

Senior Leaders' Views on Leadership Preparation and Succession Strategies in New Zealand: Time  
for a Career-Related Professionalization Policy and Provisions

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Accepted for publication by the *International Electronic Journal for Leadership of Learning*;  
revised 13 October 2009.

## Abstract

This research note reports the views of members of a branch of a professional association about their career paths and the appropriateness of preparatory and succession strategies for leaders in New Zealand schools. This sample of 12 “seniors” was unusual for its relative professional seniority, span of responsibilities and postgraduate qualifications held. With a few points of difference related to their unusual characteristics, these respondents endorsed the provisional findings of two earlier pilots involving 14 secondary principals and 28 neophyte leaders. Their career path data reiterated a general phenomenon of accelerating “stepping stoning” by leaders across designations without role-specific training prior to appointment, to the point where role mastery tended to coincide with advancement to the next designation. These seniors supported preparatory and succession strategies that address the changing needs of leaders as they construct a career across designations. They preferred strategies that offer trustworthy knowledge about leadership and preparatory training in role-specific skills prior to appointment, as well as forms of on-going direct support in order to mediate the inevitably idiosyncratic learning of leadership “on the job.” They also proposed additional preparatory strategies: fixed term contracts, temporary placements, cadetships, shadowing, and a nationally provided professional development (PD) customised for the early childhood education (ECE) sector. They suggested additional succession opportunities: “acting up,” offering shadowing and mentoring others, release for short-term positions, succession planning as a core leadership skill in leadership education, and PD in strategic planning for middle management and senior management. Mindful of the advice of these senior respondents, it was concluded that the modified survey instrument should be offered to leaders in schools and pre-schools as well as to members and potential members of a national professional association.

This is the third research report from the National Review of Preparatory and Succession of Educational Leaders for Aotearoa/ New Zealand.<sup>1</sup> The goal of the review was to anticipate the effects of the age demographics of the education workforce which indicate the need for substantial numbers to fill middle and senior management roles and institutional leadership roles in early childhood and school education in the period 2010 to 2020. The four objectives of the review were to (a) project the workforce of leaders required in ECE, primary and secondary education sectors, (b) review current preparatory and succession strategies and programmes in New Zealand and internationally, (c) research current attitudes and intentions towards preparation for and succeeding into leadership roles, and thus, (d) help provide an empirical base for a national policy review and the planned improvement and delivery of services.

Preparatory strategies were defined in this project as groups of methods used to improve aspirants' role-specific capacities prior to their appointment. Succession or developmental strategies were defined as groups of methods used by systems to improve appointees' role-specific capacities after their appointment. Together, preparation and succession or developmental strategies were assumed to be essential to sustaining an education system's leadership capabilities through nurturing ongoing learning about leadership.

The first research note (Macpherson, 2009a) reported a pilot survey in mid July 2008 of 14 serving secondary school principals. Their responses suggested that New Zealand education relies heavily on serendipitous experiential learning at team and executive leadership levels, with some more systematic approaches being used to prepare aspiring and develop first-time principals. The pilot highlighted concerns over the diversity of career paths without career path planning, the potential role

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<sup>1</sup> This review was supported by the New Zealand Educational Administration and Leadership Society through its award of the 2008 Konica Minolta and Dame Jean Herbison Scholarship.

of extrinsic motivators to help more potential leaders become aspirants, the need for skills training by designation prior to appointment, the need to specify role-specific skills and integrate training with deeper learning about leadership by level, the need for mentoring after appointment, and the need for national investment in selected preparatory and succession strategies.

