



# Values in action: observations of effective principals at work

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this research is to report on the values practised by five effective secondary principals and to seek to identify common values that underpin their work practices.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Principals were observed, each for two days, at work in their schools. From the observations of each principal activities were recorded and the principals' behaviours therein were subjected to analysis. Values manifest in the principals' behaviours were confirmed through an exhaustive process of triangulation – comparison with the espoused values that emerged through completion of both the Senge and Rokeach Scales and through private interviews.

**Findings** – The values identified have been placed in three categories – those relating to Interpersonal Relationships, Operational Style, and Personal Qualities/Attributes. An unexpected outcome was the identification of principals' "interruptibility" – the willingness to be interrupted because of the value placed on quality interpersonal relationships, to enable principals to attend to others' concerns, and to allow the person interrupting to feel valued in terms of his/her concern taking priority over whatever else the principal was doing.

**Practical implications** – That element of "efficiency" advocated in much of the time management literature – "Thou shalt not be interrupted" – is apparently ignored by effective principals. Principals apparently accept this as part and parcel of their work in schools.

**Originality/value** – The study reflects some of the limitations of qualitative investigations – "sample short but data heavy". Generalisations may be difficult to extract. Because of the severe triangulation process much data were discarded and thus other findings may have been masked.

**Keywords** Principals, Behaviour, Schools, Australia

**Paper type** Research paper

Glenford is a comprehensive high school not far from the city centre. It is situated in a middle class suburb with mainly students of Anglo-Saxon origin. The school achieves good academic results. Many of the staff have been at the school for more than twenty years and have grown to accept the easy-going nature of the school and its community. The principal and key executive have embarked on a determined process to move the school into a more dynamic, outcomes-hungry mindset. The striving for quality at every endeavour is evident in the Management Plan. The school entry foyer is alive with student artwork and colourful banners. Recognition of the school's traditions and heritage are evident in Honour Boards and in glass show cabinets.

Hitherto the school has seldom experienced vandalism and graffiti but recently a small group of students caused malicious damage overnight to the school's toilet block (which had previously never needed to be locked) and to the local primary school.



During the morning immediately after the incident, the principal called a full school assembly and calmly outlined the damage which had been caused to the school and its local feeder primary school. The address to the school was flavoured with disappointment in that, if it were caused by students from the school, this incident would cause greater disappointment to the majority of staff, students and parents who had higher expectations for students and for the school. The principal was honest and open in the delivery of facts and was non judgemental and called for the students to rally to give information which would restore the good name of the school and facilitate restitution.

While a number of clues had been left by the graffiti tags several students came forward with information. After an intensive period of investigation the offending students were identified and interviewed one-by-one by the principal. Students were offered the opportunity to have a support person present. The interviews were calm and considered. At all times the principal gave the student the opportunity to put his side of the story. Each student confessed to his involvement in the incident. The principal rang each student's parents and each interaction reflected the principal's desire to resolve the situation and not to focus on blame and the negative aspects of the student's behaviour. A meeting with offending students and their parents was scheduled for the next day.

The meeting occurred with four students, seven parents, the principal, and school counsellor present.

The parents were absolutely devastated by the unprecedented behaviour of their children. Three of the four students were sorry for their actions. A great deal of discussion occurred during the meeting and many intimate family details were aired.

The principal immediately established a framework of openness, honesty and concern for the welfare of the students involved. There was no compromise for the disappointment felt by the principal as she had higher expectations for the behaviour of students from the school.

The meeting procedure was such that each student and parent had the opportunity to discuss the situation and air any grievances/concerns. The principal maintained an aura of approachability, competence and concern for the long-term welfare of the students. Parents seemed to appreciate the principal's attempt to move from blame to establish underlying student concerns which generated the behaviour and then to restitution.

The meeting lasted nearly three hours. All participants seemed to value the opportunity to talk at length to resolve the situation. Morning tea was quietly provided during the meeting and by the end of the meeting, parents and students had agreed to a series of options to effect restitution, some of which would be quite difficult. The restitution involved a public apology to the other students for bringing discredit to their school and repair to the damage to the high school and the primary school. This would occur in the students' own time and it was agreed that parents would supervise the repair after school hours and at weekends.

The resolution of this situation did not come without grief and anxiety, however, at all times the principal conducted the meeting within a framework of care and concern and with the desire for excellent parent-school relations. The principal exhibited behaviours which identified values of Competence, Decisiveness, Effectiveness, Honesty and Openness, Ethical Practice, Integrity and Calmness.

**Conceptual framework**

The preceding critical occurrence at Glenford High School is but one of many events recorded during the observation of a sample of secondary principals in public high schools in New South Wales, Australia. The identification, description and analysis of such activities were designed to address the major purpose of the research project described herein:

*Are there values held in common by effective secondary school principals that underpin their work practices?*

The importance and place of values as motivating factors in behaviour is well documented. However, there is limited research which links values to the theories of educational administration and organisation. Begley and Leithwood (1989) argue that the values domain is a critical component of educational administration and, despite the difficulties of identifying the values which elicit various behaviours, values should not be overlooked when trying to understand administrators' behaviours in the work place.

Although values can be defined, identified and articulated, there is very limited international research as to the influence of values on decision-making and other work practices. A study by Moorhead and Nediger (1991) (built on the extensive research of Begley and Leithwood (1989)) does explore the values which influence the daily work activities of four American principals. The study used both qualitative, ethnographic methods and quantitative, survey procedures. Results of the research showed that the four principals, deemed to be effective prior to selection for the research, undertook quite different activities. The differing way that each principal undertook his/her activities could be accounted for by the "principal's differing principles, non-moral values, and educational beliefs" (Moorhead and Nediger, 1991, p. 12,15). The authors concluded that the principal's value set with the school community was a factor in the perception of that principal's effectiveness.

They contended that the "impact of principles and non moral values on determining a principal's priorities and activities carries a clear implication in regard to developing effective school leadership". They concluded that each of the principals in the study administered his/her school according to his/her personal values and these differed from each other. There was congruence between each principal's values and those of the community and school system and it was this congruence that influenced their success as effective principals.

