

“I wish they had told me that when I started out”

How applying a service lens to education leadership
can support Primary School Principals to manage
complexity in contemporary education setting

Presented at IPC, Sept 23 by Wendy Cave, Michael Hall

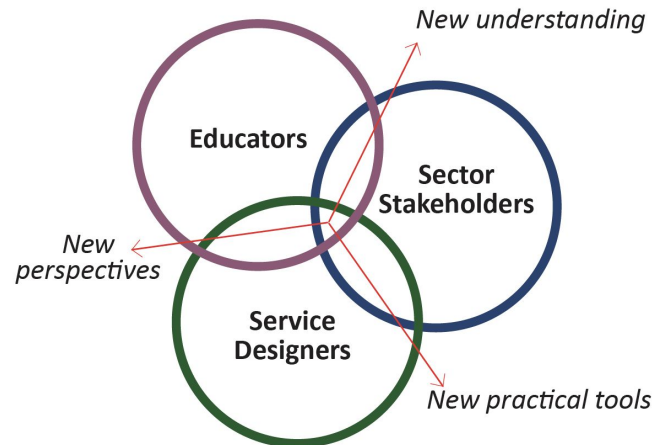
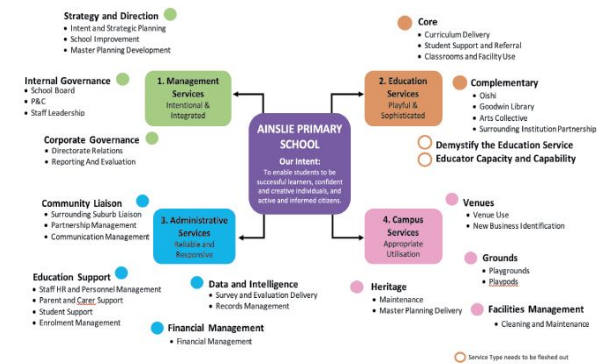
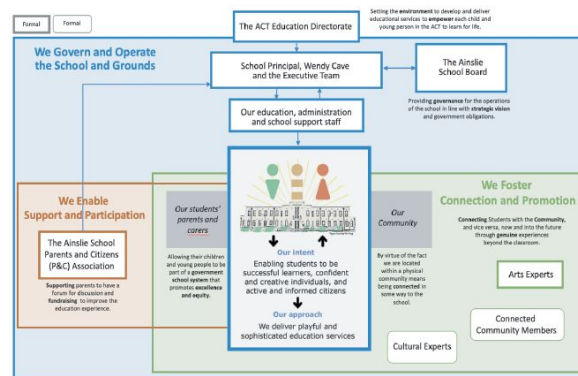
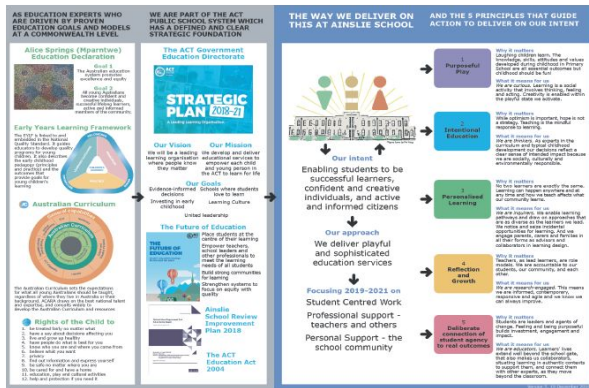
Research by Mel Edwards, Wendy Cave, Sophie Bissell, and Justin Barrie for
the Australian Government Primary Principal Association (AGPPA)
through Principals Australia Research Foundation

https://desonance.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Applying-a-Service-Lens-to-Support-Primary-Education-Leadership_Full-Research-Report_Dec22.pdf

Education and Service Design: A Collaboration

“The best ideas emerge when very different perspectives meet.”

Frans Johansson



The principal (and research experience) in two quotes



“Our core business is our teaching practice and approach”

TAS, Government 0–6 yrs, regional: small



“Core business doesn’t mean it’s 100% of my time – we deliver education services”

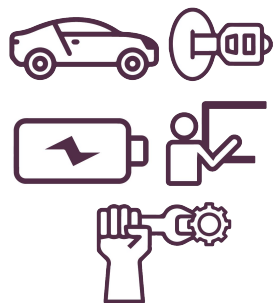
VIC, Government, 7–20yrs, metro: large

What we found AKA “I wish they had told me...”



“Instructional leadership is only one of three areas I will manage and lead every day. And the difference between managing the organization that is my school and being frustrated by ‘admin’ is realising that I’m a CEO only I have to do more.”

