely to finish school than not only their metropolitan counterparts but also students in other rural centres. What is particularly striking is that the gap of 9 per cent between remote towns and the group of all rural centres is even greater than the gap of 4 per cent between students from metropolitan areas and students from the group of all rural centres (see Table 1.3).

Table 1.3   *Retention rates to complete Year 12*

Remote town	All rural centres	Metropolitan
54 per cent	63 per cent	67 per cent

Note. From HREOC, 2000b, p. 8.

Remote schools getting smaller: Resistance to closure

When governments have attempted to close smaller schools, they have faced strong resistance from local communities who have raised funds for the facilities in the local school and feared losing the heart of their communities. According to Peshkin's (1978) study of small rural school closures there has been a long tradition of residents acting in response to the imminent loss of their school with a passion comparable to that of people who feel their cultural survival is threatened (Peshkin, cited in Hampel, 2002).

The long distances from remote towns to alternative schools in other centres limit the choice for parents and their children, especially for very young children. State governments have not always been responsive to these concerns. For example, shortly after the Education Reform Act (1990), the Greiner government in NSW closed small schools across the state. However, after a series of protest rallies, the new Minister for Education adopted a more conciliatory approach in implementing reforms and avoided further school closures, especially in remote areas.

In the state of Victoria in Australia and in New Zealand, closures of small rural schools were similarly resisted. Following the 1993 *Schools of the Future* reforms in the state of Victoria, the new Kennett government closed 55 schools within a few months of its election. Remote communities of Victoria strongly resisted these closures (Bowie, 1995). In New Zealand, small communities were most opposed to school closures following the 1989 *Tomorrow's Schools'* reforms (A. Campbell, 2004).

Parent and community lobbying of parliamentary representatives in reaction to proposed closure of small remote schools has resulted in the NSW DET accepting a policy of keeping small central schools open when, in the capital, Sydney, and other rural centres, schools of a similar size were being closed. This policy has resulted in a higher proportion of central schools having low enrolments in comparison with other schools in the state and in comparison with the situation for central schools 20 or 50 years earlier.

Context of a K-12 school providing 13 years of education

When specifically considering the principalship in small towns and remote areas, studies have usually considered the work lives of principals of primary schools which educated children in the first seven years (K-6) of their school lives. Historically, central schools in NSW were developed as extensions of primary schools and provided some secondary education only up to the early years, Years 7 and 8, of secondary schooling. The academic years in secondary departments of NSW central schools have been gradually extended as the minimum age for leaving school has increased.

This change in policy has resulted in a significant change in the staffing of central schools. Historically, central schools were established to provide at least some secondary education for isolated students who had completed their primary education and needed to stay at school until they had reached the minimum school leaving age, which was gradually increased during the 20th century. At the time of the Australian Federation in 1901, the minimum school leaving age in NSW was 13 years and until 1943, when the minimum school leaving age in NSW was increased to 15 years, retention of students to secondary education remained at low levels. Low attendance was indicated by the study of Burke and Spaull (2001), who found that in 1936, NSW secondary education systems could not account for about 40 per cent of children who had completed their primary schooling in 1934 (G. Burke & Spaull, 2001), but were not enrolled in secondary schools.

Low enrolments compounded by low attendance rates, of secondary age children meant that there was little urgency to employ secondary trained teachers, let alone secondary-trained principals, in remote central schools, and significant numbers of families seeking secondary education for their children sent them to boarding schools in metropolitan or regional centres. In 1943, the minimum school leaving age in NSW was increased to 15 years and this remained the case until the implementation of the Wyndham Scheme and the introduction of a School Certificate in Year 10 in 1965 when the leaving age effectively became 16 years. In 1967, the NSW government extended secondary education, originally for the five years, Year 7 to Year 11, by a year to include Year 12. In 2009, the NSW government extended the minimum school leaving

age to 17 years and the extended leaving age has created a continuing demand for accessible secondary education. At the time of this research, 95 per cent of central schools in NSW provided an education up to matriculation level for small cohorts of local students.

The typical central school in NSW now provides education for all students up to university matriculation level. In the state of NSW, Australia, the DET, known as the Department of Education and Communities (DEC) after 2011, maintains central schools which offer to "provide a comprehensive education for children from Kindergarten to Year 12" (NSW DEC, 2012, p. 1), usually in areas where the population is insufficient to warrant the establishment of separate primary and secondary schools. In 1997, Year 11 and Year 12 students preparing for the NSW Higher School Certificate (HSC) can choose from a range of 140 courses (NSW Department of School Education, 1997).

In December 1997, the NSW Department of School Education (DSE) and NSW Technical and Further Education (TAFE) amalgamated to become the NSW Department of Education and Training (NSW Government, 2011b). As part of the facility of a combined DET, HSC students can also select from the full range of TAFE–delivered vocational (VET) courses, known as TVET courses (TAFE NSW, 2010). These courses include 12 Industry Curriculum Framework (ICF) courses developed by the NSW Board of Studies, by means of which students can gain accreditation in industry traineeships at the same time as gaining a HSC. The expectation is that all students, regardless of geographic location, should and will have access to the full provision of this broad curriculum.

The information provided by the NSW DEC about the nature of central schools has been sparse. On its webpage, "Going to a public school" (NSW DEC, 2012), the DEC provides extensive information about each type of school in the NSW system of public education. However, the description of a central school consists of only two statements; they "reflect and respond to the needs of their local communities" and they provide remote communities with "comprehensive education" (p. 1).

The DEC's statement that central schools provide remote communities with a "comprehensive education" implied that central schools should attempt to provide

students with choices from over 100 possible courses. In providing a comprehensive education to Higher School Certificate (HSC) level in Year 12, central schools need to find the required specialist teaching resources, either on-site or off-site, for any of the full range of over 100 HSC courses including Vocational Education Training (VET) courses provided either by the school or a TAFE campus. In addition, central schools also are required to provide school based apprenticeships in remote communities which do not have other providers of apprenticeship training. Principals of central schools need to spend considerable time in consultation with a wide range of bodies to ensure that students are provided with fully accredited courses. The checklist of consultation processes in NSW (DEC, 2013b) is four pages long.

In one of their major principalship roles, that of being instructional leaders, principals of central schools therefore have had the task of providing a complete curriculum not only for the seven years (K-6) of primary education but also for the six years (7-12) up to university matriculation level. When schools do not have specialist staff available to deliver a course chosen by the student then the DET, and the local community, expect that the school should attempt to guide students in ways to enrol and study such courses externally. The main external providers of the full range of HSC courses are the DET Distance Education Centres and TAFE Institutes, which are located in larger rural centres. In order to complete the work placement components of VET courses students need to travel each week to workshops and other vocational training facilities in the major rural centres.

Vocational Education Training (VET) courses are particularly popular in communities with higher proportions of students who do not aspire to matriculate to a university course. Making transport and timetable arrangements for students to work in enterprises which have suitable facilities for work placement programs as prescribed in each VET course, poses particular problems for central schools located in small towns which do not have such enterprises.

The multiplicity of course offerings available to secondary students, as well as the maintenance of a full primary curriculum means that principals were responsible for maintaining specialist staffing, buildings and resources and also for ensuring that staff,

often novice teachers, are professionally developed to take up their teaching roles. Teachers are often the only on-site specialist in their field and, in addition, are usually teaching at least some classes outside their own specialist area to fulfil timetable requirements with a small staff. The requirement to provide a full curriculum is compounded by the geographical isolation imposed on leaders of schools in remote areas which significantly inhibits in particular the opportunity for staff to gain specialisations or to develop collegial relationships with other teachers within the same specialty.

Principals of central schools therefore work in multiple contexts, some of which they share with principals of schools in metropolitan or larger rural centres, but many of which are peculiar to the situation of schools in remote towns and villages. However, the literature available on each of these contexts has often omitted consideration of the key relationships between the school and the context. Thus, there has been a decided gap in the literature concerning schools in remote Australia and even more so in discussion about the work lives of principals working in these settings. The remainder of this thesis will address this important gap.

Section 4: Impetus and Rationale of the Thesis - Work Lives and School Context

Between 1990 and 2005, in my capacity as a principal of a NSW central school, I met and worked with other principals of central schools, especially in telephone conferences and occasional face-to-face meetings to arrange for the joint teaching of specialist secondary subjects by teachers from different central schools. A number of challenges were frequently referred to in discussions with colleague principals. Principals discussed what they perceived to be the increasing expectations placed on them by both the 'Department' and parents and the extent to which they experienced tensions in meeting these expectations. Principals discussed not only longer working hours, but also the demands to complete tasks in a shorter period and to learn and use a wider range of skills such as those in financial management and the provision and maintainance of information and communications technology (ICT) facilities in their schools. These three aspects appeared to match the three components of work

intensification described by Larson (1980, pp. 163-164). Larson's work, and the literature on the work lives of teachers and principals which has referred to Larson's analysis will be reviewed in detail in Chapter 2.

In addition to increasing work demands, principal colleagues referred to the effects of remoteness on both professional and personal lives, and how there seemed to be little appreciation by either the Department or their colleague principals in other rural centres of the special circumstances of principalship of a central school in a remote community. Although expressing many elements of dissatisfaction, principals also discussed aspects which they found to be satisfying, most commonly in their more direct relations with students. In order to retain this positive aspect of their work, some principals opted to take on additional duties such as teaching a class or supervising groups of students in extra-mural activities.

This thesis examines the way in which school principalship, particularly the leadership of teaching, is mediated by the situational context in which a school is located; a context which comprises the specific geographical, historical and socio-economic circumstances within which educational policy and practice is carried out. One of the most robust findings from leadership research is that "context matters" (Southworth, 2004, p. 1).

In particular, the thesis was intended to consider the work lives of principals of these schools with a view to identifying the distinguishing features of the principalship in conditions of geographic, professional and personal remoteness. This thesis therefore elicited and analysed perceptions of principals in remote central schools in NSW concerning their work lives in the contexts of the devolution reforms of government schools in NSW, the remote area economic and demographic decline and the particular school characteristics of being small and being a K to 12 school providing 13 years of education.

Insider research

The project was designed to add to perceptions arising from my experience as 'an insider' (A. Smyth & Holian, 1999; Tillman, 2006). I was an insider in both professional

and personal capacities as a former principal of a remote NSW central school. I was an insider colleague within the group of 58 NSW principals of central schools but also within the larger group of 2246 school principals in the NSW DET. In addition, I had grown up in a farming family with an extended family history in remote NSW. Hence, I had insider experience and knowledge of the values and aspirations of the farming communities who were served by remote central schools.

Growing up in a farming family, I heard discussions and concerns of farming life around a small town in inland NSW and the attitudes of rural dwellers towards 'the government' and government institutions, including the local school. Although teachers worked in the local community, local people expected teachers to be transient and did not regard them as part of the local community (James, 1950). The main exceptions to this attitude were towards teachers who had married a local person, stayed in the community and then over time came to be regarded as 'locals'. The community treated most teachers as outsiders and "farmers did not hide their contempt for 'book learning' " (Bessant, 1978, p. 126) offered in local schools.

In my professional life as a teacher, a senior executive in rural secondary schools and principal of a remote central school, I gained firsthand knowledge of the special contexts of working in and leading in a rural and remote NSW school and the implications of the community and school contexts on the work lives of both teachers and principals. Further insider knowledge of the characteristics of leading a remote central school was gained in frequent personal, electronic and telephone interactions with other principals of central schools in circumstances such as planning for the design and implementation of joint delivery of a range of secondary school courses. In addition, I attended and sometimes assisted with the organisation of annual conferences of NSW State Central Schools during my ten years as a central school principal.

Work lives

The principal's work world has expanded in both quantity and complexity of tasks and responsibilities. However, the theme of juggling societal demands, personal goals, family priorities and professional responsibilities in a healthy and productive way in

general has not been well researched (Andreyko, 2010, p. 2) and in the particular geographic, socio-economic and educational contexts as listed above, challenges in the work lives of principals and their actual work practices have been even less well researched.

Conflicts of values and expectations

The work lives of school principals have been influenced both by exogenous pressures, that is, those demands originating from various external agencies and by endogenous pressures, that is, those demands originating from the self-concepts of school principals and the values they hold as individuals or as members of a school community or wider professional community of school educators (Saulwick Muller, 2003, p. 11). Although Larson (1980) and later research, for example, Cranston (2007), Davies (2007), McInerney (2003), Southworth (2008) and Zammit et al. (2007), referred to the more readily observed exogenous pressures, only a small proportion of studies included consideration of endogenous pressures as constituting significant pressures in the work lives of principals.

As well as considering exogenous pressures, this thesis included an examination of endogenous pressures of principals of central schools as a significant component of their work lives. Some of the exogenous and endogenous pressures felt by principals of central schools were similar to those reported by their colleagues in larger and more urbanised communities. However, there were also value pressures that were specific to remote principals of central schools who, because of the characteristics of their schools, were forced to find different ways to handle the pressures and to resolve the resulting dilemmas and tensions.

Paradox of principals' satisfaction and dissatisfaction

Principals sometimes have reported apparently contrasting attitudes when asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they are about issues such as decentralisation, education system structures, their workload and personal wellbeing. Caldwell (1997) cited the

findings of the Cooperative Research Project's 1996 report that 86 per cent of Victorian principals did not want to return to the (centralised) pre- *Schools of the Future* arrangements. Caldwell described these findings as "surprising, given powerful concerns about workload, declining levels of job satisfaction … and frustration at 'bureaucratic interference' and inadequate resources" (p. 8).

Surveys of principals and media reports have conveyed the same apparent paradox of increasing dissatisfaction by principals with their long hours and increased accountabilities and principals' expressions of satisfaction with other aspects of their role. Riley (2012) examined in detail the deleterious effects on Australian principals' health and wellbeing arising from increased workloads and responsibilities. However, in newspaper and education magazine articles which cited Riley's report, principals also commented about the high levels of satisfaction in their work and that they remained positive (Milburn, 2012; O'Keeffe, 2012).

The apparent paradoxes sometimes have been conveyed in the titles of reports about principals' work situations, for example, "The privilege and the price" (Saulwick Muller, 2004), commissioned by the Victorian state government, and *"The best job in the world with some of the worst days imaginable"* (Australian Secondary Principals Association et al., 2007). In Ireland, "The seven challenges and four rewards of being a school principal: Results of a national survey" (M. Morgan & Sugrue, 2008) reported on similar contrasts. Similarly, in MacBeath's (2011) study of leadership development in England, Wales and Scotland, headteachers reported both "wonderful and truly horrible days" (p. 108) in a complex mix of hugely rewarding aspects of leadership combined with a range of increasing dissatisfiers and disincentives which discouraged potential leaders from applying for headteacher positions.

Research problem and Research Questions

This thesis was designed to investigate the research problem of how the situational contexts of central school leadership have affected the work lives of principals of central

schools in remote NSW, Australia. Researching this problem will be divided into three Research Questions (RQs):

RQ1: Education policy context - Devolution
To what extent have the work lives of principals of central schools in the Australian state of NSW been affected by the education policy context of devolution in that state?

RQ2: Community context – Remote and low-SES
To what extent have the work lives of principals of NSW central schools been affected by the characteristics of the communities in which they were located, namely: a) the geographic context of remoteness and b) being located in communities with a low-SES profile?

RQ3: School context – Small and K to 12
To what extent have the work lives of principals of NSW central schools been affected by the specific school characteristics of central schools in NSW, namely: a) being small schools and b) being composite schools providing 13 years of education in Kindergarten to Year 12 (K-12) schools in the state?

Generic models of successful school leadership and contextual practice

Various forms and models of leadership have been identified and associated with specific examples of school leadership which have been deemed to be successful. In some cases, success has been attributed to principals from measurements of student achievement in various forms of accountability regimes as established by government legislators or Departments of Education. In other cases, superordinate education officers or colleague principals or members of their school communities have attributed success to them, based on a range of criteria considered to be significant by them.

Contingency and successful principalship

Principals have often seen a disjunction between policies of central offices of Departments of Education, exemplar models of school leadership and the contingent circumstances of their own individual schools. Hoyle and Wallace (2007) have used an ironic perspective to describe both the above disjunction and the distinction between policy and practice. This distinction was characterised by the strategies used by principals to adapt policy to practice and the principals' representations of these adaptations as fulfilling accountability requirements to the central office (p. 9). A further

aspect of the disjunction between central policies and contingent circumstances at the local level has been described by Lindblom (1959). Although school policy making has been represented as using "scientific" theories of decision-making as suggested by the literature, in practice administrators often used an apparently less theoretical but very pragmatic approach in their decision-making about complex issues. Lindblom labelled the latter approach as "muddling through" (p. 79) in which practitioners have used a 'science' of iterative decision-making involving successive limited comparisons and continually building out from the current situation with a series of frequent small goals.

Cranston (2001) suggested that the reality for schools did not always match the rhetoric surrounding the claim that devolution was "as a positive step for teachers, parents and the wider community to be involved in decisions that affect their children" (p. 1). He argued that the challenges particularly for school leaders to achieve the ends outlined in school devolution reforms were often overlooked. For principals in non-mainstream schools, such as remote central schools, the leadership practice and views concerning what constitutes successful principalship may be different from the theoretical models of generic school leadership. They may more closely approximate the models proposed by Hoyle and Wallace and by Lindblom as they interact with and respond to the demands of their local communities more intensely and continuously than they do with central policy-making bodies.

The "place" (Letts et al., 2005) of the principals of central schools was distinctive. In this thesis, it was anticipated that principals of central schools would need and show evidence of leadership skills and priorities that were different not only in degree, but also in kind, from the necessary skills and priorities of principals of schools in larger and less remote centres. It was anticipated that the work lives, including family situations, of the principals of central schools would have some significant differences from those of their colleagues in metropolitan or other rural centres who worked in exclusively primary or secondary schools.

Significance of the thesis

This thesis is significant in terms of educational research, policy and practice.

In terms of educational research, analysis of the data collected from the principals of central schools provides more nuanced understandings of generic theories of school leadership and identifies policy and practice implications related both to the preparation of principals for leadership in remote central schools and to continued support for them during their principalships of such schools.

Significance for educational research

Much of the literature on theories of school leadership is generic in nature with considerable reliance on theories of leadership and management which have been developed in non-school contexts. For example, Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) were precursors to studies over several decades on the common characteristics of transformational leadership in any type of institution. In contrast to those whose research focused on a generic model of school leadership, Hallinger (2005) reports many limitations in investigations of generic qualities of school leadership. This thesis extends the literature on the work lives of school principals based on an examination of the work lives of one group of principals in contexts which have rarely been the subject of extended research. It provides a more nuanced understanding of the critical importance of the mix of contexts which differentiate the work lives of principals who lead central schools in remote areas of NSW from the more generic descriptions of work lives of principals as reported in the literature.

Significance for educational policy

The thesis has significance for educational policy and in particular for three main groups of policy makers. It has significance for, firstly, those responsible for the development of job descriptions and professional standards for principals; secondly, those responsible for reviewing and assessing the work of principals working in different school contexts; and thirdly, those responsible for setting general and specific criteria for the selection and promotion of teachers to the principalship of schools.

Adaptation of generic statements of professional standards, assessment criteria and selection criteria to the particular aspects of principalship of central schools in remote

areas is important for more realistic implementation of these three areas of policy-making and for ensuring that more attention is paid, not only to recruitment, but also to retention of principals to these schools.

Significance for educational practice

Principals of central schools have had particular needs for induction into a community of practice (Wenger, 1998), and for support which is tailored to the specific community and school context of leadership of a NSW central school. A better understanding of their work lives will assist education system administrators in providing more targeted support before and during their principalship. Such targeted support is important to enable principals to respond effectively to the challenges of remoteness, low-SES student cohorts and provision of a comprehensive curriculum in small K to 12 schools.

Thesis Structure

This thesis has a further four chapters: Literature Review (Chapter 2); Methodology (Chapter 3); Results: Research Questions 1, 2 and 3 (Chapter 4); and Findings and Discussion (Chapter 5).

The Literature Review chapter (Chapter 2) explores the literature on the work lives of school principals and, in particular, of principals of schools which share at least some of the contexts of central schools in NSW. There has been some educational research into the respective fields of work intensification, life in remote communities and the leadership of a multi-stage school. However, there is little specifically Australian research which combines these factors in terms of their impact on the school principals who maintain one, and sometimes the only, government institution in many of Australia's most remote communities.

Research literature on the extent to which education policies of devolution affect the work lives of principals describes characteristics which match the attributes of work intensification as defined by Larson (1980). The literature reports the three components

of work intensification in the work lives of principals, namely, longer hours of work, more tasks to be completed in a day, and diversification of skills.

Principals of remote small schools in Australia need to live in remote communities and this factor has added important additional elements to their work lives. There is little in the literature that provides insight into the issues of living in remote communities.

Studies which have focused on the issues of small schools and their principals typically consider primary schools as their examples of small schools (Clarke, Stevens, & Wildy, 2006; Collins, 2003a; Hatton, 1995; 1996; Whittall, 2002, 2003). Studies of central or area schools which include consideration of schools that are combinations of primary and secondary departments (Alston & Kent, 2006; Brian-Davis, 1999; Corbett & Mulcahy, 2006; Munsch & Boylan, 2007) are conspicuous in their rarity. Where they exist, they have focused on the extent and type of student achievement within such schools rather than on the work lives of those responsible for student achievement.

The Methodology chapter (Chapter 3) describes the use, validity and limitations of strategies used for obtaining relevant data and the methods used to analyse them. These strategies included a questionnaire survey of principals of central schools, followed by a longitudinal program of semi-structured interviews with 20 per cent of principals of central schools in NSW.

The research used interpretive processes to develop a "thick description" (Geertz, 1975; Ryle, 1968/1996; Stake, 1994) of the particular issues, contexts and interpretations of the principals of the remote schools by exploring the emic (insider) perceptions of those principals about their work and the factors influencing their work. The work lives of principals are essentially individual perspectives or constructions of reality (Hatch, 2002, p. 15) and the realities of principals of remote schools can be apprehended fully only in the form of abstract mental constructions that are experientially based, local and specific (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110).

This methodological approach gave primacy to the subjective consciousness of the interviewees and focused on the direct experience of participant principals taken at "face value" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 163). This research used constructivist elements of grounded theory, in which findings were expected to emerge rather than be forced along

pre-determined lines (Glaser, 1992). Strauss, in developing the methodology of grounded theory stressed as the first priority the "need to get out into the field to discover what is really going on" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 9). With this understanding, it was decided that the program interviews should take place in the school of each of the participating principals, and thus took into account the need to cover long distances from metropolitan and regional population centres to do so.

Chapter 4 presents the results obtained from principals responding to the survey and principals who participated in the program of in-school interviews. Relevant data has been matched with the three Research Questions. In interviews and survey items relevant to RQ1, concerning the education policy context of devolution, principals report working longer hours, an increase in the number of tasks to be completed in a set time and an increased diversity of skills required for an increased range of responsibilities, sometimes being fulfilled with fewer resources. In declining communities, they catered for high welfare needs of students and reported high levels of child sexual abuse. Staffing problems also were a dominant issue alongside maintenance of adequate ICT facilities.

In addressing RQ2, the community context of working in a remote and low-SES community, interviewees describe in detail aspects and implications of personal, family, social and professional isolation. Principals express concern about threats of violence and women principals experienced issues of gender bias.

Associated with RQ3, the context of being a small school and educating students from Kindergarten to Year 12, principals report declining enrolments and express concern about limited career prospects. Principals described their community and school contexts as being different not only to those of metropolitan schools but also to those of schools in larger rural towns.

In the final chapter, Chapter 5, findings concerning the work lives of principals of central schools are discussed and recommendations made for policy implementation and further research.

Summary of Chapter 1

This chapter has outlined the thesis purpose and study problem with the addition of three Research Questions to assist in elaborating the study problem. The thesis is located in the situatedness of leadership in a NSW central school. My perspective as an insider researcher assisted in framing the issues that were considered relevant in the work lives of principals of central schools.

The thesis is significant in that in a period in which many educational jurisdictions are developing generic standards and frameworks by which to describe effective school leadership, to develop programs of professional development, and to conduct assessment of principals it is important to recognise the critical importance of the effects of differentiated leadership contexts on the work of school principals.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews the available literature on how the situational context of central school leadership has affected the work lives of principals of central schools in remote New South Wales (NSW), Australia. In Section 1 of the chapter, generic studies on working hours in general and work lives of the professional work force will be reviewed to provide a broad context. Section 1 continues with a review of the literature concerning the way in which the education policy context of devolution of government school systems, together with the increasing prevalence of generic models of school leadership, has affected principals' work lives (RQ1). In Section 2, available literature on comparable community contexts of remoteness and low socio-economic status (SES) will be examined for possible relevance to the work lives of principals of central schools in remote NSW (RQ2). Similarly, in Section 3 available literature will be reviewed concerning the work lives of principals in the specific school contexts of leading small schools and being composite schools providing 13 years of education in Kindergarten to Year 12 (K-12) schools.

In addressing the research topic, the literature was scanned using the catalogues and electronic databases of Charles Sturt University, the University of Tasmania and the National Library of Australia. Early scanning began with databases such as *Proquest*, *Academic Search Premier*, *Informaworld* and *Education Resources Information Center* (ERIC) and others available through *EBSCOHost Education*. In the later stages of the project, the literature was scanned using *Primo*, *Summons* and *Trove*, the integrated catalogue and database search facilities of the above three institutions respectively.

The literature has provided no standard definition for the term "work lives" of teachers and principals and it is most commonly used to refer to the experience and quality of the work lives of teachers and principals during work hours (Cheung & Walker, 2006; Day, 2005; Kelchtermans, Piot, & Ballet, 2011; Starr & White, 2008). In some studies (Churchill, Williamson, & Grady, 1997; Gardner & Williamson, 2004) the term "work lives" has been used to include other aspects of the lives of teachers and principals when they are not "at work" performing duties directly associated with their

employment. Although this chapter will begin by reviewing the literature on working hours of principals and other aspects of their work lives during their hours at work, later in the chapter it will also consider the literature which deals with aspects of the lives of principals in out-of-work hours, particularly those aspects which may be relevant for principals of central schools.

Section 1: Education Policy Context – Devolution,
Work intensification and working hours in Australia

Traditionally, the number of hours in the working week has been the most frequently discussed aspect of work lives in the literature concerning general working conditions. For much of Australia's history there has been a gradual reduction in the number of hours worked by workers. Since the 1850s, Australian workers gained gradual reductions in the standard working week from 48 hours to 40 hours in 1948 (Cahill, 2007). In the sixty years since 1948 there were no further reductions in the standard working week and concerns had arisen about increases in working weeks (Fagan, 2009; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Pocock, 2005). Burgess and Connell (2005) reported that 21 per cent of people in the Australian workforce were working 50 or more hours per week. Very long hours of work, 50 hours or more per week, had become more common for full-time workers in the 20 years since 1985, particularly for men. In 2005, 30 per cent of men working full-time worked 50 hours or more per week, up from 22 per cent in 1985 (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2005a). In addition, 50 per cent of those who worked overtime (that is, beyond the accepted load of 40 hours per week) were not paid any extra for additional hours of overtime (Burgess & Connell, 2005, p. 154).

The long-standing concern about increased working hours has moved into the contemporary literature in relation to school-based working conditions. Various studies have found that Australian school principals worked between 50 to 70 hours a week (Cranston & Ehrich, 2002; Gardner & Williamson, 2004; Saulwick Muller, 2003, p. 12) and reported that school principals worked much longer than the standard Australian industrial working week of 40 hours.

Work intensification and the professional work force

Australian studies of working hours have reported that, since the 1980s, not only have workloads for full time workers increased in terms of hours at work, but also work has become more intense, that is, there are now greater expectations of performance in terms of the number and diversity of tasks completed within shortened timeframes.

This concern for the intensification of work, in addition to the increase in the hours of work, had been identified in Larson's work as early as 1980. Larson (1980), in her analysis of 'proletatarianization' (p. 131) of the professional work force, found that the pressure for longer hours was not the only factor in what she described as 'work intensification' (p. 163). The other two components in her definition of work intensification were the increase in the number of tasks to be completed in a shortened period of time (acceleration of work); and the increased diversity of skills needed for an increased range of responsibilities, sometimes being performed with fewer resources. Larson had analysed the working practices of educated labour and she argued that the professional work force had been subjected to increasing levels of work intensification.

The second component in Larson's definition of work intensification was the acceleration of work, the increasing number of tasks required for completion in each hour. She described this acceleration of work as being analogous to the acceleration of work that had occurred in manufacturing when work acceleration had reduced the period of inactivity between tasks. Even though professional workers, such as school principals, had private offices and did not punch time clocks, it was the volume of work that filled "the pores of the working day" (Larson, 1980, p. 163). Larson found that the previously established work privileges of educated workers had been eroded in very tangible ways by intensification of their work. Heavy caseloads required synchronization of workflows; and persistent task-oriented work rhythms and chronic work overload created an intensification in "mental labour" (pp. 163-164). Many of the workers in professional occupations complained about not having enough time to keep up with research in their professional field of expertise or to refresh their current skills (p. 166).

Larson's description of the general effects of work intensification has been further substantiated by Australian (Pocock, Skinner, & Pisaniello, 2010) and international studies (Fagan, 2009; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). Particularly for those with responsibilities for care, either at home or in a profession with high levels of caring responsibility, there was increasing difficulty in maintaining a satisfactory work life regime (see Table 2.1). Pocock (2005) reported:

> By most measures, the Australian work–life regime remains hostile to care and imposes significant costs. ...in a labour force increasingly beset by voracious growth in working hours and job demands. These are hostile to work–life balance. (pp. 198, 200)

The Australian studies found that the three elements of work intensification previously identified in the broader international context were significant also in the work lives of Australian teachers, namely; longer work hours, more tasks required to be completed in each hour, and a greater diversity of tasks to be undertaken with fewer resources.

Work intensification and the teaching workforce

Burgess and Connell (2005) reported the views of teachers as a subgroup within their study. Teachers repeatedly mentioned the growing intensity of their work and drew attention to the fact that there were fewer people to do the same or more tasks. Along with other Australian workers, they were required to work longer hours, to do more things concurrently, and to take on multiple jobs (Pocock, van Wanrooy, Strazzari, & Bridge, 2001, p. 19). Pocock et al., (2001) considered the incidence of longer working hours and the effects of increasing expectations of productivity and performance on the work lives of employees including professional workers, such as teachers and school principals. The deprofessionalisation in the work of Australian teachers and principals has been reported in several studies (C. Easthope & Easthope, 2000; Seddon, 1997; Spaull, 1997).

Table 2.1   *Work intensification and the professions: Sub-themes in literature*

Author	Sub-theme (Location)
Burgess & Connell, 2005	Work intensification, including teachers. Australia
Easthope & Easthope, 2000	Intensification, extension and complexity of teachers' workload. Australia
Kelliher & Anderson, 2010	Flexible working practices and the intensification of work. UK
Larson, 1980	Educated labour more intensified. US
Pocock, 2005	"Dim prospects" for work/life balance. Australia
Pocock, Skinner & Williams, 2007	Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI): Caring professions more intensified. Australia
Pocock, van Wanrooy, Strazzari & Bridge, 2001	Study of 50 families' work lives: Professional culture of accepting more duties and effects on private lives. Australia
Seddon, 1997	Education: Deprofessionalised? Australia
J. Smyth, 2001	Pervasive intensification and deskilling of teachers' work. Australia
Spaull, 1997	Deprofessionalisation of state school teaching. Australia

Work intensification and school principals

The general acceptance of continuing intensification in the work lives of teachers was indicated by later refinements of Larson's (1980) work explored in that of Apple and other researchers (Apple, 1986; Apple & Jungck, 1998; Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2003; Ballet, Kelchtermans, & Loughran, 2006; Hargreaves, 1991, 1992).

The experience of work intensification in the lives of teachers (J. Smyth, 2001) is relevant for principals of NSW central schools because Australian principals spend the major part of their careers in school education as teachers and value their identity as teachers or leaders of teachers in contrast to their role as administrators. This self-concept is similar to the view of school leaders in the UK who have used the term "headteacher", as an indication of their preferred identities as teachers (Thomson, 2009). As an example, Grace (1995) has referred to work intensification of UK headteachers who "could no longer think of themselves as head*teachers*, or with priority relationships with classroom teachers and with pupils" (p. 124, original emphasis). Work intensification in the lives of teachers also implies work intensification in the lives of

principals as principals seek to manage the intensification of work experienced by their staffs.

Work intensification: Endogenous as well as exogenous contributing factors

Studies of work intensification in schools (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2003; Ballet et al., 2006; Grace, 1995; Hargreaves, 1992; Troman, 1996) have refined the earlier studies of work intensification (Apple, 1986; Densmore, 1987; Larson, 1980), which attributed work intensification almost exclusively to external pressures (exogenous factors). More recent research has given more attention to factors within teachers and their schools (endogenous factors) (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2   *Endogenous and exogenous factors: Sub-themes in literature*

Author	Sub-theme (Location)
Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008; Ballet et al., 2006	Exogenous factors mediated by schools, teachers strive for own standards with "fierce determination". Belgium
Day et al., 2001; Grace, 1995	Endogenous factors from principals' own core values. UK
Hargreaves, 1991; 1992; 1994	"Intensification thesis", internalised pressure of commitment to teaching and students. Canada
Saulwick Muller, 2004	Conflicting endogenous and exogenous pressures on principals. Australia
Troman, 2000	Teachers were "creative mediators" in adapting to exogenous factors. UK

Hargreaves (1994) found that the "persona of perfectionism" (p. 145) is a significant factor in work intensification. In earlier research, Hargreaves (1992) reported on endogenous factors contributing to work intensification:

> Many of the demands and expectations in teaching seemed to come from within teachers themselves, and teachers appeared to drive themselves with almost merciless commitment in an attempt to meet the virtually unattainable standards of pedagogical perfection they set themselves. (p. 94)

Ballet and Kelchtermans (2003) have developed Larson's "intensification thesis" and applied it to analysis of the intensity of teachers' work lives. The impact of external

controls described as "steering at a distance" (Ball, 1997; Kickert, 1995, p. 135) varied according to the agency of school staff and the ways in which they interpret and construct meanings (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008; Ballet et al., 2006; Hargreaves, 1992). Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008) have described teachers' work lives as an "experience of intensification" (p. 47) with the word "experience" emphasizing the different constructions of meanings by teachers and their schools, that is, the ways in which they choose to interpret and respond to both exogenous and endogenous pressures. Ballet and Kelchtermans suggest three refinements of Apple's thesis; firstly, individual teachers can themselves be sources of the increased pressure. Endogenous factors, especially related to their sense of commitment by school staff to the students in their care, are significant. Secondly, the impact of intensification is strongly mediated by the culture of school organisation and sense making by individual teachers. Thirdly, the impact varies with individual teachers (pp. 47-48).

The effect of endogenous factors is described by Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008) in their observation that teachers:

> impose on themselves standards of pedagogical perfection, and strive for them with fierce determination. In other words, the sources for intensification came not only come from outside the school but also from the teachers themselves. (p. 63)

Similarly, the endogenous factor of a strong work ethic has helped to explain the long hours worked by many Australian teachers, and other professional workers:

> Commitment to students, patients and the public contributed to the unreasonable hours worked by teachers, [and other professional workers]. Commitment was an important part of the reason for hours patterns that in many cases exacted high personal tolls. (Pocock et al., 2001, p. 22)

In a study of teacher experiences in Canada, Hargreaves (1994) found that, with work intensification for teachers, there was reduced time for relaxation during the working day, including "no time" for lunch, a lack of time for professional development and a chronic and persistent overload, similar to the previously temporary overload that had been associated with meeting deadlines (p. 118). The increasing work effort made

by Canadian teachers was explained by their commitment to the ethos of the teaching profession and concern about a perceived reduction in service to students (p. 44).

The effects of exogenous factors on levels of work intensification varies with individual teachers and schools because of the individual variation in the extent of endogenous factors such as the extent of agency either individually in teachers or as a group ethos within schools (Gitlin, 2001; Gitlin & Margonis, 1995; McNeil, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c; Smylie, 1999; Troman, 1996). Some teachers are able to develop some immunity from external pressures for changes by reserving for themselves final decisions about whether or not they will enact innovations in their own classrooms (Churchill et al., 1997, p. 155).

Day et al., (2001) observed that the practices of UK principals were driven primarily by core personal values which are often part of the endogenous factor of strong religious or humanitarian ethics. Moral values, such as dedication to the welfare of staff and students, are even stronger influences on leadership actions than the exogenous factors which are perceived as primarily managerial (p. 43). Similarly, Australian principals identify with the conflicting pressures on their teachers and experience considerable role conflict between the self-imposed endogenous pressures of being carers and the exogenous demands of governments to be managers of their schools. In their study of the workloads of principals in the state of Victoria, Saulwick Muller (2004) found that principals' values were:

> …primarily those of the carer, not those of the manager. Their first and strongest loyalties in their professional lives are to those in their care. An almost inevitable but unintended consequence of this is that at an emotional level they resent intrusions on their time from outside the carer relationship, even though at an intellectual level they accept such intrusions as necessary. (Saulwick Muller, 2004, p. 22)

Work intensification: Expanded job roles for the teaching workforce

Increases in face-to-face teaching, increased responsibilities or expanded job roles, as well as increased working hours, all characterise the intensification of work experienced by teachers. Classroom teaching constitutes only part of the teachers' work (Troman, 2000; Williamson & Myhill, 2008) and teachers' expanded job role includes leadership responsibilities outside the classroom such as contributing to reform-oriented

activities including student assessment systems, pedagogical practices and curriculum development across the school (Bartlett, 2004). Other expanded roles include counselling, welfare, social work, procurement of funding, government lobbying and community liaison (Burchielli, Pearson, & Thanacoody, 2005). In addition, for professional workers whose activity is often individual, the opportunities for sociability and learning through collegial association and community are decreased (p. 167).

Studies in the Australian states of Tasmania and South Australia have reported an unwelcome intensification of teachers' work, and an unwanted shift in the focus of the core elements of their work (Churchill et al., 1997; C. Easthope & Easthope, 2000). Teachers report that a greater amount of work is expected of them and, further, that the nature of the teacher's role has not only expanded but has become more complex, encompassing a range of functions which were not expected of teachers only a decade or so before (Churchill et al., 1997, p. 148). In Tasmania, Easthope and Easthope (2000) characterise teachers' workload in term of "intensification, extension and complexity" (C. Easthope & Easthope, 2000, p. 43) and the reduction in service to students has generated the most stress and guilt on the part of teachers (p. 56). This is partly a result of the fact that teaching tends to be an open-ended activity, diffusely defined and with no clear criteria for successful task completion (see Hargreaves, 1994).

Work Intensification of School Principals: Context of Devolution

In the following section of the chapter, the literature concerning work lives will be reviewed concerning the existence of generic work intensification of principals and some factors identified as contributors to work intensification of principals. These factors have included increased responsibilities associated with devolution of government education systems, the 'romance' of leadership (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985), the persistence of notions of 'heroic' principals, movements for 'designer' leadership and dilemmas for principals in coping with contradictory pressures on school leadership. The concepts of 'satisfiers' and 'dissatisfiers' (Herzberg, 1968) has provided some insight to how principals report their dilemmas (Australian

Secondary Principals Association et al., 2007; MacBeath, 2011; M. Morgan &Sugrue, 2008; Saulwick Muller, 2004).

In addition, the literature on the worldwide shortage of suitable applicants for principal positions and the challenge of succession planning has reported also on high costs in the work lives of principals and high levels of principal dissatisfaction. This body of literature will be reviewed also in terms of its contribution to understanding the systemic and personal consequences of high levels of work intensification.

Many studies referring to work intensification in the lives of principals since the advent of education policies of devolution (Cranston, 2007; Lyall, 1998; McInerney, 2003; Southworth, 2008; Zammit et al., 2007) have tended to focus on explicitly exogenous pressures on principals (see Table 2.3). However, other researchers have found that the work of principals, like that of teachers, is also intensified by endogenous factors, that is, those factors originating from within principals themselves.

In the UK, the work of headteachers in particular has continued to grow and intensify since the 1990s, and as Southworth (2008) concluded, it "has surely reached a point where it cannot keep on increasing" (p. 424). Intensification in the work lives of principals was identified in school leadership literature before devolution reforms in education systems became established in schools (Gittins, 1967, cited in Dunning, 1993) and hence formed a more prominent theme during the 1980s and 1990s in literature concerning the work lives of principals (Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003).

Since the advent of school-based management, the load and dilemmas for teaching principals have been exacerbated by the growing demands of management and leadership (Dunning, 1993; Whittall, 2002; Wylie, 1997a). In addition, the varied responsibilities of principals have resulted in the need for principals to complete many short-term tasks in a single day resulting in "a true break hardly ever occurring" (Davies, 1987, p. 43). Davies has observed that headteachers' days were characterised by "brevity, variety and fragmentation" (p. 44). In Davies' study, he observed that a notable feature was:

> the large number of short-term activities which each head undertook. An average of 60 per cent of all the head's activities were less than nine minutes in length, while only 7 per cent lasted longer than 60 minutes. (p. 44)

The literature has identified expanding expectations associated with the principalship over the past 20 years (Andreyko, 2010; Bartlett, 2004; Copland, 2001; Hallinger, 1992; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Tomic & Tomic, 2008; Vandenberghe, 1992). Principals now face "an audience of multiple constituencies who are ever more critical of their craft" (Copland, 2001, p. 529). With deregulation, more decisions have fallen "within the domain of the principal, leading to increased pressure on principals" (Vandenberghe, 1992, p. 26). Superintendents, school boards or councils, staff members, parents, the media and community members increasingly held principals accountable both for administration of school resources and for providing the educational leadership necessary for students to achieve at satisfactory levels in standardised and high stakes testing programs (Brian-Davis, 1999).

For principals who are also teachers in small schools, the aspect of performing the two roles of principal and teacher has long been described as a "double load" (Dunning, 1993; Hayes, Denis, 1996). Hatton (1995, 1996, 2001) illustrates issues that are specific for principals of very small schools in inland New South Wales. Her research found that that any educational gains are achieved only "through massive intensification of the principal's work" (Hatton, 1995, p. 25) and that there are distinctive difficulties inherent in making corporate managerialism work in a small, disadvantaged rural school (p. 25).

Increased responsibility has been placed on principals to learn and apply immediately new specialist skills that had previously been performed by other professionals. Diversification and an increased range of responsibilities have become a larger and more widespread challenge since the devolution of responsibilities to the level of the school.

Table 2.3   *Work intensification of principals: Sub-themes in literature*

Author	Sub-theme (Location)
Apple, 1986; Apple & Jungck, 1998; Densmore, 1987	Proletarianization of teachers' work. US
Bennet et al., 2003	Principals' work intensification necessitating distributed leadership. UK
Billot, 2003; Day et al., 2001; Hallinger, 2005; Wildy, 1999	Increased accountability. New Zealand; UK; US; Australia
Burchielli et al., 2005; Carr, 1994	Principal as "meat in the sandwich", loneliness, stress. Australia
Caldwell, 2006; Debra Hayes, 2008	Loneliness, difficulty in finding time for instructional leadership. Australia; Australia
Cranston & Ehrich, 2002; Cranston et al., 2003	Secondary principals' stress, effects of devolution. Australia, New Zealand
Crozier-Dunham, 2007	Principals' work/life balance. Australia
Duke, 1988; Eckman, 2004; Hargreaves, 1994	Principals' work overload and feelings of guilt. US; US; Canada
Dunning, 1993	Cites Gittins Report re teaching principals in Wales – "double load". UK
C. Easthope & Easthope, 2000; Ewington et al., 2004; Gardner & Williamson, 2004; Lyall, 1998	Principals' work overload and feelings of guilt. Australia
Gardner & Williamson, 2004	"work lives" included life experience in out-of-work-hours. Australia
Gronn & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003	Principal disengagement, intensification – "greedy work". Australia
Gronn, 2000; 2002; 2003	"New managerialism", heroic paradigm. Distributed leadership as a possible response. Australia
Hallinger, 2005	Endogenous. Normative expectations and guilt. US
Kelchtermans et al., 2011; Yilmaz, 2008	Loneliness of the principal as gatekeeper. Belgium; Turkey
Ladd & Fiske, 2001; Lidstrom, 1999; Lubienski, 2003; Morgan & Blackmore, 2007; Whitty et al., 1998	Devolution and parental choice of schools – competition and stress for principals. New Zealand, Sweden, US, (rural) Australia, Australia
Southworth, 2008	Work intensification for principals of small schools. UK
Meindl, 1995; Meindl et al., 1985	Romance of leadership, "follower-centric theory". US

The "greedy work" of principals

Principals have worked in a professional culture that is considered as 'greedy' for unpaid hours, with expectations that staff will volunteer for extra duties. Gronn (2003) and Blackmore and Sachs (2007) used the term 'greedy' from Coser's (1974) work, on "greedy institutions" which "make total claims on their members and which attempt to encompass within their circle the whole personality" (p. 148). Gronn described the all-consuming nature of principals' work as follows:

> Because it becomes one's life, greedy work consumes one's life, so that work becomes the measure of what one is and not just what one does. (p. 153)

Principals' work as school leaders has changed because of increasing devolution of responsibility to schools and increasing centralisation of policy making and resource allocation in state offices in a climate where increased working hours are regarded as necessary and unremarkable. The intensification and qualitative changes in the rhythm and flow of principals' work have resulted from new managerialism (Gewirtz & Ball, 2000; Hatton, 1996; Hoyle & Wallace, 2005) which has commodified schooling through marketisation (Blackmore, 1993; Dempster, 2000; McInerney, 2001; L. Scott & Vidovitch, 2000) or market devolution (Lingard et al., 1999). Governments have adopted many of the neo-liberal ideas of Milton Friedman (1955) and Friedman's advocacy of an education market in which schools are expected to compete with each other in attracting enrolments by promoting the education services of their schools.

The intensification in the work lives of principals has been seen also as a major factor leading to some reconceptualisations of school leadership (Gronn, 2002, 2003). According to Gronn, recognition that the extent and complexity of school leadership is too much to expect of one individual has encouraged moves, particularly in the UK, away from the model of a single leader to various forms of distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002). According to Gronn, education systems have dramatically diminished the overall number of middle managers through processes of downsizing and de-layering and, after two decades of preoccupation with "visionary champions", flaws have emerged in the viability of such concepts (p. 333).

