

Distributed Leadership and Challenging Behaviour in Victorian Government Specialist Schools: Principals' perspectives

By

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Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

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All research procedures reported in this thesis were approved by the Human Ethics Committees of the Faculty of Education, La Trobe University, Bendigo Campus and the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The approval numbers were R019/09 and RIS09130 respectively.

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Dedication

This Thesis is dedicated to

My Wife

Jane

My Daughters

Nyaradzo, Tatenda, Fadzisai

And

My Granddaughter

Tinevimbo

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Abbreviations

BA	Bachelor of Arts
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
GTC	Gweru Teachers' College
LTU	La Trobe University
Med	Master of Education
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
PASS	Principal Association of Special Schools
UNISA	University of South Africa
UZ	University of Zimbabwe
ZOU	Zimbabwe Open University

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Abstract

This study is located in the field of educational leadership in Australia, focussing on how Victorian State government specialist school principals understand and conceptually frame the distribution of leadership regarding the management and the well-being of students with an intellectual disability.

The study investigates the extent to which principals of specialist schools distribute leadership functions among co-workers and the wider community, as they and their colleagues endeavour to manage their students, some of whom as a consequence of intellectual disability and other conditions, can manifest most challenging behaviours.

A naturalistic inquiry tradition is adopted and a case study research design employed as guided by a social constructivism world-view. Face-to face interview data were gathered from the principals of ten government specialist schools in Victoria. The analysis and the discussion of this data proceeds within the theory and the research on distributed leadership in the reviewed literature.

Distributed leadership as a model of principal leadership was reported to be practiced widely in the schools investigated. The study established that on the evidence of these principals' perspectives, each of the schools investigated utilised this paradigm not only differently but effectively for the benefit of the challenging students. Student challenging behaviour was not only reported to be a core issue in these schools, but a daily practice-based issue, characterised by unique incidents which needed spontaneous solutions. Both proactive and reactive intervention strategies were used to effectively manage challenging students.

The participants (school principals), reported a shared inclination to operationalise distributive leadership principles, which they see as essential in the development of school organisational effectiveness. The nature of distributive leadership in small specialist schools that routinely experience contentious behaviours was clarified. The study provides insights about the role of the specialist school principal in developing a school culture that consistently promotes a shared vision, good working relationships, staff empowerment and which facilitates professional development. In their evaluations about the effective implementation of these principles, these school leaders consistently utilised the distributive leadership discourse.

Chapter One

1.0 Background to the Study

1.1 Introduction

Knowledge and understanding of the management of students with a combination of an intellectual disability and challenging behaviours is important to administrators, teachers, carers, students, parents and the wider community. Indeed this is important for all who share a values stance to advancing student wellbeing in specialist schools. Besides facing vocational preparation, socio-economical skill development and other issues, some students with these conditions are at high risk of illegal exclusion from school and community services as guided by the Disability Discrimination Act 1992. (Ashman & Elkins, 2009; "Disability Act," 2006; Emerson, 2001; Robertson et al., 2005). They may be exposed to some forms of direct intervention, seclusion and psychotropic medication, systemic neglect and possible abuse from carers, other students, parents, relatives and even maltreatment from teachers (Allen, Lowe, Moore, & Brophy, 2007; Emerson, 2001; Sawyer, Rey, & Graetz, 2002). Therefore in light of the contemporary inclusive education policies that insist on more responsive practices for persons with a disability, it is important that personnel working in specialist schools are able to manage and reduce student challenging behaviours. Thus this study focuses on the nature of "Distributed leadership" in specialist schools (Barry, 1991; Gronn, 2002; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Harris, 2008; Hill, 2008; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Mayrowetz, 2008; Robinson, 2011; Spillane, 2005) and challenging behaviour as the provocative context from which an analysis of Distributed leadership is justified (Foreman, 2008; Chung and Harding, 2009, Ashman and Elkins, 2009; Loreman, et al., 2005, Emerson, 2001;Claridge, 2011).

The aim of this qualitative case study research project is to investigate, using a Distributed Leadership Approach, principals' perspectives of school leadership regarding the management of students who as a consequence of their intellectual disability or for other reasons exhibit challenging behaviours in ten Victorian state specialist schools in Australia. The study provides a snapshot of how Distributed Leadership Theory informs practice in the management of sporadic, contentious and challenging incidents in specialist schools. More specifically the study seeks to make a scholarly contribution to the contemporary discourse of school leadership by expanding current theory and practice for better understanding how distributed leadership might assist staff professional competency development around the conundrum of student behaviour management, while, also pursuing the goals of student personal learning and development in government specialist schools.

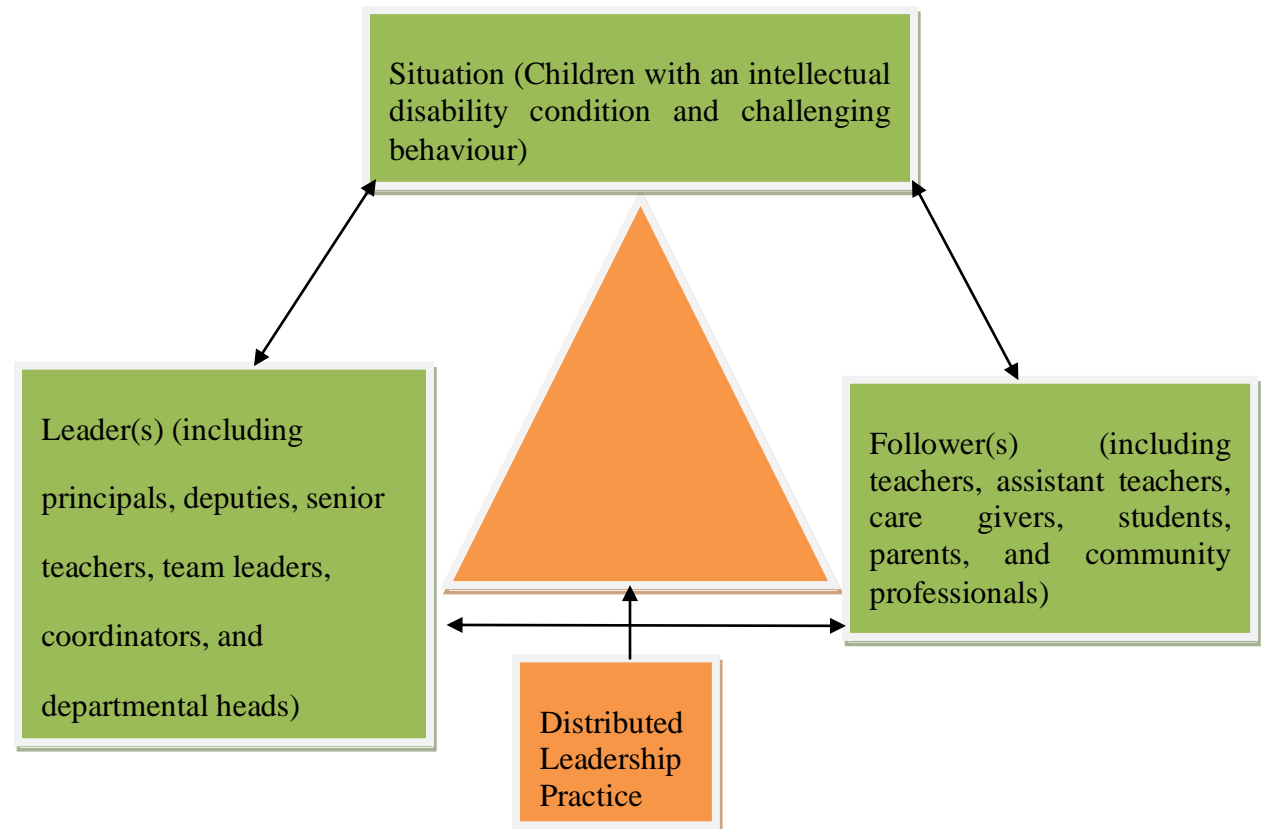
Literature reviewed in this study and in the research discussions are closely linked to and guided by the Distributed Leadership Theory Framework which is suggested by Spillane (2004) and Harris (2008) and further developed by the researcher to suit a specialist school setting as shown in Figure 1, (p.3).

The framework proposed in Figure 1 is the foundation of this study that seeks to investigate how principals distribute leadership functions and activities among their staff (leaders and followers) in a specialist school. The framework was developed by the research in summary of a review of literature. The interview questions used in the study were framed by the interpretivism paradigm (Thomas & Hodges, 2010) from the leadership framework (see Figure 1, p.3) and complementary themes from reviewed literature.

Distributed leadership is the sharing of leadership functions and activities between two or more individuals. Barry (1991) claims that with distributed leadership, decision-making authority is

spread throughout the school to create a “system that relies on using multiple leaders concomitantly and/ or sequentially within a group” (p.31).

Figure 1 Constituting Elements of Distributed Leadership Practice (Spillane et.al, 2004)



The choice of distributed leadership theory framework is made because the theory is currently rated as a potential contributor to positive change, development and transformation in school systems (Fullan, 2006; Harris, 2008; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Spillane, 2005; Wyse, Campobasso & Higgs, 2010). Hartley 2010, p.282 contends that “Distributed Leadership has affinities to the ‘new order’ of project-based collaborative working. The theory sits well with school governance and is potentially a powerful tool in studying this case. The paradigm is the popular leadership model that can offer a new way of thinking about leadership in specialist

schools and can provide a powerful tool for transforming leadership practice (Harris, 2008; Spillane & Camburn, 2006). It has empirical, representational and normative powers (Davies, 2005; Harris, 2008). In addition, the 'heterarchy' of distributed leadership resides uneasily within the formal bureaucracy of schools (Hartley, 2010). Accordingly, the principals' perspectives of school leadership regarding the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviours can be investigated analysed and discussed through the lens of the distributed leadership theory.

Coleman and Derek (2010) identify leadership as a huge area encompassing management. Management is considered a subset of leadership and leaders are people who seek to do the right thing while managers are people who seek to do things right. Leadership in a school context is about setting a new direction for the school and it usually involves the creation of an inspiring vision and a mission statement as well as setting values and principles. The leader in this instance does what is acceptable for the school, the students and the whole learning community.

Management is about directing and controlling staff, students and other resources according to principles and values established by the school leadership with the school community. A school manager aspires to do things right in his/her school. In this research, leadership is particularly defined in terms of the school principal and school team setting the vision articulated by the mission statement and values of a school as an organisation while management is defined in terms of the day to day enactment of the vision of the school (Coleman & Derek, 2010; Grillo, 2011).

A close look at government policy statements reveals that the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) is committed to improving learning outcomes for students with disabilities and additional needs in regular schools (Claridge, 2011) under the

inclusion program. In this program, the DEECD provides opportunities including provision for student dual schooling in regular and special schools, where funding is allocated to both schools on a pro-rata basis. The same policy framework commitment applies to the state's specialist schools, established with the purpose of providing an appropriate and meaningful education to students with disabilities, who range from mild to severe forms of intellectual disability (Foreman, 2008). Students in specialist schools may also exhibit challenging behaviours and/or at least one of physical disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment, autism spectrum disorder and severe language disorder with critical needs (Foreman, 2008; Ashman and Elkins, 2009; Claridge, 2011). This provides the study with the setting to investigate the views of principals on how distributed leadership can influence effective management of sensitive incidents that emerge within this cohort of students.

In Australia, pressure for specialist school placements for students with disabilities has been acknowledged and the service is the responsibility of state governments. The number of students with disabilities is increasing and some effort to meet expectations of the new shift towards inclusive practices has prompted the establishment of different school settings including residential schools for students with a disability, separate day specialist schools, separate specialist schools on regular campuses, special units located in regular schools, single special classes in regular schools, with part-time regular placements and regular classes (Foreman, 2008).

In light of these settings, Victoria's options are mostly restricted to special units in regular schools, withdrawal groups and separate day specialist schools (Claridge, 2011). The focus of this study is particularly on Victorian separate day specialist schools that cater for students with moderate to severe intellectual disability, schools which evidence the highest enrolment increases (Australian Education Union, 2010). The study investigates how principals distribute leadership in specialist school contexts regarding the management of erratic and sensitive student

behaviours. It investigates how principals prepare staff and share leadership functions and activities with them in their leadership journey. The study also investigates the extent to which principals use distributed leadership theory as they seek to manage contentious behaviours in specialist schools.

1.2 Research Question

The key questions in this study are: “How do principals in government specialist schools, (i) frame the distribution of leadership among their staff, and, (ii) see evidence of effective implementation of distributed leadership in their school contexts?”

1.3 Importance of the Study

An effective school principal exhibits a synthesis of wisdom, intelligence and creativity, thereby demonstrating an appreciation of the enduring features of successful leadership, anticipating and dealing with new trends and encouraging recognition of the problems, paradoxes and possibilities of leadership (Kaufman & Grigorenko, 2009). In light of this idea, this study will inform the wider community about significant contributions the distributed leadership theory makes to the management of contentious issues regarding student behaviours in specialist schools. The school clientele in this research study may see school principals who can effectively articulate the challenges faced in the process of managing contentious contexts.

In the study, principals were invited to reflect on leadership practices in their own specialist schools and to report what they as principals experience in these challenging environments and how they manage the student behaviour domain. Principals articulated how they distributed leadership among staff members, including professionals from the wider community, at leadership and management levels in their respective school contexts for the benefit of students.

They explained how they empowered and developed staff, equipping them with relevant skills to be able to make instantaneous yet informed decisions about managing incidents that not uncommonly arise during the school's day. They disclosed how they created and sustain trust and relationships and employed school visions or missions and values to contain the challenging situations.

Issues investigated at management level included how principals generated staff interest and confidence, facilitated collaboration, promoted teamwork and built leadership, cooperation and staff support. Furthermore, perspectives of principals investigated included challenging behaviours witnessed or experienced, intervention strategies and innovations used and how secure and stimulating school environments were developed and maintained in light of distributed leadership theory in the context of student challenging and sensitive behaviour issues.

By virtue of being qualitative, the results of this study cannot be generalised to all special schools or to all principals (Larsson, 2009). Instead, the study seeks to inform the wider community about how each of the principals interviewed in this study perceives leadership as a core factor of effective management of challenging behaviours in government specialist schools. More widely, the study contributes to further research which adds knowledge to the understanding of how principals share leadership and how distributing leadership functions and activities contribute to effective management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviours in Victorian government specialist schools. It is envisaged that the results of the study are valuable in determining the role of impromptu decision making in driving positive change in government specialist schools. Results are valuable to researchers and leaders for whom the management of challenging behaviour of students with intellectual disability is an ongoing concern in the realm of special education. The study, overall, aims to improve services in specialist schools and to benefit school principals, students, parents and other stakeholders.

1.4 Limitations of the Study

While the study was intended to generate accurate information from the sample of principals under study, the generation of misleading or incomplete information could not be ruled out. It is common that respondents who feel that their work or positions may be jeopardised, by giving honest or open and frank answers, may avoid the truth or complexities and give “safe” answers. Assurance on the confidentiality of the responses was given to the respondents before they participated in the interview. Although the study investigates contributions of distributed leadership within the context of challenging behaviour and intellectual disability in specialist schools, it does not investigate the relationship between challenging behaviour and intellectual disability and their causes. However, in spite of the size of the sample and the limitations cited, the study provides an in-depth snapshot into distributed leadership as reported by these principals in the 10 Victorian government specialist schools.

1.5 The Researcher

Good, better, best,

Never let it rest,

Till the good is better and

The better, best (Adlai Stevenson, 1953)

My leadership experience as a high school principal in Zimbabwe inspires me to seek further knowledge about the best way to lead and manage students who risk leaving school systems prematurely because they exhibit inappropriate behaviours. As principal, I found it hard to manage contentious student behaviours without assistance from colleagues, other students, parents and the community. Thus persistent questions for me, leading to this research, have been “How do other principals manage these situations? How do they influence positive attitudes among stakeholders given the contentious situations?” A wide range of ideas arise prompting me to think of a better

leadership practice, involving some form of expert power sharing in schools, perhaps. Thus, the how part of sharing leadership and management functions and responsibilities in the domain of student challenging behaviour becomes an insistent issue for me to investigate.

In light of this experience a preliminary research to the current study was completed in 2009. The pilot study set out to evaluate the success of an innovative program called, “Positive Behaviour Support”. The program was implemented by one Victorian government specialist school to combat challenging behaviour of students with an intellectual disability. In this pilot study, one school principal who is not part of the current study provided a perspective that assisted the framing of this wider study.

The current study involves face-to-face interviews with principals at their schools. During my visits I was fortunate, as a researcher, to learn of principals’ experiences of unusual challenging incidents as illustrated by 9 vignettes (see appendix G, pp.210-218). This research journey also revealed some unexpected insights into the phenomena under study, insights not anticipated from the prepared research investigation. The following incident is included here to illustrate something of this.

Incident

During my visit to one of these schools our scheduled interview was delayed by more than an hour because of a challenging behaviour incident that had started just as I arrived at the school. In brief, senior members of staff were in dialogue with one of the school’s students who was very distressed and angry. The student was threatening violence and was seen as being at risk of causing injury to other students and/or staff. The student was locked out. Along with the rest of the student body and most teachers I became part of a lock-in for almost an

hour, while the principal and key staff sought to defuse the situation. The police were called but did not turn up on time. They arrived long after the behaviour was defused. The student kicked and banged doors one after the other, jumped up and down, shouted and screamed. The event was dramatic. The principal followed him quietly in a non-threatening manner while the other staff monitored the situation, until the student gradually calmed down and sat down quietly. The principal joined him and they started talking. They walked around together and finally joined the student's class. The behaviour was defused and doors were opened for all of us. The school was back to normal and we proceeded with the interview. During the interview the principal explained that most students calm down quickly if the audience is withdrawn from the scene of the incident. The principal said that if the strategy had failed the police would have needed to defuse the situation.

The fact that the police turned up late on this occasion, demonstrates that schools are on their own when it comes to daily challenging incidents, so they need skills to be able to defuse and manage such incidents effectively. It is interesting to note that no property was damaged by the student during this incident.

While on the one hand, I noted that specialist schools were commendable for their planned responsiveness to the unique needs of each student, on the other hand, I witnessed that specialist schools can also be places where incidental and spontaneous instances of challenging behaviours are common. Consequently, most principals admitted that specialist schools are places of both low and high level order behavioural challenges among the student population, but also places of ongoing unrest for both staff and students. Given this scenario it was important to carry out a study to investigate how principals shared leadership regarding the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviours in specialist schools.

Distributed leadership themes cumulated through literature review and insights from supervisors, the pilot study and the researcher's intuition were developed into three visual frames that were used to investigate the case at strategic, management and context levels (see Figures 5, p. 109; 6, p. 130 and 7, p. 139 respectively). The frameworks were finally combined to create Chitongo's master framing of distributed leadership for specialist schools (see page 156).

1.6 Summary

The aspects dealt with in chapter 1 are background to the study, the research question, importance of the study, limitations of the study and the-researcher. The rest of the study is organised as outlined below.

Chapter 2 discusses school leadership and management, distributed leadership as an effective leadership paradigm in a school, the prevailing descriptors of both intellectual disability and student challenging behaviours, and intervention strategies and innovation programs employed to combat challenging behaviours in schools.

In chapter 3 the focus is on the distributed leadership theoretical framework developed for this study based on the works of Spillane (2004) and Harris (2008). Further focus is on the theoretical worldview guiding the study, the origins of distributed leadership and the development of a distributed leadership theory framework for this study.

Chapter 4 describes the qualitative research methodology for the study to investigate the perspectives of ten principals of government specialist schools on sharing leadership regarding the management of student challenging behaviours. It incorporates the overview of the research

process, including the research design, research instrument for data collection, interview questions, pilot study, participants, ethical considerations, data presentation, and discussion, data analysis and trustworthiness of the research procedures.

Chapter 5 presents and summarises the perspectives of the ten school principals, on how they distribute leadership among their staff as they seek to manage students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviours. The main theme was investigated under three sub themes: (a) How leadership is distributed among staff at school strategic level, (b) How leadership is distributed among co-workers at school management level, and (c) how principals distribute leadership at context level, that is within, between and outside the school.

Chapter 6 analyses and discusses the research results, guided by attributes of the distributed leadership framework. Themes discussed are: leadership distributed at school strategic level, distributed leadership at school management level and distributed leadership at school context level.

Chapter 7 reflects back on all aspects of the research investigation, highlights the implications for specialist schools, limitations of the study, and summaries of the main findings, offers some considered thoughts for further research and concludes the study.

Chapter Two

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Contextualising the Research Inquiry

It is important to understand challenging behaviours and intellectual disability in schools in order to treat students with these disorders fairly (Chung & Harding, 2009; Tracy 2005). Some students enrolled in specialist schools display a wide range of negative behaviours which are of concern to school authorities, parents and the community (Ashman & Elkins, 2009). Allen et al (2007) reiterated this and added that some of the behaviours, for example, physical aggression and self-injury often coexist with intellectual disabilities. The real problem in schools is that challenging behaviours which involve contentious incidents interfere with learning and can create safety issues for the student, other students, staff and community. In other words the relationship between intellectual disability and challenging behaviour in schools is pervasive and problematic. However, it is not necessarily those with a severe intellectual disability condition, who present with the most problematic behaviours. Instead it is often those with a “mild” or “borderline” intellectual disability that are most challenging for school management (AAIDD, 2011; Foreman, 2008; Tracy, 2005). Although persons with a combination of an intellectual disability and challenging behaviour are spread over all age groups, this study is concerned with persons between five and 18 years who are enrolled in government specialist schools.

This chapter provides an overview of literature relevant for contextualising the study to investigate how distributed leadership principles are utilised by principals to manage challenging and sensitive student behaviours in government specialist schools. Principals are invited to talk about their leadership stance on sharing leadership and how they achieve the practice. Key broad

aspects for literature review in this study are school leadership and management, distributed leadership as an effective leadership paradigm, intellectual disability and challenging behaviour. First, the literature on school leadership and management will be analysed. Second, an argument for distributed leadership as an effective form of leadership will follow. Third, intellectual disability is defined and lastly, challenging behaviour is discussed.

2.2 School Leadership and Management

School leadership and school management have two distinct functions with regard to the operation of schools and other educational organisations. Leadership sets the vision, mission and goals for the organisation while management implements, maintains and sustains the new changes in the organisation as proposed by leadership (Coleman & Derek, 2010; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). In other words leadership is about the development of people and is linked to school values, purpose and change while management is about “systems” and “paper” and is related to implementation or technical issues (Bush, 2008). Leadership presses for and copes with change while management promotes stability and copes with complexities in the school (Grillo, 2011). This comparison shows that leadership and management functions complement each other. In a school organisation, they exist in a dialectical relationship. They are interrelated concepts with overlapping functions in both individuals and organisations. The comparison also shows that leadership is a broad concept containing management within the leadership entity.

Leadership is often defined as a social construction. It includes the emotion and the often unconscious needs, experiences and group aspirations of the led, as well as the traits and skills of the leader (Sinclair, 2005, p. 1). Leadership is a process by which an individual influences and motivates a group of individuals to achieve common goals (Daft, 2005; Dym & Hutson, 2005; McShane & Glinow, 2007; Overton, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2001). Therefore leadership is considered to be at the heart of any reform effort or change; providing vision and direction,

thrust and power, commitment and enthusiasm as well as effective communication within the school system (Ghamrawi, 2010).

Many researchers agree that key roles of a school principal as a leader include developing a functional school team by creating a shared vision, designing a social architecture that shapes culture and values, inspiring and motivating subordinates, developing personal qualities, and creating energy, harmony and facilitating change within a culture of integrity (Adair, 2003; M. Anderson & Cawsey, 2008; Bonnie, 2009; Draft, 2005; Dym & Hutson, 2005; Fullan, 2002; Goleman, Boyatzis, & Mckee, 2002; Kiechel, 2005; Overton, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2001; Sinclair, 2005; Tomal, 2007). They further concur that principals can also set direction, ground rules and high standards in the school, forging consensus, generating relationships, and influencing a culture of sharing. Furthermore the principal can propagate personal responsibility and intention, inspiring continual learning, effectiveness and commitment, talent, character, alignment and fit, developing a “try this” future orientation, and spur innovation and creativity.

This discussion raises two important issues. First, school leadership is viewed as a “single person’s business” (Barry, 1991). School leadership as a single person’s business is equated to an individual, the principal. In this instance leadership is about the totality revolving around a successful principal who is identified as real, whole and innovative, purposeful, genuine, grounded, connected, supported, resilient, curious, engaged and optimistic (Bonnie, 2009). Although this principal can be successful, the leadership journey can be lonely. This form of leadership has “heroic” connotations and is currently losing popularity (Barry, 1991). Spillane (2005), arguing against heroic leadership, stresses that “no school leader can single-handedly lead a school to greatness”, because “leadership involves an array of individuals with different tools and structures” (p.143). Arguably a leader with the attributes listed above would be more successful if he/she distributes leadership functions and activities among staff in and around the school.

Second, the scope of all the qualities listed are widely shared views on the challenging dimensions of school leadership and management, and no school principal can virtually meet all criteria optimally (Bush, 2008). Research suggests that many school leaders however, try to be transformational by establishing a values system and related practices that disperse leadership and ownership for success across a wide segment of the school faculty (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano, & Dennison, 2003; Caldwell & Harris, 2009; Crockett, Bellingsley, & Boscardin, 2012; Harris, 2005; Wyse, Campobasso, & Higgs, 2010). They achieve this through outstanding governance of intellectual capital (knowledge of staff), social capital (partnerships and networks), spiritual capital (strength of moral purpose and degree of coherence among values, belief and attitudes) and financial capital (money available to support the school) in their schools (Caldwell & Harris, 2009). This research also suggests that school leadership enables management teams to implement and sustain change according to local needs of the school. In other words the management activities in the school become a function of the leadership frames of reference.

Leadership styles range from simple to complex forms including dictatorial, authoritative and transactional on one end and consultative, participative (democratic) and transformational styles on the other end of the leadership continuum (Bolden, et al., 2003; Brown, 2012; choi, 2007; Crockett, et al., 2012). Brown (2012) maintains that leadership styles can be identified by “how authority is used, how a leader relates to others, how employees are involved and how the leader communicates” (p.2). Thus the amount of authority shared between the top management and the workforce helps in the type of leadership style that can be used. Brown (2012) further argues that there is no “right” leadership style; a good leader can learn to recognise when and how to use any or all of the above styles. His discussion suggests that leaders who adopt dictatorial and/ or authoritative styles may experience isolation at work while those who adopt consultative and/or participative styles may find decision-making company and comfort among their staff. These views propose two forms of leadership in a specialist school. First leadership can be viewed as an isolated phenomenon centred on one person. Second, it may be viewed as distributed with staff playing a complementary leadership role (Barry 1991; Fullan, 2006; Harris, 2008;

Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Spillane, 2005; Wyse, Campobasso & Higgs, 2010). The next section discusses distributed leadership and its attributes.

2.3 Distributed Leadership as an Effective Leadership Paradigm in a School

Some writers (Schein, 2010; Timmons, 2011) view effective leadership in schools as the extent to which a principal endeavours to create an effective school by adopting relevant programs to assist in the many forms of problem solving that confront schools on a daily basis. For example, case studies done in selected Victorian government schools report that the DEECD values effective schools and encourages schools to adopt effective programs where teacher involvement, collaboration, connectedness and contribution are actively valued.

In the program for Students with Disabilities Guideline (2010), and consistent with more general expectations, the DEECD encourages effective leadership practices in specialist schools (Claridge, 2011). Principals in Victorian government specialist schools are encouraged to adopt an Effective School Model which is purported to provide the framework for the creation and sustenance of effective schools where diverse student needs and successes can be recognised, responded to and celebrated by the entire staff. The model articulates the Department's expectations of an effective school as illustrated in figure 2 (p.18).

In this model professional leadership is a key component that is complemented by a combined focus on student and learning, purposeful teaching, shared vision and goals, high expectations of all learners, accountability, learning communities and a secure and stimulating environment.

The inclusion of the component of “shared vision and goals”, in this model, is a paradigm shift from the heroic model of individual focused leadership to a more dispersed and distributed form of leadership. Goleman, Boyatzis et al. (2002); Fullan, Hill et al. (2006); Bowman, Carr et al.

(2007) share the view in this framework that a principal who leads in transformational improvement by sharing leadership with students, teachers, parents and community is likely to be effective and successful in their leadership journey.

Figure 2 Effective schools



Adapted from Sammons, Hilman and Mortimore (1995)
<http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/blueprint/es/default.asp>

Sharing leadership with colleagues seems to be an asset in the school leadership arena. As reiterated by Lindsay (2007) cited in Harris (2008, p.106) leadership that focuses on “instructional improvement, building collaboration and good relationships; having clear aims and

objectives; developing collegiality, trust and effective communication and extending leadership responsibilities” is effective.

Concurring with these views the international study by McKinsey (2007) that sought to identify the most effective school system, reported that school reforms rarely succeed without effective and professional leadership. The study reveals that schools that were turned around in the past had sustained, committed and talented leadership who shared leadership functions across the school (Lazenby, 2010).

Such current and well-regarded research as above supports the idea that effective schools are born of effective and professional leadership, suggesting that effective leadership in a school is critical.

Other research by Streich (2009) reiterates:

When a school lacks effective leadership, minimal learning takes place. School leaders, beginning with the principal, must provide strong leadership that sets a tone for the daily operations of the school community. In the absence of such leadership, discipline breaks down, academics falter, and a sense of organised chaos reigns (para.1).

While there is abundant research that focuses on the attributes or specific skills of leaders in school organisations (Bowman, et al., 2007; Daft, 2005; Fullan, 2006; Goleman 2002a, Halford, 2010, Lanzenby, 2010; Seikaly, 2011) this present study seeks to use Distributed Leadership theory as a conceptual foundation to the research project. Mayrowetz (2008, p. 425) supports this idea and argues that the paradigm can be used as:

(1) A 'theoretical lens' for 'looking at the activity of leadership'; (2) a means of furthering 'democracy' within a school; (3) a means of enhancing 'efficiency and effectiveness'; and (4) a means of enabling 'human capacity-building'.

Sergiovanni (2001) maintains that distributed leadership has attributes and skills based less on personalities, positions and mandates and more on ideas. It is a form of leadership that is committed to social justice principles which are managed at the school level. Leadership can be effectively distributed to promote both systemic imperatives and school change, by building school cultures that are improvement oriented, based on inclusive principles which promote positive relationships between staff, parents and the broader community (Florian, 2007; Overton, 2002). Distributed leadership can provide appropriate curricula, long-term strategies, infrastructure, teaching innovations that advance the learning opportunities of students with disabilities and additional learning needs, articulating a vision for the school, and establishing processes and structures that support staff to translate the school's vision into effective policies and practices (Fullan, 2006; Florian, 2007).

Effective and successful leadership also requires principals who are strong educators with the capacity to anchor their work on central issues of learning and teaching and continuous school improvement through meaningful teamwork, clear measurable goals and regular collection and analysis of performance data (Seikaly, 2011). This leadership model might be a better option to managing specialist schools than a heroic leadership approach where the principal can take full responsibility for the management of students with challenging behaviours.

Other researchers (see Daft, 2005; Halford, 2010) think that effective and professional leadership can facilitate an effective shift of a school from the state of stability to change, from crisis management to planned management, from individual control to collective control, from competition ideologies to collaborative ideologies, from uniformity to diversity, and from self

centred focus to a higher purpose focus, and from heroic leadership to humble leadership. This form of leadership is particularly useful when teaching and support staff must be empowered to possess informed decision-making skills, so as to effectively manage a range of contentious situations.

Some researchers and other contemporary education scholars (Bennett, Harvey, Wise, & Woods, 2003; Gronn, 2002; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Harris, 2008; Robinson, 2011; Wyse, et al., 2010) propose a paradigm shift from individual focused school leadership including authoritative forms of leadership (Goleman et.al., (2002b) to a more transformational leadership (Bolden, et al., 2003; Crockett, et al., 2012; Eangly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003; Harris, 2005) such as democratic, collective, shared, dispersed or distributed forms of leadership.

This is, however, one side of the story. Adopting a distributed leadership model in a school appears a bright theoretical idea but may not work in practice. In this thesis the side of the practising principals' story will be investigated as they are encouraged to talk about their personal leadership stance on sharing leadership regarding the management of students with a combination of an intellectual disability and challenging behaviour.

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) suggest two ways of looking at distributed leadership, the normative face and the descriptive face. The normative view of school leadership presents leadership as not limited to the principal and teacher but as stretching across individuals, communities and networks up and down organisational layers. The descriptive view of school leadership proposes that no one distributes leadership in a school because it is already distributed (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Harris (2008) who defines distributed leadership as “a collection of roles and behaviours that can be split apart, shared, rotated and used sequentially or concomitantly” (p.35), and Goleman (2002, p. 14), agree with the descriptive view that, “every person, in one way or

other acts as a leader” or rather, that leaders are already in schools, so the principals need professional development to be able to maximise their collective capacity to make a difference in their schools.