Three Accountabilities



“Each principal has one of four ways of relating to organizational management. Knowing which one I am can help me, so can the organizational management tools that help me understand why we exist, who is involved, and how we deliver education value through services.”

Five typologies



“Not only is my primary school a complex system, but the Education System is complex and, as a principal I have to adapt constantly on the demands and expectations of the system I’m in, and the guidance and leadership I need to provide.”

A complex adaptive system

Who we interviewed

State/Territory	No. of Participants
VIC	4
NSW	3
ACT	3
NT	1
QLD	4
TAS	4
SA	3
WA	1
NZ	3
Total	26

Sector	No. of Participants
Government	21
Catholic	3
Independent	2

School Location	No. of Participants
Metropolitan	15
Regional	6
Rural	4
Remote	1

Gender	No. of Participants
Male	10
Female	16

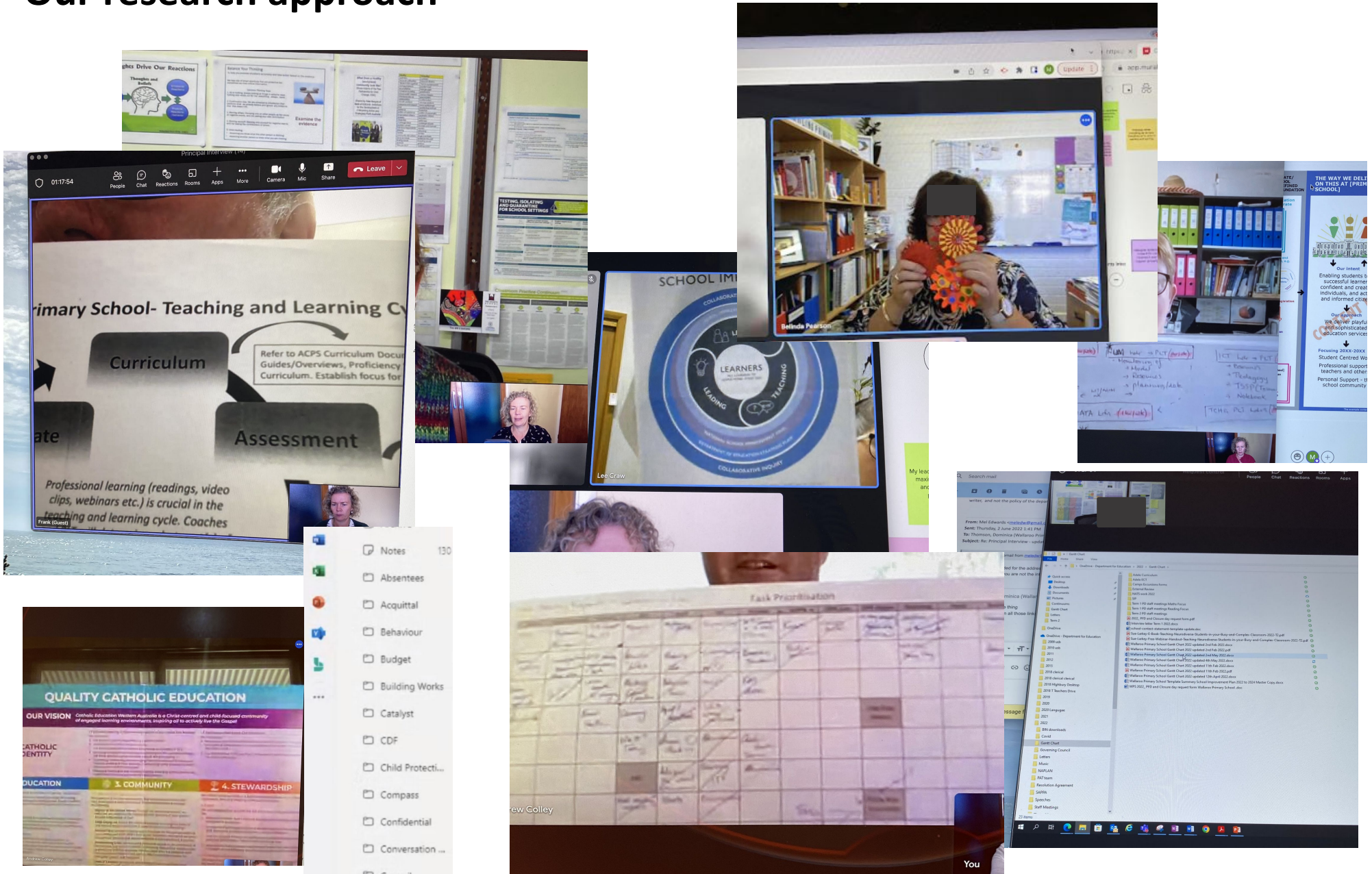
Experience in other fields	No. of Participants
Yes	11
No	15

Years of Experience	No. of Participants
0-6	7
7-20	11
20+	8



+ engagement in unstructured conversations by Team with Principal's and Tech Panel throughout

Our research approach



What does a primary school principal (actually) do?