As well as the implications for staff welfare and school organisation arising from the intensification in the work lives of teachers, the literature has reported that principals have experienced other increases in responsibilities, such as concern for the viability of their schools, because of unfavourable competition with other schools or ageing demographics in their communities. For principals of small schools with declining enrolments, issues of competition with other schools and the survival of their school has required the expenditure of considerable time and energy and has created a "pervasive change" in the working conditions of the principal (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008, p. 54). In the UK and the US, the literature suggested that principals are fearful of school closure because of non-achievement by students in standardised testing programs (Borba, 2003; West, 2010). The pressure to improve test results through the work of teachers who are similarly experiencing an increase in work intensification has contributed to the challenges faced by principals.

Diversification of principals' tasks

In an era of "pervasive change" for school principals (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008, p. 54), the diversification of tasks assigned to schools has increased the range of management responsibilities undertaken by principals and created a need for them to acquire new skills such as in budgeting, strategic planning, community relations and recruiting of staff (Churchill et al., 1997; Cranston, 2001; McInerney, 2003). Similarly, research in the US has described an expanding range of principalship roles such as being managerial, instructional and transformational leaders (Andreyko, 2010; Copland, 2001; Hallinger, 1992; Pounder, Galvin, & Shepherd, 2003). Increasing measures of accountability have increased the pressure on principals to be instructional leaders (Hallinger, 2005) and to find the financial and human resources to provide professional development for teachers and other school support staff. These reforms have affected levels of work intensification and principals' perceptions of the relevance of leadership theory in a range of geographic, socio-economic and educational contexts and their perceptions of what their own leadership role needed to be.

In McInerney's (2003) study, principals drew attention to the intensification of their workload as resulting from having to manage more and more of the administrative responsibilities once handled by the education centre. They laboured over the complexities of single line or global budgets and spent time organising repairs and maintenance programmes for buildings and equipment. Some felt that they lacked the financial expertise and/or knowledge to administer the complexities of global budgets. In addition to attempting to be educational leaders, they felt that their work is being redefined in line with the additional role of being business or site managers (see Table 2.4).

Table 2.4   *Diversification, expanding roles: Sub-themes in literature*

Author	Sub-theme (Location)
Andreyko, 2010; Copland, 2001; Hallinger, 1992; Pounder et al., 2003	Expanding role responsibilities, complexity, "hostile to work/life balance". US
Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008	Teachers' "experience of intensification", principals' experience of "pervasive change". Belgium
Churchill et al., 1997; Cranston, 2001; McInerney, 2003	Extra responsibilities, more complexity. Reality did not match rhetoric of devolution. Australia
Davies, 1987	"Unrelenting pace", "Variety, brevity, fragmentation" of principals' work. UK

Generic models of leadership

Much of the literature on theories of school leadership is generic in nature with considerable reliance on theories of leadership and management which have been developed in non-school contexts, for example, studies on transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1993; J. M. Burns, 1978; Stogdill, 1948). Stogdill's (1948) work searched for traits and characteristics that were common in successful leaders in any occupation or industry. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) were precursors to studies over several decades on the common characteristics of transformational leadership in any type of institution. In a global study of 66 cultures, Den Hartog, House, Hanges, Ruiz-Quintanilla and Dorfman (1999) concluded that "attributes associated with

charismatic or transformational leadership [were] universally endorsed as contributing to outstanding leadership" (p. 219).

The literature on transformational school principalship has become "dominant" (Brydson, 2011, p. 180; Gunter, 2001, p. 95) and widely accepted as the ideal form of leadership. For example, researchers have investigated the generic qualities of transformational leadership which can be applied to principals across all school contexts (see Bass, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2004; Leithwood & Poplin, 1992; Sergiovanni, 2000). In contrast to those who researched a generic model of school leadership, Hallinger (2005) reports many limitations in investigations of generic qualities of school leadership which do not simultaneously analyse the effects of school contexts on leadership styles and hence on work lives. He asserts that:

> … it is virtually meaningless to study principal leadership without reference to the school context. The context of the school is a source of constraints, resources, and opportunities that the principal must understand and address in order to lead. (p. 14)

The "romance" of leadership

One of the seminal leadership studies not specific to education but having relevance to expectations on school leaders was that of Meindl, Ehrich and Dukerich (1985) who analysed the "romance of leadership" (p. 78). Associated with this "romance" is the concept of "followership" (Meindl, 1995, p. 331), which described an attributional perspective in which results were attributed primarily to leaders by followers and observers in a romanticised conception of leadership. Leadership is construed as an explanatory concept used to understand organisations as systems whose success or failure is attributed to the leader. Studies of effective leaders and organisations have not addressed the possibility that instructional leadership may be a socially constructed factor or attribution used to explain organisational successes and failures, or controlled for "the tendency to associate leadership with performance" (Meindl et al., 1985, p. 85).

Leithwood and Day (2007) have recognised the influence in public attitudes when members of the business community, long enamoured by the "romance of leadership", assumed that successes or shortcomings in leadership are the main factors in any

successes or shortcomings of school (p. 1). In addition, the tendency for the various school stakeholders to attribute causation to individual leadership is strongest for situations such as very high or low levels of a school's organisational performance (Bligh, Kohles, & Pillai, 2011). For principals who lead schools in situations of low student performance this tendency has particular implications in how they will be assessed and how this will affect their careers

The tendency to attribute successes or failures in schools primarily to the work of principals as individuals has been evident in literature which has focused on exemplar leaders and the traits of successful principals. A variety of studies have focused on successful exemplar leaders or developed theories based on the premise that successful outcomes for schools can be attributed primarily to the actions and traits of the school principal and the behaviours of exemplar leaders can be used as a template for other leaders to follow. For example, see Brooker (2005), T. Burke (2003), Day (2005), Gurr and Drysdale (2007), Leithwood and Day (2007) and Mulford (2007).

As one example of 'success' literature, the NSW DET circulated a monograph (T. Burke, 2003) to all NSW public school principals, with an accompanying note which commended it to the attention of aspiring principals in NSW central and secondary schools as models of 'best practice' (p. 1) of principals of NSW government secondary schools. In nearly all of the best practice cases in Burke's monograph, the description of best practice focuses on one aspect or initiative of the principal which is considered successful in comparison with the work of other principals. The monograph does not assess whether the selected principals have been successful across all aspects of school life or whether other contributory factors are related specifically to the school or community context that are in place.

Models of "heroic" principals

The traditional concept of the leader as a hero has persisted in the general literature of management including the literature on school leadership (see Table 2.5). In considering generic models of leadership across all fields of endeavour, there has been a persistent refrain in the literature which has conceived the leader as a hero:

> Studies of leadership can seem amazingly similar … [They are] connoted by a numbingly familiar conception of the individual subject: the leader conceived as a hero … [who would] bring about transformative effects within his (sic) domain of influence. (Wood & Case, 2006, p. 1)

Similarly, the literature on school leadership has contained continuing themes of the principal in a heroic role. Thomson (2009) has noted the many studies include "heroic tales" in school leadership and, in contrast, she indicates her intent to avoid any "advocacy of a model of heroic leadership or a return to 'great man' theories of leadership" (p. 1). A decade earlier, Gronn (2000) reported on the enduring theme of the heroic school leader:

> In the 1980s, [the] heroic, neo-charismatic approaches to leadership underwent a resurgence, and the popularity of visionary and transformational leadership soared.(p. 139)

The survival and preponderance of the "hero head" beliefs (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007, p. 92) and community demands for the hero-principal with associated workloads has been accompanied by continuing concerns about principals' stress, burnout, viable work life balances, health and wellbeing (Andreyko, 2010; Mackay, 2006; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007; Riley, 2012; Thomson, Blackmore, Sachs, & Tregenza, 2003).

Literature which has selected and focused on the small group of principals recognised as being successful, usually has not attempted to describe the situations or present the stories of more typical principals. There has been a comparative lack of literature which has described or analysed the typical work of principals in the overwhelming majority of schools. Typically, principals have experienced a mixture of short-term and long-term successes in achieving the goals set either by external authorities or by the principals themselves. Voices from the majority of principals in the field have remained largely unheard.

Table 2.5   *Heroic leadership: Sub-themes in literature*

Author	Sub-theme (Location)
Bligh et al., 2011	Romancing leadership; causation theory - leaders as primary cause of high or low student performance. US
Grace, 1995	Limited model of the "ideal salvationist leader". UK
Day, 2005; Day & Leithwood, 2007; Gurr & Drysdale, 2007; Mulford, 2007b	Descriptions of exemplar principals who created success. UK; UK & Canada; Australia; Australia
Deal & Peterson, 1994	Description of an ideal principal. US
Gronn, 2000	Heroic leadership too much for one person. Australia
Hallinger, 2005	Literature which described principals with heroic capabilities. US
Leithwood & Day, 2007	Romance of leadership, exemplars. Canada & US
Meindl, 1995; Meindl et al., 1985	Follower-centric theory, Romance of leadership. US
PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007	"hero head" beliefs. UK
Riley, 2012	Heroic leadership models have exacerbated principals' stress. Australia
Simola, 1998; Thomson, 2001;	Lack of reality. Most principals did not fit heroic models. Finland; Australia
Thomson, 2009	Frequency of "heroic tales" in research. Australia
Wood & Case, 2006	Persistence of theory of the school leader as "hero". UK

Designer leadership

Various education systems have created and published sets of generic standards or frameworks of competencies to assist education bodies in the professional development and assessment of the work of principals (see Table 2.6) (CCSO-ISLLC [US], 2008; Department for Education and Skills [DfES - UK], 2004; Ministry of Education [NZ], n.d.; NSW Department of Education and Training, 2006a). In the UK, the Teacher Training Authority released the "National standards for headteachers" in 1997. The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) became responsible for programs such as the "National professional qualification for headship", which is mandatory for novice headteachers who are assessed against national standards (Gronn, 2003, p. 14). The setting-up of such standards has created versions of designer leadership (Gronn, 2003)

and has reinvigorated notions of the heroic leader model in leadership design, thus raising the expectations of performance by any individual school leader.

Table 2.6   *Designer leadership - Professional standards: Sub-themes in literature*

Author	Sub-theme (Location)
Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), 2011	National professional standards for principals. Australia
Council of Chief State School Officers - Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (CCSO-ISLLC), 2008	Educational leadership policy standards. US
Copland, 2001	The "superprincipal". US
Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2004	National standards for headteachers. UK
Gronn, 2003	The new work of educational leaders. Australia/UK
Ministry of Education, n.d.	Professional standards for secondary principals. New Zealand
NSW Department of Education and Training (NSW DET), 2006	School leadership capability framework. Australia
NSW Institute of Teachers (NSW IT) 2005	Professional Teaching Standards. Australia

Multiple conceptions of leadership, and composite models of an ideal principal (for example, Deal & Peterson, 1994, pp. 52-69), have contributed to the checklists of standards for leadership (CCSO-ISLLC, 2008; DfES, 2004), and the checklists of desirable characteristics have provided an ever expanding rubric by which principals are recruited, held accountable and evaluated. The expanded rubrics (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), 2011; New South Wales Department of Education and Training (NSW DET), 2006a; New South Wales Institute of Teachers (NSW IT), 2005) have created an ever-growing set of expectations about what constitutes an "excellent", or even a "competent", principal. This has resulted in a largely unattainable ideal, which Copland (2001) refers to as the "superprincipal" (p.531).

The state education authority, Education Queensland, has prescribed that principals need to exercise "transformational, charismatic, heroic models of leadership" (Niesche, 2011, p. 1). In addition, principals needed to have "courage, tough mindedness, intuition, passion, self-confidence, optimism and wisdom" (p. 1). The

context-free nature of such leadership qualities is illustrated by the comment by Niesche that such qualities are very similar to those prescribed for sound battle command c. 600 BC by Sun Tzu in the Chinese text "Art of war". In a similar way to school principals, Sun Tzu's commanders needed to have the "qualities of wisdom, sincerity, humanity, courage and strictness" (Sun Tzu, cited in Niesche, 2011, p. 1).

Distributed leadership: Response to complexities of school principals' work

Various writers have acknowledged that no single person can be expected to possess all the desirable qualities and skills needed for the "heroic" styles of school leadership proposed in transformative leadership models, and theorised about the virtues of distributive leadership and the value of using the latent leadership skills of middle executive and teaching staff (Andreyko, 2010; Harris, 2003; Mulford, 2008; Southworth, 2008). Suggestions of some form of distributed leadership have been popular in the literature and it has become "an idea whose time has come" (Gronn, 2000, p. 333).

However, for small schools where the principal is sometimes the leader of a very small senior management team, the opportunities for distributing leadership within the school are very limited (Munby, 2007; Southworth, 2008). In addition to being small schools, the remote central schools in this thesis are in difficult to staff locations (Beutel, Adie, & Hudson, 2011; Buchanan, 2010; Mulcahy, 2009; Pegg, 2009) and, apart from the principal, central schools usually have a group of newly trained teachers and either one or two other executive. Each of the small executive supervised not only the subject discipline in which they have been qualified but a combination of other subject disciplines as well.

Principals' dilemmas

Dilemmas are situations in which principals faced either/or choices (Billig, 1988; Clark et al., 1999), thus their choices will satisfy only some elements of a situation, while leaving other elements unresolved (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997; Wildy, 1999a). No matter what course is taken, something valued is lost and principals coping with dilemmas experienced unavoidable costs (Dimmock,

1996, 1999; Hoyle & Wallace, 2005). Dilemmas are not only temporary difficulties for principals, which arose in particular situations, but rather they are endemic to school leadership (Day, 2005; Hoyle & Wallace, 2005; Ogawa, Crowson, & Goldring, 1999; Woods, Jeffrey, Troman, & Boyle, 1997).

Dilemmas in priorities and use of leaders' time have been evident over a long period (Brubaker & Simon, 1987; Davies, 1987; Lindblom, 1959; W. G. Walker, 1968; Wolcott, 1973). However, the dilemmas of principals have been exacerbated by devolution of more responsibilities to principals such as financial and personnel responsibilities (Cranston, 1999; Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997; Wildy & Louden, 2000).

The education policy of devolution of responsibilities to principals and, at the same time, encouraging parents and communities to share in the governance of schools poses its own dilemmas. The perception of principals acting autonomously is in conflict with the requirement to share decision-making with school staff, parents and the wider community. Similarly, principals have the dilemma of democratically involving the school community and, at the same time, using human and physical resources with maximum efficiency. Principals' difficulties with devolution and restructuring have been "saturated with dilemmas" (Møller et al., 2005; Wildy, 1999a, 1999b; Wildy & Louden, 2000).

Principals have faced unresolvable dilemmas when, as local school managers in Australia's federal system of government, they have been required to respond to competing national and state priorities and accountability requirements. In addition, principals need to respond to their own endogenous motivations associated with principals' professional perceptions of their role as educational leaders. The words of Harold (1989), "it can't be done", are echoed in recent years in the reports of other authors (Milburn, 2012; Riley, 2012; Tomazin, 2008; Tomazin & Waldon, 2004). The experience of dilemmas arising from the multiplicity of demands and needs of various stakeholders in the school has been described in the literature as one characteristic of the intensification in the work lives of principals (Billot, 2003; Cranston, Ehrich, & Billot,

2003; Day, Harris, & Hadfield, 2001; Dempster, 2001; Dimmock, 1999; Ewington et al., 2008; MacBeath, 2005; Wildy, 1999a).

Principals simultaneously are leaders of professionals and chief executives for school organisations (Bottery, Ngai, Wong, & Wong, 2008; Cranston, 1999). Increased accountability requirements are often in conflict with earlier social democratic reforms towards devolution and autonomy in schools (Billot, 2003; Day et al., 2001; Wildy, 1999a; Wildy & Wallace, 1997) and to greater professional autonomy in classrooms. While principals place great value on educational and professional leadership, they experience the dilemma of meeting the increasing managerialist demands for accountability and administration (Billot, 2003; Cranston et al., 2003; Møller et al., 2005; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2008; Riley, 2012).

In addition, principals experienced continuing conflicts between exogenous pressures, such as satisfying the managerial requirements of central offices of education, and endogenous factors arising from their professional self-image, beliefs and identity as educators rather than managers (Hayes, Denis, 1996). The values and visions are primarily moral values, that is, dedicated to the welfare of staff and students, with the latter at the centre, rather than instrumental, for economic reasons, or non-educative, for custodial reasons (Day et al., 2001, p. 43). The urgent, 'top-down' exogenous demands often dictate the way they worked. Day et al., (2001) note that some heads/principals have managed this tension by putting staff needs first as far as they possibly can and they have chosen to be selective about the way they responded to external demands (Day et al., 2001, p. 48).

Dilemmas for principals have endured and remain intractable (see Table 2.7). Increasingly, since the implementation of devolution reforms and systems of accountability, principals have been required to work with tensions, opposing forces, contradictions and dilemmas, which alongside any possible benefits have ineluctable costs for principals and their schools (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005; Ogawa et al., 1999).

Table 2.7   *Principals' dilemmas: Sub-themes in literature*

Author	Sub-theme (Location)
Billig, 1988	Ideological dilemmas, definitions. UK
Billot, 2003	Contrasting real and ideal workloads of secondary principals. New Zealand
Brubaker & Simon, 1987	Mix of principals' views of their competing roles. US
Clark et al., 1999	Dilemmas of inclusive education within mass education systems. UK
Cranston, 1999; Cranston et al., 2003	CEO or headteachers? Australia
Darling-Hammond, 1995	Dilemmas in responding to standardised testing. US
Davies, 1987	Dilemmas in use of principals' time. UK
Day, 2005; Day et al., 2001	Successful principals managing tensions and dilemmas. UK
Dempster, 2001	Dilemmas in professional development for principals. Australia
Dimmock, 1996;1999; Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997; Wildy, 2000	Dilemmas in restructuring. Dilemmas are problems, which by definition are not resolvable. Australia
Ewington et al., 2008; Wildy & Clarke, 2005	Remote community values versus values of principal. Australia
Hoyle & Wallace, 2005	Principals' use of irony to handle dilemmas, health costs for principals with dilemmas. UK
Lindblom, 1959	The science of "muddling through". US
MacBeath, 2005	Trust and accountability. UK
Møller, 2005; Wolcott, 1973; Woods et al., 1997	Dilemmas at the core for principals. Norway; US; UK
Ogawa et al., 1999; Riley, 2012	Enduring dilemmas for principals, leading to health costs for principals. US; Australia
Hayes, 1996; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2008	Managing mismatches between community and systemic requirements and what principals think is best. UK, UK
Wildy, 2009; Wildy & Wallace, 1997	Managerialism versus values of principal. Australia

Paradoxical attitudes of principals: The work of Herzberg revisited

Literature on the work lives of school principals and principals' levels of overall satisfaction with their roles in a devolved education system has appeared to present conflicting data. Some research has cited principals who view their role as being very satisfying (Crozier-Durham, 2007), while in other research principals express considerable dissatisfaction. Some studies have cited principals who expressed both satisfaction and dissatisfaction with different aspects of their work (Australian

Secondary Principals Association, et al., 2007; MacBeath, 2011; Milburn, 2012; M. Morgan & Sugrue, 2008; O'Keeffe, 2012; Saulwick Muller, 2004).

The perspective of Herzberg's seminal work (1968) has been one way to interpret the apparent contradictions in the reported attitudes of principals to their work lives. Herzberg listed the hygiene or dissatisfier factors as "supervision, interpersonal relations, physical working conditions, salary, company policies and administrative practices, benefits, and job security" (p. 113). Deterioration in these factors has led to dissatisfaction. The satisfiers or motivators are the factors which enabled people to fulfil themselves as creative, unique individuals according to their own innate potentialities. People who found their jobs challenging, exciting and satisfying can express an overall satisfaction in their work and perhaps tolerated poor levels in the hygiene factors such as a difficult supervisor, poor physical working conditions or modest pay levels.

Researchers have developed Herzberg's concepts to separate the two dimensions of motivating and demotivating factors in their reviews of school leadership (Mercer, 1997; Southworth, 2008). Some researchers (Boreham, 2004; Dinham & Scott, 1998; Nias, 1981) have refined Herzberg's original two dimensions to include a third group of 'negative satisfiers' as a way of describing the complexity of the motivations of teachers and school leaders. Other research in work lives of principals (Collins, 2003b; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007) have treated satisfiers/motivators and dissatisfiers/demotivators as separate factors without necessarily citing Herzberg's work on generic issues of employee motivation. MacBeath (2011) analysed separate dimensions of satisfiers and dissatisfiers to help explain the apparent paradoxes in the UK of headteachers' robust levels of satisfaction and the simultaneous existence of high levels of dissatisfiers in potential applicants for promotion to school leadership. The dissatisfiers are seen as disincentives in applying for headteacher positions (see Table 2.8 for other literature).

Lock (2011) explores the paradox of teachers and principals of remote schools in the state of Western Australia who express some satisfactions in their jobs even though they are fully aware of the challenges in their schools and communities:

> [The investigation] revealed that there seems little doubt that both teachers
> and principals are attracted to remote schools for the public good: because

they want to make a difference for the children who live in these isolated communities. They referred to the enjoyment of both taking up a challenge and of teaching in remote schools. When analysing the responses to the questions about what they enjoyed and found challenging about teaching and living in these isolated communities, paradoxes became apparent (p. 1).

Table 2.8   *Herzberg's satisfiers and dissatisfiers: Sub-themes in literature*

Author	Sub-theme (Location)
Australian Secondary Principals Association et al., 2007; Lock, 2011; Mackay, 2006; Milburn, 2005; O'Keeffe, 2012; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007; Saulwick Muller, 2003; 2004; Tomazin, 2008; Tomazin & Waldon, 2004	Many dissatisfiers, but also overall satisfaction of principals. Australia
Boreham, 2004; Nias, 1981; Dinham & Scott, 1998;	Herzberg model modified to three dimensions. UK; UK; Australia & UK
Herzberg, 1968	Concept of satisfiers and dissatisfiers in any employment. US
MacBeath, 2011; Mercer, 1997	Many dissatisfiers, but also overall satisfaction. Motivating and demotivating factors of secondary principals. UK
Morgan & Sugrue, 2008	Challenges and rewards. Ireland

Stress levels, loneliness and wellbeing of principals

One indication of work intensification is the level of stress experienced by principals (Carr, 1994; J. Richardson & Sinha, 2011; Riley, 2012; Saulwick Muller, 2004). Stress among principals has been less well researched than have stress levels in teachers. Kottkamp and Travlos (1986, citing Heibart, 1985) reported that at that time there are very few studies of stress among principals and the results have been problematic. The one area of consistency to emerge from previous research in the area is that work overload is a major factor that school principals identified as an actual or potential source of stress (Carr, 1994).

Carr (1994) identified a number of factors which contributed to stress levels among principals. Carr (1994) found that over 37 per cent of principals had high levels of anxiety and/or depression. Smaller K to 12 schools in remote Australia have had a

limited range of staff, particularly in specialist subject areas such as computing. Consequently, principals have had limited options in allocations of duties and workloads and this has made remote K to 12 schools "very stressful places" (Australian Secondary Principals Association et al., 2007, p. 14). Another factor, which principals perceived was adding to their stress, was the phenomenon of being "the meat in a sandwich – between employer and the school community" (Carr, 1994, p. 30). Other Australian researchers (Burchielli et al., 2005; Dimmock, 1996) reported the same phenomenon of being the "meat in the sandwich in education, bearing the burden of increased pressure from overworked teachers, on the one hand, and a demanding bureaucracy, on the other" (Burchielli et al., 2005, p. 99).

The managerial role and conception of the principal as a technician has appeared to create a sense of loneliness in the principal's work role (see Table 2.9) (Caldwell, 2006b; Carr, 1994; Hayes, Debra, 2008; Kelchtermans et al., 2011; Yilmaz, 2008). In the US, Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2004) report on the "wounded" principal (p. 311) and "an epidemic of leadership loneliness and burnout" (p. 319). In their research, they found that, one of the new principals "never imagined he could be so alone" (p. 319), yet most principals kept their fears "at arm's length, reluctant to admit [them], at least in public" (p. 320). MacBeath (2011) reported a "pervasive sense of loneliness" (p. 105) among UK headteachers.

The loneliness of Australian principals is exacerbated by their increased workloads, the increased needs of staff for their support and at the same time, a perceived lack of systemic support for the principal: "Who supports the principal?" (Burchielli et al., 2005, p. 99). For female principals there are added issues of gender in their personal isolation (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Chandler, 2005; Eckman, 2004; Halsey, 2007; Howard & Mallory, 2008; Lumby & Azaola, 2011; Rodger, 2004; Shuman, 2010; Thomson, 2004) and for the new female principals, "small town gossip and a high degree of loneliness" made the job more difficult (Springbett, 2004, p. 25).

The loneliness appeared even more prominent for new principals (Bauer & Brazer, 2010; Hobson & Sharp, 2005; Stephenson & Bauer, 2010; A. Walker & Qian, 2006).

For novice principals in small, remote schools there is the isolation resulting from conflicting values of 'conservative communities' (Springbett, 2004, p. 11).

Table 2.9   *Loneliness and isolation of principals: Sub-themes in literature*

Author	Sub-theme (Location)
Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Caldwell, 2006a; Carr, 1994; Dussault & Thibodeau, 1997; D. Hayes, 2008; Kelchtermans et al., 2011; MacBeath, 2011; Yilmaz, 2008	Loneliness of principals in general. US; Australia; Australia; Canada; Australia; Belgium; UK; Turkey
Burchielli et al., 2005; Carr, 1994	Principals as "the meat in the sandwich". Australia; Australia
Blackmore, 1999; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Chandler, 2005; Eckman, 2004; Halsey, 2011; Howard & Mallory, 2008; Lumby & Azaola, 2011; Rodger, 2004; Shuman, 2010; Springbett, 2004	Gender issues for women principals. Australia; Australia; US; US; Australia; US; South Africa; Canada; US; Australia
Bauer & Brazer, 2011; Hobson & Sharp, 2005; Stephenson & Bauer, 2010; Walker & Qian, 2006	Loneliness of new principals. US; UK; US; Hong Kong
Brydson, 2011; Campbell et al., 2006; Duncan & Stock, 2010	Loneliness of new principals in rural schools. UK; US; US
Australian Royal Commission, 2013; Mitchell, 2010; Neame & Heenan, 2004; Tarczon & Qadara, 2012	Dealing with stressful issues on their own, such as child sexual abuse. Australia; US; Australia; Australia

Similarly, in the UK and the US the loneliness of the principal's task has been particularly prominent for principals of small rural schools (Brydson, 2011; K. Campbell, LaForge, & Taylor, 2006; Duncan & Stock, 2010). Apart from the physical and professional isolation in rural communities, the loneliness, particularly of nonteaching principals, has been accentuated by having "neither management team nor the collegiality that comes from teaching" (Brydson, 2011, p. 144).

Mitchell (2010) has drawn attention to the emerging issue of child sexual abuse as a school leadership issue. He described it as a "growing epidemic" with 1 in 6 boys and 1 in 4 girls in the US being sexually abused (p. 104). Australian investigations and studies (Australian Royal Commission, 2013; Neame & Heenan, 2004; Tarczon & Quadara, 2012) also have reported on high levels of child sexual abuse in Australia.

Although current research is still very limited in regard to the demographics of the problem, police statistics in NSW indicate that the regional rates of sexual assault are four times the average of metropolitan regions and the rate of violent crime in remote NSW is nearly double that of the remainder of the state (Neame & Heenan, 2004, pp. 8, 9). At the time of the current research, it was not possible to obtain research literature on the implications in the work lives school principals who lived in remote communities and who had to respond to issues involving such high emotional content, usually without reference to nearby sources of collegial or professional support.

Principals' feelings of failure and guilt in not achieving all goals

Principals report a sense of guilt at not achieving all that they had intended in their principalship (Andreyko, 2010; Clarke & Stevens, 2009; Eckman, 2004; Ewington et al., 2008; Gardner & Williamson, 2004; Thomson, 2001). Combined with an exposure to increasing levels of external accountability, they report being very prone to both persecutory and depressive guilt (Hargreaves, 1994; Woods et al., 1997). Descriptions of the heroic view of principals' capabilities also have contributed to "feelings ranging from inadequacy to guilt among the vast majority of principals" (Hallinger, 2005, p. 4). The feelings of guilt in principals have been reported over a long period (Duke, 1988; Hargreaves, 1992, 1994). These feelings were expressed in Duke (1988):

> The conflict for me comes from going home every night acutely aware of what didn't get done and feeling after six years that I ought to have a better batting average than I have. (p. 308)

Principals, like teachers, have had a commitment of care to their students and school communities and an awareness of the open-ended nature of education. Saulwick Muller (2004) found that most school principals reported the same "persona of perfectionism" (p.23) as Hargreaves (1994) has observed in teachers. The persona of perfectionism in principals "doomed them to sacrificing their personal lives and families" (Duke, 1988, p. 310).

In contrast to the body of literature on successful school leaders, a much smaller proportion of the literature has described or analysed the work lives of the majority of

principals who did not view themselves as heroic individuals (Simola, 1998; Thomson, 2001; Wenger, 1998). These principals are not necessarily exemplars in all aspects of school leadership, but have made calculated adaptations based on observed local data as described by Lindblom (1959) as "muddling through" (p. 79). Lindblom has described the approach in which administrators used a "science" (p. 79) of iterative decision-making involving successive limited comparisons and continually building out from the current situation with repeated small goals. Principals have practised this 'science' without external or self-recognition of their achievement in the development and practice of such skills. Following Lindblom's early work, there has been only a limited number of studies such as those of Walker (1968) and Wolcott (1973) which have given attention to the 'non-heroic' skills exercised by principals and using the daily data that they observed in their local school contexts.

Shortage of applicants for principalship of schools in general

One of the indicators of the pervasive and unacceptable effects of work intensification in the work lives of principals has been the ongoing shortage of applicants for principalships, both in Australia and overseas (see Table 2.10). Research on the issue has pointed to teachers' perceptions of work intensification, and even more particularly in the work lives of principals, as a significant factor in their reluctance to apply for principals' positions. In the US, there is a growing shortage of qualified candidates for the high school principalship in nearly all school districts (Eckman, 2004, p. 367).

This shortage has been confirmed by the accumulating evidence of a "flight from the principalship" (Gronn & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003, p. 183) in a range of countries including New Zealand, Australia, the UK, the US and Canada (Brooking, Collins, Court, & O'Neill, 2003; Cranston, 2007; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Draper & McMichael, 2003; Pounder et al., 2003; Williams, 2003). The lack of applicants is matched by a "climate of disengagement" in the pool of teachers who are qualified to apply for the principalship (Gronn & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003, p. 172).

In Australia, there has been sufficient concern about the declining supply of principals for the Australian Research Council to fund Blackmore, Thomson and Sachs' (2002) study. In their research, they found that restructuring towards more self-managing schools meant principals did more and more administrative and marketing work and less and less educational leadership work and that there are high stress levels associated with the intensification of the labour process (Blackmore et al., 2002).

Table 2.10 *Shortage of principal applicants: Sub-themes in literature*

Author	Sub-theme (Location)
Anderson et al., 2007; Cranston et al., 2007	Academic and media representations a disincentive. Australia
Andreyko, 2010; Carr, 1994; Richardson & Sinha, 2011; Riley, 2012; Saulwick Muller, 2004	Principals' stress. US, Australia, Australia, Australia, Australia
Blackmore et al., 2002	Performativity demands conflicting with principals' passion. Australia
Brooking et al., 2003	"Crisis" in recruiting primary school principals. New Zealand
Chapman, 1999	Concern re recruiting qualified school principals. International
Crozier, 2007; Skilbeck & Connell, 2003; Williams, 2003	Current principals are discouraging potential applicants. Australia; Australia; Canada
DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Pounder et al., 2003; Eckman, 2004	Principals' long hours, not enough authority. High school principalship not desirable. Lack of career mobility of partners. US
Draper & McMichael, 2003	More preparation needed for aspirant principals. Need for "shared realism" about school leadership role. UK
Gronn & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003; Lacey & Gronn, 2006	Teacher "disengagement", "malaise within the profession". Professional development needed for more resilience among aspirants. Australia
Ramsey, 2000	"Malaise" in NSW schools. Australia
Thomson et al., 2003	Alarming reports in U.S. media – "heart attacks" etc.

However, other factors also are evident in the reluctance of teachers to aspire to the principalship, particularly in relation to applicants for the principalship of schools in disadvantaged areas. For mature-aged couples who both have advanced in their careers, the lack of career mobility of the second partner is a disincentive which discourages teachers from applying for remote principalships (Barty, Thomson, Blackmore, & Sachs,

2005; Eckman, 2004). Rather than jeopardising the career of one of the partners, a safe option is to stay within a city or area of higher density population (Barty et al., 2005, p. 12). Principals in small, remote schools risked becoming stuck in a career "dead-end" (p. 12).

Similarly, in her research on the growing shortage of qualified candidates for the high school principalship in the US, Eckman (2004) recommends that, in order to increase the pool of applicants for the principalship, more attention should be given to the needs and desires of each candidate's partner and/or family (p. 382).

Some literature on the shortage of applicants for the school principalship has alluded to negative representations of the principalship by the media as a disincentive for potential applicants (Anderson et al., 2007; Cranston, 2007; Dinham & Scott, 1998; Thomson et al., 2003). The latter work used the title "High stakes principalship - sleepless nights, heart attacks and sudden death accountabilities" as a summary of U.S. media representations. In addition, other research has suggested that current principals added to the problem by portraying the principalship in negative terms when in discussion with school staff (Crozier-Durham, 2007; Skilbeck & Connell, 2003; Williams, 2001). For example, PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007) argued that, despite the dissatisfiers experienced by school principals, they should think of succession planning and make sure they are telling potential applicants for the principalship that they "loved the job" (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007, p. 104). The above research on negative representations in the media or by current principals does not investigate adequately the validity of such representations or whether the negative representations contributed to the "malaise" found in NSW schools and school leadership (Ramsey, 2000).

Shortage of applicants for principalship in remote Australian schools

In the same way as demographic and socio-economic statistics referred to in Chapter 1 usually described rural areas as a single entity, statistics and literature on school staffing usually provide aggregated information applicable to rural areas as a whole. Although data on the aggregate of rural Australian schools conveys the impression of satisfactory levels of applications, small K to 12 schools in the remote and

arid interior of South Australia have had very low levels of applications (Barty et al., 2005). The research of Barty et al., (2005) identified a lack of statistics specifically about applications for principalship of schools in remote inland areas of the state. Current research on shortages of principal applicants and possible associations with the current roles and work lives of principals makes only limited references to principals who work in non-mainstream schools such as those in remote locations.

The shortage of applicants has been particularly evident in more remote locations (Barty, Thomson, Blackmore, & Sachs, 2005; Brooking, Collins, Court, & O'Neill, 2003). In their study of the declining supply of principals in the states of Victoria and South Australia, Barty et al., (2005) revealed more nuanced conclusions about what factors affect the number of applications in different areas of each state. They found four categories of deterrents; location, size of school, "secret business" (p. 3) of an incumbent re-applying and other local politics such as presumed favouritism for particular local applicants. In their search for meaningful statistics, they suggested that statistics aggregated across a whole state were not always useful and that there was a need for more statistics relevant to specific areas, types of schools, and characteristics of applicants.

Gronn and Rawlings-Sanaei (2003) examined principal recruitment difficulties in the various states of Australia by positioning this phenomenon within the framework of recent school restructuring. They argued that there was accumulating evidence of a "flight from the principalship" (p. 182) and this represented a form of leadership "disengagement" (p. 172).

In the state of Tasmania, Gronn and Rawlings-Sanaei found that the principal aspirant pool in this state was diminishing. The average number of applications for an advertised principal vacancy was 14 in 1985, but this figure had shrunk to 8 in 1999. In Queensland, they found that the current recruitment pool was "very, very sparse" (p. 175). Some middle executive vacancies in remote areas required three advertisement rounds to fill positions and in 2001, 22 of 170 advertised primary principal positions (13 per cent) remained unfilled (p. 175). In the states of Western Australia and South Australia there were major problems in remote area appointments and citing the Ramsey

Report (2000) in NSW, they identified a "malaise within the profession" concerning declining leadership aspirations (p. 176).

Workload issues for principals in the subgroup of small rural schools tend to create succession problems by discouraging potential leadership aspirants who see the principalship of small rural schools "as requiring too much effort for too little reward" (Starr & White, 2008, p. 4). In the state of Victoria, which has shorter travelling distances than in NSW, Starr and White report that in the more remote schools principals believe that "working conditions have deteriorated and that they have subsequently been relegated to the lower strata of the education employment hierarchy" (p. 10). Increased work hours of principals associated with "administrivia" is particularly evident for principals of small rural schools (Caldwell, 2006b; Mulford, 2003; Starr & White, 2008). In NSW, Hatton (1995, 1996) reported that the intense demands on principals of very small schools were a factor in the turnover of principals.

Section 2: Community Context – Remote and low-SES

The work lives of principals are considered in Section 2 with a particular emphasis on working and living in communities that are remote and in addition have a low socio-economic status (SES). An extensive survey of the international literature produced little or no extant international literature on the work lives of principals who worked in the combination of community and school contexts that applied to NSW central schools. Literature about the work lives of school principals in contexts which share some characteristics with those of NSW central schools was investigated as a way of assessing the extent to which research on work lives of school principals in general is applicable to the work lives of principals of NSW central schools.

Work Lives of Principals of Remote Schools

Rural schools in NSW have often been referred to as a homogenous entity, as simply being "out there". However, rural schools have been in fact "quite diverse" and the importance of place and context have warranted closer attention (Letts et al., 2005, p. 220). The notion of "situated practices" has been used to recognise the diversity and to

examine "both the specificities of particular places as well as the more enduring trends in rural and remote education" (p. 220). In particular, the aspect of remoteness of inland NSW schools has forged the agenda for the priorities of principals of remote schools. For example, the remote schools:

> … face instability resulting from ongoing staff turnover at all levels from Principal/executive to classroom teacher. For many school leaders issues relating to staffing predominate, becoming at times a source of frustration and anxiety. The needs of beginning teachers, combined with a young and inexperienced executive, can dominate a school leader's consciousness. (Letts et al., 2005, p. 221)

In NSW, the majority of small schools have been located near larger centres or in urban locations. Principals who have led small schools in remote locations share a distinctive work life factor in that they live near, and often adjacent to, their school in a remote location. Studies in New Zealand (Collins, 2003a; Whittall, 2002; Wylie, 1997a) have reported that very small and remote schools pose more challenges for a principal than a medium-sized school in a less remote location. These studies point to a differentiation between the work lives of remote school principals and that of principals in the majority of rural schools in more favoured locations. As one example of additional challenges for principals of remote schools, the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC, 2000a) found that remote schools across Australia experience considerable difficulty in obtaining adequate services and dealing with disruptions to information and communications technology (ICT) facilities such as the internet, videoconferencing, teleconferencing or even single-user phone connections. The lack of adequate ICT facilities poses particular problems for principals of central schools who need to link with other centres in the provision of specialist subjects in the secondary curriculum (HREOC, 2000, pp. 99-102).

Principals of remote schools have identified a range of challenges that are specific to the challenges of principalship of a remote school. These include recruiting and retaining staff, isolation from principal colleagues, and community related issues (Lock, 2011). In Lock's study, principals of remote schools sought more assistance particularly with "administrative issues concerned with accountability and leadership specific areas such as whole-school planning, staff management and peer networking" (p. 1).

Principals in small and remote school settings also experience the dual impact of extra work at school and feelings of "living in a fish bowl" during out-of-school hours and there was little "break" from school when the principal lived next door to the school (Australian Secondary Principals Association et al., 2007, pp. 13, 14). The fish bowl nature of many rural and remote towns requires principals to take on the burdens of community expectations of roles, conduct and propriety (Letts et al., 2005). These expectations imposed special demands on the lives of principals outside their working hours at school.

Other research shows that Australian principals of remote schools often face an unexpected tension between personal and community values (Wildy & Clarke, 2005). In particular, Wildy and Clarke reported that it can be especially hard for female principals to fit in to their communities. Principals who undertook tasks of compassion and care in the low-SES communities often report feeling overwhelmed and drained by the size of the challenges and a feeling of being "sucked dry" (see Mills & Gale, 2003, p. 149).

Small town gossip and a high degree of loneliness for principals have added to difficulties in the work lives of principals of remote schools (McConaghy, 2006; Springbett, 2004). They have needed to have high resilience to get on with the work of a principal. According to Springbett (2004), the vision of small country towns as being idyllic, friendly and welcoming is often a myth.

McConaghy (2006) in her analysis of the non-idyllic nature of remote communities cites three dichotomies as ways to express the risks of newcomers being socially isolated. She describes remote communities as sites of intense politics of "association and dissociation", "complex invisibilities and hypervisibilities" and slippery states of "insiderism and outsiderism" (p. 337). The term 'isolated' fails to capture the full extent of how much the newcomer can be made to feel outside the community in which she or he worked (p. 337). In other words, being geographically isolated is only a small part of the total sense of isolation experienced by principals who perform a task in the community.

The reality of personal and social isolation of spouses of teachers, let alone spouses of principals, is evident in the somewhat plaintive plea made that " local

community organisations be encouraged to make every effort to welcome teachers' spouses to retain teachers in country service as long as possible" (P. C. Roberts, 2004, p. 137, citing Tomlinson, 1994).

Halsey (2005) raises the issue of the lack of career opportunities for members of the principal's family. For example, when principals accept appointment to a remote school, there is the additional factor of possible consequences for their partners and family members. School principals are in the middle of, or late in, their careers, and, for two career families, their partners are likely to be of a similar age and stage in their careers. In remote and small NSW towns, it is extremely difficult for non-teaching partners, or children, of school principals to find employment suitable to their qualifications, let alone advance in their careers (Halsey, 2005).

Similarly, Roberts (2004) reported that 72 per cent of NSW principals ranked the issue of family concerns and the employment of family members as a major disincentive in applying for a remote position. The other disincentives which have similarly high rankings are the two issues of isolation from family and friends and limited access to services such as health. In the US, principals' partners and families have had the same matters of concern when principals began to consider moving long distances from their home locations (Eckman, 2004). Apart from disruptions to personal lives of other family members, the detrimental effect on the careers or work opportunities for other family members is a factor in the lower mobility of married principals. As reported by Eckman (2004), there are an:

> … increasing number of two career families in the workplace. In terms of attracting both men and women to high school principalships in new communities, cities, or states, attention will have to be given to the needs and desires of the candidates' partner and family. (p. 382)

Work Lives of Principals of Low-SES Schools

Much of the available literature on leading a school with a low-SES student enrolment has focused on leadership of low-SES inner-city schools (Brighouse, 2004; Day, 2005; Smith & Bell, 2011) and there has been less research on low-SES schools in rural areas.

In Australia, Alston and Kent (2006, 2009) have drawn attention to the compounding disadvantage experienced by remote students after a prolonged drought and the implications for education provision by schools. As one example, Alston and Kent (2006) found that travel to TAFE courses and training is a significant issue in time and cost for students, parents and schools in more remote locations and one that required support because of cost and a lack of public transport.

For remote and low-SES communities in which students have less access to resources outside the school, the school's provision of adequate educational resources is particularly critical for the futures of students. The stakes are higher for remote students with lower social capital in their communities (Alston & Kent, 2006; Israel, Beaulieu, & Hartless, 2001; Kilpatrick & Abbott-Chapman, 2002). In order to promote educational achievement in communities with lower social capital it is important for principals to extend their work "beyond the school" and they needed to "strengthen social capital in the family and the community" (Israel et al., 2001, p. 43). In his UK study, MacBeath (2011) reported on the same issue of increased responsibilities and the high stakes nature of principalship in tough, hard-to-recruit areas. Where principals are not perceived to be successful they faced the "football managers' syndrome" and are "kicked out or relegated" (p. 107).

In addition, principals in low-SES schools experienced endogenous as well as exogenous pressures. Collard (1994) showed that principals in a disadvantaged community usually have a self-perception of service and they tended to have different leadership values and practices than those of principals in school communities in which there is an actively competitive marketplace and a stronger individual commitment to self-actualisation (Collard, 1994). In the context of leading a disadvantaged school, principals struggle with the competing demands of endogenous factors related to leading a school which provided more equitable and socially just public schooling and the exogenous pressures such as complying with new "performativities" (Blackmore, 1996, p. 448) and attracting adequate enrolments to ensure their school's survival. Australian and New Zealand studies have found that principals working in schools with a disadvantaged cohort have had a higher turnover (Chapman, 1999; Collins, 2003b;

Hatton, 1995). In contrast to studies conducted in Australia and New Zealand, Morgan and Sugrue (2008) report that Irish principals who served disadvantaged communities are the ones who found their school experience most satisfying and who are the least likely to want to leave.

Table 2.11 *Leading remote and low-SES schools: Sub-themes in literature*

Author	Sub-theme (Location)
Alston & Kent, 2006; 2009; HREOC, 2000a; 2000b	Low access of remote students to secondary education and low retention. Australia
Australian Secondary Principals Association et al., 2007; McConaghy, 2006; Springbett, 2004	Principal stress living in a fishbowl. Remote schools did not fit idyllic image. Australia
Barty et al., 2005; Halsey, 2005; Letts et al., 2005	Remote, arid areas different to other rural areas. Lack of career mobility for partners. Career block for principals. Australia
Beutel et al., 2011; Lyons, 2009; Pegg, 2009	Difficult to recruit staff in remote areas. Australia
Brydson, 2011; Campbell et al., 2006; Duncan & Stock, 2010	Loneliness of new principals in rural schools. UK; US; US
Carlson, 1990	Desperation as motive to improve rural school. US
Chapman, 1999; Collins, 2003b; Hatton, 1995; 1996; Whittall, 2001	High turnover of principals in low-SES schools, especially in rural schools. "massive intensification of the principal's work". Australia – International; New Zealand; Australia; New Zealand
Day, 2005	Principals succeeding in low-SES urban schools. UK
Dinham & Scott, 1997	Media representations of low-SES areas and of teachers in low-SES schools discouraged applicants. Australia
Ewington et al., 2008; Wildy & Clarke, 2005	Remote community values versus values of principal. Australia
Muse, 1989	Rural principalship required "more sacrifice". US
Roberts, 2004	Lack of career mobility of partners. Isolation from families. Local communities not helpful. Media representations not the main problem. Australia.

Section 3: School Context – Small and K to 12

This Section reviews the literature concerning the work lives of principals of schools which are relatively small, especially those of less than 100 students, and studies of work lives of principals of schools which provide for the 13 years of primary and secondary education from Kindergarten to Year 12 (K-12), or an equivalent range of years at school.

Work Lives of Principals of Small Schools

Nearly all of the remote central schools in the study are small schools compared to other schools in NSW. Most remote central schools have fewer than 150 students and, typically, their student populations are decreasing. The work lives of the principals of central schools share some characteristics with the work lives of principals of other relatively small schools as portrayed in both the Australian and international literature.

