

University of Wollongong - Research Online

Thesis Collection

Title: Principal capability in special schools

Author: Peter O'Brien

Year: 2010

Repository DOI:

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following: This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author. Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material.

Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.

Research Online is the open access repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

University of Wollongong Thesis Collections

University of Wollongong Thesis Collection

University of Wollongong

Year 2010

Principal capability in special schools

Peter O'Brien
University of Wollongong

O'Brien, Peter, Principal capability in special schools, Doctor of Education thesis, Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, 2010. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/3129>

This paper is posted at Research Online.

NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Principal Capability in Special Schools

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Education

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

Peter O'Brien

(Dip. Teach., Grad. Dip. Human Movement Science, M. Ed)

Faculty of Education

2010

Certification

I, Peter Barry O'Brien, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Education, in the Department of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Peter Barry O'Brien

1 September 2010

Acknowledgements

It's been quite a trip, and there are a few to thank and acknowledge for their support along the way! I'll begin with the one who proposed the journey, who was there throughout, generating and maintaining my confidence to get to the end. Thanks Wilma for your knowledge and genuine encouragement. At the beginning too was Deslea and despite her having to leave for greener western pastures, her support and good humour contributed greatly to my perseverance in the frantic early stages. Later, the statistical expertise of Anne was invaluable as the data began to be squeezed into shape, and the academic support of Rose helped to keep me on target. Thank you all.

I thank Geoff Scott for his encouragement to pursue my study, and the contributions from my special school principal colleagues, their dedicated staff and their students' parents. Similarly, I acknowledge the professional and personal support of my local principal colleagues on the South Coast of NSW, who always lent an ear as well as an opinion on all matters of school leadership, and my own staff which sensitively appreciated my plight. To those who have provided assistance in my search for information, and in particular Brenda and Alla, thank you for your contributions which have assisted me in understanding the issues of my investigation.

The deepest thanks I offer to my family. To Brynn, Dylan and Kyle, and Dominic too of late, thanks for supporting my prolonged sidetrack with good humour, distractions aplenty, and healthy encouragement.

Finally, to my wife Ginger who has not seen her dining room table for a very long time, and has grown so accustomed to watching movies by herself that my sitting with her is regarded as a night out, I submit my humblest apologies. However, without your support, and your well-practised skills in tactical ignoring and other behaviour management strategies, the job herewith would never have been accomplished. Thank you for your continual love and support, and for being the custodian of my health and sanity, particularly over the last few years.

Abstract

Rapid changes in educational policy and practice, and widespread development in technological, communicative, legal, social, and medical fields, have dramatically impacted the global educational landscape over the last three decades. Educational research has subsequently generated a focus on educational leadership, and much investigation has been made into the nature and effects of a range of leadership styles, abilities and skills, and how they contribute to overall capability for successful school leadership. Yet whilst much of this research has been based in the mainstream educational setting, and some has examined educational leadership in the context of inclusive education, little has focussed on the leadership requirements for special schools, or Schools for Specific Purposes as they are known in the New South Wales public education system.

This study investigated the leadership skills, abilities, knowledge bases and overall capability required for successful leadership of special schools. It utilised a mixed-method model which sought the opinions of special school principals, teachers, support staff, and parents of children attending special schools. The perspectives of the special school principals in the study were compared with those of mainstream principals investigated by previous research. The study found that special school principals emphasised personal and interpersonal abilities more than the mainstream principals did, and there were several abilities which were statistically more important to special school principals than they were to mainstream principals: *having a sense of humour and keeping work in perspective, wanting to achieve the best outcome possible, and having a clear justified vision of where the school must head*. The study investigated the characteristics of special schools which might account for the different leadership requirements, and concluded that *challenging student behaviour* was considered by special school principals to be the most influential of those characteristics, as well as the most challenging aspect of being a special school principal.

In comparing the perspectives of the special school participant groups on the importance of a range of leadership abilities, the study produced a number of statistically significant results. Principals considered *having the ability to defer judgement and not to jump in too quickly to resolve a problem* as more important than the other groups did, parents

believed the ability to *develop interagency agreements to promote outcomes for students with disabilities (e.g. speech therapy, physiotherapy)* was more important than did the other groups, and support staff were of the opinion that both *being able to use Information Technology effectively to communicate and perform key work functions* and *understanding of industrial relations issues and process* were more important than the other groups believed.

This study has illustrated that there are indeed different leadership requirements between mainstream and special schools, and that there are different perspectives from the members of the special school community of what is required of a principal of a special school. In this regard, the study has provided a substantial resource for those who are already leading, or aspiring to lead, special schools, and with this in mind, the study recommends future research topics and the inclusion of a special schools leadership component in the on-going development and implementation of school leadership professional learning programs.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Chapter 1: Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 The Purpose of the Study | 1 |
| 1.2 Definition of Terms | 2 |
| 1.3 The Research Questions | 4 |
| 1.4 The Context of the Study | 4 |
| 1.5 The Nature of SSPs | 5 |
| 1.6 The Significance of the Study | 7 |
| 1.7 Overview of the Study | 7 |
| 1.7.1 Chapter Two: Literature Review | 7 |
| 1.7.2 Chapter Three: Methodology | 8 |
| 1.7.3 Chapter Four: Results | 8 |
| 1.7.4 Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion | 8 |
| 1.7.5 Appendices | 8 |
| Chapter 2: Literature Review | 10 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 10 |
| 2.2 Evolution of Professional Leadership Styles | 10 |
| 2.3 Mainstream Educational Leadership | 13 |
| 2.3.1 The Impact of Change and Reform | 13 |
| 2.3.2 The Effect of Leadership on School Outcomes | 16 |
| 2.3.3 The Case for the Transformational Style of Leadership | 17 |
| 2.3.4 The Case for the Instructional Style of Leadership | 20 |
| 2.3.5 Towards a Merger | 23 |
| 2.3.6 Summary of Mainstream Educational Leadership | 31 |
| 2.4 Special Education Leadership | 33 |
| 2.4.1 The Context | 33 |
| 2.4.2 Leadership in the Inclusive School Setting | 35 |
| 2.4.3 Leadership in the Special School Setting | 44 |
| 2.4.4 Summary of Special Education Leadership | 48 |
| 2.5 Scott's (2003) Research: Leadership Capability | 49 |
| 2.6 Summary of the Literature | 52 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 2.7 The Importance of the Study..... | 53 |
| Chapter 3: Methodology..... | 54 |
| 3.1 Basis of the Research | 54 |
| 3.2 The Research Questions..... | 55 |
| 3.3 Study Design | 56 |
| 3.4 The Survey | 57 |
| 3.4.1 The Survey – Part A | 57 |
| 3.4.2 The Survey – Part B..... | 59 |
| 3.4.3 The Survey – Part C..... | 61 |
| 3.5 Procedure..... | 61 |
| 3.6 Participants..... | 63 |
| 3.7 Response Rates | 63 |
| 3.8 Collation and Treatment of the Data..... | 64 |
| 3.9 Analysis of the Data | 65 |
| 3.9.1 Analysis of Data from Part A | 65 |
| 3.9.1.1 Comparing Mainstream Principals with SSP Principals..... | 65 |
| 3.9.1.2 Comparing Groups of SSP Participants..... | 67 |
| 3.9.1.3 Comparing All Groups..... | 67 |
| 3.9.2 Analysis of the Data from Part B..... | 68 |
| 3.9.3 Analysis of the Data from Part C..... | 68 |
| 3.10 Validity of the Study | 70 |
| Chapter 4: Results..... | 71 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 71 |
| 4.2 Results from Part A..... | 72 |
| 4.2.1 Comparing Mainstream Principals with SSP Principals | 72 |
| 4.2.1.1 Personal Abilities | 73 |
| 4.2.1.2 Interpersonal Abilities..... | 77 |
| 4.2.1.3 Intellectual Abilities..... | 82 |
| 4.2.1.4 Specific Skills and Knowledge Abilities | 85 |
| 4.2.1.5 Top 10 Abilities in Part A | 91 |
| 4.2.1.6 Relative Importance of Sets of Abilities in Part A | 92 |
| 4.2.2 Comparing Principals, Teachers, Support Staff and Parents in SSPs..... | 97 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 4.2.2.1 Personal Abilities | 97 |
| 4.2.2.2 Interpersonal Abilities..... | 99 |
| 4.2.2.3 Intellectual Abilities | 101 |
| 4.2.2.4 Specific Skills and Knowledge Abilities | 102 |
| 4.2.2.5 SSP Groups: Top 10 Abilities in Part A | 106 |
| 4.2.2.6 Relative Importance of Sets of Abilities in Part A | 108 |
| 4.3 Results from Part B | 109 |
| 4.3.1 Personal Skills | 109 |
| 4.3.2 Interpersonal Skills | 110 |
| 4.3.3 Intellectual Skills | 112 |
| 4.3.4 Specific Skills and Knowledge Skills | 114 |
| 4.3.5 Inclusive Practice Skills..... | 116 |
| 4.3.6 SSP Groups: Top 10 Skills in Part B | 118 |
| 4.3.7 Relative Importance of Sets of Skills in Part B | 119 |
| 4.4 Results from Part C | 120 |
| 4.4.1 Characteristics of SSPs which Influence Leadership Requirements | 121 |
| 4.4.2 Most Challenging Aspects of Being an SSP Principal | 126 |
| 4.4.3 Being the principal in my school is like | 128 |
| Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions | 130 |
| 5.1 Introduction | 130 |
| 5.2 Addressing the Research Questions | 131 |
| 5.2.1 Research Question 1 | 131 |
| 5.2.2 Research Question 2 | 140 |
| 5.2.3 Research Question 3: | 151 |
| 5.3 Other Discussion | 153 |
| 5.4 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research | 158 |
| 5.5 Summary of the Discussion and Conclusion | 160 |
| References | 164 |
| Appendix A: Surveys | 171 |
| Appendix B: Letter to Principals..... | 216 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Appendix C: Principal's Consent Form..... | 218 |
| Appendix D: Teacher, Support Staff and Parent Letters | 219 |
| Appendix E: Principal's Package Letter | 225 |
| Appendix F: Secretary of Parents and Citizens Committee Letter..... | 226 |
| Appendix G: Follow-up Poster for Staff and Parents | 227 |

List of Figures

| Figure Number | Description of Figure | Page |
|---------------|--|------|
| 3.1 | Example of Introduction to Sections of Part A | 58 |
| 3.2 | Additional Procedural Statement for Teachers, Support Staff and Parents | 58 |
| 4.1 | Mainstream and SSP Principals: Mean Scores for Personal Abilities | 74 |
| 4.2 | Mainstream and SSP Principals: Rankings for Personal Abilities | 75 |
| 4.3 | Mainstream and SSP Principals: Mean Scores for Interpersonal Abilities | 78 |
| 4.4 | Mainstream and SSP Principals: Rankings for Interpersonal Abilities | 80 |
| 4.5 | Mainstream and SSP Principals: Mean Scores for Intellectual Abilities | 83 |
| 4.6 | Mainstream and SSP Principals: Rankings for Intellectual Abilities | 84 |
| 4.7 | Mainstream and SSP Principals: Mean Scores for Specific Skills and Knowledge Abilities | 87 |
| 4.8 | Mainstream and SSP Principals: Rankings for Specific Skills and Knowledge Abilities | 89 |
| 4.9 | Mainstream and SSP Principals: Means of the Means for Sets of Abilities | 93 |
| 4.10 | Mainstream and SSP Principals: Mean Rankings for Sets of Abilities | 95 |

List of Tables

| Table Number | Description of Table | Page |
|---------------------|---|-------------|
| 2.1 | A Summary of Categories Identified by Leithwood and Beatty (2008) for Successful School Leadership | 19 |
| 2.2 | The Impact of Leadership Dimensions on Student Outcomes: Robinson et al. (2008) | 25 |
| 3.3 | First Stage Response Rate | 64 |
| 3.4 | Second Stage Response Rate | 64 |
| 3.5 | Example of Recording of Respondents Comments in Parts A, B and C | 65 |
| 4.1 | Mean Scores and Rankings of Personal Abilities for Mainstream and SSP Principals | 76 |
| 4.2 | Mean Scores and Rankings of Interpersonal Abilities for Mainstream and SSP Principals | 81 |
| 4.3 | Mean Scores and Rankings of Intellectual Abilities for Mainstream and SSP Principals | 85 |
| 4.4 | Mean Scores and Rankings of Specific Skills and Knowledge Abilities for Mainstream and SSP Principals | 90 |
| 4.5 | Top 10 Ranked Abilities by Mainstream and SSP Principals | 91 |
| 4.6 | Proportion of Items Scored Higher by Each Principal Group for Each Set of Abilities | 96 |
| 4.7 | Proportion of Each SSP Group Rating High for Personal Abilities | 97 |
| 4.8 | Proportion of SSP Group Rating High for Interpersonal Abilities | 99 |
| 4.9 | Proportion of Each SSP Group Rating High for Intellectual Abilities | 101 |
| 4.10 | Proportion of Each SSP Group Rating High for Specific Skills and Knowledge Abilities | 103 |
| 4.11 | SSP Groups: Rank of Top 10 Abilities According to Proportion Rating High | 106 |
| 4.12 | SSP Groups: Relative Importance of Sets of Abilities in Part A | 108 |

| | | |
|------|--|-----|
| 4.13 | Proportion of Each SSP Group Rating High for Personal Skills in Part B | 110 |
| 4.14 | Proportion of Each SSP Group Rating High for Interpersonal Skills in Part B | 111 |
| 4.15 | Proportion of Each SSP Group Rating High for Intellectual Skills in Part B | 113 |
| 4.16 | Proportion of Each SSP Group Rating High for Specific Skills and Knowledge Skills in Part B | 115 |
| 4.17 | Proportion of Each Group of SSP Respondents Rating High for Inclusive Practice Set of Skills in Part B | 117 |
| 4.18 | SSP Groups: Rank of Top 10 Abilities in Part B According to Proportion Rating High | 118 |
| 4.19 | SSP Groups: Relative Importance of Sets of Skills in Part B | 120 |
| 4.20 | Proportion of SSP Principals Rating High for SSP Characteristics which Differentiate Leadership Requirements | 121 |
| 4.21 | SSP Principals: Ranking Items of Most Influence on Leadership | 124 |
| 4.22 | SSP Principals: Most Challenging Aspects of Principalship in SSPs | 126 |
| 5.1 | Abilities More Important in SSP Setting than in Mainstream Setting | 133 |
| 5.2 | SSP Groups: Significant Differences on Importance of Abilities and Skills Required for SSP Leadership | 145 |

List of Acronyms

The following table lists the acronyms used in the study in alphabetical order.

| Acronym | Meaning |
|---------|--|
| CEC | The Council for Exceptional Children |
| DET | Department of Education and Training |
| IEP | Individual Education Plan |
| NSW | New South Wales |
| NSW DET | New South Wales Department of Education and Training |
| SEN | Special Education Needs |
| SSP | School(s) for Specific Purposes |
| UTS | University of Technology Sydney |

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of the Study

There has been much contemporary research on “generalist” educational leadership theories, styles, models, practices and abilities. In relatively recent times, as a result of an increasing interest in inclusive education practice, a substantial body of research has focussed on the contributions which both “general education” and “special education” leaders make to this environment, and how they can blend together to successfully achieve significant outcomes for all students. This literature is generally located in special education research, rather than general, due to its specific focus: the integration or inclusion of students with disabilities in regular programs.

Whilst there is ample literature on special education leadership focussed on the inclusive context, there is little research which has investigated the practices and abilities for successful leadership of special schools, or Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs) as they are known in the New South Wales (NSW) public school system. These schools provide educational services exclusively for students with disabilities, although many of them engage an inclusive curriculum which gives opportunity for the interchange of students between SSP and mainstream settings.

The purpose of the study was to assess the relative importance of a range of leadership abilities to successful leadership of SSPs. It investigated whether the opinions of SSP principals differed from those of mainstream school principals by a comparative analysis with the findings of Scott (2003), who was commissioned by the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) to investigate leadership capability for its school leadership development program. It also compared the opinions on SSP leadership of four groups of respondents from SSP communities: principals, teachers, support staff and parents. Additionally, this research aimed to identify those characteristics of the SSP environment which accounted for the different leadership abilities required, and to gain some insight into what it is like to be a principal of an SSP.

1.2 Definition of Terms

A number of terms have been used in this research. Their definitions for the purposes of this study are described below.

Ability

The term *ability(ies)* in the context of this study includes those areas of “knowledge, understanding, attitudes, skills and personal qualities”, referred to in the definition of *capability* following, which are focussed on by the study. It has been used to ensure an accurate translation of and comparison to the research conducted by Scott (2003) who used the term *ability* in the same manner.

Capability

It is the author's interpretation of the work of both Scott (2003) and the NSW DET (2003), that *capability* and *ability* are synonymous, except when *capability* imparts the sense of a skill in blending a collection of abilities. In this regard, the NSW DET Professional Learning and Leadership Development Directorate (2003) modified the definition proposed by Scott (2003) to match the educational context of its School Leadership Capability Framework (2003). This definition was adopted by the study:

Leadership capability is a combination of knowledge, understanding, attitudes, skills and personal qualities that enables a person to perform to a high standard in a given leadership role or context. (p.1)

Leader; Leadership

This study adopted the definition of school leaders, proposed by Leithwood and Riehl (2003), as a basic understanding of the investigation. School leaders are

those persons, occupying various roles in the school, who work with others to provide direction and who exert influence on persons and things in order to achieve the school's goals. (p.9)

This definition acknowledges that leadership in a school is not a role assigned singularly to the principal. The study however emphasises that the principal is the primary source of school leadership despite the contemporary environment in which opportunities for teacher, other staff, student and parent leadership abound.

Special School; School for Specific Purposes (SSP)

A special school is a school which caters exclusively for the educational needs of students with disabilities. Only students with disabilities can be enrolled in a special school, although students without disabilities may participate in inclusive programs therein. Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs) are special schools which are administered by the NSW DET.

Integration; Inclusion

These terms describe models of delivery of educational programs in which students with disabilities participate with peers without disabilities. For the purposes of this study the terms 'integration' and 'inclusion' are perceived as interchangeable. Whilst 'inclusion' implies more substantial student involvement in mainstream programs than 'integration', and whilst some academic scholarship with a more precise focus on this issue may assert the distinction between the two, it is insignificant in this study. The study will generally use the term 'inclusion' as it is the more contemporary and universal of the two.

Parents

This term is used with the understanding that it also includes "carers". In the context of this study, parents and carers are those adults who have primary responsibility for the care of children residing with them.

Support Staff

This term includes those school-based personnel who assist in teaching and learning programs, student behaviour and physical management programs, student health procedures, and school administration duties. The terms "teacher's aide", and more

recently, “student learning support officer”, is used to specifically refer to those support staff that assist teachers in all aspects of their classroom and student management.

1.3 The Research Questions

Three research questions were posed by the study:

Research Question 1: What leadership abilities do SSP principals believe are more important in the special school setting than mainstream principals believe are important in the mainstream setting?

Research Question 2: What differences are there between the perceptions of SSP principals, teachers, support staff and parents of students attending SSPs on the abilities required for successful leadership of SSPs?

Research Question 3: What characteristics of SSPs do SSP principals believe make the leadership requirements of an SSP principal different from those of a mainstream principal?

1.4 The Context of the Study

In the field of special education, the most significant development during the last four decades has been the concept of *inclusion*. The inclusion movement developed from the earlier notion, which itself was heralded as revolutionary, that students with disabilities were not only ‘trainable’ but ‘educable’. However the concept and implementation of inclusion went further, as legislative, political and educational policy enforcement in developed countries ensured that students with disabilities increasingly began to attend mainstream schools instead of special schools. New issues related to teacher competency, professional learning, appropriate resourcing, advanced educational technology, student access to the physical environment and curriculum, educational standards, and effective leadership arose within the inclusive educational setting.

A further impact of this evolving global context was that the special school model of educational provision for students with disabilities was challenged. In some jurisdictions the special school model was totally reframed, in others it underwent minor

modifications, and in others it vanished. In NSW, two separate public enquiries each confirmed the importance of maintaining the SSP model as part of the continuum of service provision for students with disabilities (McRae, 1996; Vinson et al., 2002).

However, inclusion had a major influence on the practice and performance of SSPs. Before its conception there were rare opportunities for SSP students to participate in mainstream school programs. If a student was enrolled in a special school, it meant exclusion from the mainstream educational setting. Inclusion presented teachers and principals in SSPs with both new opportunities and new challenges as this complex concept evolved, and as they responded to the implications of changing parental, societal, legal and educational influences. Both teachers and principals found substantial challenge in balancing philosophy with practice, in collaborating with their mainstream colleagues and parents as to appropriate student placement and on-going educational programs, in providing appropriate instructional programs for students, in predicting future successes of the inclusion movement and its impact on students' education, and in meeting policy requirements. Principals, as the primary leaders in SSPs, were conducting a new symphony in an old opera house.

The fields of general and special education have each undergone and continue to undergo very significant changes, and the roles of schools and school leaders have needed to respond to the demands of an increasingly complex task. There has been abundant literature and research into educational leadership of mainstream education and into the implications of inclusive practice, but in the field of special education specifically focussing on special schools and SSPs, the offerings are meagre indeed. It is the assumption of this research that SSPs are intrinsically different from mainstream schools, and that as such an investigation of the issues of the principalship of such schools is warranted, particularly in the light of a rapidly changing educational climate.

1.5 The Nature of SSPs

SSPs occupy one end of the spectrum of educational service provision for students with disabilities, notwithstanding the unique exception of home schooling. They exclusively cater for the needs of such students. Proponents of the SSP argue that this educational

model has significant strengths and advantages over other schooling designs, and generally indicate the appropriateness of the educational experience to the students' needs as the fundamental reason for the SSP's existence. They cite specific support for students' and their parents' needs, including relatively small class numbers and enhanced staff-student ratios, better parent access to teachers and principals, more involvement by parents in their child's educational programs, enhanced student access to specific resources including therapy services, empathetic and specially trained teachers and support personnel, and increased opportunities for genuine inclusive interaction with and specifically supported by the local community, as significant assets of this educational model. They maintain that their students would become isolated in regular schools, and would not receive the appropriate opportunities for individual development or welfare support which their needs demand, and which the SSP can more effectively provide.

The SSP environment is argued to be the setting more conducive to achieving appropriate student outcomes for some students. To illustrate the range of student needs represented in SSPs, total student enrolment in NSW DET SSPs in 2009 was 4466. Approximately 62% of these students (2790) were diagnosed with moderate or severe intellectual disability, and a further 23% approximately (1043) were categorised as having emotional or behaviour disorders. The next largest category of SSP enrolments was for students in the Juvenile Justice program which accounted for approximately 8% (379) of the total NSW SSP enrolment (NSW DET, 2010a).

To achieve specific student outcomes, all NSW DET special education placements, including support class settings in regular primary and high schools and SSPs, have implemented IEP procedures since the 1980s. These procedures, coordinated by principals and teachers, enlist the contribution of parents, carers, advocates, educational consultants and students to formulate an educational program for the student's upcoming school year. The resulting IEP identifies the targeted educational outcomes for the student, it forms the framework for the student's class and community based learning programs, and is reviewed at a designated time, at least annually, to assess its effectiveness.

Detractors of the SSP model, who promote the ideals of inclusion as the spearhead of their objections, consider that all students' educational needs can be met in the regular classroom, and they consistently cite increased opportunities for learning in a real-life environment, age-appropriate experiences and regular social interactions, and higher expectations of students by teachers as the benefits of inclusion (Vinson et al., 2002).

1.6 The Significance of the Study

In NSW, the immediate future of special education with its current provision of services appears assured. At the time of writing (March, 2010) there were 95 SSPs in the NSW public school system, and 527 mainstream schools operating special classes for students with disabilities (NSW DET, 2010b). For the special school principals, and for the regular school special education leaders, there is little Australian research which specifically addresses the issues investigated by this study. This study will support those principals and leaders in the successful implementation of their roles within a global educational climate that will continue to ponder the relevance of their schools and their students' programs. This study will strengthen those leaders' performance amid this environment which expects proof of their ability to meet the political, educational and societal demands presented to them.

1.7 Overview of the Study

This thesis is presented in five chapters and seven appendices. The contents of the following four chapters and the appendices are described below.

1.7.1 Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews contemporary research literature relevant to the study. Firstly, it examines the concept of leadership in areas other than education, and how this concept was refined to apply to educational leadership. It then reports on styles of educational leadership which have evolved to meet the current global educational climate. The chapter then focuses on special education leadership in both the inclusive school and the special school settings, and concludes by reporting on the research of Scott (2003) to which the current study is strongly related.

1.7.2 Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter Three illustrates the methodology of the study. It indicates both its quantitative and qualitative bases, and justifies a blending of the two to achieve a deep understanding of the issue. The chapter describes the methods by which data were collected and analysed.

1.7.3 Chapter Four: Results

This chapter describes the main results of the study. First, it compares the previous findings by Scott (2003) concerning mainstream school principals' perspectives of leadership in their schools, with those of the current study concerning SSP principals' perspectives on SSP leadership. Second, it compares the perspectives of principals, teachers, support staff and parents of students enrolled in SSPs with each other. This chapter concludes with an analysis of the data collected from principals of SSPs to identify the characteristics of those schools which account for the different leadership skills required to lead them as compared with mainstream schools. This chapter incorporates supporting and clarifying qualitative data into the analysis.

1.7.4 Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter briefly reviews the aims of the research, and discusses how the data provide responses to the research questions. This chapter involves a more detailed discussion of the findings than Chapter 4, and relates them to supporting literature presented in Chapter 2. It suggests areas for future research into the leadership of special schools with implications for inclusive and mainstream education, and also presents topics for professional learning to those concerned with the leadership of special schools, and other special education environments. It concludes with an overview of the discussion of the findings.

1.7.5 Appendices

The Appendices section presents documents related to the conduct of the study: the surveys which were administered to the participants (Appendix A); the introductory letter which was sent to principals (Appendix B); the principal's consent form

(Appendix C); the teacher, support staff and parent letters (Appendix D); the letter to principals with survey packages (Appendix E); the letter to the secretaries of the schools' Parents and Citizens Committees (Appendix F); and the follow-up notice board poster for staff and parents (Appendix G).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a review of the literature as it relates to the recent evolution of general professional leadership styles. It will then focus on mainstream educational leadership styles and abilities, first in the context of mainstream education, and then in the context of special education in both the inclusive school and the special school settings. The chapter will continue with an overview of the related work of Scott (2003), a summary of the literature and a statement of the significance of the study as it relates to the literature.

2.2 Evolution of Professional Leadership Styles

An initial review of the issue of leadership identified two main styles of corporate leadership which emerged over the past two or three decades, and which, by their comparisons, have relevance to the current study. The *transactional* and *transformational* styles of leadership contributed to the evolution of educational leadership in ways which accommodated and were drawn from research of societal, philosophical, legal, economic and educational developments during this period.

The transactional style of leadership was the forerunner of the two. Avolio and Bass (2002) explained that transactional leadership was based on the concept of the leader controlling a transaction between leader and followers, an exchange in which a designated reward was delivered to the followers when a specified requirement was achieved by them. There was little focus on the development of human relationships, an aspect significantly more apparent in the transformational style to be discussed later.

Avolio and Bass (2002) divided the transactional style of leadership into three segments: *contingent reward transaction*, *management by exception*, and *laissez-faire management*. In the context of this study, these segments are worthy of a brief review.

Contingent reward is the essential component of the transactional style. It is regarded as a constructive transaction in which the leader nominates or gets agreement on a

standard of performance or development to be reached by the follower, and rewards the follower in some tangible manner on the achievement of the task.

Management by exception is a corrective transaction implemented either actively or passively. Active implementation is illustrated by the leader supervising and monitoring followers on their work performance, and taking corrective action when set standards are not met or when errors or mistakes are made. Passive implementation of management by exception occurs when the leader does not actively scrutinise work performance, but rather waits for mistakes or poor performance to occur, and then takes corrective action.

A leader who exercises *laissez-faire leadership* demonstrates no leadership at all. This style may indicate an avoidance or unawareness of leadership responsibilities, and involves no transaction.

Burns is widely accredited with the theoretical conception of the transformational style of leadership (Duignan, 2006; Gurr, 2002; Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Leithwood & Sun, 2009; Robinson et al., 2008). It originally developed in areas other than education as organisations designed strategies to match advances in technology, economies, and workplace social structures. Burns (1978) re-examined the widely existing notion, at the time, of leadership as a construct or manifestation of power, a concept which he believed was described by the transactional style of leadership. Burns considered that the nature and strength of power and their relationship to leadership had been misjudged. He proposed instead that power consisted of motives and resources, and that the relationship between motives and resources of both the leader and the follower defined leadership.

Burns (1978) maintained that “the most powerful influences consist of deeply human relationships in which two or more persons *engage* with one another” (p.11). In this way transformational leadership, as he described it, “ultimately becomes *moral* in that it raises the level of human contact and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus has a transforming effect on both” (p. 20). Burns (1978) made a clear distinction between transactional and transformational leadership styles (Duignan, 2006).

Bass and Avolio (1994) and Avolio and Bass (2002) described the transformational leader as an energising influence on others, promoting creativity, commitment and individuality within them to address problems and grasp opportunities. They proposed that these leaders delegated responsibilities to others in the organisation through positive human relationships, and developed them as individuals for the enhancement of the organisation. The findings of Podsakoff et al. (1990), whose research focussed on the development of followers' trust in their leader by the leader's transformational style of leadership, gave support to this idea.

Avolio and Bass (2002) identified the components of the transformational style of leadership as the *four Is*: *idealized leadership*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation* and *individualized consideration*. As was the case with the transactional style of leadership, a brief review of these components is warranted.

Idealized leadership refers to the leader who puts the needs of others above his or her own, who shares risk-taking with others and acts and negotiates from a position of high ethical and moral conduct. This type of leadership results in the enhancement of followers' admiration and respect of the leader, and imbues confidence and trust in his or her actions and decisions. The followers seek to emulate the leader. The *inspirational motivation* component of the transformational style describes the enthusiastic and optimistic behaviour of the leader, inspiring and motivating followers to strive for the achievement of goals and visions. The leader's personal commitment provides support to the meaning of the work of the followers. *Intellectual stimulation* encourages followers to creatively solve problems and to experiment with new approaches knowing that their ideas, efforts and mistakes will not be publicly criticised. The followers are intrinsically involved in the decision-making processes which facilitate change. Through *individualized consideration*, the transformational leader accepts that each follower is an individual with needs, desires and aspirations. *Individualized consideration* is exercised by the leader who takes into account individual differences in the supportive provision of professional development opportunities, who takes the time to listen effectively to followers, who thoughtfully

delegates specific duties to individual followers, and who empathetically supports followers in the execution of those duties.

Avolio and Bass (2002) synthesised this continuum of leadership styles, represented at opposite ends by components of the transactional and transformational styles, by proposing the concept of the “full range leadership profiles” (pp.4-8). These profiles illustrated the notion that both styles of leadership, transformational and transactional, and their contributing components, are represented to some extent in effective leaders, but that they should be combined in appropriate proportions. They maintained that the foundations and framework for successful and effective leadership in contemporary organisations were essentially constructed through the transformational style, and the components of both styles were integrated into the leader’s practice according to context: “transformational leaders ... were more effective and satisfying as leaders than were transactional leaders, although the best leaders frequently employ some of the latter but more of the former” (p.5). The full range of leadership profiles which Avolio and Bass (2002) proposed provide an appropriate backdrop to the following review of literature focussing specifically on educational leadership.

2.3 Mainstream Educational Leadership

This section will review the development of mainstream educational leadership theories and styles in response to shifts in educational research and policy over the last three decades.

2.3.1 The Impact of Change and Reform

Substantial and relentless change has characterised the field of education over the last two to three decades (Baker, 2009; Goldring & Rallis, 1993; Leithwood & Day, 2007; Winzer & Mazurek, 2005). Winzer and Mazurek (2005) commented on the initiation of this change phenomenon:

In many countries around the world, the 1980s witnessed an unrelenting assault upon the content, processes, and results of schooling that elevated school reform to a major movement. Reform, restructure, and reinvent became the rallying

cries of the reform movement in general education and the literature was replete with a myriad of initiatives to change the structure and culture of schools. (p.644)

The range, pace and depth of the changes demanded action from schools, and Goldring and Rallis (1993) described those schools which were successful with their actions as “dynamic schools” (p.4). Goldring and Rallis (2003) identified five significant influences on the evolution of dynamic schools, and subsequently the school principalship and the style of leadership of the principal: teachers were becoming leaders; student populations were diversifying; parents were becoming advocates; schools were becoming more complex in their social and technological aspects; and governments were mandating restructures and standards. In responding to these influences, dynamic schools were involved in processes of self-evaluation and self-improvement, and innovation within them was expressed on many levels simultaneously.

To meet schools' needs in this changing educational landscape, a spotlight fell on leadership, and a range of educational leadership styles emerged which was indicative of the increasing interest in the practice and research of educational leadership. This interest was sprouted both by educators and educational researchers who saw the school leadership as the most direct means by which schools could connect to, keep up with, and continually adjust to the educational changes going on around them.

Leithwood et al. (1999) noted six different approaches to educational leadership in their comprehensive investigation of four educational administration journals from North America, Australia, New Zealand and the UK. They identified these as instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, managerial leadership and contingent leadership. As noted earlier, contingent leadership is the essential component of the transactional style. Leithwood et al. (1999) acknowledged that each approach made a contribution to successful educational leadership, and that they were overlapping. Throughout the last decade, this billowing interest in educational leadership which had emerged before the turn of the century was further nurtured and fertilised by other events and conditions.

In this respect, Hallinger (2007) attributed the increased scrutiny which international education systems, and specifically their leadership, were currently enduring, to more recently emerged forces. He suggested that international educational competitiveness and modern communication technology had impacted significantly on educational leadership practices:

Educational policies and practices have gone global. Each country's policymakers scan trans-national educational trends in search of new methods of increasing their competitiveness in the global economy. Management practices associated with learning standards, accountability, student-centred learning, learning technologies, effective schools, leadership development, school-based management, and professional learning communities disseminate via a complex policy network carried on the Internet and the jet stream. (p.viii)

Leithwood and Day (2007) gave support to this perception of an unprecedented international interest in educational leadership. They indicated that this was, in a significant way, borne by a political impetus associated with the accountability regimes being implemented in public education on a global basis.

It is within this context of rapid change and a developing global and political perspective, that both contemporary practice and research in educational leadership evolved, and the focus on the work of school principals sharpened. Leithwood and Day (2007) have suggested that "this is the 'golden age' of school leadership" (p.1). Despite some years of ambiguous research findings, there was widespread agreement that educational leadership mattered, and specifically, that school leadership mattered in that it had significant effects on school outcomes (Gurr et al., 2003; Leithwood & Day, 2007).

Leithwood and Rhiel (2003) proposed, through a comprehensive examination of the research available, that the evidence supported six claims in regard to the nature and effect of school leaders on the achievement of school outcomes: successful school leadership contributes importantly to student learning; primary leaders in schools are principals and teachers; besides principals and teachers leadership is and should be

distributed to others in the school community; there is a core set of basic leadership practices – setting directions, developing people and redesigning the organisation; successful leaders acknowledge the accountability context of their work; and successful school leaders promote quality, equity and social justice.

2.3.2 The Effect of Leadership on School Outcomes

In investigating the ways principals exert influence in their schools, researchers have noted a distinction between indirect and direct effects of leadership on school progress and student outcomes (Gurr et al., 2003; Gurr et al., 2007; Robinson et al., 2008). Briefly, the distinction relates to the roles of “leaders establishing the conditions (e.g. provision of teacher professional opportunities, forms of student grouping) through which teachers make a more direct impact on students” (Robinson et al., 2008, pp.636 – 637). This distinction has resulted in ambiguous research findings (Gurr et al., 2003; Robinson et al., 2008).

However, most research on the effects of school leadership on school outcomes has produced evidence that these effects are indirect, rather than direct (Gurr et al., 2003; Mulford, 1996; Mulford, 2007a; Mulford, 2007b; Robinson et al., 2008). In other words, it is argued that a leader’s ability to conceptualise, plan, develop, ultimately provide and continuously guide all aspects of the environment in which others will directly accomplish desired school outcomes, including student achievement outcomes, is what makes the difference from the leadership point of view.

This perceived indirect effect on school outcomes should not be regarded of concern. Hallinger and Heck (1996) noted:

The fact that leadership effects on school achievement appear to be indirect is neither cause for alarm nor dismay ... achieving results through others is the essence of leadership. A finding that principal leadership effects are mediated by other in-school variables does nothing whatsoever to diminish the principal’s importance. Understanding the routes by which principals can improve school outcomes through working with others is itself a worthy goal of research. Most

important with respect to this point, the research illustrates that these effects compound as principals pursue school-level action. (p.39)

The educational climate of widespread and substantial change since the 1980s, the essence of the claims proposed by Leithwood and Rhiel (2003), the extent to which those claims are related to much contemporary research, and the specific research interest focussing on how principals effect school outcomes, collectively invite a review of two educational leadership styles which are particularly relevant to the present study. It is noted that this review does not exclude the contributions that other leadership styles make to successful school leadership. The next section will examine the transformational and the instructional styles of educational leadership, and will propose that researchers have perceived a merger of the two in response to the evolving nature of contemporary education.

2.3.3 The Case for the Transformational Style of Leadership

As noted earlier, Leithwood et al. (1999) identified six different approaches to educational leadership. Whilst they acknowledged their overlapping nature and contribution to successful practice, they concluded that the transformational style best served as the foundation for leadership of modern schools. Other researchers disagreed. Gurr (2002) reported on widespread commentary that transformational leadership was problematic due to its numerous theoretical conceptions, and that its exploration of the nature of the leader's influence on the organisation was faulty. Other criticism reported by Gurr (2002) included claims that transformational (and transactional) leadership behaviours were ill-defined, and that the concept of transformational leadership was not applicable to the school context.

Leithwood et al. (1999) reported that whilst evidence of the effects of transformational leadership on students was only modest, strong positive relationships were found between this style and others' perceptions of the effectiveness of the leader, and their satisfaction with the leader. They also described the style's positive effect on others' willingness to engage in extra effort, and their attitudinal and behavioural commitment

to change. Mulford (2007a) also found a generally positive effect of transformational leadership on school effectiveness.

Leithwood and Day (2007) and Leithwood and Beatty (2008) revised Leithwood et al.'s (1999) earlier concept of the transformational style of educational leadership. They identified four categories of practices for successful school leadership: *setting directions*, *developing people*, *redesigning the organisation*, and *managing the instructional program*. It is worthwhile noting that *managing the instructional program* was an addition to the original set of three categories proposed by Leithwood et al. (1999). Its inclusion followed increasing research interest in the role of the principal as an instructional leader in the school, to be discussed later in the chapter. Within each of the four categories of leadership practices, Leithwood and Beatty (2008) proposed that there were a number of sets of practices as illustrated in summary by Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 A Summary of Categories Identified by Leithwood and Beatty (2008) for Successful School Leadership

| |
|---|
| Category: Setting directions |
| Sets of practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a shared vision • Fostering the acceptance of group goals • Demonstrating high performance expectations |
| Category: Developing people |
| Sets of practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing individualised support and consideration • Offering intellectual stimulation • Providing an appropriate model |
| Category: Redesigning the organisation |
| Sets of practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom-level working conditions: workload volume and workload complexity • School-level working conditions: school cultures, school structures, community relations, school operating procedures • District working conditions: professional development, teacher salaries, pace of change, size • Conditions in the external environment: departments of education, wider social forces |
| Category: Managing the Instructional Program |
| Sets of practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing the program • Providing instructional support • Monitoring school activity • Buffering staff from distractions to their work |

The transformational style of leadership was not without its dangers for school principals. Goldring and Rallis (1993) cautioned that in enhancing change through transformational practices, principals might create an environment in which traditional roles, responsibilities, and professional and social interactions became ambiguous and ultimately catalysts for tension. To counteract this potential disharmony, Goldring and Rallis (1993) warned principals to remain mindful that in dynamic schools teachers exist on at least three leadership levels: “existing leaders, potential leaders and followers” (p. 38). The principal in a facilitating role should use the differences in teacher aspirations for leadership responsibilities as strengths of the school community, not as causes for division.

As an example of the phenomenon of role ambiguity, Podsakoff et al. (1990) found that *intellectual stimulation*, a sub-component of the *developing people* dimension proposed by Leithwood et al. (1999) and also a component of Avolio and Bass's (2002) concept of transformational leadership, produced a negative effect on both followers' trust in the leader and their job satisfaction. Podsakoff et al. (1990) reported that it created confusion about their roles, and subsequently induced stress and conflict. Mulford (2007a) also reported a negative effect of the *intellectual stimulation* and *developing vision* aspects of transformational leadership.

However the transformational style of leadership evolved within the educational environment as a reasonably credible and effective basis for successful principal leadership. Its essence was the development and maintenance of positive interpersonal relationships, and its particular organisational strength was generally believed to be its ability to assist principals and their schools in managing change. Gurr (2002) reported that Victorian principals and the teacher-raters who assessed them indicated that it was the style most often used.

The transformational style of leadership has been a significant contributor to contemporary theories about how principals should go about their business, at least in so far as its emphasis on the development of positive interpersonal relationships has been widely supported (Dinham, 2007; Goldring & Rallis, 1993; Gurr, 2002; Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Leithwood & Day, 2007; Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008). However, an increasing focus on the principal's specific contribution to the teaching and learning within the school has generated a renewed interest in instructional leadership, or educational leadership as Gurr et al. (2007) point out, is the preferred term in Australia. This style of leadership is the focus of the next section of enquiry.

2.3.4 The Case for the Instructional Style of Leadership

Robinson et al. (2008) reported that instructional leadership theory emerged in the late 1970s to early 1980s in studies of low socio-economic community schools which nonetheless achieved positive student outcomes. The style was represented as the sole

responsibility of the principal, and included “a learning climate free of disruption, a system of clear teaching objectives, and high teacher expectations for students” (p. 638). Oyinlade and Gellhaus (2005) have reported on Black’s (1998) summative description of instructional leadership as “an implicitly hierarchical leadership style in which the principal rules with authority and expects the teachers to follow his or her orders regarding curriculum and instruction” (p.261). In its purest form, instructional leadership paid little attention to the interpersonal skills which represented the foundations of the transformational style.

As noted earlier in this chapter, Leithwood and Day (2007) reported that there was a substantial political force behind the increased global interest in educational leadership and the development of leadership capabilities which appeared to be not coincidentally related to the increased amount of pressure placed on schools to be more publically accountable. This accountability pressure was also reported by Winzer and Mazurek (2005) and Hallinger (2007).

One of the increasingly more publically accountable measures of progress and success in international education is the area of student academic achievement. In the contemporary Australian context, this includes a focus on national assessment of student academic outcomes by the National Assessment Program for Literacy Numeracy (NAPLAN), and the subsequent publication of all Australian schools’ student academic achievement results in the recently rolled-out MySchool website, first published in February 2010. Both NAPLAN and the MySchool website are central components of the Australian federal government’s Building the Education Revolution program. These Australian initiatives have mirrored other international developments in which student achievement data have become central to not only student educational assessment, but also to educational policy and educational reform agendas (Earl & Katz, 2006).

