



Supporting Primary School Principals to Manage Complexity in Contemporary Education Settings

*Applying a Service Lens to
Support Education Leadership*

Summary Report

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for the Australian Government Primary Principal Association (AGPPA)
December 2022

About this Summary Report

This document is a summarised version of the full 64-page research report which includes:

Section 1

Executive Summary

Section 2

Introduction

Section 3

Education and Service Design: A Collaboration

Background into how the Educator and Service Designers worked together, and detail about the resulting three service artefacts.

Section 4

Research Approach 1: Background Research – Approach and methodology.

Section 5

An Agreed Foundation of Knowledge –

Analysis and synthesis from the background research into the current state.

Section 6

Research Approach 2: Field Research – Approach and methodology.

Section 7

What We Learned and What It Means – The three findings from bringing together the current state and the lived experience research. Effectively responding to the questions about artefact usefulness, service lens relevance and the contemporary primary sector landscape.

Section 8

Evolving the Service Artefacts for Use – Details of the response by principals to the artefacts and recommendations on how they can be evolved for use.

Section 9

How the Research Could Be Used – Conclusions and how the findings could be used in the short and long term.

Appendices

1. Bibliography
2. Expert Input
3. School Excellence and Improvement Frameworks by Jurisdiction
4. Elements Required for a School to Operate
5. Generic Artefacts Used in the Field Research
6. Generic Service Offering and Value Proposition Example Detail
7. Endnotes

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2023 Australian Government Primary Principals Association (AGPPA)

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Summary Visual of Research Project and Findings

This project set out to explore whether a service lens can provide a useful and practical perspective for primary school principals, and what is the contemporary state of primary education.

A cross-discipline partnership

Section 3

3 Tools developed with a principal, for a principal, in their context

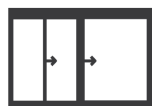
Section 3



“As an Educator, can service design provide a perspective on determining and understanding what people need from the school?”

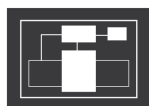


“Can service design establish a more robust, contemporary and evolving leadership framework for this Principal in her context?”



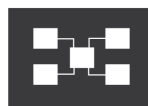
Service Artefact 1

Our Strategic Framework
Why we exist and what our intent is



Service Artefact 2

Our Ecosystem
Who is involved



Service Artefact 3

Our Services & Value Proposition
How we deliver



“Might these tools and a service lens be useful to all primary school principals?”

Curiosity turns into research

Section 2

“What is a contemporary understanding of what it means to be a Primary school principal; and can acknowledging the Principal as an Education Leader through a Service Delivery lens/mindset be key to what a Principal Service Leadership Model, based on education service leadership, means for the sector?”

Capturing what has been said and framing it from a service context

Section 5

Primary Sector Education System



- The macro system is multi-layered and complex.
- The system depends on a single accountable role for the translation of macro system aspirations and demands to individual school delivery.

Primary School



- There are descriptions and support resources around the purpose of a school, but not around how a school is managed and operates.
- The macro system regularly expects/imposes change that effectively requires the school to examine multiple operational elements.

Primary School Principal



- A pathway to principalship is not clearly mapped.
- The principal role requires more than leading teaching and learning expertise.
- There aren't practical tools and support resources about school operations and management.

Three findings from interviews into the lived experience of 26 principals across Australia and in New Zealand.

Section 7



Finding 1: Principals are adaptive agents in a complex adaptive system

A primary school operates within a complex adaptive system and the contemporary principal is an independent adaptive agent, constantly balancing the aspiration and demands of the system with the reality of their context.

The fundamentally adaptive nature being called out in the research is using a service lens to translate 'autonomy' (what a principal is conferred by the system) into practice (what a principal actually does, decides, delegates) and provide a way of examining what tools can support the principal's actions.

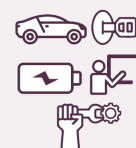


Finding 2: Three accountabilities of a primary school principal

Through a service lens we identified that the role of a primary school principal, who has ultimate accountability for school outcomes, can be deconstructed into three identifiable areas:

- Instructional Leadership.
- Organisational Management.
- Culture & Community Establishment.

The service artefacts provide touchpoints that allow the principal to think, plan, and act in relation to the Organisational Management component of their accountability.



Finding 3: Five principal typologies in relation to Organisational Management

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

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

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

Recommendations for evolving tools that have been tested by principals, for principals.

Section 8



As a set



As separate service artefacts



As practical communication tools

This document is a summarised version of the full research

Research Summary and Foundation Findings

Research context and current state findings about the system from background research

What we asked

Most school principals would agree that they came to the position from having been trained, gained experience and been rewarded for their education delivery. Yet once they assume the position of principal – and Assistant/Deputy on the way there – the role surpasses simply implementing a vision for pedagogy, guided by an ‘instructional leadership’ model and a Principal Standard.

Traditionally, this career evolution is seen as a movement from an education focus to oversight of teaching and learning delivery with additional administration or leadership capabilities.

However, there exists a prevailing perspective that a primary school is an increasingly complex organisation, subject to a range of demands and opportunities from multiple stakeholders. Furthermore, in a contemporary setting, the school facility and its staff could perhaps be seen as a service delivery hub, where the model of being a principal evolves to include key service elements in order to be leader, manager, bureaucrat, community connector, innovator.

This research project utilised the discipline of service design, to explore the question:

“What is a contemporary understanding of what it means to be a primary school principal; and can acknowledging the principal as an Education Leader through a Service Delivery lens/mindset be key to what a Principal Service Leadership Model, based on education service leadership, means for the sector?”