Studies which have focused on the issues of small schools and their principals typically consider primary schools as their examples of small schools (Bowie, 1995; Carlson, 1990; Clarke, Stevens, & Wildy, 2006; Collins, 2003a; Grady, Peery, & Drumm, 1997; Graham, Miller, & Paterson, 2009; Hatton, 1995; Muse, Thomas, & Newbold, 1989; Whittall, 2002, 2003). In these studies, such schools are not necessarily remote and some are in commuting distance of larger centres. Given the long distances in Australia, teachers and principals of remote primary or central schools need to live in remote communities and this factor has added critically important additional elements to the work lives of staff who work in small schools.

Much of the emphasis on small, remote schools has focused on the potential of online learning to enhance educational offerings (HREOC, 1999, 2000a, 2000b; T. Richards, 2005; Vinson, 1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). Usually, research on secondary education for remote students has considered the use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a possible means of providing secondary education without necessarily considering what staffing is needed within remote schools to support secondary education.

However, remote communities report problems in gaining access to ICT in their areas (Alston & Kent, 2006). The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) (2000a) has reported on the difficulties experienced by principals of schools throughout remote Australia in not being able to maintain functioning ICT facilities. The HREOC reported that remote principals with little access to technical expertise "dreaded" a computer mishap (p. 101) and, particularly for central schools with a critical need for the effective delivery of specialist secondary subjects, ICT breakdowns have

been an "enormous waste of staff time and energy" (HREOC, 2000a, p. 102). Even in schools where ICT facilities have improved and become more powerful, there still remains the need for remote students "to have face to face situations where students can interact with their peers and parents can talk with the teachers" (Christie, 2005, p. 17).

Research on small schools has considered the achievement levels of students in small schools (Howley, 2002; Page, 2006; K. Stevens, 2009; Turner, 2008), and there have been studies on programs to increase newly-trained teachers' interest in moving to a remote location (Beutel et al., 2011; Boylan & Munsch, 2006; Letts et al., 2005; Munsch & Boylan, 2008; P. C. Roberts, 2004; White & Reid, 2008; Yarrow, Herschell, & Millwater, 1999). However, there has been less research specifically on the principalship in such schools (Collins, 2003a, 2003b; Ewington et al., 2008; Mulford, 2007; Southworth, 2004). Collins (2003a) notes that although the problems of strain are greater in small schools, researchers do not really know why (p. 127). Ewington et al. (2008) speculates that the lack of research into the work of principals in small schools reflects the misconception that the principalship of small schools is just a "scaled down" version of principalship in larger schools (p. 546). Mulford (2007a) examined the proportion of journal articles on school leadership and, for example, found only two of 66 articles in *Leading and Managing* which studied the small school leadership experience (p. 7). Research on how and why work lives of principals of small schools have been different to that of principals of larger schools has remained limited in scope and in number.

Constraints on management of small schools

In small schools, principals are the first to feel the impact of intensification of their work arising from mandates for schools to develop structures to design school renewal plans. Such mandates are outlined as part of the school devolution policies in NSW (B. W. Scott, 1989, 1990b) and the continuing challenges are acknowledged to be greater than in larger schools (Hatton, 1996; Wilson & Brundrett, 2005). In small schools, there are fewer teachers and community members able and willing to sit on and participate in the committees that the NSW Education Reform Act (1990) considered to be essential

for strategic planning and school-based management. Teachers in small schools usually cannot, as is possible in larger city schools, decline to participate (Hatton, 1996; Pocock et al., 2001; Watkins, 1993).

Constraints on career progression of principals of small schools

The advent of local selection of principals in NSW (B. W. Scott, 1989) led to a situation where principals in small schools became aware that their opportunities for promotion are constrained. After the introduction in Australian schools of selection of principals by local panels, which governments labelled as 'merit selection', there is no longer the stepping stone to higher positions that existed previously (Barty et al., 2005; Collins, 2003a). Under previous systems of centralised staffing, if the promotions applicant passed the Departmental inspection as being suitable for placement on a particular level of the 'promotions list', the Head Office of the Department offered appointment to a vacant school executive position to the applicant who had the highest position on the relevant promotions list (James, 1950).

As part of the merit selection process for principals and school executive by local panels, the panels are required to provide feedback to all applicants about the quality of their application. The feedback provided by selection panels to unsuccessful applicants has regularly expressed doubts about the capacity of a principal of a small school to handle the demands of a larger staff and community. Research shows that, principals of small schools have felt that there appeared to be no clear, fair, predictable, consistent and respected career-path. This phenomenon has deterred qualified applicants from applying for principals' positions (Barty et al., 2005; Lacey & Gronn, 2006).

Survival of small schools

Principals in small remote schools have a significant presence in their communities, and the expectation that principals should participate in and contribute to local communities is different to that expected of colleagues in larger centres. Sometimes schools are the last remaining evidence of government presence in small remote Australian towns and any threat of closure, or downgrade, is of concern not only

to the principal, "a constant source of stress … [and] fear" (Starr & White, 2008, p. 6), but also for staff and the community. Policies of economic rationalism, resulting in extensive numbers of closures or amalgamations of schools in small and declining communities, have been researched in a range of countries: in the US (DeYoung & Howley, 1990), in the UK (Bottery et al., 2008), in Canada (Corbett & Mulcahy, 2006; Mulcahy, 2009), in New Zealand (Collins, 2003a) and in Norway (Solstad, 2009). For many smaller rural communities, the possibility of school closure has endured as the over-riding concern of school principals (DeYoung & Howley, 1990). The possibility also of downgrading of small schools is a major concern for principals of remote schools. In the remote NSW school researched by Hatton (1994, 1995), the school had been downgraded from its previous status as a central school providing 13 years of school education to a primary school providing seven years from Kindergarten to Year 6. This has happened in other small towns and principals have been required to move to other locations or accept a demotion.

Research in countries with 'high stakes' accountability regimes has reported on the threat to the survival of schools deemed to be 'failing'. In the US, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, 2002) has raised concerns that the only criterion used for determining that a school is failing is that of low student performance in standardised testing of a narrow range of the school curriculum (Berliner, 2005, 2011; Granger, 2008; Minarechova, 2012; Price, 2010). In a range of countries with standardised testing regimes, the threat of closure for small schools in communities with low-SES, and lower than average student performance, has created considerable anxiety for school communities and school leaders. For principals who have such a "spectacle of fear" (Berliner, 2005, p. 208) as part of their work lives, it has required inordinate amounts of time by the principal to forestall the threat of closure (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008; Bottery et al., 2008; Collins, 2003a; Copland, 2001).

The decade-long drought across inland Australia was not officially declared to be over until 2010 in NSW (NSW Parliament Hansard, 2010, 21 Oct). The declining numbers of young families and school enrolments has created additional concerns about possible closures of remote small schools. Such concerns have been reported in the

Australian states of Tasmania (Kilpatrick, Bell, & Kilpatrick, 2000), Western Australia (Sharplin, 2009), Victoria (Starr & White, 2008) and across all remote areas of Australia (Alston & Kent, 2006), where there is a "dearth of information" (Starr & White, 2008, p. 1) about how principals confronted these challenges in small remote schools.

Very small schools and the intensity of interactions with the community

Principals in remote and very small communities have more frequent and potentially significant interactions with members of the local communities (Ewington et al., 2008). Wildy and Clarke (2009) report that, for principals of very small rural schools, there are statistically significant differences in their characteristics such as, they are nearly all novice principals they have the least teaching experience and they have the lowest level of academic qualifications. Given the critical importance of principals of very small remote schools being able to manage community relations, perhaps the most significant finding is that the principals of small schools with less than 100 students report that they have the most difficulty in managing community relations.

Ewington et al. confirmed previous research (Wildy & Clarke, 2005) which reported that principals of small rural schools are mobile, staying for short periods, and that there is a higher proportion of female principals in small remote schools compared to other rural and city schools. They observe that remote communities still view the role of the school principal through the stereotype of an authoritarian male, accompanied by a wife who also is willing to participate in and support community activities. Wildy and Clarke argue that responding to such a community attitude poses particular problems for female principals of remote schools (p. 558). Their research points to the importance of differentiating the experience of principals in very small and remote schools in managing community expectations, not only from the experience of principals in urban schools, but also of principals in other schools in larger rural centres.

Table 2.12 *Small schools: Sub-themes in literature*

Author	Sub-theme (Location)
Alston & Kent, 2006; Blackmore, 2004; Kilpatrick et al., 2000; Sharplin, 2009	Declining enrolments, threat of closure of small school. Australia
Borba, 2003; Copland, 2001; DeYoung & Howley, 1990	Threat of closure of small school. US; US; US
Kelchtermans et al., 2011; Collins, 2003b; Mulcahy, 2009; Solstad, 2009	Threat of closure. Belgium; New Zealand; Canada; Norway
Bowie, 1995	Small rural schools needed strong community support to adapt to devolution changes. Australia
Campbell, 2004; Hampel, 2002	Rural communities most opposed to closing of small schools. New Zealand; US
Clarke & Stevens, 2009; Clarke et al., 2006; Ewington et al., 2008; Gronn & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003; Pocock et al., 2001; Starr & White, 2008; Watkins, 1993; Wildy & Clarke, 2005	Leadership challenges more accentuated in small rural schools. Australia
Collins, 2003a; Whittall, 2001; Wylie, 1997	More challenges in small rural schools. New Zealand; New Zealand; New Zealand
Davies, 1987; Wilson & Brundrett, 2005	More challenges in small rural schools. UK; UK
Collins, 2003b; Howley, 2002; Page, 2006; Southworth, 2008; Turner, 2008	More research on student achievement than on principalship. New Zealand; US; Australia; UK; Ireland
Graham et al., 2009	Some principals of small primary schools have a fast track in their careers. Australia
Lacey & Gronn, 2006	Small schools have bigger recruitment problems. Australia
Munby, 2007; Southworth, 2008	No opportunity for distributed leadership in small school. UK
Muse, 1989	Rural principalship required "more sacrifice". US
Starr & White, 2008	Small school principals' work intensification; dilemma – government representative or local advocate. Australia
Wildy & Clarke, 2005	High turnover of principals. High proportion of female principals. Australia
Widly & Clarke, 2009	Small remote schools have novice principals. Australia

Work Lives of Principals of K-12 Schools

Studies which included consideration of schools that are combinations of primary and secondary departments (Alston & Kent, 2006; Boylan, 1988; Brian-Davis, 1999;

Corbett & Mulcahy, 2006; Mulcahy, 2009; Munsch & Boylan, 2007) are conspicuous in their rarity and have focused more on the extent and type of student achievement within such schools and recruitment of teachers without necessarily reflecting on the work lives of teachers, and even less on the work lives of principals of such schools.

Alston and Kent (2006) in their study of the impact of the drought on secondary education in remote areas of Australia provide some rare insight on the special difficulties of attempting to provide K-12 education in a remote school. They reported on a remote K-12 school whose enrolments had declined so much that teacher numbers had dropped from 23 in 2000 to 16 in 2005 and the principal was "constantly having to juggle ways of running a K-12 school with fewer and fewer teachers" (p. 97).

Summary of Chapter 2

This chapter has reviewed the literature related to the situational context of remote central school leadership and its effect on the work lives of remote principals of central schools in NSW, Australia. The literature associated with Research Question 1 on work lives of principals in the education policy context of devolution and accountability focused on the three broad aspects of work intensification of principals, namely, longer hours of work, more tasks to be completed in specified times and diversification of the roles of the principal. Also considered are the associated sub-themes of endogenous factors, the 'romance' of 'heroic' leadership, designer leadership, dilemmas, Herzberg's satisfiers and dissatisfiers, and the shortage of suitable applicants for principalship of schools. Although principals of central schools in NSW share with other principals the policy context of devolution and accountability, the manifestation of work intensification in remote central schools is both different and more intense because of the specific characteristics of these settings.

Literature associated with Research Question 2 concerning work lives of principals in the contexts of remote and low-SES communities is less readily available. Of particular importance for this research is the distinction between remote areas and other larger rural centres in NSW and the lack of data available about principalship in remote communities.

There is an even greater paucity of literature concerning Research Question 3 and the context of leading a small school and providing 13 years of education from Kindergarten to Year 12. Although some literature investigates principalship of small primary schools, research of leadership of schools providing education for very small cohorts of secondary students is not readily available.

In Chapter 3, dealing with methodology, the research approach, research design and strategies used in data collection and analysis used in the research project will be presented.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Introduction

This thesis examines the work lives of principals of central schools in the state of New South Wales (NSW), Australia. The research methodology uses a mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2008; Greene, 2007; Maxcy, 2003) which was primarily in the qualitative research paradigm, but which also included quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. A mixed methods study with a major qualitative component provided the opportunity for much deeper insights about the quality of the work lives of principals of central schools. In addition, the qualitative component provided data on the nature of distinctive relationships in the school and the school community. This data may have been missed in a study which relied only on a broad quantitative data sweep obtained from all central schools in the state (Howley, 2002, p. 3.29; Wildy, 1999b). The use of a postal survey facilitated the collection of a broad range of quantitative data and provided opportunity to access the views of a larger number of principals. The addition of a qualitative approach using a selection (44 per cent) of those who responded to the survey facilitated the collection of rich data, and insights as to why principals have provided certain responses in the surveys. Such insights can be very significant for principals whose schools have special contexts which differ substantially from the norm for schools in general.

The thesis was intended to be exploratory and the results from the exploration are intended to be used to explain, confirm and /or disconfirm findings in previous research literature, and to identify areas hitherto not widely covered in the literature. For example, the study on the work lives of principals provided data which may contribute to an explanation for a widely reported difficulty, that is, the shortage of suitable applicants for principalship of schools (Cranston, 2007; Draper & McMichael, 2003; Gronn & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003; Williams, 2003). This shortage was more evident in remote locations (Barty et al., 2005).

The first section of the chapter considers the philosophic assumptions in using a mixed methods approach such as compatibility and pragmatism. Application issues associated with qualitative research such as reflexivity, validity, reliability, extent of

generalization and ethics (Gibbs, 2007) are considered as well as researcher identity, impression management, aspects of objectivity and distance between researcher and interviewees.

The second section of the chapter provides specific details about the research design as a combination of description and analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005) of the work lives of principals of central schools within their multiple contexts. The contexts are the political and systemic context of the devolution of the NSW public education system and the particular geographical and social context of principalship in a central school in NSW. The section of the chapter dealing with the research methods of the thesis includes a description of the sampling process and the characteristics of the samples of interviewees within the total population group of central school principals. Procedures, which were used to meet ethical requirements of the university, are outlined. The structure of the project is outlined according to phases which were characterised by either quantitative or qualitative procedures related to data gathering and data analysis within the overarching methodology of a mixed methods study.

Research Approach

Study of a collective case

The 58 principals of central schools in the remote inland areas of NSW constituted a bounded and relatively small proportion of the total group of 2246 primary and secondary principals of government schools in NSW. In common with the total group of principals in NSW, they shared the educational policy context for NSW government schools. In addition, principals of central schools shared with each other a community context characterised by remoteness from educational and other services and a school student cohort of low socio-economic status (SES). They also shared a school context in that they were leaders of schools which were small and which provided a curriculum from Kindergarten to matriculation in Year 12 (K-12). These elements of the work lives of the principals formed a "casing" (Ragin, 1992, pp. 218-219) around a "bounded

system" (Stake, 1995, p. 2). Hence, the study of this group was considered to be a collective case study (Stake, 1994).

Mixed Methods Research

Compatibility and pragmatism

In using mixed methods research, this thesis accepted the argument that quantitative and qualitative research are not incompatible, and that it is suitable to combine the two paradigms in a single study (Bryman, 2006; Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003; Howe, 1988; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). This thesis similarly adopted a pragmatic approach (Maxcy, 2003; Mertens, 2005; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) and both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used on the basis of "what works" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 42; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 18).

The subjects studied and the associated research questions were the main determinants of the methodological approach and design selected. The pragmatic approach prioritised the research questions and considered epistemological and ontological debates to be less critical issues than the provision of methods of data collection and analysis that were effective in exploring in depth the major research problem (Bryman, 2006). In addition, the pragmatic approach allowed for a greater validation of the truths embedded in principals' perceptions (Creswell, 2005). In the qualitative components of the research, the principals' experiences and perceptions were accorded "face validity" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 163) with respect to their views of the educational policy context in which they worked, and the implications of the remote community context with its historical, economic and social characteristics for the work lives of principals

The study collected in-depth data concerning the collective case of 58 principals of central schools in the state of NSW. The case study used interpretative processes and was primarily qualitative but included a quantitative component (Creswell, Shope, Plano Clark, & Green, 2006). The quantitative component which used data obtained from survey responses of 27 principals (47 per cent of principals of central schools) was

augmented (Stodolsky & Grossman, 2000) by the qualitative component which obtained data from interviews with 12 principals (21 per cent of principals). Procedurally, both stages of the program of interviews occurred after collecting data from the survey and the second stage of the program of interviews used data from the first stage of interviews as well as the analysis of the survey results to frame suitable questions for use in the second interviews with participant principals. However, the relative richness of the data obtained from the qualitative component and the convergence of data from the qualitative and quantitative components meant that when reporting results, the data from the quantitative component was reported as nesting (Yin, 2006) in the data from the qualitative component.

Triangulation and crystallisation

In this thesis, there were several layers of triangulation related to firstly, methodologies selected and, secondly, data obtained from a range of sources with significantly different purposes and audiences. Methodological triangulation was obtained through the use of both the qualitative and the quantitative methods of data collection (Denzin, 2010). In obtaining data on the perceptions of principals, qualitative methodology was reflected in the use of semi-structured interviews with principals and quantitative methodology was employed in the collection of data using a postal survey of principals of all central schools. Data triangulation was evident in information obtained from in the matching available school leadership literature relevant to school contexts of central school leaders with historical and socio-economic studies about the populations and conditions of remote inland towns of NSW.

However, the concept of triangulation has been used to describe the search for a single apprehendable truth (Denzin, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007) and does not adequately describe the interpretivist processes in viewing data from multiple viewpoints and revealing multiple truths (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 33). Instead, the concept of crystallisation (L. Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2005; Wildy, 1999b) provided a more realistic image of the processes of viewing the complexity of multiple realities experienced by principals. Crystals reflect externalities

and refract within themselves and the angles of viewing, such as survey data, interview statements, historical information or insider knowledge, influenced what the researcher perceived and interpreted concerning the work lives of principals.

A qualitative paradigm

A "thick description"

The thesis aimed to gain a greater understanding and a richer description of the work lives of principals in remote locations in the contemporary Australian context. The research used interpretive processes to develop a "thick description" (Geertz, 1975; Ryle, 1968/1996; Stake, 1994) of the particular issues, contexts and interpretations of the principals of the remote schools by exploring the emic (insider) perceptions of those principals about their work and the factors influencing their work. The approach, particularly in the program of interviews with participant principals, gave primacy to the subjective consciousness of the interviewees and focused on the direct experience of participant principals taken at "face value" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 163). It included their views of the influence on their work lives of the education policy reforms of the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET), their perceptions about the setting of their school in a remote community during a prolonged period of economic and social decline and their representations of the principal's professional, personal and social circumstances.

The principals' constructions of reality included their perspectives regarding the contexts of devolution reforms, geographical and professional isolation, providing education for a low-SES cohort of students and the particular requirement of a central school to provide 13 years (K-12) of education. The construction of their reality of school leadership was based on how they experienced the world of school education from their own vantage points (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This research on the work lives of principals used essentially individual perspectives or constructions of reality (Hatch, 2002, p. 15) by the principals.

In this study, the researcher deliberately developed a degree of closeness and empathy with the principals who participated in the schedule of interviews; accepting as

valid the self-reported views of the interviewees and the responsibility of the researcher to represent them accurately. This research used constructivist elements of grounded theory, in which findings were expected to emerge rather than be forced along pre-determined lines (Glaser, 1992).

Strauss, in developing the methodology of grounded theory stressed as the first priority the "need to get out into the field to discover what is really going on" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 9). With this understanding of how to discover and describe the reality of the work lives of principals in remote locations, it was decided that the program interviews should take place in the school of each of the participating principals. In the first interview, the questions for each interviewee were open-ended to facilitate the process whereby interviewees were able to initiate and discuss issues that they themselves perceived to be significant. In the second interview, the researcher built on the initiatives of each participant by asking questions that were more specific about the issues they had previously raised and exploring each of these issues in greater depth. The knowledge gained was jointly created in an interaction between the researcher and the participant principals (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111).

Researcher identity

Three of the interviewees knew the researcher as a colleague principal of a remote central school who had worked with them previously on joint school programs, while several other interviewees recognised the researcher as being a former principal of a remote central school. This prior knowledge and identification with the researcher was evident in the way that most interviewees greeted the researcher with warmth and friendliness on arrival at their schools. The initial, friendly interaction and development of empathy assisted the knowledge-gaining process, as principals shared a more complete and nuanced description of the realities, both rewarding and challenging, of working in and leading their schools.

Particularly in interviews, a regard for and interviewee confidence in the genuineness and integrity of the researcher were important in maintaining necessary trust so that interviewees were prepared to disclose sensitive information. As expressed

by a participant in Carr's psychological study (1994) on anxiety and depression among Australian school principals, "if the Department or the union were asking me to fill this out I would not participate. I trust you with the information" (p. 24).

Both the researcher and the interviewees came to the research as bearers of socially constructed information (Cropley, 2002, p. 53). Previously, both the researcher and the participant principals had 'attended' to aspects of their world, for example, being principals of remote schools and working for the NSW DET. The social construction of knowledge by participants and the researcher who shared a common school context also influenced not only what the participant principals said but also the questions asked and the responses which were attended to by the researcher.

Impression management

Impression management (Goffman, 1959; Oppenheim, 1992) was an important issue for the researcher in encouraging principals to offer the most complete descriptions possible. Impression management was also an issue for the interviewees in that the principals perceived the task of presenting favourable impressions about the quality of their leadership and their schools as a vital responsibility in their roles as site managers and system leaders of their schools. They were well skilled in being able to present and manage such impressions, particularly during initial interviews, and even more so, while the discussions were being recorded.

Impression management is an important aspect to be attended to in conducting an interview for both the researcher and the participant principal. The researcher travelled distances ranging from 300 km to 900 km to the remote locations of the principals' schools and conducted the interviews in their school settings. By doing so, it was intended that the principals gain a sense that their views were of great importance and that the researcher valued the face-to-face interaction of the interview process. In addition, conducting the interview in the principals' own school was designed to make it easier for them to have agency in the way they created impressions during the interview. Creating a comfort zone and establishing rapport was an important aspect of ensuring that the researcher heard the authentic voice of the participant principals.

Some of the principals when first interviewed needed some reassurance that the interview transcripts would not come to the attention of their employer or other official agencies, and were concerned that their 'outspokenness' might affect their future employment prospects. It was decided that wearing a suit or formal jacket (the usual attire of visiting supervisory personnel) could reinforce this apprehension and the researcher's dress was modified so that it conveyed a "respectable social neutrality"(Oppenheim, 1992, p. 96).

In the first interviews, some of the principals were very guarded and careful about creating the right impression about themselves and their work. It was anticipated that much of the first interview would be needed to establish rapport with the principals and create space for the principals to reflect on their issues. Some of the more sensitive issues emerged only later in the interview or at times even after the interview recording was completed and the principals made parting comments that were "off the record". This aspect of the interviewing process supported the view that at least one further interview would be not only desirable but also essential to allow principals further opportunities to talk more comfortably about potentially sensitive issues when the interview was being recorded.

It was therefore considered very important that, after rapport was appropriately established, a second interview be conducted, again in the school setting, to allow more detailed and open comments on issues which principals had alluded to in the first interview. Follow-up (second) interviews were planned for each principal, partly to obtain more specific information about issues raised during the first phase of interviews. They were designed also to build on the rapport established in the first interviews and to allow principals to be less concerned about creating a favourable first impression. With a sufficient level of rapport, it was anticipated that principals would be able to feel more comfortable about discussing and revealing more about issues which they may have considered to be too sensitive to discuss during an initial interview.

The pair of interviews also had a longitudinal aspect in that a period of at least six months was allowed to elapse between the first and second interviews with a principal. This period frequently allowed principals to represent their issues over time and to

reflect in depth on causation and progress towards solution or otherwise. This allowed principals also to discuss some of the issues which were long-standing and apparently intractable, in terms of leadership action over a lengthy period of time. In several instances, this intended time gap was even longer because principals needed to defer the proposed second interview to create space for a lengthy interview in the midst of their busy schedules. In addition, the researcher sometimes needed to delay the interview to allow time to make suitable travel and accommodation arrangements when visiting a remote location. Because most principals had been appointed recently in their positions, the two interviews sometimes served to capture the contrasting views and impressions held by the principals between when they had first started in their positions and when they had become more established in their schools.

Insider research

As an "inside" researcher (A. Smyth & Holian, 1999; Tillman, 2006) in several capacities, I had prior knowledge of some of the work life experiences of principals of central schools and the contexts in education policy, community characteristics and type of school in which they worked and lived. This background assisted me in preparing relevant items to include in the survey of the principals of central schools and to interpret the contributions made by the 12 principals who participated in the program of interviews. However, study interviewees did not work in the same school as the one in which I had been principal and I did not have responsibility or any position of authority in the work of interviewees in their schools. This meant that I did not need to make special protective arrangements for interviewees such as are deemed necessary when a researcher stands in a position of authority within the same school as study interviewees (Degenhardt, 2006).

Objectivity and distance between researcher and interviewees

Objectivity is "one of the most cherished ideals of the educational research community" and ineluctably there is an implication that its opposite, subjectivity, should be avoided (Eisner, 1992, p. 9). Although they may see objectivity as desirable,

researchers understand that complete objectivity is impossible and in all research, whether quantitative or qualitative, there is some element of subjectivity. In dealing with this difficulty, Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined objectivity as an ability to maintain a certain degree of distance from the "research materials and to represent them fairly" (p. 35). Their definition includes the notion that the researcher is able to "listen to the words of respondents and to give them a voice independent of that of the researcher" (p. 35).

While this thesis preserved a degree of objectivity as defined by Strauss and Corbin, it also valued the view of knowledge creation as a jointly constructed task between researcher and interviewee. Hence it used a strategy of creating empathy, rapport and some closeness between researcher and interviewee to facilitate the joint construction of knowledge and improve the quality of the knowledge thus gained (Toma, 2000).

Understanding of the work lives of principals of all central schools

In addition to providing a thick description of the work lives of the particular school principals who were interviewed, the proportion of principals of central schools interviewed (21 per cent) made it possible to make some "fuzzy generalisations" (Bassey, 2001) about the leadership and work lives of principals of central schools.

Research Method

Research timeline for ethics approval, survey and interviews

In January 2006, approval to conduct research was obtained from the Northern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval H8651). In February 2006, simultaneous approval was obtained from the NSW DET to survey principals of central schools and conduct interviews with them in their schools (SERAP 05.179).

During early 2006 (see Table 3.1), survey questionnaires with accompanying information sheets, letters of invitation and a document indicating approval by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee (see Appendices A2-A4, B1) were posted to 58 principals of central schools. In reply, 27 principals returned survey forms

with their responses and 13 of these principals offered to be available for the program of interviews. One of the 13 principals led a school in an extremely remote location and it was not feasible for the researcher to travel to that location. The first interviews with each of the 12 principals were held during 2006 and the second follow-up series of interviews were held during 2007. The principals concerned often had very full schedules, which usually meant that there was a waiting time before a suitable time could be scheduled for an interview. In addition, for some of the very remote schools it was necessary to drive for several days in order to visit the principals in their schools. Consequently, several months elapsed before each of the series of interviews was completed.

Data from completed survey questionnaires were analysed in the same period in which the researcher was conducting the first stage of interviews with participant principals in their schools. The coding of the survey responses and the means of coded responses for each survey item are recorded in Appendix A2. The data from the completed questionnaires formed one part of an iterative process, in which data from both the completed surveys and the first stage of semi-structured interviews helped to sensitise the research and construct a knowledge base which could be used in developing more structured questioning based on participant-selected issues for the second stage of interviews. The use of data from the returned surveys and the content of the first stage of semi-structured interviews were based on the emergence of results (Glaser, 1992) and integration of data obtained from both the quantitative and the first stage of the qualitative processes (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Table 3.1   *Timeline of research activities*

Date	Data gathering	Data organisation	Data analysis
Jun-Oct 2005	Survey and ethics application prepared		
Nov 2005	Application submitted to University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)		
Feb 2006	Survey distributed to 58 (nearly all) principals of NSW central schools		
Apr- Jun 2006	Thirteen principals offered to participate in interviews and a flexible interview schedule was devised for 12 of these principals	Survey results collated	Survey data analysed using SPSS 16.0 and Excel
May-Nov 2006	Stage 1 of interviews with each of 12 principals	Began transcription of 12 Stage 1 interviews	Started coding of interview transcripts using NVivo 7
Mar-Jun 2007	Stage 2 of interviews with each of eight principals	Completed transcription of 12 Stage 1 interviews	Continued coding of transcripts using NVivo 7; tentative constructs
Jul 2007 – Aug 2008		Eight Stage 2 interviews transcribed	Ongoing coding and recoding of case study data
Dec 2008			First presentation of results at Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE)
2009-2012			Comparison of quantitative survey and qualitative data

Selection of survey respondents and interview participants

In the information posted to principals with the survey questionnaire, principals were invited to volunteer to participate in the second stage of this study as interviewees.

Twelve principals participated in a sequence of interviews. All of the principals who accepted the invitation to participate in the program of interviews had replied to the surveys, although they were not individually identified in the responses to the surveys in order to preserve respondent anonymity. Thus, it was not possible to match directly the survey responses with the interviews in terms of questions posed or responses obtained. The construction of the first interview schedule was drawn from the general results of the survey questionnaire, rather than from any intention to follow up the specific responses of the individual interviewees.

Although the sample of 12 principals was not a random selection, it was decided to proceed with the self-selecting sample of these volunteers for pragmatic considerations (Silverman, 2009). The 12 participant principals, although self-selected, were representative of the larger group of survey respondents in terms of gender, age and training. They were also representative in terms of experience as a principal and experience in their current school. The demographic information provided by the interviewees indicated that, despite self-selection, they approximated the characteristics of the 27 principals who responded to the survey questionnaire. The majority of the interviewees, seven out of 12, were male and a large majority, ten out of 12, had trained as secondary teachers. All of the interviewees were leading a central school for the first time. The interviewees led schools which were spread over a large area of the state of NSW. Although two schools were 150 km from each other, most of the participants were at a much greater distance from their central school colleagues. The three interview participants at greatest distance from each other formed a triangle in the far northern, western and southern ends of the state and were respectively at distances of 700 km, 950 km and 1150 km from each other. When interviewed, the 12 participants revealed diversity in other areas such as family circumstances and experiences in other careers.

Quantitative Data Gathering: Survey Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire items were designed to operationalise aspects of the research questions, particularly Research Question 1, which focused more directly on the context of NSW government reforms of the public education system and its implications

for school leadership. In addition, the survey explored some conjectures about aspects of principals' leadership and work lives. The survey contained items which asked this specific group of principals about their attitudes on a range issues most of which the research literature had identified as significant and relevant to principals in general. Some of these broad issues were work intensification (Hargreaves, 1994; Larson, 1980; Southworth, 2008), increased accountability (Billot, 2003; Day et al., 2001; Hallinger, 2005; Wildy, 1999a), overload and guilt (C. Easthope & Easthope, 2000; Eckman, 2004; Gardner & Williamson, 2004) and loneliness (Caldwell, 2006b; Kelchtermans et al., 2011). The survey, and later the program of interviews, investigated which of the general issues applied to principals of central schools and identified any differences which might be attributable to the contexts of being principal of a central school.

The survey aimed to consider the experience of principals of central schools in implementing the current policies of the NSW Government and DET in terms of the administration and management of the broadly defined policy of devolution in NSW. In particular, the study investigated the variations in the implementation of policies of the devolution of schools, such as the extent to which physical resources, staffing, curriculum and accountability had or had not been decentralised, principals' levels of satisfaction with various aspects of the current policy and the perceived effect on their workload and work lives. In addition, the survey obtained data on the principals' personal perceptions concerning the length of time they believed the DET expected them to spend on a sample of principal's tasks and compared these perceptions with the length of time that principals believed they should spend on the tasks.

Survey Section A: Principals' perceptions of school-based management

Section A of the *Survey Questionnaire* (see Appendix B1) included 18 items (A1 to A11 with some sub-parts) in which principals were asked to respond to statements that were designed to be indicators of autonomous management of the school with respect to the central office of the NSW DET. For each of these items principals were asked to choose from one of five responses on a Likert scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree).

The first item A1 asked principals to give an overall view about whether they would describe the current structures in decision-making as school-based management. The next four items, A2a to A2d, asked principals to indicate the extent of school flexibility in deciding on matters of property, discipline, welfare and curriculum. The next five items, A3a to A3e, asked for principals' perceptions of the extent of benefits in relation to resource management, staffing, staff morale, student achievement and professional autonomy accruing from the current level of school-based management.

The next four statements, A4 to A7, provided indications of the school's influence in the areas of staff professional learning and the achievement levels of students. The last four statements, A8 to A11, requested the opinion of respondents on the value of accountability procedures such as mandatory student testing and programs for reporting to the DET and school communities. A 19th item, A12, invited principals to add any further comments in an open-ended manner, on the issues raised in the previous 18 statements (See *Survey Questionnaire*, Appendix A2).

Survey Section B: Principals' perceptions of time spent on principals' tasks

In Section B of the *Survey Questionnaire*, principals were asked to consider 56 items comprising two questions each about 28 particular leadership tasks. This Section was designed to elicit any significant differences arising from a conflict between personal beliefs and system obligations about the key foci of the role of principal. In the first of the two questions about each leadership task, they were asked to choose from one of three responses (Less, Same and More) on a Likert scale and indicate their perception of the time that the principal believed should be spent in an <u>ideal</u> self-managing school. In the second of the two questions for each task, they were asked to choose from the same set of three responses as response indicating their perception of the time that the principal believed the DET <u>expected</u> them to spend on the nominated task. In addition, a 57th item, labelled B19, was a free response item which invited principals to nominate any task other than the 28 listed principalship tasks and to indicate how much time they believed was expected or they believed ought to be spent on such tasks.

Survey Section C: Principals' characteristics, background information

The last section of the *Survey Questionnaire*, Section C, used six items, C1 to C6, asking principals to provide background information about their gender, professional training, school size, experience as a principal, experience at the current school and age group of the principal. The data collected from the survey about the backgrounds of principals were supplemented by data offered by interviewed participants. In interviews, participants offered information about their general background, previous careers and life experiences, which were factors in their deciding to apply for their current positions as principals.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Coding and creation of data sets

Data were obtained from a number of processes related to descriptive statistics. Once each variable had been appropriately coded and in some cases, recoded to reduce the number of possible values, descriptive statistical procedures were used to calculate means, medians and modes. As one example of survey data which was recoded from five to three Likert options, see Appendix B1 and Appendix Table B1 in which data is tabulated concerning principals' perceptions of their autonomy and implications for student success.

The reduction of data by means of factor analysis and the recoding of variables were followed by the calculation of significant associations from a process of cross tabulations with demographic data and the calculation of chi-square. Significant differences were investigated using t tests (R. B. Burns, 2000).

Single variable analysis: Descriptive statistics

Means, medians and modes were calculated as measures of central tendency of values for each of the variables of the 18 Likert scale items in Section A and the 56 Likert scale items in Section B of the survey. The means of the 74 items are recorded in Appendix B1. For each principalship task, principals were asked to indicate both how

much time a principal should spend in an ideal school and how much time they thought the DET expected them to spend.

Possible associations: Cross tabulations and Pearson's chi-square

The data were examined for associations between demographic data and substantive data. Researchers such as Camilli and Hopkins (1979) found that chi-square tests of homogeneity and independence can provide reasonably accurate estimates of Type 1 error probability for sample sizes as low as eight. In this study with a sample size of 27 respondents out of a population of 58, the sample percentage was a relatively high 47 per cent and it was decided to proceed with using the chi-square tests as a guide in making inferences about the whole population of principals in central schools.

Reduction of data: Factor analysis

The statistical search for principal components or factors was exploratory rather than confirmatory in nature (R. B. Burns & Burns, 2008; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; J. P. Stevens, 2009). Factor analysis was used to reduce the number of relevant variables, that is, to extract underlying concepts from the list of survey variables and this allowed for some confirmation and elucidation of principal factors when the participant principals were being interviewed in the second stage of interviews. As a precaution for the small sample size, both the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's sphericity test were used to check that it was appropriate to use factor analysis (Stevens, 2002, p. 388). The measures were considered to be reliable because the process involved multiple indicators rather than relying on single indicators (Graetz & McAllister, 1994). For the 18 items in Section A, KMO = 0.55 and the KMO for a majority of the individual items were above the acceptable limit of 0.5. Bartlett's test of sphericity resulted in χ^2 (153) = 295.9, p < 0.001, which indicated that it was suitable to proceed with factor analysis.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient

Internal consistency or reliability of the scale of each potentially suitable group of survey items was assessed using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (R. B. Burns, 2000).

For the 18 variables in Section A (extent of school management), Cronbach's alpha was calculated as 0.87 (See Appendices Tables B3 – B5), which was greater than the recommended 0.7 and this was considered to be adequate to proceed with further factor analysis and extractions of principal components.

Extracting factors

Given the small sample size, it was decided to perform principal components analysis for the 18 variables in Section A, specifying a limit of four components to be extracted. The four independent components were extracted using Varimax rotation. The four extracted factors had eigenvalues of at least 1.3 and in combination explained 68.5 per cent of the variance.

For each extracted component the researcher examined the contributing variables in order to create and define a single concept which would include the concepts alluded to in the contributing variables. Three of the extracted factors were variables in which principals described the extent to which devolution policies had established school-based management, flexibility in daily operations of the school and allowed for resources being managed by the school. The fourth extracted factor concerned principal's perceptions of benefits of the devolution reforms for staff and students. Each defined factor or concept was operationalised as follows. For each respondent, the survey scores for each of the variables associated with that factor were combined to provide a composite score for that factor.

Comparisons of means

The six demographic survey items (gender, training, school size, experience as a principal, experience as principal of current school, and age) were used as grouping variables to form subgroups of respondents based on each demographic criterion. For each of the six demographic criteria, the response values of relevant subgroups were examined for any immediately observable differences in the means of 74 variables with scale values in Sections A and B of the survey. The differences were tested for statistical significance using independent samples t tests.

Rationale for use of parametric tests

In order to assess the valid use of parametric statistical tests such as t tests, three properties were used to test for the variables being tested. Firstly, that there were equal intervals between values of the independent variables; secondly, that the statistical values of the dependent variables had a normal distribution or very close to it and; thirdly, that the data had homogeneity of variance (R. B. Burns, 2000).

Parametric tests are relatively robust, and t tests are valid even in less than ideal conditions (Burdess, 1994, p. 225; R. B. Burns, 2000, pp. 151-2). Although the survey data only partially satisfied the three given assumptions given above, it was considered that they met each of the conditions sufficiently to justify the use of parametric tests. Furthermore, using the parametric tests had the advantage that they had more power than non-parametric tests in detecting possible significant differences (R. B. Burns, 2000, pp. 152-3). Therefore, a number of parametric tests were used to make comparisons between the choices made by different subgroups of respondents.

Qualitative Data Gathering: Program of Interviews

During interviews, participants referred to each of the contexts associated with the three Research Questions. Apart from examining government documents concerning policies and procedures for government schools in NSW, literature on the social and economic conditions of remote towns was considered as a form of triangulation on the information provided by interviewees.

The interviews with participant principals were conducted in the work places of the principals concerned as was recommended by Wildy and Clarke (2008). In answering a small number of questions which had only moderate structuring, interviewees were able to describe in short narrative accounts any problems they encountered, how these were handled and their reflections on their experiences. Such narrative accounts offered an effective means of depicting the complexity of the work of principals in small schools, such as the remoteness of central schools, where the

principal's work is characterised by dilemmas, intense interactions with the community and coping with a diversity of professional responsibilities.

Due to the long distances to travel to the interviewees' schools, the researcher had less flexibility in finding suitable dates for conducting interviews with participant principals. In addition, setting-up interviews for principals working long hours can have a particular logistical problem in that the principals were often too busy or attending meetings away from their schools (compare with Pocock et al., 2001, interviews with employees working long hours). When the researcher attempted to arrange second interviews with the 12 participating principals, four of the principals were not available for the second interview. Two of the principals did not have time for a second interview and the other two could not be contacted; one had resigned from the DET and one had accepted a demotion to another school location.

In collecting data concerning aspects of work intensification, the study surveyed estimations by principals about the hours they believed they should spend ideally on a set of principals' tasks and the hours they believed the DET expected them to spend on the same set of tasks. In addition, interview participants provided narratives about their current practices and any contrasts with what they desired their practices to be and what theories of school leadership were currently proposed (see similar approaches in Burchielli et al., 2005; Cranston et al., 2003).

Collection of data: Interview recordings and transcripts

Principals participating in interviews were interviewed for a total of three to four hours in their school locations. At the beginning of each interview, the principals were asked to confirm that they would agree to have the interview and recorded so that the interview could be transcribed later. Each interviewee was offered the opportunity to amend or edit the transcriptions of the interviews.

Interviews were recorded on audiotape, the tapes were transcribed and the NVivo software program (Punch, 2009; L. Richards, 1999) used to code, categorise and compare the interview data. The initial interviews were semi-structured (See Appendix C1 *Questions for Stage 1 semi-structured interview*). This helped in establishing rapport

with the participant principals and their responses provided a basis for making the questions in the second interview more specific. In the semi-structured initial interviews, principals were asked to describe their professional background and what led them to become the principal of a central school. They were asked about any special features of the school such as characteristics of the student cohort, staffing experience and availability, special programs and curriculum, the socio-economic background of parents and the community and their relationships with the school. The principals were asked about the main issues that confronted them at the beginning of their principalship and what issues developed later.

About six months later, a second and more focused interview was conducted with eight of the principals. Four of the 12 principals were not available for a second interview. Principal R1 was not available for a second interview because of her resignation after the first interview. Principal S3 accepted a demotion after the first interview in order to relocate to a more favoured position on the coast. Principals T1 and X1 did not give reasons for not being available for the second interview.

The questions asked in the second interview provided more data on the issues raised by the principals in their previous interviews. In the later interviews, the principals were asked more specifically about the effects of geographic isolation on the school and their principalship. They were asked about relationships with other schools, dealing with parent complaints, the level of support from DET officers, the degree of autonomy in their role, their hours on duty, their career path and major plans for maintaining and developing the quality of teaching in their schools.

The qualitative stage of the study was undertaken after the collection and analysis of the quantitative data. It was intended to amplify the principals' voice about issues referred to in the survey, to obtain more detailed information about the attitudes of this specific population of principals and to discover new issues which were raised and considered important to the principals. The study used semi-structured interviews which were conducted in the principals' schools. They were more exploratory and were intended to reveal which issues the isolated principals had in common with other principals and which issues were particular to their situation. It was anticipated that

because the circumstances of the isolated principals of central schools were so different from those of their colleagues in the towns and cities that their issues and concerns would also be very different. It was considered essential that the interviews be kept very open to allow more opportunity for the distinctive voice of the isolated principals to emerge.

Reducing researcher subjectivity in recording and transcription

Making an audiorecording of each interview was chosen as an alternative to note taking during or after the interview as one way to reduce the possible subjective influence by the researcher in selectively remembering only part of the interview or selectively writing down what the researcher considered to be more significant.

The interviews were transcribed by an independent person, who was not personally known to the researcher. Although the independent transcribing was done partly to economise on the researcher's time, it was also a further check on researcher subjectivity in that a second person can attend to and record the exact statements being made by the interviewees.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Use of computer software in analysis of transcripts

The NVivo 7 software program (L. Richards, 1999) was used to organise and then analyse the 20 transcripts of interviews (12 were transcripts of initial interviews and 8 were transcripts of follow-up interviews). A project file to include documents relevant to the thesis was created using the NVivo program and each of the interview transcripts was imported to the project file. After observing each new topic of interest in a transcript, a new node was created in the project file and a coding stripe applied to this and any subsequent passage which referred to the same topic. The NVivo program was used to store all of the passages concerning the same topic into a single file for that node. These node files were examined for further outstanding features and the possibility of creating further nodes which could describe some topic mentioned during the interviews.

Initially about 110 nodes were created and used to highlight passages of the transcripts. Nodes referring to similar topics were grouped together in a tree node and a hierarchical tree structure of nodes was created with main nodes, child nodes and grandchild nodes. Initial NVivo nodes were combined and grouped around three main nodes with meanings identified and categorised using the analytic process of "constant comparison" (Hallberg, 2006, p. 141). Coding at both stages of the schedule of interviews allowed comparison across different interview participants and at different stages of their principalship. The three nodes grouped issues relating to the local community, the principal or other members of the school community (see Appendix Table C1).

After further analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, nodes were regrouped into nodes which could describe one of the common themes that had emerged in either the quantitative or qualitative data. The three emergent themes were work intensification, aspects of loneliness, and career limitations of central school principals (see Appendix Table C2). The theme of work intensification was identified in both quantitative data (see Table 4.6) and qualitative data. The themes of loneliness and career limitations were identified in the qualitative data.

As new issues emerged during interviews, particularly those not originally surveyed in the survey questionnaire, a search was conducted to find research literature relevant to these issues. The research literature was used to assess the validity of comments by principals, particularly those which reported on the nature of their schools and school communities.

Summary of Chapter 3

This chapter considered the question of research approach and described a study which used a mixed methods approach of data gathering. Although it was primarily in the qualitative research paradigm, it also included quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. Hence the chapter considered associated issues of compatibility of research methodologies and assumptions and the adoption of a pragmatic approach. It considered the iterative processes in the use of both quantitative and qualitative data in

assisting framing of questions and collection of further data in the second stage of interviews with principals and the subsequent strategies for organisation and analysis of the obtained data. In the following chapter, the results obtained from the data analysis processes will be discussed in the context of the research aim and Research Questions 1 to 3.