The two views of distributed leadership presented by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) differ slightly. The former requires the leader to purposely involve all stakeholders in the leadership process, however, chances of missing some stakeholders in the enactment are high, while the later takes the view that everyone is already leading, so no formal distribution is required and no one is missed. However, considering the later view, there is no guarantee that persons who are not formally employed to lead can effectively and efficiently face the leadership challenge especially in a special school context. This study goes along with the former view; leadership needs to be officially distributed for accountability reasons. Both views, however, reveal the link between distributed leadership and management of students with a combination of an intellectual disability and challenging behaviour. The definitions show that distributing leadership can assist the principal to manage the students through staff and other stakeholders. In such instances staff cannot only have management authority but leadership authority as well; thereby, enabling them to make informed decisions in the absence of the principal.

In this thesis, distributed leadership is concerned with sharing the school vision, mission and values with stakeholders for the purpose of reaching a consensual decision with regards to effective management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviours. Management is concerned with the day today enactment of the school vision, mission and goals (Coleman & Derek, 2010), that is the implementation part of the school program with regards to the management of student challenging behaviours.

In a school that applies the distributed leadership model, leadership and management functions cannot be rigid with a particular group. The principal and staff can both simultaneously enact the functions at leadership and management levels. For example the principal can lead and manage staff, students, parents and community at principal or school level. Staff can lead and manage students at school and classroom level. With this model, it is important for every teacher in a specialist school to be a classroom leader and to be able to make decisions when challenging behaviour is exhibited. Practically, the principal as a leader cannot be present in every corner of the school, in every class, at every place, every time, to lead and manage behaviourally challenging students because there can be many behaviour incidents at any one time.

In this study principals are encouraged to talk about how they lead the management of challenging situations in their schools. The study is largely influenced by the distributed leadership theory framework and in particular the ideas of Spillane et al. (2004) and Harris (2008) which are discussed in detail in chapter 3. This study disregarded traditional approaches to leadership which have the potential to keep the leader and the led in static positions instead of flexibly acknowledging the contributions of everyone and giving them a leadership stake in the school.

Key attributes of distributed leadership which came out of this part of literature discussion included professional development, empowerment, and shared school vision or mission and values and trust and relationships. The next section discusses these attributes in relation to the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour in specialist schools.

2.3.1 Professional Development

Professional development in this context encompasses an array of learning opportunities that are designed to equip staff with the knowledge and skills that they need to work effectively with students who have a combination of challenging behaviour and an intellectual disability. Professional development can be divided into pre-service and in-service training for novice practitioners and experienced professionals respectively (Guralnick, 2001). In special schools there may be need to provide continuous, specialised in-service training to all staff, particularly those required to manage situations of desperation and uncertainty with students who exhibit challenging behaviours. Studies by Zaretsky, Moreau and Faircloth (2008) in Pennsylvania, emphasise that school principals too, may need professional development in program preparation with special focus on development of instructional, distributive, relational and authentic leadership skills that enable them to organise their schools. These American scholars indicated that professional development programs for principals:

---can further build the capacity of aspiring and practising school leaders by helping them to recognise their own professional strengths and interests, immediate highly contentious ethical and legal issues, recognise their staff's talents and professional growth needs, and nurture relational networks with multiple stakeholders in special education (Zartsky, Moreau, & Faircloth, 2008, p. 174)

Therefore in this study, the purposes and processes of professional development will be investigated.

Staff in specialist schools faces impromptu and complex challenges daily, therefore they need skills to manage students with a combination of an intellectual disability and challenging behaviours. They may need ongoing professional development. For example, they may need staff training which incorporates skills in problem solving, collaboration, value clarification, and

negotiation, portfolio development and social interaction (Daft, 2005; Florian, 2007; Overton, 2002). Thus, through staff development the principal can advocate, nurture and sustain and grow an inclusive school culture, and an instructional programme, conducive to student learning and staff growth.

An inclusive school culture is nurtured by constant development of staff capacity to include students, and other professionals who work in partnership with parents and communities. Such a positive culture can foster team planning, collaborative teaching, cooperative learning and transition planning for students as they progress through their schooling (Shaddock, Giorcelli, & Smith, 2007, p. 4). An inclusive school culture advocates an effective school leadership team that can effectively manage change and foster continual school improvements through a shared mission and values that promote collaboration and enhance quality in teaching and learning (Dimmock & Walker, 2005). This can include facilitating strategies that promote effective management of challenging behaviour and attitudes, supportive structures such as physical, social and organisational, monitoring the effects and penetration of cultural change, importing assistance and following the principles of logical incrementalism (Dimmock, 2005). The whole process requires a leader with a clear vision based on the school's values platform, one who uses best practice to inform decision-making and to guide the school's decision-making process (Abdini, 2010). This means that the principal must share the vision of inclusion with staff that also need to own the inclusion culture. The whole school is thereby encouraged and co-opted to adopt an inclusion culture where respect for all students, including those with intellectual disability and challenging behaviour, is a top priority value enacted.

In this study principals are encouraged to talk about how they professionally develop their staff and equip them to manage with respect, students with intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviours in specialist schools. Principals are also encouraged to talk about how

they empower staff with skills to effectively manage challenging behaviours exhibited by students with an intellectual disability.

2.3.2 Staff Empowerment

Working with teachers who are empowered to simultaneously lead and manage students is important, especially in a specialist school. The complexity of a specialist school requires staff who can effectively implement programs that facilitate effective management of students who exhibit challenging behaviours. Carrington and Robinson (2006) maintain that the success of any school development or improvement depends on staff's implementation skills and/or skills of the management teams in the school and the extent to which the teams are empowered to act. This means that teams and individuals should be empowered to share in decision-making or make their own leader-free decisions, a situation where the distinction between leader and followers is blurred. Leithwood and Beatty (2008) reiterate that "empowering leadership promotes teacher ownership of school directions" (p. 58) and research by Nowaczewski (2003) on Chicago public small schools concluded that "by empowering teachers as leaders in their small schools, principals cannot only build leadership capacity among their staff but also help the school to run more efficiently" (p.2).

In this study, interest is on how principals in government specialist schools, which are generally smaller than their mainstream counterparts, empower their staff to manage students with a combination of an intellectual disability and challenging behaviours. Empowerment is a process resulting in an individual having a better understanding of their environment, the resources in their environment and the confidence to access these resources (Foreman, 2008, p. 502). In a school, this would mean giving staff a share in important decisions, including giving them opportunities to shape school missions, goals and values and giving them real leadership opportunities in school specific situations that matter.

Empowerment is defined in terms of legal power or authority investment. Empowering staff is important for the cultivation of a sense of ownership, increased commitment and motivation to work. Sergiovanni (2001) maintains that lack of empowerment may result in reduced commitment, mechanical behaviour, indifference, dissatisfaction and alienation. This authority stresses that disempowering staff results in staff dependence, passivity, non-reflective practices and such staff are more inclined to follow protocols instead of responding to the complex needs in each situation, are demoralised, demotivated and will work to the “rule book”. However contentious situations that develop in specialist schools are unique in motivation and presence. Rule book or prescribed responses would be inadequate because the exhibited incidents are often unpredictable, different and unique even in the same context.

A form of leadership that empowers is grounded in shared commonly held ideas and ethical connections. Principals, teachers, parents and students can come together in a shared fellowship. Conversation can be the way to bring these people together, to build needed capacity, and to win the commitment needed from everyone or to make the school systems function properly (Sergiovanni, 2001). Empowering leadership can motivate learning, the development of civic virtues, and the cultivation of self management. Such leadership can engage in purposing, developing idea structures for their schools, building a shared fellowship, and helping their schools to become communities of responsibility that promote diversity of talent and reflective thought (O'Brien, 2009). Principals in this study are provoked to reflect on the ways they empower staff to make critical decisions that protect the rights of students and maximise their potential for positive behaviour. Sharing the school vision, mission and values recur in the discussions on both staff development and empowerment, so will be discussed briefly next.

2.3.3 School Vision, Mission and Values

In Australia, the 2003 Values Education Study (Department of Education Science and Training, 2005) requires every Australian school including a specialist school, to generate school mission

and values consistent with the national example and in partnership with local school communities, including students, parents, caregivers, families and teachers. Schools are expected to use values education to set and articulate school shared visions, purposes and directions and to build student social skills and resilience by creating a more purposeful and inspiring work place built on trust, transparency and open communication (Duignan, 2006). This can include addressing issues such as management of student challenging behaviour and discipline, violence and bullying, substance abuse and other risk behaviours, disconnectedness and alienation, student health and well-being, improved relationships and students' personal achievement.

The study encourages schools to include values in their curricula and stresses that values based education can strengthen students' self-esteem, optimism and commitment to personal fulfilment; and help students exercise ethical judgement and social responsibility; and building character (Caldwell & Harris, 2009; Department of Education Science and Training, 2005; Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey, 2005). It also indicates that values can develop student responsibility in local, national and global contexts and build student social skills and resilience. Thus, enriching students' intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and to respond constructively and positively to a range of contemporary challenges.

The 2003 Values Education Study (Department of Education Science and Training, 2005) identified the following values for Australian schools; care and compassion, doing your best, fair go, freedom, honesty and trustworthiness, integrity, respect, responsibility, understanding, tolerance and inclusion. Core values such as respect and "a fair go" are claimed to be part of Australia's common democratic way of life, including equality, freedom, the rule of law and reflecting Australia's commitment to a multicultural and environmentally sustainable society where all are entitled to justice.

In this study, principals talk about the enabling power of their school mission statements and espoused values regarding the management of students with an intellectual disability who can also present challenging behaviour. Trust and relationships will be briefly discussed next, and then a discussion on the role of reflection in leadership will follow.

2.3.4 Trust and Relationships

Key factors recurring in both leadership and management are trust and relationships. Creating effective working relationships is one of the most powerful ways to get things done in a school. Key aspects of managing relationships in a school include communication, engagement, trust, energy, respect and influence (Brent & Dent, 2010) Hargreaves and Fink (2006) consider trust to be a resource which creates and consolidates energy, commitment and relationships. In concurrence, Harris, (2008) maintains that in leadership circumstances, all relationships are important and that effective leadership can only be enacted if there is mutual trust and agreement about the way tasks are undertaken. In schools principals are expected to foster a climate of trust and openness by involving, guiding and helping staff. Schools need staff who can envision how things can be done differently (Ker, 2010).

In support (Keeffe & Carrington, 2007) pointed out that positive trust relationships with all stakeholders, even in very difficult circumstances, can reinforce positive staff attitudes, commitment and self-worth within the school context. These researchers agree that if the relationship of trust is broken, then commitment and mutual relationships vanish. The next section discusses the importance of reflection in school leadership.

2.3.5 Role of Reflection in School Leadership

Reflection is defined as “the process of looking back on experience in a way that informs practice, learning in the midst of practice, and/or making informed and intelligent decisions”

(Schon, 1983 in Jay, 2003, p.12). It involves active and thoughtful considerations of what has come together in both research and development with the aim of producing theoretical understanding (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). Relevant issues include; ““what to do?”, “when to do it?” and “why it should be done?” (Shulman, 1987; Richert, 1990; Schon 1983, in Jay, 2003; Jarvis, 2010). In simple terms, reflection means thinking about what one is doing and is a powerful tool in school leadership and management because it is instrumental to critical assessment of the past, present and future of school leadership and management. Therefore it is an important aspect in this study as it will be used to accept and refine the frameworks designed for this study.

Dewey (1910), cited in Jay, (2003) in support, wrote that reflective thought is “the active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed forms of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (p. 12). Dewey describes such thought as “conscious and voluntary, based on evidence and rationality, and supported by a disposition of open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, and responsibility” (Jay, 2003, p. 12). Teachers of students with a combination of an intellectual disability and challenging behaviour need to be informed about the nature of students’ disabilities. This may require some professional development and ongoing research on new trends and developments.

Jay (2003) breaks down reflection into three concepts; “reflection-on-action, reflection-in-action and reflection-for-action” (p.12). Reflection-on-action, for example in this study, can involve the principal and staff meeting after an incident to assess how it went, to ask “what went well?”, “what did not?”, and “what could be changed for the future?”. In this way teachers critically reflect on their practices, research possible options and make informed decisions for the future.

Reflection-in-action is a process involving thought during action. For example, staff during the process of defusing a challenging behaviour incident can ask among themselves how best to mitigate the problem or reflect to see if a similar incident has happened before and if so how it was defused. This can then give them some idea or clue of how to deal with the current incident.

Reflection-for-action is a process which involves thought then action or is a practical process for guiding future practice. In this study, this overview can involve principals facilitating the evaluation of all recorded incidents of challenging behaviours and making a plan for the future.

All the three types of reflection, before, after, and for the sake of future action, can be important elements for practice in specialist schools. Principals are required to reflect on how they involve external and internal agents of change, promote team work and cross-teaching faculty support, influence staff commitment and cooperation, instil staff confidence and generate staff interest as they seek to manage students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour in their schools. Principals are also expected to reflect on what they considered to be key elements central to the management of challenging behaviours exhibited by students with an intellectual disability in their schools.

2.4 Intellectual Disability

The definition of disability under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992 is very broad to encompass physical, sensory, mental and intellectual disability as well as current and future disabling conditions. The act defines disability in the following way.

Disability, in relation to a person, means: (a) total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or (b) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or (c) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or (d) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or (e) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or (f) a disorder or malfunction that results

in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or (g) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour; and includes a disability that: (h) presently exists; or (i) previously existed but no longer exist; or may exist in the future; or is imputed to a person (2)

Ashman and Elkins (2009, p. 62) define disability as a restriction resulting from impairment and impairment as loss of some capacity. Other authorities define disability as the functional consequence of an impairment or change in body or human functioning (Loreman, et al., 2005), a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities (Vickerman & Hodkinson, 2009). The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines a disability broadly as, "any limitation, restriction or impairment that endures beyond six months and restricts everyday activity. In other words disability refers to personal limitations that are of substantial disadvantage to the individual when attempting to function in society".

In Australia, the conceptions of disability have continued to evolve over the decades. The conceptual and normative shifts in meaning can be discerned from an examination of the discourse and discussions covered in the free, compulsory and secular education provision of the Education Act 1872, the Education (Handicapped children) Act 1973 and the Disability Act 2006 (Vic). For example, in the 1970s all state governments in Australia, accepted full responsibility for the education of all children including those with mild, moderate severe and profound disability (Foreman, 2008). In Victoria, this development resulted in the establishment of more government specialist schools as directed by the Education (Handicapped children) Act 1973. Therefore the early 1970s became significant for those Victorian school-aged students with a disability, with the then government policy dictating that more government specialist schools be established, to accommodate them.

Currently the Victorian DEECD, under the program for students with disability, has provisions for educating and funding students with disabilities including students with an intellectual disability with significant problems in reasoning and thinking (Ashman & Elkins, 2009; Claridge, 2011; Foreman, 2008; Hardman, Drew, & Egan, 2005) and students with severe behaviour disorder with significant disruptive actions to other people, for example, to other students, teachers, parents and members of the community (Ashman & Elkins, 2009; Claridge, 2011; Foreman, 2008; Hardman, et al., 2005)

The Disability Act 2006 (Vic) Section (s.3) defines intellectual disability in relation to a person over the age of 5 years, as “ the concurrent existence of (a) Significant sub-average general intellectual functioning and (b) Significant deficits in adaptive behaviour, each of which becomes manifest before the age of 18 years”.

Other authorities concur that intellectual disability is a particular state of functioning that begins in childhood and the period up to the age of 18 years (American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), 2011; Foreman, 2008). More precisely, it refers to substantial limitations in present functioning, characterised by significant sub average intellectual functioning. That is, more than two standard deviations below the mean, as assessed on standardised tests of intelligence quotient, typically represented by an IQ less than 70. The IQ coexists with related limitations in two or more of the following applicable adaptive skill areas, again as assessed on standardised measures: communication, self care, home living, social skills, community use, self direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure and work (Emerson, 2001, p. 2)

From the above definitions (AAIDD, 2011; "Disability Act," 2006; Emerson, 2001; Foreman, 2008) the following important facts arise about the person diagnosed with intellectual disability.

1. The person shows significant limitations in intelligence or has significantly sub-average intellectual ability as measured on a standardised intellectual test and on a standardised measure of adaptive behaviour such as the Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scale.
2. The level of intelligence IQ is measured on a standardised intellectual assessment test such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children.
3. A person assessed as having an IQ of 70 equates to or is less than the lowest 2.4% with respect to a normative sample on a standardised general ability test under the normal curve model of intelligence.
4. Intellectual disability manifests before the age of 18.
5. The person with an intellectual disability condition has significantly more difficulties than others in learning new things, understanding concepts, solving problems, concentrating and remembering.
6. The person has significant limitations in the skills needed to live and work in the community, including difficulties with communication, self-care, social skills, safety and self-direction
7. The person has problems in adaptive functioning which can also be determined by Standardised tests.

Persons with an intellectual disability nonetheless, experience and feel the normal range of human emotions including joy, anger, pride, hurt, and jealousy. They can learn and develop more slowly than those of average or above average abilities but can learn to adapt to new situations and enjoy life independently (AAIDD, 2011; Foreman, 2008). It is important to note that having an intellectual disability does not necessarily mean that the person will have or exhibit challenging behaviours. Some people within this category are very compliant. Further it needs to be recognised that “challenging behaviour” may well be a function of teachers or other care givers not providing the appropriate forms of instruction, quality of relationship or management.

McVilly (2002) indicates that persons with mild intellectual disabilities may need intermittent support, can be educable and employable and can live independently in community, while those with moderate intellectual disabilities may require limited support, can be trainable and can benefit from vocational training and live in supported residential environments. Persons with severe intellectual disabilities may need extensive support throughout their lives, while students with profound disabilities may need pervasive support of on-going high intensity throughout their lives. Tracy (2005) reiterates that a person with mild intellectual disability, IQ 50-70, may learn to read, write and make meaningfully contributions to life, however, they may “find the subtleties of interpersonal relationships and social rules difficult to fully understand and many therefore inadvertently transgress social boundaries”, (p.1). Those persons with moderate intellectual disability, IQ 35-50, have limited learning capabilities but can have important relationships in their lives. They however need lifelong support in planning and organising their activities in life. Persons with severe, IQ 20-35, or profound, IQ<20, intellectual disability “will require lifelong assistance in personal care and tasks, communication and support and assistance in accessing community facilities and services”, (p.2).

However, specialist schools in Victoria cater for students with mild to profound intellectual disability (Foreman, 2008). In this study principals’ views are sought on how they distribute leadership with regards to management of students with a combination of an intellectual disability, ranging from mild to profound levels, and challenging behaviours.

2.5 Challenging Behaviour

Behaviour is categorised as challenging if, at least, it has

at one time caused more than minor injuries to self and/or others, (b) resulted in destruction of immediate environment, (c) occurred at least weekly, (d) caused at least an hour’s disruption, (e) caused disruption lasting more than a few minutes at least daily (Chung & Harding, 2009; Jones & Eayrs, 1993).

Put differently, behaviour is classified as challenging when exhibited in the wrong place, at the wrong time, in the presence of the wrong people, and to an inappropriate degree (Ashman & Elkins, 2009).

The subject of student challenging behaviour is both long in historical connections and multi-disciplinary in nature and has been in focus for centuries in the education realm (Porteus, 1991; Wearmouth, Richmond, Gliynn, & Berryman, 2004). Some form of challenging behaviour in schools has been recorded by Albrecht, Seelman et al. (2001) and Tronc (2010) as essentially a post-world war II phenomenon committed by students, parents and community gang members against other students and/or teachers. However, the pioneer American sociologist of education Willard Waller in his classic book, *Sociology of Teaching* (1965) provides a different view well before the war era. Waller, an early 20th century sociologist attributed challenging behaviour to the sociology of the school indicating that it may result from “the struggle of students and teachers to establish their own definition of situations in the life of the school” (Waller, 1965, p. 296). The message conveyed by these authorities at this time was that challenging behaviour is situational and is a timeless phenomenon that was here to stay. Therefore it is important to study the best ways to mitigate the challenge in schools. Forms of challenging behaviour recorded during those times and currently usually included student to student intra-school bullying including cyber bullying, student assaults on teachers and discrimination.

In Australia many terms are used to describe challenging behaviour. For example, terms that have been in common use include “violent behaviour”, “behaviour of serious concern”, “disruptive, disturbed and alienated behaviours”, “emotional disturbance”, “emotional problems”, “behaviour disorders”, “behaviour problems”, “social/emotional handicaps”, “behavioural disability” and “socially unacceptable behaviours” (Ashman & Elkins, 2009;

Tronc, 2010). Descriptors used to define challenging behaviours heighten the emotional response to such behaviours.

Ashman and Elkins (2009) indicate that the use of these terms makes it very difficult to define challenging behaviour. However, throughout this study the term “challenging behaviour” is used to mean any of the entire lists of terms especially behaviours that present as challenging for principals, staff, students, parents and the community in specialist day schools. These different terms also render challenging behaviour a relative rather than absolute concept that is defined differently by different authors as exemplified in this section.

In the Victorian government school system, challenging behaviour is designated for consideration of additional special needs funding when behaviour is manifestly beyond the expectations of students of a similar age and major and constant violation of age-appropriate social behaviours that are more than ordinary childish mischief or rebelliousness (Claridge, 2011). In addition Emerson (2001) defines challenging behaviour as:

A culturally abnormal behaviour of such intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety of the person or others is likely to be placed in serious jeopardy, or behaviour which is likely to seriously limit use of, or result in the person being denied access to ordinary community facilities (p.3).

The most common themes that recur in the various definitions of challenging behaviours include: abnormal, unacceptable and inappropriate behaviours. These themes are complex and comprehensive and they cover a wide range of behaviours. They may also be regarded as socially extraordinary or culturally abnormal as each definition typifies extreme expressions of emotion.

Challenging behaviour also occurs on separate dimensions of intensity, frequency and duration and is believed to cause serious and significant harm to the environment, other students, staff and self (Emerson, 2001). In this study forms and consequences of behaviour exhibited by students with an intellectual disability in government specialist schools are investigated but their causes and contexts are not part of the investigation.

2.5.1 Types of Challenging Behaviour Exhibited by Students in Schools

Generally, challenging behaviour in schools may include the inability to maintain satisfactory relationships with peers or adults, episodes of physical violence towards people or property, the use of poor or hostile language, resistance to following rules or expectations, general unwillingness to follow instructions from those in authority, self harming behaviour and a general mood of anger or unhappiness (Loreman, et al., 2005), physical attack, non-compliance, social disruption, physical and verbal aggression, temper tantrums, social and physical disruption, self injury, destruction, and wandering, stereotypical behaviour, inappropriate social or sexual conduct, rituals, public masturbation, bizarre mannerisms and health threatening behaviours such as smearing of faeces over the body and eating of inedible objects, overactivity and hyperactivity. (Allen, et al., 2007; Emerson, 2001; Jones & Eayrs, 1993; Pilling, McGill, & Cooper, 2007).

These behaviours can be classified into dangerous behaviours or problem behaviours (Jones & Eayrs, 1993) that are internalised, externalised or anti-social (McVilly, 2002). According to Jones and Eayrs (1993), dangerous behaviours include physical violence, use of weapons, suicide attempts and self-injurious behaviours, child abuse, fire setting, and problem behaviours consisting of temper tantrums, verbal abuse, pestering and throwing things.

Internalised behaviours include being withdrawn or inattentive e.g. appearing shy, fearful, consistently tired, easily distracted, lacking motivation; performing repetitive or unusual behaviours e.g. pacing, rocking, twirling or sucking fingers or objects and enacting self-injurious behaviours e.g. head banging, pulling own hair and picking at skin (McVilly, 2002).

Externalised behaviours include being disruptive e.g. clinging, teasing, interrupting, yelling and arguing; being destructive to property e.g. defacing or breaking property or objects by throwing hitting or burning and being hurtful to others e.g. physical and psychological harm through hitting, kicking and punching.

Anti-social behaviours include being uncooperative, for example, refusal to comply with reasonable request such as to perform chores, to take turns in a group and to adhere to the law; and enacting behaviours that others find offensive, for example, behaviours that offend, embarrass or up-set others such as swearing, spitting, inappropriate social touch and public masturbation.

In Australia, the issue of student challenging behaviour and its management, in schools, has been an area of concern for both mainstream and specialist school teachers (Foreman, 2008). Studies by Westwood and Graham (2003) in South Australia and New South Wales schools show that teachers involved in the survey were concerned with having students with emotional and behaviour needs in regular classrooms (Foreman, 2008). No concern about having students with this condition in specialist school classrooms has been raised. Principals in this study are encouraged to give their views on this issue. The next section discusses potential or actual consequences of student challenging behaviour.

2.5.2 Consequences of Student Challenging Behaviour

At the individual level or at a whole school culture level, challenging behaviour may have serious consequences for both staff and students. For example unsafe and disruptive school climates, including tardiness, misbehaviour and physical threats from students contribute to low morale and job dissatisfaction among staff (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). Consequences of challenging behaviour for students with intellectual disability include risking exclusion from community services and from services for other people with intellectual disability; being exposed to high rates of direct intervention, seclusion, and inappropriate medication, systematic neglect from teachers and carers, being abused and experiencing severe tissue damage as a result of self harm (Allen, et al., 2007; Emerson, 2001).

The exhibition of serious or repeated challenging behaviour may result in a host of negative developmental outcomes, including school failure caused by self interruption of learning or the learning of others, peer rejection, substance, physical and verbal abuse, delinquency and antisocial behaviour (Jones & Eayrs, 1993; Rathvon, 2008).

Challenging behaviour may induce poor student-teacher relationships, learning interferences, negative academic achievement, self-injury, injury to others, damage to the physical environment, interference with the acquisition of new skills, and learner social isolation, arousal of tension or stress and anxiety in teachers, thereby challenging their feelings of competence and arousing personal doubts. (Evans, Myhill, & Izard, 1993; Willis, 2009). These authorities stressed that the more staff find the behaviour of students challenging, the more they experience emotional exhaustion and the less they feel a sense of personal accomplishment.(Chung & Harding, 2009)

Student challenging behaviour can also cause staff turnover, burnout and psychological problems to staff (Chung & Harding, 2009; Jones & Eayrs, 1993). Studies done by Chung and Harding, (2009) found that, the more staff is exposed to severe challenging behaviour the more they are at risk of stress and mental health difficulties.

Therefore it is important for staff to have hands on skills on effective management of students with challenging behaviour and an intellectual disability if consequences for them and students are to be minimised. In this study views of principals are sought on how they raise staff morale as they endeavour to effectively manage these contentious contexts. The next section discusses the importance of intervention strategies and innovation programs regarding the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour in schools.

2.5.3 Intervention Strategies and Innovation Programs

The management of challenging behaviour exhibited by students with an intellectual disability is broadly concerned with student emotional and behavioural challenges (Cowley, 2006) or with oppositional and defiant behaviour (Hall & Hall, 2003). It is not simply about decreasing and increasing or regulating behaviours, but is also about discriminating between setting, place and time, where certain behaviours are appropriate and acceptable and other settings where they are not (Wearmouth, et al., 2004).

The most effective interventions intended to reduce the risk of unacceptable behaviour are those that operate at all of three levels; the student, the teacher in the classroom and the whole school (Wearmouth, et al., 2004). Therefore the management of challenging behaviour is a complex matter that requires interventions that are effective with the client student, the staff and the school. Several effective intervention strategies to behaviour management have been used by schools to mitigate challenging behaviour of students with an intellectual disability. However, in

some instances untrained and inadequately trained staff has to routinely cope with challenging behaviours in the absence of these strategies. Therefore staff training on successfully tested effective strategies in the management of student challenging behaviour supported by clear and precise policies, values and practices is essential in the life of a specialist school (Eayrs & Jones, 1993; Loreman, et al., 2005). A variety of management strategies is proposed by several writers. Some of these strategies are described in the ensuing paragraphs.

The starting point for effective management of student challenging behaviour is for schools to develop and sustain whole school behaviour promotion and management policies among all students, the articulation of whole school behaviour programs and plans, supported by staff development, effective instructional approaches for all students and effective behavioural interventions in the classroom (Anderson, Klassen, & Georgia, 2007; Wearmouth, et al., 2004).. The approaches can be proactively rehabilitated in school curricula including virtues and vices such as risk assessment, (Wearmouth, et al., 2004) intervention and the teaching of conflict resolution alternatives, teaching of anger management, alternatives to violence, emphasis upon commitment to cooperation, tolerance, personal dignity, respect for culture and multicultural values (Tronc, 2010).

Greene (2010) suggests that schools can use collaborative problem solving practices which can help staff to view challenging behaviour through more compassionate, accurate and productive lens. On a different profile, Pilling, McGill et al (2007) propose use of direct intervention for example, using protective devices, physical intervention, seclusion, giving medication, and maintaining a low teacher adult to child class ratio. These researchers recommend the development of knowledge and experience of the staff team. They also recommend more activity, more skilled and multidisciplinary staff support, good communication systems, establishing non-aversive, low arousal and non confrontational approaches to management of challenging behaviour (Pilling, et al., 2007). Prevention of challenging behaviour in schools is

cited as better than trying to mitigate and reduce or minimise or defuse it. It is argued that trying to mitigate challenging behaviour brings in a whole lot of challenges and complexities. Therefore proactive, preventative and educative measures against challenging behaviour become important aspects of management and leadership in specialist schools.

Some scholars propose the implementation and practice of traditional intervention programs in schools. The list of such programs is inexhaustible but includes School Functional Behaviour Assessment Programs (Ashman & Elkins, 2009; Jones & Eayrs, 1993); Behaviour intervention Programs (Foreman, 2008); School-wide Positive Behaviour Support Programs (Rathvon, 2008); Whole-of-School Programs (Ashman & Elkins, 2009; Sullivan, 2000; Wearmouth, et al., 2004); Applied Behaviour Analysis Programs (Hall & Hall, 2003; McVilly, 2002); Developing a Positive School Culture (Hall & Hall, 2003); Zero-Tolerance Policies on Management of Behaviour (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008); Restorative Approaches to Behaviour Management (Hopkins, 2010; Thompson, Arora, & Sharp, 2002); Conferencing (Thompson, et al., 2002); The Definitive Behaviour Management Model (Willis, 2009); and Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) (Wearmouth, et al., 2004).

Although schools are at liberty to use any of the above programs, some research has shown that some challenging students cannot respond to such strategies involving physical restraint, referrals, detentions, suspensions, expulsions and school discipline programs to the detriment of society losing them (Greene, 2010). Some schools prefer the removal of students with severe behaviour problems from their environments and have them placed in segregated settings. So pressure from troubled schools has prompted the Victorian State Government to continue establishing multiple alternative settings such as specialist schools and Residential Units (Ashman & Elkins, 2009). In this study, it is hoped that principals of ten government specialist schools will give insightful and representational perspectives about the strategies and programs adopted or implemented to combat challenging incidents in specialist schools.

Literature reviewed above raised six important issues for this study. Firstly, school leadership has been defined in dichotomous terms: as either a solo heroic business or as a collective enterprise. It has been argued that the model of distributed leadership offers strong explanatory power in understanding school leadership effectiveness and can be applicable in specialist schools.

Secondly, it has been stated that school leadership and school management have two distinct functions with regard to the operation of schools and other educational organisations. It has been argued that leadership and management are closely linked and that both leadership and management functions can be performed by one person at school level. However, leadership has been defined as a broader concept encompassing management.

Thirdly, effective schools have been identified as those which anchor their work on central issues of learning and teaching and strive for continuous school improvement by facilitating meaningful teamwork, setting clear measurable goals and regularly collecting and analysing their performance data. Such schools encourage staff to recognise diverse student needs, and to respond and celebrate their successes. The literature branded schools with staff professionalism, relationships, involvement, collaboration, connectedness and contribution.

Fourthly, literature suggests that successful leadership and management of students require continuous staff professional development, staff empowerment and reflection and consolidation of school vision, mission and values, staff morale, mutual trust and relationships.

Fifthly, literature on Victorian government schools indicate that students with a combination of intellectual disability and challenging behaviour are enrolled in both mainstream schools and

specialist schools and lastly, defining challenging behaviour has been difficult. However in the Victorian government school system, challenging behaviour has been defined as behaviour that is manifestly beyond the expectations of students of a similar age and major and constant violation of age-appropriate social behaviours that are more than ordinary childish mischief or rebelliousness. Challenging behaviour has been categorised as dangerous behaviours or problem behaviours that are internalised, externalised or anti-social.

It has been noted that at the individual level and at a whole school culture level, challenging behaviour may have serious consequences for both staff and students in law. Therefore, there is need to investigate how these challenging situations are managed. It has also been noted that the management of challenging behaviour is a complex matter that requires interventions that are effective with the client student, the staff and the school. The most effective interventions intended to reduce the risk of unacceptable behaviour are those that operate at three levels; the student, the teacher in the classroom and the whole school.