Campbell and Levin (2009) have reported that the effectiveness of student achievement data is optimised when it is a coordinated and collaborative approach by multiple levels of the educational hierarchy: the school, the district, and the state (or province) level. They noted that while school-based efforts to interpret student data serve to connect

teaching practices to individual learning needs and outcomes, it needs the collective will of the three operational levels to extract the full value of the wide range of data available. This range includes not only student assessment data, but also school and other specific contextual data. Campbell and Levin (2009) reported that the strategies used in Ontario, Canada have shown that this collaborative approach provides a framework by which district and state level inputs ensure that schools' accessibility to the data is adequate, and that schools are supported in the collection and interpretation of the data so that it can be understood and meaningfully applied to each school's context. In this respect, district and state levels supported professional learning for principals and teachers, and there were expectations of school-based changes in response to the data which were established within educational policies and accountability frameworks. The principal's role has increasingly become one of initiator and on-going facilitator of the professional dialogue and professional learning to meet both the school-based and system-based accountability measures for student learning outcomes.

Earl and Katz (2006) reported that school leaders' use of data for school improvement has been characterised by mistrust and fear within an environment lacking appropriate training, but that these impediments are being progressively overcome. They suggested that the concept of accountability has also been problematic, the problem lying in the differences between accountability measures of success from outside the school, and those from within their school communities. To accommodate these differences, Earl and Katz (2006) maintained that informed professional judgement, incorporating the analysis of data as a contributing component of the process, is essential to ensure that schools continue to serve their students' needs, and also to ensure that their leaders meet professional accountability standards. It is equally essential that the process becomes embedded within the schools, developing the sustainable capacity for schools to meet their developing needs.

Educational leaders and school staffs who are committed to professional accountability and making informed professional judgements think of accountability not as a static numerical accounting but as a conversation, using

data to stimulate discussion, challenge ideas, rethink directions, and monitor progress, providing an ongoing image of their school as it changes, progresses, stalls, regroups, and moves forward again. (Earl & Katz, 2006, p.13)

Robinson et al. (2008) have reported that interest in the link between school leadership and student outcomes has heightened as education systems internationally have been brought to account by governments and policy-makers for deficits in various ethnic and social groups' student academic outcomes. In the Australian context, this is particularly true for indigenous students.

In this context of accountability and increasing public scrutiny of comparative student results, Gurr et al. (2007) have contended that the role of the principal as an instructional leader has increased, and that principals are now being called upon to demonstrate their skills in this regard. The next section offers a perspective from the literature which considers a thoughtful merger of the characteristics of transformational and instructional leadership.

2.3.5 Towards a Merger

Robinson et al. (2008) noted that while qualitative research had attributed school leadership with considerable responsibility for school and teaching effectiveness, quantitative methods had resulted in less conclusive findings. They reported that leadership effects were only small and indirect and that the major contribution to student outcomes came from teachers. In an attempt to clarify this issue, their own quantitative study measured and compared the effect of specific styles of leadership on student outcomes, rather than assessing leadership as a generic, loosely-defined concept.

In their meta-analysis of 22 previous studies, Robinson et al. (2008) measured and compared the effects of instructional, transformational, and other types of leadership on student academic and non-academic outcomes. They found that instructional leadership had approximately three to four times the effect on student outcomes than that of transformational leadership. The "directness" of the instructional style outperformed the "indirectness" of the transformational style in relation to student outcomes. They surmised that while the transformational style may have had a positive effect on

teachers and their attitude to their work, to the workplace and to the principal, this style did not follow through with similarly positive student achievement outcomes. They also concluded that “other types of leadership”, which they had grouped as a result of their meta-analysis and which formed their five dimensions of leadership discussed below, also scored as more effective than the transformational style.

However, the understanding of instructional leadership evolved from its origins as a “principal only” activity, and these findings must be considered in this light. Robinson et al. (2008) reported that the contemporary understanding of instructional leadership included the role that principals play in designating responsibilities, and sharing the leadership tasks with teachers. In this regard, it necessarily required attention to the relationships development characteristic of the transformational style.

In their second meta-analysis, Robinson et al. (2008) identified five educational leadership dimensions from twelve previous studies: *establishing goals and expectations; resourcing strategically; planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; promoting and participating in teacher learning development; and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment*. They noted that these dimensions did not include one that specifically and unitarily targeted relationship skills, since “relationship skills are embedded in every dimension” (p.659).

Robinson et al. (2008) examined the impact on student outcomes of the five dimensions of educational leadership, and reported effect sizes ranging from small to large. These findings are reported in summary in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 The Impact of Leadership Dimensions on Student Outcomes: Robinson et al. (2008)

| Leadership dimension | Meaning of Dimension | Mean Effect Size |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| Establishing goals and expectations | Setting, communicating and monitoring learning goals, standards and expectations, and involving staff and others to achieve clarity and consensus about goals. | 0.42 |
| Resourcing strategically | Aligning resource selection and allocation to priority teaching goals. Provision of appropriate expertise through recruitment. | 0.31 |
| Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum | Direct involvement in the support and evaluation of teaching through regular classroom visits and provision of feedback. Direct oversight of curriculum through schoolwide coordination. | 0.42 |
| Promoting and participating in teacher learning development | Promoting and participating with teachers in formal and informal professional learning. | 0.84 |
| Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment. | Protecting time for teaching and learning by reducing external pressures and interruptions and establishing an orderly environment inside and outside classrooms. | 0.27 |

Robinson et al. (2008) found that the dimension of most impact was the principal's behaviours in promoting and participating in professional learning. Schools at which teachers reported that the principal was engaged with them as professional learners, tended to produce higher student outcomes. Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum was shown to have a statistically moderate effect on student outcomes, as was establishing goals and expectations through consensus. Resourcing strategically and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment produced small effect sizes.

From the results of both of their meta-analyses, Robinson et al. (2008) concluded that whilst the transformational style indeed had a contribution to make to successful

educational leadership, specifically through the development of interpersonal relationships, it needed to be incorporated into an instructional leadership framework:

Educational leadership involves not only building collegial teams, a loyal and cohesive staff, and sharing an inspirational vision. It also involves focussing such relationships on some very specific pedagogical work, and the leadership practices involved are better captured by measures of instructional leadership than of transformational leadership. (p.665)

Marks and Printy (2003) proposed a model of integrated leadership in which the characteristics of both the transformational style, based on positive interpersonal relationships, and the shared instructional style, in which principals collaborated with teachers on matters of curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment, were combined. They suggested that this merger had a historical perspective based on the focus of leadership shifting from the early managerial and instructional model, through the transformational style in order to accommodate the period of change and reform mentioned earlier, and then swerving back towards an instructional focus driven by the emerging school accountability context. Marks and Printy (2003) asserted that the result was a type of leadership which promoted positive interaction between principal and teachers, and encouraged teachers' shared ownership of instruction in the school with each other and the principal. When ownership was shared, student outcomes were shared. This type of leadership also alleviated the potential for principal burnout. They contended that schools which utilised this approach developed a culture of commitment and professionalism founded on both learning and performing at high levels.

As mentioned earlier, Leithwood and Day (2007) and Leithwood and Beatty (2008) also offered a perspective on the perceived refocus of school leadership towards the teaching and learning in the school. They added a fourth category to the previous three (*setting directions, developing people* and *redesigning the organisation*) of Leithwood et al.'s (1999) transformational leadership model. *Managing the instructional program* was unique to schools and reflected the increased interest in principals' instructional leadership roles brought on by the developing global trend in data-driven comparative student outcome assessment within the context of public education accountability.

Within this category, Leithwood and Day (2007) and Leithwood and Beatty (2008) identified a number of contributing practices which included matching staff to the school's priorities, ensuring appropriate instructional support, monitoring school performance, and insulating staff from distractions to their work. In doing so, they reinforced the earlier convictions of Leithwood and Rhiel (2003) about the importance of leadership focussing on teaching and learning.

Other researchers attributed significant importance to the development of positive relationships, but did not necessarily adhere to the transformational leadership label. For example, Dinham (2007) strongly emphasised the importance of the leader's understanding of human nature and the ability to use this knowledge to enhance interpersonal relationships. He noted that these were critical skills since collaborative commitment and a common purpose were essential to sustaining a school's activities. Dinham (2007) also made the important connection between developing positive interpersonal relationships and a focus on teaching and learning. This connection permeated throughout his analysis in which he assembled the concepts of leadership into seven categories. Six of these he determined to be "contributing categories": *external awareness and engagement; bias towards innovation and action; personal qualities and relationships; vision, expectations and a culture of success; teacher learning, responsibility and trust; and student support, common purpose and collaboration* (pp. 27-45). Underpinning these contributing categories, Dinham emphasised the prominence of the core category, *a focus on students and their learning*, which circulated throughout:

This is the belief, clearly held and articulated by the Principal and others, that the central purpose and focus of the school is teaching and learning ... every effort must be made to provide an environment where each student can achieve and experience success and academic, personal and social growth. (p. 43)

Further, Dinham (2007) also recognised that schools needed to adjust, adapt and balance categories at different stages of development, and at times in response to specific contextual demands. As an example, he submitted that low socio-economic

background schools have needed to focus on personal and social aspects of education in order to create the environment for students' academic success.

Both these points, a focus on teaching and learning and an awareness of the need for flexibility and contextual responsiveness, were also made emphatically by Robinson et al. (2008). They included a clear emphasis that "the closer educational leaders get to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely they are to have a positive impact on students' outcomes" (p.664). Like Dinham (2007), Robinson et al. (2008) also pointed out that effective school leadership will have different emphases at different developmental stages, such as to improve staff and student safety before focussing on specific curriculum issues.

Gurr et al. (2003) constructed a model of educational leadership which classified three "leadership influences on student achievement" (pp. 32-34), and which regarded student achievement as the key focus of schools. In this model, the influence of most importance was the *teaching and learning influence*, which included pedagogical, curriculum, assessment and student learning aspects. Of second importance was the *school capacity* influence, including personal, professional, organisational and community aspects. Of third importance or impact were the *other influences*, which included policies and programs of external organisations, organisational characteristics, community resources and an awareness of context and external challenges which affected the school.

As this informal merger of leadership styles began to evolve, the educational leader's role came to be viewed as a task demanding attention not only to the range of competencies previously identified, but also to the complex task of synchronising these competencies into successful practice. Additionally, research interest developed in leaders' personal attributes, and their contribution to the task of coordinating the range of competencies required.

Scott (2003), in his research to be reviewed following, referred to five domains of professional capability for successful leadership: *stance (emotional intelligence – personal and interpersonal)*; *way of thinking- being able to "read" events and "match"*

responses; diagnostic maps – using previous experience; generic skills and knowledge; and profession specific skills and knowledge (pp. 4-5). Scott (2003) defined capability as “that combination of attributes, qualities, skills and knowledge that enables a person to perform to a high standard in a given context and role” (p.4). It was the successful integration of the domains and the abilities within the domains which represented professional capability. In applying this framework to the principalship, Scott (2003) identified those abilities which were specific, quantifiable and interconnected, and which contributed to effective school leadership. He collated the abilities into four sets: the *personal, interpersonal, intellectual* and *specific skills and knowledge* sets which formed the survey items in the main data-gathering tool of his study as discussed in Chapter 3. Whilst Scott found that principals rated all sets as important to their successful school leadership, they nonetheless differentiated them from most important to least important in the following order: *personal, interpersonal, intellectual*, and *specific skills and knowledge*. Scott’s research is reviewed in more detail in 2.5 following.

Duignan (2006) also affirmed the view that educational leadership should be regarded from a capabilities approach. Duignan proposed that although knowledge, skills and abilities were indeed competencies measurable against standards, such measurement did not reflect the complexity of effective school leadership. He maintained that this complexity was linked to a dynamic educational environment in which moral and ethical issues were gaining focus, where accountability was increasing, and where there was a distinct onus on the principal to create and manage change for the betterment of individuals and the school. As principals needed to regularly respond to and make decisions about complex issues in unfamiliar and unpredictable circumstances, often involving conflict, tension and dilemmas, competencies alone did not suffice. Duignan (2006) suggested that a basis of wisdom, and a capabilities approach which drew on past experiences, a determination to develop oneself and others, and one in which dimensions of leadership blended a range of competencies into effective decision-making and action, provided the recipe for successful educational leadership.

Mulford (2007b) identified a core of generic leadership skills which replicated and reinforced the earlier findings of Leithwood et al. (1999) and Leithwood and Riehl (2003). He also reported that these skills were built on the foundation of the principals' own personal characteristics of innate goodness and passion, a belief in the importance of all in the organisation and in their ability to contribute and learn, and a "deep" democracy which was entrenched in respect for the worth and dignity of others and their cultures. Mulford (2007b) explained that leadership was a process which pays attention to, and is both influenced by and influences, the immediate internal and external school context.

Mulford (2007b) concluded that our understanding of what it takes for successful school leadership required an investigation of a more complex set of interactions than what had previously been done. He summarised his findings, with particular relevance as his work concerned the Australian context, with the proposition that:

Successful school principalship is an interactive, reciprocal and evolving process involving many players, which is influenced by and, in turn, influences, the context in which it occurs. Further, the findings demonstrated that successful principalship was underpinned by the core values and beliefs of the principal. These values and beliefs informed the principal's decisions and actions regarding the provision of individual support and capacity building, and capacity building at the school level, including school culture and structure. The principal's core values and beliefs, together with the values and capacities of other members of the school community, fed directly into the development of a shared school vision, which shaped the teaching and learning, student and social capital outcomes of schooling. (p.36)

Leithwood and Beatty (2008) investigated an area of leadership research, alluded to by both Duignan (2006) and Mulford (2007b), which has however received very little attention, particularly in the field of education. Leithwood and Beatty (2008) explored the contribution of emotions to successful leadership practice. They proposed that the range of external influences presented to principals in their daily working environment is continuously mediated by their "inner lives", which involved "their thoughts,

feelings, values and dispositions” (p.126). These influences on principals include the impost of policies and mandated requirements, the expectations of students, staff, parents and supervisors, and the accessibility of a vast range of appropriate resources. Whilst the environment in which principals work moulds their behaviours and practices, principals nevertheless explore and filter potential decisions and actions through their own personality traits and their internal motivation. Additionally, Leithwood and Beatty (2008) suggested that principals use their ability to empathise with and understand the actions of others in order to respond to them appropriately. Leithwood and Beatty (2008) suggest that principals who develop their own and their teachers’ emotional abilities will enhance the working environment of both, and consequently, the learning conditions of their students.

2.3.6 Summary of Mainstream Educational Leadership

There appears a wide range of opinion on the nature and level of impact of different styles and practices of educational leadership. The literature reviewed, which is both commentary and data-based, has also identified a range of different categories, dimensions or domains of educational leadership, and opinion differs on how these effect the achievement of school outcomes, and particularly student outcomes. However, these opinions are imbued with enough similarities to move forward, both theoretically and in practice, with a couple of assumptions.

First, leadership does matter. It matters because it is the means by which schools have managed, with varying degrees of success, to keep up with rapidly changing times and environments. The value of interpersonal skills and abilities has been emphasised in this regard. It matters because there is much political interest to say it matters. An international climate of educational reform has evolved which pays heed to this political interest borne out of, and in response to, contemporary educational research. This research has illustrated that it matters because school leadership has substantial effects on student outcomes. It is in this latter respect that a focus on instructional leadership has gained momentum, and a significant amount of literature has interlinked this evolving approach with an understanding of the need for principals to engage collaborative management practices in this process, embracing the notion that

professional learning in instructional matters is a partnership amongst leaders and teachers.

The literature points to a fundamental importance on developing positive relationships, and a significant proportion of it asserts that this emphasis should not be restricted to the establishment of a productive and collegial workplace, must also be directed into collaborative planning, design and implementation of teaching and learning in the school. Additionally, there is an increasing recognition of the importance of the contribution of the leader's personal abilities and characteristics to successful leadership. These attributes have been linked to not only a moral and ethical component of school leadership, but also to the process of how principals develop positive and productive interpersonal relationships in an increasingly complex work environment.

Second, there is a need to focus on the appropriate blends of skills and knowledge bases to match any one particular school's needs. Different styles of leadership and types of leadership abilities matter in different ways, and at different times. Context is indeed important, and the blends of leadership abilities must remain fluent and responsive as context changes for different schools, and for different leaders. The labels of leadership appear to be disintegrating in the complex solution of interactions which is the principal's workday.

The literature has shown that a thoughtful combination of the dimensions of leadership identified by theorists and researchers is required of contemporary school leaders. The changes in the educational landscape have demanded it, and the working environment of principals is too complex for them to adhere to or rely solely on any particular style. The literature indicates that Mulford's (2007a) assertion that "it is necessary to move beyond the rash of simplistic 'adjectival leaderships'...that bedevil the field" (p.16) is supported by current thinking. Several researchers have called for a fundamental reorientation of the way we think about leadership in schools by acknowledging and examining both the interconnectedness of leadership abilities, and also the means by which principals coordinate the abilities' interactions in order to successfully lead their schools, referred to as a leadership capability approach. The skills don't just self-assemble in regimental order.

In the context of special education, leadership research has paralleled significant reforms which are specific to that field, as well as those which generalist education has accomplished and continues to deal with. The next section will investigate the literature concerned with leadership in special education as it relates to the focus of this study.

2.4 Special Education Leadership

This section will review the literature as it relates to both the inclusive and special school settings.

2.4.1 The Context

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the provision of special education services to students with disabilities in NSW public schools is illustrated by a continuum, landmarked at one end by the segregated “school for specific purposes” or “special school” setting, and at the other end by the fully inclusive comprehensive school. In between, there are blends of the models from each end of the spectrum which appropriately meet the needs of students with special needs. For example, SSP students participate in mainstream school programs on a regularly timetabled basis, and in some innovative programs, the reciprocal arrangement also occurs.

Internationally, there are variations between the proportions of students engaging in programs at any point on the spectrum outlined above. However, there can be no doubt that over the last three decades “mainstream” school communities in developed nations have become more “special education” oriented as a result of the inclusive educational practice which has accompanied educational technology improvements, instructional research developments, ideological, societal and political trends, and legal imperatives. To illustrate this point in the Australian context, the number of NSW students with disabilities who received federal government “integration” funding to participate in more inclusive programs increased more than fourteen-fold over the fifteen-year period 1998-2002 (Steer, 2008). In Northern Ireland, the Department of Education reported (2006):

it is clear ... that special schools are only one element in a continuum of provision for pupils with SEN (special education needs). What is also evident is that mainstream schools are enrolling more pupils with SEN who previously would have been educated in the special school sector (p.6).

In the United States, the inclusion movement sprouted research interest in special education leadership. Crockett et al. (2009) examined the literature trends from professional journals on special education leadership from 1970 to 2009. In the decades corresponding to the commencement of the inclusion movement, the number of articles published almost doubled: in the decade 1970-1979, 67 articles were published and this increased in the 1980-1989 decade to 132. Crockett et al. (2009) reported the frequency of topics in this area over the four decades as a percentage of the total literature (474 articles) they investigated: personnel training and development accounted for 19%; law and policy, 16%; learning environment, 15%; leadership roles and responsibilities, 14%; accountability for student learning 13%; leadership preparation and development, 10%; collaboration, 8%; and technology, 5%. In a finding particularly relevant to this study, Crockett et al. (2009) noted the recent increase in the number of publications which focussed on school accountability for the achievements of all students: in the decade 1990-1999, 14 articles were identified in their search accounting for 13.2% of all articles in that decade, and in the decade 2000-2009, 33 articles surfaced accounting for 19.5% of all articles.

In Australia, the relative scarcity of Australian-based research related to general educational leadership, reported by Mulford (2007a), is magnified when searching for special education leadership literature. However, there is some literature related to special schools leadership which is relevant and is included later. In the United Kingdom, Rayner and Ribbins (1999) reported that there were very few references, in both special education and educational management literature, to the headship (principalship) in special education, and they urged this issue to be addressed. There has been some response which has relevance to the present study and which will be reviewed in the special school leadership section of this chapter.

As a result of the inclusion movement, special education leadership from an international perspective can be viewed as existing in two interrelated settings. The first is the inclusive special education setting, which refers to the arrangement when students with disabilities attend regular schools and participate in regular classes, but may also be involved in resource specialist programs, or attend resource specialist schools, which complement their substantial participation in inclusive programs. The responsibility for the leadership of the special education program within this inclusive setting may rest solely with the principal of the school, or may be distributed and/or delegated to the special education leader in the school as well as the district special education administrator.

The second setting is the special school setting, which refers to the arrangement when students with disabilities attend separate special schools in which they participate in programs designed to specifically meet their special education needs. Students who attend these schools as their primary education provider may also attend mainstream schools to engage appropriately with inclusive programs. The leadership of special schools is the responsibility of the principal. The essential difference between the two settings is that the special school student population is exclusively students with a diagnosed disability, whilst in the inclusive setting there are students with and without disabilities.

The literature to be reviewed in the following sections reflects that essential difference and its implications for the leadership. These sections will look at special educational leadership as it relates to the inclusive educational environment, and then as it fits into the special school setting.

2.4.2 Leadership in the Inclusive School Setting

Contemporary literature from the USA regarding special education leadership has necessarily focussed within the context of inclusion. This focus sharpened with the implementation of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142, 1975) and the mandated requirement of educating all students within the “least restrictive environment”. It was subsequently maintained by the Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act (IDEA, 1990), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments (IDEA, 1997), the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) (Bays & Crockett, 2007; Boscardin, 2005; Crockett, 2007; Crockett et al., 2009; Di Paola et al., 2004; Lashley, 2007; Mantle, 2005; Oyinlade & Gellhaus, 2005; Stevenson-Jacobson et al., 2006). It is worthwhile noting at this point the extent of the legislative base for much of what happens in special education in North America, as this base has implications to the literature to be reviewed. As Winzer and Mazurek (2000) point out:

The United States has a long history of relying on legislative and judicial remedies for social issues, including special education. In recent years, the federal government has played an increasingly prominent role in special education. Contemporary special education has been built largely on law; thus, the law defines the special education population to be served in infinite detail and strictly prescribes special education planning and implementation. (p.4)

In the United Kingdom the initial movement towards inclusion was supported by the Warnock Report, *Special Educational Needs: report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Children and Young People* (1978) and the resultant legislation of the Education Act (1981), followed by the Education Reform Act (1988) which included the implementation of the National Curriculum (Baker, 2009). In Australia the inclusion movement was initiated by the overseas experiences as well as by the Disability Services Act (1986) and the Disability Discrimination Act (1992). The NSW state government more recently confirmed its commitment to the principles of integration and inclusion of students with disabilities through the *People with Disabilities – Statement of Commitment* (2005a) and the *NSW DET Disability Action Plan 2004-2006 – NSW Disability Policy Framework* (2005b).

As reported earlier, it is not surprising that in light of the legislative tide driving inclusion, Crockett et al. (2009) found that in the United States the percentage of special education leadership research articles related to law and policy increased from 7.5% in 1970-1979 to 17.4% in the decade 1980-1989. Crockett et al. (2009) also reported that in the 2000-2009 decade this topic maintained a 17.8% share of the literature on special

education leadership. According to Mantle (2005), keeping well-informed on matters of special education law was of extreme importance to school leaders in avoiding substantial and complex pitfalls, and in guiding school-based policies and procedures.

There was also a substantial focus on the sharing of knowledge and skills between those educators with more special education experience and those with less. In the Australian context, several researchers emphasised the need for extending the expertise of special school teachers to those teaching in mainstream schools in order to assist in the effective implementation of inclusive practice and policy (Koop & Minchinton, 1995; McRae, 1996; Vinson et al., 2002). In the United Kingdom, Allan and Brown (2001) reported that special school principals considered that initiating and maintaining strong links with mainstream schools was extremely important, and that special school principals believed that the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 had assisted in establishing these links.

The task of successfully achieving this professional interaction between mainstream and special education, essentially the “engine” of the inclusion movement, became the target of leaders of both fields. Crockett (2007) referred to the “interface” of special education and educational leadership as the place where special education administration happened. She perceived that the interactions at this interface were overlapping and complex, and occurred within a range of contexts. Crockett noted in particular that there were increasing expectations on principals to collaborate with parents and other professionals to meet legal requirements. She noted too that principals were assuming more responsibility for students’ access to the curriculum, appropriate instruction, and for monitoring and accounting for student achievement.

This finding indicated that the accountability context of contemporary schools, as discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to general educational leadership, impacted similarly on the leadership in special education. This impact was felt along the full continuum of special education provisions. There was a revitalised focus, through the scrutiny of educational achievements of students with disabilities, on the role of the principal as an instructional leader (Crockett, 2007; DiPaola et al, 2004; Furney et al., 2005; Lashley, 2007). Steer (2008) reported that principals, as well as special education

and general education teachers, found themselves in this role as the complex and challenging nature of students with disabilities impacted on school programs and assessment practices. Bays and Crockett (2007) also emphasised the instructional role that special education leaders and school principals, in the inclusive model, were increasingly being assigned:

special education has become a major concern for school leaders, as their responsibilities have increased to ensure successful learning opportunities for all students, including students who have disabilities. (p.143)

Zaretsky et al. (2008) found that the concept of instructional leadership, in the special education domain, had evolved similarly to that reported by Robinson et al. (2008) in general education, as mentioned earlier. Zaretsky et al. (2008) noted that it included decision-making processes which were supported by data, and planning for school improvement with an emphasis on curriculum, assessment and instruction. Furthermore, they emphasised that a sense of caring, vision and courage was imbued in the principals' understandings and implementation of instructional leadership.

Burrello, Lashley and Beatty (2001) expressed concern over the implementation of "high standards policies and the accompanying testing mania" (p.189). They maintained that these developments have limited curriculum and forced schools to focus on those academics which are deemed measureable by the state-administered tests at the expense of other learning. In conceding that such policies and testing regimens have an inherent positive function, they nevertheless suggested that the pressure exerted on schools to achieve high student scores on the tests has diminished the importance of recognising diversity in learners, and how and at what rate they learn. Burrello et al. (2001) discussed the participation of students with disabilities in learner-centred schools, where the result is a more personalised approach to their learning. Within these schools, student involvement in individual project-based learning tasks is paramount to the curriculum design, and essential outcomes and personal learning goals, as components of the assessment process, are developed through whole school community dialogue. The decision-making process is a collective task. Burrello et al. (2001) indicated that the concept of leadership in this model of school is shared leadership, and

that the role of the school administrator (principal) is “to advocate for and communicate the school’s purposes, to facilitate the use of resources and networks that help the school accomplish its purposes, and to ensure that accountability is an integral part of school deliberations” (p.184). Burrello et al. (2001) also discussed the issue of evaluation of special education programs at both school and district level. They identified two major factors in this process: the importance of on-going and reflective practice, and the importance of making decisions based on sound data.

In their study involving three school districts in the south-eastern United States, Bays and Crockett (2007) found that a theoretical model of the principal’s role as a school instructional leader, in the context of inclusive education, could be constructed. First, they concluded that this role was assigned to the principal through school board policy. In the NSW public school context, this assignment is consistent with the DET’s (2000) key accountabilities document for principals *Leading and Managing the School*.

Second, it was the principal’s task to negotiate priorities including administrative, management and supervisory duties, which would support effective functioning of the school. This task incorporated the negotiation of legal compliance matters which related to both procedural and instructional issues for students with special needs. It also included a focus on the evaluation of teachers and the supervision of student instruction.

Third, there were contextual factors which affected the leadership in special education. These included systemic matters, such as school size and district support structures, and personal factors including the principal’s knowledge of and appreciation for special education, and the competence of the school’s special educators. The principal’s task was to balance these contextual factors with mediating priorities to achieve school outcomes.

Finally, the model proposed that principals, whilst being the primary supervisors of special education in their schools, were inclined to disperse responsibility among others, including the district’s director of special education and their schools’ special education teachers. This was accomplished through collaborative and consultative procedures.

Whilst the director of special education generally assisted with the coordination of professional learning opportunities and the provision of resources, the school special education teachers served as on-site support and mentors for their generalist colleagues.

Zaretsky et al. (2008) noted that principals in the inclusive education setting were acutely concerned with developing positive relationships. They concluded that personal and moral commitment, combined with strong collaborative skills to assist in distributing the knowledge necessary for effective student learning, were required of special education leaders:

The principals ... expressed an uncompromising commitment and belief that all children could learn, belong in, and contribute to a school community. They viewed differences as enriching their schools. They focused on the personal and interpersonal. Many saw themselves as problem-solvers, mediators, and facilitators of inclusive education. They also expressed an understanding of and appreciation for the expertise found among their staff. They articulated the importance of making strong connections between schools, homes, communities, and other agencies and organisations. Thus they were able to facilitate the distribution of knowledge and other valuable resources that would enhance the learning of all students The integration of multiple models of leadership appears to be necessary when leading and managing special education programs and services. (p.172)

Furney et al. (2005) identified several leadership themes which contributed to inclusive schools providing effective special education programs: fostering shared vision, planning, and decision-making processes; creating collaborative structures and processes; using data to make decisions about curriculum and instruction; and understanding and utilizing policy to create comprehensive systems at both school and district levels. Furney et al. (2005) commented that promoting a shared vision and commitment to improving all students' performance underpinned each of the other themes.

Additionally, Furney et al. (2005) noted that principals' demonstrated care about the value and success of all their students enabled them to establish their visions. They proposed that collaboration was the key to implementing vision, with effective principals showing a clear intention to establish and maintain collaborative processes through personal involvement and effective communication. Furney et al. (2005) reported that effective conflict management and resolution strategies were required of special education leaders, and that these strategies needed to concentrate on achieving child-focussed solutions. A strong emphasis on interpersonal relationships was important. This finding was replicated in the research of DiPaola et al. (2004) and Zaretsky et al. (2008).

In their study involving the input of "university-based experts", Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008) concluded that there were three "dispositions" which leaders must have in order to develop, lead and maintain inclusive schools. First, leaders must be able to see the big picture from a global theoretical perspective which focuses on social justice, equity and inclusion; second, leaders must create a bold, imaginative vision; third, leaders must possess a belief in their personal ability or power to effect the changes necessary to promote their inclusive work.

Stevenson-Jacobson et al. (2006) investigated principals' perceptions of critical skills required of special education administration. The principals were asked to select and rank ten competencies, from a list of 30, which were most needed in this role. Stevenson-Jacobson et al.'s (2006) statistical analysis indicated that nine items on the survey were considered required competencies: management of the education of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment; collaborative teaching strategies; comprehensive case study evaluation process; general and special education procedures; parents' rights; state and federal requirements; federal and state statutes affecting special education; recruitment, selection, orientation and supervision of staff; and listening, consensus building and conflict resolution.

Stevenson-Jacobson et al. (2006) compared the responses of principals with special education certification to those of principals without such certification or experience. They found that both sets of principals ranked "state and federal requirements" and

“federal and state statutes affecting special education” as the most important competencies. This result reflected a concern with legal and accountability developments in special education. Principals without special education experience ranked “managing education of students in the least restrictive environment” more highly than did the others, whilst both groups considered “parents’ rights”, “general and special education procedures”, “a case study evaluation process” and “listening, consensus building and conflict resolution” as reasonably highly ranked required competencies.

Stevenson-Jacobson et al. (2006) found that neither group of principals of their study considered “managing stress and personal well-being” and “collaboration with parents, community and agencies” as needed competencies. The lack of importance associated with the latter was particularly interesting to Stevenson-Jacobson et al. who considered that it clashed with other research findings.

Boscardin (2007) explored the notion of determining appropriate leadership roles in special education through the use of evidence-based practices, a process she described as “selecting leadership approaches that promise better outcomes for students under certain cultural and ecological conditions” (p.190). Boscardin cited a range of leadership styles (transformational, instructional, transactional, distributive, communities of practice and emerging alternative models) from which effective leadership activities could be identified, and confirmed by data, as contributing to an appropriate level of student achievement in any particular context. In order to construct a framework on which to implement such an investigation, school and/or systemic special education leaders needed to collect and analyse data to support problem-solving initiatives based on collaborative networks.

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), based in Virginia USA, is an international professional organisation for educators dedicated to improving outcomes for students with special needs. Its 2000 publication of the CEC Knowledge and Skills for Beginning Special Education Administrators (in *What Every Special Educator Must Know – The Standards for the Preparation and Licensure of Special Educators*, pp. 84-88) itemised 24 knowledge and 33 skills statements for special education leaders in the

inclusive educational context. These statements were the result of a robust research and validation schedule performed by the Knowledge and Skills Subcommittee (KSS) (CEC, 2000). The knowledge and skills statements fell into eight categories: philosophical, historical, and legal foundations of special education; characteristics of learners; assessment, diagnosis and evaluation; instructional content and practice; planning and managing the teaching and learning environment; managing student behaviour and social interaction skills, and communication and collaborative partnerships. The skills components formed the basis for Part B of the present study discussed in Chapter 3, and can be reviewed in their adapted form in Appendix A.

Wigle and Wilcox (1998) used an earlier edition of the CEC publication described above to investigate the existing competency levels of special education directors, special educators and general education administrators in the skills identified by the publication. Each group self-reported their levels of competency. Wigle and Wilcox (1998) compared the groups, and found that special education directors generally indicated themselves more competent than the special educators and the general education administrators across most of the skills. They did not explore the groups' opinions about the relative importance of the skills however.

A parent's perspective was brought to the issue by Wilhelm (2009). He described the fortunes of himself and his son with Asperger's syndrome through a period of ten years in which he attended a segregated setting beginning in pre-school, and then four years in an inclusive "Resource Specialist" high school program. Wilhelm was not only a parent of a child with disabilities, he was also a teacher and later a principal. His perspective, generated through his very personal experiences, is of unique interest.

Wilhelm (2009) noted that as a principal dealing with special education issues, he was forced to extensively develop his interpersonal skills to mediate in situations which involved parents and teachers. This role necessarily had implications for his relationships with both. He suggested several principal behaviours to promote and maintain positive relationships between the principal and parents, emphasising attitudes and practices related to the issues of parents' expectations, respect and empathy. In this regard, Wilhelm (2009) advised that principals should never tell parents they are

expecting too much, and that they should make eye contact with and refrain from interrupting them when they are talking at meetings. Principals should demonstrate respect and acknowledgement of parents as equals, and should not disparage their statements either when they make them or later in front of teachers. Wilhelm (2009) commented that empathy was essential and that principals should start working on resolving problems, and not discount them. He also advised that principals should not frustrate parents so that they enlist an advocate's support, but if they do, obtain systemic support for themselves.

The literature reviewed so far, by way of its inclusive education context, projected a substantial focus on the *interface* (Crockett, 2007, p. 140) of special education and educational leadership. Its inclusion adds richness and depth to this investigation, and in recognition of the dearth of literature related specifically to leadership skills in special schools, it provides a resource and foundation against which the following section of this literature review, specifically concerned with special school leadership, can be clarified and qualified.

2.4.3 Leadership in the Special School Setting

Rayner and Ribbins (1999) indicated that, as the scope of special education provision in mainstream education increased, there were lessons to be learned by mainstream principals from the leadership of special schools. They identified several features of special education leadership which differentiated it from mainstream education leadership. These features included a heightened focus on relationships and personal growth, the need for professional expertise and knowledge in disabilities, a focus on curriculum process rather than subject content, demonstrated teaching competence, experience in mainstream education, and a genuine regard for the value of education for students with disabilities.

Gurr et al.'s (2003) Australian case study research reported on a successful special school principal whose achievements were secured by instilling the school's vision in all staff, and ensuring appropriate resourcing with the support of the local business community. This principal valued extensive professional development for staff and

strong relationships with community and other educational groups. Her style of leadership involved a delegating component which was implemented through systemic leadership structures developed by collaborative processes. The principal reported that her interpersonal skills were critical to her success, and her decisions were always grounded in a belief in all students' rights to reach their potential. Gurr et al. attributed her success to "her total commitment to education and to the school community" (p.29).

In her study of a Queensland state special school, Driver (2006) highlighted the importance of the school's leadership focus on developing interpersonal relationships and empowering all school community members with the decision-making process. At the base of this focus was a set of shared values and beliefs upon which the school's vision was established. The school promoted an active collaboration between teaching teams, parents and the wider community including external organisations and agencies. It developed a risk-free environment in which the specific context and needs of the school were embedded in decision-making in order to maintain the relevance of the process, which necessarily included mandated systemic requirements, but integrated them with local priorities. The values based leadership focus led to shared strategic planning and implementation of programs, an enhanced school climate, a genuine sense of belonging amongst all school community members, and improved student and workplace outcomes.

Male and Male (2001) asked special school principals in the UK how prepared they believed they were for their roles, and what had contributed to their levels of preparedness. They indicated a range of levels of preparedness from inadequate to adequate, and when they were adequately prepared they attributed this to experience alone or a combination of experience and training. Principals were also asked to nominate any unique challenges in the special school context which influenced their roles as principals. Principals nominated the nature of the student population, and particularly the prevalence in this population of extremely challenging behaviour, degenerative and life-threatening conditions, emotional and/or physical vulnerability, and significant cognitive delay. Principals indicated that in dealing with these issues, they needed to be particularly capable in the areas of health and safety, people

management, curriculum planning and management, as well as having a deep understanding of other appropriate service providers to support their students.

Baker (2009) also reported on the challenges which special schools' head teachers (principals) indicated were of most concern to them in their leadership roles. Their findings provide an interesting contrast to those noted above by Male and Male (2001), and one can ponder the effects of the changes in special education during the nine years between studies, on the studies' outcomes. From a sample size of nine, Baker (2009) found that at the top of the list, 77% of principals indicated that the pressure of relentless school improvement was a significant challenge, and 66% of principals indicated that bureaucracy, constant change, insufficient funding, and maintaining an appropriate private life and work balance, were each challenging aspects of their job. In dealing with the challenges presented them, 66% of the principals responded that they used the support of their leadership teams and other colleagues inside and outside of the school. Other support means also identified by 22% of the group were exercise, family and friends, counselling, and a personal philosophy. Baker (2009) reported that there were several strong implications from his study for principals of special schools: they should build and communicate a strong school vision, maintain professional development of staff, pay attention to their own balance of work with private life, use supportive colleagues and other professional help that suit, and work with mainstream schools in supporting the mainstream students with special needs.

Dobbins and Abbott (2009) investigated the issue of relationships with parents and school effectiveness. They sought parents' perspectives on the factors in special schools which both inhibited and assisted the development of effective parent-school relationships. They reported that parents indicated a marked keenness to work collaboratively with the schools, and that they considered the parent-teacher-school relationship very highly. Parents considered school staff's personal characteristics which were related to empathy, motivation and friendliness as critical contributors to an effective interpersonal relationship. Dobbins and Abbott (2009) found that schools needed to engage more with the views of parents at both interpersonal and organisational levels, and importantly to realise that parents had an emotional

involvement with the issues, often reported to be based in feelings of isolation and grief. As they reported in relation to the characteristics of individual school staff, parents identified similar attributes of warmth, approachability and flexibility in the wider school organisation and school climate as conditions to develop positive relationships, and noted that inconsistency of practice, particularly in home-school communications and differing staff opinions on student ability and behaviour, were areas of concern. Noto (2005) also reported on parents' perceptions of the critical importance of positive home-school relationships, built and maintained on mutual respect, in a special school for students with autism spectrum disorders.

Dobbins and Abbott's (2009) and Noto's (2005) findings have implications for the role of principals in special schools. Since parents consider their relationship with the school as critically important, principals have the challenge of assembling a genuinely shared home-school vision, which incorporates positive and effective interaction between parents and school in both organisational, and most importantly, interpersonal senses, and making sure that this vision is implemented in daily school operations.

Oyinlade (2006) investigated the behavioural qualities essential for successful principalship of schools for students with visual impairments. Ten experts within the context of schools for students with visual impairments constructed an 18-item questionnaire which presented their collective opinion of what was required of principals in these schools. The questionnaire was administered to a respondent group of teachers working in schools for students with visual impairments. The teachers were also requested to rate the performance of their respective school principal on the 18 items of the scale. Responses showed that teachers rated the skills of good listening, being honest and ethical, and treating people equally and fairly, respectively, as the three most essential principal behaviours. Also of relative importance from the perspective of teachers, was the ability to help create an environment where staff was happy to work and achieve agreed goals, the provision of support to staff, and shared decision-making. Of least essentiality, the teachers rated knowledge of policies, a commitment to and demonstration of being hardworking, and fiscal efficiency.

O'Brien (2007) investigated those aspects of leadership which were particularly critical to success in the special education context. He interviewed sixty-four international educators with responsibility within their organisations for special education provision. O'Brien (2007) used the NSW DET's Leadership Capability Framework (2003), developed as a result of Scott's (2003) research, as the basis for his semi-structured interviews. He concluded that interpersonal and personal skills and attributes were considered the most important contributors to successful special education leadership. Specifically, the findings indicated an emphasis on productive relationships within and beyond the school community, and a focus on personal qualities of flexibility, resilience, a sense of humour, creative thinking and a willingness to "give of yourself". Additionally, remaining calm, accepting and encouraging change, and accepting challenges with optimism were regarded as important abilities. O'Brien (2007) also noted that interviewees expressed strong links between developing productive relationships with staff, inspiring staff, and professional development of that staff.

2.4.4 Summary of Special Education Leadership

Several themes have emerged from the literature as it relates to both the inclusive and the special school settings. First, there is a distinct emphasis on the principal's involvement in the development and communication of the school's vision, and in the level of commitment consequently demonstrated to it. This involvement is reported to be linked closely to the principal's personal abilities which include a genuine regard and respect for all students with equal rights to achieve their potential as learners and community members. This attribute displays a sense of caring for students and others in the school community, and has a moral and ethical foundation which serves as a basis for other contributing components of successful leadership.

Second, interpersonal abilities were regarded equally highly. These abilities centred quite clearly on the initiation, development and maintenance of positive relationships with all members of the school community, including staff, parents and others who were in or could potentially be in supportive positions. However little attention was given to the development of relationships with students. The research pointed to the effectiveness of a collaborative approach involving all school community members in

tasks involving planning and decision making, including the provision of resources. Parents' indicated that staff and organisational "warmness" were important contributors to positive relationships.

The third area of ability for effective special education leadership suggested by the literature is that of instructional leadership, where it has been highlighted by the international focus on the assessment and reporting of student achievement linked to accountability reforms. This emphasis is understandable as educational leaders, their teachers and other staff work in both inclusive and special school settings to ensure all students meet prescribed standards. The literature illustrated the compatibility of an instructional style of leadership with a relationship based model of implementation, and noted the importance of resourcing staff and students appropriately, and paying attention primarily to curriculum process rather than subject content. This ability has also been linked with a measure of moral and ethical authority based on the principal's demonstrated and genuine belief in the value of all students, their rights to achieve their individual potential, and their ability to learn.

As the current study is in part a comparative study with that of Scott (2003), the next section will review that research.

2.5 Scott's (2003) Research: Leadership Capability

Cranston et al. (2007) made the point that in following up trends in educational research, education systems have now generally structured their leadership frameworks and leadership development programs on dimensions of leadership, rather than listing competencies which one either has or has not, which are devoid of context, and which suggest segmented and unrelated components. Scott's (2003) study *Learning Principals – Leadership capability and learning research in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training* was a step in this direction.

Scott (2003) sought to produce a leadership capability framework by which the NSW DET could prepare and develop its principals, and also identify the most effective forms of principals' professional learning and support. The information which guided his investigation was sourced from Australian and international studies on professional and

vocational competence and expertise, research on effective leadership and change in education, and previous University of Technology Sydney (UTS) research of successful educational practice. Scott also utilised an analysis of extensive Masters of Education workplace research projects over seventeen years, and two years of extensive “exploratory workshops” within the NSW state school system. These studies provided the conceptual and operative framework for the investigation.