A service design approach was used to explore the usefulness of three foundational service design artefacts in supporting the Education Leader as a primary school principal in the Government, Independent and Catholic education contexts in Australia and New Zealand:

1. A School Strategic Framework that connects the School and its philosophy – why we exist and what our intent is.
2. A School Operating Ecosystem within a set operating context – who is involved in the different elements of a school.
3. A School Service Offering and Value Proposition Framework encompassing Management Services, Education Services, Administration Services and Campus Services – how we operationalise service delivery.

NB: For this research we only refer to primary school coverage of Years 1 to 6 and primary school principals.

Where we started

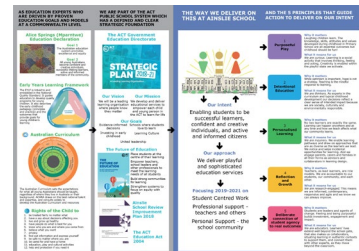
A history between an educator and service designers

Between 2015 and 2020, Wendy Cave, an ACT primary school principal and Mel Edwards and Justin Barrie of Design Managers Australia (DMA) a small service design agency with specialist experience in education, worked together to share and explore expertise and experiences of their respective practices.

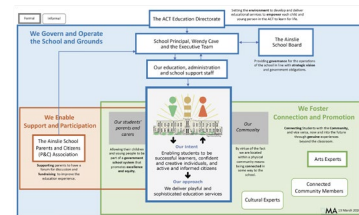
In 2018, when Wendy was appointed to a new school setting with new challenges, the relationship explicitly shifted to examine and support her by using a service lens to explore the principal role. The hypothesis was that a school is actually a complex organisation and that tools from the world of service design might be useful in an education setting.

Over the two year period of working together three service artefacts were developed in response to real-life operational need.

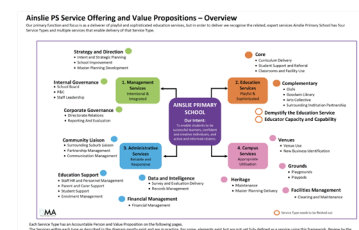
School Strategic Framework



School Operating Ecosystem



School Service Offering



- For the educator, the development of the artefacts in response to immediate operational need demystified and deconstructed the world she operated and led in a new way.
- For the service designers, the application of strategic service design thinking and methodology seemed to have benefit not only for the Principal, and her team's working day, but also evolved her perspective on leadership in a contemporary education setting.

Turning the relationship into research

The original parties were able to secure funding through the Principals Australia Research Foundation (PARF) with Australian Government Primary Principal Association (AGPPA) as the sponsoring agent.

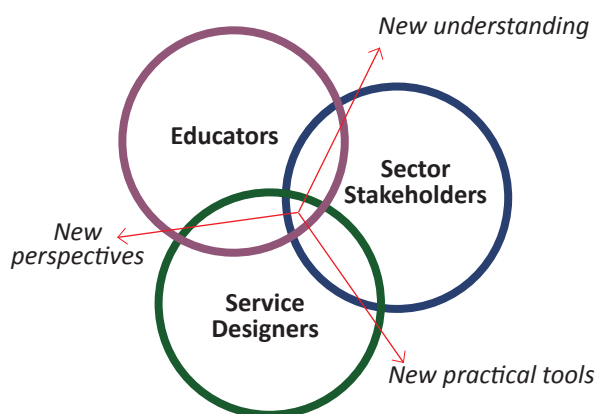
For AGPPA, Principal Associations around the world have for many years been concerned about the changing role of primary school principals. Work intensification has plagued the profession and was the focus of an international conference in Toronto in 2016. Primary school principals have traditionally ‘made things work’ because that tends to be built into their mindset, with a focus on what is best for the children in their schools.

AGPPA is intent on better articulating this role to ensure that government/department resourcing better meets what is required. While secondary schools have continued to be well resourced to support the many roles schools play, primary has sadly been ‘the second cousin’ in this debate.

A new approach for new thinking

AGPPA was committed not only to answering the questions, but also to a new type of research.

Firstly, the project itself comes from a principal’s experience. The service design approach engaged practicing and leading principals in assessing and considering a tool and thinking that is about supporting principals in their context. In connecting the three disciplines there is real potential for new understanding, perspectives and tools:



Who we are

Research Team and Technical Panel

The Research Project consisted of a core team, a Technical Panel and monthly progress engagement with AGPPA.

Core Team – Undertook the research project

- Wendy Cave: Principal, Ainslie School, Co-President Primary ACTPA, ACEL Fellow (Honorary) – Research Project Lead – facilitated the connection with AGPPA, APPA, ICP and PARF.

- Mel Edwards: former DMA Co-Principal – Design Lead and Design Researcher: led and directed all the design activity and writing of the final research paper. Project Lead – managed the administration of the Team and Project overall.
- Sophie Bissell: Deputy-Principal, Ainslie School, ACTPA member – Education Lead and Design Researcher.

Technical Panel – Provided technical and specialist perspective and inputs throughout the key stages of research.

- Diane Joseph: Education Policy and Leadership Specialist – provided advice on applicability within Education Organisations and strategy.
- Justin Barrie: Design Specialist and former DMA Co-Principal – for process advice (design research, prototyping) analysis, synthesis and conclusions. Significant contributor to the final report.
- University of Canberra: Academic Advisors – background research support and review analysis, methodology critique and report consultation.
 - Centenary Professor Moosung Lee: Leader – Research Group for Educational Leadership and Policy.
 - Dr Bernard Brown: Senior Lecturer – Teacher Education, Academic Program Director (Postgraduate).

External expert input

- AGPPA’s Empowered Leadership Working Group – Robyn Evans (NSW), Deborah Grossack (VIC), Adam Wilson (SA).