Chapter 4 Results: Research Question 1, 2 and 3

Introduction

      This chapter reports on the responses provided in a survey of all central school principals and information obtained from interviewed principals concerning the ways in which the situational context of central school leadership has affected the work lives of principals of central schools in remote NSW. Section 1 reports results on how the education policy context of devolution of government school systems and generic models of school leadership has affected principals' work lives (RQ1). Section 2 provides results concerning the community contexts of remoteness and low socio-economic status (SES) and the work lives of principals of central schools (RQ2). Section 3 reports results concerning the work lives of principals in the specific school contexts of leading a small school and leading both secondary and primary departments (RQ3).

      This chapter reports the results of data analysis based on the survey questionnaire (see Appendix B1) and the program of semi-structured interviews with principals in their schools (see Appendix C). The returned questionnaires provided a sample of 27 out of a population of 58 principals of central schools, which was a response rate of 47 per cent. Thirteen of the principals offered to participate further in being interviewed over several days in their schools. One of the 13 principals who offered to participate was not included in the interview schedule, because of the difficulty for the researcher to travel to the school which was in an extremely remote location. Twelve of the principals participated in a schedule of two extended interviews in their own schools. Eight of the twelve participants completed both interviews, while four were available for one interview. Data from both survey questionnaires and interviews were analysed and reported with reference to the three research questions noted below:

RQ1: *To what extent has the educational policy context affected the work lives of principals of central schools?*

RQ2: *To what extent have the work lives of principals of central schools been affected by the characteristics of the communities in which they are located, namely: a) the geographic context of remoteness, and b) being located in communities with a low-SES profile?*

RQ3: *To what extent have the work lives of principals of central schools been affected by the specific school characteristics of central schools in NSW, namely: a) being small schools, and b) being composite schools with both secondary and primary departments?*

Surveyed principals provided responses and the interviewed principals provided perceptions which helped to describe their work lives in the context of: devolution changes in the NSW public education system (RQ1), the community context of remoteness and low socio-economic status (RQ2), and the specific school context of small size and having combined primary and secondary departments (RQ3).

Coding and de-identification of towns, schools and principals

In presenting data from interview transcripts, excerpts were sometimes edited slightly to ensure de-identification of a principal, community or school as well as to consider length, relevance, readability, comprehensibility and avoidance of repetition. This editing did not delete, change or distort the meanings conveyed by the participants to the researcher as described by Hatch (2002, p. 226). The text was edited to some extent, for example, to remove some repetitions and to correct grammatical mistakes; however, care was taken not to alter the content of the participants' comments.

In each of the remote towns, the central schools were named "[Town Name] Central School". For economy of labelling, each principal was de-identified by using the same code name as the town and school in which the principal worked. For example, in the town labelled as R1, where the school's name is R1 Central School, the participant principal has been identified as Principal R1. Quotations from interviews with principals, examples such as (Principal R1, Interview 1), have been abbreviated as (Pr R1, Int 1).

Survey data: Background context of principals of central schools

In order to provide background data, principals provided demographic data related to their gender, age, professional background and length of experience as a principal *per se* and as a principal at the particular school.

Table 4.1 *Principals of central schools: Gender, Age*

			Frequency	%
Gender				
Male			18	67
Female			9	33
Total			27	100

Age	Frequency			
	Male	Female	Subtotal	%
<35	1	0	1	4
35-50	7	4	11	41
51-60	10	5	15	56
Over 60			0	0
Total	18	9	27	100

Table 4.1 indicates that male principals outnumbered female principals in the ratio of two to one. This ratio was consistent across age groups. A small majority (56 per cent) of the principals were in the last decade of their anticipated working career. None of the respondent principals reported that they were working beyond the age of 60 years, the earliest age in which they can retire with full superannuation benefits. The one principal who was aged under 35 volunteered the comment that he was not necessarily committed to continuing his career in school education. Most (74 per cent) of the principals were originally trained as secondary teachers (see Table 4.2).

Principals as novices in their different contexts

A majority, 53 per cent, of the principals of central schools were novice principals in that they had been principals for no more than three years and 63 per cent of the respondent principals had been the principal of their current school for fewer than four years. For 82 per cent of the principals, the current appointment was their first appointment as a principal. Seventy four per cent of principals who had responded to the survey and ten out of twelve of the interviewed principals had been trained as secondary teachers. The secondary trained principals had been promoted from non-principal

positions in their previous schools and lacked experience in dealing with parents, especially the frequency and intensity of contacts with parents of very young children. Some interviewees expressed concern about the number of central school principals who were inexperienced in such issues:

> I have an extreme worry about the number of central school principals in NSW who are doing it tough. I believe there is a problem in going from a head teacher into the principal's role and not having experience of the pressures of a K-12 school where you have the dichotomy between the primary and secondary departments in terms of attitudes of parents and staff. (Pr T1, Int 1)

Principals with a primary background found it necessary to learn about secondary school issues on the job:

> I have concentrated on the secondary issues because I am not trained in a secondary background. … When I first came, it was a real trial. It was hard yakka for two or three years. (Pr S3, Int 1)

Table 4.2   *Principal experience: Training and school tenure*

	Frequency			
	Male	Female	Subtotal	%
Training experience				
Primary	3	4	7	26
Secondary	15	5	20	74
Total	18	9	27	100
Principal experience (years)				
<1	3	0	3	12
1-3	7	4	11	41
4-10	5	5	10	37
>10	3	0	3	11
Total	18	9	27	100
Principal's tenure at the school (years)				
<1	4	0	4	15
1-3	7	6	13	48
4-10	6	3	9	33
>10	1	0	1	4
Total	18	9	27	100

Section 1: Education Policy Context of Devolution

The responses of surveyed principals provided data for RQ 1 concerning the education policy context of devolution reforms in NSW. Responses detailed principals' attitudes about the levels of school-based management and the possible benefits of devolution and uniform standards of accountability. The interviewed principals provided more detail about the work lives of central school principals. In doing so, they discussed a number of issues and concerns: including the effects of marketisation on declining school enrolments, the nature of their relationships with School Education Directors (SEDs), the incidence of community complaints and how they are dealt with by SEDs, work intensification and concerns about career prospects.

Comparisons between demographic subgroups in the survey

Survey data were interrogated for possible associations and differences between the demographic subgroups of principals based on gender, training background, size of school, principalship experience and age group of the principal. After testing for possible associations and differences between the subgroups, it was found that the responses of surveyed principals were similar regardless of their particular demographic background.

Possible associations

Cross tabulations were produced matching each of the six demographic variables with the 74 interval scale items in Sections A and B as the dependent variables. When Pearson's chi-square (χ^2) test was applied to these cross tabulations, 15 of the 444 tabulations indicated a correlation with $p < 0.05$. This low proportion of associations between the subgroups and responses to the 74 survey items was an indication of the extent of uniformity of the principals' responses across each of the six demographic subgroups.

Factor analysis and comparison of means

Factor analysis was applied to the 28 items in Section A to obtain six principal components. Four factors concerning perceptions of the outcomes of devolution policies were extracted. Three of the factors were variables in which principals described the extent to which devolution policies had established school-based management, flexibility in daily operations of the school and allowed for resources being managed by the school. When t tests were used to compare the means for the responses of demographic subgroups of principals for these three factors there were few instances of statistical differences.

However, for the fourth factor which concerned principal's perceptions of benefits of the devolution reforms for staff and students, more experienced and secondary-trained principals perceived that there were fewer benefits for staff and students. An independent-samples t test compared the scores of perceived benefits for principals with different years of experience as a principal. There was a significantly lower score for principals with more years of experience (M = 1.5, SD = 0.5) than for principals in their first year as principal (M = 2.0, SD = 0.0: T(23.0) = 5.2, p = 0.0). The magnitude of the differences was very large (eta squared = 0.5).

Similarly, an independent-samples t test compared the scores of perceived benefits for principals from different training backgrounds. There was a significantly lower score for secondary-trained principals (M = 1.8, SD = 0.8) than for primary-trained principals (M = 2.7, SD = 0.5: T(25.0) = 2.7, p = 0.1). The magnitude of the differences was large (eta squared = 0.2).

Principals' views on school-based management

Both survey items and interviews sought principals' views on policies of devolution of the NSW public education system and consequent issues of school-based management. The survey questionnaire included items designed to assess principals' perceptions of the extent of benefit to their schools of specific aspects of school-based management. A five-point Likert scale was used to capture the extent to which principals agreed with global statements about the public education system. Principals

were asked to respond to statements which characterised aspects of school-based management, and then to respond to more specific statements about their own flexibility in managing assets and property, student discipline and welfare, and teaching the core curriculum within their own school.

Although principals agreed that they had flexibility in student discipline (74 per cent agreed), student welfare (85 per cent) and teaching the core curriculum (85 per cent), only 37 per cent agreed that they had flexibility in properties and maintenance (see Table 4.3). Remote area schools were particularly dependent on well-maintained infrastructure for computer and telecommunications components of information technology (IT) and interview participants expressed their dissatisfaction about the difficulties in maintaining adequate IT services:

> We had to give up the IT line [help desk] as a bit of a joke. We tried to ring them, they would not come, they would try to help you out on the phone and that did not work. The support was inadequate and inefficient. Half the time nobody knew what they were doing. They would come in and change something but they could not help us with other things. The support just has not been there for us. (Pr W2, Int 2)

Table 4.3   *School-based management and flexibility*

Statement	%			
	Disagree[a]	Neutral	Agree	Total
Current education system characterised as school-based management	56	7	37	100
The school has flexibility in:				
- Properties and maintenance	70	19	11	100[b]
- Student discipline	15	11	74	100
- Student welfare	7	7	85	100
- Teaching core curriculum	19	4	78	100

[a] The original survey variables had five possible response values. The variables were recoded using SPSS as follows: Strongly Disagree and Disagree with code values 1 and 2 respectively were recoded as value 1 and value label Disagree; Neutral with code value 3 was recoded to value 2; Agree and Strongly Agree with code values 4 and 5 were recoded to value 3 and value label Agree. The counts (frequencies) of the recoded variables were converted to a percentage to the nearest integer of the total number of responses.
[b] After rounding the percentages for the three responses the totals of the three approximated percentages did not necessarily add to 100.

Extent of autonomy

The results of Table 4.3 indicate that respondent principals believed they had some flexibility and autonomy in their schools. However, they were sceptical of the purposes of many of the directions given to them by their SEDs. At the time of this study, principals were responding to directions from a range of SEDs and they believed that many of these directions had a political purpose only of supporting or enhancing the reputation of the government of the day. For example, Principal S4 expressed the view:

> The decisions that are made are knee jerk decisions and it just flows down. I do not think a lot of the decisions are of educational value. We have some autonomy but I would say 80 per cent of our administration is delivering a political message. (Interview 1)

New Departmental regulations or codes originating from the government of the day appeared to allow little discretion for principals. Principal S5 perceived that:

> If you read the Code of Conduct, one of the lines in there is that you will carry out the policies of the government of the day, I would add unwritten is, "and woe betide you if you do not". (Interview 2)

Levels of satisfaction of principals with devolution reforms

Surveyed principals were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with statements about the benefits accruing to their school in the current system of school-based management. The results for these survey items are presented below in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4   *Benefit of current level of school-based management*

The current level of school-based management has benefits for:	%			
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total %
- efficient management of resources	40	12	48	100
- staffing of schools	59	15	26	100
- staff morale	44	19	37	100
- student achievement	30	26	44	100
- encouraging teacher professionalism	30	30	41	100

Slightly more principals agreed on the envisaged benefits of the Education Reform Act (1990) and school-based management for efficient management of resources, student achievement and encouraging teachers to think and act as professionals. However, a larger majority of central school principals, 59 per cent, did not see benefits in the critical area of staffing of their schools.

Uniform standards of accountability

The NSW Education Reform Act (1990) provided for devolution of more management responsibilities to the level of the school and also increased the use of accountability measures for government schools. The accountability measures included statewide standardised tests, publication of Annual School Reports with formats, headings and prescribed topics as mandated by the government and mandates for schools to create and use school management plans. Cluster Directors, and later School Education Directors (SEDs), required principals to include in these plans goals for improvement in the school results in standardised tests. The principals' levels of agreement with statements about the benefits for schools and students of standardised testing, the Annual School Report and school management plans are summarised in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5   *Standardised tests, Annual School Report and Management Plan*

	%			
Statement	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total %
Standardised tests benefit students	33	19	48	100
Annual School Report is useful	59	22	19	100
Management plan is school-based	19	7	74	100
Management plan is a useful guide	11	11	78	100

Responses to standardised tests

Principals were moderately positive regarding the value of standardised testing for students. However, participant principals who were interviewed distinguished between

the value of testing for use within the school and perceived misuse of the results by SEDs, and potentially by parents. Principal S2 explained that:

> The external tests I think are valuable things to do because they provide valuable information back. … They are an integral part of our school plan and they are an integral part of teachers' plans and programs and all the areas of support that come out of it, are part of teachers' programs. There is no issue with it there. (Interview 2)

On the other hand, they were critical of the subsequent privileging of these results by SEDs as a single measure of the school's performance. In the same interview as above, Principal S2 added:

> Where the problem lies with external testing is the way it is used by the system against the schools, when you get visits by School Education Directors and so on, who constantly refer to data and performance above or below state averages and things like that, that becomes annoying. (Interview 2)

When survey participants were asked to respond to the statement that "the school self-evaluation process and Annual School Report are useful for the school and its community", the mean of the coded responses was 2.3, which was significantly below a neutral response mean of 3. This indicated a significant level of disagreement with the survey statement. Interviewed principals stated that uniform testing and mandatory reporting formats did not take into account the specific socio-economic contexts of central schools and did not fully reflect the challenges and achievements of such schools.

One example of the special challenges faced by remote schools was the perceived lack of interest in reading by parents as well as children. Principals repeatedly referred to this apparent lack of interest in reading and the difficulty the school faced in lifting basic literacy levels in standardised tests up to state means. Principal W1 commented:

> [The parents and children] just do not have any kind of desire to read whatsoever. … I think that until we can turn that around, no amount of programming and great teaching experiences will make as much difference as children who actually want to read and love reading. (Interview 1)

Interviewed principals were particularly critical of the subsequent use of standardised test results by SEDs as a single measure of the school's performance. They were offended when SEDs used means in standardised tests as the main instrument of accountability concerning the effectiveness of the principal and teachers. Principal S2 expressed concern on behalf of his staff:

> I would take enormous offence if anyone came into this school and said my teaching staff do not work hard enough. They are trying as hard as they can and are doing as much as they can and are involved in a whole range of professional development in order to improve their skills and improve the education they offer the kids. (Interview 2)

Annual School Reports

Survey responses indicated a high level of disagreement, 59 per cent, with the proposition that the mandated school self-evaluation process and the resultant Annual School Report were useful for the school and its community (see Table 4.5).

The topics for the Annual School Reports included publication of achievements and weaknesses of the school's performances in standardised Basic Skills Tests (BSTs) for students in Years 3 and 5 in primary departments and in Years 7, 8 and 9 in secondary departments of central schools. Principals also referred to the preparation of the Annual School Report as a time-consuming chore, which did not improve outcomes for the school or the students, and which ranked significantly lower in comparison with the other higher priority needs of the school. Several principals reported that being late in the completion of the Annual School Report was considered their most serious failing in the perception of their SEDs. As Principal R1 reported:

> I am like every other principal, there are some holes in my management, there are things that are not in place and I am certainly not saying that I am squeaky clean, and yet I cannot get the job done. I work 12 hours a day and I cannot do all the paperwork that is required of me in that time. My view is that as long as the staff are happy, the students are being taught, the teaching and learning programs are in place, that I am not embezzling money, or nobody else is, that should be okay. Getting the Annual School Report done should be the last thing on my list but they do not accept that, of course. (Interview 1)

The DET guidelines concerning the Annual School Report included minute details about the content that was required to be in included in the Report and the phrasing and formatting, such as bullet points, which should or should not be used. Concern for the value of the targets developed in the process of writing the Annual School Report was expressed by Principal S1 in the following terms:

> I wrote the Annual School Report for 2005, and sent it off and included targets for 2006. State Office sent it back to me and said, "You have not got any targets in there that relate to literacy and numeracy or attendance. Put some in." State Office has its mandates of what should be targets and those targets are all hard targets. I believe 90 per cent of the most important targets in schools are soft targets. Hard targets are directly measurable in terms of external performance, of performance in external examinations, or attendance, while soft targets are important targets that relate to the culture of the school, relate to the community interaction, or relate to relationships within the school. (Interview 1)

School management plans

Most principals, (74 per cent) agreed that the mandated school management plan was school-based, and 78 per cent agreed that it was a useful guide to school planning (see Table 4.5). However, interviewed principals expressed reservations about how officers in the Department interpreted standardised tests results, the Annual School Report and school management plans. Some were concerned that in focusing on student results for basic skills the task of schools was being oversimplified. Principal S1 commented on the importance of relationships rather than results in standardised testing for the health of the school:

> I really have problems with the way the Department tries to measure our effectiveness. Our product is esoteric; the results of our work quite often are not evident, for ten or fifteen years. I can talk about many specific instances that point to that. We deal in perceptions, so everything is abstract, the style of relationships, the way in which people interact, is absolutely critical. If you are going to make an organisation as complex as this one work, because it is a very complex organisation, then you have to work at the relationship level, you have no alternative. (Interview 1)

Work Intensification: Working longer hours

Participant principals reported working for 70 to 80 hours a week as if this was the norm. Principal S1 had started his principalship by working 70 hours a week and needed to take leave to recuperate. Principal S1 had a goal of reducing the working hours and was able to reduce it to 60 hours a week (Interview 2). Principal S2 reported, "I would spend on a normal day at least 12 or 13 hours day, plus weekend time" (Interview 2). Principal S2 cited the advice of his School Education Director (SED), who advised him that he could cut back his workload by 50 per cent, and that Principal S2 worked "too much, way too much" (Interview 2).

In times of high emotional demand, such as when supporting a poorly performing teacher, Principal S3 reported a need to work longer hours:

> For this poorly performing teacher, I was giving demonstrations and assisting, taking over at times and so I had to do everything after hours. I was here until 9 or 10 o'clock most nights in the office doing work trying to cover up from the day and on top of all that we had all the other emotional issues [concerning child abuse reports]. (Interview 1)

When asked about the hours of work, Principal S2 replied, "We worked it out, it is about 80 hours a week. … And I miss my wife at times" (Interview 2). Principal S4 worked in a school whose community was the subject of a national TV investigation which revealed extraordinary levels of social dysfunction and child abuse. She reported how, "some mornings I am in here at 5 o'clock" (Interview 2). As a sample day, Principal S4 reported:

> Yesterday I left home at 5 am to get to Town XX in time to start at 9 am for a seminar. After a day at the seminar, at 3 pm, I had to drive home again. Apart from the day at the seminar, I spent seven hours driving. (Interview 2)

Survey of endogenous and exogenous factors in working longer hours

In the survey questionnaire, Sections Bi and Be, principals were asked two questions about each of 28 typical tasks performed by principals. The first question asked them about their perception of an ideal self-managing school and whether they should spend less, the same or more time on each task. For each of the listed typical tasks listed in Table 4.6 the principals also were asked their perceptions of how much

time the DET expected principals to spend on the task. The first row, labelled "Principals", in each task gave an indication of the strength of endogenous factors, while the second row, labelled "DET", in each task gave an indication of the strength of exogenous pressures.

The percentages of principals reporting that in an ideal self-managing school more time should be spent on the listed task was higher in seven of the nine listed tasks than the percentages of principals perceiving that the Department of Education and Training (DET) expected them to spend more time (see Table 4.6). The only two tasks in which a lower percentage of principals preferred to spend more time than they perceived that the DET expected of them were the tasks of student welfare and developing reporting to parents.

Table 4.6 *Endogenous and exogenous factors in time spent by principals*

Typical task	Principals' preferred time / their perceptions of DET expectations of time spent	Percentage of principals		
		Less	Same	More
Development of school curriculum	Principals	4	19	78 [b]
	DET [a]	8	39	54
Development of teaching/learning programs	Principals	7	11	82
	DET	0	39	62
Development of student assessment procedures	Principals	4	19	78
	DET	0	31	69
Supervision of and mentoring of staff	Principals	0	11	89
	DET	4	23	73
Professional development at school	Principals	0	26	74
	DET	8	69	23
Professional development off-site	Principals	7	33	59
	DET	19	50	31
Principal's professional development	Principals	0	37	63
	DET	8	42	50
Student welfare	Principals	24	28	48
	DET	4	42	54
Development of reporting to parents	Principals	4	48	48
	DET	4	23	73

Note. These tasks are a selection of the 28 tasks listed in the questionnaire. For nearly all tasks, a majority of principals thought more time or at least the same time should be spent on the task.

[a] The three percentages in each row for "Principals" refer to the percentage of principals who believed they should spend less, the same or more time respectively and similarly for the three percentages in each row for "DET" refer to the percentage of principals who perceived that the DET expected them to spend less, the same or more time respectively

[b] The percentages may not add to 100 because original percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Increased number and diversity of tasks

Principals reported on how the education policy of devolution of responsibility to schools and their principals had resulted in State Office assigning an increased number of tasks to principals:

State Office has not only devolved the pain, it has devolved the workload and responsibility. State Office just keeps shuffling more and more workload to schools and holding principals responsible. If principals right across New South Wales made the decision they were going to go on stress leave tomorrow because there was just too damn much to do, what would happen? (Pr S1, Int 1).

School principals perceived themselves primarily as teachers and school leaders. They were concerned about the high proportion of their time that was being used for administration of what they perceived to be politically motivated projects. Principal W1 "loved" the job of educational leadership, but was frustrated by the increasing numbers of requirements that appeared to be "politically based" and that principals were becoming "political monsters" (Int 2):

The reason I love doing this job is the fact that I see my role as an educational leader. However, I am getting more frustrated because I think my role is being taken away from educational leadership. I think it is becoming too much an administrivia and politically based job. We have seen things such as the standardised A to E requirements for reporting to parents and negotiating submissions for Investing in Schools grants and the extra standardised tests that keep coming up. They say we will have extra tests in this, this and this. I think that is a sad indictment on the fact that we are becoming more and more political monsters. I get quite discouraged because I would rather not be dealing with that. (Interview 2)

Principal S1 reported on the inordinate amount of time required to deal adequately with the volume of electronic communications:

I spent four hours yesterday of my Sunday going through the Department's online portal and there was stuff in there that I did not know even existed. It was very scary in that if I were to get through updating myself on the intranet and my portal and dealing with the online regulations in *Inprincipal*, [the Department's weekly communication vehicle], I would have no time for anything else. Forget leading and managing the school. (Interview 2)

In addition, there was a resulting pressure on principals to complete tasks in a shorter time:

There is a perception that because it is being sent to us in electronic form, we will respond immediately. So the workload at the school level has increased inordinately and much of that responsibility has been thrown on the shoulders of the principal. Take *InPrincipal*, it has become a dumping

ground. As an example, there was a memo about the Institute of Teachers and its latest bulletin. The bulletin was 10 pages long, with 43 hypertext links. If you printed the bulletin and every page that came from the hypertext links, there were 118 pages to read resulting from just one of the memos sent to the school. The Department's website is changing all the time and for me to keep abreast of that I need to spend five to six hours a week just looking at the website. I do not have that time. (Pr S1, Int 1)

Principals were undertaking a greater diversity of tasks and sometimes they were being asked to accept responsibilities for new tasks, which they had not anticipated:

State Office has contracted companies to do school cleaning, but I am now the supervisor of the cleaners. There is nothing in writing about it, it has been very furtive, quite under the radar but suddenly all of the cleaners' contract information is coming to me. The cleaning contractor's representative comes and asks me what have they been doing and I have the responsibility of saying what hours the cleaners have to be here for. That was never the job of the principal, when it went from being a school-based position to a contract-based position. (Pr S1, Int 2)

Health concerns

One of the factors in intensification of work load was the tension that principals felt between dealing with the shorter term issues and demands of administration and, at the same time, performing a leadership role to achieve longer term goals. This tension sometimes led to principals spending longer hours on the job and experiencing stress about their capacity to cope. While some (Pr S3, Int 1; Pr S4, Int 2) referred to having health regime strategies to maintain their fitness to cope with their workload, principals also described taking periods of long service leave as a way to recover and restore their energy levels (Pr S1, Int 2; Pr S3, Int 1). Several principals, such as Principal S1, reported that they had used other forms of leave, apart from Sick Leave, as a way to maintain their health:

You have the tension always between your administrative load and your leading and managing the school. That is the source of professional blues for me. I had Long Service Leave in Term 1 this year, and when I came back I had forgotten while I was away how busy I was in this job, how intense the role was and after being back here for a week I was really down, I was really down. I thought to myself, I was starting to compare my busy-ness and my intensity with where I was in 2004, after I had just started in the school. Have I made any progress at all and that was a huge issue, and I got so bad I

was considering going for counselling support. I felt as pressured and as busy as my first couple of months in the school. … It is very draining, extremely draining. (Interview 2)

"Marketisation": Free bus passes for students

Problems associated with declining populations, declining enrolments of students, loss of specialist teaching staff and the reality of reduced curriculum offerings were compounded by government provisions which assisted students to attend schools outside the town. As part of its policy of supporting greater parental choice in schools the government provided free bus transport for students who wished to enrol at a school away from their nearest government school. Principals spoke in strong terms about how the provision of free bus transport out of the local community had taken students away from local schools:

> The school loses students out of Year 6 every year. There are three busloads of kids going to [larger centre] every day from town, and it is free. Mongrels [referring to the government]. (Pr T1, Int 1).

> We do have a problem [the free bus to a larger town]. It has a big high school with all the advantages that adolescent kids find with a big high school. … So we do lose a proportion of our senior students … But when I put my kids on the bus to take them into the larger town to do a TAFE course, they have to pay and that is a big political hot potato. (Pr R1, Int 1).

In particular, free bus transport to more distant schools had taken away many of the more capable students leaving a residual population of students, with a higher proportion of the remaining cohort being of lower ability or having special needs and therefore requiring more intensive support from the school. As described by Principal U1:

> The government is very good at subsidising transport away from the local school and so you just jump on the bus and off you go and the people can rightly say, kids are getting better results elsewhere but it is the sort of kids that you have taken away that are getting a better result elsewhere. We have a declining threshold population of school age kids and the government has just made it easier and easier for kids to go away to school. (Interview 1)

Similarly, Principal S3 and her community had asked the government to change the transport rules, because the provision of subsidised buses to bypass the school was "a very big issue" (Interview 1). Principal S4 also reported on the provision of free bus travel for students who had enrolled in a larger centre resulting in a decline in both student numbers and the proportion of more capable students in the local central school. Principal S4 described the effect as "Reverse discrimination, we have reverse discrimination, the government is actually supporting segregation" (Interview 1). In addition, the decline in student population resulted in a concomitant decline in the allocated levels of human and material resources which were tied to student enrolments.

Principals were concerned also that the increased proportion of enrolments from lower socio-economic families had resulted in a change in the image of the school. They believed that the image of the school began to suffer and parents in higher socio-economic groups had a greater incentive to move their children to other schools, again utilising government subsidies in the form of free bus travel away from the local central school. The effect on student numbers and the composition of student cohorts was most noticeable in the higher years of the school where the school was already struggling to maintain viable numbers. Principal S3 reported:

> The kids have changed. In those days, they came from functional families whereas today there are many dysfunctional families. We do not have the very bright kids. The bus has been a big influence. It takes local children to XX High School. That has been the downfall of the school. The kids do not have to pay to go, so they bypass the local school and because one mate goes, then the next, then the next and you have lost all of your good kids and you are dealing with the lower kids. Then the reputation is not as good because you are not achieving to the same degree. … We would have at least 50 per cent of our Year 6 students leave to travel to XX High School for Years 7 and 8. (Interview 1)

Devolution: The principal seen as 'the Department'

One aspect of the devolution reforms has been a repeated reduction in the number of staff employed in State and Regional offices. Administrative structures have become 'flatter', through a decrease in middle management of the State's Department of Education. In meetings with groups of principals, Departmental directors advised principals that the principals were the site managers of their schools and should regard

themselves as being 'the Department' in their communities. In practice, when a member of the public telephones the NSW DET (now DEC), the answering message advises the caller to contact the principal of their local school if they have any enquiries that need answering. Principal S1 perceived that the devolution of responsibilities to the level of the school had increased workloads in schools:

> There are not the people in the corporate side to deal with things anymore and it has to be done at the school level so the workload at the school level has increased inordinately. (Interview 1)

Dealing with parent and staff complaints

Parent complaints

Principals expressed anxiety about the number, content and direction of complaints by parents, who resorted to making their complaints known at higher levels:

> They are not averse to writing to ministers or Members of Parliament. We had a major toilet blockage the other day, so we closed the school down for a day. I do not know who or why, but it ended up with the Minister. There is a fair bit of this loose cannon stuff at the parent level. If you do not do what they want you to do, they just scream within the local community, they scream in here, they scream in District Office, and then they drag their kids out and put them on the bus and go into [a bigger centre]. (Pr T1, Int 1)

Principal R1 reported, "There was a parent complaint [by two individuals] that should have been addressed with a complaints procedure. Instead, the Director called a School Review" (Interview 1). Principal R1 asserted that the "only evidence the SED can produce is that I am late with my Annual School Report, I am late with documentation" and after complaints from the community about other issues, the SED decided that the school had serious problems] (Interview 1). The school's Parents & Citizens body dissociated itself from the complainants and sent a letter to the SED saying that the complainants did not represent the community. Principal R1 described the threat of a School Review, combined with meetings with the SED and Regional Director as "a complete debacle". The principal had "had enough" and had decided to resign from the Department at the end of the year (Interview 1). Over half of the interviewed principals intended moving from their locations as soon as possible because of the extent of family, social and professional isolation (see more detail on p. 184).

Some principals had good relations with their communities, yet even principals who spoke with confidence about the current relationships with their community and SED had a degree of apprehension that they would be on their own if, for some reason, local and district relationships changed and State Office did not choose to support the principal. Principal S4 felt under no illusion that despite the currently good relationship with the SED, any parent complaint had the potential to create serious problems for the principal:

> The Department would leave me out in the cold if anything went wrong. They [DET] would cut their losses. They would lay blame. … I am under no illusion that if there was an incident in the school and they wanted to lay blame. They would go to District and although I found my Director to be very supportive, I think if it went further the Department would support the parent regardless of whether the parent was right or wrong. (Interview 1)

Principals reported instances in their own experience and in the experience of other principals when unexpected and serious problems had suddenly arisen and the principal concerned had felt very exposed when the DET was no longer offering them the support to which they felt entitled.

While some principals felt confident that their position was secure when they were careful to 'follow the book' in every detail of Departmental requirements, other principals were less confident about maintaining the confidence of senior Departmental officials if their decision as principal happened to offend a politically active parent or group of parents. Principal S5 mentioned several times that the two previous principals of the school had been "run out of town" (Int 2).

Many of the participant principals referred to the issue of parent or community members making complaints to the Minister for Education or SEDs and this became a significant issue for principals. Some principals were the subject of complaints raised by members of staff. In very small townships, teachers and community members lived in close proximity and, of necessity, formed many of their personal as well as their professional relationships with each other. Hence, complaints by staff became complaints raised by a community member or members with the local Director. The

manner in which Directors reacted to and dealt with such complaints was a critical determinant in the reputation and future career prospects of principals:

> Those parents that are out there who are stirrers and troublemakers, can be very destructive. They are destructive in the sense that they bring the school down. They sow seeds of discontent throughout the community and even the sensible logical thinkers who would be prepared to accept that we know what we are doing, their confidence is undermined by the constant stirring and the constant negative talk that goes on at the footy match on Sunday afternoon. It does bring the school down. That sort of small handful of toxic members of the community that just cannot keep their mouths shut and telling tales and making decisions that affect the whole community. (Pr R1, Int 1)

Principal S4 spoke of complaints originating in the community between different groups, which then flowed to complaints against members of staff. Sometimes community members disagreed with the selection of particular people for school support jobs at the school:

> At the moment, I have nine complaints against nine workers in our school, each from different families complaining about each other, now they are all dealt with at school level. (Interview 1)

Staff had also been wrongly blamed for incidents that had arisen after reports made by community members to government agencies, particularly for sensitive issues such as reports of child abuse:

> A couple of teachers were personally blamed for an incident that happened in the town. We have actually had people blaming the teacher, saying, "This is your fault, you caused this". … I have an absolutely fabulous school counsellor and it is not her job to counsel staff but we rang her and she went into the classroom and sat with the class teacher. (Interview 1)

Principal S5 described what he had believed to be successful strategies in hearing of potential complaints and solving them at the school level:

> If you build your relationships right within the town and I accept that can turn on a threepence in a country town, but if you have a good relationship with your town, they come to you and not the Minister. There is the occasional threat of a solicitor or "We could go to the Minister over this". I tend to deal with that by saying, "I am fully aware of that, but let us try to solve it here", and so far, we have. (Interview 1)

Principal S5 described some success in achieving a positive relationship with the local community and attributed much of the success as resulting from the decision to buy a house and live in the town and be an active participant in community affairs and he advised new staff that it was critically important for staff to join in community activities:

> You have a choice and it is where the young teacher I was talking about found it difficult. The choice is very simple, be a part of the community or do not, but if you do not, be prepared to leave, and that is the bottom line with it and that sounds very harsh. (Interview 1)

Although describing successes in dealing with any current complaints, Principal S5 spoke at some length about the serious difficulties experienced by the two previous principals and the complaints they had to deal with. In referring to the difficulties of the previous principal, Principal S5 was careful not to be too specific because of the ongoing risk of legal action:

> It is a tremendously supportive community, but having said that, if you will not be a part of the community it is fair to say that the last two principals here were essentially forced out. One had been here a long time, and fell foul of a particular group of people, and the other one had that whole problem that I was talking about and had tried to hold this place together as best she could, for three years. The problem was not hers. (Interview 1)

Principal S5 expressed his awareness that he cannot guarantee that he would always be successful in his strategies of dealing with potential and actual complaints. Principal S5 stated, "I never ever take it for granted because as I said my two predecessors were basically run out of town" (Interview 2).

Principal T1, like Principal S5 above, had bought a house in the community and had children at home sharing in the life of the school and community. However, this investment in the life of the community did not prevent community members from raising complaints about him. The complaints were based on an incorrect assumption about the principal's out of school hours' activity. Principal T1 explained:

> There was a petition put out about eight years ago to get rid of me, because I was spending too much time at the pub, my car was parked at the bottom of the pub for hour after hour after hour. It was actually my daughter working behind the bar. (Interview 1)

Staff complaints

Principals reported that they were not always aware of complaints about them made by members of staff, and they lacked confidence that they will be treated with natural justice or procedural fairness or will be allowed to defend themselves in such situations. Principal U1 recounted that after having some difficulty in the supervision of a teacher, the teacher or teachers, complained directly to the SED about the principal's supervision practices. Principal U1 quoted the Director as saying:

> The staff have no confidence in your leadership … You have four people who I am not going to nominate on a staff of nine secondary and four primary teachers who do not have confidence in your leadership and I have another one that sent me an email. (Director cited by Pr U1, Int 2)

When Principal U1 attempted to find out any details about what the staff did not have confidence in, the Director was quoted as saying, "I cannot. I am not going to tell you, I cannot tell you." Principal U1 believed that:

> Certain procedures and natural justice had not occurred and still have not occurred and I continue to feel isolated from staff and from the Director. (Interview 2)

Relationships with School Education Directors

Some principals, such as Principal W2, reported that they had good support provided by their particular School Education Director, although this perception was qualified by concerns about other pressures from the Department, such as accountability. Principal W2 reported:

> I have had lots of good support, my district Director gives good support. I am a bit concerned about the increasing accountability and decreasing resources, but apart from that, it is fine. (Interview 2)

Principal S1 reported:

> I have a big issue with what I call devolution of responsibility, and workload because as the Department has cut the guts out of its corporate side, at the same time, they have increased accountability. (Interview 1)

When talking about relationships with community members and Departmental officers at state and district levels, principals were much less confident than they were with relationships within the school, and either expressed concerns about what can happen or referred to relationships with the community where they looked for support from their SED and this was not forthcoming. Principal R1 related:

> There is no support and I only see him when he comes to do my PARS [Principals Annual Review Schedule] visits, and he just demands to see this and demands to see that and if I raise the issues I need support on I do not get any support whatsoever and he never shows his face at other times. As soon as we start talking about any of my agenda, he is watching his clock. You can see he is thinking, "Well, I have only got to put up with this for another half an hour, I will be out of here". … They keep saying, "If you have got any issues you need to discuss, ring me", and if you have a crisis going on in your school, you get on the phone and nine times out of ten, they are not there. I just waste my time trying to find him. (Interview 1)

Similarly, Principal U1 perceived the Director's role primarily as that of accountability and checking on the principal's performance: "I still feel at times that these SED visits are like the Spanish Inquisition" (Interview 1).

Principal S1 reported that despite his "scream" for support in managing the special circumstances at his school when he was a novice principal and the school was more isolated than other central schools, the School Education Director was more concerned to criticise the principal. Principal S1 remarked:

> Most of the time I am isolated. … In early 2004, Sydney was too far away [900 km] and I could not get any support. I screamed out, and my SED actually said to me in early Term 3, "I believe from talking to people in Sydney that the school might be in crisis". He came to the front office and he said, "I am here to see the principal. Do not let anyone in." He came to my office just as I was about to leave it and he said, "I am here to see you. I want to see you now." … I said, "I believe you set me up here for a failure because … if you heard in Sydney that the school was in crisis maybe you needed to listen to me before and come out to the school before now to speak to me about how I am going. After all, I am a new appointment and the first time you are here is to try to belt me around the head". (Interview 2)

Again, with a new SED, Principal S1 reported his concern about the continuing bias towards being critical:

The SED that I have at the moment has a big stick approach all the time and I just get sick and tired of being told what I am not doing and not getting any praise for what has been done. In the three and a half years that I have been here, there has not been a single, "Well done". (Interview 2)

Conflicting roles of the School Education Director

School Education Directors had apparently conflicting roles. One role of the SED was to be a mentor and professional guide for school principals in their districts. However, a number of principals perceived that this role was in conflict with the SED's other role in holding principals accountable for the management of their schools and the achievement of goals set by State Office. This conflict was perceived by some participants as resulting in what Principal S1 described as a "charade" in discussions about principals' professional development:

How can somebody who is in the role of professional accountability at this level at the same time be your professional supervisor? It is a direct conflict of role, our professional supervisor needs to be somebody who is like a principal support officer, with whom we can debrief, and with whom we can discuss strategies. It should not ever be the same person who has the role of holding me professionally accountable for leading and managing the school. I would see that as a huge conflict of interest if I was sitting in the chair of a SED, and yet the Department continues to maintain this charade around the position of the SED. (Interview 2)

The dual roles of the SED meant that some principals exercised caution in going to their Directors to reveal that they might have problems in their school or that they might seek a second opinion on a particular matter. Principal S4 described the resulting difficulty for both the principal and the Director:

If you go to your School Education Director, they see it as this person seeking advice, therefore they are having difficulties and before you know it, it smacks you in the back of the head, and that is not the case, it is just that you want them to be a sounding board. When you go to your SED for the second opinion, he takes off his hat and becomes a supervisor. He or she has no choice. That is the job because as the SED, they are our mentor and our supervisor, and I do not see how they can wear both hats. (Interview 2)

In addition, by 2005 the roles of SEDs had been expanded to include some nominated responsibilities at State, or Region, level for policy programs such as

Aboriginal Education and Environmental Education. Principal S1 reported that the additional roles of the SED added to a "duplicitous nature" in the role of the Director.

> The Department not only causes that duplicitous nature of that role to be sustained but adds another layer to it by saying well we are going to give you a corporate directed responsibility as well. So one SED is going to be responsible for Aboriginal Education across the Region, another SED is going to be responsible for Teacher Professional Learning across the Region and hold all the schools accountable. So it is adding another layer to this duplicitous nature of the role of the School Education Director. (Interview 2)

Systemic accountability and relationship with Directors

Participants perceived that the level of accountability to the State Office of the public education system had been increasing and that the higher level of systemic accountability placed stress on the relationship between the principal and the SED, even when the principal had a good opinion personally about the Director. For example, Principal S2 expressed concern about the effects of the high levels of systemic accountability on relationships with the Director:

> I think he is a nice bloke, a very genuine person and a person whom I never have a problem ringing up and talking to him. … Have a look at the role of a School Education Director. The level of accountability that that role is placing on principals is increasing all the time, to a point where I think it becomes detrimental to the relationship between the principal and the School Education Director. Although not in my case because I am forthright enough to tell him what I think, but he has a job to do and that is his job and the system is asking him to make principals enormously more accountable and possibly inflexible in some ways, than they should. (Interview 2)

Some conflict was seen between the stated guidelines and actual practice when Directors visited principals for their Principals Annual Review Schedule (PARS). Instead of being a negotiated process with presumably some agency on the part of the principal, Principal S2 reported the practice as one in which the Director sent out a list of issues to which the principal was expected to respond:

> I think the PARS process is meant to be a negotiated process and last time he sent out an email with 11 dot points of things that he wanted to discuss, then where the negotiations comes into it I fail to see. (Interview 2)

As previously mentioned (p. 144), Principal R1 described the lack of agenda setting by the principal in the Principals Annual Review Schedule by saying, "As soon as we start talking about any of my agenda, he is watching his clock" (Interview 1).

Dealing with school crises

Principals had some doubts about the value or direction of support by the Department and their Directors in the event of a school crisis. Some repeated statements made by Directors at principals' meetings that principals had a responsibility to "put out any fires", to deal with local crises wherever possible without expecting higher-level officers of the Department to do it for them. If a crisis came to the attention of higher-level officers, it was perceived as a reflection on the capacity of the principal effectively to manage the local school. Principal S1 had researched the school before his appointment and found that there were problems in the school that needed solving:

> After I arrived, the problems were far greater than I had anticipated. In fact, it was my opinion from Term 2 that the school was in crisis, but it took until the end of Term 3 for the State Office to get that message. … So because of that we were able to do certain things. You know, we were very close to a School Administrative Review, and if that had happened, they would have just shifted all the executive out and brought new staff in and I did not want that to happen. (Interview 1)

The above Section of the chapter has dealt with the results obtained from both the surveys and interviews of central school principals in relation to issues and concerns expressed over the increasing performativity and accountability required by the implementation of the policy context of devolution. The following Section reports on the results of the survey and interviews in relation to the issues and concerns identified by principals arising from the nature of the communities served by the schools and their principals.

Section 2: Community Context – Remote and low-SES

In providing data relevant to Research Question 2 concerning the community context of remoteness and declining socio-economic status (SES), interviewed principals described aspects of the communities that affected their work lives. They reported on

multiple aspects of isolation such as personal isolation from the wider networks of their families, friends and professional colleagues. They reported on their loneliness and social isolation within the remote community and, for those who had families living with them, the lack of employment and acute isolation experienced by their partners.

Female principals experienced particular difficulties in being accepted as professionals in remote communities and many of the interviewed principals reported at length on multiple aspects of violence in the communities: domestic violence, threats of violence against principals and high rates of child sexual abuse.

Remote Context

Long distance travel – OH&S

There were very few other principals in similar situations who can represent the interests of central schools in remote locations and hence one of the pressures felt by principals of central schools was the importance of volunteering for extra responsibilities as members of district and state committees representing remote schools, students and communities. Attendance at meetings of such committees and the conflicting pressure to avoid being out of their school for too long meant that principals would drive long distances without taking adequate rest stops as specified by Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) regulations. Although Principal S1 insisted on his staff taking adequate rest breaks, he himself did not satisfy OH&S requirements for his own long distance travel:

> I insist when my staff are out of school that they either be back before dark or stay overnight in a motel for OH&S reasons. … However, I am probably the worst at not doing that. Often, I have finished a meeting in Sydney at 3 pm, hopped in the car and driven home nearly 900 km without an overnight stop. (Interview 2)

Issues of isolation

Isolation from family and friends

Principals often expressed a feeling of being lonely because of the nature of their job in a remote town and the fact that they were required to live away from their family support and old friendship networks. Most principals of central schools, and especially

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principals previously located in secondary schools, had moved considerable distances in their relocation to the position of principal of the central school. Typically, their previous appointment had been in a high school in a larger population centre.

For some principals, the solution to this problem was to live in remote townships, perhaps hundreds of kilometres from their spouse, their partner or their families. This was particularly noticeable for the female principals. Four of the five participant female principals lived on their own in the remote town. One of the five female principals, Principal X1, lived with her husband and he remained unemployed. Two of the female principals in talking about maintaining their well-being during holiday periods, mentioned that they travelled long distances to be with their partners, who lived in larger, coastal centres (Pr S3, Int 1; Pr S4, Int 2). Principal S4 added that she had not yet had a holiday where she had not been contacted over a school issue (Interview 2).

Principal W1, who was one of the few participant principals whose children were living with him, reported how much he missed the social flexibility in having his parents available to assist them with babysitting and described how lonely he and his wife felt:

> It makes it worse when you ring your sister, and unlike us, she has been able to leave her kids with Mum and Dad again. They were able to go away for a weekend together, second time in four weeks and for us? We do not have family, we have friends but having said that, outside school we do not really have those friends because I am still the principal. In some ways it is very lonely, probably more so for my wife but now just after two years, we are just starting to think, we have been nomadic now for 16 years. I am getting to the point where I would really like to be back [on the coast] where our families live. (Interview 2)

For the seven male principals, four of their wives were able to find some form of casual work in the town, although not at the same professional level as they had achieved in larger centres. For those principals whose spouse lived with them (none of the principals lived with a non-married partner), there was some difficulty in finding suitable employment. Not having employment contributed to isolation for the spouse.

Isolation of family members

In interviews, principals raised issues related to remoteness and living in declining rural communities and sometimes talked about how isolated they felt in their current position. It was common for principals to feel that they were treated as outsiders by their neighbours in the remote towns. Principal U1 commented, "Last year, for the first time in 18 years [in this town], I was invited into a parent's house" (Interview 1). Similarly, Principal T1 recounted how he "hated [Town D] and the isolation" and he "had to get out" (Interview 1). Town D was a town in which Principal T1 had been a teacher in the central school.