This present investigation differs from the Moorhead and Nediger (1991) study in that five principals, deemed to be effective leaders of secondary schools, were observed, surveyed and interviewed. Rather than identify the "fit" between the principal's values and those of the school community, this present study has identified, through a rigorous data sifting process, a set of values which are consistent for each of the principals. This congruent set of values has been identified as the values underpinning their work practices.

Concepts critical to the present study – values and effectiveness – are considered in the following sections.

*Values and values in action*

Much of the research surrounding school leadership has been driven from a social-science, objective facts, cause-and-effect paradigm. While this has generated greater insights into the nature, style and forms of leadership, it has omitted to consider that principals operate in a value-laden organisation, and are often faced with situations which challenge their value systems to determine one course of action over another. For a long time, according to Beck and Murphy (1994), values have been largely overlooked and ignored in training programs. Nevertheless, educational researchers have begun to acknowledge that educational leadership (including school principalship) can be affected by non-linear cause-and-effect factors. Hodgkinson (1991, p. 62), for example, asserts that “education connects with the whole range of human values and that administrators must be aware of the deep roots of purpose that underlie their schools”. Greenfield (1991, p.16) extends this line of thinking to conclude that leadership is a moral art and the “leader’s conduct must be deliberately moral”. Research by Krug (1993) supports the belief that principals’ thinking patterns influence their effectiveness as leaders. While all principals are engaged in the task of leading schools, they do not think about or perceive the activities in the same way. It seems that more effective principals utilise various activities as opportunities for instructional leadership and for attainment of the school’s vision, purpose and goals. These thinking patterns may well be related to the individual’s value system as values are guides and determinants of social behaviour and of social attitudes and ideologies (Rokeach, 1973).

The word “value” comes from the French verb *valoir*, meaning “to be worth”. Gradually it evolved an association with valour and worthiness (Senge *et al.*, 1994). However, lacking a universal definition, the term “values” has been interpreted in different ways. The definitions range from something that “we consider good such as love, kindness, honesty, simplicity” (Henry, 1963, p. 43) to descriptions of values as motivators of behaviour such as the definition by Rogers (1969, p. 241): “valuing is the tendency of a person to show preference.” Coughlan (1969, p. 170), in a summary of definitions, states that “values have been variously viewed as preferences, criteria, objects and possessions, personality and status characteristics, and states of mind that are absolutes, inherent in objects, present in man and/or identical with his behaviour”. For the purposes of this study, valuing is the tendency of a school principal to show preference. Values are acted on repeatedly and become life patterns. They are the guides and determinants of social behaviour, social attitudes and ideologies (Rokeach, 1973). The stronger the value, the more it influences one’s life. Values are inherent in people and, in a collective sense, in the society as culture. Existing in individuals, values flow into and help to shape the culture. Existing in culture they condition without dictating the values developed by individuals in those cultures. Values tend to permeate and influence all aspects of life.

As the study of values has evolved through the social sciences there appear ostensibly two ideologies from which to review the concept of values. The viewpoint which abounded in the 1950s and 1960s through the writings of researchers such as Morris (1956), Smith (1969), Williams (1968), Maslow (1959) and Allport *et al.* (1960) focused on the values that “people are said to have.” This viewpoint has more recently been the framework utilized by Senge *et al.* (1994) and Schein (1992) in their studies of the values, beliefs and assumptions held by organisational leaders and how these

values, beliefs and assumptions intimately drive and shape the visions and culture of the organisations.

Writers from the alternative ideology which focuses on “the values that objects are said to have” include Handy (1970), Katz and Shortland (1959) and Campbell (1963).

Rokeach (1973), however, endeavoured to differentiate between valuing something because of a deep seated motivational or guiding behaviour held by a person or because of seeing something as “having value” or “use”. Rokeach (1973, p. 5), then using the school of thought which focuses on the values that “people are said to have”, offered an understanding of how human values are based on five assumptions, and how each value or enduring belief generates “preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance”. Each position along the continuum for each value will collectively form the person’s value system. The five assumptions on which Rokeach based his understanding of human values were:

- (1) each person possesses a relatively small number of values;
- (2) all people possess the same number of values, but to different degrees;
- (3) values are organised into value systems;
- (4) values are derived from culture, society and its institutions; and
- (5) human values are part of all phenomena and are worth investigating and understanding.