Through a systematic and triangulated selection process, Scott identified 322 principals who met the effectiveness criteria determined jointly by the NSW DET, the NSW Secondary Principals Council, and the NSW Primary Principals Association. He then interviewed a small group of the identified principals to not only gather some initial qualitative data, but also to determine whether the items on the primary data-gathering tool for his enquiry, an on-line survey, were valid and appropriate for the respondents. This survey had been tentatively constructed through the initial information-gathering component of the project, and its final version was pending input from the interview phase.

The administered survey asked principals to rate the importance of 45 abilities to their successful school leadership on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (low) to 5 (high). These abilities were grouped under the category titles of *My personal abilities*, *My interpersonal abilities*, *My intellectual abilities*, and *My specific skills and knowledge*. They were also asked to rate the same abilities on the extent to which they had been addressed in their prior professional learning. A further 12 items were included in Scott's (2003) survey which enquired into the relevance of principal development programs, however these items were not included in the scope of the current investigation. Qualitative data were also sought through a range of directed questions and opportunities to make further comments.

In his results, Scott (2003) found that while principals rated all of the 45 items as between 4 and 5 on the scale, that is, that they were either important or very important, they nonetheless made some distinctions. Six of the 12 highest ranking abilities for successful school leadership came from the *personal abilities* set and three came from the *interpersonal abilities* set. Of the remaining three abilities in the 12 highest ranked,

two were from the *intellectual set* and one from the *specific skills and knowledge* set. As mentioned previously, the principals ranked the sets of abilities in order of most importance to least importance as *personal*, *interpersonal*, *intellectual* and *specific skills and knowledge*. Scott reported that these results, that is an emphasis on *personal* and *interpersonal* skills, have been duplicated in all studies of professional capability that UTS research teams and others have been involved in. Chapter 4 illustrates Scott's findings in comparison to those of the present study.

Yet, considering that all 45 items were rated by principals as at least important, Scott (2003), through his analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, concluded that it was the interconnectedness of the abilities in all areas that contributed to effective leadership:

it is the combined effect of attributes from every area ... that makes the difference ... when something goes wrong the principal needs to be able to remain calm and keep things in perspective (Emotional Intelligence: Personal) to deal with what is often a situation with a serious human conflict dimension by showing empathy and listening to different points of view (Emotional Intelligence: Interpersonal), in order to sort out what is the key issue in the welter of factors which are at play (Intellectual Abilities) and, from this diagnosis, to identify and effectively implement the appropriate mix of generic and job-specific skills and knowledge. (p.21)

As a result of Scott's (2003) research, the NSW DET subsequently developed, in partnership with UTS, a *School Leadership Capability Framework* (2003). This framework incorporated five domains of school leadership capability: *personal*; *interpersonal*; *educational*; *strategic* and *organisational*. These domains were interconnected and underpinned by "three higher order leadership skills": *stance (emotional intelligence)*; *ways of thinking*; and *diagnostic maps*. This framework is currently in use for the principal development program in the NSW DET.

2.6 Summary of the Literature

It is clear from the literature that a strong moral and ethical foundation, a commitment to developing a shared vision with the school community, and a mission to develop and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, are each regarded as important components of successful school leadership in both mainstream and special education contexts. What is equally clear from the literature in both contexts is that there is a need for principals to be actively engaged in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the school's instructional program, that is, the school's focus on teaching and learning, on the way things are taught and learned at school. This focus included recognition of the value of professional learning.

The literature indicates that the evolution of a global educational landscape has prompted shifts in the priorities of national and state educational systems which have resulted in significant adjustments to the way principals of schools lead their schools. The contemporary principal's task has been portrayed by the literature as a complex task. It requires the blending of skills and knowledge bases in a way which meets the accountability demands of current educational reform agendas, while at the same time manages the impact of the change process on the people who count - the students, teachers, parents and other members of the school community.

This chapter has suggested that the route to successful educational leadership is common to both mainstream and special education settings. However, one variation between the settings is worthy of note. The literature pertaining to special education leadership in the inclusive setting pays more attention to legal issues than does that pertaining to leadership in the special school setting or the mainstream setting. This may well be explained more by the specificity of this body of literature, than by any difference in importance of the issue, or the skills of the leader in relation to the issue, attributed to it by educational leaders from each setting. Further investigation is needed to clarify this issue.

2.7 The Importance of the Study

The literature reviewed indicated that no empirical study had investigated the differences in leadership requirements between mainstream and special education, particularly in the special school context. Additionally, the literature reviewed was based on either theoretical commentary or, in the case of empirical studies, it tended to come from a singular group of informants within the organisation.

The present study suggested that these issues should be addressed. It examined the differences in leadership requirements between the mainstream and special school settings by a direct comparison of data gathered from the principals in each setting. It explored reasons for these differences, and gathered the data for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Furthermore, it gathered a rich and deep collection of data by investigating the perspectives of four separate groups of participants from within the special school organisation: the principals, the teachers, the support staff and the parents.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Basis of the Research

As discussed in Chapter 1, this research extends the combined work of Scott (2003) and the NSW DET Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate (2003), published respectively in the documents *Learning Principals: leadership capability and learning research in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training*, and the *School Leadership Capability Framework*.

Scott's (2003) focus was on identifying those abilities which were considered by successful school principals as most important to their success, and assessing the relative strength of a range of abilities to successful school leadership. He also investigated the extent to which previous professional training and development had focused on each capability. Scott's (2003) survey respondents were identified by a criteria-based process jointly implemented by the NSW DET and the NSW primary and secondary principals' professional associations. Amongst the respondents were principals of high schools, primary schools, central schools and schools for specific purposes. The latter group of respondents formed a significantly low proportion of total respondents, and efforts by the present author to extract the data supplied by this group were unsuccessful due to ethical considerations.

The present research specifically investigated the leadership abilities required for principals of SSPs. It made three basic assumptions not considered by the work of Scott (2003) and the NSW DET (2003): 1) that there may be a different balance of leadership abilities required in SSPs than in mainstream settings, or indeed there may exist unique components of the suite of leadership skills required in the special education setting; 2) that all principals of schools, regardless of others' assessments of their effectiveness, have valuable opinions of the abilities required to successfully lead a school; and 3) that teachers, support staff and parents of students, as critical components of school communities, can provide a worthwhile contribution to our understanding of leadership abilities through their own perspectives. The latter two assumptions were supported by Gurr et al. (2003): "The reliance on principals as the primary source of data about

principal leadership limits our understanding...it may lead to ill-founded conclusions” (p.22). Day et al. (2000) gave support to this viewpoint in stating:

When researchers do turn their attention to alternative perspectives they prove to be rich sources of data ... by failing to draw upon the different ‘perspectives’ provided by students, teachers and others, previous research has ignored a plethora of evidence about both the ‘production’ and the ‘consumption’ of leadership in schools. (p.29)

3.2 The Research Questions

The research questions for the study were formulated to focus the investigation of the issue of leadership abilities in special education on those people intrinsically involved in the education of students with disabilities. In the context of NSW public schools, those schools which exist exclusively for the purpose of providing for the educational needs of this group of children are known as SSPs. The information was gathered from the principals, the teachers, the support staff and the parents of the students enrolled in these schools. The questions were constructed to assist educators already in or aspiring to be in leadership positions in special education.

Research Question 1

What leadership abilities do SSP principals believe are more important in the special school setting than mainstream principals believe are important in the mainstream setting?

Research Question 2

What differences are there between the perceptions of SSP principals, teachers, support staff and parents of students attending SSPs on the abilities required for successful leadership of SSPs?

Research Question 3:

What characteristics of SSPs do SSP principals believe make the leadership requirements of an SSP principal different from those of a mainstream principal?

3.3 Study Design

The study was a mixed method design, utilising quantitative and qualitative methods but with the emphasis on the quantitative approach. This method has been described by Creswell (1994, p.186) as “a dominant-less dominant design”, and by Creswell (2009) as a concurrent embedded design in which ‘the qualitative methods are embedded within a quantitative design’ (p.210). The purposes of this approach were 1) to triangulate the data; 2) to support the dominant quantitative data with the qualitative data; and 3) to expand the scope and breadth of the study with richer and more individually responsive qualitative data from the respondents. The dominance of the quantitative paradigm was illustrated by 1) the data collected by the Likert-type scale of the survey in Parts A, B and C and their statistical analyses; 2) the statistical comparison of the data collected in the Scott (2003) study with that collected in the present study Part A principals only; 3) the statistical analyses of numeric data in Parts A, B and C; and 4) the frequency counts of the qualitative data collected in the section of Part C of the survey which enquired into the most challenging aspects of the principalship of an SSP.

The less dominant paradigm was the qualitative method illustrated by 1) the collection of qualitative data in Parts A, B and C of the survey from respondents for each item of the survey, and a general comment at the end of each part of the survey; 2) in Part C for principal completion only, the collection of qualitative data to identify the most challenging aspects of being a principal of an SSP, and to describe, by analogy, what it is like to be a principal of an SSP; and 3) the integration of qualitative data into the analysis of data from Parts A, B and C. These procedures are discussed later in this chapter.

3.4 The Survey

The survey was constructed in three parts: Parts A, B and C. All parts of the survey requested responses to items on a 5-point Likert-type scale, and invited comments from respondents to justify, explain or add further information.

3.4.1 The Survey – *Part A*

Part A inquired into the respondents' opinions of 45 abilities which made up the four sets of abilities identified by Scott (2003) as *personal*, *interpersonal*, *intellectual* and *specific skills and knowledge*. This part was completed by principals, teachers, support staff and parents. It is a modified extraction of the on-line survey administered by Scott (2003) as his Phase 2 data-gathering instrument, developed after an initial round of semi-structured interviews (Phase 1) with expert respondents to ensure its relevance, clarity and level of engagement (Scott, 2003, p.8). With specific permission from and encouragement by Scott to use his on-line survey as a basis for the current survey, it was modified to include an appropriate introduction to each of the four sets of abilities. The introduction posed a focus question and described the procedure for completion as illustrated in Figure 3.1 which is extracted from the principal survey. The complete surveys for all groups of respondents are provided in Appendix A.

Figure 3.1 Example of Introduction to Sections of Part A

Principal Response

Part A

Personal abilities

Focus Question: How important are these personal qualities for effective leadership of an SSP?

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Being willing to face and learn from my errors and listen openly to feedback | | | | | | | |
| 2. Understanding my personal strengths and limitations | | | | | | | |

For teachers, support staff and parents an additional procedural statement was included to ensure clarity of the purpose of the survey as illustrated in Table 3.2. It was important to include this statement at the beginning of each section of the survey to ensure the validity of the survey tool.

Figure 3.2 Additional Procedural Statement for Teachers, Support Staff and Parents

Note that this is not an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

Other features of the present survey which were modified from Scott's (2003) survey were: 1) the substitution of the grammatical first person with the third person in relevant survey items for teachers, support staff and parents, e.g. "my own on-going professional learning" became "his/her own on-going professional learning"; 2) the translation in the *specific skills and knowledge* abilities set of "pedagogical knowledge and skill" into "knowledge about and skill in the art of teaching" in support staff and parent surveys; and 3) the elimination of the survey component requesting respondents to assess the most relevant forms of training and development offered to enhance the abilities listed as items in the survey. This component was irrelevant to the research questions of the current investigation.

3.4.2 The Survey – Part B

Part B, also completed by principals, teachers, support staff and parents, was based on the skills identified by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC, 2000) as being important for administrators in special education. The CEC, through the Professional Standards and Practice Standing Committee (PSPSC), established the first Knowledge and Skills Subcommittee (KSS) in 1989, and this committee's work led to the publication of the CEC Knowledge and Skills for Beginning Special Education Administrators (2000), reviewed in Chapter 2. This publication provided the foundation for *Part B* in which the CEC list of 33 skills was reduced to 28 items, a reduction based on issues of transferability and relevance to the specific context of the NSW DET. This procedure was also regarded as important to maintain an appropriate level of user-friendliness in the survey. In some instances the specific descriptions of the skills were modified to accommodate and reflect the NSW DET context, as well as incorporating educational and organisational terminology more attuned to the local Australian context. Discussion and contributions were sought and received through a network of five experienced SSP principal colleagues to accomplish this task, including trialling *Part B*.

For ease of analysis and data presentation, the 28 items of *Part B* of the survey were organised into the sets of abilities nominated by Scott (2003), *personal*, *interpersonal*, *intellectual* and *specific skills and knowledge*, but with the addition of a fifth set *inclusive practice skills*. The concept of inclusion has been discussed previously in

Chapter 2, and it is fair to say that at the time of publication of the CEC Knowledge and Skills for Beginning Special Education Administrators by the Council for Exceptional Children (2000), this policy was a strong focus of the special education community in the United States. The definitive nature of the descriptions of some of these skills reflected this strong focus and warranted this fifth set's addition to the skills collection. Note that the term 'skills' was substituted for 'abilities' to maintain the integrity of the reference to the CEC publication.

It is acknowledged that the initial allocation of each of the 28 skills to one of the five skills sets was the result of a principally arbitrary and subjective process. This determination, which followed contributions by a network of colleagues to the construction of the final list of CEC items to be included in the survey, was supported by the author's 25 years experience as a special educator, and five years as an SSP principal. This process took into account any evident duplication with skills in already existing sets designed by Scott (2003), and accounted for implied skills or abilities thoughtfully extracted from the strictness of the skills' descriptions. After the initial allocation of skills to each of the five sets, Part B of the survey was trialled by a network of colleagues and suggestions were responded to. This trialling procedure was regarded as a checking process, and was implemented to ensure that the potential for a skewing effect on the respondents, potentially initiated by the allocation of CEC items to specific skills sets, was minimised. Bearing in mind that this process in no way affected the outcomes of the statistical tests employed in the data analysis, and that its purpose was primarily to present the data in a concise manner with cross-referencing potential, then it presented as a useful tool to further the investigation. Specifically, it allowed for a comparison with the analyses of the data of Part A so that similarities and differences could be identified, and at the same time provided a consistency in survey format which served to maintain respondent engagement with it. Additionally, while items were analysed collectively as skills sets, they were also analysed and discussed as independent skills, and there is no reason to believe, from the data collected, that the allocation of skills to each of the skills sets had any skewing effect on the respondents.

At the beginning of Part B of the survey for teachers, support staff and parents, the procedural statement as indicated in Table 3.2 was again included to ensure clarity of the task and validity of the survey tool.

3.4.3 The Survey – Part C

Part C, completed only by principals, was designed through the professional collaboration of a network of principals of SSPs with a range of experience in both special education and mainstream settings. Contributions were invited from this collegial network to identify those characteristics of SSPs which differentiated them from mainstream schools and which might also indicate differentiated leadership abilities required. From these contributions a list of 20 characteristics was collated for the items in the 5-point Likert-type response for Part C of the survey, and a component requesting a ranking of the three most influential characteristics on leadership skill requirements was included. Additional qualitative data were sought, including nominations from principals of the most challenging aspects of being an SSP principal, and the duplication of an item from the Scott (2003) research seeking the proposition of an analogy to the respondent's position as an SSP principal. Part C was trialled by a network of colleagues.

The purpose of including Part C was to extract the essential and most important characteristics of SSPs contributing to any differentiated leadership ability requirements between the two educational settings. It was proposed through the inclusion of Part C that a deeper understanding of the contributing impact of the *specific purposes* of SSPs might illuminate any findings in previous parts of the survey.

3.5 Procedure

The intention to survey was initially advertised at a professional development presentation to SSP principals, and then by email to SSP principals through the established NSW SSP principals network. A time frame was established for distribution of the survey, and then a further email was sent to all SSP principals on the listserve network with the information regarding the research (Appendix B) and a consent form to be faxed back (Appendix C). This information gave a comprehensive

description of the research, including the contribution that teachers, support staff and parents of children at the school were invited to make to the project, and confirmation of both the University of Wollongong's Human Research Ethics Committee's and the NSW DET's approval. Two survey packages were consequently mailed to all school communities whose principals submitted consent forms. One package sent to the school principal included information letters (Appendix D) and surveys (Appendix A) for teachers, support staff and parents (Appendix D), and a principal's package letter (Appendix E). The second package was sent to the secretary of the school's Parents and Citizens Committee, with surveys for parents (Appendix A) and a letter for the committee's secretary (Appendix F). A return date for all surveys was nominated for three weeks time.

One week later, a follow-up email was sent to principals again requesting their personal and their school community's involvement in the research. At this time, all SSP principals who were not subscribers to the SSP principals email network were contacted by individual DET email, and their personal and their school community's participation were invited through the same information package distributed in the earlier correspondence. In total, 106 school communities were invited to contribute to the data collection.

Two weeks later, a thank you letter and a final reminder was sent by email to all principals and school community members for their participation. The survey return date was extended for three weeks, and a Staff and Parent Notice Board poster (Appendix G) requesting all survey returns to be completed within that time was distributed.

During the time from the initial message to principals and the final closing date of return, two queries about research approval and several concerning the appropriateness of replacing randomly selected staff members who were on leave or had left the service were received. After the final closing date for replies, a thank you message was sent to the 29 participating schools and their Parents and Citizens Committees, or parent respondents.

3.6 Participants

All principals of NSW DET SSPs were invited to participate, either in the first round of emails sent via the email network or by the following contact made to those not subscribers.

Teacher and support staff respondents were randomly assigned through the NSW DET directory service staff data base. Parents were invited through the schools' respective Parents and Citizens Committees or in the case where no Parents and Citizens Committee existed, through the principal's allocation to parents whom they adjudged would likely prove to be potential respondents.

In the package sent to principals who gave consent for their schools to be involved were information sheets, surveys and reply paid addressed return envelopes for themselves, three randomly selected teachers and three randomly selected support staff. In the package sent to the Parents and Citizens Committee Secretary were three envelopes, each with information sheet, survey and reply paid addressed return envelope enclosed for parent respondents. In any school where there was not an existing Parents and Citizens Committee, the principal was requested to allocate parent respondents.

3.7 Response Rates

As mentioned in 3.5, 106 school communities were invited to participate in the data collection. The invitation was sent only to school principals. At this point of the sampling procedure, in line with NSW DET policy, no invitation was sent to any other members of the school communities. There were no data collected to indicate if school communities, in collaboration with their principal, contributed in the decision to participate or not. Hence the response rate is reported in two stages. The First Stage Response Rate (Table 3.3) reports on the response rate of principals accepting the invitation for their schools to participate in the study. The Second Stage Response Rate (Table 3.4) reports on the response rate of all school community members who were sent surveys following their principal's acceptance of the invitation. All surveys were returned in reply paid envelopes or, in two cases, by fax. Note that response rates are rounded to the nearest 1%.

Table 3.3 First Stage Response Rate

| Principals Accepting Invitation to Participate (N=106) | |
|---|-----|
| No. | % |
| 29 | 27% |

Table 3.4 Second Stage Response Rates*

| Principals 1 per school (N = 29) | | Teachers 3 per school (N = 87) | | Support Staff 3 per school (N = 87) | | Parents 3 per school (N = 87) | | Total (N = 290) | |
|---|-----|---|-----|--|-----|--|-----|----------------------------|-----|
| No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| 26 | 90% | 56 | 64% | 45 | 52% | 42 | 48% | 169 | 58% |

* Note: Some very small schools had less than three teachers and/or less than three support staff. This affected response rates. The nature of some schools, specifically hospital schools which operate within less traditional organisational structures, also impacted response rates.

3.8 Collation and Treatment of the Data

Quantitative data were treated several ways dependent on the statistical outcome required. Both SPSS Version 13.0 and Microsoft Excel were utilised to perform statistical procedures. For each of these statistical software programs, raw data were entered manually direct from the completed surveys, and functions subsequently performed as required and discussed in 3.9. In Part A which compared mainstream principals with SSP principals, manual calculation of t-values was required as the complete data from Scott's (2003) research were unavailable, and hence statistical software packages could not be utilised.

Qualitative data were recorded manually. For Parts A, B and C all survey comments for all items from each group of respondents were transcribed onto a common survey sheet for each group. Individual comments were separated by a semicolon (;) or a new line. Where a comment was essentially replicated by another respondent, an asterisk (*) was recorded to indicate. A comment was considered a replicated comment if a further

comment submitted by another respondent was identical to the previous comment recorded, or if a further comment referred only to the essential component or theme of the previous comment recorded. General comments at the end of each section of Parts A, B and C were recorded similarly. For example, the teacher comments on the first item in the *interpersonal* set of abilities in Part A of the survey were recorded as follows in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Example of Recording of Respondents' Comments in Parts A, B and C

| | Comments |
|---|--|
| 1. The ability to empathise with and work productively with people from a wide range of backgrounds | Others see things you miss; wide diversity includes taxi drivers, large no. of TAS & volunteers; people from wide range of backgrounds*; everyone is equal; parents, aides, other professionals and volunteers |

Respondents' comments which were about issues presented by the items, but not related to the investigation of their importance to leadership, were discarded over two rounds of scrutiny and collation.

3.9 Analysis of the Data

This section is reported in three parts: the analyses for Part A, Part B and Part C.

3.9.1 Analysis of Data from Part A

Three analyses were conducted on the data from Part A of the survey as described in the sections following. This part of the survey required respondents to assign a level of importance to effective SSP leadership for each of the 45 abilities identified previously in the research of Scott (2003), and to add additional comments to justify their ratings or to provide further information.

3.9.1.1 Comparing Mainstream Principals with SSP Principals

The first analysis was concerned with the comparison between the two groups of principals, i.e. Scott's (2003) predominantly mainstream principals and O'Brien's exclusively SSP principals, for each ability in each of the four sets - *personal*, *interpersonal*, *intellectual* and *specific skills and knowledge*. The intrinsic value of this

analysis was that it compared the perceptions of one group of principals with those of another group of principals, each group operating in a distinct educational setting. Scott's data were obtained from *Learning Principals: leadership capability and learning research in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training* (2003).

A t-test was conducted to test whether the SSP principals' mean scores for each item were significantly different from those of the mainstream principal population. As the measures of variance from Scott's research were unavailable, it was necessary to assume that variances of the SSP and mainstream principals were equal, allowing the conduct of a 2-sample independent t-test assuming equal variances. An alternative approach for testing for difference in means was to treat the mainstream principals as a population and utilise the variation measure provided by the sample of SSP principals. As both methods yielded the same findings, only the 2-sample independent t-test assuming equal variances test results are reported.

With regard to the comparison of rankings, both Scott's research and the current research assigned rankings to each ability according to mean score – the higher the mean, the higher the ranking. The highest ranked ability was assigned ranking 1, the lowest ranked ability was assigned ranking 45. To assign a measure of significance to the gap between SSP and mainstream principals' rankings of abilities according to mean scores, an arbitrary 20% difference in ranking score was considered significant. Over the collection of 45 items, this equated to a ranking difference of nine ranking points. This analysis did not compare qualitative data collected in the two studies as the complete qualitative data set from the Scott (2003) study was unavailable due to ethical considerations.

The analysis in this section also collated and compared the top 10 specific abilities for each principal group, calculated and compared the relative importance of the four sets of abilities and the mean rankings of the four sets of abilities between principal groups, and calculated the proportion of items in each set of abilities scored higher by each group of principals. See Chapter 4.

3.9.1.2 Comparing Groups of SSP Participants

This analysis involved the data collected from the four groups of respondents from SSP communities, that is, the principals, the teachers, the support staff and the parents of students enrolled in SSPs, and compared those groups' perceptions of the role of the principal in SSP settings. This analysis used a Pearson Chi-Square analysis to compare the four groups in terms of the proportion of respondents that rated each of the abilities as being of high importance. The results are reported in the tables in Chapter 4 for each of the four sets of abilities: *personal*, *interpersonal*, *intellectual* and *specific skills and knowledge* sets. In this analysis the qualitative data, provided by respondents in the form of additional comments, were used to inform, clarify and enrich statistical results.

As with the comparison between mainstream principals and SSP principals, this analysis also examined the top 10 specific abilities for each of the groups of SSP respondents, and the relative importance of the four sets of abilities for each SSP group. See Chapter 4.

3.9.1.3 Comparing All Groups

Comparisons of the statistically significant differences between the mainstream principals and SSP principals on the one hand, and those between the four SSP groups on the other hand, were also conducted in each of the abilities sets. However, these comparisons are regarded as informal, since different statistical tests were used to determine the results in each of the previous analyses, that is, through a 2 sample independent t-test in the comparison between mainstream and SSP principals, and a Pearson Chi-Square analysis in the comparison between the SSP groups. It must be remembered that an analysis of proportions by Pearson Chi-Square was not possible for the analysis of mainstream principals and SSP principals because Scott's (2003) proportions of respondents were unavailable. These comparisons are included in the results reported for the SSP groups in Chapter 4 with respect to each set of abilities. They are regarded as useful contributors to the comprehensive nature of the study.

3.9.2 Analysis of the Data from Part B

As in 3.9.1.2, this analysis involved the data collected from the four groups of respondents from SSP communities, that is, the principals, the teachers, the support staff and the parents of students enrolled in SSPs. It compared those groups' perceptions of the relative importance of the skills identified by the CEC (2000) and included in the survey Part B as reported in Chapter 2. The analysis involved using a Pearson Chi-Square analysis to compare the four groups in terms of the proportion of respondents that rated each of the skills as being of high importance. The results are reported for each of the five sets of skills as explained in 3.4.2: *personal, interpersonal, intellectual, specific skills and knowledge* and *inclusive practice skills* sets.

This analysis also examined the top 10 specific skills for each of the groups of SSP respondents, and the relative importance of the four sets of abilities for each SSP group. See Chapter 4.

Qualitative data were used to inform, clarify and enrich statistical results in the analysis of data from Part B.

3.9.3 Analysis of the Data from Part C

Part C of the survey was completed only by SSP principals. It enquired as to the extent that each item in a list of characteristics of SSPs, identified through collegial collaboration of a network of SSP principals as mentioned earlier in this chapter, made the leadership requirements of an SSP principal different from those of a mainstream principal. Principals were asked, in common with the survey procedures for Parts A and B, to rate each item on a Likert-scale continuum from *low* to *high*, and then in a more selective process, to nominate the three most influential SSP characteristics on the differentiation in leadership requirements between the two contexts. Comments were sought in each step.

Secondly, Part C of the survey sought qualitative data about the most challenging aspects of SSP principalship, and how these aspects differentiate the job from that of a mainstream principal. Finally, replicating a component of Scott's (2003) survey, it

asked principals to provide an analogy describing “what it is like to be a principal in a school like yours” and to add any further comments.

There are several sets of analyses of data from Part C.

- 1) In the initial analysis, individual principal ratings of each SSP characteristic were collated to calculate the proportion of the SSP principal population which attributed the *high* rating to each characteristic. These results are reported in Chapter 4.
- 2) To offer confirmation of any trends exposed in the initial analysis, a simple collation procedure was then implemented to examine the SSP principals' nominations for the three most influential SSP characteristics on differentiated leadership requirements. Points of 3, 2 and 1 respectively were allocated to the items identified by each principal as most influential, second most influential and third most influential. The totals for each nominated item were calculated, and collectively the three most influential characteristics were extracted. These results are reported in Chapter 4.
- 3) In examining the data collected when SSP principals were asked to nominate the most challenging aspects of being an SSP principal, categories of responses were assigned and comments collated, according to content and frequency, to assist in the analysis of the data. When a response overlapped categories, the response was recorded in both categories. Scores were recorded as the frequency of the category of the comment, not the number of respondents making the category of the comment. These results are illustrated in Chapter 4.
- 4) There were several approaches to the use of qualitative data in the analysis of Part C. Where appropriate to clarify, enrich or illustrate statistical results, they were integrated into the quantitative analyses. They also functioned as primary columns of information, responding to the specific tasks of the survey component from which they were sourced, and to which frequency counts were applied as illustrated in Chapter 4. Third, qualitative data served as triangulation mechanisms to provide confirmation of other results.

3.10 Validity of the Study

This study's validity was reinforced by 1) the strength of its basis in the work of Scott (2003) in both content and survey design for Part A, in survey design for Part B, and in survey design and some content in Part C ; 2) the contribution to the study by the research of the CEC (2002) which provided the content for the items of Part B of the survey; 3) the input of a network of professional colleagues as experts, which contributed to the content of Parts B and C, and trialled Parts B and C, in each instance providing feedback through professional dialogue which was incorporated into both survey content and format, as described in 3.4.2 and 3.4.3; and 4) the triangulation of data provided by the collection and integrated analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the results of Parts A, B and C of the survey. In each of these parts quantitative data were collected using a 5-point Likert-scale as described in Chapter 3, and qualitative data were sought and provided throughout by way of voluntary comments.

Part A of the survey, based on the survey conducted by Scott (2003) with mainstream school principals, enquired into the importance of a range of abilities to successful leadership in SSPs. It was completed by four groups of respondents from SSPs - principals, teachers, support staff and parents. The analysis of the results of Part A provided a comparison between the data collected by Scott (2003) from the mainstream principals and that provided by the SSP principals in the current research, and comparisons among the four SSP groups of respondents. The analysis then examined any notable similarities or differences between the results of the other two comparisons.

Part B of the survey was constructed to investigate the importance of a range of leadership skills which had been previously identified as specifically relevant in the special education context, as discussed in Chapter 2. The same four groups of respondents from SSPs completed this part of the survey, and the analysis is a comparison of the data from each of those groups.

Part C of the survey was completed only by SSP principals. It required the respondents to rate the effect of a range of characteristics of SSPs on the difference in leadership requirements between those in the SSP setting and those in the mainstream setting, and also to nominate the three most influential characteristics. Secondly SSP principals were asked to identify and comment on the most challenging aspects of their job, and thirdly to propose an analogy which describes their job. The analysis of the data in Part C compares the strength of the effects of the SSP characteristics to the differentiation of leadership requirements between the two settings, and examines the SSP principals' perceptions of the challenges of their role.

Note that in the reporting of results in this chapter, the number of respondents (n) to each item is variable, as some respondents did not reply to all items. All calculations have taken these circumstances into account.

4.2 Results from Part A

Three sets of analyses were conducted on the data from Part A of the survey. The results of these analyses are presented in the following sections.

4.2.1 Comparing Mainstream Principals with SSP Principals

The following analysis compared the means and the rankings of each of the two groups of respondents for all abilities in each of the four sets identified by Scott (2003). As discussed in Chapter 3, the mean scores were analysed through a 2-sample independent t-test assuming equal variances procedure. This approach was adopted due to the restrictions of computer statistical packages, which require two full sets of data to produce p statistics, and the unavailability of necessary data from Scott's (2003) research. In utilising this method, the t-value has been calculated by hand, and this has led to the reporting of significance using alpha levels rather than p-values. The rankings analysis was completed through a comparison of rankings assigned by order of magnitude of means.

Note that for each set of abilities, the figures following illustrate the abilities in order of magnitude of mean score and ranking score respectively. In this regard mainstream principals' scores were assigned first and SSP principals' corresponding scores attached. The comparison of means and rankings is more effectively attained through this method of presentation. Necessarily, this order does not replicate the abilities' order in the administered survey.

At the end of the analysis of each set of abilities, a table summarises the statistical results for that set. In these tables, the abilities are presented in order as they appeared in the administered survey. In presenting the data in this way, cross reference can be more readily made to the survey as presented in Appendix A.

For effective presentation of data, abbreviations of the description of each ability have been made where necessary. Full descriptions are used in the text and in Appendix A.

4.2.1.1 Personal Abilities

The first set of abilities for analysis is the *personal* set, comprising 12 abilities:

- *Being willing to face and learn from my errors and listen openly to feedback.*
- *Understanding my personal strengths and limitations.*
- *Being confident to take calculated risks and take on new projects.*
- *Being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong.*
- *Having the ability to defer judgement and not to jump in too quickly to resolve a problem.*
- *A willingness to persevere when things are not working out as anticipated.*
- *Wanting to achieve the best outcome possible.*
- *Being willing to take responsibility for programs, including how they work out.*
- *An ability to make a hard decision.*
- *A willingness to pitch in and undertake menial tasks when needed.*
- *Having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective.*
- *Being able to bounce back from adversity.*

Mean Scores for Personal Abilities

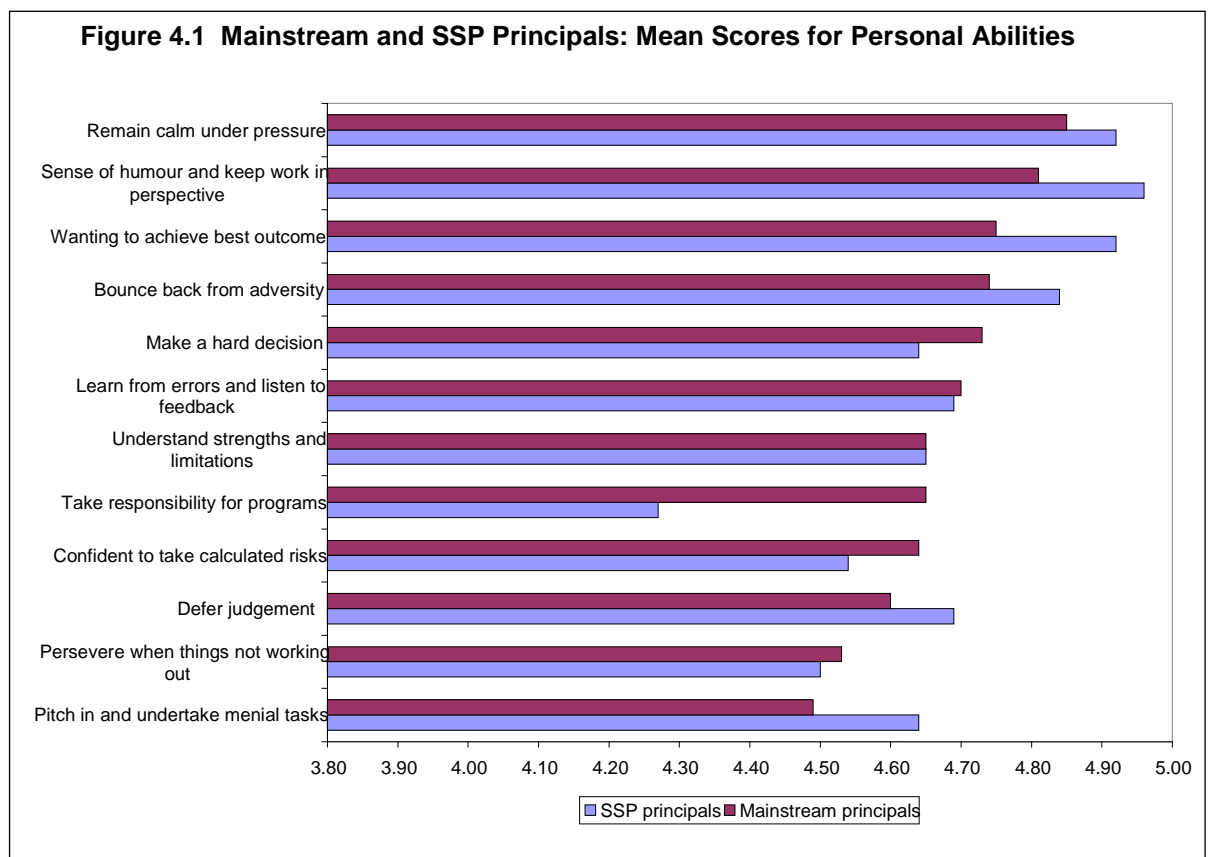
A statistically significant difference was found in the mean score for *having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective* ($t = 3.62$, $df = 355$, $\alpha = .05$), the mean score being higher in the SSP principal group (mean = 4.96, sd = 0.2) than in the mainstream group (mean = 4.81, sd unavailable).

A statistically significant difference was also found in *wanting to achieve the best outcome possible* ($t = 2.93$, $df = 355$, $\alpha = .05$), in which the mean score was higher in the SSP principals group (mean = 4.92, sd = 0.28) compared with the mainstream group (mean = 4.75, sd unavailable), and in the mean score for *being willing to take responsibility for programs, including how they work out* ($t = -2.03$, $df = 356$, $\alpha = .05$),

in which the mean score was higher in the mainstream principals group (mean = 4.65, sd unavailable) than in the SSP principals group (mean = 4.27, sd = 0.92).

No significant differences were found in the remaining items in the *personal* set of abilities.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the comparison between mainstream and SSP principals' mean scores for the *personal* set of abilities.



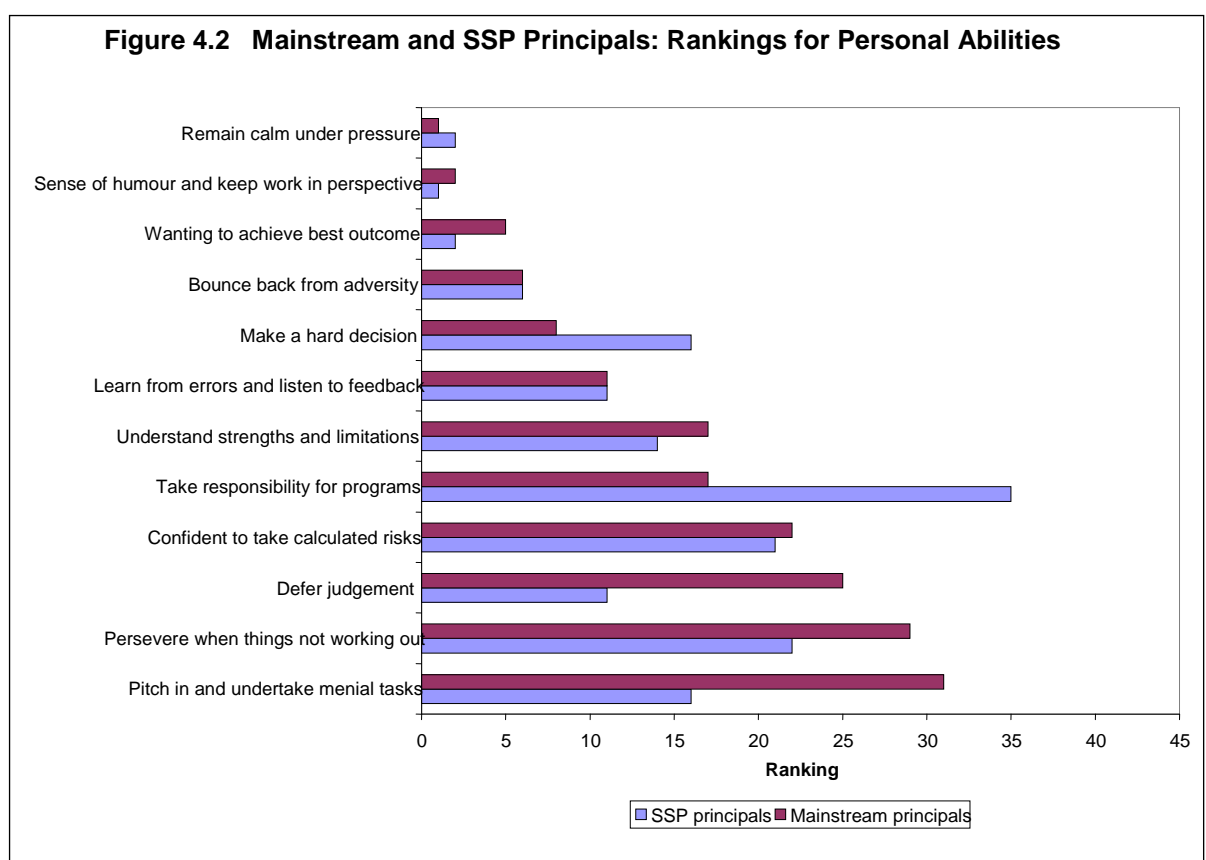
Rankings for Personal Abilities

SSP and mainstream principals agreed in ranking four abilities from the *personal* set in the top 10 of the total 45 items over the four sets of abilities: *being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong* (mainstream ranking 1, SSP ranking 2), *having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective* (mainstream ranking 2, SSP ranking 1), *wanting to achieve the best outcome possible* (mainstream ranking 5, SSP ranking 2), and *being able to bounce back from adversity* (mainstream ranking 6,

SSP ranking 6). They dissented over the inclusion of *an ability to make a hard decision*, in the top 10 (SSP ranking 16, mainstream ranking 8).

None of the items in the personal set of abilities was ranked in the bottom 10 of the 45 items, although *being willing to take responsibility for programs, including how they work out*, was ranked 35 by SSP principals.

Figure 4.2 illustrates the comparison between mainstream and SSP principals' rankings for the *personal* set of abilities.



In ranking items in the *personal* set of abilities according to mean scores, SSP and mainstream principals groups recorded the most significant differences of opinion with, in order of most significant difference, *being willing to take responsibility for programs, including how they work out* (SSP ranking 35, mainstream ranking 17), *a willingness to pitch in and undertake menial tasks when needed* (SSP ranking 16, mainstream ranking

31), and *having the ability to defer judgement and not to jump in too quickly to resolve a problem* (SSP ranking 11, mainstream ranking 25).

Table 4.1 summarises the statistical results for the comparison of mean scores and rankings between mainstream and SSP principals for the *personal* set of abilities.