The second research note (Macpherson, 2009b) reported a survey of the current attitudes and intentions of an opportunistic sample of 28 neophyte leaders at the Extending High Standards Across Schools Conference in late July 2008. These educators confirmed the concerns noted above and raised six additional issues: (a) the need for district or regional systems to deliver career planning and mentoring, (b) latent demand for access to deep learning about executive and institutional leadership, (c) negligible preparation for teaching principalships in small and remote schools potentially having serious consequences for children and the education system, (d) growing acceleration through or past designations potentially further reducing role-specific leadership competence on appointment and capacity building in schools, (e) the need for a succession policy and strategies to sustain learning about leadership after appointment, and, (f) the need for investment in leadership development infrastructure to deliver leadership preparation and succession strategies.

This third research report will note in passing the instances where the senior leaders surveyed reiterate the provisional findings from the first two samples and focus instead on new issues to be considered for inclusion in the fourth and final survey. The sections below will explain the nature of the seniors' sample, the implications of how they prepared for leadership roles in their careers, and their views on preparatory and succession strategies.

### Sample Characteristics and Career Paths

The 12 respondents comprised nine female and three male members of a branch of a national professional association. They were senior educators. One was serving in a middle management role, two in senior management roles, one was a non-teaching principal, three were tertiary educators and six (50%) were in non-school education system or contracted consultant roles. None of the 12 was under 40 years old; four were aged 40-49, three were 50-59 and five were over 60. They had served in a wide range of sectors; two of the 12 had served primarily in ECE, three in primary schools, two in both ECE and primary education, four in secondary education and two in tertiary education. All 12 self-classified as NZ European/ Pakeha. They were also comparatively well qualified; while one respondent gave no indication, one had completed a teaching diploma, four had a teaching degree, and half of the group possessed a postgraduate degree. The three unique characteristics of this sample were therefore their seniority, degree of responsibility and higher learning.

Regarding preparation for leadership, seven of the 12 seniors made no indication of having accessed leadership PD programmes, while the others pointed to a number of helpful resources and short courses. Four had used Leadspace. Two had attended the Principals' Development Planning Centre (PDPC). Four individuals recalled attending leadership role preparation courses provided by the Teacher Refresher Course Committee (TRCC), the ongoing support provided through the Principals' Professional Learning Groups (PPLG), personal study and a mentorship. These opportunities will be added to future versions of the survey instrument.

Three of the 12 agreed and four strongly agreed with the proposition that "I get a great deal of satisfaction from my current role." One person in an education system role strongly disagreed. Four made no response. The three major sources of satisfaction referred to were (a) meeting the challenges of leadership, (b) the opportunities to collaborate with others, and (c) making a difference for

colleagues and students. The fewer overall references to sources of dissatisfaction listed a range of role dilemmas (e.g. difficult people, insufficient responsibility, slow speed of change, quality of management, work load, over-crowded curriculum, Ministry compliance, lack of funding, and the current state of flux). These response patterns broadly replicated those examined in the two earlier pilots, providing more support for the general proposition that while leaders do encounter unpleasant challenges, leadership also brings even more satisfaction to most, explaining in part why they continue to offer leadership service.

The diversity of career paths highlighted in the two earlier pilots was also found in this pilot. While the average time spent in Scale A positions was seven years, a quarter were in the role less than four years and another quarter had been there for over 10 years. In sharp contrast, the average time spent in middle management roles was about three years, with only three respondents in such roles for more than four years. Four had never served in senior management, with four others spending a wide range of periods in such roles. Two respondents had served as teaching principals for 4-9 years, one other for less than four years, and another for more than 16 years. The years spent serving as non-teaching principals were equally diverse; one less than four years, two for 4-9 years and one for 10-15 years. Similarly diverse were years of service in non-school education system roles: two for less than four years, four for 10-15 years, and one over 16 years. In sum, there was no standard career pattern. One person had moved from a Scale A post to more than 16 years as a teaching principal. Others had spent over five years as a Scale A teacher before accelerating through or bypassing leadership designations to settle into teaching and non-teaching principalships or system roles. This reiterates the patterns of diversity and accelerating advancement noted in the second pilot involving neophyte leaders, with no evidence found that time spent in teaching principalships had delayed advancement. One implication of such diversity combined with accelerated “stepping stoning” is the need for

integrated preparatory and succession strategies that might better deliver leadership capability in all designations.