The research approach

The research itself is a piece of service design research. As opposed to scholarly research traditions or a literature review, service design research uses evidence from background and expert sources – and more explicitly, lived experience – to create models, hypotheses and findings that enable implementation of solutions. The research intent was to deconstruct the system, through the use of created artefacts, in order to understand if they could be useful in practice.

The Project brought together three perspectives:

- Education Sector – specifically the Primary Sector and the group of professional principals who are on the ground leading primary schools.
- Sector Stakeholders – specifically, Australian Government Primary Principal Association (AGPPA), whose core focus is to provide a unified and authoritative voice to promote and advocate for Public Primary Principals and Schools.
- Service Design experts – the professional discipline and methodology that seeks to understand how a service system actually operates in order to understand and describe how it might better deliver services for all the people involved – from recipient, through deliverer, and leader.

What research areas we explored

There were two approaches to the research:

1. Background research into existing sources.
2. Field research into lived experience with practicing principals.

We located 29 research papers, primarily Australia-specific, but a number of American and European papers also.

We examined each of the eight State/Territory Education Department or Directorate websites for strategic direction, principal resources and support material and any improvement frameworks or directives.

Research into the New Zealand experience was undertaken, with the Ministry of Education website being the main source, and the website created by the Ministry for education leaders.

Field research included approximately 40+ hours of interviews with 26 practicing principals between May–August 2022.

State/ Territory	No. of Participants	State Territory	No. of Participants
VIC	4	Government	21
NSW	3	Catholic	3
ACT	3	Independent	2
NT	1		
QLD	4		
TAS	4		
SA	3		
WA	1		
NZ	3		
TOTAL	26		

Background research – foundation findings

There are three areas of focus the initial research activity examined:

1. The Primary Sector Education System.
2. The Primary School.
3. The Primary School Principal.

The Primary Sector Education System

Starting with the Australian education operating landscape, specifically focused on the Primary Sector we asked:

- What are the tiers of governance and policy that intersect with accountable roles?
- What are the information and resource flows across the different levels?
- How is it supposed to all fit together?

In summary, we found:

- The macro system is multi-layered and complex.
- The system depends on a single accountable role for the

translation of macro system aspirations and demands to individual school delivery.

Each component of the system is intended to enable delivery of quality education to children and young people, and supports to children, young people and their families, as well as connecting education outcomes to societal and economic benefits of citizens.

It is clear in viewing the System as a whole that it is complex. The individual school – and in particular, the Accountable Role of the principal – is the locus for:

- Top-down government directives and regulations – which are measured and must be followed for compliance within the system.
- Bottom-up societal and individual expectations and demands – that must be responded to in order for the school to be part of the community, as well as duty of care compliance.

There are feedback loops and a logic exists to the flow of the connections and forces. That said, the Accountable Role has to operate to deliver on all of the resources, supports and forces, while still maintaining the “core business of teaching and learning” and keeping the student at the centre.

The Primary School

From understanding the System at its highest level, focus turned to the Australian primary school itself as the physical and intentional space where education delivery occurs. From the existing information and research we asked:

1. How does a school actually work?
2. What are all the required elements for a school to deliver on the macro System expectation/need?

In summary, we found:

- There are descriptions and support resources around the purpose of a school, but not around how a school is managed and operates.
- The macro system regularly expects/imposes change that effectively requires the school to examine multiple operational elements.

In the research available a common or agreed way for a school to be understood as an organisation that operates to deliver education did not exist.

Each jurisdiction, including the Catholic and Independent Schools, had improvement cycles and frameworks but the operations/school management aspects were often embedded in the language of data and accountability, resources, finance and facilities.

From the research it could be gleaned that ‘how a school runs’ is experientially known, often learned on the job. Descriptions we found amongst the sources came from:

- Surprised new principals who started from scratch when working out how a school operates beyond notions of leadership, and the “business of teaching and learning”; and

- Experienced principals who continually reframe their own personal mental models of school operations in order to balance and tradeoff best deployed effort and resource for student outcomes.

The Primary School Principal

The focus of the research project was not specifically the principal themselves as professional individuals and leaders of education, but the principal as the Accountable Role who must make sense as leader within a complex system.

We looked at:

- How is the accountable role of principal described?
- What is the pathway to becoming a principal and at what points are supports and resources available? For example, at induction.
- What have principals most recently said about the contemporary experience of being a primary school principal in Australia?

The principal role is complex, multi-faceted and challenging. It seems to be especially complex for new principals as they are not prepared with the fundamentals an experienced principal has gained over 10+ years. Within that, the system imposes a way of being and measuring that can come into conflict with its desire for social capital development.

Specifically, our research project is exploring whether tools/frameworks with a service lens are useful for the contemporary primary school principal in Australia. While the principal is ultimately accountable for student outcomes, the service lens seeks to demarcate between outcomes and tactics. In this vein the concept of autonomy is key because it articulates for a principal their authority to run their school in the way they see fit. This includes the ability to develop culture and connect with community because they are applying their local 'contextual knowledge at the site' in their actions and interactions.

The inconsistent or subjective application of autonomy from the system impacts the principal's view of their role and their ability to do it. Autonomy is system-constrained, perhaps chaotically dynamic, because when the system wants something, that takes precedence over any decisions or direction set at the local level.

In summary, we found:

- A pathway to principalship is not clearly mapped.
- The principal role requires more than leading teaching and learning expertise.
- There aren't practical tools and support resources about school operations and management.
- Three common principal refrains:
 1. My core business is teaching and learning, and student outcomes.
 2. Autonomy is critical, but there is a lack of role clarity.
 3. Administration gets in the way of my core business.

On being a contemporary principal – aspiration, expectation, reality



"It's a hard job not to be cynical. You see things change so much...we're good at celebrating, but also good at comparing which we shouldn't. Every context and every school is different."