Participants discussed the social isolation and limited employment opportunities of their families in a small township. Although Principal S2 tried to meet with his unemployed wife during the day, he reported how she "suffered" in her isolation:

> My wife cannot get a job. It is an issue for her and she suffers. I was over there just a little while ago and she can dust photo frames only a certain number of times. … Because of the nature of the isolated nature of the town and sometimes the apprehension of people talking and socialising with her, because of my position and the notion that what they tell her will invariably end up with me, that becomes a little bit socially isolating for her. Should she gain employment even one or two days a week, or should she get a circle of friends that keep her more occupied, I think that would lessen the stress on her. (Interview 2)

The issue of principals living away from their families was raised in two respects. Several spoke about long distance travel in trying to support and care for elderly parents. Concern about children who needed to leave home to find work or to study was raised as an issue. Principal U1 spoke with some emotion about trying to get to their daughter, who lived at a distance of over five hours driving, and who had suffered traumatic medical complications and possible attempted suicide:

> Her medication, it had a pretty disastrous effect on her and her body had just cracked up and she had gone into a meltdown situation and she could not eat, she could not drink and she just kept vomiting up and become delusionary and she apparently had so many goes at slashing her wrists and cracked it. (Interview 2)

At this time, the principal was dealing with a developing crisis involving the school staff and responding to pressure by the District's SED to explain and remedy some alleged deficiencies in student performances at the school. The SED was aware of the principal's family trauma and the principal felt that the Director should have supported the principal but did not do so at this critical time. The earliest date nominated for the district to provide consultancy support to improve student performances was three months later. Even though he had expressed many times during both interviews a great love for the teaching profession and a desire to support students in overcoming disadvantages in life, Principal U1 reflected on whether or not he really wanted to stay in his job:

> What happens in your own life, for six weeks there I could not care if this place burnt down. [Beyond a few people] nobody else is aware of what has happened, I guess I have reassessed and I really do not see that I have many future aspirations in the Department. I think I just want to get through this year and next year and I might go part of the year after that. (Interview 2)

Critical relations with local community: Principals being forced out

In the context of working in a remote town with a small population, principals made many comments about parent and local community attitudes and the possibility that their current positions as principals or their future career prospects were likely to be affected. They reported that the State Office of the Department of Education had conveyed to them at meetings of principals that the Department expected that any problems that people in the local community had with public education be dealt with by the local principal. Sometimes issues were not resolved at the local school level and parents or community members would raise matters with staff at the Department of Education District Office or with state parliamentarians. In such cases, principals were concerned about "toxic members of the community" (Pr R1, Int 1) and that issues had been raised in offices above the local level and this might create an unfavourable impression of their performance either at the level of District Office or State Office. Both Principals S1 and S5 noted that they had followed two previous principals who had had short tenures in the school after they encountered difficulties with the community and were forced out. Principal S5 reported:

There had been formal complaints about the school, in respect of issues before my time, the previous leadership styles, of my predecessors, not just the one just before me but two before that as well. (Interview 1)

Consequently, when the School Education Director advised Principal S1 to intervene in a community problem, the principal expressed reluctance to do so:

It was absolutely ludicrous in a community where there had been formal complaints made against the school. Those complaints were upheld and I am here in a position trying to bring about change. I know more about the needs of this community and its relationship with the school than anybody sitting in a chair anywhere else does, and nobody would listen to me. I felt so angry about that and it caused us an enormous number of problems and issues that we had to deal with. We could have had quite a few formal complaints arise out of that and if it was not for our capacity to manage things at a local level as effectively as we did, it would have caused an enormous amount of damage. (Interview 1)

Principals of central schools spoke of community relationship issues with considerable intensity of feeling as these issues seemed to have the greatest influence on the perceived success or otherwise of their principalships. Although principals were concerned about and usually expressed satisfaction in the educational outcomes of their students and the welfare of students and staff, they expressed considerable anxiety about the possibility of breakdowns in relationships with parents and Departmental officers. Although Principal S3 perceived she currently received support from her Director, she was still concerned about the possibility of not getting support from the Department in the event of a false allegation in the future:

I do not know what the Department thinks of you or whether they listen to the parents and whether they back you. They have always backed me, which has been good. … They have actually come to the school and seen what is actually going on, so that has given us support but I do not know if that is what every school gets. You just wonder. … It is a real worry when you have to go down that path [of dealing with a false allegation] and you know that there was nothing there anyway. We have had three cases of false allegations already; I have had one myself. (Interview 1)

Principals' discussions about their lack of agency in community relations was in contrast to their capacity to speak with confidence about school-based issues, such as the provision of a comprehensive curriculum and improving the educational outcomes, of

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students as students advanced through each year of the school. On these issues, principals seemed to have a greater sense of agency and control over the outcomes and, in interviews, principals expressed satisfaction with the achievements of the school.

Principals reported on the frequent and intense relations with community members in very small villages of perhaps only a few hundred people living at a long distance from other towns or larger centres. Management of community relations was perceived as a core issue for principals of remote schools and was often more critical for the length of tenure and future career of the principal than the principal's leadership of staff and students within the school. This contrasted with that of principals that they had previously worked with in larger centres for whom leadership issues within the school were the main criteria for a successful principalship and community relations were of secondary importance in terms of contributing to Departmental perceptions about the competence of principals. Coupled with the critical issue of community relations was the perception by principals that Department of Education officers and principal colleagues in larger centres were not fully aware of the nature of these relationships in a remote town (see Principal R1's comments, p. 24). Principals perceived that, at times, Departmental officers appeared to make adverse judgements about principals of remote schools based on the existence of a parent or community member complaint rather than substantiated evidence of the validity of such a complaint (see cited comments of Principals R1, S1, S5, T1 and U1).

Living in the town?

Principals believed that their communities preferred the principal and the staff to live in the community, rather than commute a long distance from another town. Principal U1 was aware that both previous principals of U1 Central School had decided to commute from a larger centre in order to enable their partners to continue in their professional employment and the U1 community did not accept this very well:

> It has always been an issue with the locals that the teachers do not live in the town. [Some staff could not find accommodation in the town or owned a house in a larger centre], where they have stayed and they just commute out. Mind you, I do not think you will find it is a friendly town. (Interview 1)

and,

There is a perception that when teachers do not live in the town, they do not do things in the town. (Interview 2)

However, Principal U1 also had decided to commute from a larger centre because he owned a house in the larger centre and his wife had employment there. In further comment, Principal U1 believed that having staff commute from the larger centre enabled the school to be adequately staffed. Furthermore, he gave his opinion that the small community should not be relying on the school's teaching staff to perform community tasks such as coaching children's sports teams on the weekends:

There is an aspect that the parents should be doing things with their own children and not be relying on teachers to do these jobs for them. I think by having people commuting, at least we have a staff here. If we did not have teachers commuting then the partners of those people would commute because there is not the employment base in the town to support both jobs - unless both were teachers and involved in the school, and I do not think many people would want to work with their "other half". (Interview 2)

Because of long distances to other centres, most principals opted to live near their schools, usually in the vested residence provided and maintained by the Teacher Housing Authority, and principals such as Principals S5, W1 and W2 perceived that the community appreciated this:

They like the fact that I live in town and they see me go down the street to do a bit of shopping and every Saturday morning I go down and get the paper, and they see me walking around and that is a good thing. I do not think they like the idea of people living somewhere else and just coming here to work. (Pr W2, Int 2)

However, living in the town did not necessarily result in good relations with the community. Several participants, particularly female principals such as Principals R1 and S3, felt that they were more vulnerable when they lived in the town:

I made the decision to take the teacher house because I tried to do the right thing by the community and show that I was prepared to live in the community. It has not worked because you go to social functions in the community and they want to tackle you about things that happen at school and when that started happening I would still go, "I am off duty now, I am not answering questions about school", so I just chose not to go to social

functions. I have had my front veranda egged. One day after a party, I found a pair of underpants in my mailbox, and I have had beer cans thrown on the front lawn. Why would you want to live in one of these communities? (Pr R1, Int 1)

Buying a house in the town?

Many of the current residences provided for principals were very old without suitable modern amenities. Principal T1 felt that he could not bring his family to live in the principal's residence, which was "100 years' old and very hard to heat and to cool" with no plans for renovation in the next seven years (Pr T1, Int 1) and decided it was necessary to buy his own house.

As one way of creating an impression that they intended to stay longer than previous principals, several principals such as Principals S3, S5 and T1 bought a house in the town:

> This is not a school in which people stay very long. … Previous principals came and went fairly regularly and there were reasons for that. I am considered a long-termer. I have actually bought a house here. (Pr S3, Int 1)

As part of efforts to display a commitment to stay and participate in the town's activities, Principal S5 and his family also decided to buy a house in the town:

> When I came to the town, I bought a house, what I did not know was that I was the first principal in something like 40 or 50 years to own a house in this town and the community took that as commitment. (Interview 2)

The vested residences managed by the Teacher Housing Authority were often old and were not necessarily as well maintained or updated as were other established buildings in the town. They did not necessarily have some of the more usual conveniences. Principal T1 reported this as a reason to buy a house in the town, with the additional consequence that the principal had the image of being a part of the town:

> When I first came here, there was a principal's residence next door. … The residence was 100 years' old, and very hard to heat and to cool so I rang up and said, can we heat it, you know air conditioning, and they said we will do that in seven years' time so I bought a house in town. … There is definitely the aspect that the community might see me as a person who stays. Having children in the community and involved in the community is fine, but it has its downside. (Interview 1)

Buying a house in the town did not necessarily result in favourable outcomes in terms of relationships with the community. This was especially so if it became necessary for the principal or teachers of the school to fulfil their legally mandated role as reporters of child protection issues and to make a report to the Department of Community Services (DOCS) about a child at risk. Parents who had been the subject of such a reported allegation sometimes resorted to intimidation against the person they believed to be responsible for such a report. In a small township, the most likely person to have made a report to DOCS will be the school principal (see more detail on pp. 169-170) and the location of the principal's residence in the community was evident to the community and vulnerable to attack on occasion.

Attitudes to female principals

Principals observed in a range of issues that, while some social changes had occurred in the wider population of modern Australian society, the persistence in the remote communities of more traditional social patterns and attitudes in remote towns had created its own problems. Communities with the more traditional social attitudes sometimes resisted or opposed some social changes with which they had been presented. One of the changes confronting remote towns was the increased proportion of principals of remote central schools who were females and some female principals believed that they were afforded less respect than their male colleagues were. Principal R1 observed:

> They believe they have a right to tell me who should be teaching Kindergarten. … They were demanding to know and wanted to influence my decision about who was going to be teaching Kindergarten. It is quite confronting that, how disrespectful they can be and I find that very challenging, that attitude and I have found that aspect of it relates to being a woman. There is an underlying mistrust or lack of confidence in a woman running a school and I would say that it is just part of being country people. They have this old-fashioned notion of women who could not possibly do that job and so there is a lot of mistrust, and not much confidence in my ability to do the job. However, by the same token, there are a large number of parents and community members out there who are extremely supportive of me through the putting the runs on the board. I had to prove myself. (Interview 1)

Five of the 12 interview participants, 42 per cent, were female principals, which was a higher proportion than the 33 per cent proportion of female principals who responded to the survey questionnaire (Table 4.1). Female principals had some difficulties about stereotypes in the community that they as women should only do certain types of jobs, such as fund raising activities for the Parents and Citizens association, Principal R1 reported:

> The outgoing P and C President makes snide remarks in just about every P and C meeting about what a woman's job is. It is always said in jest and it will come up when some fund raising activity is being planned and then he will just drop the little, "Oh, we are not meant to do that. That is a woman's job". (Interview 1)

The female principals felt that their communities were reluctant to accept that female principals could effectively carry out their responsibilities as school leaders. They believed that the lack of acceptance, particularly by men, resulted in most of the principal's parent and community contacts being with the mothers of the children at the school. Principal R1 reported an underlying lack of confidence in a woman running a school:

> [The community] will never accept me, and it is not just about being an outsider, it is about being a woman. … [The attitude is that] women should not be managing things; they do not have enough common sense or intelligence. … They do not know how to relate to me, they would prefer not to, they let their wives do it. (Interview 1)

Principals perceived that leading remote central schools was a very different and more complex task than it had been in earlier generations of principals.

Socio-economic Status (SES) Context

Declining populations

Most principals expressed concern about declining town populations, with particular concern about the even greater decline in the number of younger people in their communities. They were concerned about any consequent effect on school enrolments, school staffing, the ability of the school to provide a comprehensive curriculum and even the survival of their schools or at least a reduction of the K-12

school to a K-6 primary school. Principals observed that population decline appeared to be ongoing and most principals expressed pessimism about the future of their communities:

> [Principal colleague Z] had been a principal in three or four different schools each of which had declining enrolments from when he started to when he finished, and so there seems to be this pessimism about rural opportunities and rural improvement. Rural decline is an inevitable situation which we are all in. (Pr S2, Int 1)

Principals attributed population decline in remote areas primarily to the prolonged drought and the decreased employment opportunities on farms and in industries which serviced farms.

Three of the 12 participating principals described exceptions to the general pattern of population decline and indicated that their towns had attracted some new residents, which compensated for the loss of population common across remote communities. One slightly larger remote community (Town S1) had maintained its population by gaining population through movement from even more remote communities. Another less remote community (Town S5), less than two hours' drive from a provincial city, had attracted a small number of people who lived in the town and who maintained city-based occupations. A third community (Town S4), had gained a significant number of people who had left larger centres because they had problems in getting employment and needed to live in a town with a lower cost of living. The residents coming to Town S4 usually had previously lived in the town or still had close family connections in the town.

Prolonged drought: Effect on remote area populations

Prolonged drought conditions and consequent reduced employment opportunities had resulted in many established families leaving the town and district to seek employment in larger centres. As a factor contributing to the decline in remote area communities, the prolonged drought was very visible and was referred to by all of the

participant principals. Principal X1 spoke of a 20 per cent drop in enrolments in one year during the drought:

> We have had five years of drought down here, and a couple of years ago we lost 29 kids that exited the school directly related to the drought. [Some examples]: One family of five children, moved to South Australia because Dad was able to get work there, another family of three children went to West Australia and that happened right through 2004. (Interview 1)

Perceptions about ageing population and smaller families

Although the prolonged drought was a very visible factor contributing to remote area population decline, participants also referred to other indicators of socio-economic change which affected their communities and schools. One factor in smaller town populations was the reduced size of families. As well, principals perceived that the median age had increased resulting in a smaller proportion of the population of school age. Principals commented on the increased average age of their communities, particularly of farmers who remained on their farms. As reported by Principal U1:

> People are getting older. There are not a lot of breeders out there, so we will probably get nine for next year in kindergarten and I will get maybe six or seven new enrolments from there. (Interview 1)

Other principals also noted the declining size of families and a lower proportion of children:

> The number of people living in a country town has declined, they are not having as many kids, the families are smaller, there are a whole host of answers why that is happening, it is not just about drought. (Pr R1, Int 1)

Principal S2 reported the same phenomenon, "This town has an ageing population" (Interview 1). At W3 Central School, in the same schools' District as Principal U1's school, the school anticipated no new students beginning school in the Kindergarten year for two years in a row. The above comments about ageing populations were made by principals in small towns that did not have significant Aboriginal populations.

Demographic and social change in remote areas

As well as the continuing and substantial declines in the general populations of remote towns, there were also demographic and social changes in remote area communities of NSW. Some principals reported significant social welfare issues, for example, violence in the community and drug abuse (Pr S3; Pr S4; Pr T1; Pr W1). Several principals reported high levels of child sexual abuse (Pr S3, Int 1; Pr S4, Int 1; Int 2). In contrast, a minority of the interviewed principals did not report any problems with the school's student cohorts (Pr V1, Int 1, 2).

Social effects of the drought, lack of employment opportunities

The resources of farming families and their capacity to support schools also were reduced. Stress on farming families as families travelled long distances to work, or moved to other towns to obtain work, was reflected in stress on children. Principals commented about the lack of employment opportunities in their communities and the way in which this had diminished both the morale of the communities and the career aspirations of the students in their schools. For example, Principal S4 reported:

> There is no work here, no employment opportunities for the students of this school. … That is the sad part, we have generations of unemployment here in the town so we do not have any role models, and the role models that would be available are over 150 km away, which makes it not difficult but impossible. (Interview 1)

and,

> We would probably have less than one per cent of our parent community that even have employment. There is no employment in the town. (Interview 2)

Low levels of income

Principals repeatedly referred to the limited capacity of the school to draw on financial support from parents or community members. One indicator of low incomes in the community noted by principals was the low percentage of parents who paid the voluntary school contributions that the schools' Parents and Citizens bodies had recommended. Principal T1 reported:

> [A principal colleague in Sydney] asked parents for $400 or $500 in voluntary school contributions. They have 1700 students and they can get 95

per cent of their parents paying these contributions. We ask for $40 to $50 and get 20 per cent return. (Interview 1)

As a further example of parents' lack of financial capacity, Principal S4 noted that for many low-income families there was a lack of facilities for study at home:

Technology at home is non-existent and very few people have computers in the home, and those that do have computers, would not have the net because we do not have many homes that have landlines. … Very few of our parents have telephones. (Interview 2)

High proportion of students with special needs or social problems

The increasing proportion of families with high levels of financial and social needs had placed extra demands on the resources of the school. Principals observed the presence of new and poorer residents who had moved to the town because they could not afford expensive accommodation in larger centres. As a group, newer residents appeared to have a higher proportion of personal and social problems than would have been the case with the town's population in previous years. Principal R1 expressed concern about the challenges:

[The new residents] are often fringe dwellers, you know, they are rejects from cities that come out looking for a cheap lifestyle and they bring with them a whole big bagful of social problems and that in itself is a challenge for the school. (Interview 1)

Similarly, Principal W2 reported on the changing social fabric:

We are getting more of an itinerant population here. Our social fabric is changing and our clientele is changing. We are losing traditional permanent farming families and we are gaining single parents on welfare. (Interview 2)

Time taken on discipline and welfare issues

Principals perceived that an increased proportion of their time was being taken up in dealing with student discipline and welfare issues to the detriment of other tasks of school leadership that they believed to be critical. Principal W1 stated:

Discipline issues are over and above what I feel we should be dealing with. We have very constant disturbances. It is probably quite a contrast today that we have not been disturbed. I would have expected that we would have been buzzed and had people knocking, because it is a regular occurrence. …

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Sadly, we are fighting with a welfare driven kind of emphasis all the time and the bulk of that would take up my job. That is part of the frustration because I really wanted to be a leader because I really wanted to get involved and get in the classrooms and I try to do that. I get in the classroom on most days and some days I do not get in there at all. (Interview 2)

Community resentment of newer residents

In addition to the social problems of the new residents, principals were conscious of the community relations issue of dealing with the attitudes of established residents towards the newcomers. Principal R1 experienced a dilemma between the professional value of treating all students equally and a perceived sense of entitlement in the community who appeared to place more value on the education of children of established families in the town:

[We have] the challenge that we as public educators are expected to take all comers and deal with them equally, but there is a perspective in the community that [new residents] do not really belong and that they should not have full access. It is not articulated in that sort of the way but there is an underlying attitude that these kids do not deserve the same treatment that the fifth generation farmers' kids do. … The community is not very happy with some of these people moving into their little town. (Interview 1)

Decline in respect for authority

Principals perceived that there were differences in community members' respect for authority. They observed that over time the community had a lower level of respect for authority and that younger people in the community were more likely to challenge and question those in authority. This was evidenced by the nature of their relations with the two visible government authorities in the town, the police and the school, and was as much an attribute of the adults as of the students.

Some principals had noticed an increase in general law breaking in their town, even over a short period, coinciding in some cases with a reduction in police presence. Principal R1 reported on examples of law breaking:

I have noticed a change in the time that I have been here, only over six years. We need police presence in this community. We have some quite horrendous types of law breaking activity going on. Within the last six months, a young constable was posted here. He was physically attacked in the street, in a

town like this, you know, it seems quite remarkable really, the change. (Interview 1)

In addition to a trend over time for community members to have less respect for those in authority, principals observed differences between younger and older community members in their respect for people in authority and for the school staff in particular. They noticed that while younger parents might challenge and question the authority of the school the older members of the community were more likely to accord staff a more automatic respect and courtesy. Principal R1 reflected on the contrast between younger parents being disrespectful and the almost automatic deference older parents accorded the principal:

> The community have a very unrealistic expectation in what the school can provide and it is difficult because people are changing and younger parents are very intolerant and very disrespectful of teachers and the education system, very untrusting of education. …

> I think the older parents and the grandparents are much more respectful. Older people have a lot of faith and they have a huge amount of respect and courtesy. … The retired elderly in the community, they place me on a pedestal. I am this wonderful, I am the school principal. It is almost said in awe, and I think they are lovely people. (Interview 1)

Rationalisation of services: The last remaining government agency

In the more remote townships, principals reported that the school remained as the sole government agency in the town, and the largest employer:

> We are *the* government agency: The only government agency in the town, biggest, smallest, and depending where you are standing. We are the largest employer in the town, all of those things. (Pr S4, Int 2)

In very poor communities, with only the school as a visible government agency, principals believed that it was critical for the schools to undertake the provision of basic welfare services before they could focus on educational tasks such as improving the curriculum as outlined by the DET in the state's quality teaching framework (NSW DET, 2003) . Although S5 Central School appeared to have fewer social problems than

most of the central schools, Principal S5 reported on the importance of providing a social welfare service for students:

> We take on a role by default, and you know, I have people come in and ask me to read documents for them, now I should really say no, that is not my job. What damage am I going to do to the school and the community relations if I say that? So my staff and myself we do take on roles that are welfare, and by approaching everything from a welfare point of view, we can then change curriculum, improve curriculum. People do not see that, they see the quality teaching framework and say if we do this it will all change but the quality teaching framework does not put food in their bellies, it does not put shoes on their feet, it does not get their parents stopping drinking. (Interview 2)

Child sexual abuse

For principals, such as Principals S3 and S4, the responsibilities associated with being the only government agency were even more acute when the school received multiple reports of sexual abuse and the principals consequently had made their own reports to the Department of Community Services (DOCS):

> The quality teaching framework does not stop the sexual abuse that we have going on. I do not care how good our lessons are in the room if the little kid had been pulled out of bed by Uncle [A]. It does not matter how good our classroom work is, we have to deal with those issues as well.
> We have been very flat over the last week or so, because we have had quite a few issues of sexual assault. The children report to us. We have to put in a report to DOCS because that is mandatory. I have to determine the degree of urgency, we put in the report, and nothing happens. (Pr S4, Int 2)

The number of sexual assaults and, after the principals had reported indications of such assaults, the lack of prompt and effective response by Department of Community Services (DOCS) workers was a source of disappointment and distress. Principal S4 reported:

> Two weeks ago, where we perceived it was unsafe for a child to return home, and the hoops we have to jump through to do that. However, as it was we did get the child removed, and the child was taken to a place of safety, but I have since reported five further cases, now five in a fortnight and I have not had a response.
> …

So we have to ring up and say what has happened with this and we get a letter from DOCS to say thank you, we have no caseworker to deal with it. That is the response we get. (Interview 2)

…

I actually put in a report where I said that the 13 year old child was at risk of sexual assault … and when I put in a report to DOCS he said "and what is the risk that you are reporting?", so unfortunately I lost it. (Interview 2)

Principals S3 and S4 reported that sexual abuse was a major problem in their schools and Principal S4 was convinced that all female students in the school had been abused:

How much can I say? I would say without any doubt that every female in this school has been sexually abused at some stage to some degree. … How do you medically assess this sort of physical abuse apart from the emotional and psychological views, and I know for a fact I have probably eight or nine male students who have been abused and I have some male students who are currently abusing, and that is fact. (Interview 1)

Principal S4 also described the emotional shock that new teachers experienced when first confronted with high numbers of reports about sexual abuse, but she was confident that established staff could cope with such situations:

Our staff are absolutely incredible. We get young girls who have lived at home during their university training, stayed at home while they have gone out and done casual work. Then they get a permanent job and move away to a school where they are suddenly reporting what they consider to be absolutely horrendous and the established staff are very blasé with it. (Interview 1)

In interviews, principals talked about cases where they believed they had credible evidence of systematic recruitment of children for the purposes of sexual abuse and they talked about the vulnerability of many of their students. Principal S3 observed:

We now have 85 to 90 per cent of students who are from dysfunctional families. … We have low socio-economic families, ones who are in trouble, who are drug addicts, who are low down, needing a bit of money and are renting. A lot of kids have emotional trauma in their lives. They are sexually abused and so on. The students come to town with all these problems, sometimes with parents and sometimes staying with grandparents because of problems elsewhere. The parents come to work for the dole. He provides them with work under false pretences. They start with some work but then

give up … In the first three years, I would have an average of three DOCS reports a week, sometimes up to nine in a week. (Interview 1)

Providing counselling for families in situations where the principal believed there was evidence of children being abused by a sexual predator was exhausting and time consuming for the principals concerned and created a level of personal risk for them. Principal S3 reported:

In the first two and half years, I needed to fill the role of counsellor with parents as well as kids. Sometimes it would be two hours of counselling at a time and then going home completely exhausted mentally from the traumas. You feel for the kids and you think maybe I can make a difference but you are putting yourself at risk when you are doing it and there are not just a few. There are many kids here with problems. … You have all these things going on here all the time. (Interview 1)

It was part of the role of DOCS to decide on the nature and extent of any further investigation and to provide counselling to children and their families as appropriate. However, DOCS staff were usually based in a larger town or city, at several hours or even days of driving distance, and principals felt that they were in the front line. When DOCS staff were not immediately available, principals would attempt to provide care and a degree of protection and even in cases of extreme necessity, counselling, for children and their families. Sometimes there was a substantial number of reports to DOCS for which the principal did not have an indication of the likely response(s) by DOCS officers. Principal S4 stated that there were "29 outstanding reports that had not even received an acknowledgment from DOCS" (Interview 1).

Principal S3 worked in one of the schools which had a high level of referrals to DOCS about evidence of violence or abuse in families. The principal used a strategy of alerting the district Director in advance if the principal anticipated that there could be a DOCS referral or some other issue concerning the school or its students that can come to the attention of District Office. Principal S3 felt confident of the Director's support, but was not so sure about the support given to other schools:

The Directors have always backed me which has been good. … I do not know if that is what every school gets, you just wonder. I always warn the Director if something is happening. If I know something is going on I make

a phone call so that I let them know that something may be brewing, to be aware that there is going to be a referral. … Things may blow up. (Interview 1)

Violence and lack of personal safety

Principals reported on issues of lack of personal safety and high levels of violence in the community and in the homes of students. This concern about possible violence was expressed both as a general concern about violence in the community and as a specific concern for the principal's individual safety.

Violence in the community

Principal W1 observed the volatility in the community, "and the extreme violence, even more extreme than what we had been used to (Interview 1). The high incidence of violence and other offences meant that people who had police records were legally prohibited from working with school children and there were fewer people eligible to work in the school:

> Even getting people to work at school is very hard. We tried to employ four guys from the "Work for the dole" program and only one of them actually passed the police check for Prohibited Employment and he found a job in the meantime. I had to turn the others down because of their police records of things like assault and theft. (Pr S3, Int 1)

Principals commented on the high incidence of Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs) in the small townships. Principal S3 had applied for an AVO against a particular person in the town whom the principal had reported to the Department of Community Services because of perceived risks of child abuse. "I do not go round too much with the AVOs being enforced all round the place. I try to avoid the streets in town" (Interview 1). Principal S3, in describing the need to deal with an issue of a student's threatening behaviour at the school level rather than reporting the matter to District Office said that caution was necessary because, "this could upset the partner who the AVO is on" (Interview 1). Principals needed to consider the possible repercussions of "upsetting" people who were prone to violence or who were the subjects of AVOs.

Threats of violence to principals

Principals reported that they felt vulnerable about both the risk of being identified as an informant concerning possible child sexual abuse and being incorrectly presumed to be an informant when another member of the community had made a report to DOCS. Principal S4 described the consequences:

> We had two children taken from the preschool without our knowledge or permission. They walked into the preschool, told the preschool teacher they were DOCS workers and they were removing these two children, to get them ready immediately. … I think the way they did it was deliberate. They came to my office and talked to me over another issue, walked out, and walked into the preschool. … The community blamed me. … The process was what was very distressing. We are supposed to be protected. Unfortunately DOCS workers have in some cases, said the school reported the case. (Interview 2)

Sometimes the issue of community members identifying, or wrongly identifying, the source of a disclosure of abuse to DOCS, had led to harassment and threats of violence against the principal. Principal S3 reported:

> I was very reluctant to put someone in because I have had problems. I had my house torched last year, and I have had threats issued … and you know, am I going to have the house torched again if I report, or what is going to happen? Someone else has put a report in, but I will get the blame for it anyway, so you have those sorts of issues, because you live so close. The trouble with the house and the torching was probably a wrong guess, thinking that we reported something, but it was not us.

> [The staff] know it is quite life threatening at the moment. I have had threats from the worst people in town … but the staff also know it does not matter who does report, I will get the blame anyway. … I think the Department could put me on compassionate leave all the time. (Interview 1)

Principals living in local townships were confronted directly with complaints during their out of school time. A significant number of the principals reported incidents of harassment and violent or threatening behaviour that had been directed at them personally (Pr R1, Int 1; Pr S3, Int 1; Pr S4, Int 1 and Int 2; Pr T1, Int1) and commented on the "extreme violence" in their communities (Pr W1, Int 1). Principals living in very small communities in close proximity to their schools felt that their houses were very visible and they and their families can be vulnerable to anyone who may threaten them.

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Principal T1 reported on several cases of experiencing personal threat after dealing with sensitive issues at the school. In one case, Principal T1 experienced vehement language after a decision to expel a student:

> We expelled a kid in Year 3, for violence, and the negativity of the mother is still there and she is living in town and I am living in town and I hear what she is saying about the school. "The school's numbers have fallen and the principal is rotten and all that sort of crap". If you make a decision that they do not agree with, they will tell you and they tell you fairly vehemently. (Interview 1)

In a second case, Principal T1 felt a sense of personal threat after dealing with an underperforming teacher. The principal had implemented a series of improvement programs for the teacher as was required by the DET and then was required to deal with subsequent appeals after he had formally declared the teacher as unsatisfactory. Principal T1 recounted:

> Five years ago, I got rid of a teacher, I put a teacher on a program and it is a very long complicated story involving lawyers. … I went to [nearby town] on Saturday and he stalked me in the supermarket. (Interview 1)

In a third case, Principal T1 needed to provide some support at the school for a staff member to continue teaching while going through a bitter separation and divorce. The divorced husband, still living in the small town, appeared to be easily upset in visits to the school and exhibited threatening behaviour. Principal T1 related:

> At times, I had to play a role in managing the teacher's personal problems while at school. I can remember going home at Recess one day scared that her husband was going to come around to my house. Because he was a manic-depressive, you did not know what he would do, and to manage his behaviour on the site you knew it was going to upset him. In a small town, you do not have the luxury of going elsewhere, and he knows where you live, he knows your phone number, and he knows everything about you. … That was scary. (Interview 1)

The above section of the chapter has dealt with the results obtained from both the surveys and interviews of central school principals in relation to issues and concerns expressed over the characteristics of remote communities in NSW and the extent to which the declining socio-economic status of these communities has affected the schools

and the work lives of principals. The following section reports on the results of the survey and interviews in relation to the issues and concerns identified by principals arising from the specific characteristics of NSW central schools and their principals.

Section 3: School Context – Small and K-12

In providing data relevant to Research Question 3 concerning the central school context of being small and having a secondary as well as a primary department, surveyed principals confirmed evidence of the continuing decline in the size of central schools (see Table 4.7 and compare with Table 1.2). Interviewed principals expressed concern about the effect of declining enrolments particularly in the secondary department. In NSW, the size of school enrolments were the major determinant used by the DET in allocating the numbers of staff in each school and the size of global funds allocated to each school for the purchase of resources.

Small School Context

Alongside the declining SES profiles in remote area communities, principals repeatedly expressed concern about the declining enrolments in their schools and the future viability of their schools (see Table 1.2; Table 4.7 and following comments of interviewed principals). As shown in Table 4.7, two thirds, 67 per cent, of the schools were in the middle range of sizes and had between 100 and 300 students. Most, 74 per cent, of the principals originally were trained as secondary teachers. Thus, typically, the current principal of a central school was male, secondary-trained, taking up his first principal appointment in the last decade of his career and supervising a school in a remote inland area with between 100 and 300 Kindergarten to Year 12 students.

Table 4.7   *Size of schools led by surveyed principals*

Student enrolments	Frequency	%
<100	3	11
100-200	8	30
201-300	10	37
>300	6	22
Total	27	100

Decreasing enrolments in central schools

Declining and ageing non-Aboriginal populations in remote towns had resulted in declining enrolments in nearly all of the remote schools. As indicated above, in towns with significant Aboriginal populations, this was balanced partly by the lower median age of the Aboriginal population. Although remote area populations had declined considerably, the number of central schools had increased slightly from 65 to 67 during the years 1987 to 2007 (see Table 1.2). Hence in 2007, central schools had much smaller average enrolments than previously. Principals were concerned about the declining numbers in their schools and the future viability of their schools. Principal R1 observed:

> Enrolments have plummeted. … In 2000, we had about 200 students and the anticipated enrolment for next year is 122, so we have nearly halved the enrolment in six years. We had 25 teachers in 2000 and we have 13 next year. (Interview 1)

Principal S2 reflected on the limited employment opportunities in the remote towns:

> We lost 10 to 12 per cent of total enrolment from last year. … Parents are moving away to seek employment or to seek more secure employment. (Interview 1)

Principal S1 expressed frustration about factors beyond the school's control:

> We had an issue with the bus driver, because the parents just got sick of the bus driver and took their kids to another centre. … That leaves a bitter taste because there is nothing I can do about that. (Interview 2)

In addition, Principal S1 recognised the prolonged drought as a further factor in declining enrolments:

> The drought has affected us. From about the mid 90s the drought started to bite, so we have gone from nearly 260 in 1996 back to this year we only had 220 kids. (Interview 1)

Principal U1, although principal of a central school whose size was in the median range for central schools, expressed concern for the future viability of the U1 Central School and perhaps even of the U1 township, "Parents with children have moved out. … The school numbers are declining, declining. In ten years' time, I really do not know how this place is going to exist" (Interview 1).

Principals created new classes, especially in the post-compulsory years of the secondary department as a way of preventing decreases in school enrolments. For example, Principal U1 reported:

> The trend is that there are fewer students so the enrolments are going down. … We have buffered the enrolments with part time enrolments. This year we have 12 people to do the metal course and VET (Vocational and Education Training) courses on a Thursday and part time students and we have 26 IT (Industrial Technology) students on a Wednesday. (Interview 2)

Principal W2 reported his concerns about the "downward spiral" of fewer students, smaller communities and eventual closure of the school:

> You get to that spiral as is happening in other places. … I lose more students which means I lose more specialist staff which means we end up with kids who cannot afford to be sent away, getting a second class education and we will lose the community, people who are active in the town, in the committees and things and it is a downward spiral. … These small places are going to waste away to nothing. … They will probably end up closing the school. That could be on the cards. (Int 2)

The above comments about declining enrolments were made by principals in small towns that did not have significant Aboriginal populations. One school with a significant Aboriginal enrolment had gone against the tide and had an increased enrolment because of an increase in the numbers of Aboriginal students who had enrolled in the school. Principal S4 observed:

> Those Aboriginal families that had moved to coastal areas or to larger centres, with the downturn, they have moved back. Those who have lost their jobs, they have moved back because housing is cheaper here in town and there is a lower cost of living here. We are actually going against the tide. Our enrolments are increasing. (Interview 2)

Central School Context: K-12 (primary and secondary departments)

Principals of central schools reported concerns that they believed were additional to those which they shared with principals of small primary schools in their districts. In addition, they reported concerns that were not shared by principals of non-metropolitan secondary schools in the rural cities and larger towns. The nearest secondary schools were mostly located in larger centres and, since they were staffed with subject-specialist

teachers, they can usually provide students with a comprehensive choice of subjects in their secondary curriculum as specified by the NSW Board of Studies:

> The Board of Studies makes its syllabuses available to all schools in NSW. However, each school determines its own timetable based on the resources available to it and this includes the number of courses available to students. Any problems associated with subject choice for individual students need to be resolved with the school. (New South Wales Government, 2011a)

The participant principals of central schools described their particular challenges in obtaining suitably trained specialist staff to provide an adequate secondary curriculum, which both provided comprehensive subject choice for their students and complied with the specified patterns of study as determined by the Board of Studies.

Documentation work load for a central school

Some principals perceived the policy changes in terms of devolution of both responsibility and accountability to schools as creating a particular burden on central schools. The principals of central schools commented about the heavy workload of providing documentation to the DET for both primary and secondary departments. The Annual School Report was cited specifically as one example where principals of central schools had an extra workload that was not matched by their colleagues in either primary or secondary schools. Principal S5 described the mandatory Annual School Report process as being "double the documentation" of that required by either primary or secondary school colleagues:

> The Annual School Reports are a classic example. Nobody looks at the fact or cares that a central school principal provides double the documentation. We are not just answering on primary or secondary years of school, we are answering on both. It does not make it easier because you are smaller because you still have to write it all down, and that is just one little example of the way centrals are fundamentally different but it is not acknowledged that they are different. (Interview 2)

Staffing issues

A small majority, 59 per cent, of the principals of central schools disagreed with the proposition that the current structures had benefits in staffing of schools (see Table

4.4). In subsequent interviews, principals raised the issue of staffing in their schools as being one of their biggest concerns:

> If you want to sum up the role of principal, it is interesting. This is the most difficult job I have ever done, and I will get onto the main issue. In a school of this size, the biggest problem that I have is staff and staff issues. They would be taking 95 per cent of my time. (Pr U1, Int 1)

Providing a broad curriculum

As the NSW Department of Education allocated a staffing entitlement to each government school based on a complex formula which included a component for the number of students enrolled in each Year of the school, any decrease in anticipated student enrolments automatically resulted in a reduction in the school's staffing entitlement. Reductions in staffing, particularly in the numbers of secondary teachers who had training in the skills required to teach specialist subjects, created a concern that the school may not be able to provide a broad curriculum including an adequate choice of subjects for students. Principal S1 reported on the need for secondary students to select Distance Education courses:

> Many of the central schools in the region that we are servicing are experiencing declining numbers and so cannot continue to provide the breadth of curriculum that secondary students want. They need to enrol in Distance Education courses to back up [their choice of subjects]. (Interview 1)

Principal W2 expressed concern about declining enrolments leading to declining staff numbers and possible school closures:

> If I have to say, "Well I am sorry I cannot give you that subject", they are just going to hop on the [free] bus and go to [larger towns] and then that means I lose more students. That means I lose more specialist staff which means we end up like up the road with 20 kids in our secondary school. We end up with only the kids who cannot afford to be sent away and they get a second-class education. We will lose the quality that we have in this town and we will lose the community, we will lose teachers. The community loses people who are active in the town, in the committees and things and it is a downward spiral, and this has been happening for a long time. People are just going to go to larger regional centres, which is a bit of a pity. I think that is the way we are heading. We are going to end up a very small school like

up the road and they will probably end up closing one of the schools. (Interview 2)

Recruitment of teachers

Recruitment for classroom teaching positions has remained the responsibility of the State Office in Sydney. However, when the Staffing Directorate in State Office offered positions to applicants, who had indicated willingness to teach in a remote school, the applicants often rejected the offer. If no suitable teacher applicants were available or prepared to accept a position offered by the State Office Staffing Directorate in a remote school then the school principal had the added responsibility of recruiting teachers directly to the school. In discussing the process of negotiation between the school and the staffing directorate, Principal S4 remarked:

> Staffing said to me, "What [sort of teacher] do you want?" I said, "Upright and breathing".
> That is what we are down to, and people were offered the job and they just knocked it back, "No, no, no, no, no". [Not even for a] permanent position, they are not prepared to come out here. (Interview 1)

Principals found that the option of advertising for teachers to come to a central school was very difficult and often did not result in a satisfactory appointment. Principal S3, who had no previous experience in secondary schools, commented on the difficulty in recruiting enough staff to teach all specialist areas in the secondary department:

> I think finding staff that match your school is really hard and even getting them to apply for our school is really hard. Finding science staff was difficult for a fair while, and we have actually had temporary teaching with science. Then we had trouble with Industrial Arts, and now we probably need a science teacher again. We do not have anyone who is trained in music and we do not have anyone who is trained in languages at all, so that is a hassle. We have a teacher who is doing maths but is not trained and has been teaching maths for 28 years. (Interview 1)

When opting to recruit directly, a process which began with the compilation by the principal of an Expression of Interest (EOI), principals needed to set aside considerable time to interview any prospective teachers and felt that time pressures, rather than quality of applicants, influenced their final decisions about appointments. In addition, Principal S4 reported on the time taken to interview any teacher submitting an EOI:

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We can look at half a dozen people if we want to go for an expression of interest. They are all entitled to an interview, which slows down the process and in a school like this; I suppose you hit the deck running every day. You do not always have time to set aside a couple of days to interview half a dozen people. So you then end up taking what you get. (Interview 1)

Finding teachers able to teach across the full range of secondary subjects was often a difficulty for remote schools, especially for the smaller central schools.

In small central schools, we always have the problem of having to use teachers who are not trained in specific secondary teaching areas. We have only four secondary teachers who need to cover a much wider curriculum area than their four areas of training. Sometimes even core areas such as maths and science do not have a teacher trained in that area. (Pr S3, Int 1)

Teaching outside subject specialist area

When the school was unable to obtain necessary subject specialist teachers, the principal will usually need to negotiate with other staff about teaching outside their subject specialist areas. However, the working conditions for teachers negotiated between the NSW Department of Education and the NSW Teachers Federation specify, among other things, that teachers were not required to teach outside the area of their specialist training. Hence, principals' success in negotiating with central school staff in these circumstances relied on the goodwill of the teachers concerned, if principals were to succeed in asking teachers to teacher in areas outside the teacher's specialist training:

We have to ask other teachers to help teach in these subjects. The head teacher is a HSIE [Human Society in its Environment] teacher and she teaches the maths classes. (Pr S3, Int 1)

and,

It is difficult to get someone to teach, who is a science based teacher but we can get other teachers who will teach science. They will cover the classes and they will make sure that the work is presented to the students, and they will teach the students. (Pr U1, Int 1)

In some cases, principals themselves took on relief duties, teaching lesson "extras" in place of absent teachers, for example Principal W1:

You learn to get on very, very well with your staff, picking up extras in some cases, what we have also had to do is ask our Industrial Arts teacher for help in programming - while he is on leave for 12 months. I will program for it

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now and leave that so that another teacher can take it. The teacher does not necessarily have to be trained within my area, and in the meantime, we have to find someone. I have already been in contact with staffing. The person I need to talk to was away. … Basically, we bought some time. (Interview 1)

Principals teaching classes when teaching positions were not filled

Participant principals spoke of the common situation where they themselves were teaching classes when teachers were absent or there were no teachers available to teach in a particular specialist area.

Principal X1 had previous training as a mathematics teacher and needed to use these skills when the school lost enrolments and had to lose a mathematics teacher:

During that year, we lost our secondary maths teacher so effectively I needed to organise and cover that. Where we had a couple of teachers trained in science, they could reasonably cover the curriculum because it was all laid out for them. It took a lot of work. So I jumped in and covered Years 5/6 Technology and I taught that on Fridays. For one day of my week, I was in the classroom and covering the secondary maths. In addition, my other executive person was very ill, and I was doing all his administration duties. (Interview 1)

Although, like other interviewed principals, Principal T1 enjoyed teaching when staff were not available, the increased workload in such situations created a problem:

I was trained as a maths teacher and a lot of the difficulty in filling positions has been in the maths area. Last year, when my maths teacher first went on maternity leave she had Year 11 so I picked up that Year 11 and took them through to Year 12. This year, the Department appointed a maths teacher who was not qualified to take senior classes. There was no way I was going to give him the Year 11 class, so I picked up Year 11 again. I was teaching Year 11 and the extension class, and tutoring three kids of a morning, and the workload was starting to tell. … I became a teacher, because I love teaching, and I just love going out, and as soon as you leave today I have a class, and it is just a wonderful way to spend an hour, but there is a down side. (Interview 1)

Professional isolation

Principals were isolated not only geographically but also professionally, reporting isolation from their colleagues in cities and established towns and from their superordinates who worked from offices in the larger cities. Geographic isolation from

major services isolation meant that principals were often faced with demands from city-based officers that were difficult to fulfil in the context of isolation. Geographical isolation was therefore compounded by professional isolation from colleagues, supervisors and centrally located support staff. Although some central schools are located within one hour's drive of a provincial city, the typical central school is located at a more remote distance. The total area of inland NSW, over which the remote inland central schools in this study were spread, was almost as large as the combined land areas of Germany and France (See Appendix A1 and Table A1)

Some reported that they wished for the collegiality they had enjoyed as subject head teachers. Isolation, both professional and personal, was a commonly raised issue. This was most strongly felt by the 74 per cent of principals who were from a secondary background. They reported that they were not well understood either by Departmental officers or by their colleagues in high schools.

Isolation from primary and secondary principal colleagues

Participants stated that others in the DET did not understand that principals of remote central schools worked in schools which had a socio-economic context different from that of other rural or metropolitan schools. They indicated that they believed that even principal colleagues in the same educational district (in larger towns) did not understand the issues faced by principals of central schools:

> The only people who really understand the issues that principals of central schools face are principals of central schools. You have to do the job and you have to be in the job to understand it. … Our colleagues within the [district] do not understand, let alone trying to make central office in Sydney understand some of the issues that we face. (Pr R1, Int 1)

Principal R1 described how, when she had been previously a deputy principal of a large high school in a rural city, she had no sympathy for the issues or complaints raised by a central school with whom the rural city high school was attempting to deliver a combined service in vocational education:

> I used to get a king sized case of the shits with [Z] Central. They were always crying foul, "Oh we have got to travel too far; we do not have enough students". They were always whinging about this and they used to

give me the shits. My previous lack of sympathy epitomises the attitude that everybody else out there has for central schools because they just do not understand the issues. It was not until I became a central school principal that I understood and I can reflect back on some of things that [Z] Central staff used to say to me, about what their issues were. Only now I understand why things were so difficult for them and why they could not cope with some of the structures that I was trying to put in place. (Interview 1)

A number of the principals of remote central schools devoted time to participating in the statewide network of principals of central schools and using the opportunity to express their opinions through the central schools representative on the NSW Secondary Principals Council. Principal S1 reported:

That is why I am pushing, putting so much energy into the central schools principals network, because I cannot talk to primary principals, they just do not get it, and secondary principals do not want to know. A new principal of a central school had all sorts of issues when she came to her school. Fortunately the screaming and yelling and carrying on I did, rhetorically speaking, in terms of the lack of support for me in 2004, seems to have been heard, in Sydney, at least through the Secondary Principals Council, and she has had some very concrete support. (Interview 2)

Lack of collegial support

Primary-trained respondents reported that they were able to relocate relatively modest distances from their previous primary schools to take up their appointments at central schools and as a result, they continued to have some access to the collegial support and understanding of principals or teachers-in-charge of neighbouring primary schools. Although remote primary schools were much smaller than their urban counterparts, they were still quite numerous in remote areas.