The reasons provided for deciding to offer leadership also matched the responses from the secondary and neophyte samples. Nearly half were attracted by the challenges of leadership. About a fifth made the decision after a positive leadership experience or opportunity. One respondent was “asked to act in principal's role - saw the difference you could make in classes across the school.” Another was given the “opportunity to engage in ECE in external agencies (e.g. union, teachers’ council).” If more representative samples affirm these patterns of satisfaction and motivation, they can be used to review leader recruitment strategies.

A wide range of intentions were signalled regarding years to retirement; two intend to go in less than four years, two between 4-9 years, two between 10 and 15 years and two in more than 16 years. About half the main factors that have/will inform the decision to retire were about lifestyle choices, over 40% to do with job satisfaction related to job options, with only one reference to alternative professional commitments. Regarding alternatives to retirement, two of the respondents were working on contract with the Ministry to help schools with financial and performance difficulties, two were continuing postgraduate study, one had taught for a year in the USA, and three others were interested in exploring options. Overall, these responses were as diverse as the earlier pilots’ data, affirming the early stage of general knowledge regarding alternatives to retirement. If they are confirmed by follow up research, it may suggest the need for a new career path planning strategy that addresses retention.

## Preparation for Leadership

### Potential to Aspirant

The respondents were asked to recall the main factors that *discouraged* them from becoming an aspirant leader, when they were still potential leaders. The response patterns broadly replicated the neophytes' patterns with over a third of the respondents recalling a lack of confidence, over a third referring to the negative perceptions of leadership, and under a third noting their lack of skills and preparation. This affirms earlier pilot findings that the aspiration to offer leadership is being impaired by the absence of a preparatory strategy that is intended to give potential leaders the confidence, attitudes and skills to become aspirants.

When asked about the main factors that *encouraged* them, as potential leaders, to become aspirant leaders, nearly half the responses referred to becoming ready to lead as a consequence of growing confidence, successful experience and needing a greater challenge. A third referred to forms of peer encouragement and a fifth to needing authority to achieve desirable change. Again, these patterns replicated those found in first two pilots. None of the respondents had encountered extrinsic and systemic strategies intended to identify potential leaders or to encourage them to become aspirants, and to integrate their development in a wider and deliberate approach to build national educational leadership capacity and system capability.

### Aspirant to Middle Management

Respondents were asked to recall the main methods they *actually* used, as aspirant leaders prior to appointment, to prepare for leadership. The types of methods used were the same as those reported in the first two pilots, but with the weightings reversed. There were nine references to forms of PD and higher education, six to mentoring, modelling and networking,



and only two to forms of experiential learning. The same patterns were seen when asked how they might have prepared *better* as aspirant leaders.

Three interpretations are possible, and given the modest size of the sample, need to be checked using a more representative sample. One is that this pattern tends to affirm the provisional finding that leadership development infrastructure might need to provide aspirants to middle management with career path planning, mentoring, PD training in basic skills integrated with higher learning about team leadership, with special emphasis on collaborative leadership in the areas of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. Another is that the disproportionate access to higher learning in this sample, and their accelerated progression into principalships and Ministry or consultant roles, had resulted in these respondents being less reflective of the inevitably idiosyncratic outcomes of experiential learning. A third possibility is that PD and HE had provided proportionately more in this sample with career path planning opportunities and career switching options.

### **Middle to Senior Management**

Respondents were asked to recall the main methods they *actually* used to prepare for service in senior management, and how they might have prepared *better*. A total of nine references were made: five to forms of learning on the job, three to forms of PD and HE, and one to personal reflection. There were four suggestions for improvement: two to study and one each to mentoring and shadowing. These responses replicate the patterns found in the first and second pilots and affirm that none of these respondents had prepared systematically for a senior management role, probably regarding it as a temporary “stepping stone” or, in one case, as a terminal appointment. These possibilities need to be checked in follow up research.