NSW, Government, 20+yrs, regional: medium

"What don't you do when you're a principal? I do timetabling, professional learning, IT and teaching."

VIC, Government, 0-6yrs, metro: medium

"I'm always available – if a teacher needs me, I'm there. But it takes a toll, I can get caught up in the noise."

ACT, Government, 7-20yrs, metro: medium

"What I love is the kids. The joy when they do/ experience something for the first time."

NZ, Government, 7-20yrs, regional: small

"A very new principal takes 12mths to get a handle, Second year is less questions, third year, you're in your stride."

VIC, Government, 7-20yrs, rural: small

"My day is for the people in the building, and building up people for the next day."

NT, Government, 7-20yrs, regional: medium

"[many principals] are teachers at heart – you're actually running an organisation."

QLD, Government, 7-20yrs, metro: medium

"[my job] is to protect teacher's time."

SA, Government, 7-20yrs, metro: medium

"You need energy, it's a lifestyle. It's not a job it's a vocation. You are the ultimate role model – always watched."

NZ, Government, 7-20yrs, regional: small

"My role is to protect teachers, clear space – the physical environment, the purpose built environment, and to delegate the 'nitty gritty' [operational] appropriately."

NSW, Government, 20+yrs, regional: medium



The Australian Primary Sector Education System - the Operating Landscape

Australia has a national Education Vision

Our vision is for a world class education system that encourages and supports every student to be the very best they can be, no matter where they live or what kind of learning challenges they may face.⁴

The Education Declaration has two distinct but interconnected goals:

- 1 The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity
- 2 All young Australians become:
 - Confident and creative individuals
 - Successful lifelong learners
 - Active and informed members of the community.

At the Australian Government level, resources to support 'best practice' to deliver on the vision are created. For alignment, National Agreements are developed with State/Territory Education Ministers.

There are three broad areas of coverage:

1. NATIONAL REFORM AGENDA

Sets out 8 national policy initiatives against 3 reform directions that all government parties have agreed to implement.

2. EDUCATION CONTENT

acara AC Australian CURRICULUM NAPLAN

3. EDUCATION LEADERS & DELIVERERS

aitsl Sets the Standards and Frameworks to guide and measure excellence in teaching and school leadership.

Strategic Layer (policy, strategy, long term)

At the State/Territory level the eight separate Departments/Directorates set direction, measure quality and govern their Primary Schools through their own local agencies and bodies

Non-Government Schools



State/Territory Education Act
State/Territory Teaching Regulation Authority
State/Territory 'education advisory committees, councils'

Policies and procedures for expectations and accountabilities
+ Local Curriculum Elements
+ Local Policy and Directives e.g. Health, Justice, Community

Catholic and Independent schools must adhere to the broad requirements of Australia's education system. Daily operational responsibility for the leadership, efficient operation, and management of the schools resides within the Schools themselves.

Delivery Layer (operations, med/short term)

At the individual Primary School level, centralised delivery structures and support/resources exist

Regional Support Department/Directorate Officers and Support Network/District Support Improvement Officers Professional Associations Unions

Accountable Role: Principal

School Council/Board*

In all jurisdictions, except for Tasmania, a School Board or similar plays a governance role.

Each school operates to deliver on the Federal, State/Territory functions and accountabilities

Professional educators and staff manage and deliver on required functions and accountabilities

Children and Young People / Students

Marketisation and competition

Parents/Carers needs and expectations

Societal expectations and demands

Community needs and expectations

Industry and Business expectations

Broader societal expectations and environmental factors such as socio economic, geographical

Each component of the system is intended to enable the delivery of quality education to children and young people as contributing members of Australian life, society and the economy.

From Background Research to Lived Experience

The assessment of the current state provided a good understanding of how the system describes how it should operate from its constituent parts. A great deal of research exists that explores the experience of being a principal in Australia with particular focus on instructional learning, pedagogy, and wellness, system intention (i.e. Autonomy for Principals).

To this point, the researchers had developed:

- Understanding of what is known or understood about running a school from existing research, articles and government–endorsed investigations.
- Consideration of a school as part of a complex system and what that means for how a complex organisation operates.
- No argument to oppose applying a service lens view to the education system. Although no existing research provided a service delivery perspective and organisational breakdown the way the service artefacts appeared to.

