Beginning the school principalship in rural and remote Catholic schools in Western Australia

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What is the Australian educational landscape in which school leaders’ operate?

With the person alongside you discuss two aspects that are impacting on the Catholic school principal today?
Australian Catholic School Context

National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care

Digital Education and Technology in Schools

AEDl

Council of Australian Government AGENDA

NAP National Assessment Program

GONSKI

My School

Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care

Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority™

Closing the Gap

The Indigenous Reform Agenda

National School Improvement Tool

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited
CONTEXT OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Four Dioceses (4 Bishops + 1 Auxiliary Bishop)
One Catholic Education Commission

One Catholic Education Office
(Perth + 3 Regional Offices – Broome, Geraldton, Bunbury)

159 Schools (111 primary / 28 secondary / 20 composite)
+ 1 early intervention centre / 1 early learning and care

61/159 schools in rural / remote settings

73,000 students

9,500 workforce (4,500 teachers / 4,000 support)

80 % Catholic enrolment
(predominantly metropolitan)
Qualitative Research

Epistemology – Interpretivism

Theoretical Perspective – Symbolic Interactionism

Research Design ‘snapshot’
  • Case Study

Data Collection
  • Document Search
  • Semi-structured interviews
  • Field Notes

Research Participants

Trustworthiness

Data Analysis
  • Miles & Huberman (data collection, reduction, display, verification / conclusion)
Theoretical Perspective

- Technical and Management Skills
- Socialisation Skills
- Self Awareness / Role-Awareness

Participants

<table>
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<th>Remote</th>
<th>Rural</th>
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What is the context of rural and remote Australia in which Catholic schools operate?

- Health
- Employment
- Economic
- Family
- Catholic Church

... 

*Discuss with the person next you the context of rural Australia in which the Catholic school is located.*
**Rural**

**Technical & Managerial Skills**
- Administrative requirements
- School size
- Handover from previous principal

**Cultural & Social Relationships**
- Collegial support
- Professional isolation
- CEOWA support

**Self Identity**
- Loneliness and isolation
- Resiliency
Quotes

My current staff are full of graduates… the challenge for me is that I am in the classroom supporting them… but where is the time to do this? [Technical and Managerial Skills]

I feel that the association is reasonably interested in what I am doing. They are trying to support country principals. I had a city principal release one of their teachers to come up here because they knew I was teaching pretty much full time. [Socialisation]

I think that the principalship is a lonely role. [Self awareness / role awareness]
REMOTE

TECHNICAL & MANAGERIAL SKILLS
- Staffing
- Educational outcomes for Aboriginal students

CULTURAL & SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS
- Community relationships
- CEOWA support
- Professional isolation

SELF IDENTITY
- Vocational
- Loneliness and isolation
- Resiliency

Findings
Quotes

We need to ensure that children attend school and once this is achieved, then the children participate in learning and once this is achieved, you look towards achievement. The only opportunity for a future for kids in the remote community is an education. If this opportunity doesn't happen for them, well that is it for life...

[Technical and Managerial Skills]

I need to work very closely with the community. The school is a very big part of the community – a real focal point. I had two objectives at the start of my principalship. The first was to build community relationships and second, where possible, seek parental involvement. [Socialisation]

Principals need to be prayerfully reflective in their role. We need to stop and learn how to listen to God. [Self aware / role aware]
RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COMMUNITYUNDERSTANDING
   – community participation

II. CONTEXT SPECIFIC – rural and remote lens

III. PRINCIPAL ASSOCIATIONS – pastoral / professional support

IV. PREPARATION – practical needs / support for rural and remote contexts
Discussion

What is your reaction to the findings and recommendations?

What has been your experience in leadership preparation and reflection?

Anything you would like to add to this conversation?
QUESTIONS

Thank you!