Table 4.1 Mean Scores and Rankings of Personal Abilities for Mainstream and SSP Principals

| Ability | Mean Scores | | | | t-value | Rankings | |
|---|-----------------|------|----------|------|---------|------------|-----|
| | Mainstream n | mean | SSP n | mean | | Mainstream | SSP |
| Being willing to face and learn from my errors and listen openly to feedback | 332 | 4.7 | 26 | 4.69 | -0.08 | 11 | 11 |
| Understanding my personal strengths and limitations | 332 | 4.65 | 26 | 4.65 | 0 | 17 | 14 |
| Being confident to take calculated risks and take on new projects | 332 | 4.64 | 26 | 4.54 | -0.85 | 22 | 21 |
| Being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong | 332 | 4.85 | 26 | 4.92 | 1.27 | 1 | 2 |
| Having the ability to defer judgement and not to jump in too quickly to resolve a problem | 332 | 4.6 | 26 | 4.69 | 0.65 | 25 | 11 |
| A willingness to persevere when things are not working out as anticipated | 332 | 4.53 | 26 | 4.5 | -0.18 | 29 | 22 |
| Wanting to achieve the best outcome possible | 332 | 4.75 | 25 | 4.92 | 2.93 | 5 | 2 |
| Being willing to take responsibility for programs, including how they work out | 332 | 4.65 | 26 | 4.27 | -2.03 | 17 | 35 |
| An ability to make a hard decision | 332 | 4.73 | 25 | 4.64 | -0.76 | 8 | 16 |
| A willingness to pitch in and undertake menial tasks when needed | 332 | 4.49 | 25 | 4.64 | 1.13 | 31 | 16 |
| Having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective | 332 | 4.81 | 25 | 4.96 | 3.62 | 2 | 1 |
| Being able to bounce back from adversity | 332 | 4.74 | 25 | 4.84 | 1.30 | 6 | 6 |

4.2.1.2 Interpersonal Abilities

The second set of abilities for analysis is the *interpersonal* set, comprising ten abilities:

- *The ability to empathise with and work productively with people from a wide range of backgrounds.*
- *A willingness to listen to different points of view before coming to a decision.*
- *Being able to develop and use networks of colleagues to help me solve key workplace problems.*
- *Understanding how the different groups that make up my school operate and how much influence they have in different situations.*
- *Being able to work with Department of Education and Training senior officers without being intimidated.*
- *Being able to give constructive feedback to work colleagues and others without engaging in personal blame.*
- *Being able to motivate others to achieve great things.*
- *Being able to develop and contribute positively to team-based programs.*
- *Being able to deal effectively with conflict situations.*
- *Being able to work constructively with people who are resisters.*

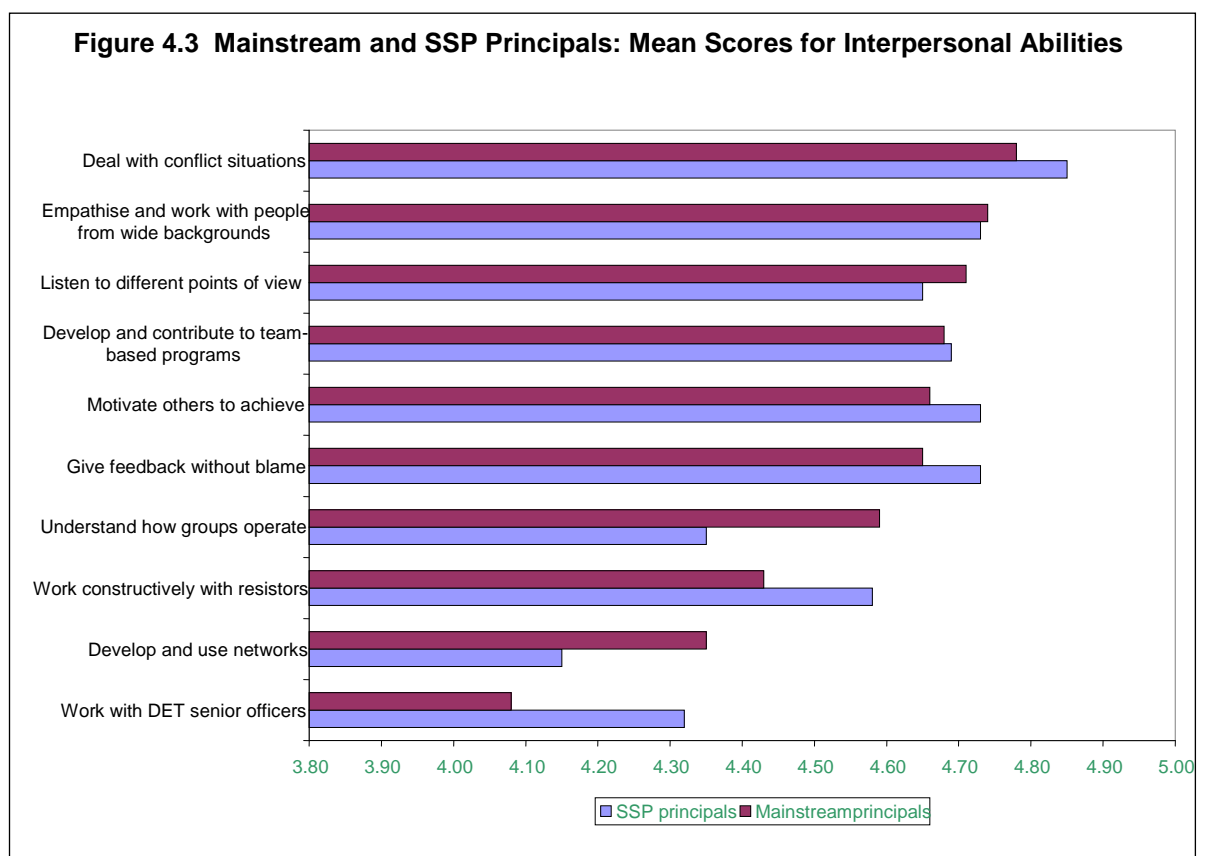
Mean Scores for Interpersonal Abilities

There were no statistically significant differences between the SSP and mainstream groups of principals' mean scores on items in the *interpersonal* set of abilities.

This lack of statistical significance in difference was initially somewhat a surprising result, as it is a commonly held opinion that SSP principals work in a highly emotively charged educational environment. It is generally felt that their dealings with staff, students and parents of children with disabilities tend to rely more on an empathetic and interpersonal framework than do the dealings of mainstream principals, and hence more value would be attached to abilities that focussed on positive relationships being

developed and protected by exceptional interpersonal abilities. One principal commented that “dealing with parents of children with disabilities we must continue to empathise, be respectful of their needs and be understanding”. However, whilst there were no statistically significant results for individual abilities in the *interpersonal* set, the comparison following in 4.2.1.6 indicates a difference in the relative importance attributed by the SSP and mainstream principals to the four sets of abilities, and this difference includes an enhanced focus by SSP principals on the *personal* and *interpersonal* abilities.

Figure 4.3 illustrates the comparison between mainstream and SSP principals' mean scores for the *interpersonal* set of abilities.



Rankings for Interpersonal Abilities

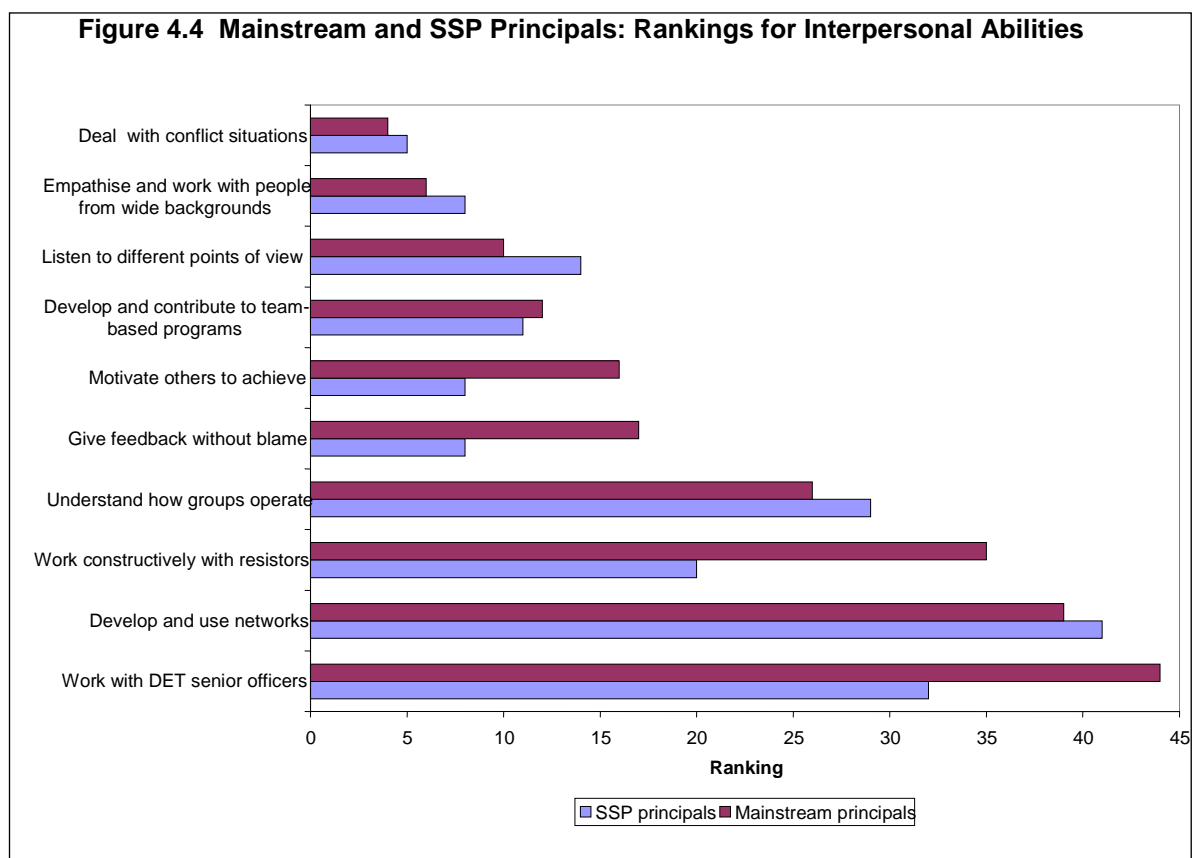
Both mainstream and SSP principals considered *being able to deal effectively with conflict situations* (mainstream ranking 4, SSP ranking 5) and *the ability to empathise*

with and work with people from a wide range of backgrounds (mainstream ranking 6, SSP ranking 8), as abilities worthy of ranking in the top 10 of the total 45 items over the four sets of abilities. Mainstream principals also rated *a willingness to listen to different points of view before coming to a decision* as a top 10 ranking ability (ranking 10), but SSP principals disagreed (ranking 14).

Reciprocally, SSP principals ranked *being able to give constructive feedback to work colleagues and others without engaging in personal blame* in the top 10 whilst mainstream principals did not (SSP ranking 8, mainstream ranking 17), and a similar result was recorded for *being able to motivate others to achieve great things* (SSP ranking 8, mainstream ranking 16).

SSP and mainstream principals agreed on the inclusion of *being able to develop and use networks of colleagues to help me solve key workplace problems* (SSP ranking 41, mainstream ranking 39) in the bottom 10 ranked of all items. Mainstream principals also included *being able to work with Department of Education and Training senior officers without being intimidated* (ranking 44), and ranked *being able to work constructively with people who are resisters*, just outside the bottom 10 at 35.

Figure 4.4 illustrates the comparison between mainstream and SSP principals' rankings for the *interpersonal* set of abilities.



Being able to work constructively with people who are resistors showed the most difference in rankings in the *interpersonal* set (15 ranking points). SSP principals responded that it was more important than mainstream principals considered. Likewise SSP principals also ranked *being able to work with Department of Education senior officers without being intimidated*, (12 ranking points), and *being able to give constructive feedback to work colleagues and others without engaging in personal blame* (9 ranking points) significantly higher than did mainstream principals.

Table 4.2 summarises the statistical results for the comparison of mean scores and rankings between mainstream and SSP principals for the *interpersonal* set of abilities.

Table 4.2 Mean Scores and Rankings of Interpersonal Abilities for Mainstream and SSP Principals

| Ability | Mean Scores | | | | | Rankings | |
|--|-------------|------|-----|------|---------|------------|-----|
| | Mainstream | | SSP | | t-value | Mainstream | SSP |
| | n | mean | n | mean | | | |
| The ability to empathise with and work productively with people from a wide range of backgrounds | 332 | 4.74 | 26 | 4.73 | -0.11 | 6 | 8 |
| A willingness to listen to different points of view before coming to a decision | 332 | 4.71 | 26 | 4.65 | -0.60 | 10 | 14 |
| Being able to develop and use networks of colleagues to help me solve key workplace problems | 332 | 4.35 | 26 | 4.15 | -1.35 | 39 | 41 |
| Understanding how the different groups that make up my school operate and how much influence they have in different situations | 332 | 4.59 | 26 | 4.35 | -1.71 | 26 | 29 |
| Being able to work with Department of Education and Training senior officers without being intimidated | 332 | 4.08 | 25 | 4.32 | 1.29 | 44 | 32 |
| Being able to give constructive feedback to work colleagues and others without engaging in personal blame | 332 | 4.65 | 26 | 4.73 | 0.87 | 17 | 8 |
| Being able to motivate others to achieve great things | 332 | 4.66 | 26 | 4.73 | 0.57 | 16 | 8 |
| Being able to develop and contribute positively to team-based programs | 332 | 4.68 | 26 | 4.69 | 0.10 | 12 | 11 |
| Being able to deal effectively with conflict situations | 332 | 4.78 | 26 | 4.85 | 0.93 | 4 | 5 |
| Being able to work constructively with people who are resisters | 332 | 4.43 | 26 | 4.58 | 0.97 | 35 | 20 |

4.2.1.3 Intellectual Abilities

The third set of abilities for analysis is the *intellectual* set, comprising nine abilities:

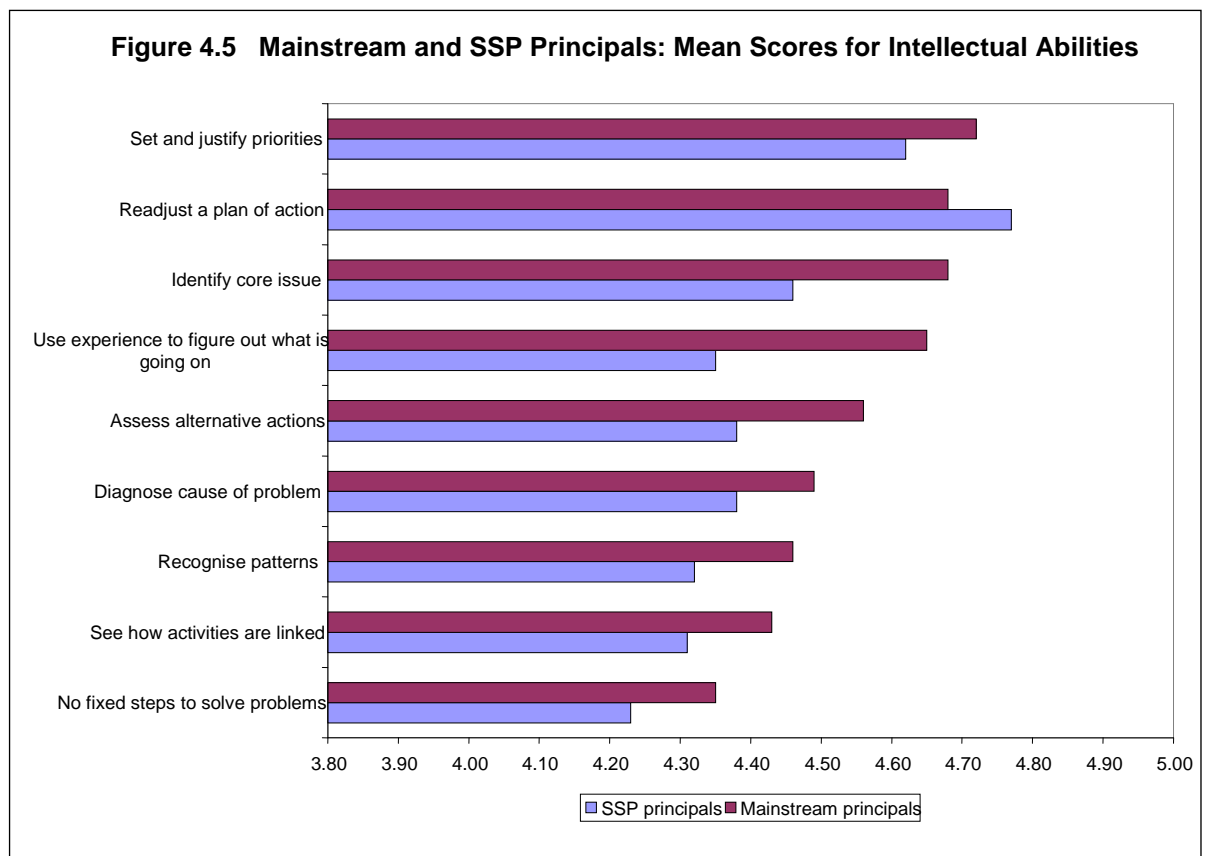
- *Knowing that there is never a fixed set of steps for solving workplace problems or implementing a program.*
- *Being able to identify from a mass of information the core issue in any situation.*
- *The ability to use previous experience to figure out what is going on when a current situation takes an unexpected turn.*
- *Being able to diagnose what is really causing a problem and then to test this out in action.*
- *An ability to trace out and assess the consequences of alternative courses of action and, from these, pick the one most suitable.*
- *Being able to readjust a plan of action in the light of what happens as it is implemented.*
- *Being able to see how apparently unconnected activities are linked and make up an overall picture.*
- *Being able to set and justify priorities.*
- *An ability to recognise patterns in a complex situation.*

Mean Scores for Intellectual Abilities

A statistically significant difference was found in the mean score for *the ability to use previous experience to figure out what is going on when a current situation takes an unexpected turn* ($t = -2.34$, $df = 356$, $\alpha = .05$), the mean score being higher in the mainstream principal group (mean = 4.96, sd unavailable). Only for *being able to identify from a mass of information the core issue in any situation* was there any other movement towards a statistically significant result, however this was not achieved ($t = -1.86$, $df = 100$, $\alpha = .05$).

No significant differences were found in the remaining items of the *intellectual* set of abilities.

Figure 4.5 illustrates the comparison between mainstream and SSP principals' mean scores for the *intellectual* set of abilities.



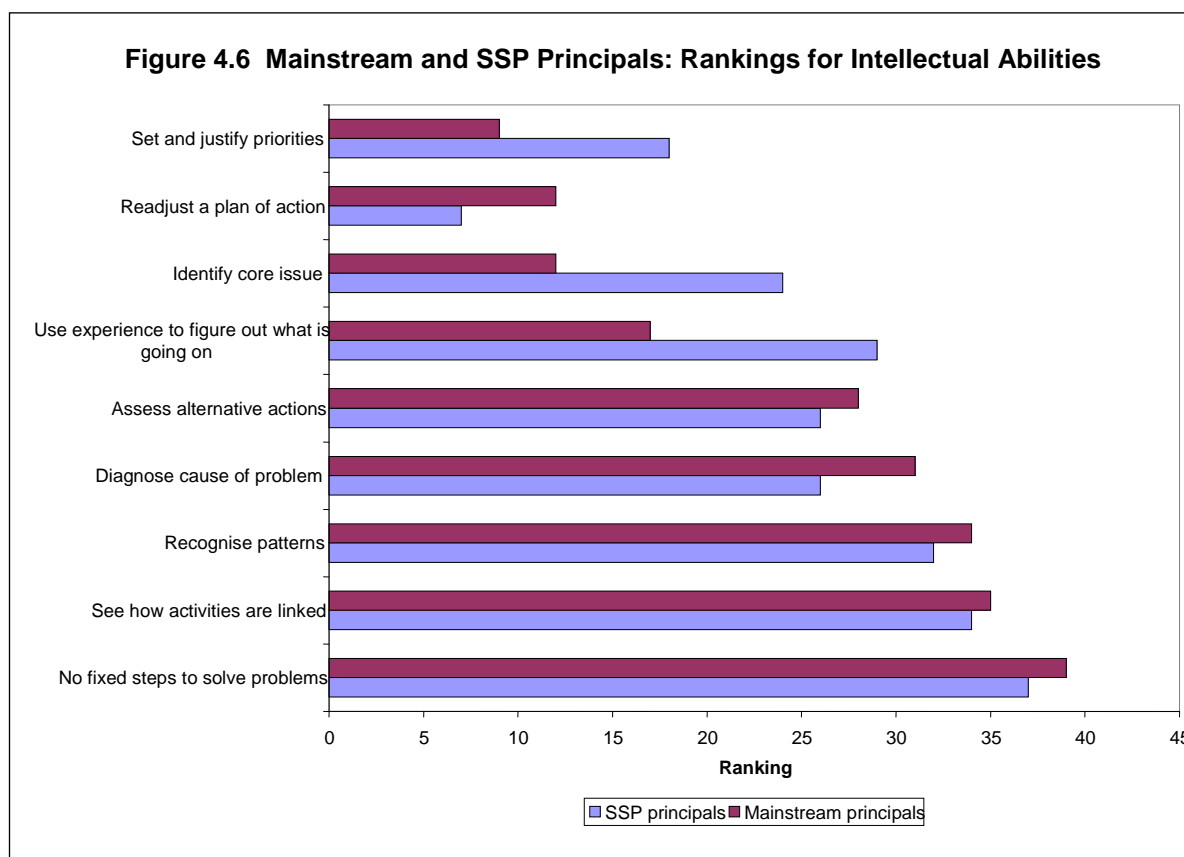
Rankings for Intellectual Abilities

In the *intellectual* set of abilities only *being able to readjust a plan of action in the light of what happens as it is implemented* (SSP ranking 7; mainstream ranking 12), and *being able to set and justify priorities* (mainstream ranking 9; SSP ranking 18) were ranked in the top 10 of all 45 capabilities by either group of principals.

Mainstream and SSP principals each relegated *knowing that there is never a fixed set of steps for solving workplace problems or implementing a program* (mainstream ranking 39, SSP ranking 37) to the bottom 10 ranked abilities. They also concurred in assigning relatively low rankings to *being able to see how apparently unconnected activities are linked and make up an overall picture* (mainstream ranking 35, SSP ranking 34), and an

ability to recognise patterns in a complex situation (mainstream ranking 34, SSP ranking 32).

Figure 4.6 illustrates the comparison between mainstream and SSP principals' rankings for the *intellectual* set of abilities.



The most significant differences in ranking between mainstream and SSP principals in the *intellectual* set were recorded for *being able to identify from a mass of information the core issue in any situation* (SSP ranking 24, mainstream ranking 12), *the ability to use previous experience to figure out what is going on when a current situation takes an unexpected turn* (SSP ranking 29, mainstream ranking 17), and *being able to set and justify priorities* (SSP ranking 18, mainstream ranking 9).

Table 4.3 summarises the statistical results for the comparison of mean scores and rankings between mainstream and SSP principals for the *intellectual* set of abilities.

Table 4.3 Mean Scores and Rankings of Intellectual Abilities for Mainstream and SSP Principals

| Ability | Mean Scores | | | | | Rankings | |
|--|-------------|------|-----|------|---------|------------|-----|
| | Mainstream | | SSP | | t-value | Mainstream | SSP |
| | n | mean | n | mean | | | |
| Knowing that there is never a fixed set of steps for solving workplace problems or implementing a program | 332 | 4.35 | 26 | 4.23 | -0.65 | 39 | 37 |
| Being able to identify from a mass of information the core issue in any situation | 332 | 4.68 | 26 | 4.46 | -1.86 | 12 | 24 |
| The ability to use previous experience to figure out what is going on when a current situation takes an unexpected turn | 332 | 4.65 | 26 | 4.35 | -2.34 | 17 | 29 |
| Being able to diagnose what is really causing a problem and then to test this out in action | 332 | 4.49 | 26 | 4.38 | -0.77 | 31 | 26 |
| An ability to trace out and assess the consequences of alternative courses of action and, from these, pick the one most suitable | 332 | 4.56 | 26 | 4.38 | -0.98 | 28 | 26 |
| Being able to readjust a plan of action in the light of what happens as it is implemented | 332 | 4.68 | 26 | 4.77 | 1.03 | 12 | 7 |
| Being able to see how apparently unconnected activities are linked and make up an overall picture | 332 | 4.43 | 26 | 4.31 | -0.70 | 35 | 34 |
| Being able to set and justify priorities | 332 | 4.72 | 26 | 4.62 | -0.86 | 9 | 18 |
| An ability to recognise patterns in a complex situation | 332 | 4.46 | 25 | 4.32 | -0.90 | 34 | 32 |

4.2.1.4 Specific Skills and Knowledge Abilities

The fourth set of abilities for analysis is the *specific skills and knowledge* set, comprising 14 abilities:

- *Having a high level of up-to-date pedagogical knowledge and skill.*
- *Being able to use Information Technology effectively to communicate and perform key work functions.*

- *Being able to manage my own ongoing professional learning and development.*
- *An ability to chair and participate constructively in meetings.*
- *Being able to make effective presentations to a range of different groups.*
- *Understanding the role of risk management and litigation in current professional work.*
- *Knowing how to manage programs into successful implementation.*
- *An ability to help others learn in the workplace through best practice in adult learning.*
- *Understanding how organizations like the Department of Education and Training operate.*
- *Being able to organize and manage time effectively.*
- *Having a clear, justified vision for where the school must head.*
- *Having sound financial and resource management skills.*
- *Knowing how to effectively identify and disseminate good practice across the school for where the school must head.*
- *Understanding of industrial relations issues and process.*

Mean Scores for Specific Skills and Knowledge Abilities

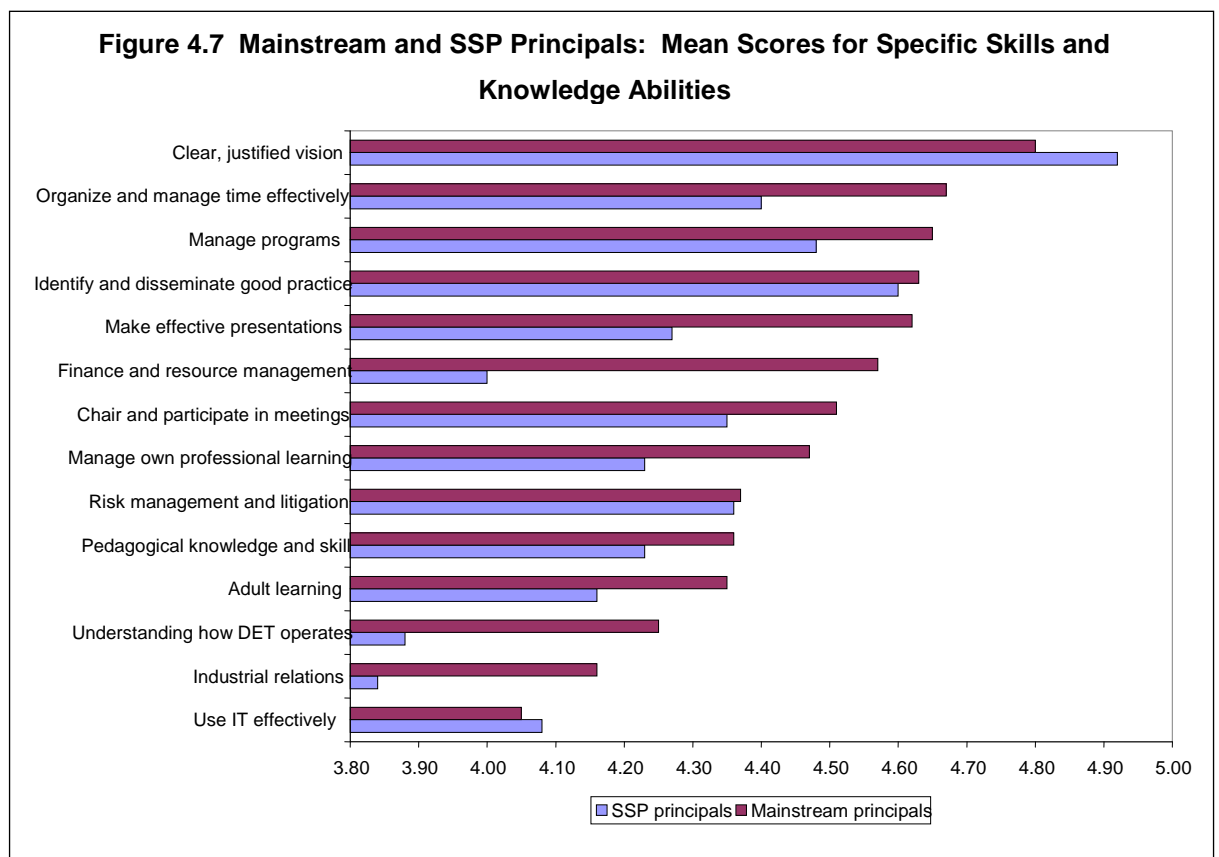
A statistically significant difference was found in the mean score for *having sound financial and resource management skills* ($t = -3.35$, $df = 355$, $\alpha = .05$), the mean score being higher in the mainstream principal group (mean = 4.57, sd unavailable) compared to SSP principals (mean = 4.00, sd = .82).

Statistically significant differences were also found in *being able to make effective presentations to a range of different groups* ($t = -2.07$, $df = 356$, $\alpha = .05$), in which the mean score was higher in the mainstream principals group (mean = 4.62, sd unavailable) compared to the SSP principals (mean = 4.27, sd = .83) and in the mean score for *having a clear, justified vision of where the school must head* ($t = 2.07$, $df = 355$, $\alpha = .05$), in which the mean score was higher in the SSP principals group (mean =

4.92, sd = 0.28) than it was in the mainstream principals group (mean = 4.8, sd unavailable).

There were no significant differences found for any other items in the *specific skills and knowledge* set of abilities.

Figure 4.7 illustrates the comparison between mainstream and SSP principals' mean scores for the *specific skills and knowledge* set of abilities.



The range of mean scores in the *specific skills and knowledge* set is the largest of any of the sets. The lowest mean scores are recorded for SSP principals for *understanding of industrial relations issues and practices* (3.84), and in the mainstream group for *being able to use Information Technology effectively to communicate and perform key work functions* (4.05). As mentioned previously, *having a clear, justified vision of where the school must head*, scores particularly high means for both groups (SSP 4.92; mainstream 4.80).

Rankings for Specific Skills and Knowledge Abilities

Both mainstream and SSP groups ranked *having a clear justified vision for where the school must head* in the top 10 abilities required for school leadership (mainstream ranking 3; SSP ranking 2). This was the only ability ranked in the top 10 from the *specific skills and knowledge* set.

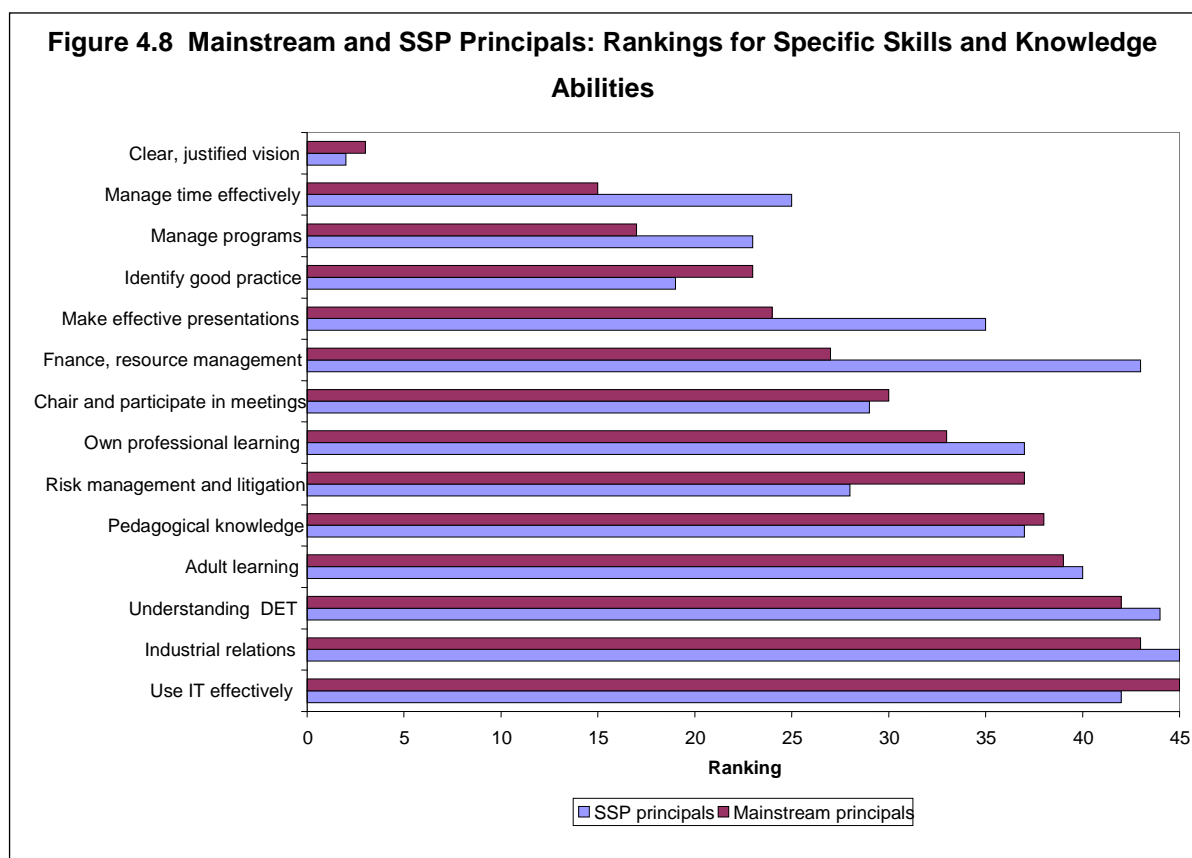
Five items in the specific skills and knowledge set were allocated a bottom 10 ranking by each of the two groups of principals. In fact, the lowest ranked items by each of the groups were recorded in this set. Mainstream principals considered *being able to use Information Technology effectively to communicate and perform key work functions*, as the least important ability of all (SSP ranking 42), whilst SSP principals identified *understanding of industrial relations issues and processes*, as worthy of this recognition (mainstream ranking 43).

There was also reasonable agreement in terms of ranking that *understanding how organisations like the DET work* was an ability of less importance than others (SSP ranking 44, mainstream ranking 42).

Other items recorded by both groups of principals in the *specific skills and knowledge* set as being in the bottom 10 ranked of all 45 items included *having a high level of up-to-date pedagogical knowledge and skill* (SSP ranking 37, mainstream ranking 38), and *an ability to help others learn in the workplace through best practice in adult learning* (SSP ranking 40, mainstream ranking 39).

SSP principals separately included *having sound financial and resource management skills* (SSP ranking 43, mainstream ranking 27), and *being able to manage my own ongoing professional learning and development* (SSP ranking 37, mainstream ranking 33) in the bottom 10, whilst mainstream principals included *understanding the role of risk management and litigation in current professional work* (SSP ranking 28, mainstream ranking 37) in this category.

Figure 4.8 illustrates the comparison between mainstream and SSP principals' rankings for the *specific skills and knowledge* set of abilities.



Having sound financial and resource management skills indicated the largest difference in rankings between SSP and mainstream principals (SSP ranking 43, mainstream ranking 27). This is not surprising given that this item represented the largest difference in mean scores in Part A of the survey as mentioned previously. Other significant differences in rankings were illustrated in *being able to organize and manage time effectively* (SSP ranking 25, mainstream ranking 10), *being able to make effective presentations to a range of different groups* (SSP ranking 35, mainstream ranking 24), and as mentioned previously, *understanding the role of risk management and litigation in current professional work* (SSP ranking 28, mainstream ranking 37).

Table 4.4 summarises the statistical results for the comparison of mean scores and rankings between mainstream and SSP principals for the *specific skills and knowledge* set of abilities.

Table 4.4 Mean Scores and Rankings of Specific Skills and Knowledge Abilities for Mainstream and SSP Principals

| Ability | Mean Scores | | | | | Rankings | |
|--|-------------|------|-----|------|---------|------------|-----|
| | Mainstream | | SSP | | t-value | Mainstream | SSP |
| | n | mean | n | mean | | | |
| Having a high level of up-to-date pedagogical knowledge and skill | 332 | 4.36 | 26 | 4.23 | -0.78 | 38 | 37 |
| Being able to use Information Technology effectively to communicate and perform key work functions | 332 | 4.05 | 26 | 4.08 | 0.18 | 45 | 42 |
| Being able to manage my own ongoing professional learning and development | 332 | 4.47 | 26 | 4.23 | -1.66 | 33 | 37 |
| An ability to chair and participate constructively in meetings | 332 | 4.51 | 26 | 4.35 | -1.05 | 30 | 29 |
| Being able to make effective presentations to a range of different groups | 332 | 4.62 | 26 | 4.27 | -2.07 | 24 | 35 |
| Understanding the role of risk management and litigation in current professional work | 332 | 4.37 | 25 | 4.36 | -0.05 | 37 | 28 |
| Knowing how to manage programs into successful implementation | 332 | 4.65 | 25 | 4.48 | -1.26 | 17 | 23 |
| An ability to help others learn in the workplace through best practice in adult learning | 332 | 4.35 | 25 | 4.16 | -1.08 | 39 | 40 |
| Understanding how organizations like the Department of Education and Training operate | 332 | 4.25 | 26 | 3.88 | -1.84 | 42 | 44 |
| Being able to organize and manage time effectively | 332 | 4.67 | 25 | 4.4 | -1.71 | 15 | 25 |
| Having a clear, justified vision for where the school must head | 332 | 4.8 | 25 | 4.92 | 2.07 | 3 | 2 |
| Having sound financial and resource management skills | 332 | 4.57 | 25 | 4 | -3.35 | 27 | 43 |
| Knowing how to effectively identify and disseminate good practice across the school for where the school must head | 332 | 4.63 | 25 | 4.6 | -0.29 | 23 | 19 |
| Understanding of industrial relations issues and process | 332 | 4.16 | 25 | 3.84 | -1.93 | 43 | 45 |

4.2.1.5 Top 10 Abilities in Part A

A compilation of the top 10 ranked abilities by each group of principal respondents according to the mean score was constructed. These results are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Top 10 Ranked Abilities by Mainstream and SSP Principals

| Ability | Ability Set | Mainstream Principals | SSP Principals |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong | Personal | 1 mean = 4.85 n = 332 | 2 mean = 4.92 n = 26 |
| Having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective | Personal | 2 mean = 4.81 n = 332 | 1 mean = 4.96 n = 25 |
| Having a clear, justified vision for where the school must head | Specific Skills and Knowledge | 3 mean = 4.8 n = 332 | 2 mean = 4.92 n = 25 |
| Being able to deal effectively with conflict situations | Interpersonal | 4 mean = 4.78 n = 332 | 5 mean = 4.85 n = 26 |
| Wanting to achieve the best outcome possible | Personal | 5 mean = 4.75 n = 332 | 2 mean = 4.92 n = 25 |
| Being able to bounce back from adversity | Personal | 6 mean = 4.74 n = 332 | 6 mean = 4.84 n = 25 |
| The ability to empathise with and work productively with people from a wide range of backgrounds | Interpersonal | 6 mean = 4.74 n = 332 | 8 mean = 4.73 n = 26 |
| An ability to make a hard decision | Personal | 8 mean = 4.73 n = 332 | - |
| Being able to set and justify priorities | Intellectual | 9 mean = 4.72 n = 332 | |
| A willingness to listen to different points of view before coming to a decision | Interpersonal | 10 mean = 4.71 n = 332 | – |
| Being able to readjust a plan of action in the light of what happens as it is implemented | Intellectual | | 7 mean = 4.77 n = 26 |
| Being able to motivate others to achieve great things | Interpersonal | - | 8 mean = 4.73 n = 26 |
| Being able to give constructive feedback to work colleagues and others without engaging in personal blame | Interpersonal | – | 8 mean = 4.73 n = 26 |

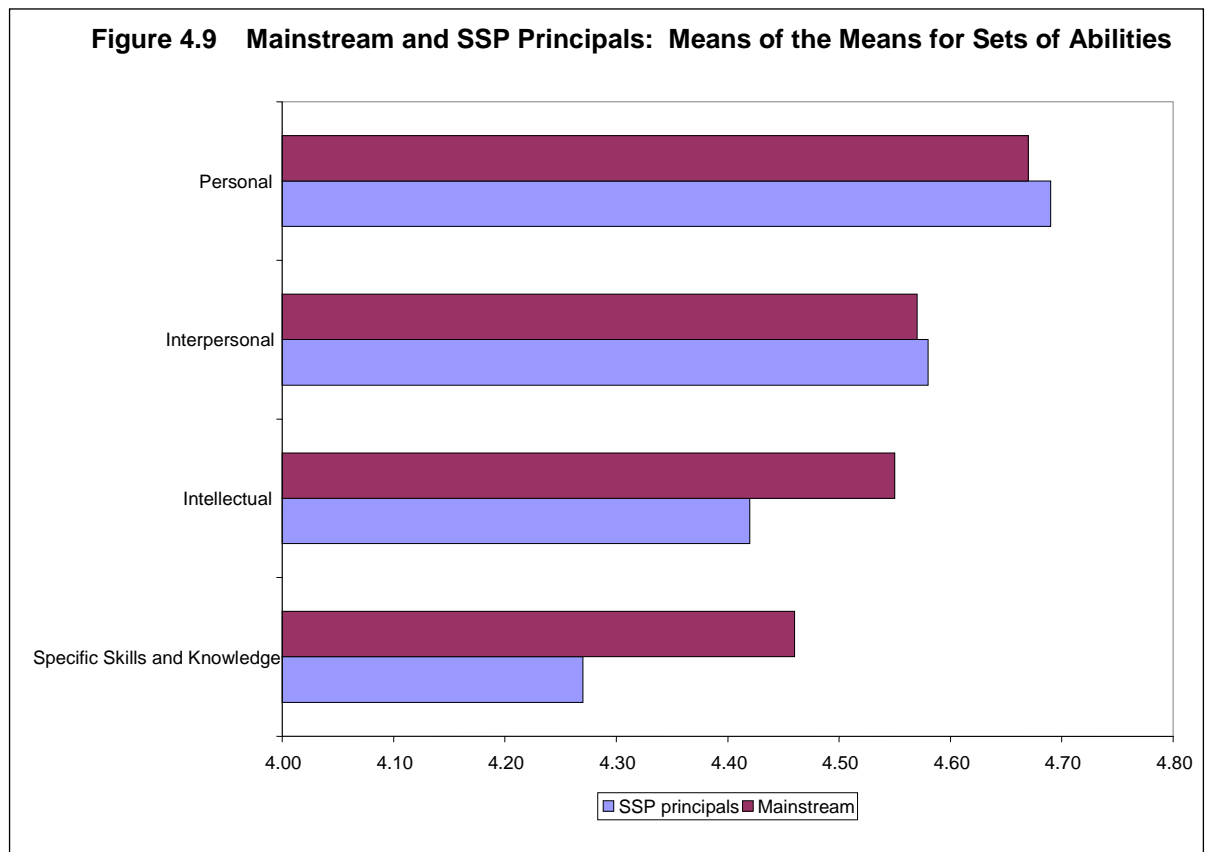
Thirteen abilities were positioned in the top 10 ranked in importance by mainstream and SSP principals. Of these 13, five were from the *personal* set, five were from the *interpersonal* set, two were from the *intellectual* set, and one was from the *specific skills and knowledge* set.

4.2.1.6 Relative Importance of Sets of Abilities in Part A

To determine the differences between the relative importance attributed to each set of abilities by each principal group, two comparisons were undertaken: a comparison of the means of the mean scores, and a comparison of the mean of the rankings, for each set of abilities.

Mean Scores for Each Set of Abilities

An overall mean of the mean scores for each group of principals was calculated for each of the sets of abilities: *personal*, *interpersonal*, *intellectual* and *specific skills and knowledge*. Figure 4.9 illustrates these calculations for all sets of abilities for each of the two principals groups. It depicts the relative importance of each specific set of abilities.



This figure demonstrates that both principal groups rate the sets of abilities in the same order of importance: *personal* as most important, *interpersonal* second most important, *intellectual* of third importance, and *specific skills and knowledge* as least important. However, while it illustrates a distinction in importance between each of the sets of abilities, it also more dramatically illustrates dissimilarities in the relative perceptions of each group of principals.

Whereas the *personal* and *interpersonal* sets of abilities might be fairly described as centralised with the mean for each set of abilities by each principal group almost identical, and the difference between the two groups of principals' means of each set of abilities similarly almost identical, the same cannot be said for the *intellectual* and the *specific skills and knowledge* sets (Figure 4.9).

Mainstream principals rate the *intellectual* set higher in importance than SSP principals do (mainstream mean 4.55, SSP mean 4.42), and they also consider that there is little difference in importance between that set and the *interpersonal* set (4.57). SSP

principals have a different opinion: they see a much more distinct difference in importance between *intellectual* (mean 4.42) and *interpersonal* (mean 4.58) abilities, with the *interpersonal* set more important. SSP principals indicate that the difference in importance between the *intellectual* set and the *interpersonal* set is more than the difference in importance between *personal* and *interpersonal* sets of abilities.

The gap between mean scores of mainstream and SSP principals is largest in the *specific skills and knowledge* set (mainstream mean 4.46, SSP mean 4.27). Additionally, mainstream principals perceive much less variation in importance between the *specific skills and knowledge* set and the other sets than do SSP principals. SSP principals indicate an almost identical gap between the *intellectual* and *specific skills and knowledge* sets as they did between the *intellectual* and *interpersonal* sets, and it is this repeated trend which highlights their conviction that the *personal* and *interpersonal* abilities are genuinely of more importance than the other two sets. On the other hand, mainstream principals do not perceive such a distinctive separation of the sets of abilities.

Rankings for Each Set of Abilities

A mean of the rankings for each group of principals was calculated for each set of abilities. Figure 4.10 following illustrates these calculations for all sets of abilities for each of the two principal groups.