### Senior Management to Principalships

With regard to preparation for teaching principalships, two respondents reported “learning on the job” and being “thrown in at the deep end” with one getting “five days from an adviser.” One advised the usefulness of her “PG study in Ed Admin and PD in managing relationships and conflict.” When asked how they could have been better prepared for a teaching principalship, two respondents proposed “shadowing a teaching principal to gain a better understanding of the realities of the job.” These responses tend to confirm that teaching principals could be unprepared for their role with significant policy implications.

With regard to non-teaching principalships, four respondents reported a range of coping tactics to prepare and succeed. One “used MOE advice, went to conferences, [and] attended principals’ associations meetings.” Two “learned on the job.” The fourth reported “working out cunning ways to use staffing to ‘shed’ my teaching component including taking on project director of ... that funded the final release.” Three indicated their preparation could have been improved by “study” and “appropriate PD” and that “PCDC would have been useful.” There was little evidence of systematic preparation or fresh strategies to improve preparation.

Given that 50% of the respondents were in professional advisory roles, the main methods they had used to prepare for service were of interest, as well as how they believed they could have been better prepared. Of the eleven references to forms of preparation, eight were to forms of PD (e.g. project management, financial management, strategic planning) and HE (e.g. personal study, investigation, reflection), and three to methods of winning the appointment. Of the six references to methods of improving preparation, five were about learning from other practitioners with one signalling the need to understand “how government departments work their political influences.” Follow up research might usefully analyse the views of a more representative sample.

**Overall**

These respondents provided eight suggestions concerning preparation for leadership that have been summarised as five career path implications: (a) a pre-appointment opportunity to find out what leadership is, means and how it links to a socio-cultural setting would be helpful, (b) potential leaders should be encouraged systematically to self-select, (c) preparatory PD in change management and building resilience is essential, (d) practitioners in ECE tend to think that leadership is all learnt on the job and that the longest serving is due the leader's role (even if they don't want it!), and (e) prior academic study should complement practical experience with strong theory about leadership. These implications will need to be discussed when developing a model of leadership preparation and succession for New Zealand/Aotearoa.

Another key difference between these seniors and the secondary principals and neophyte leaders is that they appear to have been less reliant on serendipitous experiential learning, similarly supported by leaders, and yet made more deliberate use of PD and deeper learning about leadership in their careers to cope with leadership challenges and expand their career options. These patterns were apparently sustained as they moved from potential to aspirant leader status, and accelerated across middle and senior management roles into teaching and non-teaching principalships and advisory roles. On the other hand, it must also be noted that seniors' role-specific preparation tended to be minimal and then heavily reliant on relatively few skill development short courses. These patterns now need to be checked using follow up research prior to conclusions being drawn about appropriate preparatory strategies.

**Attitudes to Preparatory Strategies**

As with the previous pilots, eight preparatory and nine succession strategies were selected from those trialled in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Australia (Dempster, 2007; Gronn,

2007). Respondents' attitudes to these strategies were then measured by asking them to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each proposition, and to comment if they wished to explain their decision. Table 1 provides the propositions concerning preparatory strategies and the frequency of respondents' ratings.

Table 1: Respondents' Attitudes to Preparatory Strategies

Proposition	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
1. Role skills training should be available prior to each level of leadership service (classroom, middle, senior, principal)	0	0	0	3	9	0
2. A National Aspiring Middle Managers' Program should be available as a preparatory opportunity	0	1	0	2	8	1
3. A National Aspiring Senior Managers' Program should be available as a preparatory opportunity	0	1	0	2	8	1
4. A National Aspiring Principals' Program should be available as a preparatory opportunity	0	0	0	2	9	1
5. Graduate status is appropriate for middle management teachers	0	0	3	5	3	1
6. Postgraduate status is appropriate for senior management and principals	0	0	2	8	2	0
7. Doctoral status is appropriate for principals and system leaders	0	3	0	7	2	0
8. A Board of Trustees should be provided with quality training and an experienced advisor to help them select their principal	0	0	1	1	9	1