The secondary-trained principals in this study had very limited opportunities for keeping in contact with their colleagues in high schools. They had much greater distances to travel before reaching any nearby high schools. For example, in the inland area of Riverina Region excluding the city areas of Albury, Griffith and Wagga, there was only one public high school for every six public primary schools. By comparison, in the four Sydney Regions there was one high school for every three primary schools and for the whole state the ratio was one to four (NSW DET, 2006b, p. 9). For secondary-

trained principals of central schools the physical distance in contacting their networks of colleagues in high schools was much greater than was the case for the minority of principals of central schools who had come from primary school backgrounds.

Lack of experience as principal or working in a central school

Most of the more recently appointed principals from a secondary background had been promoted from the position of head teacher to that of principal of a central school. Generally, head teachers in high schools have not had extended periods as a relieving principal. Many of the secondary-trained principals did not have even relieving principal experience before starting in substantive positions as principal of a central school. Principal T1 expressed concern about the lack of experience of his colleagues:

> I am extremely worried about the number of principals of central schools in NSW who are doing it tough. One of my beliefs is that going from a head teacher into the principal's role does not give you the experience of dealing with the range of attitudes of parents and the different attitudes of primary and secondary staff. (Interview 1)

Only a small number of the secondary-trained principals had previous experience as classroom teachers in central schools and for all secondary-trained principals their promotion to principal of a central school was their first experience of principalship or even relieving as principals. The secondary-trained principals regretted the loss of collegiality that they may have experienced previously when they were located in secondary schools. Principal T1 expressed his loneliness:

> I often say to my wife this is the loneliest job I have ever had, … I do not think there is any recognition from my immediate peer group which would be the high school principals, … so my relationships with those schools are virtually non-existent. (Interview 1)

Central schools overlooked by DET

Several principals expressed appreciation to the researcher for the opportunity to talk about their issues during the interviews and said that central schools often were overlooked. Some principals had confidence in their relationships with a Director at

either District or Regional level, but still lacked confidence that State Office understood or cared about the particular issues of central schools.

Isolation from officers in the Department and from colleagues in secondary schools can be very keenly felt in times of crisis. Principal U1 described his time of crisis:

> Two students were killed in a car accident right out in front of the school. … We had an excursion to the snow on the next day. We were told get them to go, "Normality needs to return". So, off they went and then some people said we should never have sent them. Students should have been at school to be debriefed. Then the counsellor came to school. He spoke to the kids, he spoke to staff, and he left around lunchtime. He never bothered to come and see me. I was sitting in here and I was in absolute crisis. You have gone all the way up there and I am just about to go, thud, and back down. Nobody came to see me, nobody debriefed me, and no Director came near me, no support. … [Re Collegial support between secondary principals in the District not being extended to principals of central schools] You blokes, we had two students killed, you blokes never came near us. (Interview 1)

Principal U1 referred to this incident and its aftermath several times during the course of the two interviews. In contrast, when coping with a school crisis of three deaths happening in quick succession, Principal S5 commented favourably about the empathetic understanding conveyed by his School Education Director but he expressed disappointment at the limited response by Directors at higher levels of the Department.

> I believe that State Office is out of touch, I do not think they understand that for them to have to commission [a senior State Office Director] to find out what is going on with central schools, suggests to me someone should have known and they did not. (Interview 1)

High turnover of principals, leaving central school and end of career

One of the effects of social and professional isolation was the high turnover of principals. Most schools had a high turnover of principals. Principals S3 (Interview 1) and W1 (Interview 2) reported they needed to find positions in more favourable locations as soon as possible in order to be less isolated from their families. Principal S2 (Interview 2) reported his interest in promotion in order to secure a less remote location, as principal of a high school, and would no longer be principal of a central school. Although not explicitly expressing dissatisfaction with his current career, Principal W2

(Interview 2) intended to make a career change, away from being a school principal. Several principals reported that colleagues had been forced out of remote schools by their communities and, in some cases, colleague principals had left the education profession.

Over half of the interviewed principals expressed a desire to leave their current positions as soon as possible. Principal R1 intended resigning within weeks (Interview 1). Principals T1 (Interview 1) and U1 (Interview 2) expressed the belief that they had no prospects of career progression and will leave their job in the next few years.

Secondary-trained principals: Career progression

Secondary-trained principals of central schools expressed doubt about their future prospects of being able to move from their remote location to a more favourable location or to receive a promotion to principal of a high school. A number of principals of central schools reported that, when they had been previously in senior high school positions, they had been encouraged by their school superintendents to apply to become principal of a central school as a pathway to achieve eventual promotion to principalship of a high school.

> Interviewer: What are your career options?
> Respondent: Well, zero. …
> A superintendent in 2000 advised me very strongly, that the central school system was a good opportunity. … Since then, the new transfer system has occurred which has effectively locked me and most of my colleagues out of any form of promotion because there are probably only half a dozen high school principalship jobs advertised for merit selection in this staffing round to date. It has been very, very limited.
> …
> I am leaving the job. I have had enough in this school. … The community never accepted me. They have made it quite plain they do not want me here so I have decided to go. … They will never accept me, and it is not just about being an outsider, it is about being a woman. (Pr R1, Int 1)

Some reported on specific feedback comments made by interview panel convenors that the central school principal's application was not successful because the interview panels believed that he/she will not have the necessary experience to successfully lead a high school. Principal U1 expressed the view that his applications for principalship of a

high school were not viewed favourably and that he had no prospects of career progression:

> The CV was never good enough. And I still feel there is a real prejudice in the Department for people being in a central school, … [In a survey] I just spoke very strongly about what would you advise the staff, and I said, do not make a career in a central school. … [The Superintendent] said to [my central school colleague Y], that he could not support Y for an application for a principal of a high school job because he did not know that Y could do the job. [Principal Y] did not have the number of relationships because of the population of Y's school. (Interview 1)

and,

> I really do not see that I can have any future aspirations in the Department. I think I just want to get through this year and next year and then leave. (Interview 2)

Participant principals reported that they had received similar comments about their applications to move to principalship of a high school even when they had substantial experience (before their appointment to principalship of a central school) as deputy principals of high schools with larger enrolments than the high schools for which they were applying. Sometimes the only available possibilities for transfer to secondary principalships were listed as Expressions of Interest. This classification meant that applicants needed to be in a substantive principalship at the secondary level. Principal R1 observed, "That locks out principals of central schools. You cannot apply for those jobs" (Interview 1).

Participant principals felt that the limited options for transfer back to a secondary school indicated a lack of recognition by the Department of the full range of skills that they exercised as principals of central schools:

> I know colleagues of mine who have 14 years' experience as principal of a central school, and they retain transfer rights only as a deputy principal of a secondary school. I find that absolutely a disgraceful situation where there is no systemic recognition of their enormous experience and leadership ability as principals. (Pr S2, Int 2)

Several participant principals believed that their career had come to a dead end, with no viable options for moving from their present school. Principal U1 contemplated an imminent drop in status and salary:

Where could I move? I do not see that my Education Director would have any confidence in me despite at the end of last year saying to me, "I really enjoy working with you and all the things that you have done blah, blah, blah." You send him some signals when you have a meeting with him about what support he is going to offer to me and you just get no response. … Where do you go? Transferring to a primary principalship would mean a drop in salary. At the end of this year, my school will be on review because of the drop in numbers. At the end of this year, the pay level for principal of this school will drop. (Interview 2)

Three Research Questions and Major Emergent Findings

For each one of the three Research Questions addressing one of the identified contexts, a major finding related to the work lives of principals emerged: these findings are indicated below in Table 4.8. Furthermore, data obtained in addressing the remaining Research Questions was found also to support the major finding for each of the Research Questions. This demonstrates the inter-relationship amongst the contexts of education policy, community and school, and the way in which the effects from one context on the work lives of central school principals compound, and are compounded by, the effects of the other contexts.

Table 4.8   *Three Research Questions and major emergent findings*

Research Question	Major finding in results for each RQ
RQ1. Education policy context	Work intensification and concerns about health and wellbeing (see Table 4.9)
RQ2. Community context: Remote and low socio-economic status (SES)	Isolation: Personal, family, social and professional (see Table 4.10)
RQ3. School context: Small and K-12	Concern for school viability and limited career prospects (see Table 4.11)

Frequency of comments and concerns

Tables 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11 below indicate the frequency of interview comments from each principal regarding each context. The tables list the number of times the interviewees raised issues related to each of the findings identified in Table 4.8 in their respective interviews. In each of the three tables, the first column lists elements of the

major finding and, where interviewees have commented on a particular element of that finding, the cells in the body of the table record the number of times the principal has commented on that element.

The first eight principals (S1, S4, S2, U1, W1, W2, V1 and S5) listed in the header row of each of Tables 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11 were interviewed twice and are listed in reverse order of distance of their schools from Sydney, the state capital, starting with S1 Central School being at the greatest distance, namely 900 km from Sydney. In the column for S4, the cell with 1,3 entered means that the element in the first row, namely "working longer hours", was mentioned by Principal S4 once in the first interview and three times in the second interview. The remaining four principals (R1, S3, T1 and X1) listed in the header row of each table were not available for a second interview. The second group of four principals is listed also in reverse order of distance of their schools from the state capital.

In Table 4.9, the first column lists elements of the major finding associated with Research Question 1, namely that of work intensification. As well as the elements of work intensification associated with RQ1, the first column also lists elements associated with the other two RQs which supported the finding of work intensification. The elements of "working longer hours" and "staffing issues" attracted the most comments by interviewees. For example, Principal S4 made one comment on "working longer hours" in the first interview and three further comments in the second interview and Principal W1 commented on "staffing issues" four times in the first interview and twice in the second interview.

Table 4.9 *Major finding – Work intensification*: *Number of comments*

Name of principal and distance of school from Sydney in km	Principals interviewed twice								Principals interviewed once			
	S1	S4	S2	U1	W1	W2	V1	S5	X1	T1	R1	S3
	900	700	500	500	500	400	300	300	500	500	500	400
RQ1: Effect of education policy context: Number of comments which supported finding of work intensification												
Working longer hours	1,2	1,3	0,3		0,1				1	1	1	2
Increased number of tasks	1,0							0,1				
Increased diversity of tasks	2,0	2,1			1,1			0,1				
Health concerns		0,1										1
Needing additional leave	0,2	0,1										1
Number of comments associated with other RQs which supported finding of work intensification												
RQ2: Effect of community context												
Long distance travel: OH&S	0,1	0,1										
Students with special needs		1,2			0,1							
Lack of interest in reading					2,0							
RQ3: Effect of school context												
Staffing issues	1,0	2,0		2,1	4,2			0, 1	1	1	2	3

Note. Distances were rounded to nearest 100 km in order to avoid identification of the school and principal. The two numbers separated by a comma refer to the number of comments made by each principal in the first and second interviews respectively.

Although "working long hours" was commented on most often, other elements of work intensification attracted many comments, particularly the increased diversity of tasks. Some of the diverse tasks, such as dealing with high numbers of child sexual abuse reports, maintaining inadequate ICT facilities, staffing issues and responding to "double the documentation" of a combined K-12 school (Pr S5, Int 2) were considered by principals to be special features of remote central schools and contributed significantly to work intensification for principals.

In Table 4.10, the first column lists elements of the major finding associated with Research Question 2, namely that of isolation in its various aspects. As well as the elements of isolation associated with RQ2, the first column also lists elements associated with RQ3 which supported the finding of isolation.

Isolation of principals of central schools included many other considerations apart from the long distances to major centres. Aspects of isolation such as personal, family, social and professional isolation were all the subject of multiple comments by principals. In addition, principals dealt with significant issues in isolation from professional

colleagues, such as high levels of child sexual abuse, declining health services and threats of violence towards principals.

Table 4.10 *Major finding – Isolation: Number of comments*

Name of principal and distance of school from Sydney in km	Principals interviewed twice								Principals interviewed once			
	S1	S4	S2	U1	W1	W2	V1	S5	X1	T1	R1	S3
	900	700	500	500	500	400	300	300	500	500	500	400
RQ2: Effect of community context: Number of comments which supported finding of isolation												
Separation from family				3,2	0,1						2	1
Isolation of family members		0,1	0,3	0,1					1			1
Declining population & services		0,1	3,0			0,1					1	
Child sexual abuse		1,3										1
Problems in reporting abuse		2,4										1
Threats of violence to principals		1,1			1,0					3	1	3
Number of comments associated with other RQs which supported finding of isolation												
RQ3: Effect of school context												
Professional isolation	0, 1				1,1			1,0	1	3		

Dealing with deaths of school children (Pr U1), high levels of child sexual abuse (Principals S3, S4), threats of violence towards principals (Principals R1, S3, S4, T1) and a suicide attempt by a family member (Pr U1) when isolated from colleagues and separated from family resulted in comments of considerable emotion being made in interviews.

In Table 4.11, the first column lists elements of the major finding associated with Research Question 3, namely that of limited career prospects. As well as the elements of career prospects associated with RQ3, the first column also lists elements associated with RQ1 and RQ2 which supported the finding of limited career prospects. Although elements of the school context such as the declining enrolments in central schools contributed to principals' concerns about limited career prospects, principals also commented about elements from the education policy and community contexts which they believed limited their career prospects. For example, the marketisation aspect of education policy reduced enrolments and career prospects for principals of small schools.

Table 4.11 *Major finding – Limited career prospects*: *Number of comments*

Name of principal and distance of school from Sydney in km	Principals interviewed twice								Principals interviewed once			
	S1	S4	S2	U1	W1	W2	V1	S5	X1	T1	R1	S3
	900	700	500	500	500	400	300	300	500	500	500	400
RQ3: Effect of school context: Number of comments supporting finding of limited career prospects												
School viability	0,1			2,1		0,2			1			
Leaving central school			0,2		0, 1	0,2						1
End of career						0,1				1	3	
Number of comments associated with other RQs which supported finding of limited career prospects												
RQ1: Effect of education policy context												
Marketisation: Free bus passes		1,0			1,0				1			2
Dealing with complaints		0,1							1	1	1	
Relationships with SEDs	1,4	0,2	0,1	0,3							3	1
Annual School Report	1,0				0,1			0,1		1		
Assessment of principal	2,4	0,1	0,3	1,0	0,1	0,1				2		
RQ2: Effect of community context												
Community relationships	1,0	1,0						0,1	1	2		
Living in the town?				1,1	0,1	0,1		2,0	3	1	1	
Attitudes to female principals										4		
Community complaints	1,0	1,1			0,1			2,0		1		
High turnover of principals			0, 1	0, 1	0,1	0, 1			1	3	1	

Across the policy, community and school contexts, principals made many comments about the critical consequences for their career prospects of community relations, community complaints and the associated elements in policy of relationships with School Education Directors (SEDs). Concerns about the way in which SEDs dealt with any complaints and what information SEDs used to assess the performance of principals attracted a high number of comments.

Summary of Chapter 4

Principals in both surveys and the schedule of interviews reported on work life issues arising from the educational policy, community and school contexts of being a principal of a NSW central school. In the three context categories, there were three emergent findings, concerning work intensification and related concerns about health;

personal, social and professional isolation; and perceptions about limitations on career prospects

They repeatedly raised the issue of the intensity of their interactions with the small remote communities and the critical consequences for their leadership when these interactions were not harmonious.

They expressed concern about the professional issues of isolation from their professional colleagues in secondary schools, primary schools and officers of the Department. The extent of this isolation was felt most keenly by principals who had previously been in secondary schools in larger centres. Most of the principals of central schools perceived that there were barriers to their career progression and they were pessimistic about their career prospects. Several older principals believed that they would either leave the teaching profession in the near future or give up hoping for a more favourable appointment and stay in their present schools until they reached retirement age.

Personal issues were also raised, particularly by participants in interviews. Principals often experienced isolation from families and a high proportion lived on their own. When marriage partners could not find employment in the small town, they felt forced to live separately, usually at long distances from their partners. Female principals (and some wives of male principals) had additional difficulties both in dealing with community attitudes and loss of family connections.

Principals of remote central schools expressed some confidence about handling issues within their schools. However, they needed to practise a level of personal resilience in coping with community-based crises and critical consequences of relationships outside the school, both in terms of relationships with key members of the community and reactions of superior officers in the Department of Education.

In this chapter, data were presented from both qualitative and quantitative sources to indicate the situational context of central school leadership has affected the work lives of principals of central schools.

The data were grouped in order to reflect the three contributing research questions. The three research questions pertained to the three broad contexts of education policy

reform, community context of remoteness and low socio-economic status and the school-specific context of small size and being a combined primary and secondary school. The following chapter synthesises, analyses and evaluates the research data, and discusses the findings in relation to each research question and to the overall research problem.

Chapter 5 Findings and Discussion

Overview

This chapter discusses the results in Chapter 4 obtained from surveying and interviewing principals about the situational context of central school leadership in New South Wales (NSW), Australia, and its effects on their work lives. Each of the three Research Questions is discussed in terms of the relationship between the results obtained and the current available research literature. Implications for research, policy and practice are considered in the last section of the chapter. The first section provides an overview of some of the key findings in relationship to the principalship of remote central schools and a model (see Figure 5.1), which provides an indication of how the contexts considered in each of the Research Questions have combined implications for the work lives of principals of central schools in NSW.

 In the next three sections of the chapter after the overview, the three Research Questions are addressed:

    RQ1: Education policy context - Devolution
    RQ2: Community context – Remote and low socio-economic status (SES)
    RQ3: School context – Small and K to 12

For each Research Question, findings in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 are linked with the results reported in Chapter 4 concerning the work lives of principals in comparable contexts. One major finding has been identified in relation to each of the three Research Questions. However, for each Research Question, it was apparent that in addition to the major finding, a number of minor findings also emerged which were related to the other two Research Questions. The three findings in this research are therefore not mutually exclusive. As indicated above in Tables 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11, the three major findings, drawn from the data relevant to each of the three Research Questions, are interlaced and mutually reinforcing. The effects of each of the three contexts rebound on and intensify each of the others and the interrelationship between contexts and findings reflects the complexity of the task of leading and managing remote central schools.

Figure 5.1 *Research Questions: Contexts and work lives implications*

RQ1: Policy Devolution	RQ2: Community a) Remote b) Low-SES	RQ3: School a) Small b) K-12	Work lives: Major finding
. Endogenous: Principal's values . Working longer hours . Increased number of tasks . Increased diversity of tasks . Resilience and health issues	. Reporting child sex abuse . Dynamic of decline . Welfare needs: 'Massive intensification' of principal's work . Reduced social capital . Long distance travel . Phone and ICT failures	. Double the documentation . Specialist staffing issue . Novice staff . Lack of relief staff . Lack of adequate ICT to teach secondary subjects	Work intensification
	. Separation from family . Isolation of family members . Loss of services . Mortality rates . Values conflict . Attitudes to female principals . Violence: Living next to the school	. Novice principal . Isolation from K-6 and 7-12 school principals . Isolation from SEDs: dealing with school crises	Isolation
. Marketisation: Free bus passes . Dealing with parent complaints . Relationships with SEDs: Assessments of principal . Standardised testing	. Declining populations: 'ghost towns' . Ageing populations . High turnover of principals: Being 'forced out' by community	. Viability of school – parental choice of school . Few transfer opportunities when relocating . End of career; 'marooned'	Limited career prospects

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This research found that the degree of remoteness was related directly to the nature of the principalship and to specific issues raised by incumbents in remote schools.

According to Alston and Kent (2006; 2008; 2009), Collins (2003a), Halsey (2005), HREOC (1999, 2000a; 2000b), Letts et al., (2005) and Starr and White (2008), staff in more remote locations of Australia and New Zealand experience difficulties in providing equitable education for students and have difficulty in maintaining their personal networks and access to community services. This research both confirmed and expanded the above findings. The greater range and frequency of comments about concerns by principals at greater distances from major centres on the coast of New South Wales (see Tables 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11) confirmed the above research concerning these difficulties for an Australian educational context. This study, therefore added further understanding of the range of issues cited in the above research literature and also provided extensive information about circumstances specific to the principalship of remote NSW central schools. These included:

1. the changed demographic of the principals themselves as communities responded to an increase in the retention of senior secondary students;

2. the challenges of being a novice principal in situations of minimal collegial support; and

3. the difficulties in leading schools where recruitment and the retention of staff suitably trained staff, especially for secondary subjects, was an ongoing issue.

### *1.	Changed demographic of central school principals*

The results obtained from surveys of all central school principals (N = 27) showed distinctive features (see Tables 4.1, 4.2). There were distinctions in terms of gender, career stage, initial professional training and previous principalship experience when compared to the characteristics of principals as reported in the literature. Thirty three per cent of central school principals were female. This proportion is much lower than was found in the study of Wildy and Clarke (2005) of principals of remote (primary) schools in Western Australia, who found that 70 per cent of the remote principals were female.

Studies of the career stages of principals in remote schools such as Clarke et al., (2006), Springbett (2004) and Wildy and Clarke (2005) have reported that principals of remote schools across Australia were typically novice principals. Similarly in this study, a majority, 63 per cent, of the principals surveyed had been principal of their current central school for fewer than four years and most of the principals, 82 per cent, were novice principals, the current school being their first appointment as a principal. A small majority of the principals were in the last decade of their anticipated working career.

There has been an increased number of principals of remote central schools whose initial professional training was as a secondary teacher. Retention rates to Year 12 in government schools across Australia have increased from 20 per cent in 1968 to 66 per cent in 1999 (G. Burke & Spaull, 2001) and hence the proportion of central school enrolments in the secondary years has increased. The survey for this study found 74 per cent of the central school principals were secondary-trained and this had been a response by principals' selection panels to the increased proportion of secondary enrolments in central schools and the belief that management of the secondary curriculum, and especially of the high stakes Higher School Certificate, was more appropriately given to a principal with secondary training and experience. Although researchers such as Burke and Spaull have noted the change in retention, the concomitant change in principal appointments was not a feature of their research. This study has thus provided a more nuanced view of the effects on central schools of the increase in senior retention rates.

2. *Principals as novices removed from collegial support*

Research conducted by Ewington et al. (2008) and by Wildy and Clarke (2005) has reported on the situation where principals of remote schools had different values and priorities from those of their communities, and the ways in which this has required them to spend more time working in and contributing to community organisations. McConaghy (2006) and Springbett (2004) acknowledged this in their work and further described the detrimental effects on the social and emotional wellbeing of principals

when remote principals typically lived next to their schools in communities which were not as supportive as the principals had expected.

In this study, the relationship between the principal and the community also was reported as a key factor in the leadership work of principals. Management of personal relations not only with parents of schoolchildren but with a whole community was perceived as a core issue by principals of remote schools. Principals reflected that this was often more critical for the length of tenure and future career of the principal than the principal's leadership of staff and students within the school. Interviewees reported on instances of individual parents or groups of community members who had "forced out" other principals of central schools (Pr S5, Int 1), a situation of more serious consequence than had been recognised in the previous research.

Nearly all the secondary-trained interviewees had no previous experience in dealing with a school community or negotiating with officers of the Department of Education and Training (DET) about staffing and necessary resources for a school. Principal T1 expressed his "extreme worry" about the number of secondary background principals who were "doing it tough", because of their lack of experience in going directly from the role of head teacher to that of principal (Int 1). Similarly, Principal S3, with a primary school background, needed to concentrate on learning secondary issues over the "last four and a half years" (Int 1). Principals expressed feelings of insecurity about the career consequences for them if any community member or group of parents complained to the School Education Director or to a Member of the NSW Parliament (Pr T1, Int 1). The career limitations of unsatisfactory relationships with communities were not canvassed specifically in the research of Ewington et al. (2008), McConaghy (2006), Springbett (2004) or Wildy and Clarke (2005) and hence, this study has identified a further effect, not just on the current but also on the future work lives of principals, based on the extent of support within the school-community partnership.

3.   *Recruitment and retention of staff*
The literature reports that remote Australian schools have persistent difficulty in recruiting teachers and hence remote schools have a high incidence of novice staff

(Barty et al., 2005; Beutel et al., 2011; Buchanan, 2010; Halsey, 2005; Mulcahy, 2009; Pegg, 2009; Roberts, 2004). This was reiterated by principal interviewees. In addition to difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff in general, principals of central schools had particular difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff in the secondary department (see Pr S4, S3, U1, W1, T1 comments) and in providing adequate curriculum continuity should one of their staff require leave of absence. Central school principals were required to lead relatively inexperienced staff, particularly in the secondary department, in providing "a comprehensive education for children from Kindergarten to Year 12" (NSW DEC, 2007, p. 1).

In addition to the difficulties of recruiting staff with appropriate subject content knowledge, the available staff were novices in their positions and required the higher levels of professional support appropriate to early career teachers. The frequency of principal comments on staffing issues supports the research of Letts et al. (2005) that these needs "can dominate a school leader's consciousness" (p. 221).

RQ1: Education Policy Context - Devolution

To what extent have the work lives of principals of central schools in the Australian state of NSW been affected by the education policy context of devolution in that state?

Major Finding 1: Education Policy and Work Intensification

The major finding associated with RQ1 and the context of education policy is that work intensification is a significant concern to principals of remote central schools. This was identified in both quantitative data (Table 4.6) and qualitative data (Appendix Table C2). Literature on the work lives of teachers and principals in Australia (C. Easthope & Easthope, 2000; Wildy & Clarke, 2009; Williamson & Myhill, 2008) and internationally (Billot, 2003; Kelchtermans, Piot, & Ballet, 2011; Southworth, 2008) has described increased work intensification for principals, who fit the category of professional workers, or "educated labor", described in the seminal work of Larson (1980), and also the studies of Densmore (1987) and Apple and Junck (1987) who described work intensification in the teaching profession. The results recorded in Chapter 4 confirm that the three components of work intensification, as identified by Larson (1980), namely,

working longer hours, increased number of tasks each day and increased diversity of tasks, are evident in the work lives of contemporary principals of central schools.

In interviews and survey items relevant to RQ1, concerning the education policy context of devolution, principals reported evidence of each of the three components of work intensification, identified by Larson (1980). The principals in this study reported firstly, on working longer hours; secondly, an increase in the number of tasks to be completed in a set time; and thirdly, an increased diversity of skills required for an increased range of responsibilities, sometimes being fulfilled with fewer resources. Despite the passage of time since Larson first published her work and the nature of the tasks which now constitute the principal's work, this study of principals in central schools has confirmed the ongoing relevance of Larson's original analysis of work intensification for contemporary school leaders.

The nature and the task of school leadership changed following the NSW Education Reform Act, 1990. The move to devolution of the NSW public education system placed new responsibilities on the principals of all government schools and created critical new issues and criteria for success as school leaders and hence, new implications for their workloads and work lives. Among the new issues were greater community participation in the governance of local schools and more parental choice between schools, issues which had a significant impact on the work of principals in small, remote and low-SES communities. Parental choice of schools, a change in policy which encouraged competition for students between neighbouring schools, has added to stress for principals in a range of countries. Studies in New Zealand (Ladd & Fiske, 2001), Sweden (Lidstrom, 1999), the US (Lubienski, 2003) and Australia (Whitty et al., 1998; Morgan & Blackmore, 2007) have reported significant stress, particularly for principals of rural schools. In this research, central school principals repeatedly expressed concerns about the continuing viability of their schools and local communities. They made comments such as "nearly half the enrolment in six years" (Pr R1, Int 1), having "a bitter taste" (Pr S1, Int 2) in losses beyond their control, "probably end up closing the school" (Pr W2, Int 2) and "I really do not know how this place is going to exist" (Pr U1, Int 1).

Endogenous as well as exogenous factors

In addition to the three components of work intensification, other major challenges arising from the policy context and identified in the preliminary survey and in interview data concerned the exogenous and endogenous pressures acting on principals. Studies on dilemmas that are experienced by principals have included factors which are endogenous to principals as well as those which were exogenous. Cranston (1999) and Wildy & Louden (2000) reported that the dilemmas of principals have been exacerbated by devolution of more responsibilities, such as financial and personnel responsibilities, to principals and Wildy (1999b) described principals' work as being "saturated with dilemmas" (p. 61). The research of Ewington et al. (2008) and Wildy and Clarke (2009) reported on the conflict experienced by principals, particularly in more remote schools, between the principals' beliefs and values which constituted an endogenous pressure on the principal and the exogenous factors of community values and pressures. The current research on central school principals explored the effect of endogenous and exogenous factors on work intensification of principals by seeking information from principals on time spent by principals on typical tasks (see Table 4.6 in Ch. 4).

Principals indicated increased pressure to spend more time on most of the listed tasks. For each of the tasks in Table 4.6, both the endogenous factor of the principals' preferences to spend more time and the exogenous factor of expectations by the DET to spend more time contributed to a total pressure to spend more time fulfilling a greater number of required tasks and meeting external expectations. Apart from the exogenous factors of education policy, and to the demands of both community and school contexts, endogenous factors also contribute to each aspect of work intensification, namely increased hours of work, more tasks to be completed in a set time and a greater diversity of responsibilities.

This data supported the findings of the literature that endogenous factors result in teachers' "merciless commitment" in attempting to meet virtually unobtainable standards (Hargreaves, 1992, p. 94), and teachers' "fierce determination" in driving for perfection (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008, p. 63). Endogenous moral values, such as

dedication to the welfare of staff and students, were stronger influences on leadership actions of UK principals than the exogenous factors which were managerial (Day et al., 2001, p. 43). Similarly, Australian principals believe that their first and strongest loyalties in their professional lives are to those in their care, while the exogenous factor of being a good manager is considered secondary (Saulwick Muller, 2004, p. 22). The literature concerning a combination of endogenous as well as exogenous pressures on principals in general was supported by the data from this research in relation to the time spent by central school principals on typical tasks.

Work Intensification Component 1: Working longer hours

Interviewed principals made a range of comments about the first component of work intensification, that is, their hours of work. Cranston and Ehrich (2002), Gardner and Williamson (2004), and Saulwick Muller (2003) have reported that the average working week for Australian principals was between 50 and 70 hours a week. However, the central school principals in this research reported that working 70 to 80 hours a week was not exceptional (see comments by Pr S1, Pr S2, Pr S3, Pr S4).

As one example of working longer hours, Hatton (1995; 1996) and Starr and White (2008) found that competing for and gaining access to restricted resources in low-SES communities is a time consuming process for principals, and often the acquisition of additional resources is entirely dependent on the successful preparation of funding submissions by the school principal to both state and federal governments and private funding sources outside the community. Of particular concern for principals of central schools, which had secondary departments, was the necessity of making applications for federal grants to support part-time vocational education programs. In providing school based apprenticeship courses for students in central schools the principal needed to spend time to follow and complete a four page checklist of consultation processes (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2013).

Principals in this research reported on the cost and time needed to consult with other schools, with Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), such as Institutes of Technical and Further Education (TAFE), and to negotiate with possible employers

about the nature and timing of required periods of on-the-job training. For principals of remote schools with almost no sources of non-farm employment places, and with student facing distances of up to 400 km to the nearest RTOs and possible employers, it was expensive in both travel and time to comply with such criteria (see comments by Pr S1, Pr S2, Pr S4, Pr W1).

The above example from this study supports Australian research which has found that principals of remote schools make extraordinary efforts to ensure that secondary students have access to education that will provide them with future employment opportunities (HREOC, 1999; 2000a; 2000b).

Work Intensification Component 2: Increased number of tasks each day

Many researchers, such as Andreyko (2010), Bartlet (2004), Copland (2001), Cranston (2007), McInerney (2003), Pounder and Merrill (2001), Southworth (2008) and Vandenberghe (1992) have identified significantly increased expectations on principals since the advent of education policies of devolution. In this research, principals supported Hatton's findings and reported that reported that State Office had "devolved the pain", the "workload and responsibility" and speculated about principals needing to "go on stress leave tomorrow" because there was too much to do (Pr S1, Int 1).

Central school principals have experienced a rapid increase in required documentation and reported that there was too much "administrivia" required in performing tasks such as responding to Departmental surveys, preparing submissions and providing acquittals to federal and state governments for particular grants (Pr W2, Int 2). Increased expectations around task completion and deadline fulfilment are also compounded by increased levels of accountability devolved to all principals, regardless of school or community context. Billot (2003), Day et al. (2001), Hallinger (2005) and Wildy (1999) have reported on the increased levels of accountability in terms of site management and student outcomes, which have been devolved to school principals. As one example of increased number of tasks, in this study principals reported an increased volume of information and communications being sent to schools in electronic form and via a range of online sites. Similarly, there was an increased frequency of email messages from the DET and other state and national government agencies which

referred to tasks which had to be completed by the principal. The increased number of such messages each day had created an expectation that the increased number of tasks referred to needed to be completed each day (Pr S1, Int 1) and such expectations were compounded by a shorter time frame for reply.

Work Intensification Component 3: Increased diversity of tasks

Studies of principals' work, such as Blackmore (1993), Hallinger (1992), Hatton (1995; 1996), Lingard et al. (1999), Lyall (1998) and Wylie (1997a) in the early years after implementation of devolution reforms uniformly commented on the increased workload and range of responsibilities undertaken by school principals. These included responsibilities such as budgeting, school maintenance, strategic planning, community relations and recruiting of staff. Later studies, such as Billot (2003), Cranston (2001), Hallinger (2005) and McInerney (2003) treated the increased diversity of principal's tasks as being less remarkable and in some cases, such as Bennet et al. (2003) and Gronn (2002; 2003), the focus moved to managing this increased diversity through the implementation of distributive leadership of schools.

However, as observed by Southworth (2008), such proposals have serious limitations for small schools where there is no opportunity for effectively distributing leadership to other experienced executive staff. The solution to an increased workload propounded by researchers on distributive leadership is not an option in small central schools with largely inexperienced executive and teaching staff. This study therefore provides an additional nuance to the work around leadership and management of schools and identifies a significant area in which small remote schools do not accord with the currently recommended models of leadership. In the present research, principals of central schools had experienced increased diversity of tasks and they reported that the workload at the school level had "increased inordinately" (Pr S1, Int 1). The time that principals spent on new tasks of administration had led to principals feeling "frustrated" and "discouraged" that they were responding primarily to "political" needs (Pr W1, Int 2; Pr S4, Int 1) and yet the commonly identified solution in terms of distributing the responsibilities of management and leadership was not available to them.

Resilience and health issues

In the media, school principalship in general often has been represented as one of "sleepless nights, heart attacks and sudden death accountabilities" (Thomson, Blackmore, Sachs, & Tregenza, 2003, p. 118). Although stress appears to be a common feature of principalship (Carr, 1994; Richardson & Sinha, 2011; Riley, 2012; Saulwick Muller, 2004), Australian school principals have not always revealed the extent of their anxieties to colleagues or superordinates. As one principal reported in a study on levels of anxiety and and depression among Australian school principals, "if the Department or the union were asking me to fill this out I would not participate. I trust you with the information" (Carr, 1994, p. 24). For principals of central schools, with a small staff and a requirement to educate children for the 13 years from Kindergarten to Year 12, there are limited options for principals to share or delegate duties and workloads and this made remote K to 12 schools "very stressful places" (Australian Secondary Principals Association, et al., 2007, p. 14).

Some studies, such as Bottery et al. (2008), Crozier-Dunham (2007), and Lacey and Gronn (2006) have investigated how professional development of principals can assist them to have the required resilience to cope with their demanding workloads. In this research, principals acknowledged the need for personal resilience, but none reported that this was obtained by attending professional development courses. Instead, principals developed personal, often idiosyncratic, at times risky, regimes to counteract the demands of workloads undertaken in schools remote from sources of places of professional development. Several interviewees (Pr S3, Int 1; Pr S4, Int 2) referred to the need for personal resilience to cope with their workload, which, especially in their early years as novice principals, was "extremely draining" (Pr S1, Int 2). They developed special health regime strategies to maintain their fitness and wellbeing. Other principals described how, in addition to using their Sick Leave allowances, they needed to take extended periods of Long Service Leave as a way to recover and restore their energy levels (Pr S1, Int 2; Pr S3, Int 1). Driving long distances to attend meetings with other principals was a risk to the safety of principals. Principal S4 reported on the necessity of

"five o'clock starts" and seven hours of driving to attend essential meetings in a regional centre (Int 1) and Principal S1 took considerable risk in attending all day meetings in Sydney and then driving 850 km overnight so that he could be back in his school the next morning (Int 2).

For most of these principals, professional development in time and task management or policy compliance was unlikely to constitute the solution propounded by the above researchers. To some extent, the stress was connected to external factors such as distance or isolation from collegial relationships and not to a personal level of knowledge or skills which were likely to be addressed through a standard professional development program.

Remote and Low-SES Community and Work Intensification

The study produced further minor findings about work intensification related to the contexts other than the policy context which form the framework of Research Questions for this study (see Tables 4.8 to 4.11). The following section considers the way in which work intensification in the policy context is compounded by the requirement to implement education policies in remote and low-SES communities.

Principals of remote central schools work within a statewide policy context that demands that they respond to issues and policies considered to be relevant to all schools within NSW. Respondents reported on the difficulties of implementing the uniform polices for all schools of the DET and the national government. For remote NSW schools in low-SES communities, any educational gains were achieved only "through massive intensification of the principal's work" (Hatton, 1995, p. 25) and this observation in the literature was confirmed by the findings of this study.

Remote community and work intensification

Studies such as Collins (2003), Whittall (2002) and Wylie (1997a) have reported that very small and remote schools posed more challenges for a principal than a larger school in a less remote location. Principals of small schools were often unprepared, or underprepared, to deal with the tensions and dilemmas associated with instructional leadership and management, system and local community expectations and personal and

community values (Ewington et al., 2008, p. 546). This perception was confirmed in the study. At the same time as principals in remote central schools are responding to local community expectations and values, they need to meet system imposed requirements and targets, such as achievement levels in the increased number of NSW standardised tests and the Australian government's National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests. In this study, principals in remote communities experienced dilemmas and stress in their work lives in meeting simultaneous and sometimes conflicting needs and priorities for students' time at school. As well as meeting the expressed needs of remote and lower SES communities, principals needed to respond both to exogenous pressures from employing and funding authorities and their own endogenous pressures (Ewington et al., 2008; Wildy & Clarke, 2005), which were highlighted by their work and experience in communities with a range of social and economic issues. Principals in such "challenging" schools needed to "manage personal emotional conflicts generated by mismatches between what they are required to do in real-life situations, set alongside what they believe is best to do" (Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2008, p. 117).

The findings of this study reiterate those of the literature. Central school principals experience particular dilemmas in meeting the requirement to share the governance of the school with staff and local communities in a more devolved framework while simultaneously remaining accountable to the DET for the implementation of the state government's policies on education (Ewington et al., 2008; Wildy & Clarke, 2005). As observed by McConaghy (2006) and Springbett (2004), remote communities in Australia did not always fit an "idyllic" image and central school principals did not feel confident about sharing school governance, particularly with those perceived to be "toxic members of the community" (Pr R1, Int 1) who were not supportive of the school's priorities and programs.

Diversity of additional tasks in remote communities

Reporting child sexual abuse

Reporting child sexual abuse within the context mandatory reporting of child protection issues was one issue which contributed to work intensification. Research on child sexual abuse in Australia such as Neame and Heenan (2004) and Tarczon and Quadara (2012) has reported that not only are remote Australians at greater risk of sexual assault (Tarczon & Qadara, 2012, p. 3) but that it was significantly under-reported (p. 5). The recent Inquiries in the states of NSW and Victoria and the national Royal Commission (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2013) concerning sexual abuse have revealed extraordinary under-reporting of these issues.

The data from interviews in the current research on levels of child sexual abuse and general violence in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal remote communities strongly support available research that these issues have been under-reported. Several interviewed principals reported high levels of child sexual abuse or other forms of violence in their communities and a level of shock experienced by their novice staff when they were first confronted with these issues (see Table 4.10). Although the interviewer in this research did not ask principals about any issues of abuse or violence, several principals raised such matters. The principals who did so reported that sexual abuse affected a wide range of students in their schools and they spoke with considerable intensity about the emotional strain on their staff and themselves.

Although the number of participants in this study was small, the principals' reports of the high incidence of child sexual abuse in their particular schools would tend to support the recent research in the US that the issue of child sexual abuse has become an increasing issue for school leadership (Mitchell, 2010). The unsolicited comments of principals in this study would support also Australian research (Australian Royal Commission, 2013; Tarczon & Quadara, 2012) which suggest that the incidence of abuse had previously been under-reported and that the levels of abuse were higher in remote areas of NSW (Neame & Heenan, 2004).

Principals in remote locations reported that they could not rely on support from the Department of Community Services (DOCS), the government body with the professional expertise needed to deal with children and families affected by child sexual abuse. Principal S4 stated that there were "29 outstanding reports that had not even received an acknowledgment from DOCS" (Interview 1). Long distances to regional centres meant that support from DOCS workers was usually not available. Apart from the principals who reported very high levels of child sexual abuse, other principals expressed their surprise at meeting high levels of intimidation and general violence in their communities.

Telephone, computer and internet maintenance

Fifty-six per cent of principals considered that the current NSW policies had created a system of effective school-based management for NSW government schools. However, a large majority, nearly 70 per cent, disagreed with the statement that they had flexibility in the management of properties and maintenance of their schools (see Table 4.3), which had been a key plank in the move to school-based management. As one example of increased diversity of principals' tasks, the devolution of responsibility for maintenance of school equipment followed by a rapid increase in the provision of telecommunication and computing facilities required principals to spend time learning and using new technical management skills.

Much of the research on small, remote schools has focused on the potential of online learning to enhance educational offerings (HREOC, 1999, 2000a, 2000b; T. Richards, 2005; Vinson, 1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). However, research has identified also that the same small, remote schools have problems in gaining adequate access to information and communications technology (ICT) (Alston & Kent, 2006; HREOC, 2000a, 2000b).

The HREOC (2000a) reported that remote principals with little access to technical expertise "dreaded" a computer mishap (p. 101) and, particularly for central schools with a critical need for the effective delivery of specialist secondary subjects, ICT breakdowns have been an "enormous waste of staff time and energy" (HREOC, 2000a, p.

102). Alston and Kent found examples of remote centres with an "archaic" telephone system and schools which did not have the resources to address such problems (p. 100).

In the current research, many of the remote central schools were dependent on ICT for the provision of secondary school subjects through "Access" programs. Schools on Access programs taught senior secondary students using videoconference links from one school to the students of up to six other central schools. The data in this study re-iterated the concerns identified in the above literature. Principals in the study expressed frustration concerning the inadequate provision of ICT infrastructure and technical support: "We had to give up the IT line [help desk] as a bit of a joke. We tried to ring them, they would not come. … Half the time nobody knew what they were doing" (Pr W2, Int 2). This was particularly critical when senior students had limited time to prepare for their final external examinations. Principals were concerned that loss of instructional time for these students had serious implications for their future career or study options. They were concerned also that breakdowns affected the reputation of the school as a reliable provider of the senior secondary school curriculum. At the same time, principals in more impoverished communities reported that, "technology at home was non-existent and very few of the parents had telephones" (Pr S4, Int 2); students therefore depended on the school's fragile ICT facilities. The data from this study supports the literature on the inadequacy of ICT facilities in remote areas and the inordinate amount of time that principals were required to spend not only in learning new ICT skills but in exercising skills in the maintenance of the ICT facilities that were critical for the education of small groups of remote area secondary students.

Low-SES community and work intensification

Remote Australian towns have experienced continuing population decline together with increasing proportions of the population who were in the lower-SES category (Budge, 1996; Fincher & Wulff, 1998; HREOC, 2000b; Vinson, 1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). Studies of poverty in remote areas of Australia have described a "dynamic of decline" (Higgins, 1998, p. 110; Vinson, 2002b, p. 98) and have expressed concern about the "sustainability of rural life" (Argent & Rolley, 2000, p. 183) and about small

remote towns which had the appearance of a "ghost town" (Beal & Ralston, 1998, p. 55).

The situations described in the above literature create particular demands on remote schools and principals. These include attracting specialist secondary staff, adjusting to the living conditions for principals and their families, and coping with social welfare issues in the community; these are rarely addressed in the literature. Principals in this study reported difficulties in providing equitable access to school education in remote towns characterised by populations which were both declining (Pr S2, Int 1) and ageing (Pr R1, Int 1; Pr S2, Int 1; Pr U1, Int 1). Principals noted, along with Higgins (1998), and Worthington and Dollery (2001), that the non-Aboriginal communities, particularly farmers, had continued to increase in average age. However, in some of the communities which had a significant Aboriginal population, the increasing median age was partly balanced by the fact that the Aboriginal community had a younger average age and a higher fertility rate and that school populations of Aboriginal children were increasing. The need to recruit and retain staff who were skilled in the cultural competencies required to teach in schools and communities with increasing Aboriginal representation presented a further concern for principals.

Much of the available literature on leading a school with a low-SES student enrolment has focused on leadership of low-SES inner-city schools (Brighouse, 2004; Day, 2005; Smith & Bell, 2011) and, with few exceptions, notably Wildy and Clark (2009), there has been less research on low-SES schools in remote areas. In addition to the issues studied in research on low-SES city schools, this study has added data on the work lives of principals who not only lead a school with a cohort of students from a low-SES background but who, because of remoteness, often live in the same communities as their students. Principals living in remote towns are both community members and community workers, and the lack of access to community resources and services affect them both personally and professionally.

Reduced social capital and community capacity to support remote school

Israel et al.(2001) in their study of schools in rural communities in the US used Hanifan's (1916) concept of social capital in rural communities to report on the critical importance of both the social capital of a community and family social capital in the educational achievement of students and community involvement in local schools. The reduced social capital in remote communities add to the increased responsibility and work intensification of the principal in two ways: the principal provided support not otherwise available within the community to its members; and the principals worked in the school without the support of a skilled community to share the workload. In addition, Alston and Kent (2006), and Kilpatrick and Abbott-Chapman (2002) have researched the limiting effects of low levels of social capital on educational attainment of students in remote towns of Australia. The low levels of social capital in remote towns with low-SES have made it problematic for principals of central schools to implement one of the major aims of devolution reforms in NSW, namely to "promote more active involvement by the community, parents and industry in the delivery of education" (Scott, 1989, p. 3).