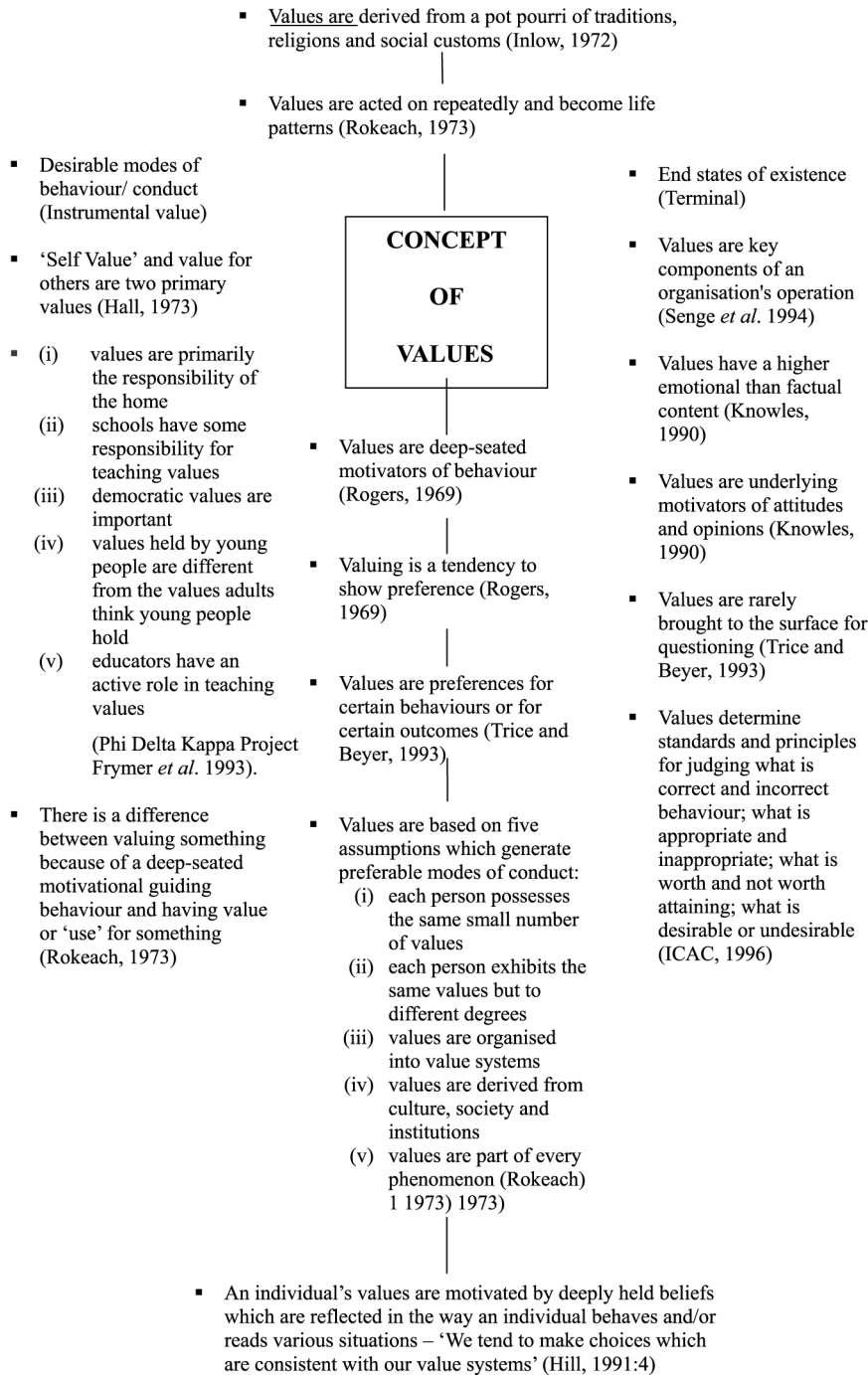
For Rokeach, values are the unifying factor which underpin the social sciences and the study of human behaviour. The explanatory definition of values offered by Trice and Beyer (1993, p. 34) as expressions of “references for certain behaviours or for certain outcomes” inevitably leads one to ask if someone is holding a value, how will this be expressed? How will the value or values be evident?

Thus, by way of summary, it may be stated that there is no one universal definition of values. The literature displays a variety of definitions and descriptors, many of which are closely aligned. In an attempt to collate these various definitions and descriptors and to build a more cohesive understanding of the meaning of values, several definitions have been identified and drawn together. These definitions are represented in Figure 1 and serve as a summation of the concept of values.

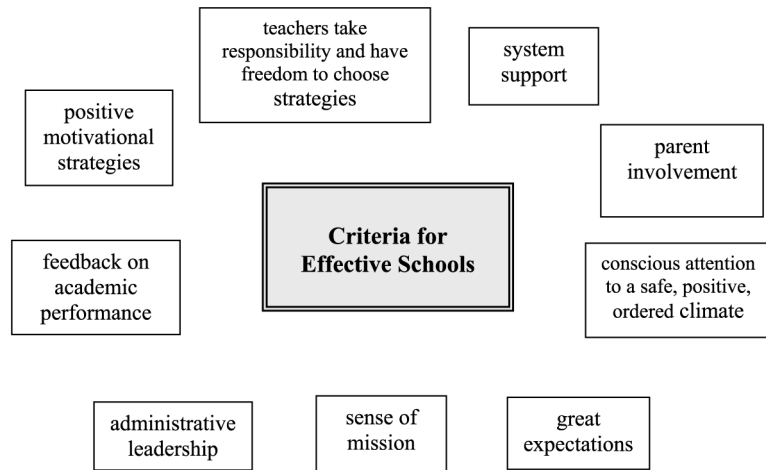
### *Effectiveness*

While schools operate across a range of contextual fields with very different socio-economic, geographical and community factors affecting organisation and structure, researchers have been able to distil, from the seemingly heterogeneous mass, a number of key factors which work towards school effectiveness. Mulford (1989), drawing on a range of research, identified a number of criteria for effective schools. These ten factors are diagrammatically represented in Figure 2 and give evidence of the complexity of the concept of effectiveness.

Although stated more than 25 years ago, it is likely that few would disagree with Edmonds who stated that effective schools have strong administrative leadership “without which the disparate elements of good schooling can neither be brought together nor kept together” (Edmonds, 1979, p. 32). One such measure of school effectiveness mentioned earlier by Dyer (1972) involved constructing a regression equation which predicts aggregate student achievement and locating schools that fall



**Figure 1.** Coming to a shared understanding of the concept of values



**Figure 2.**  
Criteria for effective schools

**Source:** Mulford (1989)

above the predicted value (effective schools) and those that fall below the predicted value (ineffective schools). Dyer identified characteristics common to the effective schools:

- a school climate conducive to learning;
- a whole school emphasis on basic skills instruction;
- an explanation by all staff that all students can learn; and
- clear instructional objectives for monitoring and assessing student achievement.

The research by Bossart *et al.* (1982) which endeavoured to confirm that effective principalship led to successful schools, identified four areas of principal leadership which have great influence on the functioning of the schools. These are:

- (1) goals and production emphasis;
- (2) power and decision making;
- (3) organisation co-ordination; and
- (4) human relations.

The findings indicate that “principal leadership which is strong in these areas produces a great impact on the functioning of a school” (Bossart *et al.* 1982, p. 11). What then, constitutes effective principalship?

Principalship has changed. The early trait approach identified attributes which were required to be a successful leader. This, and other such prescriptive and idealistic beliefs about leadership have been largely superseded as the importance of human and contextual factors, and a more positivist approach have become recognised.