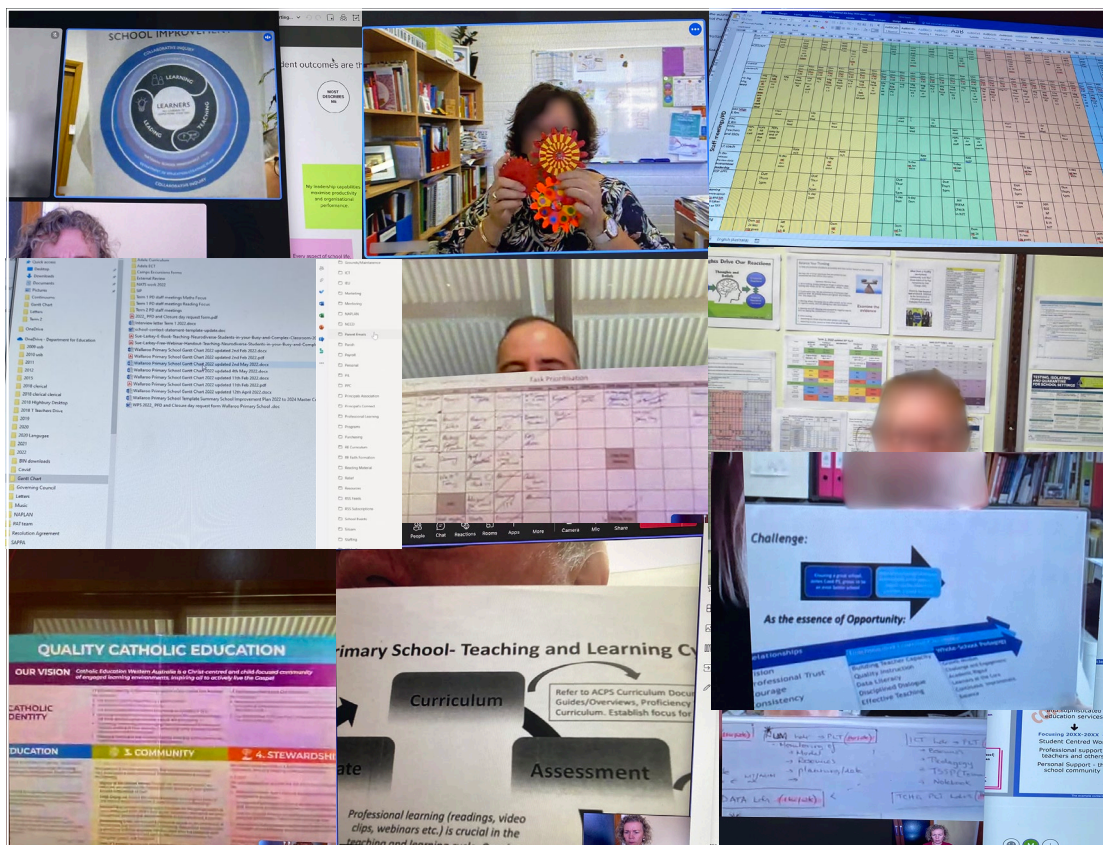
In order to engage with principals, using the existing evidence the project had established a starting point for:

- How things currently are supposed work.
- What support/resource exists.

When we were speaking with practicing primary school principals (Government, Catholic and Independent) in Australia make sense of their school, as a part of, and as a complex system*"

**i.e. drivers, outcomes, how your school actually operates*

Images of participants sharing the tools and resources that they find useful for running their school



Research findings – what we learned

Highlights from what we learned and how it can be applied



FINDING 1

Principals are adaptive agents in a complex adaptive system

A primary school operates within a complex adaptive system and the contemporary principal is an independent adaptive agent, constantly balancing the aspiration and demands of the system with the reality of their context.

This is contrary to a traditional view that schools are the physical place that ‘just’ implements government policy and curriculum within a complex system.

The fundamentally adaptive nature being called out in the research is using a service lens to translate ‘autonomy*’ (what a principal is conferred by the system) into practice (what a principal actually does, decides, delegates) and provide a way of examining what tools can support the principal’s actions.

“School is like a 3D puzzle with different levels – everything can happen, always decision-making.”
SA, Government, 7–20yrs, metro: medium

“[We’re] managing complexity, not even managing change, it’s managing complexity in terms of societal norms, education norms, personal health and wellbeing, as that has changed to a wellbeing perspective. [We] provide a leadership lens with management qualities. You need to have that blend.”
TAS, Government, 7–20yrs, regional: medium

“You have an impact in so many ways, you have a long lasting effect in families. It’s different everyday and you’re deciding directions for communities.”
TAS, Government, 0–6yrs, rural: small

“I love to grow leaders – that’s the best way to support the kids.”
QLD, Independent, 7–20yrs, metro: large

We found that the service artefacts are effective because, individually, they provide a breakdown from a foundational perspective:

- Why do we exist and what is our intent in our context, in our location?
- Who is involved and what are the connections in the different elements of our organisation?
- How are we organised to operationalise service delivery and deliver services and experiences of value?

Collectively, they identify the Organisational Management accountability of a principal. One accountability of three identified in Finding 2.

The balance of aspiration and demand is more easily planned for by principals, if services can be defined and understood through acceptance of the complex adaptive system view and the principal’s requirement for autonomy (i.e. the right to adapt in their context).

The service artefacts do exactly this. They highlight and define the elements required for enacting a principal’s role beyond instructional leadership. While the macro system may set aspiration and expectations, the artefacts and this research provides a way to navigate through this to meet those demands.

Applying the service lens

By viewing the Accountable Role of the principal as an adaptive agent, the service lens then looks to what are the tools that can help the principal adapt to the system demands in their context. That is, what exists to support the accountable role to be enacted?

*Autonomy Definition: refers to the decentralisation from the system to the school of significant authority to make decisions, especially in respect to curriculum, pedagogy, personnel and resources within a centrally-determined framework of goals, policies, curriculum, standards, and accountabilities.



FINDING 2

Three accountabilities of a primary school principal

Through a service lens we identified that the role of a primary school principal, who has ultimate accountability for school outcomes, can be deconstructed into three identifiable areas:

- Instructional Leadership – because education outcomes are paramount.
- Organisational Management – because a safe, sustainable and stable environment for learning is crucial.
- Culture & Community Establishment – because the environment a principal sets, based on their values, is demonstrated in every interaction.

The service artefacts provide touchpoints that allow the principal to think, plan, and act in relation to the Organisational Management component of their accountability.

“[My mentor] advised me early to always be aware of the bigger systems and processes, so I always come back to the impersonal the policy and processes that have to be done – this is the stuff that reduces anxiety, gives people a common ground.”

SA, Government, 7–20yrs, metro: medium

“A process will keep you safe – known process, and procedure, means knowing what to expect. ‘This is what’s going to happen...’ that’s strategy!”

NT, Government, 7–20yrs, regional: medium

“Staff needs to understand budget. Because that’s fundamental to what we do, and what we can do.”