Although the literature adequately discussed the main themes that are important for understanding the research question, it did not cover the situation in Victorian government specialist day schools. This literature did not identify any research done on how leadership is distributed in Victorian government specialist schools. It did not find any literature on how principals of government specialist schools in Victoria view leadership regarding the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviours. Therefore this study seeks to address this gap.

2.6 Summary

This chapter explored concepts that are relevant for the contextualisation of the study to investigate principals' perspectives of leadership regarding the management of students with an

intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviours in specialist schools. Broad aspects discussed were; leadership and management, distributed leadership as an effective leadership approach, intellectual disability and challenging behaviour. Key aspects which arose from discussing these broad themes include professional development and staff empowerment, the importance of vision, mission and values, trust and relationships, and staff morale. The next chapter will deal with the theoretical framing for this study, the distributed leadership theory framework.

Chapter Three

3.0 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed justification of the theoretical framework applied in this study. It answers the following two important questions.

1. Which theoretical frame of reference might be used as a guide to help shape the methodological process taken in this research?
2. What theoretical considerations need exploration regarding principals' views on leadership regarding the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour?

Firstly, choice of methodology as a qualitative researcher will be detailed. Second, a distinction will be made between the concepts of leadership and management in a school context. Third, distributed leadership as an effective school leadership paradigm will be discussed and then, finally, a distributed leadership theory framework for specialist schools will be suggested.

3.2 Theoretical Worldview Guiding this Research Inquiry

Two broad philosophical paradigms that can be applicable in social research are the positivism and interpretivism orientations (Thomas & Hodges, 2010). Positivism utilises quantitative methods of research and is objectivist (Creswell, 2007; McKenney & Reeves, 2012) while interpretivism uses qualitative methodologies and is subjectivist (Creswell, 2007). Thomas & Hodges (2010) contend that the rationale of research objectives within positivism is to establish objective measurements which have

“sufficient reliability and generalisability which can be used by other people in a practical way to plan services or develop new policy” (p.16). By contrast the rationales given for interpretivism research objectives tend to focus on other themes and do not usually focus on the potential for research findings to be used in a practical way (Thomas & Hodges, 2010). These interpretivism rationales:

tend to emphasise developing richer or more sophisticated understandings of the ideas or meanings that people hold in their heads; or of developing a better appreciation of the social processes involved in maintaining or transforming these ideas or meanings (Thomas & Hodges, 2010, p.16).

This study adopts an interpretive world view and is located within the constructivist paradigm as the tenets fit well with the worldview of the researcher. This paradigm is the means by which the research will focus and the way in which qualitative data collected from ten principals through face-to-face interviews, is understood (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). The logic underpinning qualitative research follows an inductive orientation from the ground up, rather than handed down entirely from theory. Inductive reasoning is a human quality that involves a process in which general rules evolve or develop from individual cases or from observation of a phenomenon (DePoy & Gitlin, 2011). Since principal leadership is a social phenomenological concept (Hill, 2008) it can be viewed through alternative worldviews that inform qualitative research. These include post-positivism, social constructivism, advocacy or participatory and pragmatism (Creswell, 2007), Marxism, interactionism and post-modernism lenses (Hill, 2008). In summary this study was located within the social constructivism paradigm as the means of understanding qualitative data collected by face-to-face interview responses to questions with individual principals regarding the nature of distributed leadership in specialist schools.

3.2.1 Social Constructivism

Social constructivism has a basic assumption of ontological relativism (Lincoln & Guba, 1989) by virtue of constructivists' assumption that knowledge and truth are created as a result of perspective (John, 1938). The "constructivist theory argues that because each individual is unique, humans create their own knowledge and meaning from interaction between their experiences and ideas" (McKenney & Reeves, 2012, p. 33). The theory maintains that learning is a process of constructing meaning; it is how people make sense of their experiences (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). The paradigm emphasises the instrumental and practical function of theory construction and knowing (Schwandt, 2000). Lincoln & Guba (1989) stress that social constructivism is pluralist and relativist and it recognises that various constructions which are not always congruent but deemed to be meaningful are possible.

The theoretical approach of this research study is a Social Constructivism worldview (Hill, 2008; Sadovnik, 2011). Constructivism is a theory of knowledge that argues that humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas. Constructivist world view manifests in phenomenological studies in which individuals describe their experiences (Anfara & Mertz, 2006; Creswell, 2007). For example, in this research social constructivism by virtue of its interactive mode, incorporates views of principals about their situational experiences and relationships with staff, students, parents and communities, and makes visible the hierarchies of power, communication and opportunities in specialist schools (see Creswell 2007, p. 238).

The interpretive approach recognises the self-reflective nature of qualitative research and the role of the researcher as the interpreter and presenter of data; acknowledging the importance of language and discourse in qualitative research and the issues of power, authority and leadership dimensions in the facets of the qualitative inquiry in a specialist school. In short the research will rely as much as possible on elucidating the participants' view of their own social work place, the

specialist school situation achieved through face-to-face interaction and by using open ended questions.

3.2.2 Interactionism

Sadovnik (2011) defines Interactionist Theory about the relation of school and society as a critique and extension of the functionalist and conflict perspectives and claims that its origin is in the social psychology of the early twentieth century sociologists, George Herbert Mead (1863-1931), John Dewey (1917-1938) and Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929). DePoy (2011) defines Interactionist Theory as a specific philosophical approach, which assumes that human meaning evolves from the context of social interaction; therefore, human phenomena are understood through interpreting the meanings in social discourse and exchange. Interactive concepts are described in phenomenological terms. For example the subjective meanings of principals' experiences and views of their situation are developed through "first order interaction" (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009) on leadership regarding the management of students. It is anticipated that this interactive qualitative research provides a knowledge niche about specialist school governance. Specialist school governance in this research is identified with attributes of the Distributed Leadership Theory discussed later in this chapter. The next section discusses the relationship between leadership and management in schools as learning organisations.

3.3 Leadership and Management in Schools as Learning Organisations

Leadership and management in schools as learning organisations (Sergiovanni, 2001) are not limited to the principal and teachers (see figure 1, p.3). They stretch across individuals, communities, and networks and up and down organisational layers (Fullan, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). School leadership has been defined as having at its core the responsibility for policy formulation and organizational transformation while school management has been defined as an executive function for carrying out agreed policy (Bush, 2008). This means that school leadership embodies the methods a school manager employs to promote change. School

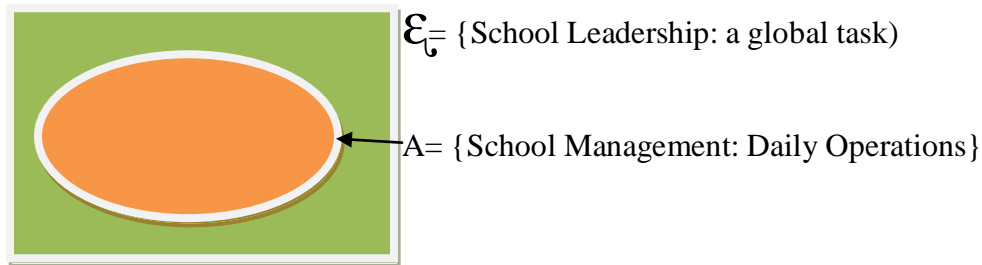
leadership remains a strategic and an all embracing concept involving influencing, guiding in direction, course, action and opinion (Grillo, 2011). It remains instrumental to the creation of human vision and energy, taking charge, making things happen and translating dreams into reality by influencing others to work towards the vision of the school. To succeed in this instance leaders consult with each other, work towards negotiated solutions and involve colleagues in decision making, to facilitate a sense of ownership of how the school functions. The gist of the above discussion is that leadership is earned through successful relationships with all management within the organization (Bush, 2008).

On the one hand the school management focuses on the daily internal operations of the school, their relationships with the environment and with the governing bodies to which they are formally responsible (Bush, 2008). Activities in management involve aspects of leadership support, staff and student control and supervision through planning, organizing, solving problems, and evaluating programs (Grillo, 2011). It is concerned with the tasks and functions that need to be carried out efficiently (Bush, 2008). Management deals with aspects of quality results, accomplishment of goals, and responsibility. In this study the principal as a school leader is considered instrumental in creating, developing and disseminating school vision, mission, values and goals to staff who in turn manage students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour. Thus staff implements the policies passed on to them by the leadership. They manage the students through day to day activities which they measure and evaluate in classroom processes as they seek to accomplish the set goals and produce intended results.

Literature reviewed consistently makes a clear distinction between school leadership and school management showing that school management is a subset of school leadership as illustrated in figure 3. The figure illustrates that leadership represented by the green entire set (ϵ) is a broad task which incorporates creation and maintenance of school vision, mission, values, goals and management. The pink oval inside the entire set (ϵ) is sub-set A which represents management

involving daily operations of a school. The model shows that management is a key element of leadership that involves the technical aspect of all school activities including the implementation of school programs and these activities and functions in a school are fused and inseparable.

Figure 3 Distinction between Leadership and Management in a School (Chitongo 2012)



The next section summarises researched understandings of distributed leadership as an effective school leadership approach.

3.4 Distributed Leadership

Literature reviewed (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) identifies two basic forms of school leadership: (a) leadership centred on one person, the leader or (b) leadership shared by two or more people, distributed leadership. There are many blended forms of leadership styles, including focused, transformational and charismatic leadership (Gronn, 2002), however, literature reveals that most contemporary researchers (Gronn, 2002; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Harris, 2008; Hill, 2008; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Mayrowetz, 2008; Robinson, 2011; Spillane, 2005) argue in favour of distributed leadership approaches.

Although some of these researchers claim distributed leadership to be a recent theory and an effective form of leadership which is gaining popularity (Spillane, 2005; Sullivan, 2003; Wyse, et al., 2010) and the leadership idea of the moment (Harris, 2008; Hartley, 2007), the idea is not a new concept in the education arena (Davies, 2005; Harris, 2008; Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, & Hopkins, 2007; Mayrowetz, 2008; NCSL, 2009). More than a century ago, John Dewey (cited in Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) referred to it when he argued that public education should be organised such that “every teacher has some regular and representative way to register judgement upon matters of educational importance, with assurance that this judgement would somehow affect the school system”(p.97).

Thus the distributed leadership theory has been long ago hypothesised as a transformational model about sharing and distributing leadership. Accordingly Harris (2008) clarifies the main features of the distributed leadership theory while contemporary researchers significantly make a contribution to Harris’s ideas as discussed in the ensuing section.

Harris (2008) presents distributed leadership as practice distributed over leaders, followers and their situation, including extended groupings and networks, and an arrangement within the organisation as a social context that is characterised by inter-relationships which are an integral part of the leadership activity. On this score, distributed leadership is understood as a practice distributed over co-workers incorporating the activities of multiple groups of individuals within, between and outside their school context. It is basically, centred on collaboration, networking and multi-agency (Harris, 2008), the interaction of stakeholders, involving teachers and other professionals, students, parents and the wider community as well as aspects of the situation including a variety of tools, routines and structures (Harris et al., 2007; Mayrowetz, 2008; Spillane, 2005). This makes distributed leadership a model which is broadly based on collective decision making and concerned with productive leadership practices and interactions.

Therefore this study will investigate how principals distribute leadership functions and activities within the school to internal school agents including school staff, school leadership teams and smaller school units in the case management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour. The study also investigates how principals share leadership in their school context with the wider community for example external agents, including personnel from cluster schools, police, professional staff (pathologists), and other facilitating bodies as more difficult cases arise.

Harris (2008) maintains that distributed leadership cannot be restricted to organisational or structural constraints or any particular pattern but can be arranged within the organisation in order to respond to particular problems and issues as they emerge. The distributed leadership approach in this study is therefore a useful tool to investigate how principals understand leadership regarding the management of students with an intellectual disability who present challenging behaviour at different school levels and settings and how each incident can be attended to as it emerges.

Nonetheless, in the literature reviewed, distributed leadership is identified as the key factor that can influence effective leadership in schools because it incorporates the principles of teamwork, collaboration, collective decision making, sharing of leadership functions, and development of positive relationships, enabling and giving responsibility to staff. Given that specialist schools in Victoria are generally small, with an average student enrolment of 160 and teacher establishment of at least 30, (see Table 3, Appendix F1, p.187) distributed leadership approaches would be optimally helpful in these contexts. Although both Tuck (2009) and Robinson (2011) reported that increasing bureaucracy is the greatest preoccupation among British small school principals, it can be argued, that such schools have less need for strong hierarchical structures, a central feature of bureaucratic organisation. Small numbers of teachers and students in such schools can enhance sharing of functions and activities enabling the principal to employ flexible and creative approaches to teaching and learning, to effectively communicate and directly engage with diverse groups of stakeholders, to establish closer relationships with students and staff, and to

consider alternative and creative approaches to staff retention (NCSL, 2009; Nowaczewski, 2003; Wyse, et al., 2010). Teachers can be afforded increased opportunities for participation and consensual decision-making. In small specialist schools, such opportunities can in turn, facilitate effective leadership and management of small groups of vulnerable students.

The DEECD contemporary policy document, *Students with Disability Guideline* (2010), shares the same principles of interaction within the distributed leadership framework and encourages schools in Victoria including government specialist schools to adopt effective programs where teacher, student, parent and community involvement, collaboration, connectedness and contribution are valued (Claridge, 2011).

Complementary to the ideas of Harris (2008), contemporary researchers understand and discuss distributed leadership as a social democratic paradigm (Dewey cited in Archambault, 1964), a direct antonym of hierarchical leadership (Harris, 2008), a human capacity building channel (Davies, 2005; Mayrowetz, 2008), and more than delegated leadership.

Because of its collaborative and interactive nature, distributed leadership is categorised as a democratic paradigm. It involves the “complementary sharing” (Harris, 2008) of leadership functions between two or more individuals or distributing organisational functions among different members of the school team or organisation (Davies, 2005; Harris, et al., 2007; Mayrowetz, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2001). Sharing leadership in the context of the school as a learning community involves growing, nurturing and supporting competent and capable teachers to become key leaders especially of curriculum and pedagogy (Davies, 2005; Duignan, 2006).

Research in the field of education has positioned distributed leadership as the direct antonym of “hierarchical leadership” or “focused leadership” (Harris, 2008; Harris, et al., 2007; Johnson, 2004). The concept is often used interchangeably with “shared leadership”, “team leadership” and “democratic leadership” (Currie, Lockett, & Suhomlinova, 2009; Spillane, 2005; Wyse, et al., 2010), “boss-less team” and “self-managed team” (Harris, et al., 2007), “devolved leadership” (Bennett, et al., 2003; Currie, et al., 2009), “participative” and “collaborative leadership” (Currie, et al., 2009).

Distributed leadership spreads decision-making authority throughout the school, creating a flatter and more representative governance structure where opportunities are created for everyone including teachers, students, parents and community members to participate in key decisions (Davies, 2005; Duignan, 2006; Harris, et al., 2007; Wyse, et al., 2010). Thus the professional ontological and epistemological claim of distributed leadership provides all members of the school community with opportunities to lead and make decisions within the framework of the school culture and mission, thereby allowing collective leadership in which teachers develop skills by working collaboratively (Goleman, et al., 2002a; Spillane, 2005; Sullivan, 2003). In other words distributed leadership in this research is rooted in the interaction of stakeholders and their context including the wider community, as together they identify, acquire, allocate and use social materials and cultural resources necessary for the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour in their specialist schools.

Distributed leadership is understood as a human capacity building instrument. Within this understanding, it is a form of collective leadership in which teachers develop expertise by working towards school goals together without influence from formal authority (Davies, 2005; Mayrowetz, 2008). This does not, however, make the work of the principal redundant. The role of the school principal within this leadership practice becomes primarily to hold the pieces of the

organisation together in a productive relationship (Sullivan, 2003) or to unify all stakeholders around the key values of the school (Bush, 2008).

Findings by Leithwood et al. (2007) concur and suggest that effectively distributed leadership needs to be coordinated, preferably in some planned way by persons who have or can develop, the knowledge or expertise required to carry the leadership tasks expected of them. It has been, however, argued that distributed leadership is more than delegated leadership where the notion of handing over unwanted tasks are passed on to subordinates (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Harris, 2008; Wyse, et al., 2010).

Distributed leadership is also reported to involve “participative management” principles (Harris, 2008). Participative management, it is claimed, can be liberating and developmental; controlling achievement and continuous improvement by enabling reflection, empowering, developing and giving decision making responsibility to co-workers. In this study participants’ involvement in the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour will be investigated in light of their views on empowering co-workers.

It is also indicated that distributed leadership encompasses some valued features of management characterised by “teamwork, continual improvement, quality, excellence, quality of work life, honesty and trust, mutual respect and dignity, employee responsibility, integrity and customer focus” (Tomal, 2007, p. 12). Thus the value of a distributed leadership model is placed on its quality as a positive channel of change within a school community, thereby continually placing high value on people and encouraging creativity, self-initiatives, trust and empowerment, improving teamwork and a positive organisational culture (Harris, 2007). Recurring themes in this section, for example teamwork, trust, relationships, support, empowerment, collaboration, and values will be essential in the framing of the distributed leadership paradigm analysed in this

study and explained in the next section. These themes will also be used as guiding principles in framing interview questions for this study.

3.5 Distributed Leadership Theory Framework

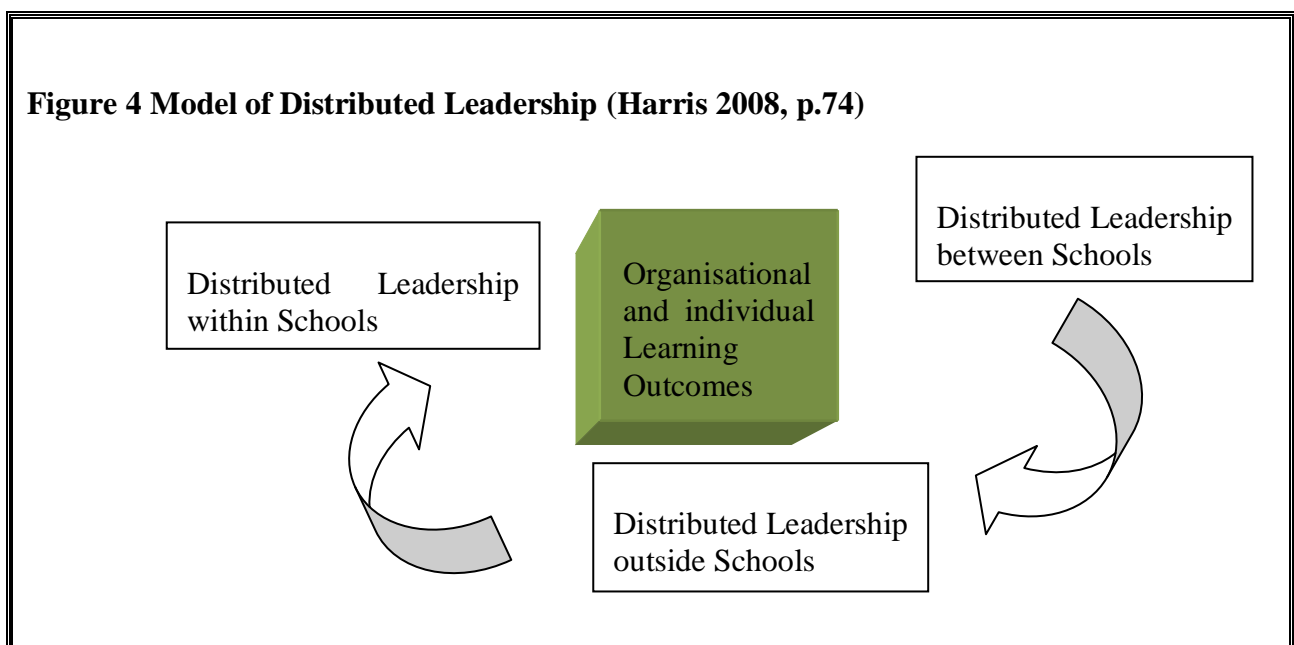
The German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) theorised about “charismatic authority” as a concept upon which rested devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (in Adair-Toteff, 2005). The idea of charismatic authority has epistemological links to heroic leadership that since Weber’s time has acquired wide usage among sociologists and educationists. However, in educational circles, in the last two decades, the suitability of heroic leadership for sustainable school improvement has been judged more problematic than previously within the study of school leadership literature (Gronn, 2002; Sugrue, 2009) and theories of distributed leadership have become more visible (Mertkan, 2011). The notion that leadership is something that is exercised by one individual is slowly being replaced by a view of leadership as distributed across multiple people and situations (Timperly, 2005). The trend is that leadership is no longer restricted to one figure in the school, usually the principal, but rather equally practised and made available to all school members (Gronn, 2002). A typical example would be a school where the principal is strongly supported by a vibrant team composed of the right people with relevant and diverse leadership gifts.

As stated by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) sustainable systemic innovation and change requires concerted action among people with different areas of expertise and mutual respect that stems from an appreciation of the knowledge and skill requirements of different roles. That is, it requires a distributive view of leadership in which people at all levels of the school system collaboratively work together sharing expertise and developing a school culture, structures and practices that foster innovation (Cowie, Jones, & Harlow, 2011). This in turn can enable school

leadership to be stretched over people and distributed over the materials and artefacts that are part of the school organisation and its social structures.

In this sense leadership is distributed and understood in terms of shared activities and multiple interactions. In support of these views researchers for example, Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004) argue that school leadership practice can best be understood through considering leadership tasks and how they are distributed over leaders, followers and their situation. They contend that the interaction of the three elements is fundamental in the leadership activity. Figure 1, p.3, adopted and developed from Spillane and Harris (2004, p.11) illustrates how the practice of leadership can be stretched over leaders, followers, and the material artefacts in the situation. The figure illustrates that the three elements are empowered by distributed leadership practice. The central triangle represents leadership practice that is constituted in the interaction of all the three elements. The figure provides fertile ground for the formulation of interview questions in this research. The contents in brackets in the boxes were intuitively added to the original framework to facilitate this. This framework might allow the researcher to examine how the social interaction and the situation simultaneously constitute leadership practice in specialist schools. For example, the extent to which distributed leadership practices in specialist schools are stretched over leaders, followers and their situation can be investigated. This framework is important in this research project because it offers theoretical grounding for studying day-to-day leadership and management practices, enabling investigations of practice to go beyond documenting lists of strategies that principals use in their schools (Spillane, 2005). After all, distributed leadership as an interpretive concept depends on the characteristics of the situation, rather than on a normative approach that generalises situations. Harris (2008) describes how interaction of social and situational context informs distributed leadership practice. Harris models and explains distributed leadership in three settings; within, between and outside school as illustrated in Figure 4 (p.60).

Figure 4 is the original framework provided by Harris (2008, p. 74), save the 3-dimensional central box, text boxes and stylish arrows. In the Harris model, organisational and individual learning outcomes are influenced by distributed leadership within, between and outside the school. She defines distributed leadership within the school in terms of restructuring roles and responsibilities, new teams, new responsibilities, teacher and student relationships. Restructuring roles and responsibilities is meant to enable effective interaction between members within the school structures.



Harris (2008) indicated that distributed leadership between schools involves collaborations, federations and networked activities. In both specialist and mainstream schools collaborations, federations and networked activities would be important for the implementation of inclusive education programs; for example the dual enrolment of students with intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour. These initiatives might facilitate the development and sustenance of good relations between specialist and mainstream schools thereby improving services for vulnerable students.

By distributed leadership outside schools Harris (2008) refers to the “involvement of multi-agencies, partnerships, extended schools, schools as social centres and community engagement” (p.74). A school cannot operate in isolation; therefore it is important for specialist schools to network with external agents from different sectors, governmental and nongovernmental as they endeavour to manage challenging incidents.

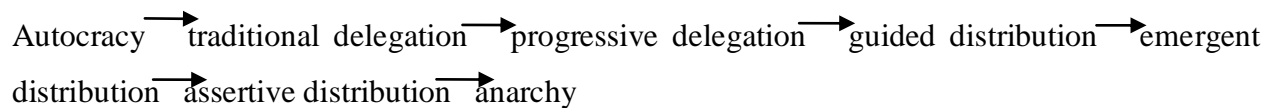
Harris demonstrates the viability of her “within, between and outside” distributive framework using nine school cases that some schools in England are successfully engaged in. However, she did not demonstrate how the three forms, within, between and outside are being utilised for the benefit of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour in specialist schools. The framework of this model will be used to develop a distributed leadership framework to be used to investigate how principals of government specialist schools are distributing leadership in their schools as they seek to manage students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour.

Distributing and sharing leadership with others in school organisations is both necessary and wise (Duignan, 2006). Literature reviewed for this study supports this idea. For example, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) maintain that distributed leadership has the potential to enhance influence and consequently contribute to the process of program implementation for a secure school change. However, it can be argued that distributed leadership is not as straightforward as it sounds. Hargreaves and Fink argued that distributed leadership can be:

---good or bad, planned or serendipitous, focused or unfocused and can enhance the sustainability of deep and broad learning for all students or disintegrate into the kind of turmoil that sucks the energy and enthusiasm out of students and staff (p.136).

They stressed that distributing leadership can lead to anarchy and confusion if over or under practised. So they analysed the levels of the concept within a continuum ranging from autocracy through traditional and progressive delegation, guided, emergent and assertive distribution to anarchy as illustrated below.

Figure 5 The Distributed Leadership Continuum



Distributed leadership has both strengths and limitations. It can be judged by the evidence of its impact on student learning and its overall sustainability (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 98). The major advantage of this leadership model is that it fosters community engagement, provides opportunities for professional and personal growth, and enables sustained progress despite inevitable changes in leadership over time (Wyse, et al., 2010). It may be claimed that forms of distributed leadership may be particularly vulnerable in the management of contentious situations, such as the management of students with disabilities and challenging behaviours.

Distributed leadership has the potential to enhance, influence and consequently contribute to the process of program implementation (Davies, 2005). It focuses on how people interact with one another to make change happen, enhance professional dialogue and to create an environment where core educational and pedagogical decisions are seen as a collective professional responsibility (Duignan, 2006; Harris, et al., 2007; Spillane, 2005). It identifies the contours of expertise within the school community and harnesses the talents of all stakeholders for the purpose of improving the processes, content and outcomes of teaching and learning (Duignan, 2006). Essentially, the values of distributed leadership are collaborative, inclusive and relationship-centred. Values such as personal connections, mutual respect and shared knowledge

are highly regarded. The outcomes at a school level mean greater staff involvement and ownership (Duignan, 2006) with the potential to positively influence organisational change (Harris, 2007).

Studies by Leithwood and Jantz (2000) in Canada, Silins and Mulford (2002) in Australia, Harris and Muijs (2004) in the UK, Spillane et al. (2001) in the USA found that participatory and distributed patterns of leadership have a positive influence on teacher effectiveness and student engagement (Davies, 2005; Harris, et al., 2007). Silins and Mulford (2002) found that if teachers are empowered in areas of importance to them and leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community, student outcomes are likely to improve.

Generally, these findings offer positive support for distributed leadership practices in schools. One of the questions of the present research is, “Would such research findings, widely accepted in the international academic literature on effective mainstream school leadership, apply to Victorian government specialist school leadership?” More specifically, this research in interviewing a sample of specialist school principals, seeks to explore their statements as to how, as leaders, they encourage educational vision into tangible operation throughout the delicate mosaic of human relationships in specialist schooling.

A contradiction and a potential dysfunction of distributed leadership is that principals and the other school leaders are required to relinquish power and control to others, thereby challenging the traditional bureaucratic and hierarchical structure of the school leadership (Davies, 2005; Harris, 2008; Harris, et al., 2007; Sullivan, 2003; Wyse, et al., 2010). In fact, leadership based on the Weberian sense of legal-rational authority, (Weber, 1947) is equated with hierarchical formal roles in an organisational hierarchy, and this mindset can prove an obstacle to sharing leadership functions and activities (Wyse, et al., 2010).

Duignan (2006) points out that distributed leadership is not easy to establish and maintain in practice, and consequently is not necessarily a predominant characteristic of many contemporary schools. For example some contemporary literature show that distributed leadership can result in boundary management issues, emergence of competing leadership styles and distribution of incompetence which can be the source of conflicting priorities, targets and time scales (Harris, 2007; Shapiro & Gross, 2008; Timperly, 2005). So within these research and system knowledge parameters, the value of investigating how distributed leadership is seen to be practised in Victorian government specialist schools by a sample of specialist school principals lies at the heart of this research.

In light of the above critiques, Harris (2008) summarises the main barriers to distributed leadership in schools into three; distance, culture and structure.

As schools grow and become more complex organisations through various partnerships and collaborations with other schools, the issue of distance makes it more difficult for teams to meet and problem solve and therefore distance becomes a barrier to distributed leadership (p.40).

However, for distributed leadership to work schools need to provide alternative solutions to communication systems in order to break the barrier of distance.

Change of culture especially from the traditional top-down model of leadership to a form that is more organic, spontaneous and ultimately more difficult to control for principals may mean crossing or dismantling strong structural and cultural boundaries within an organisation which can be a big barrier to distributed leadership (p.40).

The challenge for schools is to see leadership as an organisational resource that can be maximised through interaction between individuals, leading to problem solving and new developments.

The way schools are currently organised, dominated by compartmentalising subjects, pupils and learning into discrete but manageable boxes, presents a set of barriers to distributed leadership (Harris, 2008, p.40.).

The challenge for schools is to find ways of removing those organisational structures and systems that restrict organisational learning. However, despite these limitations, distributed leadership remains the central theoretical framework that will be used to investigate the perspectives of principals in this study.

The investigation will be carried out within three broad themes; leadership distributed at school leadership, leadership distributed at management and leadership distributed at context levels. It is believed that the attributes employed at each level can contribute to teachers' self-esteem, self-efficacy and levels of morale, work satisfaction and effectiveness thereby influencing student engagement, continuous improvement and change in schools (Harris, 2005). The envisaged conceptual framework incorporates a detailed set of themes and the structure that this study uses to investigate principals' perspectives on leadership regarding the management of challenging students.

At the leadership level, the principals' perspectives are measured in terms of how the processes of staff empowerment, trust and relationships, mission and values and staff development are utilised in sharing leadership with co-leaders, as principals seek to manage students with an intellectual disability who present challenging behaviour in their schools.

The management level is concerned with how leadership is distributed over co-workers and related to staff morale with reference to how principals nurture and generate staff interest, cooperation and confidence, and how they promote staff collaboration, team-work, and cross-teaching faculty support as they endeavour to manage students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviours.

The school contextual level deals with how leadership is distributed within, between and outside the school. Themes for investigation include intervention strategies and innovation programs they employ; principals' reflections of incidents and how they try to make these schools secure and stimulating environments for students with an intellectual disability who display signs of challenging behaviours and the staff who manage them.

Using a distributed leadership framework, this study, based on interaction via face-to-face interviews, explores with participants their distributed leadership practices with other school stakeholders; their assistant principals, teachers, administrators, school support staff, students, parents, other agencies and the wider community.

Chapter Four

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology of the study. The aspects detailed in the chapter include the description and justification of the research design, research instrument for data collection, interview questions, the pilot study, research participants, and ethical considerations, description of data presentation and discussion, data analysis, the trustworthiness of the research and chapter summary.

4.2 The Description and Justification of the Research Design

There are basically two types of research designs; the experimental-type and naturalistic inquiry (DePoy & Gitlin, 2011). The experimental-type research designs are based in a positivist philosophical foundation that yield numerical or quantitative data while the naturalistic inquiry research designs are based in interpretivism, within holistic type philosophical frameworks that use inductive and deductive forms of reasoning to derive qualitative information (Creswell, 2007; DePoy & Gitlin, 2011; Thomas & Hodges, 2010). There are many types of research designs that can be classified as experimental or naturalistic (Murimba & Moyo, 1995; Shuttleworth, 2008; Smith, 2010) including a qualitative case study design that is used by both traditions (Creswell, 2007; Drew, et al., 2008; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009; Morse & Niehaus, 2009; Shuttleworth, 2008; Smith, 2010).

A case study approach originates from the human and social sciences and applied areas such as evaluation research (Creswell, 2007). Case study research involves qualitative investigative strategies in which the researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, a human organisation such as a school or one or more individuals (DePoy and Gitlin, 2011; Creswell, 2009). These authorities contend that a case study design is flexible. They suggest that case study research can be used by either experimental-type or naturalistic inquiry traditions, and can rely on multiple methods of data collection to capture the complexity of a case (DePoy & Gitlin, 2011). Thus it is a research method that may be used in many situations to contribute to knowledge of individual, group, organisational, social political and related phenomena.