O’Dempsey (1976a, 1976b) and Willis (1980), among the earliest of several who have observed Australian principals, identified the principal’s role to be complex, ambiguous with long days punctuated with numerous interruptions, numerous short-term interpersonal contacts (not always at their instigation), and many issues at

various stages of resolution being managed concurrently. More recently, Beare and Slaughter (1993), Dinham *et al.* (1995) and Duignan (1996) have identified the principal's roles as that of a change agent, financial planner, marketer, and entrepreneur. A more intensive analysis of the role of the principal in NSW secondary schools conducted by Dinham *et al.* (1995, p.41) identified, in a school perceived by students, parents and teachers as a "good" school, a number of key roles performed by the principal. The principal, despite the large size of the school, "appeared to deal effectively with the variety, fragmentation and brevity of contacts with others which have been found to typify the principal's actual role". In summary, the principal:

- had a strong influence in establishing the general tone of the school, particularly in the administration block which was welcoming with exhibits of student accomplishments;
- was "hands on" at the centre of what was happening within and concerning the school;
- exhibited a positive attitude and an enthusiasm for the school;
- overtly displayed attention to detail and openness to outside scrutiny;
- fostered and encouraged staff to publicise school achievements in the local media;
- emphasised and encouraged excellence with a particular emphasis on academic achievement as being critical to the school's success;
- placed a priority on symbolic aspects of school culture including an emphasis on school uniform and blazers for captains and prefects at school functions;
- maintained a high level of visibility and contact with school captains, students who were misbehaving, and groups of students at year assemblies;
- maintained access to staff and parents through a range of open, two-way communication systems including telephone, newsletters, parent/teacher nights, P & C meetings and, an open door policy;
- structured and fostered the school executive as a forward thinking cohesive unit;
- encouraged innovation and allowed staff to pursue special projects; and
- maintained the aesthetics of the school resulting in an overt sense of order, cleanliness, pride and purpose.

Thus, each of the factors identified in the Dinham *et al.* (1995) study as instrumental in creating good or effective schools relies on the principal's ability and skills to "read the situation" and move to various courses of action and involvement appropriate for that set of circumstances. A number of writers including Blake and Mouton (1985), McGaw *et al.* (1992) and Dinham *et al.* (1995) advocate this contingency approach wherein the most appropriate leadership style or position is taken in view of the circumstances and there is no simple recipe for success.

As noted by McGaw *et al.* (1992, p. 19), to believe there is "one simple recipe for effectiveness is to vary the contextual realities of schools over which parents and professionals alike have little control". Indeed, the related literature suggests that effective principals have an eclectic mode of operation and draw on a repertoire of styles and strategies of leadership including hierarchical, transformational, cultural



and participative depending on the context, their own skills and their assessment of the situation at the time. Experience must also be a factor which allows the effective principal to select one style of leadership or form of action over another. In the absence of a discrete measure to identify effective principalship, for the purpose of this study the indicators signaling effective principalship identified by Dinham *et al.* (1995) will be utilised.

### Methodology

The reader is reminded that the purpose of this study was to address the question – are there values held in common by effective secondary school principals that underpin their work practices? Accordingly, the methodology devised to investigate this challenge consisted of several stages:

- the selection of a sample of suitable, i.e. effective, principals;
- the development of observational procedures to identify and record principals' "values-in action"; and
- the validation of the values observed through the triangulation of data-gathering procedures.

#### *Selection of participating principals*

For the purposes of this study, principals who were deemed to be effective in their schools were selected to participate. Every attempt was made to ensure the work practices of the selected principals aligned with what the literature indicates as best practice. The selected principals were identified as effective by their supervisors and, anecdotally, by their school communities.

In particular, the criteria attributed to Dinham *et al.* (1995) above, were used as the basis for the selection of participating principals.

On review, each of the above criteria was inherent in the work practices of the principals selected to participate in this study. In the NSW Department of Education and Training line supervision of principals is through the District Superintendent to the Director-General. Each District Superintendent confirmed that the principal from his/her district selected to participate in the study, satisfied all or most of the Dinham criteria. The District Superintendents also considered further measures of effectiveness including each school's Annual Report, sustained improvement in Higher School Certificate and School Certificate results, parent and community perception of the principal as being an effective principal, effective leadership and management practices.

Simple observation reveals that different leaders work in different ways (Smith and Piele, 1997). No one preferred leadership style or leadership behaviour is favoured over another. But, irrespective of leadership style, principals in this study were chosen through their "alignment" with the characteristics of effective principalship as outlined by Dinham *et al.* (1995). Leaders may, "with good results, use any of a variety of styles and strategies of leadership, including hierarchical, transformational and participative, depending on their reading of themselves, their followers, and the organizational context" (Smith and Piele, 1997, p. 3).

In the selection of principals no consideration was given to gender, size or location of school, nor length of principalship. Respondents in this study were male and female

principals from a mixture of city and rural schools. All are secondary school principals in the NSW Department of Education and Training and each school catered for over 700 students. For logistical reasons each of the principals selected was from a school within one geographical area in which there were 40 city and rural secondary schools from which to make a choice.

### *Observation of principals*

Observation is the cornerstone of this study.

Observation as a means of identifying and recording the work activities of principals may, arguably, be attributed to O'Dempsey (1976a, 1976b) who "shadowed" three high school principals in Queensland, Australia. O'Dempsey was inspired by the earlier work of Mintzberg (1973) in which five executives were observed, one of whom was a school superintendent. The nature of these observations was essentially non-participative and the data gathered were in accord with a pre-planned or structured protocol.

"Mintzberg-type" research has subsequently been directed at principals in several Australian studies (e.g. Willis, 1980; Thomas and Phillipps, 1982; Clarke, 1985; Baudinette, 1986; Werder, 1986; Maiden, 1987; Whan, 1988; Phillipps, 1991; Thornton, 1997; Darmody, 2001; and MacLaurin, 2004) and the current investigation continues this tradition. Whereas the earlier studies were structured so as to collect "basic data" (Thomas, 1994) (e.g. type of activity, duration of such, with whom and where the activity took place, whether or not it was planned) later investigations have been extended in scope, collecting not only "basic" but also "overlay data" (Thomas, 1994) such as evidence of behaviour under stress and decision-making practices. The current study is more closely aligned with the latter observations in which emphasis has not been placed on "basic" information but rather on the nature of the principals' observed behaviours, namely, the values that appear to be reflected therein.

Like all approaches to data-gathering, structured observation has both strengths and weaknesses. Among the former are the power to record activities and behaviours as they occur and in situ, to note relevant verbal and non-verbal communications, and to record activities whose durations are too brief to be noted by a principal in his/her diary.