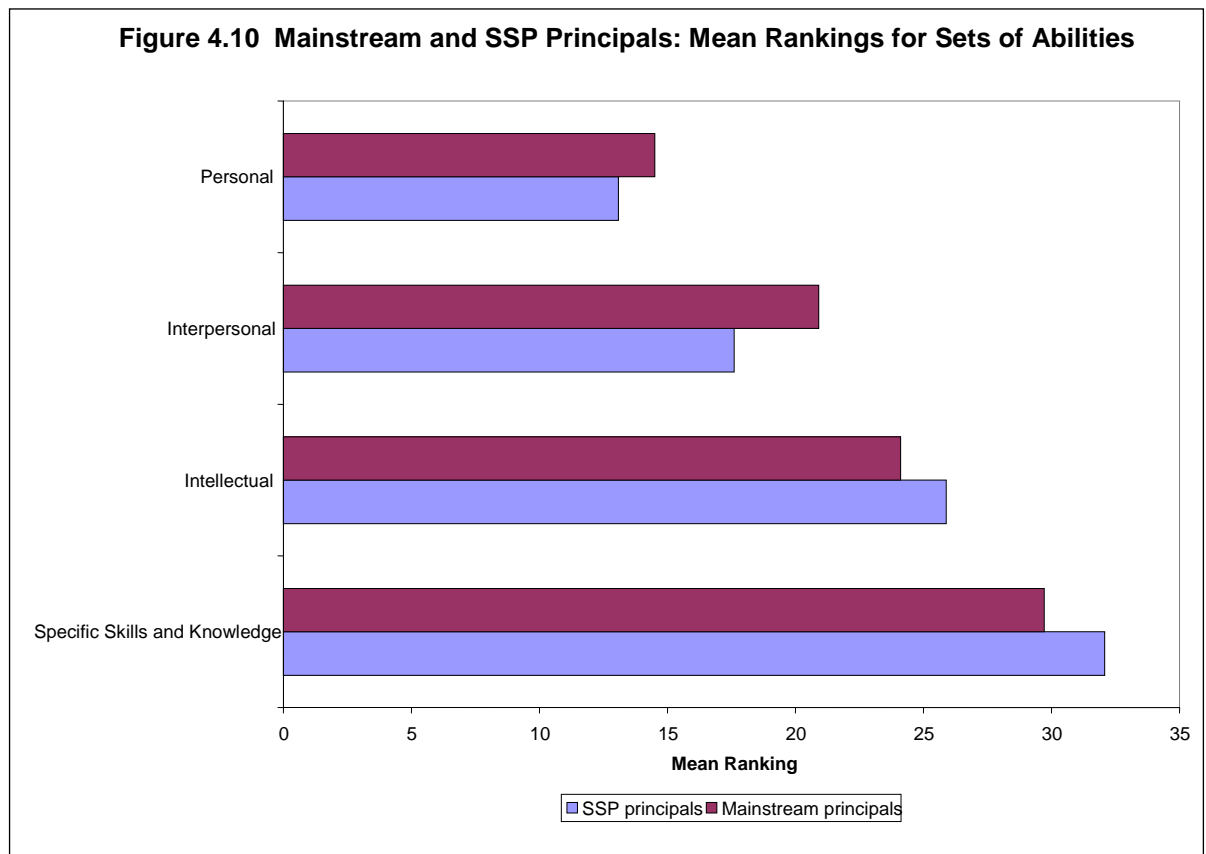


Figure 4.10 illustrates similarly that mainstream and SSP principals agree that the order of importance of sets of abilities from most important to least important is *personal*, *interpersonal*, *intellectual* and *specific skills and knowledge*.

Figure 4.10 also identifies that SSP principals attach more importance to *personal* and *interpersonal* abilities than do mainstream principals, and that mainstream principals attach more importance to *intellectual* and *specific skills and knowledge* sets than do SSP principals.

Proportion of Mean Scores

In further investigating this trend, an analysis was conducted of the proportion of items for each set of abilities which were scored equal to or higher in terms of mean scores by each group of respondents over the other group. Table 4.6 illustrates these results.

Table 4.6 Proportion of Items Scored Higher by Each Principal Group for Each Set of Abilities

| Set of Abilities | SSP Principals | Mainstream Principals |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Personal | 58% | 50% |
| Interpersonal | 60% | 40% |
| Intellectual | 11% | 89% |
| Specific Skills and Knowledge | 8% | 92% |

In the *personal* set of abilities, mainstream principals scored equal to or higher than SSP principals in six of the 12 items (50%), whilst SSP principals scored equal to or higher than mainstream principals in seven of the 12 items (58%).

In the *interpersonal* set of abilities, mainstream principals scored equal to or higher than SSP principals in four of the 10 items (40%), whilst SSP principals scored equal to or higher than mainstream principals in six of the 10 items (60%).

In the *intellectual* set of abilities, mainstream principals scored equal to or higher than SSP principals in eight of the nine items (89%), whilst SSP principals scored equal to or higher than mainstream principals in only one of the nine items (11%). In other words, of the nine items of this set, mainstream principals judged 89% of them as important as or more important than SSP principals judged them. This provides an interesting comparison with the corresponding ratio in each of the *personal* and *interpersonal* sets.

Only for *being able to readjust a plan of action in the light of what happens as it is implemented*, did SSP principals score higher than mainstream principals in this set, and the difference was not particularly significant.

In the *specific skills and knowledge* set this trend continued in that 12 (92%) of the 13 items were scored higher by mainstream principals than by SSP principals, and that SSP mean scores again illustrated a definite decline from those of the *personal* and *interpersonal* sets of abilities.

4.2.2 Comparing Principals, Teachers, Support Staff and Parents in SSPs

As discussed in Chapter 3, the analysis in this section involved using a Pearson Chi-Square analysis to compare the four groups in terms of the proportion that rated each of the abilities as being of high importance. The results are reported in the following sections through tables and discussion for each of the four sets of abilities: *personal*, *interpersonal*, *intellectual* and *specific skills and knowledge* sets. Qualitative data were included in the analysis to support, illustrate or clarify the statistical results.

At the end of each section, an informal comparison of the analyses of the data from the mainstream principals and SSP principals with that of the data from the four SSP groups is presented. This is included at this point to add breadth to the discussion.

4.2.2.1 Personal Abilities

Table 4.7 illustrates the results of the Pearson Chi-Square analysis for the *personal* set of abilities.

Table 4.7 Proportion of Each SSP Group Rating High for Personal Abilities

| Ability | Principals | | Teachers | | Support Staff | | Parents | | Pearson's Chi-Square & p. value |
|--|------------|----|----------|----|---------------|----|---------|----|---------------------------------|
| | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | |
| Sense of humour and keep work in perspective * | 96 | 25 | 71.7 | 53 | 66.7 | 42 | 73.8 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 7.704$ p = .053 |
| Remain calm under pressure | 92.3 | 26 | 92.9 | 56 | 90.7 | 43 | 85.7 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.568$ p = .667 |
| Wanting to achieve best outcome | 92 | 25 | 83.3 | 54 | 86 | 43 | 90.5 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.694$ p = .638 |
| Bounce back from adversity | 84 | 25 | 64.8 | 54 | 58.5 | 41 | 54.8 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 6.398$ p = .094 |
| Defer judgement ** | 80.8 | 26 | 51.8 | 56 | 76.7 | 43 | 59.5 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 10.249$ p = .017 |
| Learn from errors and listen to feedback | 76.9 | 26 | 75 | 56 | 84.1 | 44 | 76.2 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.342$ p = .719 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|--------------------------------|
| Pitch in and undertake menial tasks | 72 | 25 | 51.9 | 54 | 47.6 | 42 | 57.1 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 4.138$ p = .247 |
| Understand strengths and limitations | 69.2 | 26 | 60.7 | 56 | 68.2 | 44 | 57.1 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.685$ p = .640 |
| Persevere when things not working out | 69.2 | 26 | 49.1 | 55 | 61.9 | 42 | 59.5 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 3.443$ p = .328 |
| Make a hard decision | 68 | 25 | 77.8 | 54 | 86.4 | 44 | 85.7 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 4.452$ p = .217 |
| Confident to take calculated risks | 57.7 | 26 | 45.5 | 55 | 50 | 44 | 52.4 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.159$ p = .763 |
| Take responsibility for programs | 53.8 | 26 | 60 | 55 | 63.6 | 44 | 52.4 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.393$ p = .707 |
| ** indicates significant result * indicates borderline result | | | | | | | | | |

A significant result in the *personal* set of abilities was found for *having the ability to defer judgement and not to jump in too quickly to resolve a problem* (p = .017). Larger proportions of principals (80.8%) and support staff (76.7%) considered this ability of high importance than the proportions of parents (59.5%) and teachers (51.8%). The range of the difference between principals and teachers is of particular interest. Teachers, the group which scored lowest on this ability, gave some explanation to this result: “sometimes a fast response is important” and “deferred judgement would be seen as indecisiveness” provided some context from the teachers’ perspective. Comments from support staff, “some problems may need to be solved very quickly”, and parents, “some problems need rapid responses”, confirmed this viewpoint as a genuine consideration.

Although not statistically significant, a borderline result was revealed for *having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective* (p = .053). Principals (96%) stood relatively alone with a much higher proportion of their group considering this ability of high importance in comparison to each of the other groups: parents (73.8%), teachers (71.7%), and support staff (66.7%). Principals commented that this ability was “ESSENTIAL to come back day after day”, that they “can’t survive without it”, and that it is “better to laugh than cry”. Whilst the scores of other groups were lower, some

nonetheless commented in agreement with the principals that “an unhappy leader leads to an unhappy staff” (teacher), “if you don’t laugh you cry” (support staff), and “laughter and smiles can only improve the place” (parent). It is particularly interesting to note in the context of SSPs that only the principals rated this ability in the top 10 capabilities required for successful leadership, and they rated it as the most important. No other SSP group ranked *having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective* in the top 10.

Two abilities in the *personal* set were rated relatively highly by each group of respondents: *being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong* and *wanting to achieve the best outcome possible*.

4.2.2.1.1 Comparison with the Mainstream and SSP Principals Analysis

There were no replications of significant results in the analyses. However the borderline result for *having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective*, in which SSP principals scored higher than all the other SSP groups, was supported in the analysis of mainstream and SSP principals. This ability showed a significant difference between those two groups, with the mean being higher for SSP principals.

4.2.2.2 Interpersonal Abilities

Table 4.8 illustrates the results of the Pearson Chi-Square analysis for the *interpersonal* set of abilities.

Table 4.8 Proportion of SSP Group Rating High for Interpersonal Abilities

| Ability | Principals | | Teachers | | Support Staff | | Parents | | Pearson's Chi-Square & p. value |
|-------------------------------|------------|----|----------|----|---------------|----|---------|----|--|
| | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | |
| Deal with conflict situations | 84.6 | 26 | 88.7 | 53 | 84.1 | 44 | 88.1 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = .607$ p = .895 |
| Motivate others to achieve | 80.8 | 26 | 70.4 | 54 | 65.9 | 44 | 73.8 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.920$ p = .589 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|--------------------------------|
| Give feedback without blame | 73.1 | 26 | 83 | 53 | 88.6 | 44 | 76.2 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 3.525$ p = .318 |
| Empathise & work with people from wide backgrounds | 73.1 | 26 | 76.4 | 55 | 80 | 45 | 76.2 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = .475$ p = .924 |
| Work constructively with resistors | 69.2 | 26 | 68.5 | 54 | 72.1 | 43 | 58.5 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.949$ p = .583 |
| Develop and contribute to team-based programs | 69.2 | 26 | 57.4 | 54 | 59.1 | 44 | 69 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 2.088$ p = .554 |
| Listen to different points of view | 65.4 | 26 | 70.9 | 55 | 88.6 | 44 | 76.2 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 6.249$ p = .100 |
| Work with DET senior officers | 56 | 25 | 63.6 | 55 | 72.7 | 44 | 78 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 4.509$ p = .211 |
| Understand how groups operate | 46.2 | 26 | 43.6 | 55 | 59.1 | 44 | 52.4 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 2.589$ p = .459 |
| Develop and use networks ** | 30.8 | 26 | 49.1 | 55 | 65.9 | 44 | 59.5 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 9.158$ p = .027 |
| ** indicates significant result | | | | | | | | | |

The analysis of the *interpersonal* set of abilities revealed a significant result for *being able to develop and use networks of colleagues to help me solve key workplace problems* (p = .027). Support staff in particular (65.9%) and parents (59.5%) deemed this skill much more important than the principals in the job (30.8%).

One principal commented, in apparent reference to the specificity of the educational environment in which these principals worked and the subsequently implied diminished need for networking, that “key people in the school (are) used more than outside”. Another principal indicated that there is “often not the opportunity to do so (use networks of colleagues)”.

A further dimension of this concept was identified by a teacher who considered that developing networks was “difficult because in (an) SSP you feel isolated”. However, value in pursuing the development of this ability was expressed by teachers who indicated that it would “save time, allow colleagues to support each other”, and that it was important as “other colleagues may have more experience”.

One ability in the *interpersonal* set was rated relatively highly by each group of respondents, *being able to deal effectively with conflict situations*.

4.2.2.2.1 Comparison with the Mainstream and SSP Principals Analysis

No statistically significant differences were found in the analysis of mainstream and SSP principals responses, and so it is that the statistical difference lies between the perceptions of parents and in particular support staff in SSPs, and the perceptions of SSP principals, about *being able to develop and use networks of colleagues to help me solve key workplace problems*.

4.2.2.3 Intellectual Abilities

Table 4.9 illustrates the results of the Pearson Chi-Square analysis for the *intellectual* set of abilities.

Table 4.9 Proportion of Each SSP Group Rating High for Intellectual Abilities

| Ability | Principals | | Teachers | | Support Staff | | Parents | | Pearson's Chi-Square & p. value |
|----------------------------|------------|----|----------|----|---------------|----|---------|----|--|
| | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | |
| Readjust a plan of action | 76.9 | 26 | 73.2 | 56 | 68.9 | 45 | 61.9 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 2.196$ p = .533 |
| Set and justify priorities | 65.4 | 26 | 75 | 56 | 77.8 | 45 | 78 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.670$ p = .644 |
| Assess alternative actions | 61.5 | 26 | 58.9 | 56 | 62.2 | 45 | 69 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.084$ p = .781 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|--------------------------------|
| See how activities are linked | 53.8 | 26 | 50 | 56 | 43.2 | 44 | 54.8 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.353$ p = .717 |
| Identify core issue | 50 | 26 | 51.8 | 56 | 70.5 | 44 | 61.9 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 4.606$ p = .203 |
| Diagnose cause of problem | 50 | 26 | 55.4 | 56 | 55.8 | 43 | 48.8 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = .649$ p = .885 |
| No fixed steps to solve problems | 50 | 26 | 46.4 | 56 | 62.2 | 45 | 52.4 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 2.598$ p = .458 |
| Recognise patterns | 48 | 25 | 42.9 | 56 | 62.2 | 45 | 59.5 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 4.817$ p = .186 |
| Use experience to figure out what is going on | 42.3 | 26 | 48.2 | 56 | 54.5 | 44 | 57.1 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.813$ p = .612 |

The analysis of the *intellectual* set of abilities revealed no differences in proportions of groups considering any of the abilities at the high rating. Additionally, there was no ability scored at a relatively high rating by all groups.

4.2.2.3.1 Comparison with the Mainstream and SSP Principals Analysis

In the first analysis comparing SSP principals and mainstream principals, a significant difference had been found in *the ability to use previous experience to figure out what is going on when a current situation takes an unexpected turn*, with mainstream principals considering it of more importance. As no difference was identified amongst the four groups of SSP respondents, then it is reasonable to assume that mainstream principals stand somewhat alone in the level of high importance they attach to this capability.

4.2.2.4 Specific Skills and Knowledge Abilities

Table 4.10 illustrates the results of the Pearson Chi-Square analysis for the *specific skills and knowledge* set of abilities.

Table 4.10 Proportion of Each SSP Group Rating High for Specific Skills and Knowledge Abilities

| Ability | Principals | | Teachers | | Support Staff | | Parents | | Pearson's Chi-Square & p. value |
|--|------------|----|----------|----|---------------|----|---------|----|---------------------------------|
| | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | |
| Clear, justified vision | 92 | 25 | 83.3 | 54 | 80 | 45 | 76.2 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 2.832$ p = .418 |
| Risk management and litigation ** | 60 | 25 | 74.5 | 55 | 73.3 | 45 | 50 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 8.044$ p = .045 |
| Identify and disseminate good practice | 60 | 25 | 69.1 | 55 | 71.1 | 45 | 64.3 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.148$ p = .766 |
| Manage programs | 56 | 25 | 56.4 | 55 | 57.8 | 45 | 50 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = .616$ p = .893 |
| Organize and manage time effectively | 52 | 25 | 70.9 | 55 | 73.3 | 45 | 71.4 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 3.971$ p = .265 |
| Chair and participate in meetings | 50 | 25 | 76.8 | 56 | 75.6 | 45 | 64.3 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 6.346$ p = .096 |
| Make effective presentations | 46.2 | 26 | 58.9 | 56 | 66.7 | 45 | 61 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 2.926$ p = .403 |
| Pedagogical knowledge and skill | 46.2 | 26 | 42.9 | 56 | 60 | 45 | 56.1 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 3.613$ p = .306 |
| Adult learning | 40 | 25 | 60 | 55 | 62.2 | 45 | 57.1 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 3.648$ p = .302 |
| Own professional learning | 38.5 | 26 | 48.2 | 56 | 68.2 | 44 | 56.1 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 6.914$ p = .075 |
| Understanding DET ** | 34.6 | 26 | 63.6 | 55 | 68.9 | 45 | 63.4 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 8.985$ p = .029 |
| Use IT effectively ** | 34.6 | 26 | 28.6 | 56 | 60 | 45 | 45.2 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 10.893$ p = .012 |
| Finance and resource management | 32 | 25 | 43.6 | 55 | 48.9 | 45 | 58.5 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 4.763$ p = .190 |
| Industrial relations ** | 24 | 25 | 36.4 | 55 | 64.3 | 42 | 29.3 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 15.273$ p = .002 |
| ** indicates significant result | | | | | | | | | |

The analysis of the *specific skills and knowledge* set of abilities produced statistically significant results for four abilities.

Understanding the role of risk management and litigation in current professional work ($p = .045$) was illustrated by relatively similar proportions of teachers (74.5 %) and support staff (73.3 %) rating it of high importance, whilst principals (60 %) and parents (50%) groups were less committed. The most distinctive difference is between the perceptions of both teachers and support staff with that of parents. One teacher commented that this ability was “most important for student and staff welfare”, and a parent indicated that it “needs to be balanced with common sense and good intentions”. One principal indicated that they “need more help here”.

There was a marked difference in the proportions of groups which rated *understanding how organizations like the Department of Education and Training operate* ($p = .029$) of high importance. As can be seen in Table 4.9, principals stood alone in their relatively low (34.6%) proportional rating of this ability as of high importance. The other groups showed similar proportions rating this ability highly: support staff at 68.9%, teachers 63.6% and parents at 63.4%. One principal hinted that there were two components to this ability, “understanding the structure versus understanding the culture”, whilst another suggested that principals “learn the bits you need to when necessity dictates”. Both these comments added insight as to why this ability’s importance was relatively weaker from the principals’ perspective. One support staff respondent verified the complexity of this ability when commenting “seems to me to be very difficult”, whilst further weight to this perception was supplied by the parent who stated that “(the) DET appears to continuously ‘evolve’ or ‘revolve’ so (principals) need to keep it in perspective and not get too overwhelmed”.

A significant result in the *specific skills and knowledge* set of abilities was found for *being able to use Information Technology effectively to communicate and perform key work functions* ($p = .012$). Table 4.10 illustrates an interesting spread: 60% of support staff, 45.2% of parents, 34.6% of principals, and 28.6% of teachers thought this ability of high importance. While it could be said that there appears to be a gap between the opinions of support staff and the other three groups, it can also be more confidently

asserted that the difference of opinion is more strikingly apparent between support staff and both principals and teachers. The very few comments from all respondents can be referred to generically as "saving time". One principal suggested that this ability was "becoming more important".

Understanding of industrial relations issues and process ($p = .002$) provided a further significant result in the *specific skills and knowledge* set. Table 4.10 illustrates a marked difference between the proportions of support staff ranking this item of high importance (64.3%) as compared with other groups: teachers 36.4%, parents 29.3%, and principals 24%. One possible explanation to be considered would be the affiliation of many support staff in schools with an industrial support association which is regularly at loggerheads with the DET, and by virtue of the role principals play at school, with the principals also. Additionally, it is well recognised in SSPs that support staff are regularly engaged in physically demanding work and work in which the levels of responsibility can sometimes become blurred, and these components of the support staff workload may also have impacted on their tendency to rate industrial relations issues highly. There may be a perception amongst support staff that their industrial welfare can only be guarded, without personal confrontation and undue stress, by a principal well versed in these issues.

A support staff respondent indicated that *understanding of industrial relations issues and process* provided for a "happy, healthy, high morale and caring school for staff and students", while a teacher added similarly that this ability "was important for staff welfare". One principal commented that this task was accomplished when you "follow policies", another stated that it is the "Fed(eration) Rep(resentative)'s responsibility", and parents showed some empathy to the principal's viewpoint in noting that "they (industrial relations issues and processes) change so often it's hard to keep up" and "(principals) should not have to devote much time to this".

A relatively large proportion of each group of respondents scored having a *clear, justified vision for where the school must head* in the high range.

4.2.2.4.1 Comparison with the Mainstream and SSP Principals Analysis

In the first analysis comparing SSP principals and mainstream principals, there were three statistically significant results, but none of them was replicated in the analysis of the four SSP groups of respondents. In other words, mainstream principals and SSP principals have an exclusive disagreement of opinion on several abilities: *having sound financial and resource management skills* and *being able to make effective presentations to a range of different groups*, both of which mainstream principals believed to be more important than SSP principals did, and *having a clear, justified vision for where the school must head* which SSP principals believed more important than mainstream principals did.

4.2.2.5 SSP Groups: Top 10 Abilities in Part A

To illustrate the contribution of specific abilities to successful leadership in the SSP setting, a compilation of the top 10 ranked abilities by each group of SSP respondents according to the proportion of each group that rated the ability of high importance was constructed. These results are presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11 SSP Groups: Rank of Top 10 Abilities According to Proportion Rating High

| Ability | Ability Set | Principals | Teachers | Support Staff | Parents |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective | Personal | 1 (96%) n = 25 | – | – | – |
| Being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong | Personal | 2 (92.3%) n = 26 | 1 (92.9%) n = 56 | 1 (90.7%) n = 43 | 3 (85.7%) n = 42 |
| Having a clear, justified vision for where the school must head | Specific Skills and Knowledge | 3 (92%) n = 25 | 3 (83.3%) n = 54 | 8 (80%) n = 45 | 7 (76.2%) n = 42 |
| Wanting to achieve the best outcome possible | Personal | 3 (92%) n = 25 | 3 (83.3%) n = 54 | 5 (86%) n = 43 | 1 (90.5%) n = 42 |
| Being able to deal effectively with conflict situations | Interpersonal | 5 (84.6%) n = 26 | 2 (88.7%) n = 53 | 6 (84.1%) n = 44 | 2 (88.1%) n = 42 |

| Ability | Ability Set | Principals | Teachers | Support Staff | Parents |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Being able to bounce back from adversity | Personal | 6 (84%) n = 25 | — | — | — |
| Being able to motivate others to achieve great things | Interpersonal | 7 (80.8%) n = 26 | — | — | — |
| Having the ability to defer judgement and not to jump in too quickly to resolve a problem | Personal | 7 (80.8%) n = 26 | — | — | — |
| Being willing to face and learn from my errors and listen openly to feedback | Personal | 9 (76.9%) n = 26 | 9 (75%) n = 56 | 6 (84.1%) n = 44 | 7 (76.2%) n = 42 |
| Being able to readjust a plan of action in the light of what happens as it is implemented | Intellectual | 9 (76.9%) n = 26 | — | — | — |
| Being able to give constructive feedback to work colleagues and others without engaging in personal blame | Interpersonal | — | 5 (83%) n = 53 | 2 (88.6%) n = 44 | 7 (76.2%) n = 42 |
| An ability to make a hard decision | Personal | — | 6 (77.8%) n = 54 | 4 (86.4%) n = 44 | 3 (85.7%) n = 42 |
| An ability to chair and participate constructively in meetings | Specific Skills and Knowledge | — | 7 (76.8%) n = 56 | — | — |
| The ability to empathise with and work productively with people from a wide range of backgrounds | Interpersonal | — | 8 (76.4%) n = 55 | 8 (80%) n = 45 | 7 (76.2%) n = 42 |
| Being able to set and justify priorities | Intellectual | — | 9 (75%) n = 56 | 10 (77.8%) n = 45 | 5 (78%) n = 41 |
| A willingness to listen to different points of view before coming to a decision | Interpersonal | — | — | 2 (88.6%) n = 44 | 7 (76.2%) n = 42 |
| Being able to work with Department of Education and Training senior officers without being intimidated | Interpersonal | — | — | — | 5 (78%) n = 41 |

Seventeen abilities in total were positioned in the top 10 rated in importance for successful SSP leadership by all SSP respondents. Of these 17, seven were from the *personal* set, six from the *interpersonal* set, and only two from each of the *intellectual*

and *specific skills and knowledge* sets. The two highest ranking abilities were both from the *personal* set, *being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong* and *wanting to achieve the best outcome possible*.

4.2.2.6 Relative Importance of Sets of Abilities in Part A

A mean of the percentage scores indicating the proportion of the four groups of SSP respondents that rated each of the abilities as high in each set of the four sets of abilities was calculated for each set. Table 4.12 illustrates the relative importance of the sets of abilities as adjudged by each of the four groups.

Table 4.12 SSP Groups: Relative Importance of Sets of Abilities in Part A

| Ability Set | Principals | | Teachers | | Support Staff | | Parents | |
|-------------------------------|------------|------|----------|------|---------------|------|---------|------|
| | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank |
| Personal | 76 | 1 | 65.4 | 2 | 70 | 2 | 67.1 | 2 |
| Interpersonal | 64.9 | 2 | 67.2 | 1 | 73.6 | 1 | 70.8 | 1 |
| Intellectual | 55.3 | 3 | 55.8 | 4 | 61.9 | 4 | 60.4 | 3 |
| Specific Skills and Knowledge | 47.6 | 4 | 58.1 | 3 | 66.5 | 3 | 57.4 | 4 |

Teachers and support staff agreed on the relative importance of the sets of abilities, ranking them in order of importance *interpersonal*, *personal*, *specific skills and knowledge* and *intellectual*, whilst principals and parents differed only on the relative importance of *personal* and *interpersonal* abilities.

Interestingly, all SSP groups except the principals believed that *interpersonal* skills were more important than the others. Only the principals believed that *personal* skills were more important than the *interpersonal*. Parents and support staff rated the *interpersonal* set most highly, and this result provided some enlightenment to the issue of *interpersonal* abilities discussed previously in 4.2.2. It appears that those two groups in particular have expectations of the SSP principals that the principals themselves do not.

Parents agreed with principals in rating *specific skills and knowledge* abilities above *intellectual*, whilst teachers and support staff reversed that order.

4.3 Results from Part B

Part B of the survey was completed by the four groups from SSP communities: principals, teachers, support staff and parents. The items in this part of the survey were extracted from the *CEC Knowledge and Skills for Beginning Special Education Administrators* (Council for Exceptional Children 2000) as described in Chapter 3. The survey asked respondents to judge the degree of importance of each of the skills identified by the CEC to effective leadership in special education. Respondents were encouraged to add comments to clarify or justify their decisions.

As in 4.3, the analysis involved using a Pearson Chi-Square analysis to compare the four groups in terms of the proportion that rated each of the skills as being of high importance. The results are reported in the following sections for each of the five sets of skills as explained previously: *personal, interpersonal, intellectual, specific skills and knowledge* and *inclusive practice skills* sets.

4.3.1 Personal Skills

Allocating membership of this set of skills was not initially a simple task. In the *personal* ability set determined by Scott (2003), most items referred to individual characteristics one might fairly describe as components of personality, specifically traits related to resilience and commitment to a cause. It was within this context, and with attention to the implied characteristics in the descriptions of the CEC skills, that three skills from the CEC list were extracted for inclusion for the *personal* skills set:

- *Serve as advocate for students with disabilities and their families.*
- *Respect and support students' self-advocacy rights.*
- *Communicate and demonstrate a high standard of ethical practice.*

Table 4.13 illustrates the results of the Pearson Chi-Square analysis for the *personal* set of skills for Part B.

Table 4.13 Proportion of Each SSP Group Rating High for Personal Skills in Part B

| Skill | Principals | | Teachers | | Support Staff | | Parents | | Pearson's Chi-Square & p. value |
|---|------------|----|----------|----|---------------|----|---------|----|---------------------------------|
| | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | |
| Communicate and demonstrate high standard of ethics | 92.3 | 26 | 92.9 | 56 | 84.4 | 45 | 76.2 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 6.628$ p = .085 |
| Respect and support students' self-advocacy rights | 57.7 | 26 | 67.3 | 55 | 68.2 | 44 | 68.3 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.027$ p = .795 |
| Serve as advocate for students | 53.8 | 26 | 46.4 | 56 | 34.9 | 43 | 62.5 | 40 | $\chi^2_3 = 6.724$ p = .081 |

The analysis of the *personal* skills set showed no differences in proportions of groups assessing any of the skills at the high rating.

One skill in the *personal* set was rated relatively highly by each group of respondents: *communicate and demonstrate a high standard of ethical practice*. Most importance was placed on this skill by teachers (92.9%) and principals (92.3%). Least importance was placed on this skill by the parents group (76.2%).

4.3.2 Interpersonal Skills

Seven items from the CEC (2000) skills list were positioned in the *interpersonal* skills set:

- *Implement a variety of procedures to ensure clear communication at all school levels.*
- *Implement conflict resolution programs.*
- *Develop and support communication and collaboration with other educational communities and support agencies.*
- *Collaborate and engage in shared decision-making to support programs for students with disabilities.*

- *Develop and provide effective communication with parents and families of students with disabilities.*
- *Implement effective consultation and collaboration techniques.*
- *Make decisions about students with disabilities based on open communication, trust and mutual respect.*

Table 4.14 illustrates the results of the Pearson Chi-Square analysis for the *interpersonal* set of skills for Part B.

Table 4.14 Proportion of Each SSP Group Rating High for Interpersonal Skills in Part B

| Skill | Principals | | Teachers | | Support Staff | | Parents | | Pearson's Chi-Square & p. value |
|---|------------|----|----------|----|---------------|----|---------|----|---------------------------------|
| | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | |
| Make decisions with open communication trust, and respect | 92.3 | 26 | 89.1 | 55 | 90.9 | 44 | 82.9 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.899$ p = .594 |
| Develop communication with parents and families | 88.5 | 26 | 78.6 | 56 | 77.8 | 45 | 83.3 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.611$ p = .657 |
| Implement procedures for clear communication | 84.6 | 26 | 85.7 | 56 | 71.1 | 45 | 78.6 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 3.747$ p = .290 |
| Implement consultation and collaboration | 73.1 | 26 | 73.2 | 56 | 59.1 | 44 | 57.1 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 4.232$ p = .238 |
| Engage in shared decision-making for students | 65.4 | 26 | 71.4 | 56 | 53.3 | 45 | 56.1 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 4.276$ p = .233 |
| Implement conflict resolution programs | 57.7 | 26 | 71.4 | 56 | 60 | 45 | 47.6 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 5.796$ p = .122 |
| Communicate and collaborate with others | 50 | 26 | 42.9 | 56 | 53.3 | 45 | 50 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.196$ p = .754 |

The analysis of the *interpersonal* set of skills produced no statistically significant results.

A large proportion of each group considered three skills in the high importance range: *make decisions about students with disabilities based on open communication, trust and mutual respect, develop and provide effective communication with parents and families of students with disabilities and implement a variety of procedures to ensure clear communication at all school levels.* For the item which specifically focussed on principal-parent-families relationships, the results showed that both the SSP principals and parents held similarly high ratings of the importance of this skill (principals 88.5%, parents 83.3%).

4.3.3 Intellectual Skills

The *intellectual* skills items set was assembled with due consideration to the problem-solving focus implied in Scott's (2003) corresponding set. Nine items were included:

- *Facilitate the development and implementation of programs that respond to student and family needs.*
- *Understand and interpret data and information about individual students within diverse cultural and linguistic contexts.*
- *Assist in development of curriculum and instructional models for all students, not just those with disabilities.*
- *Facilitate and participate in the development of collaborative general and special education programs.*
- *Ensure that decisions and management procedures provide appropriate outcomes for students with disabilities.*
- *Facilitate the development and implementation of on-going evaluation of special education programs.*
- *Develop interagency agreements to promote outcomes for students with disabilities (e.g. speech therapy, physiotherapy).*
- *Facilitate the development and implementation of transition plans for students with disabilities.*

- *Support other schools in implementing a range of strategies that promote positive behaviour in students with disabilities.*

Table 4.15 illustrates the results of the Pearson Chi-Square analysis for the *intellectual* set of skills for Part B.

Table 4.15 Proportion of Each SSP Group Rating High for Intellectual Skills in Part B

| Skill | Principals | | Teachers | | Support Staff | | Parents | | Pearson's Chi-Square & p. value |
|--|------------|----|----------|----|---------------|----|---------|----|---------------------------------|
| | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | |
| Ensure decisions provide appropriate outcomes | 80.8 | 26 | 80 | 55 | 77.8 | 45 | 81 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = .165$ p = .983 |
| Facilitate programs that meet student & family needs | 69.2 | 26 | 76.8 | 56 | 66.7 | 45 | 81 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 2.844$ p = .416 |
| Facilitate implementation of transition plans | 68 | 25 | 57.4 | 54 | 55.6 | 45 | 77.5 | 40 | $\chi^2_3 = 5.685$ p = .128 |
| Facilitate evaluation of special education programs | 65.4 | 26 | 55.4 | 56 | 57.8 | 45 | 66.7 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.684$ p = .641 |
| Develop interagency agreements to promote outcomes ** | 50 | 26 | 64.3 | 56 | 68.2 | 44 | 82.9 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 8.371$ p = .039 |
| Support other schools to promote positive behaviour | 34.6 | 26 | 47.3 | 55 | 40.9 | 44 | 56.4 | 39 | $\chi^2_3 = 3.552$ p = .314 |
| Understand data about students in diverse contexts ** | 24 | 25 | 46.3 | 54 | 51.1 | 45 | 59 | 39 | $\chi^2_3 = 7.862$ p = .049 |
| Facilitate general and special education programs | 23.1 | 26 | 48.1 | 54 | 50 | 44 | 47.6 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 5.824$ p = .120 |
| Develop curriculum and instructional models for students | 15.4 | 26 | 39.6 | 48 | 15.5 | 44 | 34.2 | 38 | $\chi^2_3 = 6.121$ p = .106 |
| ** indicates significant result | | | | | | | | | |

The analysis of the *intellectual* set of skills in Part B produced statistically significant results for two skills.

There was a distinct gap between the proportion of parents (59%) considering *understand and interpret data and information about individual students within diverse cultural and linguistic contexts* ($p = .049$) of high importance and that of principals (24%). The few comments submitted gave little explanation for this discrepancy, referring to the “use of expertise of others” and “in our context” (principals), and “up to the teacher” and “system wide support needed” (parents). Perhaps the size of this gap could be attributed to a parent focus on “individual students”, and principals may have been unimpressed with the inclusion of “diverse cultural and linguistic contexts” in the skill’s description.

Parents (82.9%) also considered that it was more important to *develop interagency agreements to promote outcomes for students with disabilities (e.g. speech therapy, physiotherapy)* than the other groups of respondents did. This result is most apparent in comparison with the proportion of SSP principals who considered this skill as of high importance (50%). Parents’ comments referred to their perception of a lack of services: “more needed in the areas of speech and physiotherapy”; “it’s an indictment of this state government that these are still needed”; and that this ability is “vital as services are so badly needed”. Principals’ comments indicated that they viewed this task as not within their role, that it was “determined by policy”, that to accomplish it there is a “need to be able to look beyond DET”, and that they placed these services on the wish list: “if only we had them!”

Scoring relatively highly in all groups was *ensure that decisions and management procedures provide appropriate outcomes for students with disabilities*.

4.3.4 Specific Skills and Knowledge Skills

From the CEC (2000) list four items were selected for this set:

- *Interpret and communicate local policies, and state and federal law pertaining to people with disabilities, to others.*

- *Facilitate professional development for teachers of students with disabilities.*
- *Facilitate a specific professional development plan in technology for teachers of students with disabilities.*
- *Develop school budgets and procure supplementary funding to ensure effective provision and allocation of resources.*

Table 4.16 illustrates the results of the Pearson Chi-Square analysis for the *specific skills and knowledge* set of skills for Part B.

Table 4.16 Proportion of Each SSP Group Rating High for Specific Skills and Knowledge Skills in Part B

| Skill | Principals | | Teachers | | Support Staff | | Parents | | Pearson's Chi-Square & p. value |
|--|------------|----|----------|----|---------------|----|---------|----|---------------------------------|
| | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | |
| Teacher professional development | 76.9 | 26 | 75 | 56 | 80 | 45 | 73.2 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = .618$ p = .892 |
| Develop school budgets and secure funding | 76.9 | 26 | 69.1 | 55 | 64.4 | 45 | 71.4 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.298$ p = .730 |
| Teacher professional development in technology | 42.3 | 26 | 50 | 56 | 53.3 | 45 | 53.7 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 1.011$ p = .799 |
| Interpret local policies and state and federal laws ** | 19.2 | 26 | 50.9 | 55 | 48.9 | 45 | 43.9 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 7.982$ p = .046 |
| ** indicates significant result | | | | | | | | | |

The analysis of the *specific skills and knowledge* set of skills in Part B produced statistically significant results for *interpret and communicate local policies, and state and federal law pertaining to people with disabilities, to others* (p = .046). The proportion of principals scoring this skill of high importance was particularly low (19.2%), even considering the relatively low proportions of other groups scoring the skill high. Only one principal comment was submitted, and this referred simply to the “use of expertise of others”. Teachers scored this skill higher than the other groups, and

while one teacher supported the principal's viewpoint in suggesting that principals should "consult government agencies", another indicated that it was "important for 18 year olds who have nowhere to go after school".

No items in the *specific skills and knowledge* set of skills were scored outstandingly highly by any group. However an interesting result was revealed in the comparisons of proportions of groups' ratings for *facilitate professional development for teachers of students with disabilities* and *facilitate a specific professional development plan in technology for teachers of students with disabilities*. It appears that no group considers the latter as important as the former.

4.3.5 Inclusive Practice Skills

As mentioned previously in 4.4, the inclusion of this set of skills was required as a consequence of the specificity of several skills descriptions in *CEC Knowledge and Skills for Beginning Special Education Administrators* (Council for Exceptional Children 2000). Five skills are included in this set:

- *Communicate an inclusive vision to school, school education area, and regional communities.*
- *Advocate for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in local and regional programs at school and community levels.*
- *Ensure appropriate outcomes and assessment programs for students with disabilities that are linked to the regular curriculum.*
- *Contribute to the development of plans to promote inclusive programs at other school and community sites.*
- *Coordinate the development of a discipline policy for students with disabilities which encourages inclusive practice.*

Table 4.17 illustrates the results of the Pearson Chi-Square analysis for the *inclusive practice* set of skills for Part B.

Table 4.17 Proportion of Each Group of SSP Respondents Rating High for Inclusive Practice Set of Skills in Part B

| Skill | Principals | | Teachers | | Support Staff | | Parents | | Pearson's Chi-Square & p. value |
|--|------------|----|----------|----|---------------|----|---------|----|---------------------------------|
| | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | |
| Coordinate inclusive discipline policy | 56 | 25 | 67.9 | 56 | 55.6 | 45 | 50 | 40 | $\chi^2_3 = 3.433$ p = .330 |
| Ensure outcomes linked to regular curriculum | 38.5 | 26 | 47.3 | 55 | 55.6 | 45 | 57.5 | 40 | $\chi^2_3 = 2.980$ p = .395 |
| Promote inclusive programs at other sites | 38.5 | 26 | 38.2 | 55 | 31.1 | 45 | 38.1 | 42 | $\chi^2_3 = .719$ p = .869 |
| Advocate for ** inclusion at school and in community | 26.9 | 26 | 55.4 | 56 | 62.2 | 45 | 75.6 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 15.985$ p = .001 |
| Communicate an inclusive vision | 26.9 | 26 | 50.9 | 55 | 46.7 | 45 | 43.9 | 41 | $\chi^2_3 = 4.260$ p = .235 |
| ** indicates significant result | | | | | | | | | |

The analysis of the *inclusive practice* set of skills in Part B produced statistically significant results for one item, *advocate for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in local and regional programs at school and community levels* (p = .001). The proportion of principals (26.9%) scoring this skill highly was lower than each of the other groups who presented a somewhat homogenous opinion. Two principals commented similarly that “inclusion is not the total answer”, and that students needs are the main priority and focus, and another suggested that the DET regional network should be assisting more. One teacher comment also shifted the ownership of this ability in the SSP context to others, stating that this “should not be the job of principals, not enough advocating from the community”.

Parents scored this skill higher than the others. One parent commented that this skill should be implemented “with a balanced realistic view to the appropriateness of such”.

No skill in this set was scored relatively highly by any of the groups.

4.3.6 SSP Groups: Top 10 Skills in Part B

To illustrate the contribution of specific skills to successful leadership in the SSP setting, a compilation of the top 10 ranked skills by each group of SSP respondents according to the proportion of each group that rated the ability of high importance was constructed. These results are presented in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18 SSP Groups: Rank of Top 10 Abilities in Part B According to Proportion Rating High

| Ability | Ability Set | Principals | Teachers | Support Staff | Parents |
|--|-------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Communicate and demonstrate high standard of ethics | Personal | 1 (92.3%) n = 26 | 1 (92.9%) n = 56 | 2 (84.4%) n = 45 | 8 (76.2%) n = 42 |
| Make decisions with open communication, trust, and respect | Interpersonal | 1 (92.3%) n = 26 | 2 (89.1%) n = 56 | 1 (90.9%) n = 44 | 2 (82.9%) n = 41 |
| Develop communication with parents and families | Interpersonal | 3 (88.5%) n = 26 | 5 (78.6%) n = 56 | 4 (77.8%) n = 45 | 1 (83.3%) n = 42 |
| Implement procedures for clear communication | Interpersonal | 4 (84.6%) n = 26 | 3 (85.7%) n = 56 | 6 (71.1%) n = 45 | 6 (78.6%) n = 42 |
| Ensure decisions provide appropriate outcomes | Intellectual | 5 (80.8%) n = 26 | 4 (80.0%) n = 55 | 4 (77.8%) n = 44 | 4 (81.0%) n = 42 |
| Teacher professional development | Specific Skills and Knowledge | 6 (76.9%) n = 26 | 7 (75.0%) n = 56 | 3 (80.0%) n = 44 | 10 (73.2%) n = 41 |
| Develop school budgets and secure funding | Specific Skills and Knowledge | 7 (76.9%) n = 26 | — | 10 (66.4%) n = 45 | — |
| Implement consultation and collaboration | Interpersonal | 8 (73.1%) n = 26 | 8 (73.2%) n = 56 | — | — |
| Facilitate programs that meet student & family needs | Intellectual | 9 (69.2%) n = 26 | 6 (76.8%) n = 56 | 9 (66.7%) n = 45 | 4 (81.0%) n = 42 |
| Facilitate implementation of transition plans | Intellectual | 9 (68.0%) n = 25 | — | — | 7 (77.5%) n = 40 |
| Engage in shared decision-making for students | Interpersonal | — | 9 (71.4%) n = 56 | — | — |

| Ability | Ability Set | Principals | Teachers | Support Staff | Parents |
|--|--------------------|------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Implement conflict resolution programs | Interpersonal | – | 9 (71.4%) n = 56 | – | – |
| Respect and support students' self-advocacy rights | Personal | – | – | 7 (68.2%) n = 44 | – |
| Develop interagency agreements to promote outcomes | Intellectual | – | – | 8 (68.2%) n = 44 | 2 (82.9%) n = 41 |
| Advocate for inclusion at school and in community | Inclusive Practice | – | – | – | 9 (75.6%) n = 41 |

Fifteen abilities in total were positioned in the top 10 rated in importance for successful SSP leadership by all SSP respondents in Part B of the survey. Of these 15, two were from the *personal* set, six from the *interpersonal* set, four were from the *intellectual* set, two were from the *specific skills and knowledge* set, and one was from the *inclusive practice* set.