A case study may also seek to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what results (Yin, 2009). This means that a qualitative case study research design necessarily involves detailed and intensive analysis of a single case or a multiple case involving multiple persons or units (Burton, Brundrett, & Jones, 2008; DePoy & Gitlin, 2011; Smith, 2010). It involves an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and a context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2009). There are several forms of case study a researcher can choose from, for example a collective case study consisting of multiple cases which can be intrinsic or instrumental (Stake, 2006; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). In this present study, the case to be explored being principals' perspectives of distributed leadership and the management of student challenging behaviour, the approach involves interviews with principals across a multi-site system (specialist schools) with data being drawn from these 10 school leaders. The study incorporates a naturalistic inquiry methodological approach and uses a multi-site case study method (Creswell, 2007; Gillham, 2000; DePoy & Gitlin, 2011; Stake, 2006) to investigate how principals in ten Victorian specialist schools selected from nine regions in Victoria, Australia, frame the distribution of leadership among their staff as they and their colleagues seek to manage challenging students.

The study employed this approach because it facilitated the examination of the complexity of the study case in its naturally challenging context (DePoy & Gitlin, 2011). The approach is also used because;

1. It is a logical model of systematic and consciously framed investigation that allowed the researcher to draw constructs and relationships from data collected from participants (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992).
2. It was the most appropriate method for addressing “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 2009) such as:
 - (a) Why, or on what rationale basis, do principals in specialist schools distribute leadership?
 - (b) How do specialist school principals profess to distribute leadership so that all staff can make informed decisions when they manage students with a combination of an intellectual disability and challenging behaviours?
3. the method is flexible and naturally usable, is multipurpose and uses multiple methods of data collection to capture the complexity of a case (Burton, et al., 2008; DePoy & Gitlin, 2011). The method was strong in its investigation of school principal realities, attended to the subtlety and complexity of the case in its own right, recognised the complexity and embedded state of social truths, was a step to action and insights and presented research data in a more publicly accessible form than other kinds of research designs (Bassey, 1999; Smith, 2010).
4. the method enabled the inclusion of specific data sources and the corroboration of information from one school context with other school settings (Conrad & Serlin, 2006, p. 380) and allowed the investigator to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events (Yin, 2009).
5. the method involved collecting extensive narrative data on principals’ perspectives over a limited period of time, in their natural setting, in order to gain insights not using other types of research methods (Drew, Hardman, & Hosp, 2008; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). Overall, it was an approach to inquiry that began with assumptions, worldviews, a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems exploring the meaning which school principals ascribed to social or human problems. Central features of this multi-site

qualitative case study related to assumptions consisting of; (a) the stance towards the nature of reality-how the researcher knew what he knew (epistemology), (b) the role of values in the research (axiology), (c) the language of research (rhetoric), and (d) the methods used in the process (methodology) (Creswell, 2007, p. 16).

In general, qualitative evidence is associated with the interpretive paradigm and attempts to offer an interpretation or explanation (Burton, et al., 2008; Gay, et al., 2009). The major merit of qualitative data in this case study was its provision for the use of direct quotes from participants, their rich, opaque and potential to offer insight and humanity into data analysis (Burton, et al., 2008). However, it is important to note that data collected in this study was typically extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information, such as incident observations, vignettes and interviews (Creswell, 2007; Yin 2003). The data provided limited basis for scientific generalisation, were difficult to organise and resulted in massive, and lengthy reports (Creswell, 2007; Yin 2003). Fortunately, key themes based on distributed leadership concepts generated by literature review, facilitated organisation, collation and interpretation of the data and consequently weakened the limitations of the approach.

4.3 Description and Justification of Research Instrument for Data Collection

Research instruments are “tools” that are used to collect data needed to find solutions to problems under investigation. Examples of instruments are tests, questionnaires, interviews and observation guides (Gillham, 2000; Thomas & Hodges, 2010). In this study, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used. Before the instrument was used with the principal research informants, it was fine-tuned and validated in a pilot study with the assistance of one principal of a special school, a senior special education professional, my supervisors and colleagues (McKenney & Reeves, 2012).

Interviews are a primary source of case study information (Conrad & Serlin, 2006). Interviews are conducted through verbal communication. They are approaches that require face-to-face talk and electronic media in order to generate data (DePoy & Gitlin, 2011; Smith, 2010). There are several generic types of interviews that are typically used: structured, semi-structured and open ended interviews (DePoy & Gitlin, 2011; McKenney & Reeves, 2012). In structured interviews, respondents are asked a consistent set of questions. Semi-structured interviews are characterised by a time schedule and follow-up or spontaneous questions. In open-ended interviews, the interviewer may engage the respondent in relatively informal conversation, asking about events, opinions and insights (Conrad & Serlin, 2006; DePoy & Gitlin, 2011). This study used the semi-structured interview because it was the most suitable for investigating the perspectives of principals on leadership concerning the management of students with a combination of an intellectual disability and challenging behaviour (Morse & Niehaus, 2009).

In this study a face-to-face interview format was used. A face-to-face interview is a traditional format for interviews where the interviewer and interviewee pre-arrange a date, time, place and focus for the interview (Burton, et al., 2008; DePoy & Gitlin, 2011). In this study the researcher took the view that talking to principals in their familiar surroundings was an advantage, offering the potential to provide some additional qualitative data. It was assumed that this could take the form of on-the-spot observations of the school surroundings and facilities, organisational ambience, interactions with other staff, and whatever incidental events the researcher would have an opportunity to observe on the day of the visit. For example, it was assumed that principals are often proud of their schools and would invite visitors to accompany them for a walk through their school. In this research a date and location for an in-school interview was set for each school principal save one principal who opted to have it at the University campus and all scheduled interviews were conducted as planned.

4.3.1 Strengths of Using Face-to-Face Interviews

A face-to-face interview was used because it is flexible, response is immediate, and non-verbal behaviour is observed (DePoy & Gitlin, 2011) within the natural and usual environment of the respondents. The interviewer sought to manage and control the environment, the question order, completeness of answers and the complexity of questions. One major advantage of a face-to-face interview was its adaptability. An audio recorder enabled the interviewer to give full attention to the principals' verbal and non-verbal responses to questions, and later to more systematically review them, and to keep track of the interview without interruptions from writing during the interview.

4.3.2 Limitations of Using Face-to-Face Interviews

Face-to-face interviews are time consuming for both the interviewer and the interviewee (Burton, Brundrett and Jones, 2008). Planning for interview flexibility especially for the interviewee and fixing interview time to 45 minutes reduced the disadvantage. The principals were informed of the approximate duration of the interview when they were invited to participate. A notice of question areas was provided in advance to avoid blank responses during the interview. An open possibility of follow up for clarification and further questioning through telephone or internet was negotiated and agreed with all participants. Anticipated possibilities of rescheduling with face-to-face interviews were avoided by making interview time open to participants' plans. All participants adequately answered the interview questions and a few follow-ups were made during the transcription of the audio taped data.

4.4 Description and Justification of the Interview Questions

The research problem was identified, diagnosed and the aim of the study was established in a pilot study the previous year (Thomas & Hodges, 2010). Basically, personal and professional experience provided fertile ground for the growth of problem awareness and yielded interview questions. These important elements underpinned the research and inquiry into the data based on

intuition (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Gillham, 2000; Thorne, 2008). Overall, insights relating to the chosen guiding questions came from many sources: the academic literature, previous empirical work, theoretical ideas, policy, practices and experience which in recent years included teaching experience of the researcher, in Victorian specialist schools. This amalgam of sources was used to generate theoretical inputs that shaped the understanding of the problem, context and other relevant topics within the leadership and management realms in Victorian specialist schools (McKenney & Reeves, 2012; White, 2009). Close collaboration with one principal (not part of the main study) during a pilot study was sought to better understand the educational problem at hand, the target context and stakeholder needs and expectations. The contextual insights from the literature reviewed, pilot study, methodology, discussions with supervisors and colleagues as well as responses from interviewed principals were instrumental to the generation, development, modification and refinement of interview questions (Gillham, 2000).

The final interview questions were clustered under four broad themes; demographic data, perspectives of distributed leadership at leadership level, perspectives of distributed leadership at school management level and perspectives of distributed leadership at school context level. The composition of research participants was seriously considered during the framing of the interview question. Principals of specialist schools are an “elite” group with busy schedules, potentially prohibiting interviews lasting more than an hour (Gillham, 2000). It was decided therefore that interviews be constructed so as to last approximately 45 minutes. It was predicted that this length of time would be the most desirable time-frame, and would reduce the risk of refusals to participate in the study. As it turned out, eight of the ten principals initially approached agreed to participate. An unexpected bonus to the research enterprise was that most principals interviewed invited the researcher to take a tour of their school, and all invitations were accepted. These short 20 –30 minute “expeditions”, usually following each interview afforded the research with further insights into the nature and the functioning of specialist schools.

4.5 Description and Justification of the Pilot Study

A pilot study is a procedure that involves pretesting of research methods in order to identify weaknesses in data collection approaches (Smith, 2010). Murimba and Moyo (1995) define a pilot study as a small scale study run on a trial basis, which is designed to prepare for the main study (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). In this study the pilot run involved one special school principal, a senior special education professional, my supervisors and research colleagues who assisted in the identification of misunderstandings, ambiguities and inadequate items (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). On the basis of the pilot run feedback and results, necessary revision of the interview instrument was made prior to the interviews. The aim of the pilot run was to prepare the researcher for this study and to complete a preliminary investigation into the nature of the topic. The study also aimed to trial the interview questions in a single case study (Yin, 2009). The results of the pilot study assisted the researcher to plan for the current study. For example, the choice of participants, the framing of research questions and the overall layout of the interview instrument in this study were influenced by this pilot run.

4.6 Description and Justification of the Research Participants

School principals are the research participants used in the study. The target population consisted of 81 principals of government specialist schools in the state of Victoria, Australia (PASS, 2009). This population was targeted because of the position held by principals in schools. The researcher, as a former school principal was interested in finding out how colleague principals understood and distributed leadership regarding the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviour in specialist schools. It was assumed that these principals would provide credible data to facilitate accurate case conclusions. These schools generally catered for students aged five to 18 years with special needs mainly caused by intellectual disability and at least one of the following disabilities; physical disability, health

impairment, hearing impairment, visual impairment, autism spectrum disorder, emotional behavioural disorder and language disorder.

Coincidentally, five rural schools and five urban schools were selected for the study. All the five rural schools had lower enrolments (range 44- 151) than urban schools (range 160-345). The adult to a pupil ratio was uniform in both settings and all schools indicated they had adequate teaching and learning resources proportionally provided according to the size of the school. The respondents (see Table 4, Appendix F2, p. 186) included five female and five male principals. Their modal age range was 56-65, teaching experience in special schools, mean=22.1 years, leadership experience in special schools, mean=7.5 years. Two of the principals were quite experienced (15 and 16 years) while four were less experienced (two with two years and two with four years). Overall the data revealed that the principals were a senior and experienced cohort group in the teaching profession. This background information gave the researcher confidence that the respondents would be well able to provide credible information on their leadership regarding the effective management of students in specialist schools.

All principals in specialist schools in Victoria could have been investigated but resources were a limiting factor. A probability sample plan was applied. Probability sampling is a procedure that selects participants using a random sampling approach. The procedure was the most effective method for the selection of principals for the study because it enabled the researcher to avoid conscious or unconscious selection bias and controlled selection methods used (Babbie, 1990).

All Government specialist schools in Victoria had an equal chance of being selected so there was an excellent chance that the selected sample would be closely representative. The sampling frame included 81 names of government special schools in Victoria save four specialist schools in Gippsland. Gippsland was left out because of its distance from the researcher's location.

Including Gippsland schools would be too expensive for the researcher in terms of travel. The distribution of government specialist schools in Victoria by region was not even (see table 1, below).

Table 1 Distribution of Registered Victorian Government Specialist Schools

Region	Number	Percent
Barwon South-West	7	9%
Central Highlands Wimmera	5	6%
Eastern Metropolitan	15	19%
Gippsland	4	5%
Goulburn North-Eastern	6	7%
London Campaspe Mallee	5	6%
Northern Metropolitan	12	15%
Southern Metropolitan	17	21%
Western Metropolitan	10	12%
Total	81	100%

The distribution (Table 1) shows that the number of specialist schools per region ranged from four to seventeen. To get an unbiased sample of specialist schools four schools per region had to be randomly selected to make the final selection round of schools. Names of schools in each remaining region were written on cards and placed in a hat, region by region and four schools

were picked. Finally 16 names of specialist schools from the 4 metropolitan regions were put in a hat, thoroughly shuffled before each name was picked and five metropolitan specialist schools were selected. Similarly, five rural specialist schools were selected. Table 2, presents the results of this activity.

Table 2 Number of Selected Specialist Schools by Region

Region	Number	Percent
Barwon South-West	1	10%
Hume	1	10%
Eastern Metropolitan	1	10%
Gippsland	0	0%
Grampians	1	10%
Loddon Mallee	2	20%
Northern Metropolitan	2	20%
Southern Metropolitan	1	10%
Western Metropolitan	1	10%
Total	10	100%

When the final list of schools was in place, principals of specialist schools on the list were invited to participate. An addressed envelope was enclosed for principals to return signed consent forms. After receiving the signed consent forms, the researcher communicated with

principals by telephone or email to set the interview date. Ten principals participated in the interview constituting 100% of the sample.

4.7 Description and Justification of Ethical Considerations

Basically the purpose of ethical considerations in research involving humans is the protection of the welfare and rights of participants in research (Wooldridge, Kemp, & Minchin, 1999). Ethical considerations also promote the aims of research and the values that are essential to collaborative work such as trust, accountability, mutual respect and fairness. In Australia the National statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans, endorsed by the Australian Government in March 2007, requires that all individuals, institutions and organisations conducting research which involves human participants should have their research approved by a Human Research Ethics Committee. Furthermore researchers should obtain informed consent from all involved in the study and should preserve privacy and confidentiality wherever possible. In this research approval to conduct research in ten government specialist schools was sought from the La Trobe University Research and Graduate Studies' Committee for Human Research Ethics. Approval was also sought from the DEECD. After the ethics approvals were granted a notice to conduct research in the nine regions was sent to Regional Office Directors. All the Regional Directors positively responded to the notification. Each prospective participant was then sent a participant information sheet, a consent form and a letter of invitation to participate. Each participant signed the consent form and returned it by mail to the researcher. Dates and places to meet for the interviews were arranged by telephone and/or email. The interview instrument was sent to the participants in advance and interviews were conducted on agreed dates and convenient places, nine at the school and one at the La Trobe University, Bendigo Campus.

4.8 Description of Data Presentation and Discussion

The data collected from interviews were audio taped, transcribed and summarised in tables and prose and was presented at leadership, management and school context levels (see Figure 8 p.156). Sub-themes at leadership level included the processes of staff empowerment, and professional development, propagation of trust and relationships, and utilisation of school missions and values.

At management level staff morale issues were presented. These included a quest to know how principals generated staff interest, improved staff cooperation and instilled confidence, promoted teamwork and collaboration, and influenced cross-staff faculty support as they sought to manage students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviour in their schools.

At context level, data were presented on challenging behaviours exhibited in specialist schools, intervention strategies and innovation programs employed and how safe and stimulating environments were created and maintained in special schools. The presented data was analysed and discussed qualitatively, using a distributed leadership framework for special schools, at the three levels discussed above as presented in Figure 8, p.156.

4.9 Description and Justification of the data Analysis

The purpose of data analysis is to faithfully reflect in summary and organized form what the research found (Gillham, 2000). Data analysis in qualitative research involves the process of turning information into credible and meaningful findings through coding, sorting and organizing in order to develop patterns and relationships that make a story (Saldana, Leavy, & Beretvas, 2011; Thomas & Hodges, 2010; Thorne, 2008; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). Bernstein (2000, p.270) states that procedures for analysis follow a specific pattern including all or some of: reading the transcripts to get a sense of the whole; identification of meaning units and themes; transformation of meaning units and themes from participants' language to the discipline;

formulation of descriptive structure of meaning of the phenomenon; and integration of insights into a total description of the phenomenon.

In this study, data were audio-recorded and participants were given a pseudonym using the first 10 letters of the English alphabet A to J to maintain anonymity. The analysis began with recording responses from the 10 Principals of specialist schools and proceeded with listening and re-listening to all scripts guided by the structured questionnaire used during the interview. After this sequential and careful listening, transcribing, reading and re-reading each to understand and get the sense of the whole story in specialist schools, each script was examined in-depth and meaningful units and themes were identified. These were grouped according to patterns and relationships and were mainly guided by themes identified during the literature review and those included within the Distributed Leadership Theory Framework introduced and discussed in chapter three. Thus all data sources were reviewed and lenses for data analysis were refined and thereafter used to examine the findings and draw conclusions (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). The description and questioning of themes involving the transformation of participants' words to the intuitive words of the researcher then followed. The themes were examined, clustered and tabled for easy access (see Appendix F, p.187). Some of the data were identified as vignettes and presented in as illustrated in Appendix G, p. 210.

Reflection on what the data indicated in an attempt to draw meaningful thoughts and conclusions from the similarities and differences in respondents' utterances was critical. This enabled the researcher to develop a richer structural description of how principals shared leadership in contentious contexts. As Corbin and Strauss alluded, "Thinking is the heart and soul of doing qualitative analysis" p.163, the researcher was deeply involved in a back and forth thought game between concrete data involving inductive and deductive reasoning throughout the analysis process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Thorne, 2008). The adoption of this approach enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the research evidence in this study.

4.10 Representativeness and Trustworthiness

McKenney & Reeves (2012) maintain that two important concerns in data analysis are representativeness and trustworthiness of the data. Representativeness in this study refers to how well the principals' voice represents distributed leadership and the management of student challenging behaviour in Victorian specialist schools. Trustworthiness pertains to the extent to which value is given to transparency in reporting. This allows for readers to access for themselves the trustworthiness of the findings. Trustworthiness involves establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1989).

Credibility (internal validity in quantitative research), relates to the truthfulness and accuracy of findings in naturalistic inquiry, also called truth value (Anfara & Mertz, 2006; DePoy & Gitlin, 2011; McKenney & Reeves, 2012). In this study credibility stems from the face-to-face interaction that was employed with these principals in their particular schools. Transferability, (external validity in qualitative research) shows that findings in this study cannot be generalised but other special schools may benefit from the information and assumptions made in this case study (Larsson, 2009; McKenney & Reeves, 2012). Dependability (reliability in qualitative research) means that the findings are consistent and could be repeated in the same and similar contexts. Confirmability relates to objectivity and deals with the extent to which the findings of the study were shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation or self-interest. This was addressed by letting the voice of the participants be heard by the reader through statements and vignettes captured directly from principals in one-on-one interviews (McKenney & Reeves, 2012).

In this qualitative research study the criteria for assessing credibility and trustworthiness included clear descriptions, explanations and justification of participant selection, the major

themes within the reviewed literature and the Distributed leadership theory framework, statements made by principals, some observations during interviews and vignettes collected from principals (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The inclusion of these vignettes in the data served to enhance the credibility of the study, that student behaviour management in its many forms remains a constant theme in specialist schools with a charter to meet the specific learning needs of very atypical student enrolments. These vignettes emerged from the fact that the researcher chose to visit each school, and chose not to interview the principals by phone. Some of these vignette material is therefore unintentionally complementary to the interview data, enhancing the overall trustworthiness and credibility of the data, while raising some questions that fall outside the parameters of this research study.

4.11 Summary

This chapter has dealt with research methodology that was used to investigate perspectives of principals on leadership regarding the management of students with a combination of an intellectual disability and challenging behaviours in 10 Victorian government specialist schools. A naturalistic inquiry tradition was adopted and a case study research design was used. Data collection procedures included seeking ethical approvals from La Trobe University Research and Graduate Studies' Committee for Human Research Ethics and from the DEECD. Regional Education Directors of the regions involved were notified of the research itinerary. Consent was sought from individual principals of ten randomly selected government special schools who were used as the research participants. An interview questionnaire was used to solicit information from participants and face-to-face interviews were conducted. The data presentation involved the use of tables and prose narratives. Qualitative methods were used to analyse and discuss collected data, guided by a distributed leadership framework constituting three broad themes; distributed leadership at strategic, management and school context levels. The next chapter presents the collected data.

Chapter Five

5.0 Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will present a summary of the data collected from principals of five regional government specialist schools and five urban government special schools in Victoria. The data of principals' perspectives encompass a number of dimensions of school leadership regarding the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviour in these schools.

The raw data collected from face-to-face interviews with principals of the sampled ten specialist schools were summarised (see Appendices F, p.187, G, p.210 and incident, p. 9). This chapter draws on that data to discuss and analyse from sub-themes based on the distributed leadership paradigm suggested by Spillane (2004), Figure 1, p. 3 and Harris (2008), Figure 4. p. 60 and further developed by the researcher to suit special school settings as presented in Figures 8, p. 156. Included in the data summaries are ten vignettes narrated by the principals during the interviews (See Appendix G, pp. 210-218). The purpose of including these vignettes is to stress and support important points which emerged during the interview. The next section presents a summary of the attributes of distributed leadership which were used to investigate the case in this study.

Firstly, leadership at the strategic level involves principals' talk about their perspectives on staff empowerment, trust and relationships, school mission and values and staff development in relation to management of student challenging behaviour.

Secondly, leadership at the management level includes principals' perspectives on how they generated staff interest and instilled staff confidence, facilitated collaboration, promoted teamwork and cross-teaching faculty support, and improved cooperation as they sought to manage these behavioural challenges from students.

Thirdly, leadership within the context of the contentious situation involves principals talking about the challenging behaviours which they witnessed, intervention strategies and innovations they employed in the management of student challenging incidents. They also talked about how they tried to make and keep their school settings safe and stimulating for their students.

5.2 Summaries and Analysis of the data

The structure of each section summary constitutes the title or question followed by the aim of the title or question and the data summary. In some instances, vignettes and quotations sourced from the interviews are used to illustrate, strengthen and add value to the perspectives of the principals.

Title: Demographic data on investigated schools (See Table 3 in Appendix F1, p.187).

Aim: Some basic summary data are presented here to provide the study with a selection of background information on school year of establishment, enrolment age range of students enrolled and staffing. This information contextualises each specialist school setting as an educational organisation.

The data show that these special schools are fairly new, eight of which were established after 1970. The schools are essentially small, given that eight of the schools had student enrolments between 44 and 169 with nine schools employing between nine and 42 teachers, and between ten and 31 teacher assistants. The report indicated that the average teacher to student ratio was 1:6 and the average ratio of students to adults was 3:1. Two schools had significantly larger enrolments of 332 and 345 students each. The former school operated from one campus and employed 42 teachers and 83 teacher assistants. The latter school operated over four campuses and employed 70 teachers and 20 teacher assistants.

Title: Demographic data on school principals (See Table 4, Appendix F2, p. 188).

Aim: These data were collected to determine gender, age range and professional experience of the principals interviewed. This information was important in this study to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collected from this cohort of principals.

The data on principals show that there was coincidentally an equal distribution of male and female principals in these sampled special schools in Victoria. All the respondents were mature and experienced with a modal age range of 56-65. Eight of the participants reported having worked in special schools for at least 16 years, served as principal in special schools for less than ten years with two having been principals for two years each and worked in the current school for less than ten years. It is significantly important to note that all respondents regardless of age and experience tended to give similar responses that were consistent with professional practices in their schools. The next section presents data collected on how leadership is distributed at strategic level, in the investigated schools.

5.2 Distributed Leadership at School Strategic Level

Question1: As a school principal how would you summarise your personal leadership stance in terms of sharing leadership?

Aim: This question sought to investigate the extent to which leadership is shared with co-leaders and co-workers in each school context by considering the aspects of trust and relationships, professional development and staff empowerment.

Data summary: All principals (see Table 5, Appendix F3, p. 189) had the opportunity to explain their personal stance on sharing leadership with regards to the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviour. As a group, they highlighted that they shared, distributed, decentralised, devolved, and delegated leadership. Universally, they reported that they shared leadership with staff for example assistant principals, leading teachers, team leaders and section leaders. Principals F and I in Table 5 were the most eloquent participants in support of their distributed leadership practices. Participant F made the following statement:

The principal cannot do everything on his own. Staff members are encouraged to have some degree of leadership skills and to be part of a functional committee. Participating in decision making in a committee engenders a sense of ownership. The principal is reliant on the good will and professionalism of colleagues.

Participant I made a similar statement as follows:

I decentralise and devolve leadership among staff, coach them and thank them for taking leadership roles. Distributive leadership is the source of better operations. Sharing leadership assists me to manage student challenging behaviour at our different campuses. I manage these campuses through assistant principals, leading teachers, team leaders, and section leaders. However, successful delegation of duties to staff requires my trust and faith in them.

All participants indicated that they prepared staff for leadership tasks through staff development and training. Relationships, mutual trust and having faith in staff, effective communication and staff discussion meetings were reported to be central issues in sharing leadership successfully. Some participants, for example, participant D (see Table 6, Appendix F4, p. 190) on principal's stance on use of internal agents of change to develop staff, however, reported that s/he employed a combination of both distributive and top-down, down-up approaches to school leadership as follows:

We also use a bottom up approach and top down approach to the management of student challenging behaviour. We work in teams, generating team discussions on mental health needs. We use staff to introduce programs, lead professional development; giving staff with the potential to change things the opportunity to innovate. Coaching mentoring, team talking and discussions are effective channels.

Question 2: How do you use your personal leadership philosophy to involve internal agents of change?

Aim: This question was developed to investigate the extent to which principals distributed training functions to their staff as they sought to manage students with challenging behaviour.

Data Summary: Most principals interviewed (Table 6) indicated that they relied on internal staff for most staff development programs on management of student challenging behaviour. For example they made use of leadership teams and individual specialist teachers to facilitate in professional development workshops. Most participants concurred on the views that the use of internal agents, as professional development facilitators, including teachers and deputy principals was not only effective but convenient and less expensive. For example participant D (Table 6) reported as follows:

We use staff to introduce programs, lead professional development; giving staff with the potential to change things the opportunity to innovate. Coaching mentoring, team talking and discussions are effective channels. We use our internal psychologists and therapists. Using internal agents is cheap and convenient.

Question3: How do you use your personal leadership philosophy to involve external agents of change?

Aim: This question sought to find out the extent to which these school leaders involved external agents of change in professional skills development and the management of student challenging behaviour.

Data Summary: All principals (see Table 7, Appendix F5, p.191) testified that external agents or consultants were powerful facilitators of change at all levels, right from the introduction through the implementation and evaluation of a program. The principals reported that they engaged external agents of change to develop staff, for example during program introduction, investigation, implementation and evaluation stages. Participants A, F and H (Table 7) provided powerful statements on reasons for engaging external agents of change in their schools. Participant A said:

External agents are important to create a foundation for change. Engage external agents to develop staff on how to deal with challenging behaviour. Use them as needed, at the implementation stage, during research, investigation stage and evaluation, visit or invite other schools.

Similarly participant F said:

I believe that powerful messages can come from outside the school. External agents assist to train staff. For example with the “You can do

it” program, we sent staff to a ‘train the trainer’ professional development workshop where a specialist facilitated. The trained staff then trained and disseminated the information to the rest of the school. The trained staff modelled the program for the whole staff who in turn discussed the merits and demerits of the program before implementation.

Participant H justified the engagement of external agents of change at her/his school as follows:

External agents are experts who share our philosophy, expertise and credibility. They are facilitators who use compromise, collaborative and robust conversations, negotiations and win lose orientations. We have engaged 5 regular consultants for this school. I invite consultants to introduce my vision as if it were theirs and staff has been very receptive to new ideas coming from outside the school.

Contrary to these positive statements about utilising external agents of change participant C, one of the most experienced principals (Table 7) offered a more circumspect view:

Sometimes there is no need for external agents. We need to protect our image as a school. Their meetings normally lack consistency. If used, their role should be communicated well and staff should understand reasons for engaging them.

Question 4: What is your key role in the management of student challenging behaviour?

Aim: The question sought to investigate the role of the principal and the extent to which the principal shared leadership roles with the school leadership teams and colleagues in their context.

Data Summary: The participants reported that they played a key role in the management of challenging behaviour exhibited by students with an intellectual disability. The lists of roles provided by these principals are very similar to the leadership role guidelines for principals

provided by the DEECD in Victoria. It is revealed (see Table 8, Appendix F6, p.192) that the role of the principal included setting the management tone by attending to staff and student welfare through delegation, staff development, staff support, team building and resourcing. Most frequently mentioned aspects of this key role included working with school councils, encouraging professional learning scholarships, action research, and facilitating feedback and action learning, facilitating and modelling a culture, involving, consulting and empowering staff. Some participants, especially the less experienced, reported that they liaised with other principals, consulted specialists on new trends, got feedback from staff, and listened to other people's views as they tried to effectively lead their schools.

Question 5: What is the enabling power of a school mission statement regarding the management of student challenging behaviour in a government specialist school?

Aim: This question sought to investigate how a school mission facilitated distribution of leadership over leaders, followers and the school context.

Summary data: In Victorian government specialist schools, as reported by these principals, (see Table 9, Appendix F7, p.193) a mission statement articulated the school's areas of focus and purpose of establishment and in summary, was to be (1) a reference point for staff, (2) the foundation of the school's programs, (3) the point of departure for school plans, (4) a guideline to school plans, (5) the source of school mottos and slogans, (6) a statement of purpose that gave direction to staff, and (7) a tool used to introduce, develop and sustain the management of student challenging behaviour

In the shared perspectives of these principals, a mission statement assisted staff to (a) develop a shared understanding of the school's vision, programs and activities, (b) widen and broaden their

thinking patterns about student challenging behaviour, (c) focus on school goals, (d) be proactive and innovative, (e) maximise student potential to improve behaviour patterns, (f) remember, think and reflect on their day-to-day challenging behaviour plans, (g) collectively work towards school goals, and (h) understand their duty of instruction and care

Each of these interviewed principals eloquently articulated the enabling power of their particular school's mission statement and all acknowledged that mission statements were their supportive "rod and staff" which comforted them during their journey of managing students.

Question 6: What is the enabling power of school values in the management of student challenging behaviour in a government specialist school?

Aim: This question sought to investigate how school values were utilised in the process of distributing leadership among co-workers in these school contexts as principals sought to manage students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviour.

Summary data: There is evidence (see Table 10, Appendix F8, p.194) that all principals endorsed the viewpoint that the teaching of values was embedded in their curricula. Participants' reasons for weaving values into their curricula and for teaching them are summarised below.

Participants collectively indicated that values shaped, built, developed and corrected attitudes, character and behaviour. They were sources of positive behaviour management practices, staff commitment to the management of students challenging behaviour and helped staff to collectively and collaboratively work together.

They also indicated that teaching of values helped change behaviour patterns of both students and staff. They formed the basis of staff actions, and assisted the engagement of students in a proactive way. They also helped staff to focus at their ability not their disabilities and helped to manage or improve the environment; thus making the school a safe and positive place for students.

Question 7: From your experience in specialist education and as a principal, can you identify key elements you consider essential in ensuring that a school innovative program is effective such that it becomes central to the life of the school?

Aim: This question sought to validate the extent to which leadership was distributed over colleagues in the school context with respect to the effectiveness of innovation programs employed in the school.

Summary data: All participants (see Table 11, Appendix F9, p. 195) were able to identify key elements that drove them as leaders during the implementation of innovative programs designed to assist the school in the management of student challenging behaviour.

Elements reported as essential to ensure an innovative program was effective included; staff development and coaching, recorded incidents, engagement of competent and committed staff, resourcing, modelling, collaboration, encouraging staff to intentionally make a connection with their students, choosing, trusting, team commitment to goal achievement, staff respect for each other, working together, having compassion and facilitating open communication, sharing a vision and keeping behaviour management a top priority.

Question 8: How have you developed teacher and teacher aide skills that are relevant for student challenging behaviour management, as part of your leadership agenda to achieve the goals outlined in your school's mission and values?

Aim: The question sought to investigate how principals seek to develop staff skills, teaching and non teaching, as they endeavoured to prepare them to manage student challenging behaviour.

Summary data: All principals interviewed acknowledged that training staff was very important in the management of student challenging behaviour (see Table 12, Appendix F10, p.196, on teacher professional skills development). One of the principals illustrated the importance of staff training as a tool for school transformation as illustrated in vignette 1 (Appendix G1, p. 210).

In two of the schools, each principal was assisted by a non-teaching assistant principal. Each was responsible for the management of students with challenging behaviours. In the first school (see Vignette 2, Appendix G2, p.211) the deputy principal coordinated all issues and activities that dealt with challenging behaviour in collaboration with all stakeholders. The principal at this school reported positive results as a consequence of this form of distributed leadership.

In the other school (see Vignette 3, Appendix G3, p.212) a curriculum mismatch with students was discovered by the deputy principal responsible for challenging students' affairs, to be the key factor influencing the four students to exhibit challenging behaviours. The deputy principal took a leading role in facilitating a program called 'Connections' which eventually contributed to the effective management of the challenging students.