A frequent criticism is that the presence of an observer contaminates data by preventing participating principals from undertaking their normal work activities (or their work activities normally?). Thomas (1994, p. 7) argues that this is not the case and, indeed, the observer is quickly forgotten as the principal is "swept away" by the demands of the day's activities. The "labeling" of a particular activity may be inadequate – or even inaccurate – and the nature of the process requires one observer to make all notations. As such, it is virtually impossible to ensure, through comparison of records, "a suitably high level of inter-observer reliability".

Strict ethical protocols were agreed upon prior to the commencement of each observation. Among such were the need for principal and observer to minimise their interactions throughout the working day and, where deemed necessary by the principal, the requirement that the observer retire from the situation until a particular activity was completed. Less than one percent of total observational time was "lost" as a result of the observer's withdrawals.

The observation of each principal extended over two consecutive days each commencing at 8.00 a.m. and concluding at approximately 5.00 p.m. Examples of observed values are displayed above in the case study of Glenford High School.

### *Triangulation of procedures*

Within the literature on social science, there is a distinct tradition to collect convergent data through the use of multiple data collection methods (Jick, 1979). This convergent validation of data has been called “triangulation”. The triangulation metaphor may be compared with the surveyor’s strategy of using multiple reference points to more accurately confirm an object’s position. Similarly, organisational researchers can improve the accuracy of their judgements through the collection of different kinds of data for the same phenomenon (Jick, 1979).

In the social sciences, the use of triangulation can be traced to Campbell and Friske (1959) who argued that the use of more than one method should be used to confirm that the variance reflected is that of the phenomenon being tested and not that of the method being utilised. This type represents the most popular use of triangulation as it facilitates cross validation “when two or more distinct methods are found to be congruent and to yield comparable data” (Jick, 1979, p. 602). Triangulation thus allows researchers “to be more confident in the articulation of their results” (Jick, 1979, p. 608) as it strives to establish agreement or congruency among data sets.

Such is the situation in the current study

At the outset it was recognised that the observation of principals at work would provide an almost unique opportunity to identify values-in-action. It was also recognised that therein lay the possibility of the observer’s misinterpreting a value-laden behaviour. For example, a principal’s action that was perceived as reflecting courtesy may, in fact, have been primarily manifesting restraint/self-discipline. Thus, steps were taken to validate or strengthen the “legitimacy” of each value-in-action observed by a process of triangulation. Two additional approaches were adopted: at the conclusion of the second day’s observation each principal completed two questionnaires to identify his/her espoused values – Senge *et al.*’s (1994) Survey for Personal and Work Values and Rokeach’s (1967) Survey for Terminal and Instrumental Values – and participated in a “debriefing” interview with the observer in order to establish agreement that observations recorded did in fact reflect the principal’s value-driven behaviour.

The application of the questionnaires at the conclusion of the two consecutive days of observation was designed to minimise contamination of the data which could occur if discussion of values from the literature preceded the observation. If principals had been aware of the sets of values found in the literature prior to the observational study, such information may have interfered with their normal work practices. They may have been more concerned with what the values research shows they “should” be exhibiting rather than going about their “normal” work practices. Thus, the espoused values of each principal were documented.

Senge, in his articulation of organisations as learning communities, stated that personal values as well as organisational values are key components of an organisation’s operation. Senge and Roberts (Senge *et al.*, 1994) adapted an exercise developed and designed by Robert Niles (Vice President of Human Resources at the Helen Curtis Corporation) which requires participants to identify (by elimination) the

values important to them in their work practices. Using a list of 80 values, the Senge *et al.* (1994) elimination process assists organisational leaders to determine the values which are most important to them in their personal and work life.

Rokeach (1967, 1973), in a series of studies of human values in American life, had concluded that values guide human action in daily situations, and in the long term, give expression to human needs. He also noted that values have a strong motivational component, and instrumental values are motivating because the idealist modes of behaviour they are concerned with are perceived to be instrumental to the attainment of desired end-goals. Terminal values are motivating because they represent the super-goals beyond immediate, biologically urgent goals. Using the concept of instrumental and terminal values, Rokeach listed 18 terminal and 18 instrumental values. Among the terminal values were Ambitious, Broadminded, Capable, Cheerful, Clean, Courageous, Forgiving, Helpful, Honest, Imaginative, Independent, Intellectual, Logical, Loving, Obedient, Polite, Responsible and Self-controlled. The instrumental values included A comfortable life, An exciting life, A sense of accomplishment, A world at peace, A world of beauty, Equality, Family security, Freedom, Inner harmony, Mature love, National security, Pleasure, Salvation, Self-respect, Social recognition, True friendship and Wisdom. From this listing, Rokeach developed a values survey form which has been used extensively in subsequent studies. It was used in the present study to assist participants to articulate and rank the espoused values which underpin their daily work practices.

After completing the surveys, each principal was interviewed in a debriefing session.

The interview had an unstructured schedule, allowing the interviewer flexibility to modify questions to be asked, change the sequence of questions, and to probe for more information from the respondents if necessary. This unstructured interview technique had been employed previously in a study by Licata (1985, p. 190) relating to informal interactions of principals with their peers. The technique “employs specific questions but allows the interviewer to follow-up questions to determine the meaning of the respondents’ answers”. In this current study, questions were designed to confirm that noted values were, indeed, from the principal’s point of view, the value or values underpinning that behaviour or activity. Consequently, questions were unstructured, designed to clarify for the researcher behaviours noted during the observation.

It was anticipated that, having completed the two values surveys, and having become familiar with the values terminologies from the surveys, principals would be able to confirm the value or values underpinning each noted work activity or interaction.

Interviews averaged 60 minutes and took place in each principal’s office. All interviews were conducted by the observer/senior author.

Thus, at the completion of data-gathering, information on values had been secured from the five principals by several methods: through observations of them at work, from their responses to two survey instruments, and from interviews/debriefings.

### Analysis of data

To begin the process of analysing the wealth of data generated by each principal an organisational framework was developed. Organisation of data was undertaken in two stages.

First, continuing the process of triangulation, the search for congruent data was conducted across the observed, agreed and espoused values for each principal and then, similarly, across the five principals. In so doing a great deal of data was discarded. Nevertheless, the final data accepted were only those that had survived the rigour of the triangulation process. The following figures represent these procedures.