SA, Government, 0–6yrs, regional: small

“To use business language, the primary client is the student – how are you satisfying the client if you’re not doing all the things?”

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

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

NSW, Catholic, 20+yrs, regional: medium

However, the service mindset poses a broader context that moves beyond a purely education practice focus for the principal in particular. It challenges and expands the notion of *core* and a number of principals extended this statement:

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

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

A school is an enabling environment, for learning, for safety, for student and teacher growth and development and for fulfilling the commitment to education excellence and equity.

In thinking about the education position with a service lens the artefacts looked to deconstruct how a school actually operates. The service lens sees an organisation as a provider and deliverer of services that enable desired outcomes for all users.

Principal: “I’m responsible for developing young people.”

Service Response: “How do I practically deliver on that when I can’t do everything myself?”

Principal: Our core business is teaching and learning.

Service Reframing: We are an enabling environment that facilitates growth of a child through teaching and learning that occurs in a physical space.

The service lens is not to privilege bureaucracy and process over relationships and pedagogy, the intention is to pose: If you look at a school as if it was a service delivery organisation could you undo some of the complexity in some areas that operate like service delivery?

Applying the service lens means statements, beliefs and expectations principals have of themselves can be classified toward practice, tools and boundaries.

Applying the service lens

When we spoke with principals in their schools there was still the commonly held position, also highlighted from the background research:

“Our core business is our teaching practice and approach”

TAS, Government 0–6 yrs, regional: small

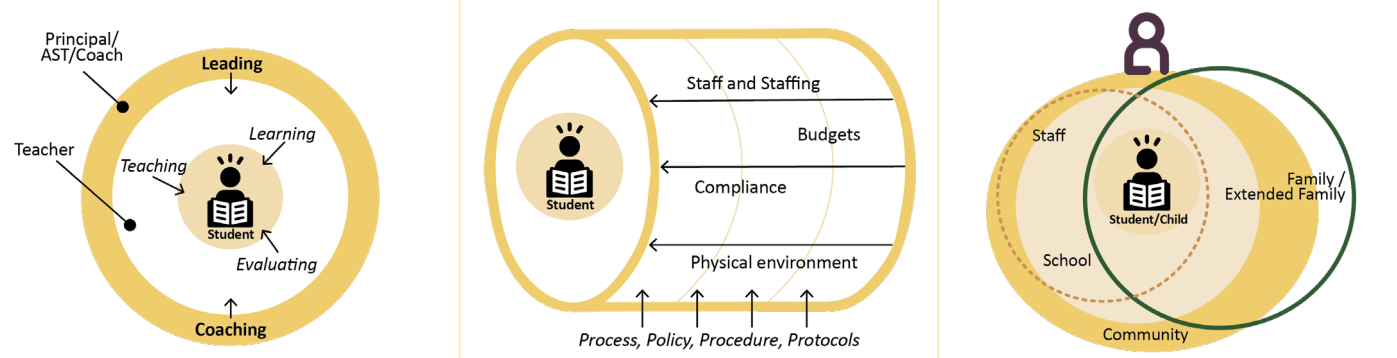
The Three Accountabilities of a Principal



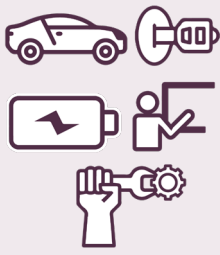
1. Instructional Leadership	2. Organisational Management	3. Culture & Community Establishment
<p>Because education outcomes* are a School’s primary/core role/function</p> <p>Description Management of curriculum and instruction by a school principal for quality teaching and learning measured by student achievement, and improvement, teacher feedback, and quality assessment.</p> <p>Leading learning communities.</p> <p>Influence and guide pedagogical practices.</p> <p><i>*As defined by the national Education Vision</i></p>	<p>Because a safe, sustainable and stable environment for learning and working that is appropriately resourced and managed is fundamental in a School.</p> <p>Description i.e. administration, operations delivery, management, improvement.</p> <p>Using a Service Lens the four areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education Services• Management Services• Administrations Services• Campus Services. <p>For detail see Appendix 6.</p>	<p>Because the environment a principal sets, based on the their values is clear in every interaction that occurs within the School.</p> <p>Description Schools don’t just have strategy and values as statements; through the principal, they demonstrate and live them through interactions. Moreover, the interactions are not standardised information transmission – there is a relationship being formed. Any communication and interaction is intersubjective.* It is a continuous interchange over years that goes both ways – parent/carer <>child<>teacher<>principal.</p> <p><i>*Intersubjective is the concept that each person is influenced by his or her family, friends, acquaintances, and culture.</i></p>

Where is the ‘student at the centre’?

Although the language of ‘student at the centre’ is not explicitly used, the service lens accountabilities do reflect the place of student outcomes, but as the *ends*; the actions, activities and organisation of the accountability are the *means*.



<p>Culture and community</p> <p>The service lens, and associated accountabilities that the lived experience research highlighted do not explicitly have a call out to culture or community. This is not because these elements are not critical, it is because from a service lens point of view they are outcomes rather than service descriptors in the context of our research question.</p> <p>That said, from our research, we have captured that school culture and ‘community’ is what distinguishes each school, driven by the actions of the principal and others.</p>	<p>Culture is what the principal – either deliberately or sub-consciously, creates, adapts, adapts to, and/or shapes.</p> <p>Community includes four human components</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students/Kids.• Staff.• Parents/Carers.• Other e.g. extended family, People in the surrounding areas of the school.• The fifth component to Community is physical place and space. Place being the location, space being where school is experienced.
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FINDING 3

Five principal typologies in relation to Organisational Management

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

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

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



“We have to recognise that becoming principal is a transition to a change of state – from specialty to coach. You don’t see the coach on the field. If you’re doing, you can’t oversee.”