All principals interviewed indicated that they sought to actively develop assistant teacher skills to enable these staff to effectively manage students with a combination of an intellectual disability and challenging behaviour. Table 13 (Appendix F11, p.197) on development of assistant teacher skills in the management of student challenging behaviour, shows that principals developed assistant teacher skills through school based and outside the school based professional development programs. They

made use of specialist professionals and the leadership teams to provide on the job staff training to assistant teachers. They also made use of external agents to introduce new programs, coach and evaluate progress and reassure achievement of positive results. Principals indicated that they developed teacher aide skills through group discussions in staff meetings, effective communication, networks, and practical involvement in incident handling and building sound relationships. Aspects commonly included in the training programs included managing student challenging behaviour, encouraging the use of appropriate language, incident recording and evaluation and how to avoid personalising incidents.

5.3 Distributed Leadership at School Management Level

The aim of this section was to investigate how distributed leadership promoted, maintained and sustained staff morale as it was stretched over leaders, followers and the school context. The principals talked about how they generated staff interest, employed collaboration, promoted teamwork, cooperation, influenced confidence and provided support to staff as they sought to keep morale high in the process of managing students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviours.

Question 9: How do you use your personal leadership philosophy to generate teacher interest in managing students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour?

Aim: To investigate how principals kept staff morale high in their challenging specialist school context.

Summary data: In Table 14 (Appendix F12, p.198) all principals talked about how they generated staff interest in the management of student challenging behaviour. The principals

reported that staff development, resourcing, innovation, modelling, communication, coordination, building teams, and being available to support and assist staff were paramount issues in generating staff interest in the management of student challenging behaviour. None of the respondents mentioned any use of staff incentives.

Question 10: How do you use your personal leadership philosophy to promote teamwork?

Aim: This question was included to investigate how principals promoted teamwork as they shared leadership with their subordinates in their school contexts.

Summary data: Table 15 (Appendix F13, p.199) shows that cordial relationships and teamwork were rated very high by all schools studied, in the process of managing students. The table shows that principals in these schools employed diverse strategies to build relationships and teams. For example participant D shared a powerful view on how to promote teamwork in the process of managing student challenging behaviours. The participant said:

We facilitate opportunities for people to work on tasks, programs and time tables. We involve the whole school, consulting them and giving them ownership. However, staff needs to feel supported by, for example, keeping teacher pupil ratio good, answering their questions, considering their contributions and determining the positive and negative value of the program. We celebrate together, promoting the feeling that staff feel valued and supported. We treat people professionally, involve them, delegate responsibilities of decision making, educate them, communicate, spell out and model our expectations, support them when in need, respect them and ensure everyone is on the same page. We rely on workshops, staff development and ongoing development of work teams.

Question11: How do you use your personal leadership philosophy to improve staff cooperation?

Aim: This question was designed to investigate how principals sought to improve staff cooperation during the management of student challenging behaviour, given the complexity and personal risks involved in some incidents.

Summary data: Table 16 (Appendix F14, p.200) demonstrates that all participants reported actively working in their schools to improve staff cooperation in the management of student challenging behaviour. Some strategies used to improve staff cooperation included staff development, team building, influencing development of trust and relationships, communicating, planning, providing feedback, facilitating decision making opportunities, consulting, reinforcing referencing of mission and values and modelling.

Question 12: How do you use your personal leadership philosophy to promote cross-teaching faculty support?

Aim: This question was tailored to establish the extent to which principals encouraged collaborative approaches across faculties in the school as they sought staff support in managing students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviours.

Summary data: All principals interviewed endorsed the idea that promoting cross-teaching faculty support through collaboration was an important component of a school system. In Table 17 (Appendix F15, p.201) participants revealed that they promoted cross-teaching faculty support by facilitating ongoing improvement of their communication networks, through collaboration in staff meetings with management coaches, team coordinators, specialist teachers, and the school leadership team. Some principals engaged specialist teachers to coordinate

curricula and activities across faculties. For example participants F and J (Table 17) made the following interesting statements on this issue.

Participant F said:

Specialist teachers join classes twice per week. Staff gives feedback to each other to improve teaching practice. We use those more enthusiastic to model for others to observe. We use the collaborative teaching model. We do not dump programs onto teachers because that would lead to program failure.

Participant J said:

We use a collaborative management approach and we model the management process, avoiding feelings of isolation and improving communication networks. We aim to see success through a shared view of the school ethos.

Question 13: How do you use your personal leadership philosophy to instill teacher confidence in the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour?

Aim: The aim of this question was to find out how principals in specialist schools instil confidence in their teachers given the challenging incidents which they faced daily.

Summary data: In Table 18 (Appendix F16, p.202) principals revealed that they instil teacher confidence in the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviours by collaboratively involving them in decision making, setting an effective communication system, providing staff development and training, providing adequate

resources, listening to their concerns and setting standards for teachers to follow. They also reported that, in their schools, aspects such as the existence of collaborative teams, having a principal who was part of the collaborative team, reassuring staff, incident recording and evaluation, exchange programs with other schools, were also valuable in instilling teacher confidence in the management of students with intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviours in their schools. One principal indicated that, providing relevant support when staff face challenges was one of the most important aspects as exemplified in Vignette 4 (Appendix G 4 p.213).

5.4 Distributed Leadership at School Context Level

The next set of questions investigated how leadership regarding the management of students with challenging behaviour was distributed within, between and outside the school context thus drawing on the work of Harris (2008). Key concepts investigated are challenging behaviours, intervention strategies and innovation programs, and safe and stimulating environments.

Question14: To what extent is student challenging behaviour management a core issue in your school?

Aim: The aim of this question was to determine the extent to which student challenging behaviour management was prioritised as an issue in specialist schools.

Summary data: In response to this question the participants indicated that the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviours was to a larger extent a core issue in their schools. They maintained that they deal with these issues daily.

Question 15: To what extent does your school have students who would be highly challenging, emotionally and behaviourally, for mainstream schools?

Aim: The aim of this question was to establish the level of challenges the specialist schools faced as compared to mainstream schools.

Summary data: In response to the question above, the participants revealed that their schools enrolled students who were, to a larger extent, highly challenging for mainstream schools.

In support of their views the shared claims of these principals was, such students would not be easy to control in mainstream schools for a mix of reasons: because of “their nature”, the mainstream school curriculum, teacher pupil ratios and staff short of skills in handling challenging behaviours of students with an intellectual disability. One urban principal offered the following example on how one school’s curriculum contributed to the manifestation of a student challenging behaviour and how their school solved the problem.

A student who had been refusing to attend a secondary college because she could not cope with the curriculum there is now attending her school here without exhibiting the behaviour she used to exhibit at her previous mainstream school.

Most principals also indicated that they enrolled students in their schools either on full time or part time basis. Thus, some of the students were involved in dual enrolment, spending a fraction of schooling time in a special school and the other fraction at their mainstream school. Sometimes specialist staff from specialist schools visited mainstream schools to assist in the management of challenging students under the inclusion program. The inclusion program reduced pressure for permanent placement of students with challenging behaviour in specialist schools.

However, this dual enrolment practice initiated by some of these principals had led them to believe that specialist schools function within the wider school system as “dumping places” or “corrective centres” for students who are unusually challenging for mainstream schools. One of the regional principals expressed concern as to how some parents reacted when called to assist the school at those times when their child exhibited challenging behaviour that was classified as dangerous. This principal offered her/his comments on this matter in Vignette 5 (Appendix G5, p. 214).

Question 16: Can you identify any student challenging behaviours that have occurred in your school within the last three years? What types of student behaviours would you say are the most prevalent? What types are the most challenging for teachers and support staff in your school?

Aim: These questions were meant to validate and confirm the claim that behaviourally challenging incidents occurred in government specialist schools.

Summary data: All principals mentioned the types of student challenging behaviour that occurred in their schools within the last three years, the most challenging and most prevalent behaviours were listed in Table 19 (Appendix F17, p.203).

Table 19, shows detailed student behaviours identified by the respondents to have occurred in their schools within the last three years. One of the participants specifically mentioned that 15 % of their students exhibit very dangerous behaviour. An example of this offered by one principal is illustrated in Vignette 6 (Appendix G6, p.215).

Table 20 (Appendix F18, p.204) summarises the most prevalent and most challenging behaviours as reported by participants in Table 19. The figures in the table represent the number of participants who mentioned each of the behaviours. For example physical aggression was mentioned as the most prevalent by ten participants and as most challenging by eight participants.

The table shows that physical aggression was the most prevalent and most challenging behaviour in the schools studied followed by verbal aggression. The reports show that for 9 out of 10 principals the most prevalent behaviours were also the most challenging behaviours.

Question 17: What are the main effective whole school strategies your school uses to facilitate proactive social behaviour in students? For the past three years, can you identify any particular strategies which have proved effective in reducing student challenging behaviour in your school?

Aim: These questions sought to investigate how specialist schools managed students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviours and the extent to which they were achieving this goal. The questions also sought to validate the extent to which distributed leadership was spread among staff in these schools.

Summary data: The responses from these respondents (see Table 21, Appendix F19, p.205) show that all schools deployed a range of whole school policies and all strategies were recognised at whole school level. The strategies and programs adopted by their schools can be bundled as proactive or responsive. All the participants demonstrated that they recognised and valued each of these categories.

The principals' responses also indicate that strategies that were proactive and strategies that were responsive were equally used in these specialist schools and were both equally effective. Principals provided a generally shared perspective that proactive strategies functioned to reduce the prevalence of challenging behaviours and they equipped staff with skills for unexpected and impromptu incidents. They also indicated that responsive strategies were spontaneous and they required staff with reflective thinking skills that better enabled them to act both strategically and effectively on the spur of the moment during a challenging incident. The example in witnessed incident (see p.9) illustrates that challenging incidents spontaneously occurred in special schools and that the schools needed impromptu strategies to facilitate resolution of the problems.

In the explanation of the management of this incident, this principal reported using “divide and rule” strategies, and most principals interviewed emphasized that such strategies were very effective for the safety of staff and students. They indicated that they separated the challenging student from the rest of the students by locking “in” or “out” depending on the specific nature of the challenging incident.

This principal shared a view that the student's behaviours were “unique for them but the first of its kind on that day”, and a common routine matter to resolve in this school community. This incident provided some hands-on insights about the reality of the life of the school and its daily challenges.

Some principals indicated that their teachers were strongly advised to refrain from using direct intervention on their own because sometimes it was very dangerous to both students and staff as illustrated in Vignette 7 (Appendix G7, p.216).

Staff development on the history, types, causes, consequences of challenging behaviour and possible strategies to curb challenging behaviour was highly considered a priority by the principals. Recognising positive behaviour, reclaiming positive behaviour and including value education in school curricula were also regarded as very effective strategies used to drive challenging incidents out of specialist schools. Some principals reported they believed that for some extreme cases direct intervention and other forms of punishment should be used. Vignette 6 (Appendix G6, p.215) and vignette 8 (Appendix G8, p.217) are good examples.

Responses from the principals show that values education was very effective and was used consistently and extensively by all schools. These strategies sought to equip students with skills to have their needs met without resorting to becoming behaviourally challenging.

Recruiting and retaining best staff with relevant skills was very effective for the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviours. The example offered in Vignette 9 (Appendix G9, p.218) in one principal's words, illustrates this point. In this account, the principal offers no hint of the qualities of a student with an intellectual disability, but plenty about a child disadvantaged for a host of social reasons.

Question 18: Innovative programs can be used in a school to reduce incidents of student challenging behaviour and promote positive student behaviour patterns as part of the school's evolving culture. What is your comment on this statement?

Aim: The purpose of this question was to find out the extent to which innovation is encouraged among subordinates in specialist schools through mechanisms of distributed leadership theory.

Summary data: All principals agreed that being innovative helped to reduce incidents of student challenging behaviour giving reasons and examples as illustrated in their responses (see Table 22, Appendix F19, p. 208).

All respondents agree that innovation was very important in the management of student challenging behaviour indicating that each incident was unique and needed a responsive approach. They spoke well about being proactive and educating staff members about traditionally recognised and tested positive behaviour support programs such as tribes, circle time, farm, solving a jigsaw, you can do it program, growing pains, calmer classrooms, restorative programs, social skills program and values education, all of which they claimed assisted staff to cope well with the spontaneous challenging behaviour incidents that arose as part of everyday school life in these schools.

They also mentioned other less common strategies such as engaging management coaches, exchange programs with other schools, modifying curricula to suit students and keeping classes small.

Question 19: Is there anything you would like to add?

Aim: The aim of this question was to give principals the opportunity to voluntarily furnish the researcher with any other information they considered essential and relevant to the interview that perhaps had been missed out during the interview.

Summary data: At the end of the standardised interview schedule, all principals offered post-interview comments. These comments are summarised in Table 23 (Appendix F21, p.208). Principals pointed out that consistency and teamwork, staff support, ongoing learning, small class sizes and low enrolments, resourcing and innovation were considered important aspects in specialist schools in relation to the management of student challenging behaviour. They also reported that daily incidents were a serious concern for principals and their staff and they indicated that external support was not adequate enough to stop incidents of challenging behaviours exhibited by students with an intellectual disability.

5.6 Summary

This chapter summarised data collected from ten principals of Victorian government specialist schools on their perspectives of leadership regarding the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviours. A Distributed Leadership Theory framework was used to investigate critical issues regarding the management of student challenging behaviours at three levels; leadership, management and context levels. Aspects most frequently mentioned as important at leadership level included staff development, trust and relationships, mission and values and staff development.

Responses from principals at management level suggested teacher interest, collaboration, teamwork, cooperation, support and confidence were all attributes that helped them to distribute

leadership and consequently to manage students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviours.

The context level was investigated in light of three broad themes; reflection on exhibited challenging behaviours, intervention strategies and innovation programs, and safe and stimulating environments. The next chapter analyses and discusses the data presented in this chapter in relation to the research question and literature reviewed in chapters two and three.

Chapter Six

6.0 Data Analysis and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This study is concerned with the perspectives of principals in ten Victorian government specialist schools on school leadership regarding management of students with an intellectual disability who can exhibit challenging behaviour. The first section of this chapter addresses the key issues that relate to the importance of specialist schools and the management of contentious behaviour. The second examines how principals in these schools determine evidence of effective implementation of distributed leadership in their school contexts and the last section is a reflection of the specialist school context. The data were collected and presented within the distributed leadership frameworks at school leadership, management and context levels. Based on literature reviewed, principals' perspectives and the researcher's intuition, a distributed leadership model for managing students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour in specialist schools was developed (See Figure 8, p. 156).

Figure 5 (p. 109) displayed key issues addressed at the strategic level. These include staff empowerment, trust and relationships, shared school missions and values and staff development. At the management level, Figure 6 (p. 130) displayed issues discussed on how principals saw evidence of effective implementation of distributed leadership in their school contexts. Issues addressed were staff interest, collaboration, teamwork, cross-teaching faculty support, and cooperation and staff confidence. Figure 7 (p. 139) displays issues addressed on principals'

reflections on student challenging behaviours, safe and stimulating school environments, intervention strategies, programs and innovations.

The researcher sought to engage participants in a relaxed and informal discussion, despite the invariant and sequential order of interview questions. The interview questions were tailored so as to investigate principals' perspectives on leadership regarding their school staff management of contentious situations. An endless list of aspects related to distributed leadership could have been investigated and discussed; however, this discussion was limited to the aspects contained in figures 6, 7, and 8. The results were achieved by encouraging principals to talk about their school context specifically, how they encouraged a sharing of leadership, how they as leaders endeavoured to raise staff morale, and how they managed challenging behaviour in their schools. This section addresses the issues at leadership level as displayed in figure 6.

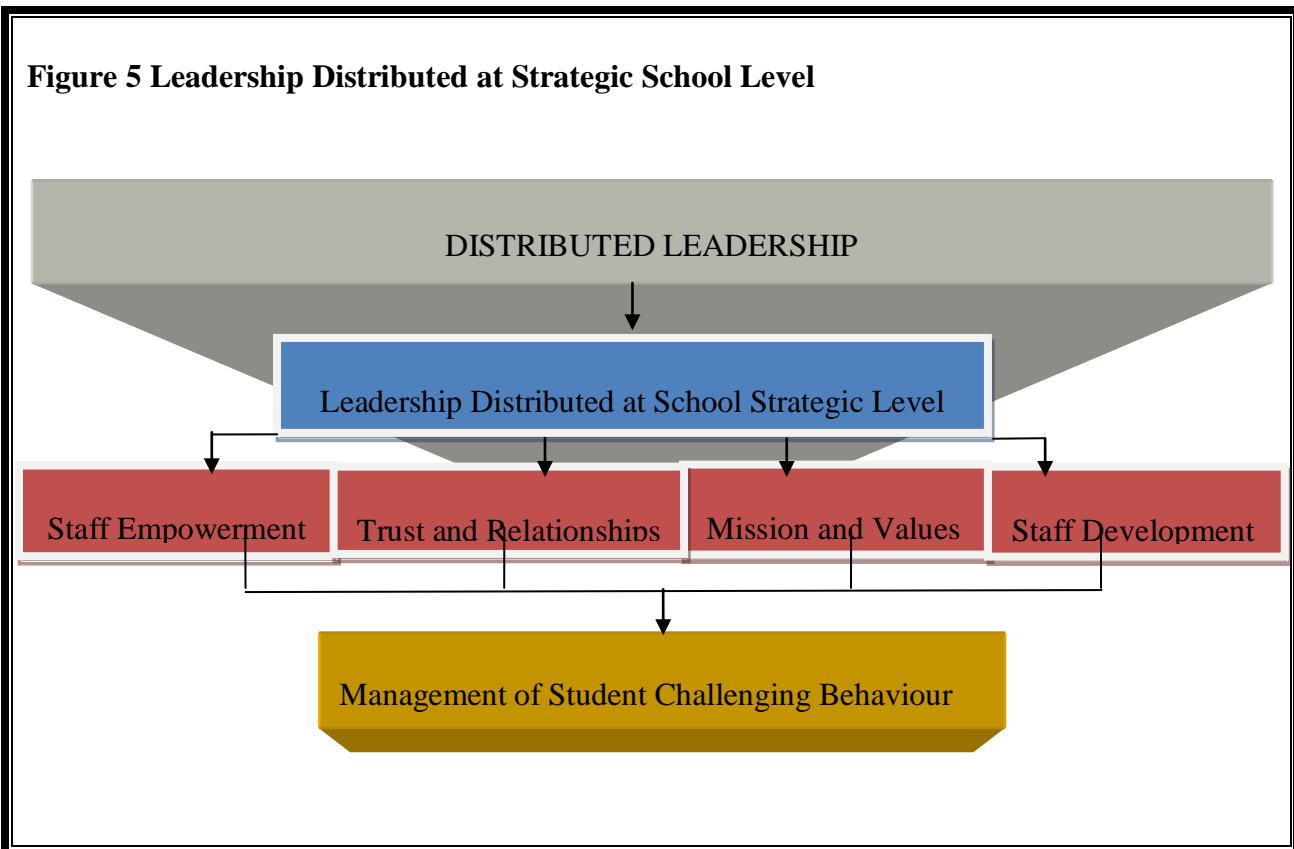
Figure 6 provides a pictorial representation of how principals in special schools endeavoured to lead the management of student challenging behaviours by distributing leadership over leaders through staff empowerment, creation and development of trust and relationships, utilising school missions and values and facilitating staff development

As reviewed in chapter two, Sergiovanni (2001), suggests distributed leadership to be one of the most powerful leadership paradigms because it is democratic and is committed to social justice principles. This idea is widely supported by contemporary scholars for example (Bennett, et al., 2003; Bolden, et al., 2003; Crockett, et al., 2012; Gronn, 2002; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Harris, 2008; Wyse, et al., 2010) who propose a paradigm shift from the traditional individual focused school leadership to a more democratic, collective, shared, dispersed or distributed form of leadership. Harris (2008) stresses “a move away from the leader-follower relationship to a focus upon the interactions between different leaders of various types and at various levels within the (school) organisation” (p.40). The Distributed Leadership Theory Framework provided by Spillane (2004, p.11) suggests that distributed leadership is such that leadership roles and

functions are to be stretched over leaders, followers and their particular context. Harris (2008) further develops the theory and suggests that distributed leadership can be modelled within, between and outside the school boundaries.

6.2 Leadership Distributed at Strategic School Level

Figure 5 Leadership Distributed at Strategic School Level



In light of these literature findings, from this researcher's point of view, it was pertinent to find out the extent to which distributed leadership was practised in Victorian government specialist schools not only generally but with regards to the wider behavioural management of students. Data collected from principals (Table 5, Appendix F3, p.187) on principals' personal stance on sharing leadership and management of student challenging behaviours; reveal that some form of distributed leadership was practised in the schools investigated.

All principals interviewed had ample opportunity to explain their personal stance on sharing leadership with regards to the management of students at their school. In Table 5, principals offered a broadly similar view to the extent that sharing leadership was very important. All principals articulated that shared understandings and shared decision making were key sources of better operations in their schools, so they willingly and actively promoted distributed leadership practices.

As a group, the respondents were clear about the way they understood shared leadership. As can be seen in the appendices, the use by participants, of key terms like sharing leadership, distributive leadership, and decentralisation, devolution of leadership and delegation of leadership was consistent with conceptual framing in the reviewed literature (Bennett, et al.; Bolden, et al., 2003; Davies, 2005; Harris, 2008, Harris, et al., 2007; Mayrowetz, 2008; Spillane, 2005; Wyse, et al. 2010).

This study also indicates that these principals were not particularly self-centred in their leadership approaches, a shared perspective which was congruent with literature sources on effective distributive practice. For example, the reviewed literature shares the view that a principal who leads in transformational improvement by sharing leadership with students, teachers, parents and community is more likely to be effective and successful in his/her leadership journey (Bowman, et al., 2007; Fullan, et al., 2006; Goleman, et al., 2002b). Moreover, Davis (2005); Bolden, et al., 2003; Hargreaves and Fink (2006); Harris (2008) and Lazenby (2010) observed transformational leadership to be essentially distributive in nature and to be sustainable in educational leadership circles.

Summations of these principals are that as a cohort of individual respondents, collectively, they all acknowledged not being able to manage student challenging behaviour on their own, as individuals. In such matters, they attested to being strongly reliant on their staff. Thus principals reported working collaboratively, not just with assistant principals and leadership teams, but with all other competent staff in the school and professionals from their communities. For example principal I in Table 5, on principals' stance on sharing leadership, put it this way:

I decentralise and devolve leadership among staff. I coach them and thank them for taking leadership roles. Distributing leadership is the source of better operations. Sharing leadership assists me to manage student challenging behaviour at our different campuses. I manage these campuses through assistant principals, leading teachers, team leaders, and section leaders. However, successful delegation of duties to staff requires me to have trust and faith in them (p.189).

The participants reported that teamwork was very important in the management of challenging behaviour exhibited by students with an intellectual disability. They generally agreed that the successful distribution of leadership was largely dependent on staff's level of interest, collaborative skills, teamwork, cooperation, support and confidence, training and the trust the principal had in their subordinates and professionals from communities. They also indicated the need for effective communication, coaching, modelling, monitoring, evaluating, reviewing and reflecting before, during and after the process of distributing leadership functions.

The principal's personal leadership stance on sharing leadership with staff was therefore considered a central issue in this study because the principals reported something of their own professional leadership practices in these specialist schools. For most principals leadership had to be shared in one form or the other. For example principal F (Table 5) in support of this statement said:

The principal cannot do everything on his own. Staff members are encouraged to have some degree of leadership skills and to be part of a

functional committee. Participating in decision making in a committee engenders a sense of ownership. The principal is reliant on the good will and professionalism of colleagues.

Based on their statements, the participants nonetheless, demonstrated that they practised distributed leadership differently and perhaps at different wave lengths, from practices aligned with traditional delegation or with assertive distribution. The theory of distributed leadership accounts for this. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) observed that distributed leadership manifests within a continuum, ranging from autocracy through traditional and progressive delegation, guided, emergent and assertive distribution to anarchy. None of the responses, however, indicated extreme leadership positions of autocracy or anarchy. Evidence from some principals in the study demonstrated that some principals employed both the distributive and the top-down; down-up approaches to leadership, for example participant D in Table 6 (Appendix F4, p.190) said,

We use a distributive approach to leadership, giving individual teachers the opportunity to lead an innovative program. We also use bottom-up and top-down approaches to the management of student challenging behaviour.

The use of both approaches is not peculiar to school D. Like any other school principal in Victoria a specialist school principal is bound by the DEECD policy which structures school leadership hierarchically. No matter how innovative a school principal can be, as long as the national leadership or state-level frameworks for principal responsibilities remain systematically or bureaucratically-framed, and perhaps not intrinsically distributive, the effort of innovative principals working towards distributed leadership will always have limits.

The discussion above demonstrates that principals in specialist schools in this study were willing to distribute leadership over their subordinates and professionals from their communities;

however, the reverse might not be true. The next section discusses how leadership was shared among co-leaders in specialist schools studied.

6.3 Distributed Leadership Stretched over Leaders

Findings by Leithwood et al. (2007) suggest that effectively distributed leadership needs to be coordinated, preferably in some planned way, to persons who have or can develop, the knowledge or expertise required to carry the leadership tasks expected of them. On a similar note, Gronn (2002) pointed out that distributed leadership practice requires a context where the principal is strongly supported by a vibrant team composed of the right people with relevant and diverse leadership gifts.

These ideas were reiterated by principals in this study which indicated that they distributed leadership functions to trustworthy, highly competent or even brilliant staff who had a flare in decision making (See Table 5 Appendix F3, p.189). For example, participant D said, “I delegate and trust people so I work with a brilliant decent team”, and participant G said:

I identify people I can trust and hand over the reins. For example I share leadership regarding student challenging behaviour with 3 assistant principals, 4 team leaders for the 4 sub schools, 2 leading teachers who are coaches for all sub schools, develop middle level staff giving them support, building relationships and helping them take key roles in the school. I am surrounded by people who pull in the same direction.

On a parallel note Spillane (2004) suggested that for school leadership to be effective, it needs to be distributed over leaders. This idea is widely supported by most other research authorities on school leadership. Sergiovanni (2001), Hargreaves and Fink (2006), Fullan (2006), Leithwood et al. (2007), Harris (2008) and Bush (2008) stress that school leadership has at its core the responsibility for policy formulation and organisational transformation which require team

effort. In support of this idea, Grillo (2011) maintains that school leadership should remain a strategic and all embracing force influencing, guiding in direction, course, action and opinion during the formulation and transformation processes. Thus the role of the school principal within this leadership practice does not vanish, but becomes primarily to hold the pieces of the school organisation together in a productive relationship (Sullivan, 2003) or to unify all stakeholders around the key values of the school (Bush, 2008).

These principal respondents (Table 8, Appendix F6, p.192) consistently acknowledge their own key role in the management of challenging behaviour exhibited by students with an intellectual disability. Table 8 reveals that the role of the principal included setting the management tone within the school by empowering staff and attending to staff and student welfare through a distribution of leadership functions and activities, via staff development, team building, resourcing and seeking staff support. However, by comprehensively listing their multiple roles in Table 8, in response to interview question 4, principals sometimes demonstrated a sharp contrast to the distributive leadership claim which they had made. If the principals were earnestly distributing leadership among their subordinates, they could not have a multiplicity of roles they claimed to perform in this table. They therefore demonstrated that if they were practising distributed leadership, then they stretched it over their subordinates to a limited extent or else, they might have just recalled their job description list as provided by the DEECD in this interview. Reports by participants A, C, D, E, H, I and J were good examples of job description listings alluded to. The best representative statement of the listings was reported by participant A, who said:

The principal is involved in developing behaviour management plans, recording and keeping incident data, convening and holding meetings to discuss and review accumulated data on challenging behaviour incidents. The principal encourages staff to suggest best approaches to recurring incidents, supports teamwork activities, and encourages staff creativity and involvement in managing challenging behaviour. S/he establishes school councils and encourages professional learning

scholarships, action research, and facilitates feedback and action learning.

It is, however, also interesting to note that none of the principals mentioned student challenging behaviour management as part of their job description list.

In light of the above, investigating how principals in specialist schools, really distributed leadership over leaders, were imminent in this study. Responses from principals B, C, E, G and I (Table 5) specifically indicated that sharing with leaders, leadership regarding the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviour was a day-to-day practice operational challenge. Principals in these schools, appeared to have the autonomy to manage student challenging behaviour through leaders grouped as ‘professional learning teams’, ‘school committees’, ‘subject coordinators’, ‘assistant principals’, ‘team leaders’, ‘coaches for sub-schools’ and ‘section leaders’ depending on the size of the school and its structures. For example, principal G who led a four-campus school said:

I identify people I can trust and hand over the reins. For example, I share leadership regarding student challenging behaviour with three assistant principals, four team leaders for the four sub schools, two leading teachers who are coaches for all sub schools, develop middle level staff giving them support, building relationships and helping them take key roles in the school.

These principals did not only claim to have handed over the reins to staff, but as a group professed to seek to empower their staff to make decisions particularly as incidents occurred in different sub-schools, school sections, departments and classrooms. By so doing, the principals built school cultures that were responsive to the complex needs of students.

6.3.1 Staff Empowerment

Sergiovanni (2001) observed that empowering staff is important for the cultivation of a sense of ownership, increased commitment and motivation to work. He maintains that lack of empowerment may result in reduced commitment, mechanical behaviour, indifference, dissatisfaction and alienation (Sergiovanni, 2001). Leithwood and Beatty (2008) concur and reiterate that “empowering leadership promotes teacher ownership of school directions” (p. 58). Similarly, Robinson (2006) maintains that the success of any school development or improvement depends on staff skills to implement new programs and/or skills of the management teams in the school and the extent to which the teams are empowered to act.

These observations, drawn from the research literature are congruent with the expressed views of these principals. Consistently the respondents attested that they empowered staff at both leadership and management levels to make better decisions on the management of student challenging behaviour. For example, participant A (Table 5) reported that s/he empowered staff to make decisions whenever possible at all levels. This principal said:

I decentralise the management of student challenging behaviour to classrooms and empower staff to make decisions whenever possible at all levels. However I as principal have a critical role of setting the pace, building teams, monitoring, reviewing, reflecting and making suggestions for change.

Throughout the interviews, the principals consistently detailed that they empowered staff to manage students with challenging behaviour, through on-going professional development and training, via collaborative meetings, team discussions, or through the provision of other resources and form of support.

Most principals emphasised the essence of the principles of trust and relationships and the indispensability of communication and modelling in school leadership as they endeavoured to

distribute leadership among colleagues with regards to the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviour.

6.3.2 Trust and Relationships

Trust and relationships in school leadership are inseparable concepts. Reviewed literature (Harris, 2008) demonstrates that in distributed leadership circumstances, all relationships are important and that distributed leadership can only be enacted if there is mutual trust and agreement about the way tasks are undertaken. Principals are expected to foster a climate of trust and openness by involving, guiding and helping staff and schools need staff who can envision how things can be done differently (Ker, 2010). So what is trust and how is it established in specialist schools?

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) consider trust to be a resource which creates and consolidates energy, commitment and relationships. Taking a similar stance, Keeffe and Carrington (2007) pointed out that positive trust relationship with all stakeholders, even in very difficult circumstances, can reinforce positive staff attitudes, commitment and self-worth within the school context. These researchers agree that if the relationship of trust is broken, commitment and mutual relationships vanish.

Within a similar vein principals D, G, H and I (Table 5) reported that trust was important for team and relationship building and was a central issue in sharing leadership successfully at all school levels. Principals B and C conveyed similar views in Table 11 (Appendix F9, p.195) when they reported key elements essential for the implementation of an innovative program for the management of student challenging behaviour. The latter respondents also stressed that respect for each other, communication and working relationships are powerful elements in the

implementation process of an intervention program in the management of student challenging behaviour. It is not out of the ordinary to note that principals were reluctant to share leadership with everyone save people they trusted; however, they avoided mentioning that the professional trust relationship need to be reciprocal. School staff needs also to be able to trust their principals for them to willingly share leadership functions with them.

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) emphasise that effective school leadership depends and indeed thrives on trust. In trust relationships staff rely on each other, act according to agreed on or assumed expectations in a context of shared understanding and assumptions of goodwill and faith. A typical example is principal G in the last example above. The principal in this instance stated being willing to only hand over the reins of leadership to people s/he trusted. This means that in this school if a teacher was assumed by the principal to be insufficiently trustworthy, s/he could not be part of the leadership or management team, implying that they might not be given the opportunity to independently lead a class and make decisions regarding the management of challenging incidents. This would, however, limit the idea of distributed leadership in specialist schools and would leave the principal with an insurmountable load to carry.

The discussion above shows that leadership in specialist schools was to a large extent distributed over leaders in the schools except in special cases where some members were not sufficiently trusted and relationships were not favourable.

However it is interesting to note that some schools recognised that the DEECD played a role in facilitating distributed leadership. In Table 12 (Appendix F10, p.196) on perspectives of principals' on teacher professional skills development, principal G indicated that in her/his school, relationships were built through leadership workshops sponsored by this authority and facilitated by external agents of change. This report was in contrast with reports by some

principals who expressed the concern that the DEECD was not supporting them in the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviour (see principals F and I in Table 22 (Appendix F20, p. 208), on additional information). Perhaps these principals were not aware that the authority provided this support.