4.3.7 Relative Importance of Sets of Skills in Part B

A mean of the percentage scores indicating the proportion of the four groups of SSP respondents that rated each of the skills as high in each set of the five sets of skills in Part B was calculated for each set. Table 4.19 illustrates the relative importance of the sets of skills as adjudged by each of the four groups.

It is important to remember that these skills sets are not identical to the abilities sets of Part A of the survey. A more detailed explanation of the construction of the skills sets of Part B is given in 3.4.2.

Table 4.19 SSP Groups: Relative Importance of Sets of Skills in Part B

| Skills Set | Principals | | Teachers | | Support Staff | | Parents | |
|-------------------------------|------------|------|----------|------|---------------|------|---------|------|
| | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank | % | Rank |
| Personal | 67.9 | 2 | 68.9 | 2 | 62.5 | 2 | 69.0 | 1 |
| Interpersonal | 73.1 | 1 | 73.2 | 1 | 66.5 | 1 | 65.1 | 2 |
| Intellectual | 47.8 | 4 | 57.2 | 4 | 53.7 | 4 | 65.1 | 2 |
| Specific Skills and Knowledge | 53.9 | 3 | 61.3 | 3 | 61.7 | 3 | 60.6 | 4 |
| Inclusive Practice | 37.4 | 5 | 51.9 | 5 | 50.2 | 5 | 53.0 | 5 |

Principals, teachers and support staff all agreed that *interpersonal* skills were of most importance, followed by *personal*, then *specific skills and knowledge*, *intellectual* and *inclusive practice*. Parents showed a different perspective, indicating *personal* as the most important, although a cautious approach to assigning significant importance to this finding is recommended due to the composition of the items in this set of skills, both in number (three only) and in content. Parents thought that *interpersonal* and *intellectual* skills were equally second most important, and that *specific skills and knowledge* skills then outranked *inclusive practice* in order of importance to successful SSP leadership.

Apart from the superiority of *personal* and *interpersonal* skills as important contributors to successful SSP leadership, the most remarkable characteristic of these results is the relegation of *inclusive practice* skills to the bottom rung of importance. In light of the political and philosophical trends towards the implementation of inclusion, it may have been reasonable to expect that this set of skills would score somewhat higher in importance than achieved. Perhaps the translation of the political and philosophical trends to the SSP context has been perceived to have been under-resourced, and thus implementation to have fallen short of that expected and hoped for. Certainly this proposition is guesswork, but appears to warrant further investigation.

4.4 Results from Part C

In *Part C* of the survey SSP principals were asked to identify the extent to which each item in a list of characteristics of SSPs made the leadership requirements of an SSP principal different from those of a mainstream principal. They were also asked to

nominate the three most influential SSP characteristics on the differentiation in leadership requirements between the two contexts. Comments were sought in each step.

Secondly in Part C, SSP principals were asked to nominate the most challenging aspects of SSP principalship, and how these aspects differentiate the job from that of a mainstream principal. Finally, SSP principals were asked to provide an analogy describing “what it is like to be a principal in a school like yours” and to add any further comments.

The following tables and discussion report the results of these enquiries.

4.4.1 Characteristics of SSPs which Influence Leadership Requirements

The proportions of SSP principals who scored SSP characteristics in the *high* rating of influence on differentiated leadership requirements are illustrated in Table 4.20.

Table 4.20 Proportion of SSP Principals Rating High for SSP Characteristics which Differentiate Leadership Requirements

| SSP Characteristic | % | n |
|--|----------|----------|
| The range and prevalence of challenging student behaviours (e.g self-injury, violence, aggressiveness, refusal to interact) | 80.8 | 26 |
| Occupational Health and Safety demands due to behaviour management and physical management of students | 76.9 | 26 |
| The level of school responsibility for the curriculum, matched to the students' types and levels of disability and resources (e.g. hydrotherapy, mobility) | 69.2 | 26 |
| Responsibility for health care management of students with special medical conditions and needs | 69.2 | 26 |
| Developments in technological and augmentative communication and mobility devices and systems | 68.0 | 25 |
| Educational programs cater for years K - 12 | 68.0 | 25 |
| The student population, exclusively students with disabilities | 57.7 | 26 |
| The parent population, exclusively parents of at least one child with a disability | 57.7 | 26 |
| The level of involvement of consultant professional support personnel (e.g. physiotherapists, occupational and speech therapists) | 57.7 | 26 |
| The higher proportion of teacher aides than in mainstream settings | 53.8 | 26 |

| SSP Characteristic | % | n |
|--|------|----|
| The networking with other government departments and private service agencies which consult and negotiate on supplementary programs | 53.8 | 26 |
| Cooperation with local community organizations and facilities to improve student educational outcomes related to integration and inclusion programs | 53.8 | 26 |
| The prevalence of student special transport applications which are the responsibility of the school | 53.8 | 26 |
| Limited access to qualified and experienced special education casual staff | 52.0 | 25 |
| The teacher population, with a range of experience in both mainstream and special education settings | 50 | 26 |
| Cooperation with local mainstream education settings, to enhance student outcomes, particularly in integration and inclusion programs | 50 | 26 |
| The implications of legislative requirements related to child protection issues (e.g. physical assistance in toileting, health and behaviour management) | 50 | 26 |
| The necessity for regular submissions for funding to acquire specialist equipment and other resources (e.g. supplementary teacher aide time) | 42.3 | 26 |
| Procedures and resources required for safe transport of students with disabilities | 42.3 | 26 |
| Enrolments are determined by placement panels' assessments of students meeting enrolment criteria | 34.6 | 26 |

The range and prevalence of challenging student behaviours (e.g. self-injury, violence, aggressiveness, refusal to interact) was reported by 80.8% of SSP principals as having a high level of influence on differentiated leadership requirements. One principal commented that this was “a huge issue”, another was concerned that there was “no recognition of the higher support needs of students with dual diagnosis”, and a third indicated in leadership terms that the “principal needs to be at the forefront of student/staff support and managing the behaviours”.

It is not surprising that the second most influential characteristic in this regard determined by SSP principals is *Occupational Health and Safety demands due to behaviour management and physical management of students* (76.9%), as it would appear fair to comment that the two characteristics are closely linked through the *challenging student behaviour* connection.

However, one must be cautious not to assign too much authority to this perceived link. Occupational Health and Safety issues addressed in the SSP context regularly and substantially focus on physical management of students, not necessarily concerned with

protection to and from self and others as a result of challenging and dangerous student behaviour, but with therapeutic and hygiene positioning procedures which in their own right imply risks for staff and students. These procedures can be physically demanding in both strenuous and repetitive senses, can involve the manipulation and manoeuvring of students and equipment, and can demand professional training to avert injury. This result should be considered with these circumstances in mind, and further investigation of this issue would be helpful in our understandings. Whilst one comment succinctly stated that “the buck stops with the principal”, this is in no way different from mainstream settings.

SSP principals believed that *responsibility for health care management of students with special medical conditions and needs* also has a relatively strong influence on differentiated leadership requirements (69.2%). Whilst this characteristic may extend the OHS issue specified in the previous characteristic identified above, it also adds the specific dimension of medical care which carries implications of more critical resourcing and specific professional training issues. Several principals commented on this issue. One reported implications to the interpersonal relationships between principals and parents, explaining that “parents/caregivers place too much responsibility on schools and resent it when this is pointed out”, while others indicated more grave concerns in commenting that “principals are required to make many medical decisions”, and that there is “increased responsibility because of increasing number of students who could die at school due to medical problems/conditions”.

Students' access to and participation in the curriculum is highlighted by the relatively strong result of three other SSP characteristics. Sixty-nine percent of SSP principals believed that *the level of school responsibility for the curriculum, matched to the students' types and levels of disability and resources (e.g. hydrotherapy, mobility)* differentiated the leadership requirements to a *high* extent.

Sixty-eight percent of SSP principals considered both *developments in technological and augmentative communication and mobility devices and systems* and the fact that *educational programs cater for years K - 12* were *high* in their influence on leadership

requirements. Comments on the latter characteristic referred to “tracking students to ensure challenging work” and “meeting an expansive range of students’ needs”.

Principals were also requested to make a more definite distinction in their opinions by nominating the three most influential characteristics on leadership requirements of SSPs. This task provided a further means of triangulating the data. The results, as calculated by procedures mentioned in 3.9.3, are illustrated in Table 4.21.

Table 4.21 SSP Principals: Ranking Items of Most Influence on Leadership

| Ranking | SSP Characteristic | Total Points |
|---------|--|--------------|
| 1 | The range and prevalence of challenging student behaviours (e.g self-injury, violence, aggressiveness, refusal to interact) | 47 |
| 2 | Occupational Health and Safety demands due to behaviour management and physical management of students | 20 |
| 2 | The level of school responsibility for the curriculum, matched to the students’ types and levels of disability and resources (e.g. hydrotherapy, mobility) | 20 |
| 4 | The student population, exclusively students with disabilities | 10 |
| 5 | The parent population, exclusively parents of at least one child with a disability | 9 |
| 6 | Cooperation with local mainstream education settings, to enhance student outcomes, particularly in integration and inclusion programs | 8 |
| 6 | Responsibility for health care management of students with special medical conditions and needs | 8 |
| 8 | The level of involvement of consultant professional support personnel (e.g. physiotherapists, occupational and speech therapists) | 7 |
| 9 | Limited access to qualified and experienced special education casual staff | 6 |
| 10 | Enrolments are determined by placement panels’ assessments of students meeting enrolment criteria | 5 |
| 11 | Educational programs cater for years K - 12 | 4 |
| 12 | The necessity for regular submissions for funding to acquire specialist equipment and other resources (e.g. supplementary teacher aide time) | 3 |
| 13 | The teacher population, with a range of experience in both mainstream and special education settings | 2 |
| 13 | The networking with other government departments and private service agencies which consult and negotiate on supplementary programs | 2 |
| 13 | The implications of legislative requirements related to child protection issues (e.g. physical assistance in toileting, health and behaviour management) | 2 |

| Ranking | SSP Characteristic | Total Points |
|---------|---|--------------|
| 16 | The higher proportion of teacher aides than in mainstream settings | 1 |
| 16 | Developments in technological and augmentative communication and mobility devices and systems | 1 |
| 18 | Cooperation with local community organizations and facilities to improve student educational outcomes related to integration and inclusion programs | 0 |
| 19 | The prevalence of student special transport applications which are the responsibility of the school | 0 |
| 20 | Procedures and resources required for safe transport of students with disabilities | 0 |

Overwhelmingly, principals of SSPs indicated that *the range and prevalence of challenging student behaviours (e.g. self-injury, violence, aggressiveness, refusal to interact)* was the most influential characteristic of their schools on the leadership capabilities required. This result confirmed the findings previously illustrated in Table 4.20, and has significant implications to the professional learning of principals and those aspiring to this role. Several comments related to the link between student behaviour and consideration for student and staff safety, and the provision of resources to meet needs was described by one principal as “staff expected/wanting to do too much with too little staffing, training, (and) physical environment”. Another SSP principal extended this issue in noting that “staff and parents look to an effective leader being able to create and maintain a safe environment for their child and staff”. One principal indicated that *challenging student behaviour* “affects safety, emotional climate, morale and learning”.

Two characteristics were ranked equally as next most influential: *Occupational Health and Safety demands due to behaviour management and physical management of students*, and *the level of school responsibility for the curriculum, matched to the students' types and levels of disability and resources (e.g. hydrotherapy, mobility)*. Again, these results replicated the previous findings illustrated in Table 4.20.

Occupational Health and Safety demands were reported by individual principals to be “increasingly placing great stress on staff”, promoting “staff feelings of being unsupported”, and “restrict(ing) goodwill and function of the school”.

Comments related to *school responsibility for the curriculum* could be summarised by one principal's assertion that "balancing BOS (Board of Studies) requirements, parent desires, age appropriateness, (and) student needs (is) a constant battle".

Three characteristics of SSPs, which were represented by relatively large proportions of SSP principals scoring them highly influential on differentiated leadership requirements in the previous investigation illustrated in Table 4.20, were relegated to less significant levels in the more selective process depicted by Table 4.21. *Responsibility for health care management of students with special medical conditions and needs, developments in technological and augmentative communication and mobility devices and systems, and educational programs cater for years K – 12* each fell into this category.

4.4.2 Most Challenging Aspects of Being an SSP Principal

Principals were asked to nominate the most challenging aspects of being an SSP principal, and the data were treated as described in 3.9.3. A total of 76 nominations were submitted by SSP principals, and the results are illustrated in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22 SSP Principals: Nominations for the Most Challenging Aspects of Principalship in SSPs

| Challenging Aspect | N = 76 | |
|---|--------|------|
| | No. | % |
| Student behaviour | 17 | 22.4 |
| Curriculum demands | 7 | 9.2 |
| Time available to deal with all issues | 6 | 7.9 |
| Diverse range of students | 6 | 7.9 |
| Teamwork amongst staff and parents | 5 | 6.6 |
| Support for staff | 5 | 6.6 |
| Diverse range of staff | 5 | 6.6 |
| Occupational health and safety | 5 | 6.6 |
| Staff – student ratios | 4 | 5.3 |
| Student health issues | 3 | 3.9 |
| Caring for parents | 3 | 3.9 |
| Student welfare | 2 | 2.6 |
| Executive and administrative staffing support | 2 | 2.6 |
| Training for staff | 2 | 2.6 |
| Therapy for students | 1 | 1.3 |
| Transport for students | 1 | 1.3 |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-----|
| Decent buildings | 1 | 1.3 |
| Dealing with difficult issues | 1 | 1.3 |

As can be seen, 22.4% of SSP principals' comments indicated that *student behaviour* stood alone as the most challenging aspect of being an SSP principal. Whilst most of these comments simply nominated *student behaviour* as the most challenging characteristic, others provided additional detail: "medication not managed properly at home, supporting staff with difficult students"; "risk assessment and risk management"; "meeting behaviour needs of staff and students and having the resources to do this"; and "training staff to understand students' behaviour". There comments reflected an interaction between several of the most challenging aspects listed in Table 4.22. This result adds further evidence to the strong influence that the issue of student behaviour has on the leadership requirements within the SSP environment.

Further, 9.2% of comments referred to the *curriculum demands* of an SSP, citing issues of student communication, use of appropriate technology, the K-12 curriculum requirement, and the wide range of student needs as the prominent contributors to the challenging nature of this aspect. The next most challenging aspects of SSP leadership were *time available to principals* to complete their tasks and the *diverse range of students* which each accounted for 7.9% of SSP principals' comments.

Staff issues rated very highly if all comments related to them were considered collectively. As illustrated in Table 4.22, there were several areas concerning the challenges presented by staff. These included dealing with student behaviour, staff training and support, staff cohesion, staff-parent relationships, staffing ratios, and the diverse range of staff. More detail was provided by three principals who submitted comments about "access to experienced staff", whilst another included the challenge of "developing unqualified, inexperienced staff continually".

It should be noted that percentages in Table 4.22 have been rounded to the nearest .1 and therefore the percentage total is 99.9%.

4.4.3 Being the principal in my school is like

When asked to complete the analogy *being a principal in my school is like.....*, and to add any other comments, several principals alluded to the generic multi-skilling capabilities of “jugglers”, “the ringmaster of a circus”, “being a jack of all trades” and “riding a merry-go-round, the wheels fall off, fix it up and away you go again”. There were numerous comments which projected the SSP principal’s job as a demanding and challenging one: for example, “being constantly available to students, staff, parents, support professionals”; “playing a 10-11 hour game of soccer flat-out non-stop, going home and preparing to do it again”; “running on a treadmill that speeds up”; “being in a fish bowl, always available to many consultative groups, always on the go, emotionally draining”; and “intellectually challenging, intellectually tiring”.

Other comments indicated the rewards of the job: for example, “participating in a rewarding and highly satisfying career”; “never enough time but damned rewarding”; and “wandering the many-trailed forest to base camp, with an out-of-date map, bush-fires and floods constantly altering the landscape, but with the knowledge and aspirations that you’ll get there in the end with a smile of achievement”.

Whilst the general mood of comments was substantially positive even given the acknowledgements of the challenges of the job, some comments reflected a degree of frustration and dissatisfaction with the NSW DET: for example, “the struggle for resource support with some (personnel) in DET leaves one feeling undervalued and whingeing”; “staff training lacking”; “disgraceful executive release”; and “oversized classes”. One principal synthesised a collection of thoughts to state that “OHS, challenging behaviour, learning programs, support and effective management directly depend on quality/experienced staff and effective resourcing by DET”. Another group of comments referred to the perceived antagonism that others hold towards the role that special schools play in contemporary education: “being a threatened species and trying to adapt to an increasingly difficult environment ... (need for) positive outlook”; “sometimes ... on a ship sailing against mainstream fear and prejudice ... (this is a) chosen course for us”; and “being part of a select bunch of individuals with highly refined and often underappreciated skills”.

Considered collectively, the results from the quantitative and qualitative analyses presented in this chapter bring to light a range of issues, and present a number of implications, concerning the leadership of SSPs from several perspectives. These issues and implications are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

This research set out to investigate a range of perceptions about leadership capability and the specific abilities required for successful leadership in special schools, specifically in the context of the principalship of NSW DET SSPs. The study relied heavily on the work of Scott (2003), which provided the capability model, including descriptions and collective sets of abilities, upon which the framework for much of this investigation was constructed and subsequently implemented. It is through the work of Scott, including his survey design, that the comparisons of perceptions of respondents in Part A of the present study were achieved. As stated in Chapter 1, the work of Scott has contributed substantially to on-going leadership professional learning in the NSW DET (*Learning Principals: leadership capability and learning research in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training*, 2003).

The current research compared the opinions of SSP principals with those of mainstream principals about the leadership requirements within their respective school settings. The study also exposed the perspectives on special education leadership from within the SSP environment by comparing the opinions of groups within this context: the principals, the teachers, the support staff and the parents of students attending these schools.

A further dimension to this study has been the investigation, within the NSW SSP context, of special educational leadership skills which have been identified by previous research (Council for Exceptional Children, 2000). The current research used this collection of skills, as described in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, to add to the richness and specificity of the data upon which findings could be used to inform current and future professional practice. SSP community members provided this information.

Finally, this research explored reasons which might account for the different leadership requirements between SSP and mainstream settings. To this end it sought from the SSP principals their opinions about the characteristics of SSPs which contributed to

differentiated leadership requirements between the two settings, and about the most challenging aspects of their job.

This chapter will address the research questions which the study proposed, discussing the findings as they are supported by the data of the survey and the literature reviewed. It will consider implications for current and future leadership practice and professional learning, will discuss the limitations of the study, and present recommendations for further research. A summary of the discussion will be presented, and the chapter will conclude with some final comments.

5.2 Addressing the Research Questions

5.2.1 Research Question 1

What leadership abilities do SSP principals believe are more important in the special school setting than mainstream principals believe are important in the mainstream setting?

The SSP principals' responses in Part A of the survey were compared with the principals' responses in Scott's (2003) research to address this question.

The study found that SSP principals and mainstream principals agree on the order of relative importance they attribute to the four identified sets of abilities to successful leadership included in Part A (Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.10): *personal*, *interpersonal*, *intellectual* and *specific skills and knowledge*. Both groups of principals' ratings of *personal* and *interpersonal* domains or dimensions of leadership as the two most important were supported by the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, which also acknowledged that these domains were closely interconnected. Specifically in the special school setting, a number of researchers have illustrated these points (Dobbins & Abbott, 2009; Driver, 2006; Gurr et al., 2003; Noto, 2005; O'Brien, 2007; Oyinlade, 2006; Rayner & Ribbins, 1999).

However, some attention should be directed in this discussion to SSP principals' perception that, in the special school setting, the *personal* and *interpersonal* sets of leadership abilities have a relatively more commanding superiority over the other two sets, than mainstream principals believe they have in the mainstream setting (See 4.2.1.6, Figure 4.9 and Table 4.6). It is this shift in emphasis which not only accounts for a difference in the leadership requirements between the two settings, but also suggests that SSP principals should be vigilant in ensuring that their performance and professional development in *personal* and *interpersonal* leadership abilities are given priority. The teachers, support staff and parents of SSPs gave support to this finding, as discussed in the answer to Research Question 3 following.

To assist in this discussion, Table 5.1 provides a concise illustration of those abilities identified by this research as having more importance in the SSP context than in the mainstream context, and hence deserving of special scrutiny. The table indicates the method by which each ability was identified as significantly more important in the SSP setting. It might be argued that one should give more consideration to those identified by independent t-test than those by ranking protocol, however a comprehensive approach should include both.

As can be seen in the table, four of these abilities are from the *personal* set, three from the *interpersonal* set, and two from the *specific skills and knowledge* set. No abilities in the *intellectual* set were considered by SSP principals to be more important in the SSP context than mainstream principals did in their context. The table reinforces the findings presented in Chapter 4 which indicated that SSP principals place a stronger emphasis on the *personal* and *interpersonal* abilities than mainstream principals do.

Table 5.1 Abilities More Important in SSP Setting than in Mainstream Setting

| Ability Set | Ability Description | Method of Identification |
|--|---|--|
| Personal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent t-test |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wanting to achieve the best outcome possible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent t-test |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having the ability to defer judgement and not jump in too quickly to resolve a problem | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranking protocol |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A willingness to pitch in and undertake menial tasks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranking protocol |
| Interpersonal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to work with senior DET officers without being intimidated | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranking protocol |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to give constructive feedback to work colleagues and others without engaging in personal blame | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranking protocol |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to work constructively with people who are resistors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranking protocol |
| Specific Skills & Knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a clear justified vision of where the school must head | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent t-test |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the role of risk management and litigation in current professional work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranking protocol |

The discussion following focuses on those specific skills and abilities identified by the current research, and illustrated in Table 5.1, which demonstrably contribute to the superiority of *personal* and *interpersonal* leadership capability.

SSP principals have told us that *having a sense of humour and keeping work in perspective* are paramount to the successful implementation of their roles. Their comments included “can’t survive without it”, and “ESSENTIAL to come back day after day”. Another SSP principal explained the “perspective” element: “out the door, forget about the place: it’s a job, not a life”, while another referred to the less favourable alternative: “better to laugh than cry”. Whilst there was a statistically significant difference in the importance attached to this ability by the two groups of principals, it must be noted that the ranking protocol illustrated that in relative terms, the mainstream principals rated this ability only one ranking point lower than the SSP principals (Table

4.1: SSP ranking 1, mainstream ranking 2). Mainstream principals indicated that *being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong* was more important. SSP principals ranked this the second most important ability. As discussed in Chapter 2, a similar need to maintain an appropriate work-private life balance was reported by Baker (2009) who investigated the challenges that special school principals commented were of major concern to them.

In this discussion, it is worthwhile to refer to the answer the study proposed to Research Question 3 following, that SSP principals clearly indicate that *challenging student behaviour* is the most influential characteristic of their schools on the leadership requirements of them. It is not unreasonable to suggest strong links between *challenging student behaviour* and *having a sense of humour and keeping work in perspective*, and *being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong*. These links are grounded in the context of the SSP environment, schools which specifically and exclusively cater for the needs of students with disabilities. If one accepts the possibility of such links, then this finding implies that if the student populations of SSPs present a higher concentration or level of challenging behaviour than do the student populations of mainstream schools, then it may be explained that the principals of SSPs feel that dealing with this situation demands more attention to *having a sense of humour and keeping work in perspective*, and *being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong*. Further research should explore this possibility, and should include enquiry to determine if mainstream principals similarly perceive such a strong influence from *challenging student behaviour* on educational leadership requirements.

SSP principals also tell us that *wanting to achieve the best outcome possible* is more important than do mainstream principals. It is an interesting and unexpected proposition that there should be some statistically significant differentiation in the level of importance attached to this ability between the two groups of principals, for one might wonder why achieving the best outcome would not be considered of the highest importance for any principal in any educational setting. What is not quite so

unexpected is that parents of SSP students indicated that they believed it to be the most important ability of an SSP school principal (Table 4.11).

However, SSP principals do provide an explanatory clue, in the data they provided to answer Research Question 3 following, as to why this result has been exposed. It seems that there is a focus in the SSP setting on the individuality of students which may not be as acute in mainstream settings. Approximately 69% of SSP principals indicate that *the level of school responsibility for the curriculum, matched to the students' types and levels of disability and resources* has a *high* level of influence on the differentiated leadership requirements between mainstream and SSP settings (Table 4.20). The nature of the SSP student population, which is exclusively students for whom educational programs are individually tailored through the annual IEP procedures compulsory for all students enrolled in SSPs, appears to account for the difference of opinion between SSP and mainstream principals. The parents' elevation of *wanting to achieve the best outcome possible* to the most important status (Table 4.11) may also be substantiated by their involvement in and contribution to the IEP process, of which they are an integral and mandatory component.

The ranking protocol determined that *having the ability to defer judgement and not to jump in too quickly to resolve a problem* is more important in SSPs than in mainstream schools, but SSP principals gave little indication why. One principal reported that "time to think is important", another that "some things sort out without interference". A third SSP principal reported that this is the case "especially with ED/BD (emotional disturbance/behaviour disorder) kids", and while this comment referred to the specific nature of one disability category represented in the SSP student population, it reasonably presents similar implications for other categories of disabilities represented in SSP student populations. Additionally, this comment could be interpreted as reflecting the principal's concern over problem-solving related to student behaviour, welfare and disciplinary procedures, bearing in mind the challenges that student behaviour presents to SSP principals, as discussed in response to Research Question 3 following. In these circumstances, a fair interpretation would be that SSP principals make judgements after consideration of a student's level and type of disability, bearing

in mind the ability of the student to make decisions about and accept responsibility for personal behaviour. Additionally, the expected outcome of the principal's decision in relation to the development of the student, and the rights of the student, other students and the staff of the school, would constitute integral parts of the decision-making process. This process would also involve Occupational Health and Safety considerations. It is probably erroneous to suggest that mainstream principals do not give the same level of consideration to their disciplinary decisions, but the larger proportion of students for whom responsible personal behavioural decisions are problematic in SSPs may well account for the higher ranking of importance assigned to this ability by SSP principals.

SSP principals have indicated that a *willingness to pitch in and undertake menial tasks* is a more important leadership ability than mainstream principals do. It is possible that their high rating of *Occupational Health and Safety demands due to behaviour management and physical management of students* (Table 4.20 and Table 4.21), as SSP characteristics which influence leadership skill requirements, goes some way to explaining this finding. Indeed, SSP principals acknowledge the importance of Occupational Health and Safety by their ranking of *understanding the role of risk management and litigation in current professional work* as an ability of more relative importance than mainstream principals do (Table 4.4). It would be fair to suggest that SSP principals' awareness of the risk of injury to staff is high due to behaviour and physical management of their students, and that they would consider that their personal contribution in "pitching in" would be regarded by their staff as an expression of collegiality, of teamwork and of empathetic leadership.

Furthermore, demonstration of a *willingness to pitch in and undertake menial tasks*, reflected in the literature in Chapter 2 as contributing to the components of transformational leadership described by Avolio and Bass as *idealized leadership* and *inspirational motivation* (2002, pp 2.3), could be regarded as a means of generating genuine corporate purpose in achieving the school vision. This possibility is supported by the SSP principals' belief that *having a clear, justified vision of where the school must head*, identified in Table 5.1, is more important than mainstream principals

believe. In the special education context, Furney et al. (2005) emphasised the role that the principal's demonstrated belief in the value of the students and the care that is delivered to them has in establishing a shared vision, and thereby linked the *personal* and the *interpersonal* dimensions of leadership with the critical importance of vision-building. The literature reviewed on the leadership of special schools has given further support to this conclusion (Baker, 2009; Driver, 2006; Gurr et al. 2003).

Another interesting component in this discussion is that three *interpersonal* abilities which SSP principals regarded as more important than did mainstream principals, identified by the ranking protocol, all implied the ability to deal with negative elements of interpersonal relationships: intimidation, blame and resistance.

One of these, *being able to work with senior DET officers without being intimidated*, might have some basis in the specificity of the purpose of SSPs, and in respect to what SSP principals may perceive to be limitations of senior DET officers which include their immediate supervisors and others involved at senior levels in the administration of both mainstream and special education services. It is not improbable that SSP principals might consider that these officers lack the relevant experience in the contemporary SSP setting, and that their knowledge and understanding of the real purpose of the SSP is limited. Additionally, SSP principals might view that senior DET officers' comprehension of the substantial issues confronting SSPs is incomplete, and that their support of SSP communities is politically rather than educationally directed. It is feasible too that SSP principals believe that these perceived inadequacies may lead to intimidation, for instance, through demands for conformity, and that the productivity of their professional relationships may be consequently compromised. If this was in fact the case, then the SSP principals' assertion, that *being able to work with senior DET officers without being intimidated* is more important than mainstream principals assert, may have some foundation of understanding, and hence may provide some input into leadership professional learning programs. However, both SSP and mainstream principals considered this ability low in importance relative to other abilities. Despite being relevant to the outcomes of the study, this discussion is speculation without a basis of further research.

The two other *interpersonal* abilities in Table 5.1 are closely linked: *being able to give constructive feedback to work colleagues and others without engaging in personal blame* and *being able to work constructively with people who are resisters*. Whilst only the former is ranked in the top 10 of abilities by either principals group (Table 4.5), exploring reasons why they should be considered more important by SSP principals than by mainstream principals is of interest to this study. Although the following discussion is guesswork without further investigation, several points may contribute to the dialogue and future research.

First, the range, complexity and interactions of the disabilities of students attending SSPs tend to promote a rigidity of structure within the school environment which if compromised can lead rapidly to unacceptable increases of risk, or ineffective teaching and learning. The planning and implementation of agreed procedures for administration and teaching and learning components of the school's operation, clearly communicated and appropriately resourced, serve to limit unwanted opportunities for assigning personal blame for ineffective action. There are implications in this discussion to both *Occupational Health and Safety demands due to behaviour management and physical management of students*, and *the level of school responsibility for the curriculum, matched to the students' types and levels of disability and resources*, characteristics of SSPs which SSP principals rated highly in influencing the differentiated leadership requirements between the two settings. Male and Male (2001), as reported in Chapter 2, gave some substance to this line of discussion when they found that principals of special schools in the UK indicated that the nature of their student populations provided unique challenges in the areas of health and safety, curriculum access, people management and service provision.

For example, in SSPs infection control procedures related to student hygiene are highly structured, and inattention to procedures can be acutely hazardous to staff and student health. Other examples include the therapeutic physical positioning schedules for students with physical disabilities, and the implementation of behaviour management and individual student academic and communication programs. The SSP principals' assertion that *being able to give constructive feedback to work colleagues and others*

without engaging in personal blame and being able to work constructively with people who are resistors may be in relation to the adherence by all school community members to appropriate protocol and procedures for all school management and teaching and learning operations.

Second, the SSP environment is generally regarded as one in which there is a strong reliance on staff camaraderie and collegial resilience. This perception of staff cohesiveness is largely in response to the vulnerability, fragility and sometimes unpredictability of members of the student population. These student population characteristics can strain resources, staff skills, and personal and professional relationships, negatively impacting school morale. One SSP principal commented in relation to the effect of challenging student behaviour, it “affects safety, emotional climate, morale and learning”. In such an environment, resistance to the corporate endeavour can promote a degradation of the school community’s common purpose, a diminution of staff morale, and consequently a negative effect on the achievement of individual student goals. The SSP principals’ assignment of more importance to *being able to work constructively with people who are resistors* than do mainstream principals may reflect concern about either their own personal ability to deal with resistors, or the effect that resistors may have on school purpose or individual student achievement. Further research is required to investigate this question.

SSP principals have indicated that *having a clear, justified vision of where the school must head* is an ability of significantly more importance in SSPs than mainstream principals believe it is in mainstream schools. Several researchers have supported this finding by indicating the importance of vision-building in the inclusive special education setting (DiPaola et al., 2004; Furney et al., 2005; Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008; Zaretsky et al., 2008). In the special school setting, both Driver (2006) and Gurr et al. (2003) similarly reported on the importance of this ability. One SSP principal commented that additionally, the principal “must be able to communicate the vision”, reinforcing the link with *interpersonal* abilities. This result of the significant difference between SSP and mainstream principals on the importance of this leadership ability can be considered in the light of the particular focus of SSPs, and understood in

the context of the SSP's areas of "special-ness": the student population, the curriculum, the teaching and learning activities, and the resources including the staff and parents. The importance attributed to this ability by the SSP principals appears grounded within the concept of a special school operating around a collaboratively designed vision, justified by the participation of all school community members, and implemented to achieve common targets.

In addressing Research Question 1, this study has given firm directions to further explorations into the nature and development of nine of the 45 abilities investigated in Part A of the survey, and those that are and will be entrusted with the leadership of special schools will be well served by following them. Future research in special educational leadership, particularly in respect of the constant evolutionary state of inclusive education philosophy and practice, must acknowledge those abilities identified in Table 5.1 as significant attributes for the contemporary special education leader. These abilities have been found to be particularly important in the special school setting, and on-going research must investigate their individual and collective nature and impact on successful leadership, and how they should be blended appropriately and thoughtfully into professional leadership development programs. This evidence-based approach will complement previous research which continues to substantially inform current practice in educational leadership.

5.2.2 Research Question 2

What differences are there between the perceptions of SSP principals, teachers, support staff and parents of students attending SSPs on the abilities required for successful leadership of SSPs?

Parts A and B of the survey provided information to answer this question. Part A focussed on general educational leadership capabilities, and Part B targeted specifically identified special education leadership skills.

If consensus can be a source of comfort to SSP principals in the context of this question, they can be heartened by the general agreement amongst groups which make up SSP communities that *personal* and *interpersonal* abilities are of more importance than the

others. Apart from the parents' opinion in Part B, which ranked *interpersonal* and *intellectual* abilities as equally second most important behind *personal* abilities, this result was replicated in both parts of the survey.

In Part A of the survey, principals alone rated the *personal* set as the most important. The other SSP groups indicated that *interpersonal* abilities take precedence over *personal* (Table 4.12). This result may be considered as having two interdependent explanations. First, a review of the *personal* abilities indicates an emphasis on individual qualities and attributes firmly bound to the concept of an emotional intelligence capability, a collection of skills which equip principals "personally" for the rigours and stressors of the leadership task. It is not unreasonable to suggest that there would be two categories of response to this set of abilities, that the "private" nature of these abilities itself differentiates the responses one could get. These responses are on the one hand from those with intimate experience with the context in which the abilities are being considered, that is the principals, and on the other hand, the responses from those without that intimate and personal experience, that is, the other SSP groups. Second, with some thought one may consider the responses from the groups other than the SSP principals reasonably understandable if one concedes that these groups traditionally place a heavy reliance on the principal's ability to relate to them, and that in this respect the concepts of positive communication, productive relationships and motivation for success are embedded in the *interpersonal* abilities. One parent commented that "the key to any school is the relation a principal makes with student and parent. If I knew a principal was staying at a school for all my child's life, I would be more compelled to share with the principal, and help my child onwards, because I would know the principal was committed and interested like me". Regardless of the somewhat speculative nature of this discussion, principals should give serious regard to the indication that their *interpersonal* interactions with the teachers, support staff and the parents may be the primary criteria by which their competence is assessed by the members of their school's community, and by implication, the confidence with which they are entrusted and the support they are subsequently offered. However, in pursuing this discussion, one must be mindful of the strength of the interconnectedness of the *personal* and *interpersonal* dimensions of leadership, and that their separation is not an

easy, nor perhaps a desirable, task. As reported in Chapter 2, several researchers have noted these links in the mainstream education setting (Dinham, 2007; Duignan, 2006; Mulford, 2007b; Scott, 2003), others have illustrated them in the special school setting (O'Brien, 2007; Oyinlade, 2006), and others have highlighted them specifically from the special school parents' perspective (Dobbins & Abbott, 2009; Noto 2005). However, the discussion is worthwhile.

From the principals' perspective, and without further investigation, it is speculation to suggest that it may be the principals' daily experiences in the roles they perform that sway them to confirm that they ultimately rely on their *personal* aptitudes above all other abilities, that it is this particular array of skills which allows the appropriate expertise in and application of the other areas to accommodate the complexity of their professional tasks. In other words, without their *personal* abilities or qualities, they would not be able to use the other skills to successfully perform their leadership role. It is an interesting proposition that the two groups of principals in this study, united in their belief that *personal* abilities are more important than *interpersonal*, disagree with the balance of SSP respondents in Part A of the survey. As a couple of SSP principals stated, the concepts that it is "better to laugh than cry" and "out the door, forget about the place: it's a job, not a life" may be the crucial personal attitudes which get the principals' votes. Indeed, whilst SSP principals ranked *having a sense of humour and keeping work in perspective* as the most important and mainstream principals saw it as second most important, not one of the other groups of SSP respondents included it in their top 10 abilities (Table 4.11). It should be mentioned also in this discussion that, whilst the difference between the SSP principals and the other SSP groups was not statistically significant, it was nonetheless a borderline result with the principals standing alone in rating it higher than each of the other groups. However, even if this discussion is only speculation, it appears to be a reasonable starting point for further research.

In Part B of the survey, which focussed specifically on skills in the area of special education, a sense of ambiguity emerged as the parent group alone reported that *personal* skills were more important than the others. SSP principals, teachers and

support staff indicated that *interpersonal* skills were the most important. However, as mentioned previously, the skill sets in Part B did not replicate those in Part A, and the specific contextual nature of the items in Part B of the survey, that is targeted directly on special education, are worthy of review in better understanding these results. The three items in the *personal* skills set of Part B focussed on the importance of ethical leadership, the support of students' self-advocacy rights, and advocating for students and their families. These items were extracted from the CEC's (2000) list of skills and knowledge for special education leaders, and directly fed from the CEC's involvement in the inclusion movement. Whilst these items indicated a drive and motivation for personally valuable work set within a special needs environment, they did not reflect the 'individual and personal characteristics' flavour of the *personal* abilities set in Part A which were determined by the necessary comparison with Scott's (2003) results, and the use of his survey tool. These differences in the contextual location of the items of Part B and their specific focus are significant and give some account for the ambiguous results, but also offer insights into the specific special education environment not afforded by Part A of the survey. Additionally, this ambiguity has served to emphasise that there is a genuine interconnectedness of the *personal* and *interpersonal* skills of SSP leadership which was discussed in the answer to Research Question 1.

Of special interest to this discussion is that in Part B each group of SSP respondents has relegated *inclusive practice* to the bottom rung of importance (Table 4.19). Additionally, the statistically significant result for *advocate for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in local and regional programs at school and community levels* (Table 4.17), which indicated that principals regard this skill as less important than do all of the other groups, appears particularly worthy of further investigation in light of the specific purpose of SSPs. One can wonder if this common attribution of less importance for *inclusive practice* is bound to the nature of special schools, that they are in fact exclusive due to the specific needs of their students, and that the members of such school communities see, for their students, no such importance as the inclusion movement might demand. In regard to the *inclusive practice* skills, it is important to remember the SSP context of this study, for one might reasonably expect some variation of these results in the context of an inclusive educational setting. This issue was

discussed previously in Chapter 1, and in light of current special educational trends, particularly inclusive education, warrants further investigation.

There are a number of other statistically significant results which are worthy of discussion, and which current and aspiring SSP principals should take notice of. It is prudent to present them in the following manner in order to consider the implications of the interrelationship of opinion to the complexity of the principal's task.

Table 5.2 lists the abilities and skills in which statistically significant results were obtained. In identifying these skills, the table comments on the respondent group, as identified by the comparison of the proportions of each group scoring high for each leadership skill as reported in Chapter 4, which appears to account for the statistical significance.

Of the 10 abilities identified in Table 5.2, six of them indicate that the principals are the group with whom the significant difference resides. For only one of these six, principals believe that the ability is more important than any of the other groups do. They indicate that *having the ability to defer judgement and not to jump in too quickly to resolve a problem* in the *personal* set is significantly more important than the teachers and the parents do. Support staff holds a relatively similar viewpoint to the principals.

Table 5.2 SSP Groups: Significant Differences on Importance of Abilities and Skills Required for SSP Leadership

| Ability Set | Ability Description | Survey Part | Comment on Outstanding Group |
|--------------------------------------|---|-------------|--|
| Personal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having the ability to defer judgement and not to jump in too quickly to resolve a problem | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals and support staff consider it more important than other groups do |
| Interpersonal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being able to develop and use networks of colleagues to help me solve key workplace problems | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals consider it less important than other groups do |
| Intellectual | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop interagency agreements to promote outcomes for students with disabilities (e.g. speech therapy, physiotherapy) | B | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents consider it more important than other groups do |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and interpret data and information about individual students within diverse cultural and linguistic contexts | B | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals consider it less important than other groups do |
| Specific Skills and Knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the role of risk management and litigation in current professional work | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents consider it less important than other groups do |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how organizations like the Department of Education and Training operate | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals consider it less important than other groups do |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being able to use Information Technology effectively to communicate and perform key work functions | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support staff considers it more important than other groups do |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of industrial relations issues and process | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support staff considers it more important than other groups do |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpret and communicate local policies, and state and federal law pertaining to people with disabilities, to others | B | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals consider it less important than other groups do |
| Inclusive Practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in local and regional programs at school and community levels | B | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals consider it less important than other groups do |

The qualitative data can assist with this discussion. The few principals' comments submitted, as discussed in the previous section in response to Research Question 1, each supported the need for principals to be skilful in this area of *having the ability to defer judgement and not to jump in too quickly to resolve a problem*: "time to think is important" was a representative comment. Whilst teachers' comments demonstrated empathy and understanding of the SSP principals' opinion: "if you (the principal) react too quickly your emotions may stop you from considering the bigger picture"; "allow staff to work things out"; "otherwise never learns from others"; "reacting through logic and viewing situations objectively is imperative, best to wait until emotion is settled"; and "take the time to analyse all the information", they nonetheless indicated that they considered this ability significantly less important than the SSP principals did. In supporting this difference of opinion, teachers' comments included "sometimes a fast response is needed", and "deferred judgement would be seen as indecisiveness". Parents too rated this item less important than the principals and the support staff did, and offered only two comments, that "some problems need rapid responses", and "each student is different". Support staff comments both confirmed their rating of this ability at almost the same level of importance as SSP principals did: "be fair in judgements and not make quick decisions"; and indicated their understanding of the context of the principal's daily work: "some problems may need to be solved very quickly".