I'm the person running the place that's set up for good learning to happen. My teachers make the classwork happen, in partnership with parents. Operational matters set up the environment for learning to happen, staff do that, but I [ensure we're] set up for that."

NSW, Catholic, 20+yrs, regional: medium



To use business language the primary client is the student – how are you satisfying the client if you're not doing all the things?"

VIC, Government, 7–20yrs, metro: large

We found there are three accountabilities

Through a service lens the role of a primary school principal can be deconstructed into three identifiable areas:



1. Instructional Leadership

Because education outcomes are a School's core role.

- Manage curriculum and instruction, lead learning communities, influence and guide pedagogical practices.



2. Organisational Management

Because a safe, sustainable and stable environment for learning and working that is appropriately resourced and managed is fundamental in a School.

- School administration, operations delivery, management, improvement.



3. Culture & Community Establishment

Because the environment a principal sets, based on the their values is clear in every interaction that occurs within the School.

- Schools don't just have strategy and values as statements; through the principal, they demonstrate and live them through interactions.

The language of 'administration'

Education and Learning Delivery DELIVERING Curriculum LEADING teaching and learning SUPERVISING of students INSTRUCTIONAL leadership Human Resources MANAGING Staff DEVELOPING staff MANAGING workforce planning IMPROVING the quality of teaching and school leadership, such as teacher registration, performance and development, or professional learning MANAGING teacher's professional development, teacher selection, staff supervision MANAGING under performing staff OVERSEEING of teacher housing MEETING REGULATIONS as 'registered charities' or 'corporate entities' collect data on overseas students (Non-Gov) MANAGING/COORDINATING school council MANAGING Community partnerships and engagement ENACTING local curriculum DEVELOPING school MANAGING capital works projects vision DEVELOPING ways of meeting school improvement targets (often externally mandated or negotiated with supervisors & school improvement officers) LEADING school improvement, such as planning or implementation CHANGE MANAGING such as technology enhancement Initiatives seeking to streamline compliance and administrative Requirements IMPLEMENTING new requirements, systems and requests OVERSEEING daily operations and structures – timetabling, behaviour management support REPORTING or responding to accountability measures PROCURING & CONTRACT MANAGING e.g. oversight of school buses from the tender to the daily running process MAINTAINING operational risk registers SUPPORTING occupational health and safety MANAGING policy requirements that are mandatory for schools. These include, for example, completion of forms, reports, data collection (such as student census) and other departmental obligations on

- Bureaucracy, Regulation, Process
- Time-wasting, Time-saving
- Red Tape, Compliance
- Imposed, Enforced
- Policy ("we have to do this"), Protocol ("we prefer to do it this way"), Voluntary ("we'd like you to do this")
- Nitty Gritty, Admin, Operational Stuff, Donkey Work



No one tells you what a principal does –how do I do this stuff?"

VIC, Government, 0–6yrs, metro: large

The language of 'administration'



This is Organisational Management

Because a safe, sustainable and stable environment for learning and working that is appropriately resourced and managed is fundamental in a School.

- *Why we exist.*
- *What's our intent in our context.*
- *in our physical location.*
- *Who is involved.*
- *What the connections are across the different elements of our organisation.*
- *How we are organised to operationalise service delivery.*
- *Deliver services and experiences.*
- *Measure value through:*
 - Education services
 - Management services
 - Administration services
 - Campus services

1.
**STRATEGIC
FRAMEWORK**

2.
ECOSYSTEM

3.
**SERVICE OFFERING &
VALUE PROPOSITION**

Your Experience - an activity

How would you breakdown your time?

Percentage of time	Instructional Leadership	Organisational Management	Culture and Community establishment
You think you spend	%		
You actually spend	%		
You wish you spent	%		

1. Instructional Leadership

Manage curriculum and instruction, lead learning communities, influence and guide pedagogical practices.

2. Organisational Management

School administration, operations delivery, management, improvement, resource allocation, facilities maintenance.

3. Culture & Community Establishment

Ways of behaving, values and standards. Community of students, staff, parents, carers, extended community of family, school neighbours. The physical space and place.

How the three service artefacts help a principal with Organisational Management

As a set

the three artefacts represent the operating landscape and Organisational Management components of a complex organisation.