In Table 15 (Appendix F13, p.199) summarising how principals promoted teamwork, respondents stressed the importance of relationship building as one of the core elements of promoting teams. For example, principals A, D, F and H (Table 15) reported that building sound relationships required the professional treatment of staff and the creation of opportunities for staff to work together and learn from each other. The majority shared the view that the whole school had to be included in management programs and all had to be valued, respected, consulted, supported and had to partake in celebrations of successes. Communication was branded to be one of the key factors influencing relationships in schools D, E and I. These reports about trust and relationships are widely supported by the reviewed literature (see Bret and Dent, 2010, Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, Harris, 2008 and Ker, 2010). Respondent E made the most powerful statement in this report regarding relationship building and communication in a specialist school spread over different campuses. The principal said:

We operate on different campuses so good relationships are important for small teams to work together so that the whole team works together, communication is very important through weekly bulletins, newsletters 4 times a term, staff meeting once every 3 weeks, administration meeting every 3 weeks and whole school professional learning twice per term.

This principal raised the point that some schools operated from different campuses, making it more complex for the principal to manage on-spot student challenging incidents. Therefore s/he seems strongly dependent on empowering staff, establishing an effective communication network within an environment characterised by trust and good relationships, in order to promote effective management of students with an intellectual disability who also evidence challenging

behaviour. The next section discusses the importance of school mission statements and school values to principals who sought to influence staff to take distributed leadership functions and activities in their schools.

6.3.3 Mission and Values

Reviewed literature favours continual organisational, pedagogic and student well-being improvement through the daily enactment of shared vision, mission and values in all school functions. For example Dimmock and Walker (2005) suggest that an effective school leadership team should effectively manage change and foster continual school improvements through shared vision, mission and values that promote collaboration and enhance quality in teaching and learning.

Respondents' views were consistent with this view. Principals universally reported that school mission statements and values significantly assist them to manage challenging behaviour exhibited by students with an intellectual disability. In each of these unique statements, they conveyed a shared view that school mission statements were substantive whole school statements which maintained consistency especially in a school with high staff turnover. Generally principals maintained that mission statements were common and important guidelines to effective principal leadership, guiding the principal and staff even in extenuating and difficult circumstances. For example, participants A, Table 9 (Appendix F7, p.193) said:

Mission statements are universal guidelines facilitating the process of managing student challenging behaviour because they work as the foundation of the school's programs or a point of departure and reference for staff, helping them to be proactive and responsive in all circumstances, and to have shared understanding of the school's goals. They provide a shared understanding of the goals of the school.

The reports made by school principals on the function and enabling power of a mission statement demonstrated that principals knew the purpose of their school's mission statements. It also demonstrates how mission statements could facilitate the distribution of leadership over other leaders. The principals (Table 9) on the enabling power of mission statements reported a mission statement as an indispensable tool for specialist schools as it articulated the school's areas of focus and purpose of establishment. It was the point of departure for all school programs, a common guideline to planning and reference for staff, the staff's performance platform, and a reminder for staff to do what was right and the source of school mottos and slogans. They also reported that a mission statement encouraged and facilitated effective management of student challenging behaviour and generated interest in shared or collective achievement of success.

There was a strong indication in the data that principals often used mission statements as the stepping stone for innovation in their school leadership programs and activities. Arguably the school mission and its values acted as the power house and guiding principle in preparing staff development plans which the principal and leadership team used to facilitate effective management of challenging behaviour exhibited by students with an intellectual disability in their schools.

All participants reported 'respect' to be a core value in their schools (see Table 10, Appendix F8 p.194). This is consistent with reviewed literature, and in Australia at a wider cultural level, where values such as respect and a fair go are part of Australia's common democratic way of life, which includes equality, freedom and the rule of law. They reflect Australia's commitment to a multicultural and environmentally sustainable society where all are entitled to justice so should be incorporated into school values (Department of Education Science and Training, 2005). Values were reported as the source of power for effective leadership in Table 10 and the literature reviewed (Caldwell & Harris, 2009; Loreman, et al., 2005). For example, participant A

(Table 10) demonstrated how values were understood to be a source of power for effective leadership as follows:

Values help staff to facilitate the engagement of students in a proactive way, looking at students' ability not their disabilities. Values are the driving force which helps us as leaders, to effectively encourage staff to work together, to manage or improve the environment, making the school a safe and positive place for students. Values provide opportunities for students' success and remind staff to be fair in their actions."

Principals interviewed reported that shaping school values with staff and incorporating them in school curricula played a key role in the management of challenging behaviour of students with an intellectual disability. For example, respondent D in Table 10 said:

The enabling power of values is reliant on shared choice, shaping and teaching of values and encouraging teachers to be committed to the management of students with challenging behaviour. For example, openness and fairness foster self-esteem and independence in students and respect propagates a caring attitude among staff.

This accession is in tandem with reviewed literature. For example, values based education was reported to have the propensity to strengthen students' self-esteem, optimism and commitment to personal fulfilment; and help students exercise ethical judgment and social responsibility; and building character (Caldwell & Harris, 2009; Department of Education Science and Training, 2005). Participant F (Table 10) offered a good example demonstrating the power of values education as follows:

Teaching through values is a source of commitment to the management of student challenging behaviour. For example, students can be taught to be inquisitive, supportive and happy, and to have pride in their achievements, to trust and respect each other.

The next section discusses the value of staff development as a central issue in leadership

distribution as principals endeavour to manage students with an intellectual disability who present challenging behaviour in specialist schools studied

6.3.4 Staff Development

Some researchers (Abdini, 2010; Daft, 2005; Florian, 2007; Overton, 2002) stress that staff professional development is important in the life of a school. In this study, Tables 12 (Appendix F10, p.196) and 13 (Appendix F11, p.197) all respondents, supporting the idea, emphasised that equipping staff with skills and training them to manage and prevent challenging behaviour is very important in the professional life of a specialist school. For example, participant G in Table 12 emphasised that:

Programs to develop teacher skills in managing student challenging behaviour are ongoing and a never stop approach. From these programs teachers gain skills to be innovative and build relationships through workshops sponsored by the education department and facilitated by external agents. The leadership team and staff also visit other schools and learn from them under the inclusive program.

Participant C stressed the importance of staff training as follows:

Actively engage teacher assistants in activities such as making new plans to meet new needs as in planning the farm project where students do productive work, residential programs and making individual education plans. Also train them in student education needs assessment and in assisting students to manage their own behaviour through home grown voluntary clubs, leisure skills and discussion circles. However, make sure that they do not personalise challenging incidents and never ask them to do what you can't do yourself. An open door philosophy encourages a positive learning attitude for staff. Educate teacher assistants on challenging behaviour policies for example, they should supervise the students under their care all the time and encourage ongoing positive communication between them and the students.

Principals consistently reported that in their own schools, they promoted an effective staff management with respect to the typical challenging behaviour exhibited by students with an intellectual disability by facilitating ongoing staff development. The reports in these tables list several strategies, plans and programs being used to professionally develop staff both teaching and none teaching and equipping them to face the challenge in specialist schools. Participants also listed the important skills developed during staff training in their schools. For example, participant I (Table 12) said:

Staff needs training on sharing responsibility, the need to support each other, the importance of staff stability, the function of leadership teams, teacher professional learning and social interaction, effective teaching and classroom management, cooperative learning and 'no put down' policy, positive staff models, teaching social skills, values and conflict resolution.

Respondents universally reported Staff development, to be indispensable in specialist schools and the participants claimed that as principals, they benefited directly from it. Appendix G (pp. 210-218) identifies 9 contextual illustrations of which participants used vignette 1 (p.210), vignette 3 (p.212) and vignette 8 (p.217) to stress this point.

For example, Vignette 1, in which staff used to react to challenging behaviour by instantly correcting negative behaviour exhibited, demonstrates how the school changed its approach to behaviourally challenging incidents after staff development. During a staff development workshop, the teachers at this school were taught that when working with students who exhibit mild forms of challenging behaviour they should not concentrate on the behaviour but ignore it and instead, work to re-focus and re-engage the student on the task at hand.

Another example, Vignette 3, in which four students consistently disturbed the daily activities of the school, demonstrates how the school successfully managed to defuse challenging behaviour

by restructuring the curriculum for the students after the assistant principal attended a professional development program which they called “Connections”.

In Vignette 8 the principal explained the need for staff development on the consequences of using direct intervention for behaviourally challenging students. The principal had learnt a lesson when s/he suffered a student bite during a direct intervention process. This example illustrated that all staff, including the principal, needed ongoing training on managing behaviourally challenging students.

Vignette 9 (Appendix G9, p.216) demonstrates that professional development helped staff to realise the need to show respect and care to students who exhibited challenging behaviour. This point is demonstrated by the principal’s opening statement; “When children are at their worst that is the time they need us most.”

Other benefits of staff development listed by the participants included unity of purpose, sharing with staff from other schools and developing training skills within the school. For example participant D in Table 15 (Appendix F13, p.199) reported that professional development helped get staff to pull in the direction of the leader. In this school staff was given the opportunity to facilitate in staff development sessions. Participant E (see Table 7, Appendix F5, p.191) gave leading teachers opportunities to visit other schools to exchange ideas on management of student challenging behaviour. School F makes use of train-the-trainer programs. The principal said:

I believe that powerful messages can come from outside the school. External agents assist to train staff. For example, with the “You can do it” program, we sent staff to a “train-the-trainer” professional development workshop where a specialist facilitated. The trained staff then trained and disseminated the information to the rest of the school. The trained staff modelled the program for the whole staff who in turn discussed the merits and demerits of the program before implementation.

Staff development programs implemented by most schools appeared to benefit them; however, it was vital to note that not all staff development led to positive results because strategies which worked in certain contexts could not work in others.

Participants also reported that they used both internal and external agents of change to develop staff skills on the management of challenging behaviour exhibited by students with an intellectual disability (see Table 6 Appendix F4, p.190 and Table 7, Appendix F5, p.191).

Principals interviewed revealed that they relied on internal staff for most staff development programs on the management of student challenging behaviour. The main reason forwarded in Table 6, was that use of internal agents of change was not only effective but less expensive and more convenient. They reiterated that using internal agents influenced teamwork and good relationships, fostered ownership of results, a culture of unity and self professional development. Indications from principals' views were that using internal agents to train staff facilitated an ongoing day-on-day staff development process. These principals consistently affirmed that they preferred to work with an effective leadership team of skilled and talented staff. They reported that they valued modelling, mentoring and assistance programs, building a solid leadership team, training-the-trainer programs, exchange programs with other schools, distributive leadership, and professional learning teams to be central to their staff development programs.

All participants reported that they had engaged external agents of change in their schools to facilitate in professional development programs on management of student challenging behaviour. They reported that their schools had benefited a lot from external agents' effort. For example, participant F in Table 7 had to say, "I believe that powerful messages can come from outside the school. External agents assist to train staff".

Participant H in the same table demonstrates how powerful external agents can be if engaged to facilitate in a specialist school. The participant said:

External agents are experts who share our philosophy, expertise and credibility. They are facilitators who use compromise, collaborative and robust conversations, negotiations and win lose orientations. We have engaged 5 regular consultants for this school. I invite consultants to introduce my vision as if it were theirs and staff has been very receptive to new ideas coming from outside the school.

The participants reported that some of the agents engaged are provided and funded by the DEECD and include management coaches, psychologists, therapists and other specialist staff. Some principals said they are dependent on external agents because their staff tended to listen to the voice of the external agent more than the principal's. However, some principals indicated that sometimes the use of external agents was expensive and time consuming, so using internal agents was a better option. Principal C was circumspect and cautious about the use of external agents of change in her/his school. The principal's comment was:

Sometimes there is no need for external agents. We need to protect our image as a school. Their meetings normally lack consistency. If used, their role should be communicated well and staff should understand reasons for engaging them.

Participant C also reported that professional development meetings encouraged staff to take a lead in managing students who exhibited challenging behaviour and in Table 5 (Appendix F3, p.189) s/he stressed inviting staff to lead. The principal said, "We depend on a meetings and meetings and more meetings approach, characterised by clear reports and staff invitation to lead, participate and make decisions in a school committee".

The interviewed principals reported that their schools actively supported the Central Education Authority's inclusive principle by participating in inclusion programs in mainstream schools. Some principals revealed that they enrolled students in their schools either on full time or part time basis. Meaning that, some of the students were involved in dual enrolment, spending a fraction of schooling time in a special school and the other fraction at their mainstream school. Sometimes specialist staff from special schools visited mainstream schools to assist and share with staff in the management of student challenging behaviour under the inclusion program (see Table 12, Appendix F10, p.196). Participant G in this table said, "The leadership team and staff also visit other schools to share and learn from them under the inclusion program".

However, this dual enrolment practice made some interviewed principals think and feel that their schools were being exploited, put under unnecessary pressure and used as dumping places or rather corrective centres for students who challenged the resources and abilities of mainstream schools. They thought the practice was one of the ways mainstream schools were showing resistance against the inclusion program. Some principals used the phrase dumping places specifically and others conveyed implicitly a similar meaning to corrective centres where students who were highly challenging and incorrigible for mainstream schools were dumped for character and behaviour correction, shaping, building and development.

6.4 Section Summary

The aim of this section was to investigate how principals, in specialist schools studied, distributed leadership over co-leaders as they sought to manage challenging behaviours of students with an intellectual disability. Key issues investigated at leadership level included how principals empowered these leaders, developed trust and good working relationships with them, utilised school missions and values as positive devices and how they facilitated professional development in their endeavour to manage challenging situations.

The research found that, principals in these schools reported breaking new ground in distributing leadership over the leadership staff in their schools and professionals from the wider community as they endeavoured to develop the most effective and proactive ways of managing their students, in accord with their schools' mission statements and values. These leaders were empowered by the principals to make decisions on the management of student challenging behaviour, through modelling, professional development and training, team building, collaborative meetings and discussions in leadership teams. The study revealed principals preferred to distribute leadership to staff they trusted and that, relationships were paramount to the spreading of leadership among team members in these schools. On the evidence of this research, there was a good case to claim that leadership in special schools was to a large extent distributed over co-leaders in the schools except in special cases where some members were less trusted and relationships were not favourable.

The research demonstrated that mission statements and values played a pivotal role in the management of student challenging behaviour by directing and refocusing leadership teams on matters regarding the management of student challenging behaviour. There was a strong indication in the reports that principals used mission statements as the stepping stones for innovation in their school leadership programs and activities. The report also demonstrates that staff development and training were the pillars on which the management of student challenging behaviours was based. Importantly, the study also suggests that communication provided the linkage which assisted principals to spread leadership over their subordinates and other community professionals.

Although some sections of the report had the potential to demonstrate some doubt as to the extent to which principals employed distributed leadership practices in their schools, the general

picture is that principals in these schools distributed leadership to staff and community professionals.

The findings of the report have implications not just for specialist schools studied but for all specialist schools in Victoria and in Australia as a whole. In schools where distributed leadership is the practice, implications are that principals realise that the education system is hierarchically structured and these hierarchies are maintained for efficiency, specialisation of functions and for control purposes. The next section addresses how principals see evidence of effective implementation of distributed leadership in their school contexts.

6.5 Distributed Leadership at School Management Level

Figure 6 Staff Morale and Distributed Leadership Framework at Management Level

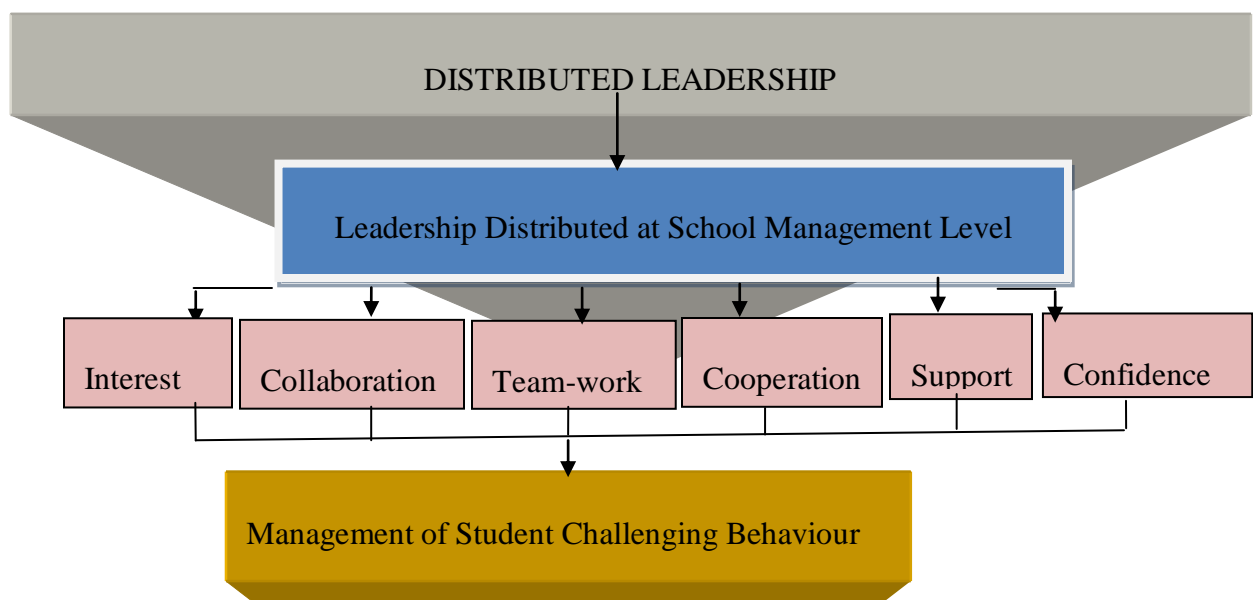


Figure 6 is a pictorial representation of how principals sought to raise staff morale as they endeavoured to distribute leadership among their co-workers at school management level.

Co-workers of the school principals included deputy principals, senior and junior teachers, students, parents and the community. In this study principals reported that they distributed leadership over deputies, senior staff, junior staff and professionals from the community.

Working under these circumstances, participants revealed that they envisioned success in their efforts by addressing issues of staff interest, collaboration, teamwork, cooperation, support and confidence within their particular school contexts.

6.5.1 Staff Interest

Generating staff interest in the management of students with a combination of challenging behaviour and an intellectual disability was considered one of the key roles of principals in schools studied. In Table 14 (Appendix F12, p.198) these principals indicated that they generated staff interest by seeking to involve them in sharing responsibility, demonstrating to them how success can be achieved and how programs can benefit them and students, how other teachers have been successful, providing training and support, consulting them and being proactive, selling and buying new ideas and getting them to remember that “kids come first”. They also reported seeking to generate interest in their staff by encouraging feedback, active listening, modelling, and providing adequate resources, especially modern technology and techniques. Participant B (Table 14) shared as follows:

Seek for better ways of addressing situations, discuss appropriateness of a program, moving with time, e.g. use of interactive smart boards, good

response and feedback, encourage creativity and search for knowledge, make use of provided resources; success makes them proactive to change.

Findings in Table 14 are consistent with reviewed literature that principals can effectively generate teacher interest in the process of challenging behaviour management by developing a shared and inspiring sense of direction for the school, modelling appropriate behaviour, rewarding teachers for success with their students, providing resources for teachers, buffering teachers from disruption, allowing teachers' discretion over classroom decisions and minimising student disorder (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; NCSL, 2009; Nowaczewski, 2003; Zartsky, et al., 2008). However, none of the respondents mentioned rewarding staff in any way. The implications are that staff may not be effectively responsive to the distributive leadership paradigm innovation because they know their official leaders are paid for the leadership role they play. If principals are going to successfully spread leadership roles to staff, they need to consider giving them some form of incentive that would go with the roles.

6.5.2 Collaboration

Collaboration in a school refers to an interactive and ongoing process where staff with differing expertise and knowledge work together in order to find solutions to mutually agreed on problems (Foreman, 2008). Keefe and Carrington (2007) add that collaboration "involves the interrogation of various perspectives through cycles of clarification and argumentation until awareness is raised and a level of consensus is established between all stakeholders" p. 189. During a collaborative process professionals, parents and students can work together to achieve the mutual goal of delivering an effective educational program designed to mitigate student challenging behaviour (Hardman, et al., 2005). Therefore any successful collaborative venture requires teamwork, cooperation, staff confidence, cross-teaching faculty support and a "multi-way" communication.

Principal C, in Table 11 (Appendix F9, p.195) mentioned “being collaborative” among other elements, to be an essential element that ensured a student challenging behaviour strategy was effectively implemented such that it became central to the life of the school. This is so because collaboration often results in consensual decision making and collective results thereby fostering ownership. Participant C said, “Trust and passion for work, a genuinely committed team, resourcing, time, enabling support, understanding, staff choice, respect for each other and being collaborative are essential elements”.

Vignette 2 (Appendix G2, p.211) demonstrates the successes of the school vice principal who worked collaboratively with staff, professionals and families in the management of students with an intellectual disability who presented challenging behaviour. This form of distributed leadership approach was reported to be working well in this school.

6.5.3 Teamwork

Teamwork in a specialist school involves a group of professionals, parents and students who join together to plan and implement an appropriate educational program for effective management of students with challenging behaviour (Hardman, et al., 2005). Table 15 (Appendix F13, p.199) shows that teamwork was rated highly by all schools studied in the process of managing challenging behaviour exhibited by students with an intellectual disability. The participants reported that teamwork promoted effective management of student challenging behaviour. So team building was an ongoing process in their schools. They developed teamwork through ongoing team development and training. They sustained teamwork by making teams functional, valuing, supporting, recognising and rewarding team contribution. They maintained teamwork by promoting effective partnerships with individual staff and teams, coordinating support by promoting quality communication, flexibility, efficient arrangements and resourcing. They kept up team morale by being sensitive to staff needs, managing trauma and limiting impact among staff and providing critical incident debriefing and counselling to individuals and team members.

Overall the respondents agreed that learning from each other and working together as a united school team took precedence in the management of student challenging behaviour. In Table 15, participant D shared on how s/he as a principal sought to promote teamwork as s/he endeavoured to distribute leadership over her/his workmates. The participant said:

We learn from each other through professional development workshops outside school hours. This way we get the majority of staff to pull in our direction. We have set up structures and we are prepared to share responsibilities. We facilitate opportunities for people to work on tasks, programs and time tables. We involve the whole school, consulting them and giving them ownership. However, staff needs to feel supported by, for example, keeping teacher pupil ratio good, answering their questions, considering their contributions and determining the positive and negative value of the program. We celebrate together, promoting the feeling that staff feel valued and supported. We treat people professionally, involve them, delegate responsibilities of decision making, educate them, communicate, spell out and model our expectations, support them when in need, respect them and ensure everyone is on the same page. We rely on workshops, staff development and ongoing development of work teams.

This principal demonstrated that s/he was not alone in this leadership journey. S/he tried to spread leadership roles among staff and s/he valued human relations in her/his approach to distributed leadership, as illustrated by words used like “We learn from each other---”, “staff need to feel supported---”, “We celebrate together---” and “--- respect them---” and consistent with literature (Carrington & Robinson, 2006; Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Hardman, et al., 2005; Seikaly, 2011; Shaddock, et al., 2007; Tomal, 2007; Wyse, et al., 2010).

6.5.4 Staff Cooperation

Cooperation evolves as members establish trust and respect for each other through meaningful interaction within the school context (Keeffe & Carrington, 2007). All principals in this study attested that influencing staff cooperation is important in facilitating effective management of challenging behaviour exhibited by students with an intellectual disability. In table 16 (Appendix

F14, p.200) principals indicate that they influenced staff cooperation through staff development, effective communication, making their expectations clear, supporting them, involving them in decision making and acknowledging and rewarding the results of their effort, establishing an effective leadership team, building mutual trust, showing love and having faith in them. The same table also shows that developing in teachers a culture of understanding the mission and values of the school, the nature of students in the schools, what is happening in and around the school and the need for change stimulated teacher cooperation in the management of students with a combination of challenging behaviour and an intellectual disability.

6.5.5 Staff Support

Ashman and Elkins (2009) observed that teachers need in-school support and time to collaborate and work with teams including other teachers, specialists and parents as they endeavour to facilitate cross-teaching faculty support. They need support from specialists available inside and outside the school so that they can work together, share ideas and plan to achieve agreed mission goals.

This assertion was supported by all principals interviewed who reported that promoting cross-teaching faculty support through collaboration was an important component of a school system. In Table 17 (Appendix F15, p.201) principals revealed that they promoted cross-teaching faculty support by facilitating ongoing improvement of their communication networks, through collaboration in staff meetings with management coaches, team coordinators, specialist teachers, and the school leadership team. Some principals reported that they engaged specialist teachers to coordinate curricula and activities across faculties. Participant F demonstrated how s/he promoted cross-teaching faculty support as follows:

Specialist teachers join classes twice per week. Staff gives feedback to each other to improve teaching practice. We use those more enthusiastic

to model for others to observe. We use the collaborative teaching model. We do not dump programs onto teachers because that would lead to program failure.

Similarly, participant J illustrated as follows; “We use a collaborative management approach and we model the management process, avoiding feelings of isolation and improving communication networks. We aim to see success through a shared view of the school ethos”.

The two examples above illustrated the importance of collaboration and communication in seeking to promote cross-teaching faculty support as the principals endeavoured to spread leadership, regarding the management of student challenging behaviour, among their co-workers. These illustrations are in tandem with literature that stresses the indispensability of collaboration in the leadership and management of specialist schools (Claridge, 2011; Daft, 2005; Florian, 2007; Harris, 2008; Overton, 2002; Shaddock, et al., 2007)

6.5.6 Staff Confidence

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) define staff confidence to be a source of energy that can urge positive expectations for favourable outcomes and can influence staff to willingly commit themselves to taking a lead in the management of student challenging behaviour. They emphasised that “Once lost, confidence is difficult to regain” (p.216). Participants were asked to talk about how they spur staff confidence in the management of student challenging behaviour.

In Table 18 (Appendix F16, p.200) participants reveal that they, as principals, instil teacher confidence in the management of challenging behaviour of students with intellectual disability by collaboratively involving them in decision making, communicating effectively, providing

staff development and training, providing adequate resources, listening to their concerns and setting standards for them to follow. They also revealed that, in their schools, they valued the existence of collaborative teams and appreciated principals who were part of the collaborative teams, reassuring staff, incident recording and evaluation and exchanging programs with other schools. One of the principals indicated that, providing support when staff face challenges was also one of the most important aspects in instilling staff confidence. This principal said; “So we appointed an assistant principal whose main role was attending to student challenging behaviour and providing support to staff during incidents. (See Vignette 3, Appendix G3, p.212).

6.6 Section Summary

The objective of this section was to investigate how principals took stock of effective implementation of distributive leadership in their school contexts. The section also investigated the extent to which leadership was distributed among staff as principals sought to raise staff morale in the process of managing student challenging behaviour. The study demonstrated that the issues addressed at management level were interrelated with aspects addressed at strategic and context levels and that leadership was distributed over staff members to a considerable extent. Principals in this study achieved this goal because they generated staff interest, sanctioned collaboration, promoted teamwork and cross-teaching faculty support, influenced cooperation, and instilled staff confidence.

The study found that principals in specialist schools generated **staff interest**, as they tried to spread leadership among their colleagues, by attending to staff professional welfare and responding to their professional resource needs. They generated staff interest by facilitating ongoing professional development and support, encouraging feedback, active listening and modelling, proactive approaches and providing adequate resources especially modern technology and techniques. However, none of the principals mentioned rewarding or giving incentives to staff who take leadership functions in the management of student challenging behaviour.

Collaboration was reported as an effective leadership tool in the management of student challenging behaviour in both single campus and multi-campus schools. However collaborative ventures were reported to require teamwork, cooperation, staff confidence, cross-teaching faculty support and a multi-way communication.

The study revealed that principals promoted **cross-teaching faculty support** through collaborative meetings with management coaches, team coordinators, specialist teachers, and the school leadership teams as they sought to stretch leadership over their co-workers.

Teamwork was reported to be the central theme in distributed leadership. Principals reported that team building was ongoing in their schools because it promoted effective management of student challenging behaviour. The report also stresses that teamwork and staff morale needed to be promoted, sustained and maintained through coordination, communication, training, resourcing and attending to staff welfare.

Staff cooperation was reported to play a pivotal role in the management of student challenging behaviour. Principals in this study indicated that they influenced staff cooperation by facilitating staff development, effective communication, making their expectations clear, supporting them, involving them in decision making and acknowledging and rewarding the results of their effort, establishing an effective leadership team, building mutual trust, showing love and having faith in them.

This study revealed that instilling **confidence** in staff enhanced effective decision making thereby improving the management skills of staff. Principals in these schools reported that they

instil staff confidence by involving them in decision making, facilitating professional development and training, providing adequate resources and encouraging effective communication.

In this section principals demonstrated that leadership was distributed over staff to a larger extent. The reports were very consistent with literature reviewed on staff interest, collaboration, teamwork and cross-teaching faculty support, cooperation, and staff confidence. The next section discusses the extent to which leadership is shared in a special school context.

6.7 Distributed Leadership at School Context Level

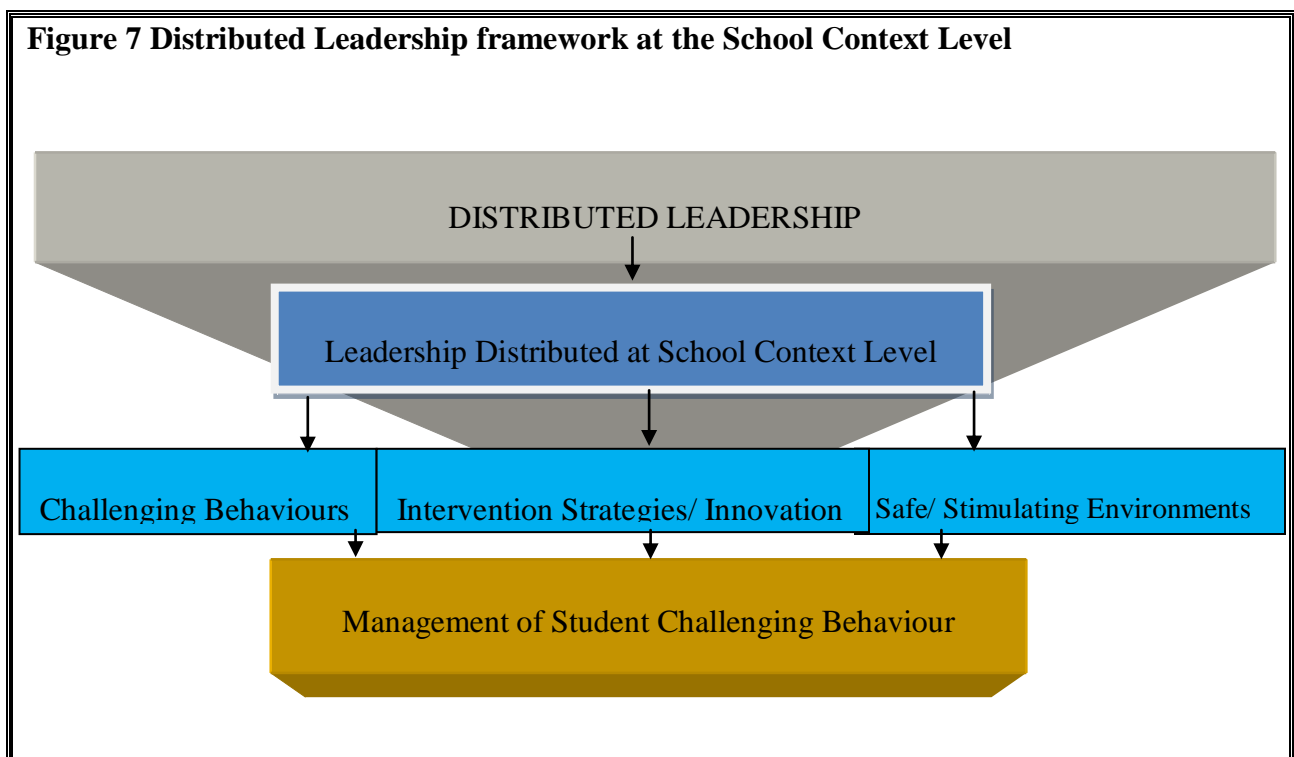


Figure 7 has been developed from the data collected in the study to visually represent how principals distributed leadership in their school contexts as they encouraged their staff groups to manage challenging students. The context in this section is defined in terms of the school environment and its relationships with other schools as well as the community. Thus the section seeks to investigate the extent to which distributed leadership was practiced within the school, between schools and outside the school within their wider community (Harris 2008). The discussion revolves around three main themes; student challenging behaviour in special schools, intervention strategies and innovation programs, and safe and stimulating environments.