The sample size did not warrant the calculation of percentages and means. The concept of skills training prior to service at each level of leadership was strongly supported, with one respondent noting that "theory before enables you to think and prepare for events." The proposed replication of the NAPP as a delivery vehicle for preparation at each level of leadership service was also strongly supported by respondents. The sole exception disagreed and interpreted the

strategy as “indoctrination by the state to produce clones,” later modified to “if everyone agree somebody isn’t thinking,” and, “My views could alter depending on the nature of the programme.” This attitudinal shift might be interpreted as indicating the novelty of the proposals.

The proposals that “graduate status is appropriate for middle management teachers” and “postgraduate status is appropriate for senior management and principals” were supported or strongly supported by most, with one person calling for “Graduate status in Ed Admin not just subject status.” With regard to postgraduate status, one person noted that “[t]his would need to be a long term, well managed goal for ECE.” As with the neophytes’ responses, these positions taken on the relationship between graduate and postgraduate status and leadership roles appeared to refer to the functional relevance and limits of higher learning. Status appears to be an irrelevant issue. Further research needs to test support for the proposition that “relevant” graduate/postgraduate/doctoral studies are an “appropriate part” of preparing for specific leadership designations.

The proposal that “doctoral status is appropriate for principals and system leaders” was supported or strongly supported by nine respondents, while three strongly disagreed. As with the neophytes’ responses, the appropriateness of doctoral status appeared to be weighed in terms of its functional relevance to school leadership and as being solely research based. Since none of the respondents had personal experience of either PhD or EdD studies, and doctoral standing is becoming more common in US school and system leadership, follow up research might usefully seek to explain these attitude sets. The survey instrument also needs to set aside the issue of status and test support for the statement, “Relevant doctoral studies are an appropriate part of preparing for principalship and system leadership.”

It was proposed that “a Board of Trustees should be provided with quality training and an experienced advisor to help them select their principal.” This proposition was strongly supported with one caveat: “Depends on the skills and qualities of the BOT concerned.” Another commented that “[t]his was an oversight of *Tomorrows Schools*. There was not enough rigour in the protocols for this.” It follows that the Schools Trustees Association should be consulted regarding the reliability of this item, and any other associated issues they have with regard to the preparation and succession of leaders.

Respondents were invited to suggest any other preparatory strategies. They suggested fixed term contracts, temporary placements, cadetships, shadowing a successful leader in the desired position with reflective conversations, and a nationally provided PD strategy that supports the ECE sector’s combination of elements (i.e. 98% women, socio-cultural environment, team teachers, generally full time teaching combined with leadership role). All of these suggestions will be considered prior to the final survey.

Overall, the attitudes to leadership preparatory strategies revealed by this pilot research suggest strong support for the review of national policy. Particularly strong support was signalled for relevant skills training prior to service in middle and senior management, and in teaching and non-teaching principalship levels, and for the NAPP delivery model. The variances in attitudes towards graduate, postgraduate and doctoral studies, as preparatory methods, signalled the need to refine these survey items and further research to clarify the bases of attitudes. Of particular interest will be the relationships between access to PD and HE and the accelerated career paths of those now in advisory roles.

### Attitudes to Succession Strategies

Respondents' attitudes to nine succession strategies were measured by asking them to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each proposition, and to comment if they wished to explain their decision. Table 2 provides the propositions presented and the frequency of respondents' ratings.