QLD, Government, 7–20yrs, metro: medium

“I’m instructional on the surface but an organisational leader to support.”

SA, Government, 20+yrs, metro: large



Typologies provide indicators of how people will consume/ use the artefacts and knowledge in context of a service– related experience.

Typologies do not define the ‘whole’ person, just how they respond to particular services, or in this case, the service artefacts specifically. As opposed to a ‘type’ which usually means a whole person exemplified by defining characteristics.

Typologies are not hierarchical or judgmental.

Applying the service lens

Typologies are useful in designing the artefacts different principals will use (that is, being open to the fact that they should be designed in a way that facilitates different types of use) and also to enable principals to select the mode of artefact that suits their Organisational Management type.

The typologies are not a comprehensive assessment of principals, but a model for using the service artefacts. The typologies can be used as a foundation to design and evolve other Organisational Management artefacts so that they are appropriate and relevant to the user.

The typologies are a model for using the service artefacts, they capture:

- What is important.
- What frustrates.
- Preferred tools and techniques.
- Attitude to Organisational Management.
- Organisational Management artefact use.

What typologies are, and are not

Typologies are a service design technique and tool. They look at the key users in a system and describe how to craft tools to support experience. They are based on evidence directly sourced from the lived experience of interview participants.

From the Research Data

Of those interviewed

- 27% fit the Driver typology
- 15% fit the Educator typology
- 23% fit the Energiser typology
- 35% fit the Enabler typology

In terms of professional experience, of those interviewed:

- A number of Drivers had external experience, but from within the education industry, e.g. working in the department/directorate, education consulting.
- Educators had no professional experience outside of teaching and school leadership roles.
- Energisers all had external experience, but from within the education industry, e.g. working in the department/directorate, education consulting
- Enablers all had external experience from outside the education sector. A number came to teaching as a change in career

Principal Typology 1

Driver



When it comes to Org Mgmt

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

Because as a principal

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

Attitude to Organisational Management

"I'm learning that so-called red tape and operations are the job."

Organisational Management Artefact Use

- As a trust builder.
- As easy-to-absorb knowledge.

Principal Typology 2

Educator



When it comes to Org Mgmt

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

Because as a principal

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

Attitude to Organisational Management

"It's not unnecessary but it is disproportional [in effort] to the outcome."

Organisational Management Artefact Use

- As a self-check, for their own understanding, rather than for using with others.

Principal Typology 3

Energiser



When it comes to Org Mgmt

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

Because as a principal

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

Attitude to Organisational Management

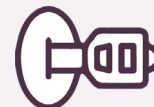
"What I get to last is curriculum and learning. But I can't teach every class – I make it possible for [for every class] to be taught."

Organisational Management Artefact Use

- To enlighten others on the basics required in order to do the good stuff.
- To share with others what the Energiser intuitively knows.

Principal Typology 4

Enabler



When it comes to Org Mgmt

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

Because as a principal

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

Attitude to Organisational Management

"[Teaching and learning as] core business doesn't mean it's 100% of my time – we deliver education services."

Organisational Management Artefact Use

- Believes the artefacts should be compulsory when starting as a new principal.
- To get others understanding how things work in a school.

Principal Typology 5

Supporter



When it comes to Org Mgmt

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

For principals

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

What is Important to a Supporter

- Supporting the different levels of experience for practicing principals and aspiring principals.
- Advocating for and promoting the realistic aspects of being a principal.

Evolving the service artefacts for use

The original service artefacts were created with and for a specific principal, in a specific context. The service artefacts came from the world of service design with complex public sector organisations. They were not attempting to reimagine a school as a ‘business’, but they were explicitly intended to highlight and clarify that a school is complex, and that an enabling environment must exist for teaching and learning to occur, therefore – from a service perspective – tools must exist to support understanding and action.

- **As a set** the three artefacts represent the operating landscape and Organisational Management components of a complex organisation.
- **As separate service artefacts** they are one–page visual overviews that deconstruct the practical elements for describing:
 - Why do we exist and what is our intent in our context, in our location?
 - Who is involved and what are the connections in the different elements of our organisation?
 - How are we organised to operationalise service delivery and deliver services and experiences of value?
- **As a practical tool** they were designed for principals:
 - To understand at an overview level the lay of the land quickly, not deeply; and
 - To see the scope of accountability and breakdown.
- **As a communication tool** they are designed as:
 - A memory jogger, that provides a reminder about how things work, to confirm or verify connections and to reduce uncertainty, to initiate action, to get started.
 - A quick reference tool for the principal, to provide a sense of confidence on the known, to feel secure at an overview level (not a deep comprehensive handbook).
 - A device – for making meaning not instructing, to communicate or generate understanding, to discuss or predict possibility with others.

Service artefact usefulness

Across the board the intent of the service artefacts was validated through the research with principals.

The service artefacts don’t present a philosophy or style, but a common – and now tested – representation of the parameters of what is known with regards to Organisational Management. As they are, they:

- Provide a ‘template’ for a visual or a framework of the types of questions a principal needs to ask about how their school runs.
- Can be used, not as a day–to–day service artefact, but something that helps a principal to get started, get an overview, or share their accountability.

- Need to be timeless, not time bound – a living document of ‘how we are running things’.

From a visual and aesthetic perspective, the artefacts:

- Help visualise the fundamentals of what principals should be covering for Organisational Management.
- Must be on a single page for usability, and the graphics should be as simple as is appropriate for the principal to use.
- Are a visual stimulus – so printed, not necessarily published and displayed publicly except for those concerned with Organisational Management.