The first alignment produced a set of congruent values for each principal – values observed and recorded on the observation matrix and agreed (confirmed) during the debriefing interview. This is shown in Figure 3.

The shaded area of intersection (AI) between the values observed in action and the confirmation of those values represents the first set of triangulated data for each principal. This is identified as AI, the observed and agreed (confirmed) values in action for each principal.

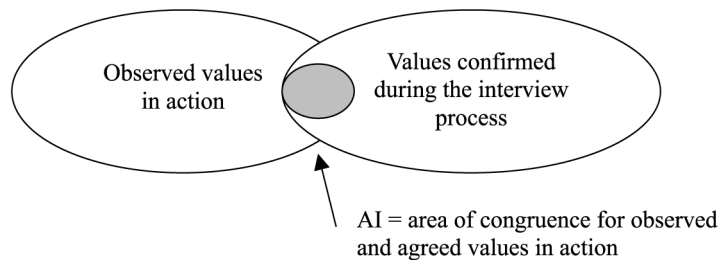
A second alignment of data for each principal was achieved through matching the observed and agreed values data set (A1) with the important work values identified in the Senge *et al.* (1994) survey and with both the terminal and instrumental values from the Rokeach (1967) survey. The outcome of this process is represented in the shaded area of intersection (A2) in Figure 4.

Thus, represented by A2 in Figure 4 are those observed, agreed values congruent with the espoused values for each principal across the three methodological approaches.

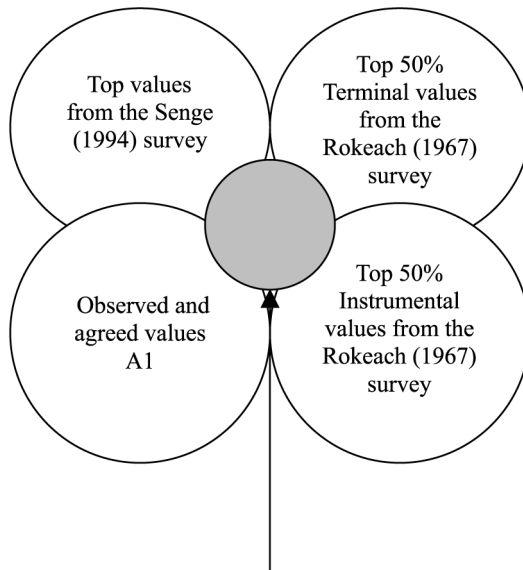
A final alignment of data was achieved for the five principals collectively through matching all A2s – their areas of congruence of observed, agreed and espoused values.

The second stage of the framework for organising data was achieved by locating each value in one of three domains – those relating to Interpersonal Relationships, those which reflect Operational Style, and those which may be described as Personal Qualities or Attributes. These three domains, generated essentially from the literature relating to effective principals, may be challenged on the grounds of subjectivity. Nevertheless, in view of the meanings attributed to the values terms by each participant and by the researchers, some confidence is felt in such a “clustering” process. These three categories were utilised such that the most frequently observed and agreed values were listed under the relevant category i.e. whether a value related to Interpersonal Relationships, Operational Style or Personal Qualities or Attributes). The same listing process was then used to classify the espoused values of principals as identified by the two survey instruments.

The following tables reflect the process of data analysis and triangulation of methods employed to identify with confidence the values manifest by the five



**Figure 3.**  
First triangulation process  
to identify agreed values  
in action



A2 = Area of congruence of observed, agreed and espoused values

**Figure 4.** Second triangulation process to identify congruent values across the three methodological approaches for each principal

principals at work. The tables reflect the summation of individual analyses or profiles for each principal (not displayed herein) in which were sought an alignment or matching of the values:

- observed and agreed by interviews;
- espoused via the Senge *et al.* (1994) survey; and
- espoused via the Rokeach (1967) survey.

In seeking congruence among the three data sets the researchers were often confronted by a value attributed to but one principal – particularly as revealed from both survey instruments which, collectively, identify a plethora of possible values. Accordingly, in most cases, identification with a particular value by at least three principals was demanded as a measure of congruence. In the following tables the values displaying fewer than three asterisks are displayed for information only. These were not taken forward to the “final” data set of values which consistently underpinned the work practices of effective principals. Whereas this procedure provided added confidence in the conclusions ultimately reached, it also left a lingering concern about the extent and nature of the data discarded throughout this exhaustive process of triangulation.

In Table I the most frequently observed values-in-action, “validated” by interview/debriefing, are reported for all five principals. Values are listed according to their proximity to Interpersonal Relationships (e.g. Helpful), Operational Style (eg. Efficient) or Personal Qualities/Attributes (e.g. Honest). The number of principals displaying each value is indicated by asterisks.

In similar process, Tables II and III record the espoused values of the five principals revealed by the Senge and Rokeach surveys.

Values related to interpersonal relationships	Values related to operational style	Values related to personal qualities/attributes
Helpful (caring for the well being of others) *****	Knowledgeable *****	Honest (sincere) *****
Quality relations (compassionate, pleasant, collegial, willing to listen, co-operative, approachable, understanding working with others) *****	Efficient (logical, hardworking industrious) *****	Open *****
Polite **	Competent *****	Ethical practice ***
Friendly/personable **	Capable *****	Calm/self controlled *
	Quality standards and outcomes (high expectations, excellence) ***	
	Decisive **	
	Order (attention to detail) **	
	Effective *	
	Fast paced **	
	Ambitious (strong, assertive) *	
	Leadership *	
	Professional *	

**Table I.**  
Most frequently observed and agreed values in action displayed by the five principals

**Note:** Asterisks indicate the number of principals displaying that value

Values related to interpersonal relationships	Values related to operational style	Values related to personal qualities/attributes
Quality relations *****	Effectiveness *****	Open/honest *****
Work with others *****	Leadership ***	Self respect ***
Co-operation *****	Personal development (living up to the fullest of potential) ***	Integrity **
Helping (society, other people) *****	Achievement ***	Ethical practice *
Influencing others ***	Excellence ***	Reputation *
Affection (love, caring) *	Quality (of what I take part in) ***	Truth *
Community *	Decisiveness **	Loyalty *
Supervising others *	Knowledge/intellectual *****	
	Challenging problems **	
	Efficiency *	
	Responsibility and Accountability **	
	Pleasure *	
	Competence *	
	Wisdom *	

**Table II.**  
Espoused values of participating principals as identified through application of the Senge *et al.* (1994) survey

**Note:** Asterisks indicate the number of principals displaying that value

By extension of the triangulation process all values displayed in Tables I-III were aligned in order to identify those with the greatest degree of congruence. The values that “survived” this process, i.e. those reflecting the highest overall and sustained support from the principals’ observed, agreed and espoused data, were grouped again according to Interpersonal Relationships (Table IV), Operational Style (Table V) and Personal Qualities/Attributes (Table VI).