The economic and social decline in remote NSW communities has resulted in community members feeling less confident to contribute in decision-making bodies such as the school's Parents and Citizens body or the local school council. In this study, principals' perceptions of a "downward spiral" (Pr W2, Int 2) supported the observations of Higgins (1998) and Vinson (2002b) that the decline in population and services in remote NSW was exacerbated by a "dynamic of decline" and a diminished perception of collective self-efficacy or capacity (Squires, cited in Vinson, 2002b, p. 110). In the current research, there were detrimental social effects caused by the prolonged drought and ongoing lack of local employment opportunities (Pr S4, Int 1; Pr X1, Int 1) and, unlike parents of children in other NSW schools, parents were unable to contribute to the financial resources of the school by the payment of school contributions (Pr T1, Int 1).

In addition to remote communities having low social capital, the staff in remote schools have continued to be mainly inexperienced (HREOC, 2000b; Letts, Novak, Gottschall, Green, & Meyenn, 2005; Preston, 2000a, 2000b; Roberts, 2004) and principals have very limited access to either social capital in the community or

professional experience in their teachers with whom they could share decision-making or implement a form of distributed leadership as has been researched by Bennet et al. (2003) and Gronn (2002; 2003). In the current research, principals of small central schools have presumed that their mainly novice teachers had a limited capacity to share in school planning or distributive leadership and principals accepted the extra workload of associated documentation tasks mandated by State Office such as the Annual School Plan, the Annual School Report, submission writing, acquittal of grants and daily responses to 'urgent' emails without the support of other experienced staff or community members. In situations where the State Office mandated community participation, for example, in the preparation of the school's Strategic Plan and the publication of the Annual School Report, principals were often in the position of providing significant support to community members rather than being supported by them.

Small K-12 Schools and Work Intensification

The third context, that is, the nature of a small, K-12 school, within which this study was conducted was also a factor in increasing work intensification for principals of central schools (see Table 4.9). The literature has reported on the particular ways in which principals of small schools have experienced increasing work intensification (Dunning, 1993; Whittall, 2002; Wylie, 1997). The varied responsibilities of principals have resulted in the need for principals to complete many short-term tasks in a single day resulting in a situation where a true break "hardly ever" occurs (Davies, 1987, p. 43). Davies observed that the days of principals of small schools were consumed by activities which were characterised by "brevity, variety and fragmentation" (p. 44).

The findings in this study confirm the reported literature findings on the work intensification experienced by school principals in general and of small primary schools in remote areas of Australia (Hatton, 1995, 1996; Starr & White, 2008; Wildy & Clarke, 2005; 2008, 2009). Although the above research has reported on the high levels of documentation undertaken by principals in small and remote primary schools, this research has found that principals of central schools have an even higher burden of

documentation in dealing with all documents relevant to both primary and secondary principals as well as some additional memos sent specifically to principals of central schools (Pr S1, Int 1). Principal S5 referred to "double the documentation" (Int 2) and that the smaller size of their schools did not make it easier because principals still had "to write it all down" and the extra documentation loads were "not acknowledged" (Int 2).

Limited availability of specialist secondary staff: Principals' workloads

On its website the Department guaranteed that central schools would "provide a comprehensive education for children from Kindergarten to Year 12" and "provide rural and isolated communities (sic) with comprehensive education" (NSW Public Schools, 2007). Issues such as limited access to specialist staff and interruptions to ICT facilities pose dilemmas and considerable challenges for principals in attempting to provide a fully "comprehensive" education for all students and access to education for "communities" as well.

In this study, principals often dealt with the non-availability of any secondary teachers in a particular subject by accepting an extra responsibility of teaching that subject themselves. Principals T1 and X1 taught mathematics when no mathematics teacher was available, Principal W1 taught Industrial Arts and Principals S3 and U1 trained teachers on site to teach outside their specialist area. In a system where teacher numbers were tied to student enrolment numbers, principals expressed concern about a "downward spiral" when the schools lost students, and therefore specialist staff, leaving the remaining students at risk of "getting a second class education" (Pr W2, Int 2).

Summary of work intensification finding

In summary, this study found evidence of each of the three components of work intensification as identified in the literature, that is, working longer hours, an increase in the number of tasks to be completed in a set time, and an increased range of responsibilities. Although the education policy context of devolution has been a major factor in work intensification the community and school contexts of central schools also

have added to work intensification. The findings of this study have added further, and contemporary, evidence of work intensification which also supports and extends the findings of earlier literature.

RQ2: Community Context – Remote and Low-SES

To what extent have the work lives of principals of NSW central schools been affected by the characteristics of the communities in which they were located, namely:
a) the geographic context of remoteness and
b) being located in communities with a low-SES profile?

Major Finding 2: Community Context and Principals' Isolation

The major finding associated with RQ2 concerned the effect on principals' work lives of living and working in communities that were both remote and designated as of low socio-economic status (SES). This finding emerged primarily from the qualitative data (see Appendix Table C2) and indicated that working in these contexts resulted in significant personal, social and professional isolation for principals, as well as contributing to work intensification and career limitations.

Remote communities and central schools different from other rural schools

Residents of inland remote communities had different issues not only from those of people living in the capital, Sydney, but also from the issues of communities on the NSW coast and in other larger rural centres. Haslam-McKenzie (1998) reported that inland remote communities dependent on agriculture were the "forgotten people" (p. 41), who were concerned about the "continuing drain of young people" (p. 47) from their communities both to the state capital, and to larger rural centres. Argent and Rolley (2000) reported concerns about the "sustainability" of community life in remote NSW "amidst a growing outflow of essential public and private services" (p. 183), with Dietsch et al. (2008) drawing particular attention to the limited availability of adequate health services in the area of maternity services, and how this was a factor in a reduction in the number of people who wanted to raise families in remote NSW.

Beal and Ralston's (1998) study concerning the effects of closing the last remaining bank in remote towns found that residents in remote NSW towns were

concerned about their towns becoming "ghost towns" (p. 55). All the remote NSW towns considered in the Beal and Ralston study relied on the provision of education by a central school. Although some research was available on the economic and population decline in remote agricultural communities, and principals in this study made frequent references to the decline in their communities and schools, there has been much less research on the implications of such contexts for schools or the work lives of principals who worked in the declining communities. The research of Wildy (1999a; 1999b) and Wildy and Clarke (2005; 2008; 2009) has reported on issues experienced by principals of primary schools in remote areas of the state of Western Australia and the current research extends the research on principals of primary schools by providing specific data on the work lives of central school principals who have the additional issues of being required to provide a "comprehensive education" up to Year 12 (NSW DEC, 2012) for very small enrolments in secondary departments.

Eight out of ten post code areas with the highest ranking mortality ratio scores in NSW were in the communities of Brewarrina, Collarenebri, Goodooga, Ivanhoe, Lightning Ridge, Menindee and Wilcannia, which had matching central schools (Vinson, 1999, pp. 36-38). Principals of central schools usually live in such small towns and the high mortality rates and lack of medical facilities were symptomatic of a qualitative difference in personal lives, the lives of principals' family members and in the professional workload of principals.

In several of the towns visited by the researcher, most of the buildings in the town, including the principal's residence, appeared to be in very poor condition and at least 50 years old. Both the physical evidence and the interview data in the current study supported the research of Beal and Ralston (1998) on the remote towns becoming "ghost towns" (p. 55) and the concerns reported by Argent and Rolley (2000) about the "sustainability" of community life in remote NSW (p. 183). Interviewees in this study observed a declining proportion of young families with school age children (Pr R1, Int 1) and expressed pessimism about the future viability of their communities and schools (PR S2, Int 1). The ongoing decline in facilities and populations and lack of social opportunities in remote communities contributed to principals feeling isolated from their

family, and from their social and professional networks. In describing how much his wife suffered in her isolation, Principal S2 commented: "you can dust photo frames only a certain number of times" (Int 2).

Social isolation and separation from family

McConaghy (2006), Springbett (2004), Wildy (1999b), and Wildy and Clarke (2009) in their research on remote Australian school principals reported that while some succeeded in making new friendships in the small communities, most principals appeared to live during their off-duty hours in almost complete isolation from anyone else in the immediate neighbourhood. In this study, the social isolation of principals and their families from the remote communities appeared to be a significant factor in the work lives of principals of central schools and was accompanied by work pressures as principals used their off duty hours to catch up with the requirements of their jobs and were therefore less able to spend time in making social contacts within their communities.

Not only did principals describe their work as "the loneliest job" they had ever had, but they also reported on the separation from their partners and children who needed to live in distant cities for employment or for reasons of tertiary study. Only two of the interviewees had dependent children living with them. The separation from family represented a significant cost to principals and their families incurred in order to take up senior positions in their schools. In the US, Eckman (2004) observed that only a small proportion of the principals moving to a distant location had moved to the new locations with their families and in the majority of cases they were now living long distances from their immediate families and more extended friendship networks. In her study, Eckman drew attention to the career disruptions of the partners of principals who had moved, an issue which was also of concern to the principals in this study. In the current research, the lack of career options in remote towns was a significant issue for partners of central school principals and was a factor in the high proportion of principals who lived on their own, isolated from their communities and also living long distances from their partners and families.

Attitudes towards female principals

For the female principals there were added factors in their personal isolation (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Chandler, 2005; Eckman, 2004; Howard & Mallory, 2008; Lumby & Azaola, 2011, Rodger, 2004; Springbett, 2004). Some of the interviewed male principals were accompanied by their wives. However, all except one of the interviewed female principals lived on her own, mainly because employment options for their husbands or partners were extremely limited. In the one case where a husband lived with a female principal, Principal X1, the husband had access to only limited and casual employment and the principal experienced some negative community comment when she chose to ask her husband to do some minor unpaid maintenance work at the school. Female principals in particular discussed their anxiety in being able to care for elderly parents when the principals were required to work long hours in their jobs and they were a long way from those needing care (Pr S2, Int 1). In addition, the community's social activities such as membership of sports teams or socialising at the local pub were less accessible to them. Participating in sports teams was usually available only to much younger staff members. Principal S4 in the interview gestured with her hand that the only way to "party" was to "go about 120 km that way, about 150 km that way or 200 km that way" (Int 1), that is, away from the community in order to relax in an environment with a measure of privacy.

Principals also expressed a sense of loss at being so far away from their children, who were either in their later stages of education or beginning their careers in larger centres. In one case, a (male) principal, Principal T1, discussed with considerable distress how he felt when it was reported that his daughter had attempted suicide and he was working 500 km away from her (Int 1).Roberts (2004) reported on the high priority given by teachers to the factor of isolation from family and friends as a disincentive for moving to remote locations. The current research has revealed that the factor of isolation from family in particular is an even more significant issue for principals of schools in these locations.

Threats of violence to principals

Most of the interviewed principals lived next to their schools in what was known to be the principal's residence and the visibility of their homes added to the vulnerability of the principal and any family members living with the principal. The data from this study added substantially to the report of Mills and Gale (2003) that principals in small remote towns needed "to live in a larger town to escape" (p. 149). Principal S3 believed that the intimidation she experienced was more significant because of living "so close" to the school (Int 1). Similarly, Principal T1 reported how it was "scary" when he was threatened by someone who knew where he lived, his phone number and "everything" about him, and that another community member had "stalked" him in the supermarket (Pr T1, Int 1).

Principals reported being subjected to personal harassment and threats of violence (Pr R1, Int 1; Pr S3, Int 1; Pr S4, Int 1 and Int 2; Pr T1, Int1) and commented on the "extreme violence" in their communities (Pr W1, Int 1). As a result of the principal's many reports of child sexual abuse, Principal S3 reported a threat that the principal's house would be "torched", that it was "quite life threatening" with "threats from the worst people in town". Principal S3 commented on, "putting yourself at risk", "having all these things going on here all the time" and the principal felt that it was necessary to "avoid the streets in town" (Int 1), again contributing to personal isolation.

In addition, in a very small community, it was assumed that any report to DOCS concerning child abuse must have been made by the local principal. Apart from intimidation of the principal and threats of retaliatory violence by the alleged perpetrators of child abuse (Pr S3, Int 1), principals also expressed concerns for their teachers when angry community members, in retaliation for the principal's original reports, had falsely reported that the teachers were abusing children (Pr S4, Int 1).

There is considerable research on violence affecting school students including research journals such as the "Journal of School Violence" and "Perspectives on School Violence" which focus on violence as it affects students. However, studies such as (Riley, 2013) which reported on the consequences of violence against Australian school

principals are less common. The current study adds data to the available research on this issue.

Small K-12 Schools, Loneliness and Principals' Isolation

Loneliness and professional isolation

Loneliness has been reported as a common feature in the principal's work role (Caldwell, 2006a; Carr, 1994; Debra Hayes, 2008; Kelchtermans et al., 2011; Yilmaz, 2008). In the US, Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2004) reported on the "wounded" principal (p. 311) and "an epidemic of leadership loneliness and burnout" (p. 319). In the UK, MacBeath (2011) found a "pervasive sense of loneliness" (p. 105) among headteachers.

The principals of central schools in this study were almost entirely novice principals and the data supplied by principals of central schools confirmed the literature which suggests that loneliness among school principals is an even more prominent issue for new principals (Bauer & Brazer, 2011; Hobson & Sharp, 2005; Stephenson & Bauer, 2010; Walker & Qian, 2006). In addition, Brydson (2011), Campbell et al. (2006) and Duncan and Stock (2010) acknowledged that loneliness was a particularly prominent issue in small rural schools. In the current research, the mainly novice principals of central schools expressed considerable emotion as they described how they were required to deal with issues such as, the deaths of school children (Pr U1), high levels of child sexual abuse (Principals S3, S4), threats of violence towards principals (Principals R1, S3, S4, T1) and a suicide attempt by a family member (Pr U1) when the principals were isolated from colleagues and separated from their families.

For principals in the current study, the loneliness described in the literature as being attached to the position of principalship of a school was increased further by the conflict between their professional values and those of their communities. As one example, Principal R1 described the dilemma she experienced between the professional value of treating all students equally and a perceived sense of entitlement in the community who appeared to place more value on the education of children of established families in the town (Int 1).

In their small, remote schools the principals of central schools experienced similar factors of isolation to those observed by Springbett (2004) who described the perceived conflict of values of principals working in "conservative communities" (p. 11) and for the new female principals, the experience of "small town gossip and a high degree of loneliness" which made the job more difficult (p. 25). For the relatively high proportion of female principals (five out of twelve) interviewed for this study the issue of community attitudes to women in leadership roles was of particular concern (Pr R1, Int 1) and confirmed research on difficulties experienced by female principals because of attitudes of remote communities towards female principals (Chandler, 2005; Halsey, 2011; Lumby & Azaola, 2011; Shuman, 2010) .

Carr (1994, p. 30) and Burchielli et al. (2005, p. 99) both observed how Australian principals viewed themselves as being "the meat in a sandwich", squeezed between the demands of the employer and the school community, with a perceived lack of systemic support for the principal also expressed in the comment, "Who supports the principal?" (Burchielli et al., 2005, p. 99). In this research, principals referred to being "sandwiched" between the expectations of small, remote communities and the requirements of principals to implement Departmental policies and procedures. Conflicts between community and Departmental policies included issues such as when to close the school because of inadequate toilet facilities with no plumbing service immediately available (Pr R1, Int 1); procedures for employing administrative support staff (Pr S4, Int 1); providing quality education for children of itinerant families (Pr R1, Int 1); and broader tensions between providing educational leadership and attending to the details of school administration (Pr S1, Int 1). For principals in small, remote communities in which the successful operation of the school was strongly influenced by having good relations with the community, the conflicts reported by Carr (1994) and Burchielli et al. (2005) became even more critical both for the operation of the school and for the career prospects of the principal.

Isolation from colleagues

Studies of isolation of principals (Bauer & Brazer, 2011; Dussault & Thibodeau, 1997; Hobson & Sharp, 2005; Howard, 2002; Howard & Mallory, 2008; Stephenson & Bauer, 2010) have considered aspects of isolation that are associated with the complexities and multiple roles of principalship of a school. However, in this study principals of central schools have described an added dimension to their isolation in that they are isolated both physically and professionally from the overwhelming majority of principals who are principals of either primary or secondary schools.

A number of factors contributed to the heightened sense of isolation experienced by principals of central schools. Professional isolation was reported repeatedly, for example, by Principals R1, S1, T1 and U1, who had trained as secondary teachers. The secondary-trained principals had moved to remote locations away from secondary-trained colleagues who had similar years of experience but who had remained in larger centres. Vinson (2002c) in his third report on NSW public education observed that experienced staff in their early forties with dependants were unlikely to willingly accept a transfer to a difficult-to-staff area and that they would need creative incentives to make it worth their while moving. Vinson reported that only four per cent of experienced teachers would seek a future appointment in inland areas of the state and these trends were confirmed by responses to other items and many open-ended comments (p. 19) made to Vinson and his investigators.

Much of the literature on staffing remote schools, for example, Roberts (2004), Beutel et al. (2011), Boylan and Munsch (2006) and Sharplin (2009) focuses on possible incentives and disincentives for teachers to apply for these schools. The prospective teachers have traditionally been in early careers and either single or a younger couple with no children or, at most, children of a young age and the literature does not usually include consideration of educators who may be considering transfer at an older age or a later stage in their careers. In contrast to the literature, all of the principals in the current research had considerable experience as teachers and were both older, and at a later stage in their careers, than the prospective teachers usually considered in the literature on staffing of remote schools.

Principals in the current study were particularly isolated from former colleagues who were at similar stages of experience in their careers and family lives. Their former colleagues predominantly had chosen not to relocate either on their own, or with their older-age families, to difficult-to-staff areas (Vinson, 2000c). A high proportion of the mainly older-age principals in this study expressed concern about their isolation from family members and friends (Principals S2, S3, S4, T1, U1, W1, X1) and the extent of the isolation was indicated further by the high proportion who expected to resign or leave the profession within the next few months (Principals R1, T1, U1).

Isolation from School Education Directors

On the most recent website advertising the benefits of becoming "rural teachers" (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2013), all four of the featured rural teachers worked in larger rural cities and towns. Two of the centres had access to nearby universities and two were in larger centres with resident School Education Directors and education offices supporting professional development. Such information is representative of much of the literature concerning rural schools which does not differentiate between the more vibrant communities on the coast and in larger rural centres and the declining remote communities of the inland areas of the state. Research literature referring to employment in "rural" schools as a total group (Beutel et al., 2011; Graham et al., 2009; Letts et al., 2005; Skilbeck & Connell, 2003; Stevens, 2009) and professional information (NSW DECs, 2013) do not adequately describe the current work lives of teachers and principals in remote NSW schools. Principals commented on the lack of understanding of the central school context by colleagues in less remote schools and officers of the Department (Pr R1, Int1; Pr S5, Int 1), even in times of "absolute crisis" (Pr U1, Int 1).

Summary of work isolation finding

This research found that principals of central schools experience isolation occasioned by not only long distances and absence of services but also by personal, family, social and professional isolation. Some of the aspects of isolation engender

intense emotional effects on principals and deleterious effects on their health and well-being. Although the literature identifies loneliness as a disadvantage of the principalship, the full extent of personal, social and professional isolation arising from living as well as working in remote communities is rarely fully presented in the available literature.

RQ3: School Context – Small School and K to 12

To what extent have the work lives of principals of NSW central schools been affected by the specific school characteristics of central schools in NSW, namely:
a) being small schools and
b) being composite schools providing 13 years of education in Kindergarten to Year 12 (K-12) schools in the state?

Major Finding 3: School Context and Limited Career Prospects

In addressing RQ3, the nature of the school itself was considered to be of significant importance in the work lives of central school principals and a key factor which differentiates their experience from principalship of schools in metropolitan and larger rural cities and also from colleagues who are principals of small stand alone primary or secondary schools. The major finding associated with the school context is that the career prospects for principals of central schools are limited by declining enrolments, the risk of being 'forced out' by parent, community or staff dissatisfaction and the nature of their relationships with School Education Directors, and the consequences of policies of devolution since the Education Reform Act (1990). This finding emerged primarily from the qualitative data (see Appendix Table C2).

Associated with RQ3, namely the school context of being small and educating students from Kindergarten to Year 12, interviewees repeatedly expressed concern about declining enrolments and the continuing viability of their schools and communities. Because of the nexus between student enrolments and staff numbers, declining enrolments, particularly in the secondary Years 7 to 12, resulted in loss of specialist teaching staff and, eventually foreshadowed possible transfer of the principal. The majority of principals of central schools, who were originally trained as secondary teachers, perceived that it was very difficult for them to gain appointment to principalship of a secondary school or a school in a more favoured location.

Interviewees believed that they had no, or very limited, prospects of career advancement. They described their career prospects as being "zero" (Pr R1, Int 1) and that they did not have "any future aspirations in the Department" (Pr U1, Int 2).

This research supported that of Lumby and Azaola (2011) who, in one of the rare studies on career prospects of principals of remote schools, reported that being principals of small, remote schools could " maroon them in a low-paid, low-status and extremely challenging role" (p. 73). In the current study, women principals in particular expressed little confidence about any career progression and this confirmed the finding of Lumby and Azaola that gender issues were a factor in the lack of career prospects for women principals of small, remote schools.

Remote area decline
Concern for viability of small schools

Any threat of school closure, or downgrade, was of concern for school staff and the community. However, for the principal it was, "a constant source of stress [and] fear" (Starr & White, 2008, p. 6). Similar anxieties have been observed internationally: in the US (DeYoung & Howley, 1990), in the UK (Bottery, Ngai, Wong, & Wong, 2008), in Canada (Corbett & Mulcahy, 2006; Mulcahy, 2009), in New Zealand (Collins, 2003) and in Norway (Solstad, 2009). In this study, interviewees expressed pessimism about the future of their communities and schools (PR S2, Int 1). This was linked to a concern about a declining proportion of young families with school age children (Pr R1, Int 1) and this research confirmed the research literature which found high levels of principal anxiety about declining enrolments and possible consequences, such as school downgrades and transfer or demotion of principals. Any reduction in secondary enrolments at the central school meant that the principal had more difficulty in retaining specialist staff for secondary subjects. This in turn was likely to lead to the withdrawal of secondary students to larger centres, and a further downward spiral in enrolments, staffing and possible school downgrade and demotion for the principal. The anxieties and pessimism of the principals in this study support the international literature above about concerns for the sustainability of small schools, particularly in remote areas.

Career concern

In this research, principals who commented on community decline and expressed concern about declining enrolments and the viability of secondary departments (Pr R1, Int 1; Pr S1, Int 2; Pr S2, Int 1; Pr S3, Int 1; Pr T1, Int 1; Pr U1, Int 1) and even the closure of the whole school (Pr W2, Int 2) were expressing concern also about the risks to their current status and careers. The limiting of career prospects for principals of schools with reduced enrolments in declining communities is not generally well-researched. Studies such as Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008), Bottery et al. (2008), and Starr and White (2008), which have reported principals' concerns about the viability of smaller schools, have not necessarily considered the further implications for the careers of the affected principals. However, in this study of principals of remote central schools, principals often referred to limited career prospects and described the factors leading to these limitations as community decline, the risk of being 'forced out'. The felt their isolation not only from professional colleagues but also from their SEDs, with whom their relationships were particularly critical as they were required as referees in any application for transfer or promotion to another principalship in government schools.

Lower classification of school: Forced transfer of principal

As well as the risk of forced transfers of teachers, principals also faced the risk that their own status and pay levels would fall if the school were reclassified to a lower level. The NSW DEC has classified central schools at four levels. These levels match the enrolments of the schools. In data for the 20 years 1987 to 2007, the NSW DET recorded a decrease from 75 per cent to 19 per cent of all central schools whose enrolments were above 100 students. Principal positions in schools where enrolments had declined below 100 students were reduced in status to the lowest classification possible, PC4, for a principal of a central school (NSW DET, 1998, 2008). In some cases, such as in Hatton's studies (1995, 1996), remote central schools had been reduced to primary schools providing education to Year 6 only. Reclassifications of central schools to primary school status result in further reductions of status of the principalship

at such schools. For Principal W2, the concern was even more substantial: "They will probably end up closing the school. That could be on the cards" (Int 2).

For principals of remote schools whose schools were at risk of being reclassified to a lower grade, the longer distances between other remote schools made it almost impossible for them to transfer to a vacancy in a similar status school within commuting distance of their current home. In order to retain status and salary in this circumstance, the principal and his/her family are required to move to a new home at a considerable distance from their current location.

Risk of being 'forced out'

Parent or community dissatisfaction

In very small centres, the school may be the only visible government service in the town (Pr S4, Int 2; Pr S5, Int 1) and the principal is perceived not only as the spokesperson for the DET but also as a public servant representing the government in general (Argent & Rolley, 2000; Beal & Ralston, 1998; Dietsch et al., 2008). For remote townships dependent almost entirely on the fortunes of the local farming economy, governments based in capital cities and public servants representing them have often been perceived as being unsympathetic to their interests (Bessant, 1978; James, 1950; McConaghy, 2006; Springbett, 2004; Wildy & Clarke, 2005). In this study, the frequency and intensity of interactions between the principal and community members, combined with the principal's vulnerability and professional isolation have resulted in unanticipated challenges to some newly appointed principals. Seventy-four per cent, of principals in this study (see Table 4.2) when promoted had transferred from secondary schools in which they did not have the same level of responsibility for contacts with communities outside the school.

Principals of remote schools are particularly dependent on the goodwill of their local communities for their survival as principals in their schools and even for any future career prospects. In remote towns, the values and priorities of a school community can be very different from those of the principal (Ewington et al., 2008; Wildy & Clarke, 2005) and discontented individuals or groups of individuals in the community are able to

make complaints to the district School Education Director (SED) or to Members of Parliament, as was reported in this study (Pr T1, Int 1).

Principals in this study repeatedly referred to the critical importance of how their SEDs reacted to complaints by parents whose values and priorities were not necessarily the same as the principal, and of the DET. The way in which complaints were treated was considered to have vital consequences for the careers of the principals concerned and this study affirmed the research of Brian-Davis (1999) on the critical importance of this issue for principals of remote Australian schools. Interviewees in the current research reported episodes where they, or principal colleagues, had not been accorded procedural fairness and natural justice by their SEDs (Pr R1, Int 1; Pr S1, Int 2; Pr S4, Int 2; Pr S5, Int 1; Pr T1, Int 1; Pr U1, Int 2) and careers had been adversely affected. Even though Principal S5 felt a degree of confidence in the support of the SED, he still believed that "if it went further, the Department would support the parent regardless of whether the parent was right or wrong" (Int 1). Principal S5 reported that although the previous two principals had exercised professional competence, they had been "forced out" by the community (Int 1).

Staff dissatisfaction

Teachers at the school also may raise a complaint about the principal with the School Education Director (SED). Although Departmental grievance procedures preclude people with a grievance remaining anonymous, principals expressed concern about the apparent willingness of Directors to support staff who had made anonymous complaints to the disadvantage of principals. Principal U1 believed that, "procedures and natural justice had not occurred [concerning staff complaints to the SED] and still have not occurred and I continue to feel isolated from staff and from the Director" (Int 2). Geographic isolation from major services means that principals are often faced with demands from city-based officers that are difficult to fulfil in the context of isolation. Geographical isolation is therefore compounded by professional isolation from colleagues, supervisors and centrally located support staff.

Education Policy and Limited Career Prospects

Parental choice of school, free buses and school viability

As a result of the implementation of policies of devolution, parents were given more choice of schools (Ladd & Fiske, 2001; Lidstrom, 1999; Lubienski, 2003; R. Morgan & Blackmore, 2007; Whitty, Halpin, & Power, 1998). In the current study, principals frequently expressed concern about how the policies of choice, supported by government subsidies for bus travel, had decreased their small enrolments and eventually the career options for the principals. Since the NSW Education Reform Act (1990), governments have assisted parents in exercising their choice of schools, by providing free travel passes for students travelling more than 1.6 km from home to school. Many of the participating principals of central schools spoke in the strongest terms about the detrimental effects for their schools of free bus travel beyond the local community. Principal S3, for example, called the policy "a very big issue" and "the downfall of the school" (Interview 1). Principal T1 reported that each day three busloads of students were travelling out of the small town to larger schools because the government made such travel free. He contrasted the government's provision of such free travel with the costs incurred when central school students paid twice a week for travel to the same larger centre to do TAFE courses, which the central school could not provide. Principal R1 described the issue as "a big political hot potato" (Interview 1). Data from principals in this study supported the literature on the cost of travel to participate in TAFE courses and other educational experiences being a significant issue for students in more remote locations (Alston & Kent, 2006). For highly specialised events such as drama and music performances or sporting events in the state capital, Sydney, the cost of this travel is prohibitive for many of the poorer students and schools feel it is necessary to conduct fund raising events or use other school funds to subsidise the cost of the necessary travel and thus compensate for the perceived lack of equity in these policies.

The free, government-provided bus travel to larger centres has encouraged a substantial and increasing drift of the more capable students to schools in these centres resulting in a decline in both student numbers and the proportion of more capable

students at the central school. Since reduced student enrolments result in reduced allocations for school staffing and basic funding, the combined effects of declining enrolments and reduced staffing threatens the continuing viability of secondary programs, and even the survival of some central schools.

In two of the NSW central schools with substantial enrolments of Aboriginal students, the proportion of Aboriginal enrolments had increased from 60 per cent to nearly 100 per cent in the 15 years to 2008 (Patty, 2008, Mar 10a; Mar 10b). Principals observed that the cumulative effect was to change some central schools into schools with predominantly Aboriginal enrolments and thus to create a form of segregated schooling (Pr S4, Int 1).

Privileging standardised tests and career concerns in principal evaluation

Although the survey results in Table 4.5 appeared to indicate that principals were moderately positive regarding the value of standardised testing for students, the data received from interviewed principals indicated a more complex response. On the one hand, when the various statutory authorities responsible for the administration of standardised tests sent schools the results of standardised testing accompanied by details of individual student performances and related diagnostic resources, then principals reported that the results were useful as a supplement to the school's assessment programs and school planning. On the other hand, principals have reported that the standardised tests did not adequately reflect success or achievement in schools.

Research on high-stakes testing, such as that endorsed in the "No Child Left Behind Act" (2002) in the U.S., has found problems with a narrowing of school curriculums (Berliner, 2005; 2011; Granger, 2008; Minerachova, 2012; Price, 2010). Data from central school principals supported the literature findings in that central school principals reported that publication of aggregated results for a school's performance in standardised tests did not provide parents, the public and the district SED with an adequate view of the school's performance (Pr S1, Int 1; Pr S2, Int 1). Publication online of aggregated results of a school allowed for comparisons to be made between remote and non-remote schools on the basis of levels of student achievement in

standardised tests which did not compare situations that were sufficiently similar (Pr W1, Int 1).

Principals frequently referred to the way in which SEDs had privileged the results of standardised tests in a limited range of basic skills. The Directors regarded the standardised results as 'hard data' and hence more useful and reliable than other forms of assessment. The Directors were reported as not having the same interest in other forms of assessment conducted by the school to measure student achievement in the full range of subjects taught at the school (Pr S1, Int 1). Principals reported that the aggregated test results were being "used by the system against the schools" (Pr S2, Int 2).

Apart from concerns about possible distortions in teaching programs in giving priority to preparing for standardised tests, principals reported some insecurity about the proportion of time spent by SEDs in referring to standardised test results in the annual Principal Assessment Review Schedule (PARS) (Pr U1, Int 2; Pr S2, Int 2). The district SEDs visited remote schools infrequently, and only briefly, and principals perceived that the SED's assessments of the principals' performances relied disproportionately on a limited range of accountability measures and an inadequate understanding of the contexts of remote schools.

Thomson et al. (2003) have described media reports of "sudden death" consequences for U. S. principals whose schools had low scores in standardised tests, yet there is less available research on the effects of standardised testing with high stakes on the work lives of principals. In one of the few studies on consequences of standardised testing in the work lives of principals, Berliner (2005) has described a "spectacle of fear" (p. 208). Some research has indicated that the consequences of high stakes testing can be more significant for principals in low-SES areas and small rural communities (Egley & Jones, 2004; McGhee & Nelson, 2005).

Decreased opportunities for transfer or promotion
Principals participating in this study were uniformly pessimistic about the ongoing decline in their towns and schools and several principals stated bluntly that the options

for their transfer or promotion to another principalship were severely limited or even non-existent. Principal U1 reported that there was "a real prejudice in the Department for people being in a central school" (Int 1) and he could not see that he had "any future aspirations in the Department" (Int 2). Similarly, Principal R1 described her career prospects as being "zero" (Int 1). Standardised testing in NSW schools does not have the degree of high stakes as in the US or the UK. However, this research adds to the data on the concerns of principals about the privileging of standardised test scores, and possible consequences described by McGhee and Nelson (2005), such as the loss of respect by their supervisors, isolation from professional colleagues and risks to their future career prospects.

Principal U1 described how he had spoken "very strongly" in advising his secondary colleagues against trying to "make a career in a central school" (Int 1). Nearly half of the interviewed principals of central schools, Principals R1, S3, T1, U1 and W2, indicated that they intended to withdraw from working in a central school as soon as possible.

Implications for Research, Policy and Practice

Implications for research

Remote context different from that of other rural or low-SES contexts

The data in this study indicated that for remote schools, there was a need for further research which identified the special context of <u>remote</u> schools which had different characteristics from those of the larger group more usually considered under the broad heading of <u>rural</u> education. Most research on rural schools has focused on small primary schools. More research is needed on the provision of secondary education in small K-12 schools and particularly the issue of secondary staffing, which was a "dominant" issue for principals in this study and was referred to in first interviews with Principals S3, S4, T1, U1, X1 and W1. Information and communications and technology has been suggested as a solution to the problems of the lack of specialist teachers (HREOC, 1999, 2000a, 2000b; T. Richards, 2005; Vinson, 1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). However, more investigation is needed as to the most effective way to use ICT in remote

communities which have limited provision of ICT facilities, little access to maintenance by qualified technical support and, in some cases, unreliable telephone communications.

Research on schools in low-SES communities has usually investigated the examples of low-SES schools in urban areas. In these areas, principals usually do not live adjacent to the schools and students and parents have access to professional support services other than those provided by the school. More research is needed on the effects on the work lives of principals who live next to their schools and who work in remote and low-SES communities and experience the challenges of working in communities of low social capital and experiencing personal intimidation and violence in the community. In these communities with high needs, in some cases with high levels of child sexual abuse, principals sometimes are seen as the only visible source of professional support (Argent & Rolley, 2000; Judd et al., 2006; Lloyd et al., 2000; Vinson, 2002b).

Generic leadership models

There is considerable research which considers principalship in general and which attempts to define and describe generic models of school leadership. However, such models are mostly propounded without the nuances of leadership that come with different contexts, and without giving attention to the variability of consequences for the work lives of principals.

Research on generic models of school leadership and implications for the work lives of school principals has limited applicability for principals who lead schools in contexts which differ significantly from the contexts of the majority of schools or major subgroups of schools. This present research indicates that the development of a more specific model of leadership of remote schools is necessary to take into account priorities for principalship of a central school, priorities which are very different from those of principals in other schools.

Investigation of the available literature supports the conclusion of Starr and White (2008),that there is "a dearth of information in Australia at this time about how school principals confront these challenges in small rural locations" (p. 1). There is a continuing

need for further studies that elicit specific and direct data from remote schools and the work lives of their principals beyond NSW, across Australia and internationally.

The link between principals of remote schools and their communities is one which is rarely dealt with in the literature, and the negative aspects of such relationships are largely hidden in the rhetoric of rural mythology about the 'friendliness' of village life (Bessant, 1978; McConaghy, 2006; Springbett, 2004). The various aspects of isolation and the lack of friendship in the community for principals and their families is a recurring issue in this study.

Being a school leader in such remote geographical and social places requires different priorities and skills for the principal to survive and continue to provide effective educational leadership. The data in this study show clearly that more research is needed to reveal the nature of the relationship between principals and small communities and its effect on the school, the principal and the community. The realities of these relationships can be obscured by literature that refers to all types of non-metropolitan schools under the one heading of being 'rural' (Graham, Miller & Paterson, 2009; Mulcahy, 2009; NSW DEC, 2013a; Pegg, 2009).

Implications for Educational Policy and Practice for Principals of Central Schools

The lack of attractiveness of school principalship in general has been researched in the literature on the shortage of suitable applicants for principalship (Brooking, Collins, Court, & O'Neill, 2003; Chapman, 1999; Draper & McMichael, 2003; Eckman, 2004; Gronn & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003). Furthermore, Australian research has reported that this shortage is even more acute in remote schools (Barty, Thomson, Blackmore, & Sachs, 2005; Brooking et al., 2003; Chapman, 1999; Draper & McMichael, 2003; Gronn & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003; Halsey, 2009; Roberts, 2004; Springbett, 2004). The shortage of suitable applicants for principalship of remote schools such as central schools in NSW would indicate that eligible staff have not been attracted to the prospect of leading a central school and living in a remote community.

Data from this study indicate that there are aspects in the work and lives of principals that do not appeal to prospective applicants for principals' positions and there

is a need for education authorities to consider measures to address a range of issues in the work lives of principals. This study uses the term 'work lives' as a way of describing the professional lives of principals inside official hours of work and also includes implications for their lives outside official working hours. In general, SEDs and other DET officers in this study, reportedly rarely display sufficient understanding of the modern context of decline in remote Australia and the effects of personal, family, social and professional isolation on the lives of principals outside their work hours. Data from this research suggest that the practices of education systems need to address both personal and professional needs of principals working in the challenging circumstances which characterise small, remote and low-SES schools.

Although participant principals acknowledge difficulties such as coping with professional and social isolation, dealing with social difficulties in their communities and meeting the mandatory policy and accountability requirements of Staff Office, the existence of "dissatisfiers" (Herzberg, 1968) did not mean that they were necessarily dissatisfied overall or that they did not also find satisfiers in other aspects of their work lives. They also conveyed a determined and confident attitude about the effectiveness and achievements of their school and were highly motivated to spend the time and energy to improve outcomes for their students. Almost without exception, the interviewees described significant changes they had introduced when they started at their schools and they were optimistic that they could solve school-level problems, maintain high professional standards in teaching and improve the achievement levels of students at their school.

The contrasting perceptions of principals of central schools about different aspects of their work match the apparently paradoxical attitudes of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of principals found in the literature (Australian Secondary Principals Association, et al., 2007; MacBeath, 2011; Milburn, 2012; M. Morgan & Sugrue, 2008; O'Keeffe, 2012; Saulwick Muller, 2004). Despite the expressions of satisfaction with some aspects of leading a school, the data suggest that policy makers need to acknowledge the value of the wide-ranging work performed by principals in central schools. As part of this acknowledgement, policy makers need to adapt the policies and

practices of human resource management, including professional development and provision of career opportunities, in order to remove the 'dissatisfiers' that are reported by principals of central schools.

Suggestions for Future Research

The current research literature on principalship of rural schools usually provides data on either small, remote primary schools or compares the principalship of city schools with the combined group of all rural schools. More data needs to obtained on the staffing issues faced by principals of central schools. In particular, more research is needed on how secondary students in remote locations can have access to adequately-trained specialist teachers, either as staff located in their schools or through effectively maintained ICT facilities.

In addition, more research is needed on the extent to which small, remote and low-SES communities differ from larger rural towns and cities and how these differences affect the work lives of principals. For example, research could be conducted in other states that have large, thinly populated areas in which schools provide both primary and secondary education.

Principals of central schools need to develop their own community of practice (Wenger, 1998) with greater use of any ICT facilities that are available to them. At present, principals of NSW central schools meet annually in a statewide conference. More attention needs to be given to ways and means for central school principals to develop their practice in groups based on smaller geographical units and to meet either in person or in using videoconference facilities on a more frequent basis.

Summary

After fifteen years of devolution, the current level of school-based decision-making is constrained by controls imposed by State Office. These controls have increased the perceptions of principals of central schools that they have increasing work intensification and bear increased responsibility at the school level both for student outcomes and for dealing with the problems of an remote community and any

community dissatisfaction. At the same time, the demand for increased retention rates in remote areas has increased the propensity for principal selection panels to choose secondary-trained principals who experience even greater isolation than their primary-trained colleagues in their principalships of remote central schools.

Findings suggest that principals' concerns include areas such as matching mandates from state office with quality teaching in their schools, fostering parent awareness of the value of quality education, difficulties in finding and securing trained teachers in secondary specialist areas and providing in-school professional development for both newly trained teachers and teachers teaching additional subjects outside their area of training. Primary-trained principals express the need to learn about the secondary curriculum and pedagogy in order to ensure that teachers provide quality instruction to matriculation level. Principals are concerned that teachers need professional development to provide for students coming from poor and declining remote communities. Principals experience personal, family, social and professional isolation in dealing with these issues and concerns about their limited career prospects but at the same time maintaining their commitment to their profession.

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Appendices

Appendix A   **Preparation of study**

Appendix A1   Map of NSW: Inland areas and location of central schools

    Table A 1   Comparison of areas of NSW, France, Germany areas in km^2

Appendix A2   Request re survey of principal's perceptions

Appendix A3   Ethics committee report

Appendix A4   Ethics committee final approval

Appendix A1   Map of NSW: Inland areas and location of central schools

Simpson Desert

Queensland

New South Wales

(semi-arid interior)

Tamworth

Great Dividing
Range

Bathurst

Sydney

Wagga

Pacific Ocean

Victoria
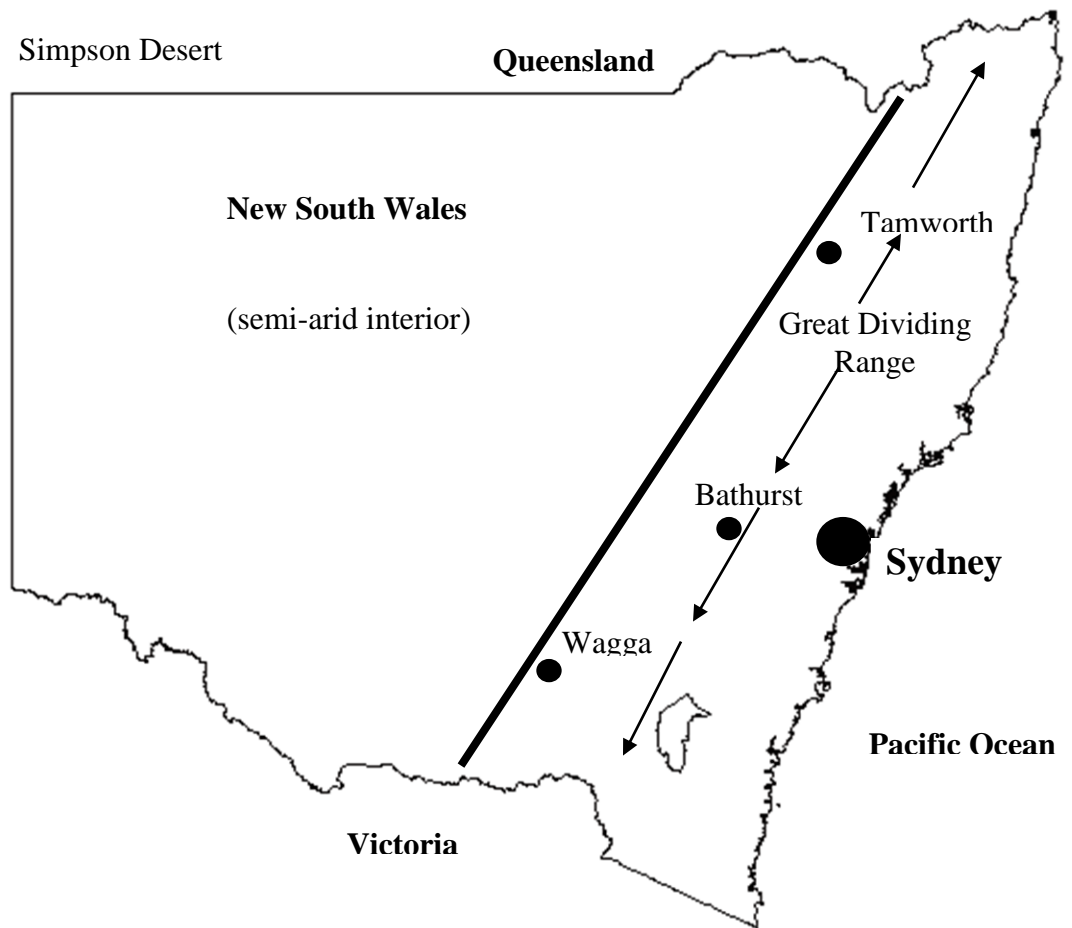
The inland area of NSW west of the black line is semi-arid. Nearly all of the central school principals who were participants in this study worked in the remote inland area, or in remote areas of the Great Dividing Range, which runs parallel to the coast from north to south of the state. The inland area of NSW has 37 local government areas with a population of 211 000 (ABS, 2012). In contrast to the areas near the coast, all the local government areas in the semi-arid interior had declining populations. The area of the remote, semi-arid interior is similar to that of the nations of France or Germany (see Table A1). The black dots are the regional cities from which the inland regions are administered. In some cases, the regional cities are closer to Sydney than they are to the remote schools that they administer.

Table A 1 *Comparison of areas of NSW, France, Germany areas in km^2*

New South Wales	France	Germany
800,628	348,672	551,500

Note. Data from: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2010b),

https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gm.html,

https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/fr.html

Appendix A2   Request re survey of principal's perceptions

UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA
School of
Education

Bruce Pietsch
67 Park St West Wyalong NSW 2671
Tel: 04 2772 2810 (M)
Email: bpietsch@westserv.net.au

REQUEST re SURVEY OF PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE and INVITATION
Dear Colleague

I have been principal at Tullibigeal Central School in the NSW Department of Education and Training from 1996 to 2005. As principal of a central school, I have been interested in the policies that relate to rural schools and how they are enacted at the school level; for example, what is the perceived extent of local management in rural schools, what the perceptions of principals towards these policy changes are and how principals view the future of rural education.

I believe that central schools (and their equivalents in other states) play a unique role in both the education of rural students and the health of the social fabric in smaller communities. Through this project I hope to contribute to a better understanding of what actually happens in Australian rural public education, in comparison with theory about what ought to happen in schools.

I am completing this project as part of my doctoral studies (PhD) at the University of Tasmania. I have used the list of schools in the Department of Education's Directory of Schools to send this survey to principals of every central school in New South Wales. I would be pleased if you would consider participating in this research by completing the attached survey, which I anticipate would take about ten minutes of your time. Your participation is, of course, entirely voluntary. Confidentiality of the information you provide is assured, and there is no need for you to provide your name or school on the survey form. When you have completed the survey, please post it to the Faculty of Education office in the "Reply Paid" envelope provided, if possible by Friday 17th March, or as soon as you are able to.