Table 2: Respondents' Attitudes to Succession Strategies

Proposition	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
1. There should be a Leader Identification Programme to encourage potential leaders to become aspirant leaders	0	0	1	5	6	0
2. There should be a Leader Recruitment Programme to encourage aspirant leaders to prepare for middle management service	0	0	1	4	6	1
3. There should be an Overseas Leader Recruitment Programme to encourage applications from appropriate personnel	0	1	5	4	1	1
4. There should be an annual Role Induction and Development Conference for each level of leadership service	0	0	2	6	3	0
5. Mentoring services should be available for the first year of service at each level of leadership	0	0	0	0	11	0
6. Mentoring first time leaders at each level should be provided by experienced leaders	0	0	1	3	9	0
7. There should be Postgrad Scholarships available to enable middle and senior managers to sustain their learning about leadership	0	0	1	5	6	0
8. There should be Doctoral Scholarships available to enable institution and system leaders to sustain their learning about leadership	0	0	5	3	4	0
9. Chairs of Boards of Trustees should be offered training in Principal Succession Planning	0	0	1	3	7	0

The calculation of percentages and means was not warranted given the sample size. The proposed Leader Identification Programme was strongly supported, with one respondent neutral without explanation. Three respondents noted that “[w]ithin large schools this is fine, problematic with typical size of NZ schools,” “[b]est achieved within school context” and “[t]here is a risk of placing undue pressure on potential leaders.” Although school clusters could address small school issues, implementation is outside the scope of this project. The proposed Leader Recruitment Programme was similarly strongly supported with the sole case of neutrality unexplained. Two comments explaining support were, “But we need somehow to get less government (bureaucratic) interference in the education sector, not more,” and, “Especially Maori.” The response patterns to these two items cohered with those in the first two pilots.

There was ambivalence over the proposed Overseas Leader Recruitment Programme, though considerably less than that found in the neophytes’ sample, possibly due to the extra-school perspectives of those in advisory roles. One respondent explained his support as follows: “There needs to be a free market for talented people from where ever we can get them.” This economic libertarianism (Macpherson, 2009c) contrasted with the four values noted in the objections from neophytes: nationalism, effectiveness, careerism, and feminism. The only other comment referred to a “non-applicable” response: “ECE has a unique combination of curriculum and context; difficult to step in.” Since the recruitment of leaders overseas would include trying to attract expatriate New Zealand teachers currently offering leadership internationally, and the education system is already dependent on overseas recruitment, it suggests that this item is both discriminately well and eliciting the qualitative data needed for interpretation. The distribution and relative strength of values behind attitudes will be useful when interpreting distributions and reviewing overseas recruitment strategies.



The proposed “annual Role Induction and Development Conference for each level of leadership service” was strongly supported. The three respondents explaining their neutrality indicated that “[t]he quality of the programs would be the critical factor,” “[b]ut only if it centrally funded - the Ops Grant does not stretch anymore,” and “[n]ot sure if conference is the right approach.” Once again, since program design and delivery mode would be addressed during implementation planning, and therefore is beyond the scope of this review, it suggests that the term “Conference” in the item should be replaced by “PD opportunity” in future research.

The proposals to have mentoring services “available for the first year of service at each level of leadership” and that “mentoring first-time leaders at each level should be provided by experienced leaders” were both strongly supported. One supportive comment to the first proposal suggested, “Support is essential for new principals. This should be ongoing in the first two years.” A supportive comment regarding the second proposal noted that “[t]his would be a feature of a healthy organisation. School size is a problem here.” This suggests that the first of the two proposals should adopt the language of the second and be edited to read, “Mentoring services should be available to first-time leaders at each level of leadership.”

There was strong support for the proposal that there should be “postgraduate scholarships available to enable middle and senior managers to sustain their learning about leadership.” The sole neutral respondent clarified his position by noting that it “[d]epends on the quality of programme offered.” This highlights the issue of “quality” alongside the issues of “relevance” and “returns to education” raised by neophyte respondents. This suggests that the item might be modified to read, “There should be postgraduate scholarships available to middle and senior managers to raise the quality and relevance of their learning about leadership to benefit education.”