Reading between the lines and suggesting inferences from small quantities of qualitative data is risky business. However, as a contributor to the discussion of these findings, it may reasonably be regarded as worthwhile. For example, one might propose that the collection of comments received about *having the ability to defer judgement and not to jump in too quickly to resolve a problem* evoked a suggestion of secondary issues arising from the initial problem-solving task for the principal. That is, it was not just the deference or non-deference of the judgement that was being evaluated, but the repercussions of the judgement for other SSP community members. For instance, if the problem related to a student behaviour and/or student welfare event, or the delegation of staff responsibilities matter, all members of the school community might present further issues as a result of the principal's immediate, or delayed, response to the problem. One suspects that the phenomenon of secondary issues, which centre on principals'

relationships with staff, parents and students, is not unknown to principals, and further, that principals are resigned to its longevity as an unavoidable component of their leadership responsibilities. As an example, one principal stated, “parents/caregivers place too much responsibility on schools and resent it when this is pointed out”. A focus on decision-making and problem-solving appears warranted in special education leadership professional learning.

Support staff indicates two other abilities to which they attach more importance than do the other groups: *being able to use Information Technology effectively to communicate and perform key work functions* and *understanding of industrial relations issues and process*, both from the *specific skills and knowledge* set. In respect of the former, one support staff member reported that the principal’s skills in this area should be “relevant to their workload”. Without further research, and particularly of a qualitative nature, it is impossible to conclude why support staff should feel this ability to be of more importance than the other groups of respondents believe it to be. However, one may guess that the support staff understanding of the principals’ administrative role, which includes a wide range of communication tasks, may appear to support staff to demand a high level of expertise on behalf of the principal. The comment reported above may have been a warning for temperance in this regard, that is, that principals only need to have a level of expertise commensurate with that required to achieve their work’s tasks, and not a level which would project them as information technology experts. The inference is that principals have enough to do already.

In calling for principals of SSPs to have an *understanding of industrial relations issues and process* one support staff member responded that skills in this area would result in “happy, healthy, high morale and (a) caring school for staff and students”. This appears an entirely reasonable and healthy perspective, and in referring to “staff and students”, the comment includes the suggestion that the principal’s skills in this area can complement and support all members of the school-based community including those not specifically responsible for the teaching and learning programs and student outcomes. As discussed in Chapter 4, this finding asserts a strong belief by the support staff that industrial relations are important, and principals are well advised to consider

the strength of this perspective in establishing a collegial and professional working environment built upon a shared vision for the school.

Similarly supplying two abilities to the list of significant differences between SSP groups (Table 5.2), parents believe that only one of these is more important than do the other groups: *develop interagency agreements to promote outcomes for students with disabilities (e.g. speech therapy, physiotherapy)*. One can in no way be surprised by this finding, for it is surely the welfare and progress of their children that parents must primarily be concerned with, and accessing special support services for them which are linked to the school may seem the most efficient track to take. In demonstrating their acceptance that schools needed to go outside their gates to seek specific support for their students, parents were strong in their criticism of the resources provided by the public school system: “more needed in the areas of speech and physiotherapy”; “it’s an indictment of this state government that these are still needed”; “never enough funding”; and “vital as services are so badly needed”. School staff including principals on the other hand, may see this ability as contributing to the complexity of their task which they already regard as significantly challenging, and also perhaps as the responsibility of others. This would need further investigation.

Parents believed that *understanding the role of risk management and litigation in current professional work* was less important than the other groups did, and the gap was particularly distinct between them and the teachers and support staff. One parent offered an insider comment: “we are over-lawyered (I am one), but nowhere have I heard of SSPs with legal issues”, another suggested that what is required is a “basic understanding only, should be done by a professional”, and another suggested an interesting alternative, “principal’s supervisor should do this, too time consuming for the principal”. Only one principal commented on this item, suggesting that they “need more help here”. It appears that the importance of this leadership ability in the Australian context is less than that in the USA as reported by Stevenson-Jacobson et al. (2006) and discussed in Chapter 2.

Principals interestingly attached less importance than the other groups did to five of the abilities indicated in Table 5.2. Of these abilities, one came from the *interpersonal* set,

one from the *intellectual* set, two from the *specific skills and knowledge* set of abilities, and one from the *inclusive practice* area. A brief review of these findings follows, and cautious interpretation is recommended due to the small amount of qualitative data collected to support it.

In relation to *being able to develop and use networks of colleagues to help me solve key workplace problems* in the *interpersonal* Part A set, principals commented that they either had limited opportunities to use networks, or that “key people in the school were used more than outside”, comments which exuded both a sense of isolation and a sense that the school itself contained the expertise required. In commenting on *understand and interpret data and information about individual students within diverse cultural and linguistic contexts* from the *intellectual* set in Part B, one principal stated that they should “use the expertise of others” in this area, confirming a lesser priority for this skill than other groups had assigned, whilst another emphasised that this is of importance “in our context”. There is little evidence in the data about why the other SSP groups view this skill as more important than the SSP principals do. In fact, several comments from teachers and parents also indicated that the best way to accomplish this task is through the specific support from others. One teacher commented that this “role (is) often delegated to executive”, while a parent suggested that it is “up to the teacher”. Whilst there is a significant difference between the SSP principals and the other SSP groups on the importance of this skill, it is also noted that none of these groups rated the skill particularly highly. The literature reviewed from the special education setting contributes to the discussion of this result. Burrello et al. (2001) noted that while there was some benefit in state and national testing to produce student achievement data, this method of assessment paid little attention to the wide range of student diversity in learning styles and learning rates which might be regarded as particularly prevalent within the special education student population. It might be argued that this finding illustrates that SSP principals feel similarly, that the use of such data may be held with some mistrust and fear (Earl & Katz, 2006) by SSP principals, and that the results of this type of testing may be regarded by them as providing only minor application to the SSP environment. Additionally, bearing in mind the relatively recent implementation in Australia of national testing, one might suggest that the professional learning journey in

the comprehensive use of the data obtained from such testing may not yet have had the necessary level of impact to engage SSP principals, and also their teachers, with a more positive concept of its effectiveness. The issue of the use of data is also discussed in 5.3, and further research into this area appears warranted.

In the *specific skills and knowledge* area, SSP principals offered little commentary to assist in interpreting their relatively low rating of importance for *understanding how organizations like the Department of Education and Training operate*. The need for a balanced detachment from such organisations was indicated by one comment, “learn the bits you need to when necessity dictates”, whilst another suggested that there was a need to understand the cultural dimensions of such organisations which accompanied their structural operations: “understanding the structure versus understanding the culture”. In Part B, all SSP groups rated the importance of *interpret and communicate local policies, and state and federal law pertaining to people with disabilities, to others* relatively lowly, but principals were significantly low, and commentary was restricted to a suggestion that principals make “use of expertise of others”. This result conflicts with research results reported by Stevenson-Jacobson et al. (2006), discussed in Chapter 2, who indicated that principals highly rated competencies related to legal issues in the area of disabilities, and federal and state statutes affecting special education.

In Part B, one item in the *inclusive practice* skills set was rated significantly less important by the SSP principals: *advocate for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in local and regional programs at school and community levels*. Again principal commentary was limited on this item, with one comment suggesting that the DET regional network “should carry some of this load”, and another that “inclusion (is) not total answer – most suitable placement for their needs” referred to the continually evolving debate on the manner in which the educational needs of students with disabilities can be best met. Parents rated this skill in the top 10 required for leadership of a special school, and it was the only *inclusive practice* skill placed in this category by any group. The significant difference in opinion on the importance of this leadership skill, particularly between principals and parents, should be thoughtfully considered by the leaders of special schools.

There are lessons to be learned by principals of SSPs from the identification of those abilities in Table 5.2. Being aware of the interrelationships of opinions of the various groups within their school communities of what is important in leadership styles and leadership skills will lead to a greater understanding of their roles as leaders of their schools and competence in the execution of those roles. In particular, this understanding will have a profound effect on the principal's success in the areas of strategic planning, managing change and developing and maintaining positive relationships.

5.2.3 Research Question 3:

What characteristics of SSPs do SSP principals believe make the leadership requirements of an SSP principal different from those of a mainstream principal?

Part C of the survey gathered the data to answer this research question.

The most outstanding finding is the definitive confirmation that *challenging student behaviour* is the single most influential characteristic of the SSP environment on differentiating the leadership requirements between SSPs and mainstream schools (Table 4.20 and Table 4.21). It is also regarded as the most challenging aspect of being an SSP principal (Table 4.22). Additionally, the high ranking of *Occupational Health and Safety demands due to behaviour management and physical management of students* further illustrates the effect of *challenging student behaviour* on the leadership of SSPs.

The connectedness of *Occupational Health and Safety* concerns with *challenging student behaviour* is supported by the comments of SSP principals in relation to these characteristics: for example, “(there is a) shift from educational needs to student/staff safety”; “very stressful trying to prevent injury”; “affects safety, emotional climate, morale and learning”; “increasingly placing great stress on staff”; “hard decisions, student, staff, other students’ safety considerations”; and “huge amount of time, stress, emotion for whole school”. Whilst these comments specifically reinforced the health and safety implications of *challenging student behaviour*, these and other comments reflected concern over the issue of the secondary effects of challenging student

behaviour, particularly related to the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships, as reported earlier in the answer to Research Question 2: for example, “(it results in) staff feelings of being unsupported”; “restricts goodwill and function of the school”; “staff and parents look to an effective leader being able to create and maintain a safe environment for their child and staff”; and in another SSP principal comment with conceivably two levels of meaning, the student behaviour management level and, specifically in this discussion, the people management level, “understanding the link between communication and behaviour is a fundamental principle of SSP operation”. These findings, as discussed in answer to Research Question 1, appear linked to the SSP principals’ assertion that *having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective* is the most important of all abilities, illustrated by the SSP principal’s comment “out the door, forget about the place: it’s a job, not a life”.

Two other comments from SSP principals indicated that inadequate resource provision by the NSW DET also contributed to the strong influence that *challenging student behaviour* had on the differentiated leadership requirements of SSPs: “lack of resources, staff expected/wanting to do too much with too little staffing, training, physical environment”; and “understaffed to meet needs of students in ED/BD (emotionally disturbed/behaviour disordered)”. Comprehensive audits of student behavioural issues in both SSPs and mainstream schools, and analyses of DET resources provided to meet the respective identified needs, would appear to be valuable investigations to determine the justification for these comments.

Another notable contributor to differentiated leadership requirements, and to the cargo of challenges which confront principals in NSW SSPs, was *the level of school responsibility for the curriculum, matched to the students’ types and levels of disability and resources (e.g. hydrotherapy, mobility)*. This characteristic of SSPs has been discussed in the answer to Research Question 1, and is firmly linked to the range and levels of needs which students attending SSPs present to the teaching, support staff and the principals of their schools. The provision of appropriate educational services to their students can be a complex task for SSPs, with the individuality of their students being firmly entrenched as the main criteria for effective instruction. This attention to

individuality is expected, by the NSW DET and the NSW Board of Studies, to be illustrated in the students' programs of study, which are the result of an annual IEP designed and implemented with parental input, and which meet educational and Occupational Health and Safety standards. It is little wonder that the task of matching significant individual student needs, for all of their students, to a comprehensive curriculum in an under-resourced environment, is regarded by SSP principals as a characteristic of their schools which differentiates their leadership requirements from those of mainstream schools. One principal commented that "the degree of specialisation required to provide quality and relevant curriculum and pedagogy is significant". In following their own advice in identifying the three most influential characteristics of their schools on the leadership requirements (Table 4.20 and Table 4.21), SSP principals could do no better than to get to know their students and thoroughly understand their needs. O'Brien's (2007) report of the teenage student with disabilities who indicated that the best thing about her principal and her school's special education director was that "they know who I am" supports this suggestion.

In response to each of these substantial findings, the discussion has highlighted implications to the adequacy and appropriateness of current and future structures and services to support SSP principals. An expansive view of these issues would include not only leadership professional learning programs, but also teacher and support staff on-going professional learning programs, pre-service teacher training, staff recruitment and selection procedures, and appropriate access to school and student support services. The extent of these implications, and the ability of finite resources to best meet the needs uncovered, will only be unearthed through more research, through specific investigation of the nature of these issues, and the associated thoughtful provision of appropriate and adequate resources.

5.3 Other Discussion

Some discussion should centre on the apparent discrepancy between the level of emphasis placed by the literature reviewed on the instructional role of the leader, and the lack of such emphasis by all groups of participants in the current study, including the mainstream principals of Scott's (2003) study.

A review of all items in Part A of the survey identified four abilities which reflect a focus on leadership capability related to an instructional leadership style or set of skills. Each of these abilities came from the *specific skills and knowledge* set:

- *Having a high level of up-to-date pedagogical knowledge and skill.*
- *Being able to manage my own ongoing professional learning and development.*
- *An ability to help others learn in the workplace through best practice in adult learning.*
- *Knowing how to effectively identify and disseminate good practice across the school for where the school must head.*

Not one of these abilities scored in the top 10 abilities for any group. The one which was most firmly centred on instructional abilities, *having a high level of up-to-date pedagogical knowledge and skill*, was ranked at 38 and 37 respectively by mainstream and SSP principals. There were some comments presented which are of relevance to the discussion, and which to some extent mediate the findings presented above.

Concerning *pedagogical knowledge and skill*, SSP principals' comments were that this ability was a "central aspect of leadership", and a "shared responsibility". Teachers were somewhat of the same ilk in the comments they submitted: "to lead you have to have the knowledge or be able to guide others on how to gain it" and, emphasising the interpersonal aspect of the usefulness of this ability, "and being able to convey this to staff". One parent indicated that this ability "helps to provide guidance for staff but skills as a manager are more important", however other parents stressed the essentiality of this ability, "teaching is the business", and the need to "keep up with (the changes)".

The ability to *help others learn in the workplace* attracted some commentary, with some agreement between principals, teachers and parents that this ability or task was one which could be reasonably delegated. However, a principal comment that "individuals need to acknowledge the importance of self-development (and) improvement" conflicted with a teacher view that "staff are reliant on executive staff for personal and professional growth".

In Part B, which was completed only by the SSP groups, five skills referred to the instructional role that school leaders play. Four of these were from the *intellectual* set of skills:

- *Understand and interpret data and information about individual students within diverse cultural and linguistic contexts.*
- *Assist in development of curriculum and instructional models for all students, not just those with disabilities.*
- *Facilitate and participate in the development of collaborative general and special education programs.*
- *Facilitate the development and implementation of on-going evaluation of special education programs.*

One skill was from the inclusive practice set:

- *Ensure appropriate outcomes and assessment programs for students with disabilities that are linked to the regular curriculum.*

None of these five skills were ranked in the top 10 skills by any of the groups. Again, some comments submitted are useful to this discussion.

As discussed in 5.2, whilst SSP principals believed this skill to be less important than the other three SSP groups, each group believed it to be a skill required, not so much of the principal, but more of others, e.g. “use of the expertise of others” (principal), “often delegated to executive” (teacher), “up to the teacher” (parent). These findings appear to be somewhat at odds with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 from the mainstream setting (Furney et al., 2005; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Leithwood & Day, 2007; Zaretsky et al., 2008), which specifically encouraged the principal’s responsibility for this role. However, whilst there appears to be less emphasis attached to this skill by SSP groups in this study than some of the literature reviewed has expressed, their opinions are not incompatible with the instructional leadership models presented by Robinson et al. (2008) and Marks and Printy (2003), who emphasised that the leadership component of this task is not necessarily that of the expert in data interpretation, but in coordinating and making use of the expertise. It may be that SSP

principals feel inadequate with their skills in this area, and considering the restrictions of their roles, delegation is a more efficient use of both their time and their interpersonal abilities.

To add to this discussion, the ability to interpret and apply data within school contexts has been reported as an increasingly important contributor to school decision-making, as well as school and professional accountability measures (Campbell & Levin, 2009; Earl & Katz, 2006). However, researchers in the special education setting have indicated that there is an element of uncertainty and ambiguity in the application of student data to that setting. Burrello et al. (2001), while emphasising the importance of making decisions based on sound and appropriate data, expressed 1) a wariness of the limiting effects of large scale testing and data analysis on schools' special education curricula; 2) an acknowledgement of the potential for the loss of other student learning which is not measureable through such testing; and 3) a concern about the inattention to student diversity generated by these testing schedules. The findings in this study may be indicating similar misgivings by SSP principals, and research into these issues in the Australian special school context would provide valuable information to them as they increasingly become involved in data-driven decision-making.

Comments from each SSP group emphasised that there was little time for special school principals to *assist in development of curriculum and instructional models for all students, not just those with disabilities*. These comments focussed on the inclusive aspect of the skill description, that is, that principals should be concerned with mainstream curriculum and instruction as well as that for students with disabilities. Two comments from parents indicated that their children's rights to the principal's time are more important than the principal's skill in this area: "SSPs are for children with disabilities, (this would be) robbing SSPs ", and "(the principal should be proficient in this ability) only if children without disabilities also attend the school". One principal agreed in more moderate terms: "keep up to date, but focus is disabilities in (an) SSP".

Principals' and teachers' comments indicated agreement on the ability to *ensure appropriate outcomes and assessment programs for students with disabilities are linked to the regular curriculum*. Both groups asserted that the needs of SSP students are the

priority in linking outcomes to the regular curriculum, and that responsibility for achieving this task is shared between the principal and the teachers. Parents' comments exclusively agreed, one asking "how? My daughter can't read, speak or eat without help, how can she be part of (the) regular curriculum?" Another parent expressed desperation in her long-term view of the issues affecting special school students, "the principal needs to be the advocate for the students with regard to curriculum and outcomes. They need to voice the family needs but also ensure the student's program will assist them to reach close to their potential before leaving school, as when they leave school it all stops!!", and another, that outcomes and assessment programs should be linked to the regular curriculum "where realistic and appropriate". The research of Wehmeyer et al. (2007) is worthy of inclusion in this discussion. They reported on the enabling effect of the specific teaching of self-determination, which they described as "volitional actions, where 'volition' refers to making conscious *choices* or the power or will to make conscious choices" (p.5), to students with disabilities, including those with severe disabilities. They explained that this focus of teaching not only resulted in positive functional outcomes which endured into adulthood, but also increased students' access to the regular curriculum and promoted effective inclusive practice. In common with the SSP principals and teachers in the present study, the students' needs were paramount in determining access to the regular curriculum and the extent of any modifications of that curriculum required. It would be worthwhile for SSP principals and their teachers to review this literature and its implications to their practice.

In response to these findings, it might be argued that specific abilities related to "instructional leadership", as described by Robinson et al. (2008), and also to "shared instructional leadership", described by Marks and Printy (2003), were not specifically represented in the study. In this respect, the contemporary concept of an instructional leader could be regarded as at the centre of the interconnectedness of several domains of leadership capability, and specific attention to this overlap and integration of skills would be required to inform a legitimate investigation of leadership practice which utilised "instructional" skills. The image of school leadership presented by Dinham (2007), in which six leadership categories were fed by the core category of a *focus on students and their learning*, provides an interesting backdrop to the possibility of further

research on this issue. Another addition to this discussion might be to suggest that the impact of the global school accountability context, reported in the literature, has yet to reach the levels in the Australian context as it has in the places from where the literature emerged, North America and the UK. Again, further research on this issue appears warranted to investigate this finding more comprehensively.

5.4 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

In common with the work of Scott (2003), this study did not inquire into the perceptions of students, and their non-participation in it is regarded as a limitation. In all schools, students may offer valuable opinions on the issue of educational leadership. However as a population of respondents, students with disabilities attending SSPs pose particularly challenging problems, and specifically in the area of communication. As a group they are non-homogeneous, presenting a diverse range of exceptionalities which deliver the researcher special problems regarding validity and reliability, appropriateness in level of intellectual engagement in the survey, and representativeness of any sample taken. Including the perspectives of students of SSPs deserves a more specific approach which was not within the scope of this research.

There were a number of limitations connected to the methodology. First, as the data were obtained by self-report methods, there was no certainty that the responses were truthful, and that appropriate attention and integrity were employed in providing them. However, there was no reason to believe that this was not the case, as anonymity was guaranteed and there was no benefit available to respondents, personally or with regard to school resources, for any particular response.

Second, the size of the samples, particularly of the SSP principals (26), may be regarded as a limitation. When viewed with the demonstrated ceiling effect in which almost all mean scores for items in Part A of the survey fell within the four to five range on the scale and some almost reached five, then the acquisition of a larger sample would be strongly recommended for future research in this area. An additional advantage of a larger sample size would be that a factor analysis could be conducted to identify the

particular dimensions of the grouped items, and subsequently make appropriate comparisons and connections between them. This might lead to a further refined survey with increased investigative potential. In the present study nonetheless, since there was generally a small variance in scores, the negative implications of collecting the data from a relatively small sample size were minimised. It is noted that the ceiling effect, and the small variance in scores, were also illustrated in Scott's (2003) research with a much larger sample size (322). Consideration should also be given to the effectiveness of a wider scale, e.g. one to ten, to magnify the variance in future research.

Third, there were intrinsic challenges in the section of the study which compared the data from Scott's (2003) research with the present study. By necessity, the survey instruments were different in parts due to adjustments made for clarity, the categories of respondents, and specific contextual relevance. These challenges were particularly prominent in the comparison between Scott's (2003) data for mainstream principals and the current study's data for SSP principals, two groups which were different. However, these groups were also alike in that they were each a group of principals of NSW DET schools. It was the differences between them and between their professional environments which the study was attempting to uncover. As this exploration was the essence of this part of the study, it was implemented with the expectation that the data sought and collected in Part C of the survey would illuminate those aspects of the comparison which were problematic, that is, that the surveys were different in places and that the comparison was being made between two different groups. The study was also limited by the unavailability of the complete set of data from Scott's (2003) research, in particular the standard deviations. This situation rendered statistical analysis software packages unusable in the comparison of mainstream principals with SSP principals, and was met by the use of older methods of hand calculations of measures of significance, and the reporting of significance using alpha levels rather than p values. To meet these challenges, future research, as mentioned above, would be well served by the construction of a new survey designed from the outcomes of a factor analysis of items in the present survey, and administered to both mainstream and SSP respondents.

The study has suggested a number of areas for further research which have been discussed earlier in the chapter: 1) the links between challenging student behaviour and the ability of principals to maintain humour, perspective, and calmness in the performance of their duties; 2) the nature of the professional relationship between SSP principals and senior DET officers; 3) the impact of constructive feedback and constructive relationships between SSP principals and their staff; 4) the importance of inclusive practice in SSPs; 5) the place for interagency collaboration in SSPs; 6) the use of student achievement data in the SSP context; and 7) the status and prevalence of “instructional leadership” in SSPs. Exploration into each of these areas would be well served by a review and refinement of the current survey tool as discussed above.

The following section will review the discussion of the study's findings and present the conclusions.

5.5 Summary of the Discussion and Conclusion

The study has shown that leadership of an SSP requires a similar collection of skills and abilities, blended into a measure of leadership capability, to those required of leadership in a mainstream school. However, it has also shown that those involved in special education believe that special education also requires special leadership. It has demonstrated that SSP principals differ from mainstream principals in the importance they attribute to a range of leadership abilities within their respective settings, and that different groups within special school communities, the principals, the teachers, the support staff and the parents, have their own perspectives on the leadership requirements therein.

The study has highlighted the need for special school principals to pay particular attention to the *personal* and *interpersonal* dimensions of their leadership practice. The SSP principals themselves, and the other members of their school communities, have all indicated that these aspects of an SSP principal's performance are of more relative importance than other aspects, that it is the expert implementation of these abilities and skills which distinguish successful special education leadership from successful mainstream leadership. Additionally and importantly, the study has drawn to the

attention of current and future special education leaders those specific abilities, discussed in this chapter and illustrated in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2, which demand a sharper focus than others within the special school context. This information may prove particularly useful in ensuring that those important aspects of the special school principal's role are not neglected, and that neither the principal nor the school community is negatively affected.

This research demonstrates reasonable authority to also conclude that a special education component of professional leadership learning is warranted, and indeed that particular proficiency in *personal* and *interpersonal* abilities is recommended for applicants seeking appointments as principals of SSPs and other special education leadership positions. The emphasis on the *personal* and *interpersonal* areas, the genuine interconnectedness of these abilities illustrated by the study, and the identification of specific abilities which deserve special attention, support such a conclusion. The inclusion of a special education component in professional leadership learning would prove to be valuable for leaders in all settings on the spectrum of special education services, for whilst special schools alone exclusively cater for students with disabilities, the contemporary educational environment ensures that the needs of students with disabilities will continue to be met along the full spectrum. Through the answers it proposed to its questions, this study has given direction to the construction of a framework for such a component, and the discussion has urged further research to continue its assembly.

To this end, the data gathered has also laid a foundation of information to support special educators in their professional learning endeavours, and as the evolution of inclusive educational practice continues, these abilities, skills and capabilities also become increasingly more important to mainstream educational leaders. In specifically identifying those abilities which are of more importance in the special school setting than they are in the mainstream setting, and those which are valued more, or less, by the groups within special school communities, this study proposes a direction and strategic plan for individuals in all educational leadership positions, and those aspiring to such

positions, to ensure success in their roles in relation to the provision of special education services. It is wise to have an understanding of others' perspectives.

Contemporary research appears to be increasingly interested in a capabilities approach to investigating and understanding the complex interactions between the domains or dimensions of educational leadership, and how these promote successful school leadership. Scott's (2003) definition of professional capability as "that combination of attributes, qualities, skills and knowledge that enables a person to perform to a high standard in a given context and role" (p.4) projects the image of leadership as a "performance" – an event which embraces all the necessary talents in the right order of importance, in the right proportions, and at the right time. The literature reviewed has pointed to the importance of school leaders flexibly utilising and blending skills from the range of leadership domains to meet the school's needs in terms of priorities, the stage of the school progress towards its vision, and other contextual influences at any given time (Duignan, 2006; Mulford, 2007b; Scott, 2003). Whilst this study has developed the understanding of the notion of the interconnectedness of the domains, abilities and capabilities for successful leadership of special schools, further enhancement of this understanding appears to be a legitimate and valuable target for future research.

Through this study, support has been offered to NSW DET school leadership professional development, and specifically principal preparation programs, which have been built upon Scott's (2003) work. In this respect, the transferability of these NSW DET programs to the SSP context is arguably validated. Specifically, the NSW DET has included a professional learning resource for principals focussing on the development of capability in the *personal* and *interpersonal domains*, and targeting emotional distance, humour and perspective, and resilience (Department of Education, NSW, 2006).

In finding also that the most significant influence on the leadership requirements of SSPs is the challenging behaviour of their students, this study sends a clear message and provides a distinct direction to SSPs, their leadership, and their support networks including the NSW DET: professional learning, resource provision and appropriate

student behavioural interventions are required. In this regard, the study's findings are also relevant to principals and other leaders in schools other than SSPs which might have a higher than average proportion of students with challenging behaviour. Although confirmation would need to be determined by further research, this situation is reported to more commonly occur in schools of low socio-economic status.

It is worthwhile returning very briefly to two results highlighted by this study about *having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective*: first, that there was a statistically significant result for this ability in the comparison between SSP principals and mainstream principals, with SSP principals rating it more important than mainstream principals; and second, that there was a borderline result in the comparison between all SSP groups on the importance of this ability, with SSP principals rating it higher than all of the other groups. This ability was the only one in which SSP principals stood relatively alone. Perhaps it is a classic case of "you never know until you go", and in light of the rapidly changing educational climate indicated by the literature reviewed, perhaps it is one that SSP principals, and those still to be SSP principals, should take particular heed of. Indeed, "having the best and worst job, ... (and) feeling undervalued and whinging", as one principal commented, appear to demand attention to this ability.

Special education, and its spectrum of practices and philosophies, have been debated and challenged on the international stage since their conceptions. Yet no-one seems to be arguing successfully that special education is not special, that there is no place for it in the contemporary educational environment. In investigating leadership in special education, this study found that there is also something special in special education leadership. For those already in the job, these findings have either confirmed opinions and provided reassurance that their on-going professional practice and learning is educationally legitimate, valuable and valid, or have provided reason to question their current performance. For others travelling towards special education leadership positions, they have sign-posted the way.

References

- Allan, J. & Brown, S. (2001) Special schools and inclusion. *Educational Review*, 53(2), 199-207
- Avolio, B. & Bass, B. (2002) *Developing Potential Across a Full Range of Leadership: Cases on transactional and transformational leadership*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum
- Baker, J. (2009) Special school headship in times of change: impossible challenges or golden opportunities? *British Journal of Special Education*, 36(4), 191-197
- Bass, B. & Avolio, B. (1994) *Improving Organizational Effectiveness Through Transformational Leadership*. Thousand Oaks California: Sage
- Bays, D. & Crockett, J. (2007) Investigating instructional leadership for special education. *Exceptionality*, 15(3), 143-161
- Black, S. (1998) Research: a different kind of leader. *American School Board Journal*, 185(6), 32-34 in A.Oyinlade & M. Gellhaus (2005) Perceptions of effective leadership in schools for students with visual impairments: a national study. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, May 2005, 261-275
- Boscardin, M. (2005) The administrative role in transforming secondary schools to support inclusive evidence-based practices. *American Secondary Education*, 33(3), 21-32
- Boscardin, M. (2007) What is special about special education administration? Considerations for school leadership. *Exceptionality*, 15(3), 189-200
- Burns, J. (1978) *Leadership* New York: Harper & Row
- Burrello, L., Lashley, C., & Beatty, E. (2001) *Educating All Students Together: how school leaders create unified systems*. Thousand Oaks California: Corwin Press
- Campbell, C., & Levin, B. (2009) Using data to support educational improvement. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 27, 47-65
- Council for Exceptional Children (2000) CEC knowledge and skills for beginning special education administrators in *What Every Special Educator Must Know: The Standards for the Preparation and Licensure of Special Educators*. Reston, Virginia: CEC, 84-88

- Cranston, N., Ehrich, L. & Morton, L. (2007) Current issues in educational leadership. What is the literature saying? *The Australian Educational Leader*, (2), 10-13
- Creswell, J. (1994) *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications
- Creswell, J. (2009) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications
- Crockett, J. (2007) The changing landscape of special education administration. *Exceptionality*, 15(3), 139-142
- Crockett, J., Becker, M. & Quinn, D. (2009) Reviewing the knowledge base of special education leadership and administration from 1970-2009. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 22(2), 55-67
- Day, C., Harris, A., Hadfield, M., Tolley, H. & Beresford, J. (2000) *Leading Schools in Times of Change*. Buckingham: Open University Press
- Department of Education, Northern Ireland. (2006) *The Future Role of the Special School*. Bangor, Northern Ireland: Education and Training Inspectorate, Department of Education
- Department of Education and Training, State of NSW. (2000) *Leading and Managing the School*. Sydney: State of NSW, Department of Education and Training
- Department of Education and Training, State of NSW. (2003) *School Leadership Capability Framework*. Sydney: State of NSW, Department of Education and Training, Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate. Downloaded from https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/proflearn/docs/pdf/SLCF_col3.pdf at Warri Beach on 15 February 2010
- Department of Education and Training, State of NSW. (2005a) *People with Disabilities – Statement of Commitment*. Downloaded from https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/general_man/general/spec_ed/PD20050243.shtml at Warri Beach on 15 March 2010
- Department of Education and Training, State of NSW. (2005b) *NSW DET Disability Action Plan 2004-2006 –NSW Disability Policy Framework*. Downloaded from https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/general_man/general/spec_ed/implementation_6_PD20050243.shtml at Warri Beach on 15 March 2010

Department of Education and Training, State of NSW. (2006) *Principal capabilities: emotional distance, humour and perspective, and resilience*. Sydney: State of NSW, Department of Education and Training, Professional Learning and Leadership Directorate.

Department of Education and Training, State of NSW. (2010a) *Statistical Bulletin: schools and students in New South Wales Schools, 2009*. Downloaded at Warri Beach on 25 August 2010 from www.det.nsw.edu.au/reports_stats/stats/schools.htm

Department of Education and Training, State of NSW. (2010b) *List of Special Schools*. Downloaded at Warri Beach on 15 March 2010 from http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/types/specificpurposes/schoollist_ssp.php , and *List of Regular Schools with Support Classes*, downloaded at Warri Beach on 15 March 2010 from <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentssupport/programs/disabilitypgrms/schoollist/index.php> .

Dinham, S. (2007) *Leadership for Exceptional Educational Outcomes*. Teneriffe: Post Pressed

Di Paola, M., Tschannen-Moran, M. & Walther-Thomas, C. (2004) School principals and special education: creating the context for academic success. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 37(1), 1-10

Dobbins, M. & Abbott, L. (2009) Developing partnerships with parents in special schools: parental perspectives from Northern Ireland. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 10(1), 23-30

Driver, C. (2006) Values based leadership and strategic planning in a state special school, in L. Smith & D. Riley (Eds) *ACEL Yearbook 2006: New Waves of Leadership - Selected Papers from the 2005 National Conference of the Australian Council for Educational Leaders, Gold Coast Queensland* Winmalee, NSW: ACEL, pp.24-35, downloaded from http://apollo.instanthosting.com.au/~ace14897/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/ACELYearbook2006.pdf at Warri Beach 8 March 2009

- Duignan, P. (2006) *Educational Leadership: Key Challenges and Ethical Tensions*. New York: Cambridge University Press
- Earl, L., & Katz, S. (2006) *Leading Schools in a Data-Rich World: harnessing data for school improvement*. Thousand Oaks California: Corwin Press
- Furney, K., Aiken, J., Hasazi, S. & Clark/Keefe, K. (2005) Meeting the needs of all learners. *Journal of School Leadership*, 15, September 2005, 546-570
- Goldring, E. & Rallis, S. (1993) *Principals of Dynamic Schools: Taking charge of change*. Newbury Park, California: Corwin Press
- Gurr, D. (2002) Transformational leadership characteristics in primary and secondary school principals. *Leading & Managing*, 8(1), 78-99
- Gurr, D., Drysdale, L., Di Natale, E., Ford, P., Hardy, R., & Swan, R. (2003) Successful school leadership in Victoria: three case studies. *Leading & Managing*, 9(1), 18-37
- Gurr, D., Drysdale, L., & Mulford, B. (2007) Instructional leadership in three Australian schools. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 35(3), 20-29
- Hallinger, P. (2007) Foreword in C. Day & K. Leithwood (Eds) *Successful Principal Leadership in Times of Change: an International Perspective*. Dordrecht: Springer, p.viii
- Hallinger, P. & Heck, R. (1996) Reassessing the principal's role in school effectiveness: a review of empirical research 1980-1995. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 32(1), 5-44. Downloaded from <http://eaq.sagepub.com> at Griffith University on March 7, 2010
- Koop, T. & Minchinton, J. (1995) Inclusive curriculum: making it happen for students with disabilities. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 15(3), 1-8
- Lashley, C. (2007) Principal leadership for special education. *Exceptionality*, 15(3), 177-187
- Leithwood, K. & Beatty, B. (2008) *Leading with Teacher Emotions in Mind*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press

- Leithwood, K. & Day, C. (2007) Starting with what we know, in C. Day & K. Leithwood (Eds) *Successful Principal Leadership in Times of Change: an International Perspective*. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 1-16
- Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D. & Steinbach, R. (1999) *Changing Leadership for Changing Times*. Buckingham: Open University Press
- Leithwood, K. & Riehl, C. (2003) What do we already know about successful school leadership? A paper prepared for the AERA Division A Task Force on Developing Research in Educational Leadership, downloaded from <http://web.archive.org/web/20030806030029/http://www.cepa.gse.rutgers.edu/W hat+We+Know+ long +2003.pdf> at Warri Beach on 16 March 2010
- Leithwood, K. & Sun, J. (2009) Transformational school leadership effects on schools, teachers, and students. In W. Hoy & M. DiPaola (Eds.) *School Improvement*. USA: Information Age Publishing, pp. 1-22
- Male, T. & Male, D. (2001) Special school headteachers' perceptions of role readiness. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 16(2), 149-166
- Mantle, J. (2005) Navigating special education tensions and controversies. In Hughes, L. (ed.) *Current Issues in School Leadership*, pp. 183-203 Mahwah, NJ, USA: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
- Marks, H. & Printy, S. (2003) Principal leadership and school performance: an integration of transformational and instructional leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(3), 370-397. Downloaded from <http://eaq.sagepub.com> at University of Wollongong on February 25, 2010
- McRae, D. (1996) *The Integration/Inclusion Feasibility Study*. Sydney: NSW Dept. of School Education
- Mulford, B. (1996) Do school principals make a difference? Recent evidence and implications. *Leading & Managing*, 2(3), 155-170
- Mulford, B. (2007a) Overview of research on Australian educational leadership 2001-2005. *ACER Monograph Series*, Number 40 July 2007, 1-24
- Mulford, B. (2007b) Successful school principalship in Tasmania, in C. Day & K. Leithwood *Successful Principal Leadership in Times of Change: an International Perspective*. Dordrecht: Springer, pp.17-38

- Noto, L. (2005) A case study of the Ann Sullivan Centre in Lima, Peru. *The International Journal of Special Education*, 20(2), 47-57
- O'Brien, P. (2007) "They know who I am" – leadership capabilities in special education. *Premier's Education Scholarships* Book 5 Part 1, pp. 89-98. NSW Department of Education and Training, Sydney NSW. Downloaded from <https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/awards/index.htm> at Warri Beach 19 March 2010
- Oyinlade, O. (2006) A method of assessing leadership effectiveness: introducing the essential behavioural leadership qualities approach. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 19(1), 25-40
- Oyinlade, O. & Gellhaus, M. (2005) Perceptions of effective leadership in schools for students with visual impairment: a national study. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, May 2005, 261- 275
- Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B., Moorman, R.H. & Fetter, R. (1990) Transformational leaders' behaviours and their effects on followers' trust in leader, satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviours. *Leadership Quarterly*, 1(2), 107-142
- Rayner S. & Ribbins, P. (1999) *Headteachers and Leadership in Special Education*. London: Cassell
- Robinson, V., Lloyd, C., & Rowe, K. (2008) The impact of leadership on student outcomes: an analysis of the different effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5), 635-674
- Scott, G. (2003) *Learning Principals: Leadership Capability and Learning Research in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training*. Sydney: State of NSW, Department of Education and Training, Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate
- Steer, M. (2008) Instructional leadership for special needs education. *Leadership in Focus*, 10, 38-39
- Stevenson-Jacobson, R., Jacobson, J. & Hilton, A. (2006) Principals' perceptions of critical skills needed for administration of special education. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 19(2), 39-47

- Theoharis, G. & Causton-Theoharis, J. (2008) Oppressors or emancipators: critical dispositions for preparing inclusive school leaders. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 41(2), 230-246
- Vinson, T., Esson, K. & Johnston, K. (2002) *Inquiry into the Provision of Public Education in NSW*. Annandale NSW: Pluto Press
- Wehmeyer, M., Agran, M., Hughes, C., Martin, J., Mithaug, D., & Palmer, S. (2007) *Promoting Self-Determination in Students with Developmental Disabilities*. New York: The Guilford Press
- Wilhelm, T. (2009) Making a difference, one child at a time. *Leadership*, May/June
- Winzer, M. & Mazurek, K. (2000) *Special Education in the 21st Century – Issues of inclusion and reform*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press
- Winzer, M. & Mazurek, K. (2005) Current reforms in special education: delusion or solution. In J. Zajda (Ed) *International Handbook on Globalisation, Education and Policy Research*. The Netherlands: Springer, pp. 643-658
- Wigle, S. & Wilcox, D. (1998) Special education directors and their competencies on CEC-identified skills. *Education*, 123(2), 276-288
- Zaretsky, L., Moreau, L., & Faircloth, S. (2008) Voices from the field: school leadership in special education. *The Alberta Journal of Special Educational Research*, 54(2), 161-177

Appendix A: Surveys

Appendix A illustrates the survey tools which were used to gather the data for the study. The surveys are presented for each group of respondents: principals, teachers, support staff and parents.

***Leadership Capabilities of
Principals of
Schools for Specific Purposes***

Principal Response

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. The completion of this survey will take approximately 25 minutes.

**Please return the completed survey
in the addressed reply paid envelope by**

Monday 28 February

Principal Response

Part A

Personal abilities

***Focus Question:* How important are these personal qualities for effective leadership of an SSP?**

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Being willing to face and learn from my errors and listen openly to feedback | | | | | | | |
| 2. Understanding my personal strengths and limitations | | | | | | | |
| 3. Being confident to take calculated risks and take on new projects | | | | | | | |
| 4. Being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong | | | | | | | |
| 5. Having the ability to defer judgement and not to jump in too quickly to resolve a problem | | | | | | | |
| 6. A willingness to persevere when things are not working out as anticipated | | | | | | | |
| 7. Wanting to achieve the best outcome possible | | | | | | | |
| 8. Being willing to take responsibility for programs, including how they work out | | | | | | | |
| 9. An ability to make a hard decision | | | | | | | |
| 10. A willingness to pitch in and undertake menial tasks when needed | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 11. Having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective | | | | | | | |
| 12. Being able to bounce back from adversity | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects that you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Interpersonal abilities

Focus Question: How important are these interpersonal qualities for effective leadership of an SSP?

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. The ability to empathise with and work productively with people from a wide range of backgrounds | | | | | | | |
| 2. A willingness to listen to different points of view before coming to a decision | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 3. Being able to develop and use networks of colleagues to help me solve key workplace problems | | | | | | | |
| 4. Understanding how the different groups that make up my school operate and how much influence they have in different situations | | | | | | | |
| 5. Being able to work with Department of Education and Training senior officers without being intimidated | | | | | | | |
| 6. Being able to give constructive feedback to work colleagues and others without engaging in personal blame | | | | | | | |
| 7. Being able to motivate others to achieve great things | | | | | | | |
| 8. Being able to develop and contribute positively to team-based programs | | | | | | | |
| 9. Being able to deal effectively with conflict situations | | | | | | | |
| 10. Being able to work constructively with people who are resistors | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects that you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Intellectual abilities

Focus Question: How important are these intellectual abilities for effective leadership of an SSP?

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Knowing that there is never a fixed set of steps for solving workplace problems or implementing a program | | | | | | | |
| 2. Being able to identify from a mass of information the core issue in any situation | | | | | | | |
| 3. The ability to use previous experience to figure out what is going on when a current situation takes an unexpected turn | | | | | | | |
| 4. Being able to diagnose what is really causing a problem and then to test this out in action | | | | | | | |
| 5. An ability to trace out and assess the consequences of alternative courses of action and, from these, pick the one most suitable | | | | | | | |
| 6. Being able to readjust a plan of action in the light of what happens as it is implemented | | | | | | | |
| 7. Being able to see how apparently unconnected activities are linked and make up an overall picture | | | | | | | |
| 8. Being able to set and justify priorities | | | | | | | |
| 9. An ability to recognise patterns in a complex situation | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects which you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Specific Skills and Knowledge

Focus Question: How important are these role-specific and generic skills for effective leadership of an SSP?

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Having a high level of up-to-date pedagogical knowledge and skill | | | | | | | |
| 2. Being able to use Information Technology effectively to communicate and perform key work functions | | | | | | | |
| 3. Being able to manage my own ongoing professional learning and development | | | | | | | |
| 4. An ability to chair and participate constructively in meetings | | | | | | | |
| 5. Being able to make effective presentations to a range of different groups | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 6. Understanding the role of risk management and litigation in current professional work | | | | | | | |
| 7. Knowing how to manage programs into successful implementation | | | | | | | |
| 8. An ability to help others learn in the workplace through best practice in adult learning | | | | | | | |
| 9. Understanding how organizations like the Department of Education and Training operate | | | | | | | |
| 10. Being able to organize and manage time effectively | | | | | | | |
| 11. Having a clear, justified vision for where the school must head | | | | | | | |
| 12. Having sound financial and resource management skills | | | | | | | |
| 13. Knowing how to effectively identify and disseminate good practice across the school for where the school must head | | | | | | | |
| 14. Understanding of industrial relations issues and process | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects that you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Principal Response

Part B

The Council for Exceptional Children has identified a range of skills as being important for administrators working specifically in the area of special education (Council for Exceptional Children, 2000). These skills are represented in the items of this part of the survey.