Values related to interpersonal relationships	Values related to operational style	Values related to personal qualities/attributes
Terminal values	Instrumental values	Terminal values
Helpful (working for the welfare of others) ****	A sense of accomplishment (lasting contributions) ****	Honest (sincere, truthful) *****
Polite (courteous well-mannered) ****	Wisdom (a mature understanding of life) ****	Courageous (standing up for beliefs) *****
Forgiving (willing to pardon others) *	An exciting life (a stimulating active life) *	Self respect (self-esteem) ****
True friendship (close companion-ship) ***	Capable (competent, effective) *****	Equality (brotherhood) *****
Family security (taking care of loved ones) ****	Responsible (dependable reliable) ****	Inner harmony (freedom from inner conflict) ****
Mature love (sexual and spiritual intimacy) *	Logical (consistent, rational) **	Social recognition (respect, admiration) *
	Broadminded (open-minded) **	
	Intellectual	
	Intelligent	
	reflective) **	
	Clean (neat, tidy) *	
	Ambitious	
	(hardworking, aspiring) **	
	Self controlled	
	(restrained, self-disciplined) **	
	Imaginative (daring, creative) *	

**Note:** Asterisks indicate the number of principals displaying that value

**Table III.**  
Espoused terminal and instrumental values which ranked 1-9 inclusive (top 50 per cent) by participating principals using the Rokeach (1967) survey



**Table IV.**  
Congruent values relating  
to interpersonal  
relationships

Most frequently observed values in action for all participants	Top ranked espoused values identified through application of the Senge <i>et al.</i> (1994) survey	Top 50 per cent Rokeach (1967) values
Helpful (caring for the well-being of others) ***** Quality relations (compassionate, pleasant, collegial, willing to listen, co-operative, approachable, understanding, working with others) *****	Helping (society, other people) ***** Working with others ***** Quality relations (helping other people) ***** Co-operation *****	Terminal values Helpful (working for the welfare of others) ***** Polite (courteous, well-mannered) *****
		Instrumental values True friendship (close companionship) ***** Family security (taking care of loved ones) *****

**Note:** Asterisks indicate the number of principals displaying that value

Most frequently observed values in action for all participants	Top ranked espoused values identified through application of the Senge <i>et al.</i> (1994) survey	Top 50 per cent Rokeach (1967) values
	Terminal values	Instrumental values
Knowledgeable****	Knowledge/intellectual/wisdom***	Wisdom (a mature understanding of life)****
Efficient (logical, industrious, hardworking)****	Efficiency**	An exciting life (a stimulating active life)*
Capable****	Effectiveness****	A sense of accomplishment (lasting contributions)****
Effective**	Responsibility and accountability**	
Fast-paced**	Decisiveness**	
Decisive****	Excellence***	
Quality standards and outcomes (high expectations, excellence)****	Quality (of what I take part in)***	
Leadership	Personal development (living up to the fullest of potential)****	
	Leadership****	

**Note:** Asterisks indicate the number of principals displaying that value

**Table V.**  
Congruent values related to operational style

**Table VI.**  
Congruent values related  
to personal  
qualities/attributes

Most frequently observed values in action for all participants	Top ranked espoused values identified through application of the Senge <i>et al.</i> (1994) survey	Top 50 per cent Rokeach (1967) values
Honest (sincere) ***** Open ***** Ethical practice *** Self respect *****	Open/honest/truthful ***** Integrity ** Ethical practice * Self respect *****	Terminal values Honest (sincere, truthful) ***** Courageous (standing up for beliefs) ***** Instrumental values Inner harmony (freedom from inner conflict) *** Self respect (self-esteem) *****

**Note:** Asterisks indicate the number of principals displaying that value

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The tabulation of such data thus provided the basis for the conclusions reached in the following section. Values in action

### Discussion

The preceding Tables depict the values which were consistently espoused by the five principals, as identified by the Senge *et al.* (1994) and Rokeach (1967) surveys, and as aligned with the same values which were frequently observed, identified and accepted as values in action. The sets of values were located in three categories – those relating to Interpersonal Relationships, Operational Style, and Personal Qualities/Attributes.

As far as can be ascertained it seems that this study is unique – it has attempted to bridge the gap between espoused and practised values in the workplace. There are limited studies internationally which tie values, as motivators of human behaviour, to the work practices of principals or even to that of managers and business leaders.

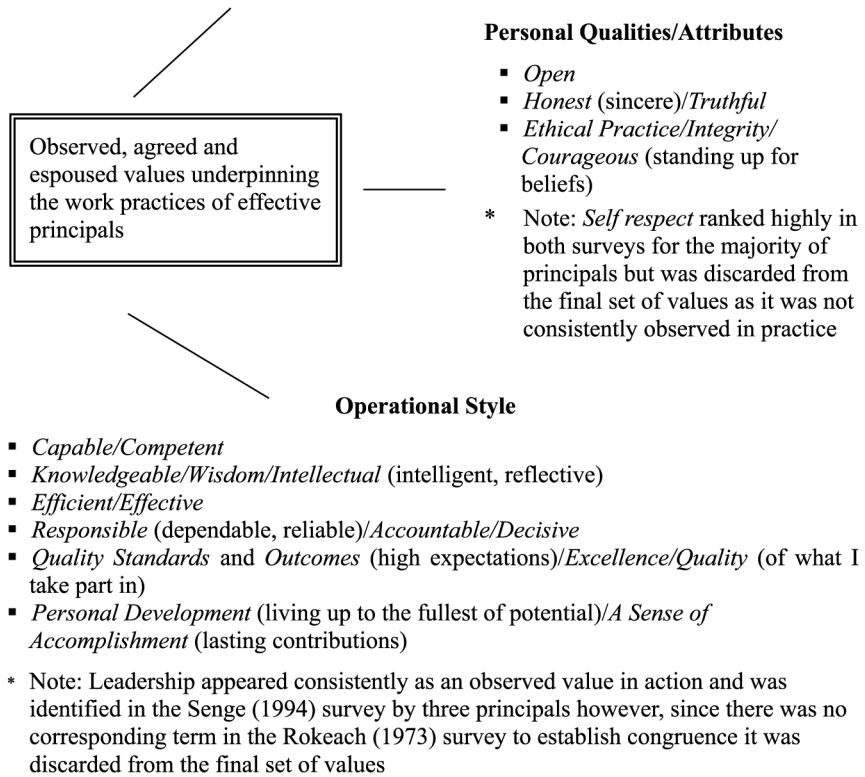
Values can be defined, identified and articulated. This research study showed that values can be identified through observation. Rigorous triangulation ensured that only those values which were congruent across the three methodologies for the majority of principals joined the final set of identified work values. This final set of observed, accepted and espoused congruent values consistently underpinning the work practices of effective principals is outlined below:

- (1) Work values relating to interpersonal relationships:
  - Quality Relations (compassionate, pleasant, collegial, willing to listen, approachable, understanding, working with others), True Friendship (close companionship), Polite (courteous, well mannered), Co-operation; and
  - Helpful (caring for the well-being of others)/Working for the welfare of others/Working with others.
- (2) Work values relating to operational style:
  - Capable/Competent;
  - Knowledgeable/Wisdom/Intellectual (intelligent, reflective);
  - Efficient/Effective;
  - Responsible (dependable, reliable)/Accountable/ Decisive;
  - Quality Standards (high expectations), Excellence/Quality (of what I take part in); and
  - Personal Development (living up to the fullest of potential)/ A Sense of Accomplishment (lasting contributions).
- (3) Work values relating to personal qualities/attributes:
  - Open;
  - Honest (sincere)/Truthful; and
  - Ethical Practice/Integrity/Courageous (standing up for beliefs).

These congruent values which survived the several triangulation processes are represented diagrammatically in Figure 5 as a pocket book summation of the values which consistently underpinned the work values of effective principals in this research study.

### Interpersonal Relationships

- *Quality Relations* (compassionate, pleasant, collegial, willing to listen, approachable, understanding, working with others)/*True Friendships* (close companionship), *Polite* (courteous, well mannered), *Co-operation*
- *Helpful* (caring for the well-being of others)/*Working for the welfare of others/Working with others*



**Figure 5.**  
Observed, agreed and espoused congruent work values of effective principals

Principals each day face situations which place them at times in moral dilemmas, that is, they must choose from competing values positions. How a principal maintains a position of ethical leadership may well be underpinned by the espoused values and values in action highlighted in this study and categorised as Personal Qualities/Attributes. Lashway (1998), in his review of ethical leadership, states that real leaders concentrate on doing the right thing, not doing things right. In terms of principals' work practices, the professional development of existing principals and the induction of new principals, more needs to be said about the importance of Ethical Practice and Integrity as cornerstones of effective principalship and effective schools.

Yet another implication for practice stems from an unintended outcome of the observational process which may have implications for the work practices of principals and for the literature pertaining to effective business management practices. This unintended outcome relates to the notion of “interruptibility”. Phillipps (1991, p. 6), in his research of principalship in Australian schools, defined the principal’s interruptions as “their willingness to be interrupted; their circumstances in which, they could permit, or refuse activities and influence their modus operandi and indirectly, their effectiveness”. In accordance with the definitions of Clarke (1985) and Phillipps (1991), interruptions are dependant on the initiation of others and not something initiated by the principal in terms of a forgotten task or action. Using this definition as a basis, the five participating principals in this research could all be deemed “eminently interruptible”.

This willingness to be interrupted is a positive aspect of principalship and can be seen as an expression of values. The valuing of quality relationships and the operational style of attending to concerns, allowed the person interrupting the principal to feel valued in terms of his/her concern taking priority over whatever else the principal was doing. This facilitated the teacher getting back to task knowing that his/her issue/concern was addressed/solved or would be addressed and or solved in the near future. Dinham *et al.* (1995) may well call this attribute “hands on leadership”, the ability to address issues on the spot through detailed knowledge of what is happening in the school as an indicator of effectiveness.

This outcome of the study may refute the time management theorists and those who would construe interruptions to work practice as having a negative impact on effectiveness. An observational study of principals and their work practices by Thomas and Ayres (1998, p. 244) concluded that, “contrary to the literature, principals did not view interruptions as hindering their tasks as school leaders”. The three high school principals in the Thomas and Ayres (1998, p. 248) study considered the interruptions as “not time that is traded, but time that is invested”. For a number of readers this outcome of the study will seem to sit in opposition to the literature on time management. Time is an increasingly vital component for leaders and managers including principals.

As the number and range of tasks increases through the restructuring of school education, principals are increasingly confronted by a multitude of urgent tasks and pressing items for action. Evident in the abundant literature surrounding time management, particularly from the business management sector, is the suggestion that “managers can exert a greater degree of control over the temporal component of their work” (Thomas and Ayres, 1998, p. 244). The literature suggests that effective time management involves control over such practices as interruptions since interruptions hinder/thwart effectiveness. Without tested research such “assumptions continue to influence the literature and cause concern to managers and, especially, school principals” (Thomas and Ayres, 1998, p. 244).

This current observational study supports the research by Phillipps (1991) in that interruptions to the principal’s work practices were many and varied. The nature of the interruptions from the interrupter’s point of view were pressing issues for urgent action. The research by Thomas and Ayres (1998), supported in the literature by Sergiovanni (1981), notes that the manner in which the principal allows for interruptions to be an integral and important aspect of principalship communicates to

members of the organisation that their concerns are important and valued and need to be attended to. This current study, whilst modest in sample size, confirms the practice of being “eminently interruptible” as a work practice of effective principals. It may well be considered that the valuing of interpersonal relationships which were highly ranked espoused values for each of the five principals and were also frequently observed values in action, may underpin this willingness and acceptance of interruption.

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