The next proposal was that “there should be doctoral scholarships available to enable institution and system leaders to sustain their learning about leadership.” Seven agreed and five were neutral. None disagreed, which indicates that the modified item is more acceptable than those put before the secondary principals’ and neophytes’ samples. The only two comments included, “Possibly,” and, “Haven’t thought this through as to whether this should be applicable to all.” As with the neophyte leaders and secondary principals, the key issues are effective methods of ensuring relevance to education and an appropriate balance of public and private returns from investment. Extending the changes made to the previous item, this item might be improved by being modified to read, “There should be doctoral scholarships (coursework and research) available to institution and system leaders to advance the quality and relevance of their learning about leadership to benefit education.”

The final item proposed that Chairs of Boards of Trustees should be offered training in Principals Succession Planning. It was strongly supported. The first comment explaining a non-response was that “I’m not convinced that Board chairs always have the time and energy to do this.” The second comment to explain neutrality was, “Unsure if volunteer boards want to be involved but if they were open to the idea – yes.” The third comment clarifying agreement was that it “[w]ouldn’t be necessary if all boards had to have an adviser.” These issues will be raised with the key stakeholder, the Schools Trustees Association, to advance the reliability of this item.

When invited to suggest other succession strategies, the respondents provided a mix of comments regarding

- The wider context of the National Review (e.g. “Thanks for taking notice of the need for systematic training and education in leadership,” “It is important for this research to

continue into the tertiary sector,” and, “In the USA ‘administrators’ must have an MEdAdmin degree. They need not even have been a teacher. If principals are competent they will be happy in their jobs and may well stay longer in leadership positions.”),

- The value of proposals (e.g. “Scholarships to advance educational qualifications and leadership training to prepare for appointments is an excellent idea and almost essential component to retaining high standards of leadership”),
- Implementation conditions (e.g. “On-going support in the early years is highly desirable”),
- Industrial conditions of service (e.g. “Reintroduce the country service bar to assist rural schools”), and
- The organization of the education system (e.g. “Close small schools, amalgamate schools, appoint managers to boards”).

Five additional succession strategies were suggested: opportunities to “act up” in the education system, shadowing opportunities, release to take up short-term positions where leader may be on a scholarship, incorporate succession planning into leadership education as a core skill for a leader to have (not an incidental or accidental “content area”), and offer “knowledge and understanding of strategic planning at middle management and senior management - so there is an appreciation of how their work and the work of their teams contributes to achieving strategy.”

The next version of the survey instrument will seek to accommodate these suggestions.

### **Discussion and Preliminary Conclusions**

This third pilot surveyed a sample of 12 seniors. The sample was unusual for its relative seniority, span of responsibilities and advanced qualifications. They reported that, on balance, the unpleasant challenges of leadership were outweighed by the aspects that bring satisfaction. Although

their career paths were diverse, the patterns indicated a general phenomena of accelerating “stepping stoning” across designations without role-specific training prior to appointment, including teaching principalships, to the point where role mastery may be coinciding with advancement to the next designation.

The reasons these respondents gave for offering leadership, planning retirement and considering alternatives to retirement largely matched those provided by the secondary principals and neophyte leaders. They appeared to reinforce the need for improved career path advisory services as well as for revised recruitment and retention strategies. Similarly, these respondents recalled being discouraged from becoming aspirant leaders by a lack of confidence, negative perceptions of leadership, and lacking skills and preparation. They also remembered being attracted to leadership by the challenges, peer encouragement and being given opportunities that built confidence and competence. As with the earlier respondents, they did not indicate the presence of systemic strategies intended to identify potential leaders and to encourage them to become aspirants, and to build their leadership capacities prior to and within each designation prior to principalship.