Tools, not rules

Importantly, the service artefacts are tools, not rules.

The qualification for usefulness with the service artefacts is that they are a tool:

- To be tailored and questioned for contextual application.
- For conversation about what is there, and what is not.

Their act of creation or tailoring presents an opportunity for a principal to reflect on their own world, or engage staff in filling in the details for their own learning, or for aspiring principals to examine the schools they operate in.

But they are not rules, or infallible frameworks that every principal, in every school should ‘follow’. They support the critical thinking required of an education leader in the contemporary primary sector in Australia.

How the research could be used

We set out with this research to answer a range of questions about applying a service lens to education. We explored the contemporary understanding of what it means to be a primary school principal; and whether the service lens is useful via the created and tested service artefacts.

The service lens does not *corporatise* the role of principal, but it does provide a language for the aspects of the job that must deliver on compliance, legal frameworks and risk management inherent in running a large organisation.

The result of the research is that principals have assessed a tool and thinking created by principals, for principals that has been proved to:

- Demystify accountability for the new or unaware, and enable understanding.
- Deconstruct education leadership in order to enable action.
- Relieve cognitive load and increase confidence in decision–making.
- Provide a shared reference point – within school, within sector.

The application of the service lens doesn't re-define the Principal, but leads to further broader questions about whether the traditional notion of principal as they are expected to operate is sustainable in the increasingly complex adaptive systems such as education delivery, within increasingly complex societies.

For AGPPA, the research can

- Inform AGPPA's Strategic Objectives.
- Support promotion and advocacy through consideration of where principal-generated tools reside and are accessed.
- Start a conversation or review the type of 'administration' currently required by principals.
- Be used to review or support the induction practice for principals.
- Provide a new language when supporting the wellness and wellbeing of principals at all stages of their career.

For the Education Sector, the research can

- Be shared with Departments and Directorates, Education Offices and Associations.
- Support the evolution of a future education leadership model.
- Be considered as a new type of research approach.
- Be used to consider how to attract new candidates, from different fields, and how they could be oriented to the sector.

For Principals, the research provides

- A contemporary perspective of their role, and a focus on one key aspect of their accountability.
- Immediate access to the service artefacts as they are.

Responses to the service artefacts by typology

Driver

"An accurate reflection of the school system."

ACT, Catholic, 0–6yrs, metro: small

"I can see using these in my context."

NSW, Government, 20+yrs, regional: medium

"Service lens is useful – it's what we are responsible for."

QLD, Government, 0–6yrs, remote: medium

Educator

"I love them – As template I could complete. They're not constraining because you bring your own interpretation of my context."

ACT, Government, 7–20yrs, metro: medium

"I'm not confused by them, but Content? Yes.

Format? – I prefer my [own] style."

VIC, Government, 0–6yrs, metro: medium

"They're busy – have to be concise to be powerful, but a good reminder visual."

SA, Government, 7–20yrs, metro: medium

Energiser

"I could see these in the Staff Handbook. Different users – I would get comms student or aspiring teacher to do gathering of content."

NT, Government, 7–20yrs, regional: medium

"[They're infographic visual models to encapsulate the essence of your school – your vision, your mission, or whatever it happens to be and I think that's really essential...obviously each school is different in that way but if the intent is...documents that help to share a vision and make sure everyone is on the same page with the language – I would say it would be essential for all schools to engage in."

NSW, Independent, 20+yrs, metro: large

"I quite like them – I could understand them."

NZ, Government, 7–20yrs, regional: small

Enabler

"Good for people when starting out – you pull all these things together. There are certain things you [need] to know."

NSW, Catholic, 20+yrs, regional: medium

"Would've helped if [they] existed when I got this role."

VIC, Government, 7–20yrs, rural: small

"Looks good. "I'd like to be able to hand someone this when we have visitors to the school."

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

Appendices

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APPENDIX 2: Expert Input

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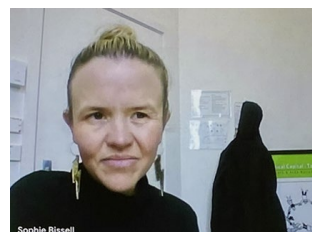
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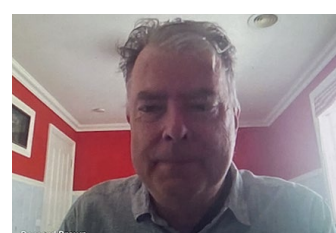
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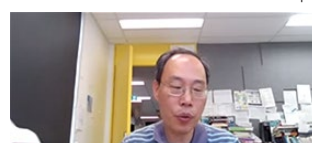
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About DMA

From 2003 to 2020 Design Managers Australia (DMA) was a Canberra-based globally award-winning service design agency. They combined high level strategic service design and planning in complex environments with experience in the realities inherent in the complexities of the delivery of strategy and operations within public and private sectors organisations. Working with Wendy Cave at Macquarie Primary School on the DesignInSchools project 2015-2016 the work evolved into an offer to engage students as co-designers in the problem-solving discipline from a collaborative and human-centred position. The project became an opportunity for students and staff to learn by doing. Winner for 'Systemic Change in Education' – Service Design Award (2017) Global Design Network, Co-Winner Best Overall 'Service Design – Education Services' (2016), Good Design Australia. » dmaarchive.wordpress.com

About University of Canberra

The University of Canberra has a strategic partnership with the ACT Directorate of Education. Ainslie School is one of 20 affiliated schools and contributes to research and UC Course Advisory Groups.

With thanks

Esteban Fernandez Drovetta, executive and leadership consultant, for sharing his experiences in strategic planning and leadership coaching with principals in the New Zealand education system.