I am enclosing a copy of the approval provided by the Department of Education and Training to conduct research in NSW government schools as well as a more detailed

information sheet about the purpose and processes of the study. If you would like more information prior to completing this survey please contact me by phone or email (see above).

Yours sincerely

Bruce Pietsch

Invitation for further participation as an interviewee
As part of a further in-depth investigation, I will be seeking to visit a small number of principals (probably four) in their schools and observe the tasks undertaken by them over several days. I will then invite the participating principals to comment on the factors influencing their decisions; particularly the balance between deciding issues within a school-based management structure and operating within the central constraints of the Department of Education. If you would like to consider volunteering to participate in this further stage, please contact me by phone or email and before any further participation I will provide a further information sheet and ask you to sign a written consent form.

Bruce Pietsch

Appendix A3   Ethics committee report

UTAS

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (TASMANIA) NETWORK

PROGRESS REPORT FORM
for the period of 2006

Please __email__ the completed form to: **marilyn.knott@utas.edu.au**

Please post the signed copy to:
Marilyn Knott, Ethics Officer Social Sciences, Research Services, Private Bag 01, Hobart, Tas. 7001.

SECTION 1 - PROJECT DETAILS	Ethics Reference No. **H0008651**

Project Title:	**Decentralisation of Australian public schools: Policy development, outcomes and future directions**

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR DETAILS	
Name:	**Professor John Williamson**
Phone:	6324 3339
Email address:	John.Williamson@utas.edu.au
Contact address:	Locked Bag 1307 Launceston Tasmania 7250

OTHER INVESTIGATOR NAMES (Co-Investigators, students)	
Name	**Bruce Pietsch**

SECTION 2 – STATUS OF APPLICATION Indicate which status applies to the project. Include appropriate dates			
In Progress?	Anticipated completion date	**02 Jan 13**	Go to Section 3
Not yet commenced?	Anticipated start date		Go to Section 6

SECTION 3 – ETHICAL ISSUES

Please tick YES or NO to the following questions. If you answer YES to any question, give details below or if there is insufficient space, use a separate sheet:

	YES	NO
Section 3.1 **(If insufficient space – please use separate sheet).** Did any participants withdraw from the project during this year? If 'YES' please provide details.		✓
Section 3.2 **(If insufficient space – please use separate sheet).** Did any ethical issues arise during the research not foreseen at the outset? If 'YES' please provide details.		✓
Section 3.3 **(If insufficient space – please use separate sheet).** Were there any unexpected adverse effects on subjects? If 'YES' – how many adverse events were experienced? Have all unexpected or adverse effects been reported to the committee? If 'NO' please provide details as to why they were not reported and append the reports.		✓
Section 3.4 **(If insufficient space – please use separate sheet).** Were any complaints received from subjects? If 'YES' please provide details.		✓
Section 3.5 **(If insufficient space – please use separate sheet).** Have you departed at all from the protocol that was approved? If 'YES' please provide details.		✓
Section 3.6 **(If insufficient space – please use separate sheet).** Has there been any breach of confidentiality of data, which includes identifying information? If 'YES' please provide details.		✓

SECTION 4 – PROGRESS REPORT

Provide a brief report on the progress of the project and an indication of results obtained:

Survey questionnaire sent to principals of all public central schools in NSW

Responses recorded and partially analysed using SPSS software

Personal interviews conducted at schools of central school principals in rural and remote areas of NSW

First interview with each principal recorded and some of them transcribed

Analysis of transcribed interviews begun using NVivo 7 software

Presentation given in January 2007 to UTAS Summer School course in Research Methods

Publications and presentations: Please attach any publications, conference papers, presentations, abstracts of theses etc., which have resulted from the study:

PowerPoint presentation attached to report

SECTION 5 – CHANGES TO APPLICATION - **(If insufficient space – please use separate sheet).**

Please answer the following question if the project is continuing.

	YES	NO
Are you planning to make any further changes to the application (subjects, procedures, etc)? Please note: **Major changes require the submission of a tracked application and should reflect the research as it is currently being carried out.**		✓
Details of the new procedures:		

SECTION 6 – STATEMENT BY CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

I accept that the information provided in this report is a true records of the research undertaken by myself, or the students under my supervision:
Chief Investigator name: Professor John Williamson

Chief Investigator signature:

Date:

Appendix A4   Ethics committee final approval

Email sent from Marilyn Knott   Marilyn.Knott@utas.edu.au   12/02/2009
to John.Williamson, cc Bruce Pietsch

Dear Professor Williamson
Ethics Ref No: H8651
Project title: Decentralisation of Australian public schools: Policy development,
outcomes and future directions.

This email is to confirm that your Ethics Final Report was approved by the Tasmania
Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee on 10/2/2009.
It is not standard policy to send a formal confirmation of the report approval.
Please let us know if your circumstances require a letter of report approval.
Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards
Marilyn Knott
Ethics Officer, Social Sciences
Research Services
University of Tasmania
Private Bag 1 Hobart TAS 7001
Ph 03 6226 2764   Fax 03 6226 7148   Email: Marilyn.Knott@utas.edu.au

Appendix B   **Quantitative Data Gathering, Survey and Analysis**

The coding and means for each item have been added to the original survey questions for principals of NSW central schools.

Decentralisation of Australian schools:
The experience of NSW Central School principals

Section A Perceptions of extent of school-based management

Population (P) = 65   Sample (N) = 27

Code		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
	Statement			Means		
1	The current mix of state office controls and school-based decision-making could be described as a system of school-based management			2.6		
	The school has flexibility in:					
2a	- making decisions about properties and maintenance		2.2			
2b	- dealing with student discipline				**3.7**	
2c	- dealing with student welfare				**3.9**	
2d	- making decisions about <u>how</u> to teach core curriculum subjects				**3.7**	
	The current level of school-based management has been beneficial for:					
3a	- efficient management of resources			3.0		
3b	- staffing of schools		2.3			
3c	- staff morale			3.0		
3d	- student achievement			3.2		
3e	- encouraging teachers to think and act as professionals			3.2		
4	Decisions about staff professional learning are mainly made at the school level				**3.7**	
5	The principal has more influence than the Department's state and regional offices on the school's success					**4.2**
6	In general, satisfying Departmental requirements means that the school is also providing a quality education for students			3.5		

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Code		1	2	3	4	5
Statement				Means		
7	The school has a major say in decisions which most affect student achievement			**3.8**		
8	The current standardised testing programs provide a worthwhile benefit for students			3.1		
9	The school self evaluation process and annual school report are useful for the school and its community		2.3			
10	The school management plan is primarily developed from school-based decisions			**3.7**		
11	The school management plan provides a useful guide for school-based activities			**3.8**		

Please add any further comments about the issues raised above.

Section B   **Time spent by the principal on particular leadership tasks**

Task	Code	In an 'ideal' self managing public school how much time do *you think* should be spent? Less (1)	Same (2)	More (3)	How much time do you think *Department expects* should be spent? Less (1)	Same (2)	More (3)	M2 – M1
		Mean (M1)			**Mean (M2)**			
1 Securing daily casual relief		1.4			1.7			.29
2 Timetabling, organising for variations of routine		1.8			1.7			-.09
3 Student discipline		1.5					2.1	**.63**
4 Student welfare			2.2				2.5	.26
Meetings, including phone conversations, with:								
5a - staff			2.3				2.4	.08
5b - parents			2.3				2.5	.24
5c - non school-based Departmental officers		1.7					2.3	**.58**
5d - community members or other non school agencies			2.2				2.6	**.45**
Development of:								
6a - School curriculum			2.9				2.5	-.43
6b - Teaching/learning programs			2.7				2.6	-.13
6c - Student assessment procedures			2.7				2.7	-.05
6d - Reporting to parents			2.4				2.7	.25
7 Supervision and mentoring of staff			2.9				2.7	-.20
8 Staff welfare, e.g. OH&S and leave			2.3				2.7	**.40**
9 Teaching classes, e.g. relieving for absent teachers		1.7					2.1	.39
Professional development of staff:								
10a - On the school site, e.g. Whole School Development Days			2.7				2.2	-.59
10b - Off the school site			2.5				2.1	-.40
11 Principal's professional development			2.6				2.4	-.21
12 Securing staff for temporary or permanent appointments		1.7					2.1	.37
13 Preparation of annual school management plan		1.8					2.5	**.76**
14 Preparation of annual school report		1.2					2.6	**1.35**
Email communication and preparation of documents for:								
15a - Department of Education, e.g. returns, reports, submissions		1.2					2.4	**1.20**
15b - Community agencies, e.g. liaison with			2.0				2.3	.31

Task		Code	In an 'ideal' self managing public school how much time do *you think* should be spent?			How much time do you think the *Department expects* should be spent?			M2 – M1
			Less 1	Same 2	More 3	Less 1	Same 2	More 3	
				Mean (M1)			Mean (M2)		
	welfare agencies								
15c	- Parents, e.g. newsletters, reports to P&C, individual letters about children			2.3			2.5		.20
15d	- Staff, e.g. daily notices, meeting preparation, writing reports			2.0			2.3		.31
16	Financial management, e.g. cash flow budgeting, monitoring and audit preparation		1.9				2.5		**.69**
17	Maintenance of properties		1.6				2.4		**.77**
18	Capital development		1.9				2.4		**.50**
19	Other – Please specify and give any indications of how much time is spent and how much time should be spent on tasks other than those above								

Section C   Background information

Items C1, C2 (Gender and Training of principal) provided nominal data.

Training * Gender Crosstabulation

Count

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Training	Primary	3	4	7
	Secondary	15	5	20
Total		18	9	27

Note. Most of the principals (15 out of 27) were male and secondary trained and nearly all male principals (15 out of 18) were secondary trained.

Item		Code for items C3 –C6				Mean of code numbers
		1	2	3	4	
C3	Size of school (number of students)	<100	100↔200	201↔300	>300	2.7
C4	Years of experience as a principal	<1	1↔3	4↔10	>10	2.5
C5	Years of experience as a principal in the current school	<1	1↔3	4↔10	>10	2.3
C6	Age of principal	<35	35↔50	51↔60	>60	2.5

Table B 1   *Variable categories used in survey and number of items*

| Survey Section | Variable Category: Number of items | | | |
	Interval	Ordinal	Nominal	Open Comment
A: Perceptions of extent of school-based management	18[a]			1
B: Time spent by principal on particular leadership tasks	56			4
C: Background information		4	2	
	74	4	2	5

Note. [a] Interval and ordinal variables were coded on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, 1 to 3 and 1 to 4 depending on the number of possible responses to the survey item.

Table B 2 *Professional autonomy and effects on student success*

Statement	(%)			
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Professional learning decisions mainly made at school level	26	0	74	100
Principal has more influence than Departmental offices on school success	7	4	89	100
Meeting Departmental requirements results in quality education for students	26	11	63	100
School has major say in decisions which most affect on student achievement	15	11	74	100

Significant majorities (74 per cent, 89 per cent, 63 per cent and 74 per cent) of respondents agreed respectively with the above four statements. Agreement with these statements provides an indication of approval by central school principals of current levels of school-based decision-making and support for the proposition that school-based decisions have a major effect on student achievement.

Table B 3 *Internal consistency: Reliability coefficients of section groups*

Group	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Section A *(Extent of school-based management)*	18	.867
Section Bi *(Time should be spent ideal school)*	28	.879
Section Be *(Time Department expects to be spent)*	28	.849

Table B 4 *Internal consistency: Reliability coefficients of item subgroups*

Item subgroup	Item stem statement	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Section A *(Extent of school-based management)*			
Question 2 a-d	The school has flexibility:	4	.740
Question 3 a-e	The current level of school-based management has been beneficial:	5	.827
Section Bi *(Time should be spent ideal school)*			
Question 5 a-d	Meetings, including phone conversations:	4	.693
Question 6 a-d	Development of resources:	4	.774
Question 10 a-b	Professional development of staff:	2	**.147**
Question 15 a-d	Email and document preparation:	4	.771
Section Be *(Time Department expects to be spent)*			
Question 5 a-d	Meetings, including phone conversations:	4	.856
Question 6 a-d	Development of resources:	4	.711
Question 10 a-b	Professional development of staff:	2	**.268**
Question 15 a-d	Email and document preparation:	4	.791

Table B 5 *Principal components from factor analysis of survey Section A*

Research Area	Principal component, Cronbach alpha	Variable loading to the component	Loading
1	School-based management, $\alpha =.798$	Q11. School management plan: Useful guide	.888
		Q10. School management plan: School-based	.749
		Q5. Principal: Major influence on school's success	.614
		Q7. School: Major influence on student achievement	.595
		Q8. Standardised tests: Benefit to students	.554
2	Benefits for staff and students, $\alpha =.849$	Q3c. Benefits: Staff morale	.915
		Q3d. Benefits: Student achievement	.831
		Q3e. Benefits: Encouraging teacher professionalism	.737
		Q6. Departmental requirements: Assists students	.646
2	Flexibility in daily operations, $\alpha =.780$	Q2b. Flexibility: Student discipline	.884
		Q2d. Flexibility: <u>How</u> to teach core curriculum	.769
		Q2c. Flexibility: Student welfare	.652
1	Resources managed by the school, $\alpha =.806$	Q2a. Flexibility: Properties and maintenance	.820
		Q3a. Benefits: Management of resources	.778
		Q3b. Benefits: School staffing	.637
1	Description as school-based management, $\alpha =.849$	Q1. School-based decision-making?	.849
		Q4. Professional learning: Mainly at school level	.611
2	Annual school report is useful	Q9. School self-evaluation and school report are useful to the school	.945

Appendix C   **Qualitative Data Gathering, Interviews and Analysis**

Appendix C1   Questions for Stage 1 semi-structured interview

Appendix C2   Questions for Stage 2 semi-structured interview

Appendix C3   Transcription of a first interview with principal

Appendix C1   Questions for Stage 1 semi-structured interview

i. *Ask principal to sign consent form*

Introduction

My study is designed to get an in-depth picture of the actual <u>experience</u> of principals in central schools, what it is like to be in a rural area, which may be considered remote. I have just a few broad questions which are meant to be very open-ended.

ii. *Check that tape recorder is set to record*

Areas of interest for the principal to offer information

1.   What is your <u>professional</u> <u>background</u>?

         What led you to become the principal of a remote central school?

2.   What was your <u>vision</u> of the sorts of things you would be doing as the <u>principal</u> of a central school?

         What did you expect to be different from your previous roles as a teacher or a middle executive?

3.   What is the <u>context of this school</u>?

         Any special features of:

                  - students   enrolments, type of student

                  - staff   experience, availability

                  - curriculum   special programs

                  - parents

                  - community?

4.   What are the <u>main issues</u> you have had to deal with at the beginning of your principalship? What issues developed later?

iii. *Make an appointment for a later interview*

Appendix C2   Questions for Stage 2 semi-structured interview

Further comments on matters mentioned in first interview
1.   Any further comments on the *context of the school*?
      For example, any special features of:

- students	enrolments (changes in enrolment trends / perceived causes), type of student
- staff	experience, availability
- curriculum	special programs
- parents	support / concerns (P & C / School Council)
- community	Support /concerns – opportunity for mutual participation

2.   Any further comment on the *main issues* you have had to deal with at the beginning of your principalship? What issues developed later?

===
Some other specific matters have been raised by principals during the first interviews. Would you like to add any of your comments about these topics?
1.   Geographic isolation and its effect on the school and your principalship
2.   Relationships with neighbouring / other schools (membership of PPA / SPC) – collegiality?
2.   Parent complaints   The subject or topics of complaints; the extent of these, how they are managed within the school and by district or regional office if relevant
3.   Relationships with superintendent or director: frequency of visits; support offered. How are issues of isolation overcome?
4.   Support from District Office – ie consultant availability; opportunity for professional learning for staff and self.
4.   Degree of autonomy in the principal's role
For example, how does it compare with level of autonomy in previous executive positions?
5.   Hours on duty   What type of tasks do you spend your time on?
6.   Career path   What is the next stage in your career?
7.   What are your plans for the school for next year?

Interview S3 Central School

Interviewer. My first interest is in what leads people to become leaders of central schools or principals of country areas

Pr S3. I was raised in a central school. A1 was a central school back when I was there and so until just before I went to high school – they built the new high school just before I left A1 Central School

My first/second placement was A2 which was a central school then before it became a high school. I spend my first nine years down at A2 then I went to A3. From A3 I went to A4 I went to A4 in the North West as a principal of a one-teacher school. All of my experiences have been at country schools. I have never wanted to be in the city. From there I went to A5 Central School for two and a quarter years as an Assistant Principal for supervision purposes because I really wanted to go further and then my dad was really crook so I went to … At the central school I had over 200 in the primary department and I was running it without any relief. I did have a principal who was urging me to go further. He would have liked to see me stay at … but a PC1 was a bit much and I had gone for another couple of positions. They said that AP positions in centrals were nothing compared to an AP or DP in a normal school which I was fuming about because I was already running the primary staff as well as the budget of a whole big school and I was doing the staff development for 40 odd staff. So it didn't sit very well with me. Then I saw this school and I knew a few people who had been out this way. They gave me some of the background so I went for the principal's position. I had four interviews that week and this was the first one I got. I was successful with the first one, so I accepted the offer. This is now my fifth year here.

It's not a school that many people stay too long in.

Interviewer. You have been encouraged and mentored along the way

Pr S3. My principals and APs throughout my teaching career have always led me to go further. They have had a good influence on my career. I didn't do too much at first because of my young children.

Interviewer. You had the outside classroom experience along the way.

Pr S3. I have had the outside classroom experience and also kept in with classroom practice at all times. I still enjoy teaching and being with the kids. I have also been involved in a lot of community and regional experiences. I like being in the country.

Interviewer. What do you see as a plus for being in a country school?

Pr S3. Not so much travelling. You've got the close relationship with the parents and the students and rapport. You know everyone and you know their backgrounds. You know what the kids have been through. That's not a plus sometimes. They know me. You probably know too much about them sometimes and you can't change it. That makes it a bit hard. You know the families. You've got that link right through the school. Comradeship, closeness. You can see the difference between the secondary and primary,

the staffing components and things like that. It can be a problem but you can see the way it's going through it.

Interviewer. Do you like the central overall with the overlapping staff?
Pr S3. I like central schools but I'd rather go back to being a primary school principal. For the last four and a half years I've concentrated on the secondary issues because I am not trained in a secondary background. I love primary – primary is where my heart is. I've always enjoyed centrals but I would really love to get back to a primary at some stage.

Interviewer. What sort of things did you notice when you first came to S3?
Pr S3. When I first came to S3, it was a real trial. It was hard yakka for two or three years. Staff in the Secondary who had been here a long time, a long time, as long as I had been teaching. We had three staff in secondary with long experience.

Interviewer. I am interested in the contrast. Some people stay a long time. What are the factors in their staying?
Pr S3. Farmers. They have married farmers. Women who have married farmers. Also the office staff had been here for years. They were set in their ways and it was really hard to bring in any change because no matter how you did it there would be huge objections. Communication was very poor. A lot of policies had to put into place. Some … for years. Role statements because they didn't know what they were supposed to be doing so we had to start right from the word go. They didn't want to change. Because I am a change person I found that really hard. You don't change unless you need to change, e.g. communications in the school. They should back me. Back in the days where the kids were willing to have a go at everything where money was available for money and stuff.

Interviewer. Just the issues of staffing
Pr S3. They were reluctant to change and very set in their ways. "We've had a try at that. It didn't work and we're not going to do it again."

Interviewer. Had they had principals come and go fairly quickly?
Pr S3. Fairly regularly and there were reasons for that. I am considered a long-termer. I have actually bought a house here. Yes, it is very strange. I would not have even though of it in the first couple of years. The kids have changed. In those days they came from functional families whereas today there are many dysfunctional families. We don't have the very bright kids. The bus has been a big influence. It takes local children to A6 High School. *That's been the downfall of the school* (emphasis added). The kids don't have to pay to go, so they bypass the local school and because one mate goes, then the next, then the next and you've lost all of your good kids and you are dealing with the lower kids. Then the reputation is not as good because you are not achieving to the same degree.

Interviewer. It's a big problem

Pr S3. The school with the P&C have asked the government to change the transport rules. It is a big issue but we are getting kids back very slowly. The bus is a very big issue. We only have one small bus operating for the school and it will probably close down soon. We will not even have a town bus. We are looking at trying to get one which is very hard these days. Our young kids don't have buses for the town trips.

Interviewer. Your students – mainly from the town or from farms?
Pr S3. We have about 30 per cent from farms and the rest from the town.

Interviewer. Staffing?
Pr S3. In small central schools we always have the problem of having to use teachers who are not trained in specific secondary teaching areas. We have only four secondary teachers who need to cover a much wider curriculum area than their four areas of training. Sometimes even a core area such as maths or science do not have a teacher trained in that area. We have to ask other teachers to help teach in these subjects. The head teacher is a HSIE teacher and she teaches the maths classes, but she has been teaching maths since she started teaching. She would probably know more about maths than anyone else but she can't gain qualifications on that basis without losing her position in the school even though she has taught maths for 28 years.

Interviewer. For context this is a K-10 school
Pr S3. We are K to 10 but we are starting a trial Y11 this year.

Interviewer. Even more demanding
Pr S3. Yes, and a VET audit this year. It was one of the arguments for starting Y11 courses, that our staff's chances of promotion were in jeopardy because of not having experience in teaching senior classes. They were not getting staff development in teaching Years 11 and 12.
Staff have really had problems coping with changes where we may not see the benefits of the change until years to come. Teachers have had success in their early years of teaching but have gradually stayed the same even though the clientele has changed. We now 85 to 90 per cent are from dysfunctional families. A couple of years before I came we had a person in town who bought a lot of the houses and targeted people who wanted to live in housing. This topic needs to be confidential.

Interviewer. Definitely
Pr S3. He's a paedophile. Everyone knows, it's been published. He's targeted low socio-economic families ones who are in trouble, who are drug addicts, who are low down, need a bit of money and are renting. A lot of kids with emotional trauma in their lives, sexually abused and so on. The students come to town with all these problems, sometimes with parents and sometimes staying with grandparents because of problems elsewhere. The parents come to work for the dole. He provides them with work under false pretences. They start with some work but then give up because of problems with him or some other issue.

Interviewer. This must be a very big problem for the school to deal with.
Pr S3. In the first three years I would have an average of three DOCS reports a week, sometimes up to nine in a week.

Interviewer
Did the staff notice these things?
Pr S3. Yes. In the first two and half years I needed to fill the role of counsellor with parents as well as kids. Sometimes it would be two hours of counselling at a time and then going home completely exhausted mentally from the traumas. I actually took on looking after a kid two years ago. It's a no-no but I did it but in the end they had to put her back with her mother and it wasn't good for her. Real problems. She was sexually abused again by her dad.

Interviewer. It must be a huge issue for the staff
Pr S3. It's happened to them lots of times. I've got a staff member …No, I had better not touch that. You feel for the kids and you think maybe I can make a difference but you are putting yourself at risk when you are doing it as well and there's not just a few. There are a lot of kids here with problems. It's got better in the last couple of years we have had more good families who have actually bought and moved into the town. You've got all those things going on here all the time.
It's got a bit better. You've got all those sort of things going on all the time here, but today we've got ... to see two people off and another one this week

Interviewer. How far away do they go
Pr S3. 35 km to A6, so it's not too bad but we haven't had long DOCS reports this year which normally you have got heaps and heaps, so last year and this year have slowly got better plus from all the reports we've put in. We've put a few in who've left town, very fortunately left.

Interviewer. You could easily talk about the whole social situation
Pr S3. Yeah whole families and parents' training

Interviewer. It sounds horrific
Pr S3. I would say that in the last 2 years I would see probably about 8 parents with bipolar kids in the school

Interviewer. Parents (or guardians?)
Pr S3. Yes, bipolar not schizophrenia, whether they recognise that is another thing, we've actually got some of them in year 11,

Interviewer. Have they been identified by the Department as having special needs that require funding?
Pr S3. We have, we had one class and there were 7 people in there at one stage, in one group, but we lost about 5 of those kids which has changed the whole school.

Interviewer. Are you getting much support staff?

Pr S3. It's getting harder and harder to get it because you've got to get so much documentation and they are cutting back on the number of classifications and things. W actually booked out Dr B1when he was on a visit to A6 a couple of years ago to get kids identified, because we really needed that, we had so many kids that, I think we had twelve at one stage out of a school of 86, so a big percentage.

I think we had 10 on our books and looking for a ED (Emotionally Disturbed) class. Because we were a K to 10 school at the time, we had to have primary and secondary students in separate classes, and so therefore we suffered because those kids weren't going to keep going on at school. We just got one kid who refused to be on medication, he was on good support but he's been suspended. I don't think he will come back (knock on door…..interruption)

It gives a label to your school, it brings the behaviour problems with it, the police visits, the DOCs reports, parents who weren't interested in coming to the school and if they did they'd come along drop their kids off and then go straight to the pub and then come back really drunk and pick them up. That's what apparently was happening before, we've got them to come into the assemblies and things like that but as far as being involved in the school, if we got assemblies, we're getting them into reports finally, things like that, but as far as getting them into the classroom, they wouldn't pass the police test.

Interviewer. Part of my interest is in the interaction between the Department and the school, the policy about training staff in child protection, how do staff cope with all the training?

Pr S3. They've been really good but because we're in a bad situation we do it twice a year, we don't just do it once a year, we do it on a regular basis.

Interviewer. Some teachers have seen it as an imposition?

Pr S3. Well I found, it's a personal thing that's happened lately but I was very reluctant to put someone in because I've had problems, I bought and had my house torched last year, and I've had threats issued and it just happens to be one of our parents. His kids don't come to school and am I going to have the house torched again if I report or what's going to happen? It's been followed up, someone else has put a report in, but I'll get the blame anyway for it. So you've got those sorts of issues, because you live so close

Interviewer. And people can guess who has made the report?

Pr S3. Oh of course they can guess but they guess wrong, like the trouble with the house was a guess wrong first, probably the torching was, thinking that we reported something, but it wasn't us,

Interviewer. But your staff are still prepared to do the reporting by the sound of it

Pr S3. Oh yes, but they are very reluctant to get into any more because they know it is quite life threatening at the moment. I have had threats from the worst people in town, so

that makes it a bit hard for them, but they also know it doesn't matter who does it I'll get the blame anyway.

Interviewer. Our conversation is a bit unexpected but obviously there is a huge issue that you are having to deal with.
Pr S3. Yes, I think the Department would put me on compassionate leave all the time

Interviewer. Perhaps you could develop a little bit with your initial perception of the staff as being unwilling to make changes, what's happened?
Pr S3. They have changed, I think that they've had probably clearer expectations. Communications are a lot more forthcoming, and we've lost a few staff in the office area, which has made a huge difference, the mixture of staff was really bad. We had to have an official meeting and set down the roles and responsibilities

Interviewer. For a teacher?
Pr S3. Yes, and they went in with an attitude, a more positive attitude since then. I don't want to get into any comments about the Department.
We have to put money in because the parents aren't going to do it. It is okay to say it's the parents' responsibility but it's the kids that are the ones that are suffering and if we say we're not going to do it, no-one is going to make me do it, if we want to make a difference to the next generation of kids then we need to put the effort in now and make a difference to the kids that are here.

Interviewer. Do the teachers come around to it, trying to do a bit more for the students?
Pr S3. Yes and including them in the decision making and making them think that they're the ones that have been responsible for those decisions. We've got a circus program at the school and the kids are really keen on that and are going really well with it.

Interviewer. Have you got a teacher that's helped to get it going?
Pr S3. Yes and we've had some clowns here for the performance and they've said wow this would be good for our kids so we took it and had camps with the clowns, and took it the next step forward, and got included in the Circus West program
That's been a real big thing because all of secondary have been involved. In small schools we have the kids involved in everything, we're also a PSP school, so we got stacks of funding.

Interviewer. So PSP means it's a version of being a disadvantaged school?
Pr S3. We're one of the poorest schools in the state.

Interviewer. What sort of things does that help you with, these types of funding?
Pr S3. Putting in programs that we are putting together in competition with larger schools

Interviewer. Combined with neighbouring schools?

Pr S3. Not only neighbouring schools, we can hook into Bridge Street with their connection programs, we can hook into A7High School one day and the kids support each other. We can hook into the year 11s, they're doing Child Studies at the moment, through video conferencing through TAFE. We've used it for our debate last year, we judged a debate between two schools through video conferencing so they did their actual debate by video conference and I judged it from here. So it has helped us with that.

Interviewer. Your staff are keen to try it?
Pr S3. Yes, they're learning, but getting the facilities up and running and getting the technology first to get it up and going, makes it a bit hard. The Country Areas Program (CAP) has just been outstanding and I think professional development programs would be the best I've ever seen.

Interviewer. Has that been a stimulus to help your staff try new things?
Pr S3. Yes and getting them into doing things too. They're now actually getting away and going and doing these courses and thoroughly enjoying it, so that's been a big plus. One of our staff, a head teacher, wasn't changing, because she couldn't go into any room where people were smoking. Notifying the Department that this is really a problem and this is causing her not to attend staff development courses and getting a lot of staff development away from smoky RSL clubs and places like that, so that's been a big plus for her. She could be off ill for a week if she comes into contact, talking to a parent even who has been smoking would be enough to make her lose her voice for a few days and that was one of the big issues we had. Knowing your staff as well has helped bring about their change, She's now in the staff room and laughing and giggling with us whereas three years ago she wouldn't have come in.

Interviewer. I think you referred to it before, some of your predecessors haven't been as long staying as you. Perhaps your longevity might have been a bonus for the school.
Pr S3. Oh I probably will leave in a couple of years it depends on how I feel, but then last year I made a decision, bought a place in town, but once I've made a decision that if things are going well I'd like to stay a bit longer.

Interviewer. Has it made some difference to the school, one way or the other
Pr S3. Maybe they realise that I'm not going to give up, they also know I get involved in things. I do as much work as everyone else as far as fundraising and things like that. I don't just sit back and let everyone else do it. I'm involved in committees, I'm in the Lions club, I'm part of the community.

Interviewer. Do you see that as important for your work in the school?
Pr S3. I've always seen that as part of the school yeah, but it also takes a lot of your time, and living in the community can be a big plus too I think

Interviewer. Is there a community perception of what you're like as a person?

Pr S3. I don't go round too much with the AVOs being enforced all round the place. I try to avoid the street, but I think they know that I'm a go-getter, that things are being brought forward and that they're going to continue to move forward. They know that I get a lot of funding for the school and I do put in extra hours for the school.

Interviewer. Any interplay between the parents, District Office, Regional Office and the principal? How's that going?
Pr S3. We still have parents who ring in complaining about different things that are going on

Interviewer. Individually?
Pr S3. Individually, I don't have groups, like some places where you might have a group of people. I probably still get upset that they've gone that way in making complaints, like I had one the other day. We've got a kid who is ED and the mother is either schizophrenic or bipolar and she just rang and she couldn't tell District Office what was the problem.
Her kid is a real problem, he targets kids and he sets them against each other, so you've got that, got those ones that come from the alcoholic backgrounds and you've got to try to step aside from that and realise it's not your problem, it's their problem.

Interviewer. And in that triangle, do you feel comfortable that district regional office give you support, credibility, when you present your information?
Pr S3. I do now, although a couple of years ago I would have worried about that. They've always backed me which has been good, and they've actually come and seen what's actually going on, so that has given us support but I don't know if that's what every school gets.
I let them know something may be brewing at the moment, like my situation at the moment. Things not only blow up here but they may blow up.
This could upset the partner who the AVO is on and so then letting them be aware of what's going on ahead of time really makes a difference. This other one I wouldn't have even reported him in the old days because it was just ridiculous, he provoked other kids and put a chair above his head, but it's put our staff in a situation where they have been falsely accused and that's a real worry when you have to go down that path and we've had three cases already, I've had one myself.

Interviewer. Where there's been a complaint by the parent against a staff member?
Pr S3. Oh it's extremely worrying, so we've had one, he was only a temporary staff, and the child decided he wouldn't come back in school because of our other students and knowing that this could be a continuing situation and it our student body is made up of 90 per cent of students with problems it is always in the back of our mind that we watch we're never alone with a kid

Interviewer. In case there is some sort of allegation?

Pr S3. If there is, if there is anything that looks like its brewing up, document it in the diary, keep records, so the staff are really aware of that, whereas in the old days they didn't' think of doing things like that.

They know that, because of our low numbers they know that there is only going to be a boy or a girl to try and get a day off or whatever, they'll make sure that there is someone else and that they are not by themselves, so we just make that rule, just make sure you're visible at all times.

Interviewer. Are there times when you need to travel with only one of your students?
Pr S3. Yes a fair bit, but if there's only one, a lot of parents take their own kids. It restricts your travel because you don't let other kids go with them because of insurance issues.

Interviewer. Could tell me a little bit about what happens in the working day and the type of issues and so on?
Pr S3. The working day, probably arrive at 7.30 between 7.30 and 8 most days, and probably 6 o'clock at night, that's probably a good hour to get home, which it is a long day, and a lot of your day would be counselling children, and counselling parents, probably not so much now as in the past.

Interviewer. Staff and dealings with staff?
Pr S3. A lot of counselling with staff, early in the piece, and new staff, staff with problems with their marriages, because we are small staff, making sure the staff are not overloaded but then sometimes I can overload myself by trying to help them. Emotional support is most important for staff.

I would say the disfunctionality of kids can even be reflected in probably 30 per cent of staff that have marriage break-up.

Probably a lot of the staff not only have the problems at school but because of the drought, over a large number of years, so they're feeling the hardships there, we're also got staff that are into their 50s and where they have parents who are really sick or dying, so there's a lot of emotional things there and most of them have at least one parent in care, so they've got the travel, so you've got a 6-hour drive to get to others in their families.

Interviewer. We've referred to the students a fair bit, what are the enrolment numbers?
Pr S3. Our enrolment numbers hover around 86 to 90. This year we've got an actual enrolment of mahybe 111, because of the additional year with Year 11 enrolments. Next year the school is extending to include Year 12 as well, for the year as a trial. We've got 40 odd adults enrolled in Year 11 courses.

Interviewer. Is there a change in your retention?
Pr S3. We don't retain them very well. We would have at least 50 per cent of Year 6 going to A6 High School, whether they all stay there is another thing, and we'd only get 3 or 4 back, from A6 High, in the Year 9 or 10 stages, we got 4 back this year.

Interviewer. Do any of them go away to boarding school?
Pr S3. We'd probably lose one a year maybe two sometimes

Interviewer. Of the students who are exiting school, what stage would they exit?
Pr S3. It would have been probably Year 10. We've got really low achievers, achieving top being 3 – 4 in the School Certificate if they are in a higher, in another school in the school certificate, those same kids would be lucky to get in 2. We haven't got any really high achievers so we're not getting to be 5 – 6 but we're getting the top in 3 – 4 which they wouldn't achieve otherwise.
It's a pretty transient population. They come and go. You don't' know whether the numbers are going to be up in the next year or two because there isn't much employment here. It's a low socio-economic group, so most of the whites who move into town have already sold their cheap housing

Interviewer. Any special programs for the students?
Pr S3. We have our own radio show, and our own radio studio. For two mornings a week is broadcast from the local railway station. We've got our own circus program running, we've got special theme days that we have where kids can do their own special things.

Interviewer. They are confidence-building kind of exercises?
Pr S3. We're trying to do as much as possible we've brought a music teacher into the school this year, because of the Year 11 we've been able to increase the staff.
We've just been involved in the student leaders program at A10 which probably helped us not to have to go to Sydney for the senior students. Probably the technology for the radio and the circus are probably our main special programs/

Interviewer. What's been the attitude to reading by the students?
Pr S3. Primary are really good, but secondary not so good.

Interviewer. Any extra staffing support for students with special needs?
Pr S3. Yes so we have a Teachers Aide in our Infants for 2 hours a day, we have them on the maths for 1 hour and we have just received funding to support tutoring for Aboriginal children tutoring in each Year.

Interviewer. What's the percentage of Aboriginal students?
Pr S3. We are just under 20 per cent and our Aboriginal students join in the Crock Festival.
We've also got kids involved in Tournament of the Minds - I'll take the kids up to A11 for this.
Another program for the kids is the Rock Eisteddfod.

Interviewer. Is there any special liaison with the Aboriginal community?

Pr S3. There is starting to be, and it's a matter of who identifies as Aboriginal. It can be contentious regarding who is Aboriginal and which Aboriginal nation a family belongs to.

Interviewer. Combined activities with other schools?
Pr S3. The Western Spectacular was obviously the biggest combined activity. It's the first time they've put it on and it was music, dance and circus, so they used the circus arts that they have been doing in the Region, and it was fantastic, it really made it so different to any of the ones that they had been to in Sydney.

Interviewer. So it was big boost for the kids then and their parents?
Pr S3. Yes, and our kids getting into a field with musical drama is really hard when there weren't people trained in the school and I didn't have time to do much with them, because you just don't get the time and this year the circus was away that we got kids involved with it fairly quickly.

Interviewer. Did you get funding?
Pr S3. I applied for sports funding and got about $1200 out of the $2500 that we asked for but this year we're doing the healthy eating, healthy lifestyle, type of thing where we've actually applied for $2500 and got it this year on the sports grant for to have fruit each week and to have a special sit down meal where the kids are taught in their lesson how to behave in public, where they should actually eat, not on the lounge chair. So, they're doing that once a term and they are having a special meal that is prepared by secondary kids.

Interviewer. Do you have a school canteen that can help?
Pr S3. There's a school canteen that's, 2 days a week, but we just had big trouble at the moment because with our clientele we have parents that you can't trust with credit about, and we've actually lost money this year. I don't know why we lost money, it appears that our takings are a quarter of what they should be on many days. Do we close it down, do we keep it for the kids, how do we not lose the money, whether it's been pinched or wrong amounts been given as change.
Even getting people to work at school is very hard, we've had 4 guys contacted by the Work for the Dole scheme and only one of them actually passed the Criminal Record Check and he had another job in the meantime. I had to turn the others down because of records of assault and theft.

Interviewer. Any principal mentors?
Pr S3. Yeas, I don't know actually why I was on a mentoring program, because I thought I was going quite well, but I suppose it was because of community and staffing problems, but that was a great help.

Interviewer. Did you volunteer to go on the mentoring program or was it suggested to you?

Pr S3. It was suggested I think and I said yes I'll go ahead with it, but I'd say it probably was because I had issues with the secondary and probably being a primary person in a central school with secondary issues. It was a secondary person that was my mentor which worked out really well and I listened to everything and did everything she suggested.

Interviewer. You were happy with that support?
Pr S3. Yes, she was very supportive. I think it was just a difference whether you can accept advice. She was really good.
Our big problem is getting these kids to a level where they can cope in society and be productive and just feel somewhat worthwhile because they don't.
We ran after-hours tutoring two days a week using PSP funding and this year we've got a little extra funding to assist tutoring for Aboriginal students.

Interviewer. Returning to an earlier issue, could you say more about finding and retaining staff?
Pr S3. I think finding staff that match your school is really hard and even getting people to apply for our school would be really hard. When we've had our primary one it's been easy enough to get staff in, but not so easy for secondary, because you're going into specialist fields. For example, science was difficult for a fair while, and we've actually had temporary teaching for a while with science and then we had trouble with industrial arts, and then now we're probably looking at science at the moment. We don't have anyone who is trained in music here, we had to bring someone in from A8 and we don't have anyone who is LOTE trained at all, so that's a hassle. We're combining that with KLA at the moment. We've got a teacher who is doing maths but is not trained and has been teaching maths for years and years.
We've got an English history teacher this year and she has been really good. She's been appointed this year, but as far as getting casual staff so we've got plenty of funding but getting casual staff to come in on a day to day basis is really hard.

Interviewer. Not a big enough pool or not enough people?
Pr S3. It probably isn't a big enough pool at the moment because the three schools in this area have started trialling Year 11 and 12, and that's taken up a lot of the temporary staff for those three schools, so it hasn't left those people that would normally be used for day to day relief, and that's not going to get any better next year.
Also we had a temporary relief here a couple of years ago and I think if you get burnt when you get burnt you get a bit wary of what's going on. We got a temporary relief in that was really bad, because I was doing her job, my job, and also trying to assist her in an improvement program. We were doing a lot of work.

Interviewer. What period of time?
Pr S3. That was for a term. We were going to employ her for the rest of that year, but we called back another casual that had gone out to A9 because we were desperate and it was really hard for us to get temporary staff. We've got to get them accommodation, and at that time there wasn't any so I let her stay with me, a big mistake. Not only did that

happen, but the hassles of that personality, so I don't think they screened temporary people very well.

Because she was only here for a term and we're thinking well maybe it's the behaviour of our kids that is causing the problem, maybe it isn't her, maybe it's just that she needs extra support, but when you put all that support in and then you let her go, then another couple of schools will end up with the same problem. I mean how long do you give them that trial period when you know the kids are really bad before you say this person needs to be on an improvement program and then they move from school to school and cause trouble wherever they go,

Interviewer. What was the workload like for you as a supervising principal?

Pr S3. Well my other staff would not have been able to supervise the improvement program. I was busy giving demonstration lessons and assisting, taking over at times and so I had to do everything after hours, I was here until 9 or 10 o'clock most nights doing work in the office to cover up from the day from and on top of all that we've got all the other emotional issues at the school. It was a hectic time and I did that for too long, but trying to get someone in for that term was hard too.

Interviewer. Do you have your own network of close confident support and/or close friends who you can count on?

Pr S3. Probably not this year so much because well I've lost my closest friend at A4 who has gone to another school but I think I've probably had to be stronger in my own self, because I don't want to get other people involved in what's happening.

I think the staff at the moment, because the staff are so closely linked at the moment I think there's no trouble there. A couple of years ago if we were in the same situation I probably wouldn't have coped at all and I think because the staff are working so well together that support has been really important.

Also I've had support even from a person outside this area who actually came to court one day to help me with a legal issue. When I went to court, I wouldn't have employed any legal help from this area to represent me in court. I've seen them in action and I thought, pity help me if I ever get to that stage because I'm just gone.

Interviewer. You mentioned another principal colleague, you felt comfortable with other central school principals that have been the support for you

Pr S3. Yes, I suppose we were always, we were in contact regularly because we were so close in numbers and in our situations and it was very relevant, to give each other ideas, but I mean our phone calls got less frequent. At first they'd be 2 or 3 times a day even, then down to once a week where you'd have a hello call. We still ring each other, and email each other and say how are you going, so that's fine. I don't think school wise I've had to do that this year at all. I've been able to handle anything that's come my way. I've been able to handle a lot better when something is thrown out during the day now.

Interviewer. I noticed as soon as I walked through the door by the way, there's a friendly interaction across the corridor into the staff room.

Pr S3. Oh we had this circus guy who came here, he's working with the secondary kids on a behaviour program, and because it is happy, it is joking, they do their kidding bit. It's changed. Whereas, if you came in here three years ago the students would be just getting into fights – just bringing the cakes in today as a treat, that wouldn't have happened a few years ago, I can tell you now.

Interviewer. Well they are nice distractions
Pr S3. Yes and it's good. We can actually go in and sit in the staff common room. For the first couple of years I wouldn't go in there and that has changed.

Interviewer. Any position that you'd like to apply for, or things you want to achieve or want to see happen in the future?
Pr S3. Well Howard [Prime Minister] wrecked the retirement at 55 hasn't he?

Interviewer. I'm not game to ask your age
Pr S3. It's OK, I'm 50. I put 60 down as my age for retirement.
I was silly, I could go forever, because I'm not teaching.
I've got a partner who lives in A12 [1500 km from S3] and he's not well so, 55 was looking good but, probably I would like to get back like to working in primary schools, although I love centrals, and I could probably stay here for a time but I'm changing my thinking about that.

Interviewer. It seems like you want new challenges?
Pr S3. Trying new challenges all the time. It's probably why I've survived so far.

End of interview

Table C 1 *NVivo tree nodes sorted according to groups of people*

Node	Child node	Grandchild node	Sources	References
Community				
	Complaints		15[a]	35
	Community profile		14	98
		Attitudes to staff	4	5
	Image of the school		15	40
		Parent support of school	13	35
Principal				
	Accountability		15	44
		Annual School Reports	3	6
		Standardised tests	6	12
	Level of autonomy		3	4
	DET policies	Department of Community Services	2	8
		Students with challenging behaviours	3	12
		Occupational Health & Safety	3	4
	Career prospects	Career limitation	13	93
		Career mentor	10	28
		Professional development and collegial support	8	22
		Support from superiors	15	51
	Personal welfare		10	16
		Loneliness, personal crises	4	13
		Problems for family	15	52
		Career problems for partners and children	2	7
		Workload and stress	16	54
School issue				
	Staffing	Staff recruitment and retention	18	125
		Performance, difficult relations	14	40
		Training	17	66
		Staff welfare	2	5
	Providing curriculum		15	55
		Vocational education	10	20
		Distance education	6	30
		Achievement levels, retention	19	48
		Special needs	13	29
		Technology support	7	23
	Welfare	Discipline and welfare	14	65
		Travelling distances	8	37
		Racism and Aboriginal education	9	48

Note. Initial NVivo nodes were combined and grouped into three main nodes. The three nodes grouped issues relating to the local community, the principal or other members of the school community. [a] Twelve principals participated in the program of interviews. Eight principals were available for a second interview, making a total of 20 possible sources. Data were from the NVivo software program (Version 7).

Table C 2 *NVivo tree nodes sorted according to themes*

Theme	Subthemes	Sources	References
Work intensification			
Community profile		14	98
	Attitudes to staff	4	5
Accountability		15	44
	Annual School Reports	3	6
	Standardised tests	6	12
DET policies	Department of Community Services	2	8
	Students with challenging behaviours	3	12
	Occupational Health & Safety	3	4
Personal welfare		10	16
	Workload and stress	16	54
Staffing	Staff recruitment and retention	18	125
	Performance, difficult relations	14	40
	Training	17	66
	Staff welfare	2	5
Providing curriculum		15	55
	Achievement levels, retention	19	48
	Special needs	13	29
Welfare	Discipline and welfare	14	65
	Racism and Aboriginal education	9	48
Isolation			
Image of the school		15	40
	Parent support of school	13	35
	Loneliness, personal crises	4	13
	Problems for family	15	52
	Career problems for partners and children	2	7
	Vocational education	10	20
	Distance education	6	30
	Technology support	7	23
	Travelling distances	8	37
Career limitation			
Complaints		15[a]	35
Career prospects	Career limitation	13	93
	Career mentor	10	28
	Professional development and collegial support	8	22
	Support from superiors	15	51

Note. Data were from the NVivo software program (Version 7).