Unlike the two earlier samples, these senior respondents referred far more to HE and role-specific PD in their preparation for middle and senior management roles than to direct support from colleagues (via mentoring, modelling and networking) and to forms of experiential learning. These weightings were replicated in their references to methods that would have helped them prepare better for middle and senior management roles. Various interpretations can be checked by follow up research. One is that leaders in middle and senior management roles come to appreciate a blend of three types of prior and ongoing learning opportunities – HE and role-specific PD, direct support and experiential learning. Second is that their disproportionate access to HE and PD, in a context of accelerated progression, rendered these respondents less

susceptible to the vagaries of idiosyncratic experiential learning. Third is that HE and PD provided them with greater career path planning and switching opportunities.

The negligible preparation for teaching principalship reported replicated the data from the secondary and neophyte groups, highlighting again the serious consequences for small school communities. And again, the respondents reported a range of coping tactics to prepare and succeed in non-teaching principalships, with little evidence of a standard preparatory pathway. A point of difference with earlier pilots was the unusual extent to which those in advisory roles had accessed HE and specialist PD courses.

The general advice from this group regarding preparatory strategies can be inferred; they should be assembled along a career pathway to address needs by designation. They would encourage potential leaders to become aspirants, for example, by having them investigate team leadership roles in context. More broadly, they should offer trustworthy knowledge about leadership, preparatory PD in role-specific skills and direct support (through mentoring and networking) to supplement and mediate idiosyncratic learning about leadership “on the job.”

The degree of support for proposed preparatory strategies was measured and some items were adjusted. Prior skills training at each level of leadership is strongly supported. Using the NAPP model to prepare aspirants for middle and senior management and for teaching and non-teaching principalships is strongly supported. Future research should measure support for “relevant” graduate/postgraduate/doctoral (coursework and research) studies as an “appropriate part” of preparing for specific leadership designations. Training and supporting Boards of Trustees selecting principals is strongly supported. Four new preparatory strategies were suggested: fixed term contracts, temporary placements, cadetships, and shadowing.

The degree of support for succession strategies was measured, some items were modified and some new items suggested. The respondents endorsed the proposed Leader Identification Programme and Leader Recruitment Programme. There was some neutrality but no disagreement with the proposed Overseas Leader Recruitment Programme, adding pragmatism and economic libertarianism to the four values noted in the objections from EHSAS respondents: nationalism, effectiveness, careerism, and feminism. The survey item involved appears to discriminate well enough to help inform a review of overseas recruitment strategies.

The concept of an “annual Role Induction and PD opportunity for each level of leadership” was well supported. There is very strong support for the two proposals regarding mentoring: that it should be available for first-time leaders at each designation, and that it should be provided by experienced leaders, adding weight to the idea highlighted by the neophyte data - that a new cluster or regional delivery system is needed to embed mentoring as a norm of educational leadership. The few residual ambiguities found in support for the idea of postgraduate and doctoral scholarships to sustain learning about leadership in specific designations were used to further modify the items. The final proposal, to offer Chairs of Boards of Trustees training in Principals Succession Planning, was strongly supported, pending consultations with the Schools Trustees Association. Five new succession strategies were suggested: opportunities to ‘act up,’ shadowing, release to take up short-term positions, incorporate succession planning into leadership education as a core leadership skill, and PD in strategic planning for middle management and senior management.

Overall, as with the analysis of the secondary and neophyte responses, the primary impression gained is that the respondents were encountering proposals about preparation and succession strategies for the first time, and moreover, enjoyed making a contribution. Leadership

preparation and succession appears to be a relatively underdeveloped yet very timely policy issue. The second overall impression is that most of these modified strategies enjoyed stronger support than with earlier cohorts, due to the modifications after each pilot. The third impression is that this cohort of seniors, primarily in senior leadership and advisory roles, have reflected more on the profession and dilemmas of educational leadership than the two earlier samples. This implies that, in addition to surveying leaders in a range of designations in New Zealand schools, the survey should be offered to all members of a national professional association.

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