6.7.1 Student Challenging Behaviours in Specialist Schools

All principals acknowledged student challenging behaviour to be a core problem in their individual school contexts and that its management was ongoing school business. There was a consensual view that student challenging behaviour was not only a core issue in their schools but a daily issue and could be significantly contributory to main reasons for the existence of special schools. The respondents reported their understanding of meaningful learning as dependent on appropriate student behaviour within the school and stated that challenging behaviour had been on top of the priority list of discussion topics in meetings held by the Principal Association of Specialist Schools (PASS). They cited that it was a common problem not only for specialist schools but even for mainstream schools.

All principals in the study attested to a shared view that the students they enrolled in specialist schools would be to a considerable extent, challenging for mainstream schools. They cited reasons such as the nature of students, teacher-pupil ratios and staff's lack of skill to manage student challenging behaviour as key extenuating factors.

The nature of the students' educational needs is such that they have personal limitations that substantially disadvantage them when attempting to function in society (AAIDD, 2011; Vickerman & Hodkinson, 2009) so they require specialised resources and management skills. Getting these can be very difficult in a mainstream school where enrolments are high and teacher to pupil ratio is wide.

In Table 19 (Appendix F17, p.203) each principal reflected that in the past three years they experienced a wide variety of challenging behaviours from students in their schools. This table provides a summary of the most prevalent and most challenging behaviour categories, they mentioned. For example, Table 20 (Appendix F18, p.204) summarises the most prevalent and most challenging behaviours reported by the participants. The table shows that physical aggression was the most prevalent and most challenging behaviour in the schools studied, followed by verbal aggression. Significantly, the reports show that for nine out of ten principals the most prevalent behaviours were also the most challenging.

Respondents reported to have managed both problematic and dangerous behaviours in their schools. Their report is consistent with literature reviewed which categorised challenging behaviour in schools as problematic and dangerous (Jones & Eayrs, 1993), internalised, externalised or anti-social (McVilly, 2002). The general belief of the participants was that problematic behaviours can mostly be managed by school staff while some more difficult to manage require specialised assistance for example from police (See Vignette 4, Appendix G 4, p.213; Vignette 6, Appendix G 6, p.215; Vignette 8, Appendix G 8, p.217 and Incident, p.9).

6.7.2 Intervention Strategies and Innovations

In Table 21 (Appendix F19, p.205) participants' ideas about what constituted an effective strategy to manage student challenging behaviour were listed. They were able to identify two key elements that drove them during the implementation of innovative programs which assisted them in the management of student challenging behaviour. One of the key issues raised was the need for the leadership team to be on top of the situation. For example, participant F said:

Vital elements include staff commitment, good will and ensuring the leadership team understands the program and accepts that it is a worthwhile program that is a good fit for their students. The leadership team should be committed to engaging students and hanging on even when things get tough. They should never expel a student. They should be able to model to the whole staff and parents.

This participant raised a very important point that an intervention program to student challenging behaviour must be contextually suitable and all stakeholders must be involved in its implementation. This practice is consistent with distributive leadership theory principles (Harris, et al., 2007; Mayrowetz, 2008; Spillane & Camburn, 2006).

Another key issue raised was that the program should benefit the recipients. For example participant G said:

Programs should benefit the students, staff and parents. Facilitate whole school training programs which put everybody on the same page. Ongoing coaching, documenting incidents and processes, prioritising agency and keeping behaviour management a top school priority are vital elements.

Participant D crowned it all in this statement; "A distributed leadership paradigm facilitates the celebration of benefits to all stakeholders, the involvement of the whole school in program implementation, and the collective achievement of intended goals".

However, all principals interviewed offered a variety of strategies and seemed to concur, among themselves and with the reviewed literature (C. J. K. Anderson, Klassen, & Georgiou, 2007; Ashman & Elkins, 2009; Greene, 2010; McVilly, 2002; Pilling, et al., 2007; Wearmouth, et al., 2004), that there was no particular strategy that could stop student challenging behaviour in their schools because each context or incident was unique and different (see Table 21, Appendix F19, p.205).

Some of the principals interviewed (see Table 22, Appendix F20, p.208) confirmed they relied on impromptu and flexible strategies that emerged with the management of each incident. For example participant D said, “Each form of behaviour is unique; therefore innovation to meet the spur of the incident’s moment is essential.” Principal H said, “Innovation at the spur of the moment is important because each incident is different and unique”.

These principals appear to agree that strategies to curb or defuse student challenging behaviour are difficult to list down because they are often contingent to each school, upon particular whole school pro-active or development programs introduced to individual schools, and the leadership styles of the school principal and her/his team as demonstrated in Vignettes 1 to 9 (Appendix G, pp.210-218) and Incident p.9). They suggested that knowledge and understanding of why and how challenging behaviour occurs was central to successful management of student challenging behaviour. They also agreed in Table 22, that it was better for a school to be innovative and proactive than to be reactive to student challenging behaviour. For example, participant D said, “Before ‘Tribes’ the school did not use a consistent proactive approach to promote appropriate student social reactions”.

Generally, principals interviewed reported that they adopted strategies and programs traditionally borrowed from other institutions in countries all over the world. There are indications that some of these strategies and programs had worked well with challenging students in Victorian

government special schools. These programs included; the tried and tested known, whole school programs listed in Table 22.

Some principals reported that when their schools were under unusual pressure arising from highly challenging behaviour which could impact on staff or other students' safety and perhaps in desperation or running short of ideas, they would resort to out-dated and unpopular traditional strategies like use of direct intervention and calling the police to handle dangerous out of control students and suspension, consistent with literature (Jones & Eayrs, 1993; Judge, 1987; McVilly, 2002; Tronc, 2010). For example, Appendix G (Vignettes 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, pp.213-218) and the principal's comment in the recorded Incident, p.9, demonstrate that some of the principals resorted to employing direct intervention approaches, police intervention and suspension of behaviourally challenging students.

Vignette 4, demonstrates that one of the schools ended up employing an ex-police officer who managed challenging behaviour for the school in conjunction with a recreation officer who helped staff during breaks. The principal at this school acknowledged that the ex-police officer had significantly assisted the school in the domain of student challenging behaviour both proactively and reactively.

Vignette 5, demonstrates that a behaviourally challenging student was suspended indefinitely after school authorities and parents failed to agree. The collaborative approach to the problem failed in this instance.

In Vignette 6, the student who was handed over to police for trying to smash the assistant principal's head stopped coming to school after police intervention. In this incident police intervention did not benefit the student because he lost his schooling opportunity.

In the incident reported in chapter 1 the researcher's business was delayed for more than an hour, the principal said s/he was going to engage the police for help if the strategy of locking out the student, which they used, had failed to defuse the behaviour. In this incident the school managed the behaviour by separating the violent student from the rest of the school until the behaviour subsided.

Vignette 7, demonstrates that use of direct intervention can be very dangerous to both the behaviourally challenging student and staff. The principal was hurt during the direct intervention process. The student was, however, still attending at the school after the incident.

Vignette 8, demonstrates that a student, who exhibited unacceptable and dangerous behaviour of threatening to stab a member of staff at one of the schools investigated, was handed over to police for questioning and correction. The strategy worked because the student accepted correction and was still learning at that school.

Although the strategy of engaging the police worked in Vignette 8, the method could not work in vignette 6 because the student in this incident stopped coming to school after police intervention.

Although police used direct intervention in vignette 8, the respondent here offered a view that what s/he described to be "Reality Theory" was applied to this incident. Literature reviewed provided two approaches to the management of student challenging behaviour: a collaborative problem solving approach and a contentious approach incorporating direct intervention (Greene, 2010; Pilling, et al., 2007). The interviewed principals demonstrated that both approaches were

used in their schools (see Table 21, Appendix F19, p. 205; Vignettes 1 to 9, Appendix G, pp.210-218 and Incident. p.9).

These principals were aware of the DEECD policy on use of direct intervention. They were also aware that using direct intervention techniques, was sometimes dangerous so should be avoided where possible. The use of police demonstrates that schools were aware of the consequences of using unreasonable intervention strategies on behaviourally challenging students and therefore wanted to remain on the safe side because, determining what is reasonable, was difficult. They reported encouraging their staff to try by all means to use innovative collaborative and safe strategies that do not end them in the hand of the law. One principal reported her/his school having used police proactively. Thus there were attempts, it was argued, to establish better trust relationships between police and students, so that “extreme” incidents were less likely to occur. The discussion above stresses that distributed leadership was widely stretched outside the school boundaries, into the community.

Table 11 (Appendix F9, p.195) provides a list of key elements these principals considered essential in ensuring a challenging behaviour strategy was effectively implemented to the extent that it became central to the life of the school. Elements, for example, staff development and coaching, engaging competent and committed staff, resourcing, modelling, trusting and relationships, team commitment to goal achievement, facilitating open communication, sharing a vision, keeping behaviour management a top priority, keeping a consistent focus on curriculum and providing a quality learning environment, were not only key elements that they as principals considered essential in ensuring a challenging behaviour strategy was effectively implemented such that it became central to the life of the school but distributed leadership concepts. This provides evidence for the view that in the shared view of the interviewed principals, distributed leadership was widely practised in their schools.

Innovative tactics developed through exposure and experience was reported by participants. These are listed in Table 21 (Appendix F19, p.205) The most popular strategies involved selecting which behaviours to address and which behaviours just to live with, providing alternatives before behaviour becomes worse, and providing specific resources to specific needs of disabled persons, establishing flexible, stimulating and challenging programs, and maintaining consistency. These strategies required collective effort not only from staff but from all stakeholders including professionals from the community.

Participants also reported classroom-related strategies listed in table 21 which served to reiterate the wide spread use of the distributed leadership practice in these schools. Some strategies of interest were development of clear class rules and devising consequences which met students' sensory needs, valuing and giving students choice and flexibility, structuring learning programs to suit, challenge and motivate the students, varying teaching-learning styles and showing consistent love to all students.

6.7.3 Safe and Stimulating Environments

The education authority in Victoria requires students with a disability, for example, students intellectually and behaviourally challenging, to be educated in an environment that is secure, stimulating and conducive to learning (Claridge, 2011). Participant E in Table 11 (Appendix F9, p.195) describes a secure and stimulating school environment to be identified with "Strong leadership with a clear shared vision of where the school is going with all students and staff feeling valued, are comfortable in a learning environment where they experience and celebrate success".

In Victorian government schools, the Program for Students with Disabilities Guideline 2010, the Central Education Authority encourages effective leadership practices in secure and stimulating

environments (Claridge, 2011). In this program (figure 2, p.18) principals are encouraged to adopt the effective school model which is purported to provide the framework for the creation and sustenance of effective schools. With this framework, diverse student needs and successes could be recognised, responded to and celebrated in a secure and stimulating environment.

Participants consistently reported that they were managing student challenging behaviour and keeping their school environment safe and stimulating by distributing leadership over co-leaders, staff and their context. For example, participant J (Table 10, Appendix F8, p.194) reiterates, “Our school is obliged to provide a safe environment for all students so safety and respect are important virtues.”

All participants, as a group, identified a long list of factors influencing the establishment and maintenance of a secure and stimulating environment for students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviours (Table 10). The list included staff development, relationships, empowerment, collaboration, support, knowledge and understanding of the student, communication, innovation, and staff morale.

Through staff development members gained skills to meet the challenges they faced daily in the schools. For example, Vignette 1 (Appendix G1, p.210) demonstrates that staff development transformed the way staff managed student challenging behaviour at classroom level.

Cordial relationships promoted safety and security for both staff and students. Principal G in Table 5 (Appendix F3, p.189) did not mince her/his words. S/ he handed over the reins to staff s/he trusted.

Staff empowerment encouraged staff to own programs and make decisions that benefited the whole school. Vignette 2 (Appendix G2, p.211) and Vignette 3 (Appendix G3, p. 212) demonstrate how empowered staff assisted in the management of student challenging behaviour and how collaboration reinforced collective decision making and responsibility as demonstrated in Vignettes 1, 2, 3 and 9 (Appendix G, pp.210-212 and p.218 respectively).

Staff support made life easy for the leaders, especially during challenging incident management. For example, Vignettes 2 and 9 demonstrate the importance of staff support and the knowledge of students under their care. The Incident (p.9), demonstrates the importance of staff support during the process of defusing an incident.

Knowledge and understanding of students helped staff to make correct choices when a challenging incident erupted and also assisted staff to determine the correct curriculum for the students. Vignette 3 (Appendix G3, p.212) demonstrates how a group of challenging students were assisted to engage in learning programs after staff realised they were providing them with a wrong curriculum. On a parallel note one of the participants demonstrated that a challenging student benefited when exposed to a curriculum she coped with. The participant said:

A student who had been refusing to attend a secondary college because she could not cope with the curriculum there is now attending her school here without exhibiting the behaviour she used to exhibit at her previous mainstream school.

Innovation was crucial because each incident was reported to be unique and needing quick thinking and quick solutions, so staff members needed skills to innovate on the spur of the moment.

Communication bound all these factors together and without it the whole school system would collapse. For example, lack of communication between school administration and parents in Vignette 5 (Appendix G5, and p.214) resulted in the student's indefinite suspension from school.

For the schools to function well and the environment to be secure and stimulating, staff morale needed to be high. The leaders had to be able to generate staff interest, promote cross-teaching faculty support and teamwork, influence cooperation, instil staff confidence and be prepared to share leadership within, between and outside the school.

Interviewed principals demonstrate that their schools were secure and stimulating for students because of low and manageable enrolments, adequate teaching and assisting staff with low staff to student ratios (See Table 3, Appendix F1, p 187). Arguably, these aspects are also potential contributing factors to the development of a safe and stimulating school. Participants claimed that the schools managed to keep the enrolment low and the number of teachers and assistant staff favourable. These reports are consistent with literature which suggests that maintaining a low teacher adult to child class ratio is one of the key factors in reducing incidents of student challenging behaviour in general (Pilling, et al., 2007). There is, however, no evidence in reviewed literature or this study to show that staff to student ratio has a significant effect on levels of challenging behaviour exhibited by students with intellectual disability in Victorian government special schools and consequently on keeping these school environments secure and stimulating.

The majority of the respondents reported that despite the small size of the school the interviewed principals reported that these schools were nonetheless places of some discomfort for both staff and students as demonstrated in Vignettes 1 to 9 (Appendix, G, pp.210-218 ; Incident, p.9). This

scenario is echoed by Tuck (2009) and Robinson (2011) who agree that due to the small number of staff, small schools present some particular challenges for principals. For example Tuck said:

As organisations, small schools have a high degree of complexity, stemming from the small numbers of staff they employ and the intricate remit they fulfil. In particular head teachers have fewer opportunities to delegate their work and as a result are more likely to have to engage directly with diverse groups of stakeholders (para.6).

These reports suggest that larger enrolments would possibly make these special schools unmanageable or very difficult to lead or manage. On the contrary other literature reviewed on the management of main stream small schools in England and America reveals that school leadership difficulties has prompted organisational practices to split large schools into autonomous small schools to facilitate effective school leadership and management (NCSL, 2009; Nowaczewski, 2003; Wyse, et al., 2010). This seems to suggest that small schools or smaller school organisational units require a distributed leadership model so that responsibilities are shared more evenly.

6.8 Section Summary

The aim of this section was to discuss the collated data on the extent to which the outcome of distributed leadership implementation in special schools was achieved. As a group, these principals consistently argued that leadership was distributed over the school context to a considerable extent.

The participants reported that student challenging behaviour was not only a core issue in their schools but a daily issue. Both problematic and dangerous behaviours which are internalised or

externalised and anti-social were reported. Two approaches to the management of student challenging behaviour; a collaborative problem solving approach and a contentious approach incorporating some direct intervention techniques were commonly employed in these schools. The first approach was consistently endorsed but some principals reported that at times, because of student or staff safety factors, situations warranted a more direct interventionist approach. Physical aggression was reported to be the most prevalent and most challenging behaviour followed by verbal aggression. The consensual belief of the participants, based on their reports, was that problematic behaviours can mostly be managed by school staff while some more difficult to manage behaviours, require some form of direct intervention or specialised assistance for example from police and other therapeutic professionals within and outside the school community.

The schools' propensity and confidence to innovate and manage student challenging behaviour was reported to be driven by two basic elements; the capacity of the leadership team to be on top of the challenging situation and the potential of the innovative programs to benefit the recipients and all stakeholders.

It was also reported that being innovative and proactive was better than being reactive to student challenging behaviours, and there is wide evidentiary support for this view in the literature on whole school approaches to this area (C. J. K. Anderson, et al., 2007; Ashman & Elkins, 2009; Eayrs & Jones, 1993; Greene, 2010; Loreman, et al., 2005; Sullivan, 2000; Wearmouth, et al., 2004). Being innovative and proactive, through staff development, was reported to enhance a school's continuous improvement and create a stimulating and secure school environment for all stakeholders. Being reactive was reported to hamper progress and promote chaos in the school.

All principals interviewed, though, agreed that there was no particular strategy that could stop student challenging behaviour in specialist schools, because consistent with specialist schooling's state charter to develop individual learning plans for every student, each problematic situation be it in or outside a classroom, was also unique, generating its own particular set of constraints. So principals and their staff mostly relied on responsive, flexible and innovative strategies that emerged with the management of each incident. There is something of a paradox implicit in the effectiveness of such impromptu and flexible approaches, being that in these principals views, the on-going mentoring and the professional development of their staff, worked in such a way as to facilitate greater staff skills in effectively managing very challenging situations, thus having the overall effect of meeting principals goals of distributing leadership within their schools.

The study found that participants sought to manage student challenging behaviour and to keep their school environments secure and stimulating by distributing leadership and stretching it within, between and outside the school environment. The participants demonstrated, in their reports and especially highlighted Vignettes 1 to 9, Appendix G, pp.210-218 and Incident, p.9, that they employed distributed leadership theory concepts including staff development, trust and relationships, staff empowerment, collaboration and support, knowledge and understanding of the student, communication, innovation, and staff morale as they sought to manage student challenging behaviour. Innovation was pegged most crucial because each incident was unique and required quick thinking and quick solutions. Therefore it was reported, that staff needed to have skills to innovate at the spur of the moment and had to be aware that class management was part of their role.

The participants shared the view that creating and maintaining staff morale was important for the creation and sustenance of a secure and stimulating school environment. This implied that leaders had to be able to generate staff interest, promote cross faculty support and teamwork,

influence cooperation, instil staff confidence and be prepared to share leadership within, between and outside their school.

Interviewed principals also demonstrated that their schools were secure and stimulating for both staff and students because of adequate resources, low and manageable enrolments, adequate teaching and assisting staff with low staff to student ratios.

There is, however, no evidence in reviewed literature or this study to show that staff to student ratio has a significant effect on levels of challenging behaviour exhibited by students with an intellectual disability in Victorian government specialist schools and consequently on keeping the school environment stimulating and secure. There is also no evidence that distributed leadership can have significant impact on leadership regarding the management of student challenging behaviour in specialist schools.

None of the respondents talked about facilitating greater distributed leadership by distributing responsibility and accountability. The present education system structure could be the stumbling barrier to this kind of innovation. There is need to develop staff and nurture talent throughout the school to enable effective management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour in Victorian government specialist schools.

Chapter Seven

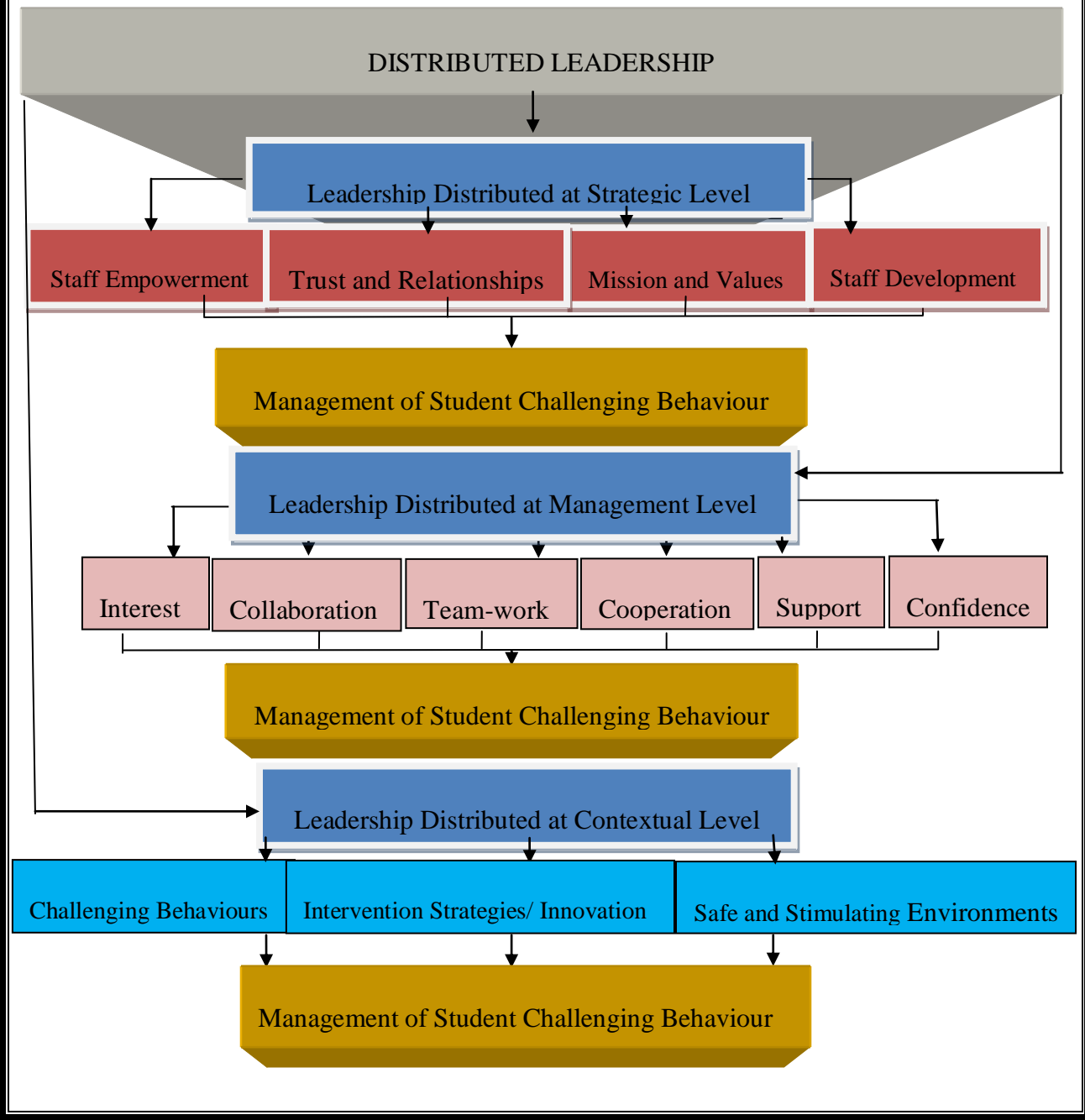
7.0 Summary and Conclusions

7.1 Summary

This chapter concludes the research study by presenting a summary of the major findings and the research conclusions. The study was located in the field of educational leadership and sought to investigate principals' perspectives of leadership regarding the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviours in Victorian government specialist schools. The purpose of looking at challenging behaviour was to clarify the nature of distributed leadership in Victorian government specialist schools. The study sought to make a scholarly contribution to the contemporary discourse of school leadership by expanding current theory and practice for understanding leadership and management of contentious contexts in government specialist schools.

The aim of the study was to investigate the extent to which principals of specialist schools distributed leadership functions among co-workers and the wider community as they endeavoured to contain and manage effectively the contentious incidents that can and do emerge daily in their schools. The choice of perspectives investigated was guided by the Distributed Leadership Theory Framework suggested by Spillane (2004) and Harris (2008) as well as distributed leadership attributes supplied by the reviewed literature supervisors' suggestions. The Chitongo framework of distributed leadership in specialist schools was developed by the researcher to suit the specialist school contexts in this study. The levels outlined in figures 5, 6 and 7 were put together to make the all embracing framework in figure 8.

Figure 8 Chitongo's Framework of Distributed leadership in Specialist Schools



This investigation framework is centred on how principals distributed leadership over co-leaders, other staff and the school context as they sought to manage daily contentious issues.

Distributed leadership in the specialist school context of this study, was presented as a widely occurring phenomenon with normal experiences of distributed leadership that involved an evolution of intrinsic leadership, not an imposed leadership style, not one person's good idea, a style without a step-by-step recipe for leaders and teachers. All participants conveyed a similar attitude towards shared vision, shared responsibility and shared informed action in the area of contentious behaviour.

In the schools in this study, distributed leadership was not an explicitly chosen leadership style; but rather, an implicit form of leadership which seemed congruent with these school contexts. As reported by principals, it was inherent within the management of challenging behaviour contexts and on a daily basis, in the effective defusing of problematic incidents. What happens in these specialist schools dictated the need for forms of distributed leadership. An important observation was that the schools had little or no choice other than to distribute leadership because they had to, as challenging incidents not atypically, emerged sporadically and dictated instant action. Thus distributed leadership emerged to be an important foundation process in a specialist school. However, evidence from the study showed that the paradigm needed people who could become informed decision makers and who were prepared to share responsibility.

7.2 Implications of this research for Specialist Schools

Although the findings from this study cannot be generalised to all Victorian specialist schools, there are implications that are worthy of further considerations. In light of the school enrolments, staff quota, the nature of students enrolled and prevalence of challenging incidents in special schools, this research is consistent with wider literature which suggests that it is not productive

for the schools to stick to or rely solely on traditional-hierarchical school leadership structures if the problem of challenging behaviour was to be addressed effectively, and from a student wellbeing stance. Specialist schools need to adopt a more proactive and responsive distributed leadership approach to the management of contentious incidents. Every member of staff in the school requires the necessary skills to confidently lead in the effective management of challenging incidents as they are inclined to spontaneously occur. Therefore there was need for special schools to adopt ongoing professional development programs, to equip staff with appropriate skills. For example, it was imperative for teachers to be skilled in the processes of cooperation, teamwork, collaboration and supporting each other during the management of contentious incidents.

Via these principal perspectives, a special school was presented as a place for a dynamic and collegial leader and not a place for a heroic and glorious leader. It was identified as a place where distributed leadership was the “modus operandi” through which effective management of challenging behaviours was achieved.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

The study was prompted by the desire of the researcher to find out how principals of government specialist schools in Victoria effectively managed students with a combination of challenging behaviour and an intellectual disability. The study did not seek to investigate the relationship between challenging behaviours and intellectual disability. The study sought to investigate how principals shared leadership with their colleagues as they endeavoured to manage students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviours.

The key perspective, consensually reported by the respondents was to collectively and collaboratively lead the school through staff by employing Distributive Leadership Theory

principles. The participants demonstrated that they had the penchant to distribute leadership among staff and the autonomy to restructure their schools to match their contextual needs and values regarding the management of students.

One of the major limitations of this study was that just one cohort of participants was used. Different and more variegated findings may have been obtained, perhaps, if a complementary cohort of, say leadership team members or teachers were also interviewed. On this score, further research on the same subject but with more cohorts involved in the study is considered as potentially enriching this existing knowledge base. Another limitation was the exclusion of Gippsland Region specialist schools from the sample. It was however assumed that the five regional specialist schools would be a fair representative of all regional specialist schools in Victoria. The uneven distribution of specialist schools in the state was yet another limitation; hence an unbiased sample of four schools per region had to be drawn first to make a final selection of the 10 from 16 schools.

7.4 Summary of Findings

This study found that specific types of problem behaviours were prevalent and commonly identified by principals in the ten specialist schools studied. In light of this study there is need for staff to learn to become more consistent and less confrontational when managing incidents with students exhibiting challenging behaviours and that a team approach derived from distributed leadership principles facilitates a more consistent, considered and caring approach.

The study found that the schools' propensity and confidence to innovate and manage student challenging behaviour was driven by two basic elements; the capacity of the leadership teams to have confidence in managing challenging situations and the potential of the innovative programs to benefit the recipients and all stakeholders. This implies that these schools needed to

adequately and continuously train their staff to be at par with the changing times and with new or emerging developments in the domain of student challenging behaviours.

Positive school ethos with good working relationships and strong teamwork between staff encouraged good student behaviours. Therefore Principals needed to empower, develop and nurture talent in staff, so that staff could work as a team, creating an environment which was non-violent, respectful and harmoniously cultured.

Principals' perspectives of leadership regarding the management of contentious situations in Victorian government specialist schools were comprehensive, educational and valuable in this study. The perspectives studied were fundamentally oriented to sharing leadership across multiple people and situations as opposed to heroic leadership which was restricted to one figure in the school, the principal. Distributed Leadership in the specialist school contexts of this study was the leadership method of the day. It was not a decisive step-by-step leadership measure, but involved within the framework developed because it was the matter of necessity.

Principals in these specialist schools linked distributed leadership with the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibited challenging behaviour. They effectively managed the students by sharing leadership with their colleagues and professionals from the wider community. Data from the study established that each of the schools investigated utilised the distributed leadership paradigm differently and principal statements were such that this approach also seems to be effective in terms of addressing the well-being benefits of challenging students.

The study found that student challenging behaviour was a core issue in the Victorian government specialist schools studied. It was a daily practice-based issue characterised by unique incidents which often needed spontaneous solutions which were managed by the school staff. According to these respondents, dangerous and problem behaviours were prevalent and common in their schools. Physical aggression was on top of the list followed by verbal aggression. The consensual belief of the participants, based on their reports, was that problematic behaviours were mostly managed by school staff while some more difficult to manage behaviours required some form of direct intervention or specialised assistance. For example problems that were curriculum relevance based were solved by the school personnel while those dangerous for both students and staff needed the attention of police and other therapeutic professionals within and outside the schools' wider community.

The participants strongly suggested that consequently, the teachers had to be skilled and informed to make immediate and important decisions and to share the responsibility in each of the contentious issues involved. To do that, the principals consistently sought to develop in their individual schools, a professional community with a shared vision and consistent values. They reported achieving this through staff empowerment, professional development, building trust and relationships, and creating and maintaining high staff morale.

Thus, there was a strong indication in the study that principals' effort to distribute leadership among staff was complemented and backed by the way and extent to which staff was empowered to make decisions, and professionally developed and trained to manage challenging incidents. There was also a strong indication that building trust and relationships with staff and pro-actively using school mission statements and values in leadership and management were instrumental to effective management of challenging behaviours.

The study demonstrated that leadership was distributed over staff members to a considerable extent and that principals determined the achievement of this goal by considering the levels of staff interest, collaboration, teamwork and cross-teaching faculty support, staff cooperation, and confidence, in their schools. Importantly, it was also found that communication provided the linkage that assisted principals to share leadership with their colleagues and other community professionals. It was, however, revealed that these principals tended to distribute leadership to competent, trustworthy and cooperative staff.

The study confirmed that the common purpose of special schools, as implied by each school's mission statements, was to provide an appropriate education for life to students with an intellectual disability aged 5 to 18 years. It was found that schools fulfilled this purpose by creating environments which were secure, fulfilling, happy, positive, respectful, community based and stimulating, challenging, vibrant and nurturing, success oriented, rewarding and supportive. The participants claimed their schools to be secure and stimulating for both staff and students because of relevant curricula, low manageable enrolments, adequate teaching and assisting staff with low staff to student ratios and adequate resources.

One conclusion from this study would suggest that innovation and proactivity would be better options than reactivity to student challenging behaviours. Being innovative and proactive was reported to enhance school continuous improvement and create a secure and stimulating school environment for all stakeholders. Being reactive, by comparison, was reported to hamper progress and promote chaos in the school. Overall, innovation was tagged the most crucial aspect in managing student challenging behaviour because each incident in a specialist school was unique and needed quick thinking and quick solutions.

These findings attest to the importance of distributive leadership in specialist schools. Principals in these schools need to consider leadership as a power-sharing professional adventure which requires a whole school team effort. They need this leadership approach that is anchored on shared school mission and values, a challenging and stimulating experience, an ongoing learning venture, a risky business but not a heroic management journey.

7.5 Further Research

Distributed leadership was reported to be a paradigm which effectively enabled the processes of managing spontaneous and contentious issues and was widely practiced in the schools investigated. In light of the research evidence from the study, there is need to investigate (1) the perspectives of other stakeholders on this subject, (2) the merits and limitations of distributed leadership practices in special schools, (3) the value of distributed leadership in special schools, (4) the availability of appropriately skilled and qualified staff sufficient to ensure that needs of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour are met in specialist schools, and (5) effects of staff to student ratio on levels of challenging behaviour exhibited by students with an intellectual disability in Victorian government specialist schools and consequently on keeping the schools' environments secure and stimulating for all stakeholders.