As separate service artefacts

they are one–page visual overviews that deconstruct the practical elements – why, who what and how

As a practical tool

they were designed for principals:

- To understand at an overview level the lay of the land quickly, not deeply; and
- To see the breakdown and scope of accountability.

As a communication tool

they are designed as:

- **A memory jogger**, a reminder about how things work, to confirm or verify connections and to reduce uncertainty, to initiate action, to get started.
- **A quick reference tool**, to provide a sense of confidence of the known, to feel secure at an overview level (not a deep comprehensive handbook).
- **A device for making meaning**, not instructing, to communicate or generate understanding, to discuss or predict possibility with others.

Tools, Not Rules

We identified five typologies

Through a service lens, in relation to Organisational Management, there are definite types of behaviour and activity that emerge. These typologies are not psychological constructs, nor about individual identities. They help identify different ways operating in the service context.

Principal Typology 1



Driver

When it comes to Organisational Management

I will make it happen, I will make it work better so we can get on with things.

Because as a principal

I want to achieve quality education delivery within my current context.

Principal Typology 2



Educator

When it comes to Organisational Management

I'll deal with it to get it out of the way.

Because as a principal

I am an educator first and always – education activity should really be my only focus.

Principal Typology 3



Energiser

When it comes to Organisational Management

I'll sort it, trust me; it helps us do what we love.

Because as a principal

I want our school to offer great educational experiences for students and staff, into the future, and for society.

Principal Typology 4



Enabler

When it comes to Organisational Management

I will help you understand how it all fits together so we can use it appropriately.

Because as a principal

I believe attention to organisational planning is the foundation for excellent education delivery.

Principal Typology 5



Supporter

When it comes to Organisational Management

I recognise that it is an important part of education leadership quality and effectiveness.

Because as a principal

I want to support education leaders in the interests of Australian society and economy.

Your Typology - an activity



FINDING 3

Five principal typologies in relation to Organisational Management

Though principals are all individuals, there are definite types of behaviour and activity in relation to Organisational Management that emerge.

The research has identified five principal typologies in relation to their Organisational Management approach: Driver, Educator, Energiser, Enabler and Supporter.

These typologies are not about personal style, they are about practice and they help to identify different ways of operating in the service context.

Remember, these typologies aren't about the whole you, they are about your response to organisational management.

Have a read and then discuss with the people near you (or find your type):

- **What type do I think I am?**
- **How might I use the type to guide me with organisational management when I get home?**
- **What is something you wish you were told.**

Principal Typology 1



Driver

When it comes to Organisational Management

I will make it happen, I will make it work better so we can get on with things.

Because as a principal

I want to achieve quality education delivery within my current context.

Principal Typology 2



Educator

When it comes to Organisational Management

I'll deal with it to get it out of the way.

Because as a principal

I am an educator first and always – education activity should really be my only focus.

Principal Typology 3



Energiser

When it comes to Organisational Management

I'll sort it, trust me; it helps us do what we love.

Because as a principal

I want our school to offer great educational experiences for students and staff, into the future, and for society.

Principal Typology 4



Enabler

When it comes to Organisational Management

I will help you understand how it all fits together so we can use it appropriately.

Because as a principal

I believe attention to organisational planning is the foundation for excellent education delivery.

Principal Typology 5



Supporter

When it comes to Organisational Management

I recognise that it is an important part of education leadership quality and effectiveness.

Because as a principal

I want to support education leaders in the interests of Australian society and economy.

Principals are adaptive agents in a complex adaptive system

*“Schools are defined primarily by the **people** who lead the school, and by the ever evolving **relationships** between that leadership and their **staff, students, and parents**. A school is furthermore defined by the **very structure and appearance of its hallways** and stairwells and windows, the **quality of the air** that its children breath, and the manner in which **acoustics** are shaped by its **surfaces**. A school is defined by the very place in which it sits, in that **particular community**, within that **particular state** and local policy context, in that **specific time**. And it influences and shapes the children within it in ways that can be nearly indefinable—in ways **tremendously positive**, or in ways **tremendously negative**. ... **A COMMUNITY OF ADULTS AND CHILDREN INTERACTING WITHIN A UNIQUE SPACE, TIME, AND PLACE**. An **interconnected set of social relationships and roles** governed as much by **unpredictable and unseen forces** as by the **stable** grammar of grade–levels and discrete **academic subjects**.”*

[By] viewing a school as an ecosystem means that you recognize that changing one thing may result in a cascade of unforeseen and perhaps unintended consequences.”

*What will it take to improve the conditions for learning in our schools?
Schools & Ecosystems: Socio-ecological perspectives on education*

In conclusion the adaptive agents in a complex adaptive system

The Australian Primary Sector Education System - the Operating Landscape