***Focus Question:* How important are these skills for effective leadership of an SSP?**

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Communicate an inclusive vision to school, school education area, and regional communities | | | | | | | |
| 2. Interpret and communicate local policies, and state and federal law pertaining to people with disabilities, to others | | | | | | | |
| 3. Facilitate the development and implementation of programs that respond to student and family needs | | | | | | | |
| 4. Advocate for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in local and regional programs at school and community levels | | | | | | | |
| 5. Ensure appropriate outcomes and assessment programs for students with disabilities that are linked to the regular curriculum | | | | | | | |
| 6. Understand and interpret data and information about individual students within diverse cultural and linguistic contexts | | | | | | | |
| 7. Facilitate professional development for teachers of students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 8. Facilitate a specific professional development plan in technology for teachers of students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 9. Assist in development of curriculum and instructional models for all students, not just those with disabilities | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 10. Facilitate and participate in the development of collaborative general and special education programs | | | | | | | |
| 11. Ensure that decisions and management procedures provide appropriate outcomes for students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 12. Facilitate the development and implementation of on-going evaluation of special education programs | | | | | | | |
| 13. Develop interagency agreements to promote outcomes for students with disabilities (e.g. speech therapy, physiotherapy) | | | | | | | |
| 14. Develop school budgets and procure supplementary funding to ensure effective provision and allocation of resources | | | | | | | |
| 15. Contribute to the development of plans to promote inclusive programs at other school and community sites | | | | | | | |
| 16. Facilitate the development and implementation of transition plans for students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 17. Coordinate the development of a discipline policy for students with disabilities which encourages inclusive practice | | | | | | | |
| 18. Support other schools in implementing a range of strategies that promote positive behaviour in students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 19. Implement a variety of procedures to ensure clear communication at all school levels | | | | | | | |
| 20. Implement conflict resolution programs | | | | | | | |
| 21. Develop and support communication and collaboration with other educational communities and support agencies | | | | | | | |
| 22. Collaborate and engage in shared decision-making to support programs for students with disabilities | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 23. Develop and provide effective communication with parents and families of students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 24. Implement effective consultation and collaboration techniques | | | | | | | |
| 25. Serve as advocate for students with disabilities and their families | | | | | | | |
| 26. Respect and support students' self-advocacy rights | | | | | | | |
| 27. Communicate and demonstrate a high standard of ethical practice | | | | | | | |
| 28. Make decisions about students with disabilities based on open communication, trust and mutual respect | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects which you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Principal Response

Part C

Focus question: To what extent do the following characteristics of SSPs make the leadership requirements of an SSP principal different from those of a mainstream principal?

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. The student population, exclusively students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 2. The parent population, exclusively parents of at least one child with a disability | | | | | | | |
| 3. The level of school responsibility for the curriculum, matched to the students' types and levels of disability and resources (e.g. hydrotherapy, mobility) | | | | | | | |
| 4. The teacher population, with a range of experience in both mainstream and special education settings | | | | | | | |
| 5. The higher proportion of teacher aides than in mainstream settings | | | | | | | |
| 6. The level of involvement of consultant professional support personnel (e.g. physiotherapists, occupational and speech therapists) | | | | | | | |
| 7. The networking with other government departments and private service agencies which consult and negotiate on supplementary programs | | | | | | | |
| 8. Cooperation with local community organizations and facilities to improve student educational outcomes related to integration and inclusion programs | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 9. Cooperation with local mainstream education settings, to enhance student outcomes, particularly in integration and inclusion programs | | | | | | | |
| 10. The implications of legislative requirements related to child protection issues (e.g. physical assistance in toileting, health and behaviour management) | | | | | | | |
| 11. Developments in technological and augmentative communication and mobility devices and systems | | | | | | | |
| 12. Enrolments are determined by placement panels' assessments of students meeting enrolment criteria | | | | | | | |
| 13. The prevalence of student special transport applications which are the responsibility of the school | | | | | | | |
| 14. The necessity for regular submissions for funding to acquire specialist equipment and other resources (e.g. supplementary teacher aide time) | | | | | | | |
| 15. The range and prevalence of challenging student behaviours (e.g self-injury, violence, aggressiveness, refusal to interact) | | | | | | | |
| 16. Occupational Health and Safety demands due to behaviour management and physical management of students | | | | | | | |
| 17. Responsibility for health care management of students with special medical conditions and needs | | | | | | | |
| 18. Procedures and resources required for safe transport of students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 19. Educational programs cater for years K - 12 | | | | | | | |
| 20. Limited access to qualified and experienced special education casual staff | | | | | | | |

Please rank the three most influential characteristics of SSPs, as described in the above items in **Part C**, on the leadership skill requirements of an SSP principal. Please comment on your selections in the space provided.

| Item | Comment |
|--|---------|
| 1. The most influential is item no. _____ | |
| 2. Second most influential is item no. _____ | |
| 3. Third most influential is item no. _____ | |

What do you consider to be the most challenging aspects of being an SSP principal, and how do you feel these aspects differentiate the job from that of a mainstream principal?

Overall, what analogy best describes what it is like to be a principal in a school like yours?

Being the principal in my school is like...

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects that you believe are important and have been overlooked.

***Thank you for the time you have committed to complete this survey
and the valuable information you have provided.***

Leadership Capabilities of Principals of Schools for Specific Purposes

Teacher Response

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. The completion of this survey will take approximately 20 minutes.

**Please return the completed survey
in the addressed reply paid envelope by**

Monday 28 February

Teacher Response

Part A

Personal abilities

Focus Question: How important are these personal qualities for effective leadership of an SSP?

Note that this is **not** an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Being willing to face and learn from his/her errors and listen openly to feedback | | | | | | | |
| 2. Understanding his/her personal strengths and limitations | | | | | | | |
| 3. Being confident to take calculated risks and take on new projects | | | | | | | |
| 4. Being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong | | | | | | | |
| 5. Having the ability to defer judgement and not to jump in too quickly to resolve a problem | | | | | | | |
| 6. A willingness to persevere when things are not working out as anticipated | | | | | | | |
| 7. Wanting to achieve the best outcome possible | | | | | | | |
| 8. Being willing to take responsibility for programs, including how they work out | | | | | | | |
| 9. An ability to make a hard decision | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 10. A willingness to pitch in and undertake menial tasks when needed | | | | | | | |
| 11. Having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective | | | | | | | |
| 12. Being able to bounce back from adversity | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects that you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Interpersonal abilities

***Focus Question:* How important are these interpersonal qualities for effective leadership of an SSP?**

Note that this is **not** an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. The ability to empathise with and work productively with people from a wide range of backgrounds | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 2. A willingness to listen to different points of view before coming to a decision | | | | | | | |
| 3. Being able to develop and use networks of colleagues to help him/her solve key workplace problems | | | | | | | |
| 4. Understanding how the different groups that make up my school operate and how much influence they have in different situations | | | | | | | |
| 5. Being able to work with Department of Education and Training senior officers without being intimidated | | | | | | | |
| 6. Being able to give constructive feedback to work colleagues and others without engaging in personal blame | | | | | | | |
| 7. Being able to motivate others to achieve great things | | | | | | | |
| 8. Being able to develop and contribute positively to team-based programs | | | | | | | |
| 9. Being able to deal effectively with conflict situations | | | | | | | |
| 10. Being able to work constructively with people who are resistors | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects that you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Intellectual abilities

Focus Question: How important are these intellectual abilities for effective leadership of an SSP?

Note that this is **not** an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Knowing that there is never a fixed set of steps for solving workplace problems or implementing a program | | | | | | | |
| 2. Being able to identify from a mass of information the core issue in any situation | | | | | | | |
| 3. The ability to use previous experience to figure out what is going on when a current situation takes an unexpected turn | | | | | | | |
| 4. Being able to diagnose what is really causing a problem and then to test this out in action | | | | | | | |
| 5. An ability to trace out and assess the consequences of alternative courses of action and, from these, pick the one most suitable | | | | | | | |
| 6. Being able to readjust a plan of action in the light of what happens as it is implemented | | | | | | | |
| 7. Being able to see how apparently unconnected activities are linked and make up an overall picture | | | | | | | |
| 8. Being able to set and justify priorities | | | | | | | |
| 9. An ability to recognise patterns in a complex situation | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects which you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Specific Skills and Knowledge

***Focus Question:* How important are these role-specific and generic skills for effective leadership of an SSP?**

Note that this is **not** an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Having a high level of up-to-date pedagogical knowledge and skill | | | | | | | |
| 2. Being able to use Information Technology effectively to communicate and perform key work functions | | | | | | | |
| 3. Being able to manage his/her own ongoing professional learning and development | | | | | | | |
| 4. An ability to chair and participate constructively in meetings | | | | | | | |
| 5. Being able to make effective presentations to a range of different groups | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 6. Understanding the role of risk management and litigation in current professional work | | | | | | | |
| 7. Knowing how to manage programs into successful implementation | | | | | | | |
| 8. An ability to help others learn in the workplace through best practice in adult learning | | | | | | | |
| 9. Understanding how organizations like the Department of Education and Training operate | | | | | | | |
| 10. Being able to organize and manage time effectively | | | | | | | |
| 11. Having a clear, justified vision for where the school must head | | | | | | | |
| 12. Having sound financial and resource management skills | | | | | | | |
| 13. Knowing how to effectively identify and disseminate good practice across the school for where the school must head | | | | | | | |
| 14. Understanding of industrial relations issues and process | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects that you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Teacher Response

Part B

The Council for Exceptional Children has identified a range of skills as being important for administrators working specifically in the area of special education (Council for Exceptional Children, 2000). These skills are represented in the items of this part of the survey.

Focus Question: How important are these skills for effective leadership of an SSP?

Note that this is **not** an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Communicate an inclusive vision to school, school education area, and regional communities | | | | | | | |
| 2. Interpret and communicate local policies, and state and federal law pertaining to people with disabilities, to others | | | | | | | |
| 3. Facilitate the development and implementation of programs that respond to student and family needs | | | | | | | |
| 4. Advocate for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in local and regional programs at school and community levels | | | | | | | |
| 5. Ensure appropriate outcomes and assessment programs for students with disabilities that are linked to the regular curriculum | | | | | | | |
| 6. Understand and interpret data and information about individual students within diverse cultural and linguistic contexts | | | | | | | |
| 7. Facilitate professional development for teachers of students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 8. Facilitate a specific professional development plan in technology for teachers of students with disabilities | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 9. Assist in development of curriculum and instructional models for all students, not just those with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 10. Facilitate and participate in the development of collaborative general and special education programs | | | | | | | |
| 11. Ensure that decisions and management procedures provide appropriate outcomes for students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 12. Facilitate the development and implementation of on-going evaluation of special education programs | | | | | | | |
| 13. Develop interagency agreements to promote outcomes for students with disabilities (e.g. speech therapy, physiotherapy) | | | | | | | |
| 14. Develop school budgets and procure supplementary funding to ensure effective provision and allocation of resources | | | | | | | |
| 15. Contribute to the development of plans to promote inclusive programs at other school and community sites | | | | | | | |
| 16. Facilitate the development and implementation of transition plans for students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 17. Coordinate the development of a discipline policy for students with disabilities which encourages inclusive practice | | | | | | | |
| 18. Support other schools in implementing a range of strategies that promote positive behaviour in students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 19. Implement a variety of procedures to ensure clear communication at all school levels | | | | | | | |
| 20. Implement conflict resolution programs | | | | | | | |
| 21. Develop and support communication and collaboration with other educational communities and support agencies | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 22. Collaborate and engage in shared decision-making to support programs for students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 23. Develop and provide effective communication with parents and families of students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 24. Implement effective consultation and collaboration techniques | | | | | | | |
| 25. Serve as advocate for students with disabilities and their families | | | | | | | |
| 26. Respect and support students' self-advocacy rights | | | | | | | |
| 27. Communicate and demonstrate a high standard of ethical practice | | | | | | | |
| 28. Make decisions about students with disabilities based on open communication, trust and mutual respect | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects which you believe are important and have been overlooked.

***Thank you for the time you have committed to complete this survey
and the valuable information you have provided.***

***Leadership Capabilities of
Principals of
Schools for Specific Purposes***

Support Staff Response

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. The completion of this survey will take approximately 20 minutes.

**Please return the completed survey
in the addressed reply paid envelope by**

Monday 28 February

Support Staff Response

Part A

Personal abilities

Focus Question: How important are these personal qualities for effective leadership of an SSP?

Note that this is **not** an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Being willing to face and learn from his/her errors and listen openly to feedback | | | | | | | |
| 2. Understanding his/her personal strengths and limitations | | | | | | | |
| 3. Being confident to take calculated risks and take on new projects | | | | | | | |
| 4. Being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong | | | | | | | |
| 5. Having the ability to defer judgement and not to jump in too quickly to resolve a problem | | | | | | | |
| 6. A willingness to persevere when things are not working out as anticipated | | | | | | | |
| 7. Wanting to achieve the best outcome possible | | | | | | | |
| 8. Being willing to take responsibility for programs, including how they work out | | | | | | | |
| 9. An ability to make a hard decision | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 10. A willingness to pitch in and undertake menial tasks when needed | | | | | | | |
| 11. Having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective | | | | | | | |
| 12. Being able to bounce back from adversity | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects that you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Interpersonal abilities

***Focus Question:* How important are these interpersonal qualities for effective leadership of an SSP?**

Note that this is **not** an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. The ability to empathise with and work productively with people from a wide range of backgrounds | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 2. A willingness to listen to different points of view before coming to a decision | | | | | | | |
| 3. Being able to develop and use networks of colleagues to help him/her solve key workplace problems | | | | | | | |
| 4. Understanding how the different groups that make up my school operate and how much influence they have in different situations | | | | | | | |
| 5. Being able to work with Department of Education and Training senior officers without being intimidated | | | | | | | |
| 6. Being able to give constructive feedback to work colleagues and others without engaging in personal blame | | | | | | | |
| 7. Being able to motivate others to achieve great things | | | | | | | |
| 8. Being able to develop and contribute positively to team-based programs | | | | | | | |
| 9. Being able to deal effectively with conflict situations | | | | | | | |
| 10. Being able to work constructively with people who are resistors | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects that you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Intellectual abilities

Focus Question: How important are these intellectual abilities for effective leadership of an SSP?

Note that this is **not** an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Knowing that there is never a fixed set of steps for solving workplace problems or implementing a program | | | | | | | |
| 2. Being able to identify from a mass of information the core issue in any situation | | | | | | | |
| 3. The ability to use previous experience to figure out what is going on when a current situation takes an unexpected turn | | | | | | | |
| 4. Being able to diagnose what is really causing a problem and then to test this out in action | | | | | | | |
| 5. An ability to trace out and assess the consequences of alternative courses of action and, from these, pick the one most suitable | | | | | | | |
| 6. Being able to readjust a plan of action in the light of what happens as it is implemented | | | | | | | |
| 7. Being able to see how apparently unconnected activities are linked and make up an overall picture | | | | | | | |
| 8. Being able to set and justify priorities | | | | | | | |
| 9. An ability to recognise patterns in a complex situation | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects which you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Specific Skills and Knowledge

***Focus Question:* How important are these role-specific and generic skills for effective leadership of an SSP?**

Note that this is **not** an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Having a high level of up-to-date knowledge about and skill in the art of teaching | | | | | | | |
| 2. Being able to use Information Technology effectively to communicate and perform key work functions | | | | | | | |
| 3. Being able to manage his/her own ongoing professional learning and development | | | | | | | |
| 4. An ability to chair and participate constructively in meetings | | | | | | | |
| 5. Being able to make effective presentations to a range of different groups | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 6. Understanding the role of risk management and litigation in current professional work | | | | | | | |
| 7. Knowing how to manage programs into successful implementation | | | | | | | |
| 8. An ability to help others learn in the workplace through best practice in adult learning | | | | | | | |
| 9. Understanding how organizations like the Department of Education and Training operate | | | | | | | |
| 10. Being able to organize and manage time effectively | | | | | | | |
| 11. Having a clear, justified vision for where the school must head | | | | | | | |
| 12. Having sound financial and resource management skills | | | | | | | |
| 13. Knowing how to effectively identify and disseminate good practice across the school for where the school must head | | | | | | | |
| 14. Understanding of industrial relations issues and process | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects that you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Support Staff Response

Part B

The Council for Exceptional Children has identified a range of skills as being important for administrators working specifically in the area of special education (Council for Exceptional Children, 2000). These skills are represented in the items of this part of the survey.

***Focus Question:* How important are these skills for effective leadership of an SSP?**

Note that this is **not** an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Communicate an inclusive vision to school, school education area, and regional communities | | | | | | | |
| 2. Interpret and communicate local policies, and state and federal law pertaining to people with disabilities, to others | | | | | | | |
| 3. Facilitate the development and implementation of programs that respond to student and family needs | | | | | | | |
| 4. Advocate for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in local and regional programs at school and community levels | | | | | | | |
| 5. Ensure appropriate outcomes and assessment programs for students with disabilities that are linked to the regular curriculum | | | | | | | |
| 6. Understand and interpret data and information about individual students within diverse cultural and linguistic contexts | | | | | | | |
| 7. Facilitate professional development for teachers of students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 8. Facilitate a specific professional development plan in technology for teachers of students with disabilities | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 9. Assist in development of curriculum and instructional models for all students, not just those with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 10. Facilitate and participate in the development of collaborative general and special education programs | | | | | | | |
| 11. Ensure that decisions and management procedures provide appropriate outcomes for students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 12. Facilitate the development and implementation of on-going evaluation of special education programs | | | | | | | |
| 13. Develop interagency agreements to promote outcomes for students with disabilities (e.g. speech therapy, physiotherapy) | | | | | | | |
| 14. Develop school budgets and procure supplementary funding to ensure effective provision and allocation of resources | | | | | | | |
| 15. Contribute to the development of plans to promote inclusive programs at other school and community sites | | | | | | | |
| 16. Facilitate the development and implementation of transition plans for students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 17. Coordinate the development of a discipline policy for students with disabilities which encourages inclusive practice | | | | | | | |
| 18. Support other schools in implementing a range of strategies that promote positive behaviour in students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 19. Implement a variety of procedures to ensure clear communication at all school levels | | | | | | | |
| 20. Implement conflict resolution programs | | | | | | | |
| 21. Develop and support communication and collaboration with other educational communities and support agencies | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 22. Collaborate and engage in shared decision-making to support programs for students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 23. Develop and provide effective communication with parents and families of students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 24. Implement effective consultation and collaboration techniques | | | | | | | |
| 25. Serve as advocate for students with disabilities and their families | | | | | | | |
| 26. Respect and support students' self-advocacy rights | | | | | | | |
| 27. Communicate and demonstrate a high standard of ethical practice | | | | | | | |
| 28. Make decisions about students with disabilities based on open communication, trust and mutual respect | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects which you believe are important and have been overlooked.

***Thank you for the time you have committed to complete this survey
and the valuable information you have provided.***

Leadership Capabilities of Principals of Schools for Specific Purposes

Parent Response

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. The completion of this survey will take approximately 20 minutes.

**Please return the completed survey
in the addressed reply paid envelope by**

Monday 28 February

Parent Response

Part A

Personal abilities

Focus Question: How important are these personal qualities for effective leadership of an SSP?

Note that this is **not** an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Being willing to face and learn from his/her errors and listen openly to feedback | | | | | | | |
| 2. Understanding his/her personal strengths and limitations | | | | | | | |
| 3. Being confident to take calculated risks and take on new projects | | | | | | | |
| 4. Being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong | | | | | | | |
| 5. Having the ability to defer judgement and not to jump in too quickly to resolve a problem | | | | | | | |
| 6. A willingness to persevere when things are not working out as anticipated | | | | | | | |
| 7. Wanting to achieve the best outcome possible | | | | | | | |
| 8. Being willing to take responsibility for programs, including how they work out | | | | | | | |
| 9. An ability to make a hard decision | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 10. A willingness to pitch in and undertake menial tasks when needed | | | | | | | |
| 11. Having a sense of humour and being able to keep work in perspective | | | | | | | |
| 12. Being able to bounce back from adversity | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects that you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Interpersonal abilities

***Focus Question:* How important are these interpersonal qualities for effective leadership of an SSP?**

Note that this is **not** an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. The ability to empathise with and work productively with people from a wide range of backgrounds | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 2. A willingness to listen to different points of view before coming to a decision | | | | | | | |
| 3. Being able to develop and use networks of colleagues to help him/her solve key workplace problems | | | | | | | |
| 4. Understanding how the different groups that make up my school operate and how much influence they have in different situations | | | | | | | |
| 5. Being able to work with Department of Education and Training senior officers without being intimidated | | | | | | | |
| 6. Being able to give constructive feedback to work colleagues and others without engaging in personal blame | | | | | | | |
| 7. Being able to motivate others to achieve great things | | | | | | | |
| 8. Being able to develop and contribute positively to team-based programs | | | | | | | |
| 9. Being able to deal effectively with conflict situations | | | | | | | |
| 10. Being able to work constructively with people who are resistors | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects that you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Intellectual abilities

Focus Question: How important are these intellectual abilities for effective leadership of an SSP?

Note that this is **not** an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Knowing that there is never a fixed set of steps for solving workplace problems or implementing a program | | | | | | | |
| 2. Being able to identify from a mass of information the core issue in any situation | | | | | | | |
| 3. The ability to use previous experience to figure out what is going on when a current situation takes an unexpected turn | | | | | | | |
| 4. Being able to diagnose what is really causing a problem and then to test this out in action | | | | | | | |
| 5. An ability to trace out and assess the consequences of alternative courses of action and, from these, pick the one most suitable | | | | | | | |
| 6. Being able to readjust a plan of action in the light of what happens as it is implemented | | | | | | | |
| 7. Being able to see how apparently unconnected activities are linked and make up an overall picture | | | | | | | |
| 8. Being able to set and justify priorities | | | | | | | |
| 9. An ability to recognise patterns in a complex situation | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects which you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Specific Skills and Knowledge

***Focus Question:* How important are these role-specific and generic skills for effective leadership of an SSP?**

Note that this is **not** an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Having a high level of up-to-date knowledge about and skill in the art of teaching | | | | | | | |
| 2. Being able to use Information Technology effectively to communicate and perform key work functions | | | | | | | |
| 3. Being able to manage his/her own ongoing professional learning and development | | | | | | | |
| 4. An ability to chair and participate constructively in meetings | | | | | | | |
| 5. Being able to make effective presentations to a range of different groups | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 6. Understanding the role of risk management and litigation in current professional work | | | | | | | |
| 7. Knowing how to manage programs into successful implementation | | | | | | | |
| 8. An ability to help others learn in the workplace through best practice in adult learning | | | | | | | |
| 9. Understanding how organizations like the Department of Education and Training operate | | | | | | | |
| 10. Being able to organize and manage time effectively | | | | | | | |
| 11. Having a clear, justified vision for where the school must head | | | | | | | |
| 12. Having sound financial and resource management skills | | | | | | | |
| 13. Knowing how to effectively identify and disseminate good practice across the school for where the school must head | | | | | | | |
| 14. Understanding of industrial relations issues and process | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects that you believe are important and have been overlooked.

Parent Response

Part B

The Council for Exceptional Children has identified a range of skills as being important for administrators working specifically in the area of special education (Council for Exceptional Children, 2000). These skills are represented in the items of this part of the survey.

Focus Question: How important are these skills for effective leadership of an SSP?

Note that this is **not** an assessment of the performance of your school's principal. It is an investigation of those skills you consider of most importance in SSP leadership.

For each item, please put a cross in the column that best describes your rating. Note that there is a column for those items that you consider to be not applicable. Please use the comments column to justify your ratings or provide any further opinion on the item. You are particularly encouraged to comment if you have chosen the *not applicable* (n/a) rating.

Ratings: 1 = low 2 = low-medium 3 = medium 4 = medium-high 5 = high n/a = not applicable

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 1. Communicate an inclusive vision to school, school education area, and regional communities | | | | | | | |
| 2. Interpret and communicate local policies, and state and federal law pertaining to people with disabilities, to others | | | | | | | |
| 3. Facilitate the development and implementation of programs that respond to student and family needs | | | | | | | |
| 4. Advocate for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in local and regional programs at school and community levels | | | | | | | |
| 5. Ensure appropriate outcomes and assessment programs for students with disabilities that are linked to the regular curriculum | | | | | | | |
| 6. Understand and interpret data and information about individual students within diverse cultural and linguistic contexts | | | | | | | |
| 7. Facilitate professional development for teachers of students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 8. Facilitate a specific professional development plan in technology for teachers of students with disabilities | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 9. Assist in development of curriculum and instructional models for all students, not just those with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 10. Facilitate and participate in the development of collaborative general and special education programs | | | | | | | |
| 11. Ensure that decisions and management procedures provide appropriate outcomes for students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 12. Facilitate the development and implementation of on-going evaluation of special education programs | | | | | | | |
| 13. Develop interagency agreements to promote outcomes for students with disabilities (e.g. speech therapy, physiotherapy) | | | | | | | |
| 14. Develop school budgets and procure supplementary funding to ensure effective provision and allocation of resources | | | | | | | |
| 15. Contribute to the development of plans to promote inclusive programs at other school and community sites | | | | | | | |
| 16. Facilitate the development and implementation of transition plans for students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 17. Coordinate the development of a discipline policy for students with disabilities which encourages inclusive practice | | | | | | | |
| 18. Support other schools in implementing a range of strategies that promote positive behaviour in students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 19. Implement a variety of procedures to ensure clear communication at all school levels | | | | | | | |
| 20. Implement conflict resolution programs | | | | | | | |
| 21. Develop and support communication and collaboration with other educational communities and support agencies | | | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----------|
| 22. Collaborate and engage in shared decision-making to support programs for students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 23. Develop and provide effective communication with parents and families of students with disabilities | | | | | | | |
| 24. Implement effective consultation and collaboration techniques | | | | | | | |
| 25. Serve as advocate for students with disabilities and their families | | | | | | | |
| 26. Respect and support students' self-advocacy rights | | | | | | | |
| 27. Communicate and demonstrate a high standard of ethical practice | | | | | | | |
| 28. Make decisions about students with disabilities based on open communication, trust and mutual respect | | | | | | | |

In the box below, please make any comments you feel will explain further your choices in the section above. You are particularly encouraged to add any aspects which you believe are important and have been overlooked.

***Thank you for the time you have committed to complete this survey
and the valuable information you have provided.***

Appendix B: Letter to Principals

University of Wollongong



Peter O'Brien M.Ed.
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong
Wollongong NSW 2522

Dear Principal,

I write seeking your school's participation in a survey which represents the data-gathering component of my doctoral thesis (Doctor of Education) at The University of Wollongong. This thesis investigates the *Leadership Capabilities of Principals of Schools for Specific Purposes*.

In 2003 Professor Geoff Scott of the University of Technology Sydney completed research under commission to the NSW Department of Education and Training on the leadership capabilities required of school principals to ensure effective performance. Scott sought and analysed information from public school principals about those capabilities, including how they might be best taught to other principals.

The findings of Scott's study have led to the publication of the documents *Learning Principals: leadership capability and learning research in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training* and the *Department of Education and Training Leadership Capability Framework*. Scott's research and these subsequent publications have served as the foundations for the development of the current New South Wales Department of Education and Training *School Leadership Strategy*.

However, despite the existence of over one hundred public schools in NSW specifically dedicated to the education of students with disabilities, and despite the thorough examinations of this area by McRae (1996) and Vinson et al. (2002), leadership in special education has received no specific consideration in these documents or in this strategy. It is an assumption of this research that an investigation of the issues of the principalship of Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs) is warranted in the light of the rapidly changing education climate and the current focus on educational leadership.

Through survey design which has in part been based on the survey conducted by Geoff Scott, the study will examine the importance of a range of identified capabilities to successful SSP leadership, and will determine if there are differences in the capabilities required of SSP principals to those of mainstream colleagues by a comparison with the Scott findings. The perceptions of four groups of respondents will be sought: principals, teachers, and support staff of SSPs, and parents of students attending SSPs. The study will also examine the effect which the perceived differences between SSPs and mainstream schools have on the respective leadership capabilities required. The survey will be presented in three parts. Parts A and B are designed to be completed by all respondents, and Part C by principals only.

I am approaching all principals of SSPs in NSW to enlist their participation in the study. As Department of Education and Training guidelines indicate that written consent must be given by

principals for any research to be conducted in schools, I attach a consent form for you to complete appropriately and return as requested.

If you consent to your school's participation, teacher and support staff participants will be invited by random selection via the DET on-line directory, and parent respondents will be enlisted by representation to your school's Parents and Citizens Committee. There will be three respondents in each of these groups, except in small schools where numbers will be adjusted accordingly. It will be emphatically emphasised to these respondents that the survey is not an assessment of the principal's effectiveness, but rather an opportunity to contribute to the study to improve its overall strength, depth and richness. Individual potential respondents will be advised that they are free to refuse to participate in the research.

All contributions to the study by survey data-gathering will be voluntary and anonymous. There will be no identifying information gathered other than a built-in indication of the respondent's position as principal, teacher, support staff or parent, and a tracking number on the return envelope to follow up returns. Raw data collected will be stored securely at the University of Wollongong.

This research has been reviewed by the University of Wollongong's Human Research Ethics Committee and approved by the NSW Department of Education and Training Strategic Research Directorate. If you have any comments, you may direct them to me, or to my research supervisors:

Dr Wilma Vialle
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong NSW 2522
ph.42214434email:wilma_vialle@uow.edu.au

Dr Deslea Konza
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong NSW 2522
ph. 42213603 email: deslea_konza@uow.edu.au

Please consider both personally participating in this study, and encouraging staff and the Parents and Citizens Committee of your school to contribute. These multiple perspectives will be used to ensure that present and future principals of SSPs are equipped with a powerful understanding of the perceptions of those who matter in special education. However, you are free to refuse to allow your school's participation in the research.

If you consent to your school's participation, please complete the Consent Form attached and return as requested. A package will be sent to you in about a week which will contain a survey for your completion, several for randomly selected staff members, and a copy of the approval letter from the NSW Department of Education and Training. Parent surveys will be distributed through your school's Parents and Citizens Committee.

Regards,

Peter O'Brien

Appendix C: Principal's Consent Form

Principal's Consent Form

Leadership Capabilities of Principals of Schools for Specific Purposes

Peter O'Brien

I have been given information about the research project *Leadership Capabilities of Principals of Schools for Specific Purposes* being conducted by Peter O'Brien as part of a Doctor of Education degree at the University of Wollongong. I understand that this research will be implemented under the supervision of Dr Wilma Vialle and Dr Deslea Konza in the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong.

I understand that if I consent to the participation of _____ (name of school) in the project, a number of school community members will be asked to complete a survey which is the data-gathering instrument of the research.

I have been advised that I may ask Peter O'Brien or his supervisors any questions I may have about the research and my school's participation, and have had opportunity to do so.

I understand that that I am free to refuse my school's participation in this research, and that individual members of the school community invited to participate may also refuse to participate.

If I have any enquiries about the research, I can contact Peter O'Brien (ph. 44551491) and his supervisors: Dr Wilma Vialle (ph.4221444) and Dr Deslea Konza (ph.42213603). If I have concerns or complaints about the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Complaints Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Wollongong on 42214457.

By signing below I indicate that I consent for _____ (name of school) to participate in the research entitled *Leadership Capabilities of Principals of Schools for Specific Purposes*, conducted by Peter O'Brien as it has been described to me in the information sheet. I understand that the data collected from my school's participation will be used for Peter O'Brien's doctoral thesis, and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

Name: _____ School: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please fax this completed form to:

Peter O'Brien
Fax no. 44554981

Appendix D: Teacher, Support Staff and Parent Letters

Teacher

University of Wollongong



Peter O'Brien M.Ed.
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong
Wollongong NSW 2522

Dear Teacher,

I write seeking your participation in a survey which represents the data-gathering component of my doctoral thesis (Doctor of Education) at The University of Wollongong. This thesis investigates the *Leadership Capabilities of Principals of Schools for Specific Purposes*.

In 2003 Professor Geoff Scott of the University of Technology Sydney completed research under commission to the NSW Department of Education and Training on the leadership capabilities required of school principals to ensure effective performance. Scott sought and analysed information from public school principals about those capabilities, including how they might be best taught to other principals.

The findings of Scott's study have led to the publication of the documents *Learning Principals: leadership capability and learning research in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training* and the *Department of Education and Training Leadership Capability Framework*. Scott's research and these subsequent publications have served as the foundations for the development of the current New South Wales Department of Education and Training *School Leadership Strategy*.

However, despite the existence of over one hundred public schools in NSW specifically dedicated to the education of students with disabilities, and despite the thorough examinations of this area by McRae (1996) and Vinson et al. (2002), leadership in special education has received no specific consideration in these documents or in this strategy. It is an assumption of this research that an investigation of the issues of the principalship of Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs) is warranted in the light of the rapidly changing education climate and the current focus on educational leadership.

Through survey design which has in part been based on the survey conducted by Geoff Scott, the study will examine the importance of a range of identified capabilities to successful SSP leadership, and will determine if there are differences in the capabilities required of SSP principals to those of mainstream colleagues by a comparison with the Scott findings. The perceptions of SSP principals, teachers, and support staff, and parents of students attending SSPs will be sought. The study will also examine the effect which the perceived differences between SSPs and mainstream schools have on the respective leadership capabilities required.

I have contacted all principals of SSPs in NSW to inform them of this research and enlist their participation in the study, and your principal has given approval for data to be gathered in your school. You have been randomly selected through the Department of Education and Training on-line staff directory to be invited to contribute to the study.

You are free to refuse to participate in the study. If you choose to participate, your contribution will involve the completion of the enclosed survey. The information you provide will be voluntary and anonymous. There will be no identifying information gathered other than a built-in indication on the survey form of your position as a teacher, and a tracking number on the return envelope to follow up returns. Raw data collected will be stored securely at the University of Wollongong, and a report on the findings of the study will be forwarded to your school upon completion.

This research has been reviewed by the University of Wollongong's Human Research Ethics Committee and approved by the NSW Department of Education and Training Strategic Research Directorate. If you have any comments, you may direct them to me, or to my research supervisors:

Dr Wilma Vialle
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong NSW 2522
ph.42214434 email:wilma_vialle@uow.edu.au

Dr Deslea Konza
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong NSW 2522
ph. 42213603 email: deslea_konza@uow.edu.au

Please give serious consideration to completing the enclosed survey Parts A and B, and returning within one week in the stamped addressed envelope. It is important to note that the survey is not an assessment of your principal's effectiveness, but rather an opportunity for you to contribute to the study to improve its overall strength, depth and richness. Your contribution will ensure that present and future principals of SSPs are equipped with a powerful understanding of the perceptions of those who matter in special education.

Regards,

Peter O'Brien

Support Staff

University of Wollongong



Peter O'Brien M.Ed.
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong
Wollongong NSW 2522

Dear Support Staff Member,

I write seeking your participation in a survey which represents the data-gathering component of my doctoral thesis (Doctor of Education) at The University of Wollongong. This thesis investigates the *Leadership Capabilities of Principals of Schools for Specific Purposes*.

In 2003 Professor Geoff Scott of the University of Technology Sydney completed research under commission to the NSW Department of Education and Training on the leadership capabilities required of school principals to ensure effective performance. Scott sought and analysed information from public school principals about those capabilities, including how they might be best taught to other principals.

The findings of Scott's study have led to the publication of the documents *Learning Principals: leadership capability and learning research in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training* and the *Department of Education and Training Leadership Capability Framework*. Scott's research and these subsequent publications have served as the foundations for the development of the current New South Wales Department of Education and Training *School Leadership Strategy*.

However, despite the existence of over one hundred public schools in NSW specifically dedicated to the education of students with disabilities, and despite the thorough examinations of this area by McRae (1996) and Vinson et al. (2002), leadership in special education has received no specific consideration in these documents or in this strategy. It is an assumption of this research that an investigation of the issues of the principalship of Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs) is warranted in the light of the rapidly changing education climate and the current focus on educational leadership.

Through survey design which has in part been based on the survey conducted by Geoff Scott, the study will examine the importance of a range of identified capabilities to successful SSP leadership, and will determine if there are differences in the capabilities required of SSP principals to those of mainstream colleagues by a comparison with the Scott findings. The perceptions of SSP principals, teachers, and support staff, and parents of students attending SSPs will be sought. The study will also examine the effect which the perceived differences between SSPs and mainstream schools have on the respective leadership capabilities required.

I have contacted all principals of SSPs in NSW to inform them of this research and enlist their participation in the study, and your principal has given approval for data to be gathered in your school. You have been randomly selected through the Department of Education and Training on-line staff directory to be invited to contribute to the study.

You are free to refuse to participate in the study. If you choose to participate, your contribution will involve the completion of the enclosed survey. The information you provide will be voluntary and anonymous. There will be no identifying information gathered other than a built-in indication on the survey form of your position as a support staff member, and a tracking number on the return envelope to follow up returns. Raw data collected will be stored securely at the University of Wollongong, and a report on the findings of the study will be forwarded to your school upon completion.

This research has been reviewed by the University of Wollongong's Human Research Ethics Committee and approved by the NSW Department of Education and Training Strategic Research Directorate. If you have any comments, you may direct them to me, or to my research supervisors:

Dr Wilma Vialle
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong NSW 2522
ph.42214434 email:wilma_vialle@uow.edu.au

Dr Deslea Konza
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong NSW 2522
ph. 42213603 email: deslea_konza@uow.edu.au

Please give serious consideration to completing the enclosed survey Parts A and B, and returning within one week in the stamped addressed envelope. It is important to note that the survey is not an assessment of your principal's effectiveness, but rather an opportunity for you to contribute to the study to improve its overall strength, depth and richness. Your contribution will ensure that present and future principals of SSPs are equipped with a powerful understanding of the perceptions of those who matter in special education.

Regards,

Peter O'Brien

Parent

University of Wollongong



Peter O'Brien M.Ed.
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong
Wollongong NSW 2522

Dear Parent,

I write seeking your participation in a survey which represents the data-gathering component of my doctoral thesis (Doctor of Education) at The University of Wollongong. This thesis investigates the *Leadership Capabilities of Principals of Schools for Specific Purposes*.

In 2003 Professor Geoff Scott of the University of Technology Sydney completed research under commission to the NSW Department of Education and Training on the leadership capabilities required of school principals to ensure effective performance. Scott sought and analysed information from public school principals about those capabilities, including how they might be best taught to other principals.

The findings of Scott's study have led to the publication of the documents *Learning Principals: leadership capability and learning research in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training* and the *Department of Education and Training Leadership Capability Framework*. Scott's research and these subsequent publications have served as the foundations for the development of the current New South Wales Department of Education and Training *School Leadership Strategy*.

However, despite the existence of over one hundred public schools in NSW specifically dedicated to the education of students with disabilities, and despite the thorough examinations of this area by McRae (1996) and Vinson et al. (2002), leadership in special education has received no specific consideration in these documents or in this strategy. It is an assumption of this research that an investigation of the issues of the principalship of Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs) is warranted in the light of the rapidly changing education climate and the current focus on educational leadership.

Through survey design which has in part been based on the survey conducted by Geoff Scott, the study will examine the importance of a range of identified capabilities to successful SSP leadership, and will determine if there are differences in the capabilities required of SSP principals to those of mainstream colleagues by a comparison with the Scott findings. The perceptions of SSP principals, teachers, and support staff, and parents of students attending SSPs will be sought. The study will also examine the effect which the perceived differences between SSPs and mainstream schools have on the respective leadership capabilities required.

I have contacted all principals of SSPs in NSW to inform them of this research and enlist their participation in the study, and your principal has given approval for data to be gathered in your child's school. This survey has been distributed to you through your school's Parents and Citizens Committee.

You are free to refuse to participate in the study. If you choose to participate, your contribution will involve the completion of the enclosed survey. The information you provide will be voluntary and anonymous. There will be no identifying information gathered other than a built-in indication on the survey form of your position as a parent, and a tracking number on the return envelope to follow up returns. Raw data collected will be stored securely at the University of Wollongong, and a report on the findings of the study will be forwarded to your school upon completion.

This research has been reviewed by the University of Wollongong's Human Research Ethics Committee and approved by the NSW Department of Education and Training Strategic Research Directorate. If you have any comments, you may direct them to me, or to my research supervisors:

Dr Wilma Vialle
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong NSW 2522
ph.42214434 email:wilma_vialle@uow.edu.au

Dr Deslea Konza
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong NSW 2522
ph. 42213603 email: deslea_konza@uow.edu.au

Please give serious consideration to completing the enclosed survey Parts A and B, and returning within one week in the stamped addressed envelope. It is important to note that the survey is not an assessment of your principal's effectiveness, but rather an opportunity for you to contribute to the study to improve its overall strength, depth and richness. Your contribution will ensure that present and future principals of SSPs are equipped with a powerful understanding of the perceptions of those who matter in special education.

Regards,

Peter O'Brien

Appendix E: Principal's Package Letter

University of Wollongong



Peter O'Brien M.Ed.
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong
Wollongong NSW 2522

Dear Principal,

Thank you for your consent for your school community to participate in my research *Leadership Capabilities of Principals of Schools for Specific Purposes*.

Enclosed in this larger envelope you will find:

- An envelope marked **The Principal** containing a survey for your completion and return
- Three envelopes marked with the **names of teachers** containing a survey for their completion and return
- Three envelopes marked with the **names of support staff members** containing a survey for their completion and return

I would appreciate your distribution of these envelopes to the nominated people in your school.

Each marked envelope contains a return addressed envelope in which completed surveys should be returned.

I am forwarding a similar package to your school's Parents and Citizens Committee addressed to the school. If your school does not have a P&C Committee, I would appreciate your assistance in distributing the three surveys enclosed in smaller envelopes to consenting parents.

I thank you very much for your assistance in this study.

Regards,

Peter O'Brien

Appendix F: Secretary of Parents and Citizens Committee Letter

University of Wollongong



Peter O'Brien M.Ed.
Faculty of Education
University of Wollongong
Wollongong NSW 2522

Dear Secretary,

I forward you this package in anticipation of your committee's participation in my Doctor of Education research thesis *Leadership Capabilities of Principals of Schools for Specific Purposes*.

Enclosed in this larger envelope you will find:

- An information letter describing the study I am undertaking, and also indicating that your school's principal has consented to your school's participation.
- Three envelopes marked **Parent** containing an information letter (as above), a survey for parent completion, and a pre-paid addressed envelope for return of the completed survey.

I would appreciate your distribution of the three envelopes to consenting parents. On the survey form it is requested that parents return the completed survey by February 28. I understand that this may not be possible due to the schedule of P&C Meetings and the subsequent distribution of surveys. In these circumstances, please advise parents that return would be appreciated within one week of receipt.

I thank you very much for your assistance in this study.

Regards,

Peter O'Brien

**Appendix G: Follow-up Poster for Staff
and Parents**

SSP Leadership Survey

Although advertised
Return Date has passed

Please Return Surveys

in stamped addressed envelopes.

**All contributions
will be immensely appreciated,
will add to the richness and depth of
data,
and will be included in the research.**

Thank you

Peter O'Brien