7.6 Conclusion

Specialist schools in Victoria provide a model for the implementation of distributed leadership. They do this partly because of the contentious issues that they are required to manage every day. Thus, through the agency of an effective distributed leadership model, the research findings of this professional doctoral research provide support to the proposition that having a well-informed specialist school force who can share a common vision, and who can agree to work to shared organisational goals and strategies with an atypical student population, does add overall value to student learning, wellbeing and development.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Questionnaire

My name is Thomas Chitongo and I am a Doctorate Student at La Trobe University. As part of my coursework, I would like to undertake a study in your school. The study seeks to explore the principal's perspectives of leadership regarding the management of student with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviours in Victorian government specialist schools.

The research is conducted with principals of government specialist schools in the state of Victoria. In accordance with Privacy Laws, "*your participation in this study will remain strictly confidential and your individual responses anonymous*". None of your responses will be linked to your name or passed on to any other department or authority. Answers that you give in this study will not incriminate you in any way. Data will be analysed as a group of responses from ten principals of government specialist schools in Victoria. The following questions seek to collect data on your perspectives on selected themes guided by the distributive leadership paradigm.

1.0 Demographic Data

1.1 Gender

Male	
Female	

1.2 Experience

Number of years in special schools	
Number of years as principal	
Number of years as principal in current school	

1.3 Age Range

Below 35 years	
36- 45 years	
46-55 years	
56-65 years	

1.4 School

Year established	
Enrolment	
Teaching staff	
Teaching assistants	
Administration staff	
Students' age range	

2.0 Distributed leadership at leadership level

2.1 As a school principal how would you summarise your personal leadership stance in terms of sharing leadership?

2.2 How do you use your personal leadership philosophy to involve internal agents of change?

2.3 How do you use your personal leadership philosophy to involve external agents of change?

2.4 What is your key role in the management of student challenging behaviour?

1.5 What is the enabling power of a school mission statement regarding the management of student challenging behaviour in a government specialist school?

1.6 What is the enabling power of school values in the management of student challenging behaviour in a government specialist school?

1.7 From your experience in special education and as a principal, can you identify key elements you consider essential in ensuring that a school innovative program is effective such that it becomes central to the life of the school?

1.8 How have you developed teacher and teacher aide skills that are relevant for student challenging behaviour management, as part of your leadership agenda to achieve the goals outlined in your school's mission and values?

3.0 Distributed leadership at school management level

3.1 How do you use your personal leadership philosophy to generate teacher interest in managing students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour?

3.2 How do you use your personal leadership philosophy to promote teamwork?

3.3 How do you use your personal leadership philosophy to improve staff cooperation?

3.4 How do you use your personal leadership philosophy to promote cross-faculty support?

3.5 How do you use your personal leadership philosophy to instil teacher confidence in the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour?

4.0 Distributed leadership at school context level

4.1 To what extent is student challenging behaviour management a core issue in your school?

4.2 To what extent does your school have students who would be highly challenging, emotionally and behaviourally, for mainstream schools?

4.3 Can you identify any student challenging behaviours that have occurred in your school within the last three years? What types of student behaviours would you say are the most prevalent? What types are the most challenging for teachers and support staff in your school?

4.4 What are the main effective whole school strategies your school uses to facilitate proactive social behaviour in students? For the past three years, can you identify any particular strategies which have proved effective in reducing student challenging behaviour in your school?

4.5 Innovative programs can be used in a school to reduce incidents of student challenging behaviour and promote positive student behaviour patterns as part of the school's evolving culture. What is your comment on this statement?

4.6 Is there anything you would like to add?

5.0 Thank you very much for participating in this interview.

Appendix B

Research Outline for Regional Director

Title of the project: *Principals' Perspectives of Leadership Regarding the Management of Students With an Intellectual Disability who Exhibit Challenging Behaviour in Victorian Government Specialist Day Schools*

Faculty Human Ethics Committee Approval Number: R004/10

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Approval Number: 2010_000495

Investigator: Thomas Chitongo

28 Condon Street

Bendigo

Victoria 3550

Mobile: 043 235 4090

Email: tchitongo@students.latrobe.edu.au

Supervisor: Dr. Michael Faulkner

La Trobe University, Bendigo Campus

Education Building, room 2.31

Telephone: 54 447 323

Email: m.faulkner@latrobe.edu.au

Course: Doctor of Education (EdD)

The Regional Director

Dear Sir

This letter advises your office that I intend to approach at least one Specialist School in your region for the purpose of undertaking a research study during the period 1st June to 30th July 2010. This is part of my coursework in the Education Doctorate in which I am enrolled. The aim of the research is to investigate principals' perspectives of school leadership regarding the management of students with and intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour in Victorian government specialist schools.

The purpose of study is to gain a better understanding of how specialist school principals promote effective leadership management of student challenging behaviour. The results will be used as the basis for doctoral research into the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour in government specialist schools.

Ethical approvals for this study have been given by both the La Trobe University Faculty of Education Human Ethical Committee and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. (See copies attached).

Confidentiality will be strictly maintained and the information will be kept in electronically locked files. Hard copies and recorded notes will be kept in a locked file in my office. At no time will the participant, the school or the region be identified in any report. The data may be preserved for possible future use in my doctoral thesis in an electronically locked file. This is an opportunity for Principals of the schools to reflect on leadership practice in their schools. More widely the study will contribute to further research which adds knowledge to the understanding of effective leadership practices, innovative practices and the management of student challenging behaviour in specialist schools.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Thomas Chitongo (Researcher)

Appendix C

Participant Information Sheet

Title of the Project: *Principals' Perspectives of Leadership Regarding the Management of Students with an Intellectual Disability who Exhibit Challenging Behaviour in Victorian Government Specialist Schools*

Faculty Human Ethics Committee Approval Number: R004/10

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Approval Number: 2010_000495

Investigator: Thomas Chitongo

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Supervisor: Dr. Michael Faulkner

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Telephone: 54 447 323

Email: m.faulkner@latrobe.edu.au

Participant: The Principal

Course: Education doctorate (EdD)

Dear -----

As part of my research in the Education Doctorate, I would like to include your perspective as a principal in my research. The aim of the research is to investigate “*Principals’ Perspectives of Leadership Regarding the Management of Students with an Intellectual Disability who Exhibit Challenging Behaviour in Victorian Government Specialist Schools*” The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of how specialist school principals promote effective leadership in the management of student challenging behaviour by distributing leadership functions and activities. The results will be used as the basis for doctoral research on principals’ perspectives of leadership regarding the management of students with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour in Victorian government specialist schools.

You have been identified as a possible participant because of your present role as principal in a government specialist school.

Ethical approvals for this study have been given by both the La Trobe University Faculty of Education Human Ethical Committee and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

I am asking you to take part in an interview which I will audiotape to assist recording responses accurately I anticipate the interview to take no longer than 45 minutes. The interview will take place at your school at the time convenient to you.

Confidentiality will be strictly maintained and the information will be kept in electronically locked files. You may request a copy of your personal data on my research findings and a summary of results of the research. Hard copies and recorded notes will be kept in a locked file in my office. At no time will the participant, the school, the town or region be identified in any report. The results will form part of my doctoral thesis and will be kept in an electronically locked file. You may view the transcript of the interview if you wish. I will send you a copy of my report to participants when it has been assessed. Your participation in this project is totally voluntary. You may withdraw at any time with no adverse consequences.

This is an opportunity for you to reflect on leadership practices regarding the management of student with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour in your school. More widely the study will contribute to further research which adds knowledge to the understanding of effective management of student with an intellectual disability who exhibit challenging behaviour in government specialist schools.

Any questions regarding this project may be directed to the student researcher, Thomas Chitongo of the Faculty of Education at the Bendigo Campus on mobile 0432354090 or my supervisor, Dr. Michael Faulkner on 54 447 323. If you have any complaints or queries that the researcher has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the secretary, Faculty Human Ethics Committee, Faculty of Education, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086, Phone:54 447 983, Email: j.freeman@latrobe.edu.au

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Thomas Chitongo (Researcher)

Appendix D

The Consent Form and statement of agreement

Consent form

Title of the project: *Principals' Perspectives of Leadership Regarding the Management of Students With an Intellectual Disability who Exhibit Challenging Behaviour in Victorian Government Specialist Day Schools*

Faculty Human Ethics Committee Approval Number: R004/10

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Approval Number: 2010_000495

Investigator: Thomas Chitongo

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E-mail: tchitongo@students.latrobe.edu.au

Supervisor: Dr. Michael Faulkner

La Trobe University, Bendigo Campus

Education Building, room 2.21

Course: Education Doctorate (EdD)

Statement of Agreement

I, _____ have read and understood the participant information sheet and consent form, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in the project, realising that I may physically withdraw from the study at any time and may request that no data arising from my participation are used, up to four weeks following the completion of my participation in the research.

I agree that research data provided by me or with my permission during the project may be included in a thesis, presented at conferences and published in journals on the condition that neither my name nor any other identifying information is used.

Name of Participant (block letters):

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Email: _____

Name of Investigator (block letters): THOMAS CHITONGO

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of Student's Supervisor (block letters): MICHAEL FAULKNER

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E

Letter to invite the Participant

Thomas Chitongo

La Trobe University

Bendigo

Victoria 3552

17 June 2010

The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECT

This letter is to invite you to participate in my research project entitled: “*Principals’ Perspectives of Leadership Regarding the Management of Students With an Intellectual Disability who Exhibit Challenging Behaviour in Victorian Government Specialist Day Schools*”.

The research will take place during the period 20th June 2010 to 30th July 2010 at your school and time convenient to you. The interview will last for 45- 60 minutes. I would like to ask you some questions about the relationship between principal leadership, innovative practices and management of student challenging behaviour in your school.

As part of my research in the Education Doctorate, I need your perceptions on the topic above. This research has been given ethics approval by both the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee La Trobe University and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

All the data you provide will be strictly confidential and will be used in my doctoral thesis. I have attached a participant information sheet and a consent form for you to consider and sign. Please return the signed consent form using the addressed envelope enclosed.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Thomas Chitongo

Appendix F

Data summaries

Appendix F1

Table 3 Background Data on Schools

School	Year established	Enrolment 2010	Age range	Number of teachers	Assistant teachers	Administrative staff
A	1958	332	5-18	42	83	10
B	1985	44	5-18	9	16	2
C	1989	151	5-18	36	30	3
D	1991	90	5-18	16	16	2
E	1987	75	5-18	15	15	1
F	1996	155	2.5-18	25	31	6
G	1973	345	5-18	70	20	10
H	1957	160	5-18	32	24	3
I	1976	70	5-18	12	10	2
J	1975	169	5-18	30	27	2

Appendix F2

Table 4 Background Data on Principals

Gender	Age Range	Experience in Specialist Schools	Experience as Principal	Experience in Current School
Male	56-65	22	16	16
Female	46-55	19	4	4
Male	46-55	27	9	7
Female	56-65	16	15	15
Male	46-55	17	6	6
Male	56-65	6	2	2
Male	36-45	9	2	2
Female	56-65	39	4	4
Female	56-65	26	8	8
Female	56-65	40	9	9

Appendix F3

Table 5 Principals' Personal Leadership Stance on Sharing Leadership on Management of Student Challenging Behaviour

School	Principal's Personal Leadership Stance
A	I decentralise the management of student challenging behaviour to classrooms and empower staff to make decisions whenever possible at all levels. However I as principal have a critical role of setting the pace, building teams, monitoring, reviewing, reflecting and making suggestions for change.
B	I am positive about sharing leadership. For example, I have set up professional learning teams to assist staff implement the current restorative program and educate them on how the innovation can be integrated into their classroom practice.
C	The basis of my philosophy is, 'never ask someone to do what you can't do yourself'. I adopted an open door philosophy where all are welcome always. I am always available to set the tone, monitor, and review, reflect and decide. My situation philosophy influences the direction the school takes. We depend on meetings and meetings and more meetings approach, characterised by clear reports and staff invitation to lead, participate and make decisions in a school committee.
D	I delegate and trust people so I work with a brilliant decent team. Delegating management duties to staff is very important for the development of confidence, faith and trust. However effective communication keeps them motivated. Distributive leadership is essential because the school will continue to operate normally even during my absence.
E	I am pro to sharing leadership. I use a leadership structure with a large middle management class consisting of coordinators who are strong decision makers, a VCAL Coordinator, who does career advice and a placement coordinator. I equip staff with skills and confidence to handle situations on the spur of the moment.
F	The principal cannot do everything on his own. Staff members are encouraged to have some degree of leadership skills and to be part of a functional committee. Participating in decision making in a committee engenders a sense of ownership. The principal is reliant on the good will and professionalism of colleagues.
G	I strongly believe in sharing leadership. I identify people I can trust and hand over the reins. For example I share leadership regarding student challenging behaviour with 3 assistant principals, 4 team leaders for the 4 sub schools, 2 leading teachers who are coaches for all sub schools, develop middle level staff giving them support, building relationships and helping them take key roles in the school. I am surrounded by people who pull in the same direction.
H	I have to delegate and trust people in order to have a good team around.
I	I decentralise and devolve leadership among staff, coach them and thank them for taking leadership roles. Distributive leadership is the source of better operations. Sharing leadership assists me to manage student challenging behaviour at our different campuses. I manage these campuses through assistant principals, leading teachers, team leaders, and section leaders. However successful delegation of duties to staff requires my trust and faith in them.
J	Sharing leadership is my strength. Therefore I equip staff with skills and knowledge, and confidence, and help them to understand that students needs have to be met first.

Appendix F4

Table 6 Principal's Stance on use of Internal Agents of Change to Develop Staff

Principal	Principal's Stance on use of Internal Agents of Change to Develop Staff
A	Use the leadership team as main drivers of change, more distributive approach extending to other teachers individuals/ teams in facilitating
B	Set up Professional learning teams, go through education plans, staff meetings as information
C	Involve internal agents of change, make them feel, comfortable, safe and supported, encourage consistency, external agents chop and finish to quickly so it is better not to have them at all
D	We have 5 internal agents working in the school leadership team which is the key driver; We use a distributive approach to leadership, giving individual teachers the opportunity to lead an innovative program. We also use a bottom up approach and top down approach to the management of student challenging behaviour. We work in teams, generating team discussions on mental health needs. We use staff to introduce programs, lead professional development; giving staff with the potential to change things the opportunity to innovate. Coaching mentoring, team talking and discussions are effective channels. We use our internal Psychologists and therapists. Using internal agents is cheap and convenient.
E	Team of staff to resource and make it running, source for funding, we support staff in their pursuit, giving leading teachers experience through visiting other schools and students before placement at the school, up-skilling staff with promotional work, sharing as a school with other schools, Staff turnover is a reflection of teacher frustration and demotivation.
F	Making use of the train the trainer program
G	We have people with the skills within the school who are able to promote our philosophy and innovations.
H	Get the leadership team on the same page, targeting people you believe can help facilitate, get everyone on board through active discussion groups, Employ people with talent and skills
I	Use each other in mentoring and assistance to each other
J	Using internal agents is the best option to implement an intervention program because it is cheap and staff is always available on sight

Appendix F5

Table 7 Principal's Stance on Involving External Agents to Develop Staff Skills

Principal	Principal's Stance on Involving External Agents to Develop Staff Skills
A	External agents are important to create a foundation for change. Engage external agents to develop staff on how to deal with challenging behaviour. Use them as needed, at the implementation stage, during research, investigation stage, and evaluation, visit or invite other schools.
B	Consultants are effective facilitators especially if they are engaged to work with professional learning teams. Before engaging them, prepare staff by teaching them the merits and demerits of using consultants. Consultants have been helpful to me especially when they deliver my idea in their own words; staff tends to be listening more to them than to me.
C	Sometimes there is no need for external agents. We need to protect our image as a school. Their meetings normally lack consistency. If used, their role should be communicated well and staff should understand reasons for engaging them.
D	We need external agents of change. Currently we are getting training from external agents of change on 'Kids matter/mind matters-about mental health'. External agents generate a spirit of working together in the process of implementing change; encourage discussions, creativity, and group action learning projects where the whole school can get involved.
E	We use external agents of change when ever needed. We exchange ideas on management of student challenging behaviour with other schools. We visit them or they visit us. I believe in the 'we' policy and not 'I' policy. Decision making is basically shared with 3 members of the principal class team. We encourage staff to affiliate to associations and clubs and to take part in their professional training and research programs.
F	I believe that powerful messages can come from outside the school. External agents assist to train staff. For example with the 'You can do it' program, we sent staff to a 'train the trainer' professional development workshop where a specialist facilitated. The trained staff then trained and disseminated the information to the rest of the school. The trained staff modelled the program for the whole staff who in turn discussed the merits and demerits of the program before implementation.
G	External agents give a lot of helpful information, familialise staff on new programs and speak about program time frames. They are people with credibility and they share our philosophies, talk to our staff and support our programs.
H	External agents are experts who share our philosophy, expertise and credibility. They are facilitators who use compromise, collaborative and robust conversations, negotiations and win lose orientations. We have engaged 5 regular consultants for this school. I invite consultants to introduce my vision as if it were theirs and staff has been very receptive to new ideas coming from outside the school
I	The management coach is our external agent. We made contacts with consultants when we developed an arts based curriculum. The external agents trained the school leadership team and the school leadership team trained the rest of the staff.
J	We engage external agents such as psychologists and therapists, from the department of education who come to talk to staff and students. The agents provide training for example on management of autistic students. However use of external agents can be very expensive. Best option is to use internal staff.

Appendix F6

Table 8 Views of Principals Interviewed on their Key Role

School	The Role of Principals
A	The principal is involved in developing behaviour management plans, recording and keeping incident data, convening and holding meetings to discuss and review accumulated data on challenging behaviour incidents. The principal encourages staff to suggest best approaches to recurring incidents, supports teamwork activities, and encourages staff creativity and involvement in managing challenging behaviour. S/he establishes school councils and encourages professional learning scholarships, action research, and facilitates feedback and action learning.
B	The principal cultivates a positive culture, where s/he models self and commits self to programs so that people can follow the example, a culture where staff share her/his vision provoking a whole school approach to creation of new ideas.
C	A leader is there to drive staff to accept the responsibility of managing challenging behaviour. The leader provides better ways of doing things and adopts a clear communication system, with trustworthy and respected people around. The principal creates a network of performance plans initiated from top to bottom and vice versa, that is from the principal through the leadership team to the subject teacher and vice versa. The principal ensures that the leadership team and the rest of staff are committed to the goals of the school on management of student challenging behaviour.
D	The principal encourages further professional development of staff, team work, staff commitment and modification of traditional intervention programs to suit their schools, making a choice and selling the program to staff. Selecting what is relevant for the school, coaches and encourages them.
E	A principal directs and sets the tone for generation of ideas and development of programs that promote effective management of student challenging behaviour. Provide opportunities for leadership team to learn promotional work with other schools. Students first, everyone needs to be valued. Encourage members to bring new ideas and discuss the ideas together.
F	The principal encourages staff to read stuff on intellectual disability and challenging behaviour and consult researchers on developments in the area. Recognises a need, acts and talks to other principals
G	The principal said 'establish a need, involve the teachers along the journey so that they can claim ownership of the program, get their input, encouraged them to keep reading and getting updated about management of challenging behaviour of students with intellectual disability. Talk to other principals, consult specialists on the trends, get feedback from staff, and listen to their views'.
H	Involvement in the management of challenging behaviour, staff ownership development, consultation and getting some input and feedback from staff on how best to manage student challenging behaviour are important.
I	'The principal acts as a filter for all that happen in a school, can be one of the pace setters, developing teams, prompting and, encouraging, generation of new ideas. Sell your passion, people are following procedures set up, coach support, talk to staff briefing and reviewing challenging behaviour, reflect on previous behaviour and plan for the present and future.
J	The principal distributes or delegates leadership, and drives the school forward, assists staff, students, parents and community and give them feedback. The principal also supports other staff professionally, psychologically, morally, financially, spiritually, and socially. The principal comes up with things to try and keep that optimism to staff, helps staff from slipping into despondent.

Appendix F7

Table 9 Enabling Power of School Mission Statements

School	Enabling Power of Mission Statement
A	Mission statements are universal guidelines facilitating the process of managing student challenging behaviour because they work as the foundation of the school's programs or a point of departure and reference for staff, helping them to be proactive and responsive in all circumstances, and to have shared understanding of the school's goals. They provide a shared understanding of the goals of the school.
B	A mission statement encourages staff to think about how best the diversity of students including students on respite care can be effectively managed.
C	Mission statements provide common guidelines that facilitate the process of helping students on their journey to reaching their full potential.
D	A mission statement is a reference point for staff to remember, think and reflect on in their day today plans. It facilitates a collective achievement of success.
E	A mission statement encourages the leadership team to facilitate the management of student challenging behaviour, rather than managing it.
F	A mission statement helps limit challenges, and establish a great school environment that is proactive to challenging behaviour. It enables staff and community to understand the school's vision on reducing incidents of student challenging behaviour.
G	A mission statement is the source of school mottos and slogans. It provokes innovative practices across the school staff as they regularly refer to it. It also gives staff direction, purpose and keep them focused towards the school's goals.
H	The school mission statement articulates the school's areas of focus and purpose of establishment and so it is the reference point or the point of departure for all school programs and activities.
I	A mission statement provides the basis on which staff can maximize student potential to improve behaviour patterns.
J	A mission statement gives the overriding guidance of how students should always be treated and referred to. It widens and broadens the way staff and community think about effective management of student challenging behaviour.

Appendix F8

Table 10 Enabling Power of School Values

School	Enabling Power of Values
A	Values help staff to facilitate the engagement of students in a proactive way, looking at students' ability not their disabilities. Values are the driving force which helps us as leaders, to encourage staff to work together, to manage or improve the environment, making the school a safe and positive place for students. Values provide opportunities for students' success and remind staff to be fair in their actions. For example this school values respect for self and others.
B	Values form the basis of our actions. For example, our values teach respect for self, others and school property, staff commitment helps students to be positive, and confidence reinforces resilience, integrity, respect and teamwork in the school.
C	Teaching of values facilitates change in behaviour patterns of both students and staff. For example, having fun helps students engage in learning and grooms students to be good citizens. Engagement is the pathway to reduction of behaviour challenges. Teaching respect enables students to value themselves, parents, teachers, the community, other students and school property. Nurturing support, mutual respect and mutual trust assist to keep students engaged.
D	The enabling power of values is reliant on shared choice, shaping and teaching of values and encouraging teachers to be committed to the management of students with challenging behaviour. For example, openness and fairness foster self-esteem and independence in students and respect propagates a caring attitude among staff.
E	Values education contributes to the management of students challenging behaviour enabling everybody in the school to know and enact the values. For example a school can include values for example respect in its learning programs.
F	Teaching through values is a source of commitment to the management of students challenging behaviour. For example students can be taught to be inquisitive, supportive and happy, and to have pride in their achievements, to trust and respect each other.
G	Values dictate the way we work. Personal best, respect, cooperation, happiness and honesty give students the propensity to learn and to improve their behaviour patterns.
H	Teaching values for example, commitment and respect, self esteem confidence, dignity, safety, support and understanding according to needs or indirectly in classes, helps staff to reduce student challenging behaviour.
I	Values are sources of positive behaviour patterns. For example a safe environment, consistency and respect as values are a source of positive behaviour patterns in students. Respect as a value assists students to be 'the best they can'.
J	Values are an overriding guidance on how we treat, interact, talk and assist challenging students. Through values, each day is treated as a new day with yesterday's problem eliminated. For example clear communication as a value goes behind everything we do. With fairness as a value, people get what they need, and acceptance ensures students with a disability become part of the community. Resilience enables students to get up again and reach for an alternative education when knocked down. Finally, our school is obliged to provide a safe environment for all students so safety and respect are important virtues.

Appendix F9

Table 11 Key Elements Considered Essential for the Implementation of an Innovative Program by Principals

School	Key Elements
A	Action learning, laying a foundation, developing the program, implementing the program, monitoring and assessing the program, reflecting and celebrating success followed by training and repeating the cycle as required.
B	Resourcing, modelling, coaching, making a connection, choosing, trusting, team commitment to goal achievement, respecting each other, working together, bureaucratic systems, compassion and open communication are vital elements
C	Trust and passion for work, a genuinely committed team, resourcing, time, enabling support, understanding, staff choice, respect for each other and being collaborative are essential elements.
D	Communication, continual review of programs and ensuring that everyone is doing the same thing are vital elements.
E	Staff commitment and goodwill, appropriate programs and modification of programs to suit school needs. Strong leadership with a clear shared vision of where the school is going with all students and staff feeling valued, are comfortable in a learning environment where they experience and celebrate success.
F	Vital elements include staff commitment, good will and ensuring the leadership team understands the program and accepts that it is a worthwhile program that is a good fit for their students. Leadership should be committed to engaging students and hanging on even when things get tough. They should never expel a student. They should be able to model to the whole staff and parents.
G	Programs should benefit the students, staff and parents. Facilitate whole school training programs which put everybody on the same page. Ongoing coaching, documenting incidents and processes, prioritizing agency and keeping behaviour management a top school priority are vital elements.
H	The leadership team has to be fully conversant with the programs. Key elements are choosing the right staff, effective teachers, putting in place a system that raises the standard of each student and providing relevant support to each student regardless of the behaviour exhibited.
I	Whole school training, ongoing coaching, and documentation of behaviour processes are vital elements.
J	Trying to keep behaviour management a top priority is important.

Appendix F10

Table 12 Perspectives of Principals on Teacher Professional Skills Development

School	Perceptions of Principals on Staff Professional Skills Development
A	The school spends 85% of their time on professional development. They engage experts, a team of therapists and teachers from other schools to facilitate discussions and communication techniques, and to employ early intervention strategies to student challenging behaviour.
B	The school makes use of a school wide positive behaviour strategy. It invites external agents to facilitate and audit student behaviour patterns, uses behaviour management consultant who works with staff- modelling strategies for teachers to use. The consultant evaluates the results and appraises staff on its successes in workshops
C	School trains staff on giving students options. The school uses ongoing group discussions general meetings, integrated services meetings and staff meetings.
D	Currently teachers are being trained by external facilitators on school wide positive behaviour strategy.
E	We are being developed through DEECD and experts on safe schools are effective schools. Some of our staff visits other schools for coaching. On the job training, class demonstrations, induction, modelling, working as a team, identifying, knowing and understanding sensory needs of student, up-skilling staff on challenging behaviour management strategies, training staff on the nature of autistic students are some of the effective strategies we have used.
F	We are being trained on 'Calmer Classrooms'. Facilitators are talking about managing challenging behaviour. Staff has learnt; not to focus on the student but the behaviour, not to let students draw them in, not to lock them in or push them in a corner where they can come out fighting, to give them time, to give them options and to engage on positive restrain programs for safety and retention of dignity for both staff and students. A quarter of the students in the school are autistic and many are challenging, so professional development of staff on students with autism is also part of our skills programs.
G	Programs to develop teacher skills in managing student challenging behaviour are ongoing and a never stop approach. From these programs teachers gain skills to be innovative and build relationships through workshops sponsored by the education department and facilitated by external agents. The leadership team and staff, also visit other schools to share and learn from them under the inclusion program.
H	Staff skills are developed through discussions, involvement, sharing ideas, communication, modelling, workshops, regular meetings and integrated services committee meetings.
I	Staff need training on sharing responsibility, the need to support each other, the importance of staff stability, the function of leadership teams, teacher professional learning and social interaction, effective teaching and classroom management, cooperative learning and 'no put down' policy, positive staff models, teaching social skills, values and conflict resolution.
J	Staff is being developed on challenging behaviour awareness programs, student behaviour intervention plans, professional development workshops, function of time out room, tribes positive behaviour plans, individual behaviour plans, case record evidence, and behaviour management chart, school-wide effective behaviour support programs by an external agent who is an expert in autism.

Appendix F11

Table 13 Development of Teacher Aide Skills in Managing Student Challenging Behaviour

School	Development of Teacher Aide Skills in Managing Student Challenging Behaviour
A	Professional development- communication
B	Restorative practice and reality theory assisted by external agent
C	Actively engage teacher assistants in activities such as making new plans to meet new needs as in planning the farm project where students do productive work, residential programs and making individual education plans. Also train them in student education needs assessment and in assisting students to manage their own behaviour through home grown voluntary clubs, leisure skills and discussion circles. However, make sure that they do not personalize challenging incidents and never ask them to do what you can't do yourself. An open door philosophy encourages a positive learning attitude for staff. Educate teacher assistants on challenging behaviour policies for example, they should supervise the students under their care all the time and encourage ongoing positive communication between them and the students.
D	Involving them in auditing the results of all activities
E	Ongoing evolving activity, respond to staff needs on professional learning and development , use educational psychologists social workers, school based funded welfare officer
F	Challenging behaviour is an issue for all staff so shared responsibility rules. Staff should feel supported by the leadership team and the principal. Therefore the principal and the leadership team take turns to staff develop staff on management of student challenging behaviour
G	Immediate support and staff training
H	Invite specialist to train staff on how to deal with challenging students and the language to use in different incidents, sharing
I	The coach on the job very useful, sharing, induction, modelling
J	Use of therapists, considering sensory needs of student

Appendix F12

Table 14 How Principals Generate Teacher Interest in Managing Students with Challenging Behaviour

School	How Principals Generate Teacher Interest
A	Show them the way- “kids first” so train them to be receptive to changes that help children.
B	Seek for better ways of addressing situations, discuss appropriateness of a program, moving with time, e.g. use of interactive smart boards, good response and feedback, encourage creativity and search for knowledge, make use of provided resources; success makes them proactive to change.
C	Encouragement, providing resources,
D	Be available to assist, modelling, communicating about how to manage incidents and supporting staff providing resources, grouping difficult students together- to enable behaviour management, staff consultation.
E	Sell the innovation- staff should see sense and benefit of innovation, provide support and be available, deal and understand and support individual needs, general culture of school should be positive flexible, ongoing, being proactive not responsive.
F	Demonstrate how you can be successful, use successful and enthusiastic members to talk/facilitate, acknowledging positive actions towards student challenging behaviour.
G	Sell the idea and show how the program will benefit them and the students
H	Professional development is paramount in promoting staff interest
I	Demonstrate how it can be successful, use successful staff to talk about how they did it
J	Involve them in sharing responsibility with the leadership team, coordinate the teams and get feedback from the team and the individuals

Appendix F13

Table 15 How Principals Promote Teamwork and Build Leadership

Principal	How Principals Promote Teamwork and Build Leadership
A	We set up structures, share leadership responsibilities and facilitate opportunities for people to work on task as a team.
B	Staff work in teams of three plus the principal, for all team activities,
C	Together we can learn from each other and make something happen, professional development encourages staff to work as a team.
D	We learn from each other through professional development workshops outside school hours. This way we get the majority of staff pull in our direction. We have set up structures prepared to share responsibilities. We facilitate opportunities for people to work on tasks, programs and time tables. We involve the whole school, consulting them and giving them ownership. However, staff need to feel supported, by for example keeping teacher pupil ratio good, answering their questions, considering their contributions and determining the positive and negative value of the program. We celebrate together, promoting the feeling that staff feel valued and supported. We treat people professionally, involve them, delegate responsibilities of decision making, educate them, communicate, spell out and model our expectations, support them when in need, respect them and ensure everyone is on the same page. We rely on workshops staff development and ongoing development of work teams.
E	We operate on different campuses so good relationships are important for small teams to work together so that the whole school team works together. Communication is very important and we communicate through weekly bulletins, newsletters four times a term, staff meeting once every three weeks administration meeting every three weeks whole school professional learning meetings twice per term.
F	Involving everyone and giving them opportunities to display their talents
G	Bring the staff together and celebrate our successes together, one whole staff meeting every term, whole school assembly, Christmas concert for the whole school. Performing teams should feel valued and supported.
H	Treat people professionally, provide a viable teamwork environment, involving them, value outcomes from teams, delegating decisions to teams and get directions from them.
I	Communicating my expectations, respect, modeling and speaking about it.
J	We promote teamwork by ongoing planning and development of teams through team leaders.

Appendix F14

Table 16 How Principals Influence Staff Cooperation and Build Leadership

School	How Principals Influence Teacher Cooperation and Build Leadership
A	The school influences teacher cooperation by developing in teachers a culture of understanding the need for change, building trust, supporting each other, give people time space and opportunity to think reflect, implement, act and do things in-depth rather than trying to slash it through.
B	Get them to work in teams, flexibility with the time table and providing adequate support staff.
C	Show them you trust, love and have faith in them.
D	Understanding what is happening through reflection and communication through daily, weekly and monthly planners, daily bulletins, curriculum meetings, discussion teams, set time lines, reviews, revisits, get feedback on successes, core group to model to other staff, start small and speak throughout the school. Get the coordinator to disseminate the information, make them feel involved, use leadership team that is united and heading towards the goal.
E	We have an inclusive staff group. No staff is uncooperative. They are all involved in decision making. Our mission and values influence staff to have a culture of cooperation related to restorative practice. They have a commitment to what they do. We encourage positive attitudes from the top down to the classroom.
F	Make them feel involved by consulting with them, giving ownership of it.
G	Using a united leadership team, that leads in the same direction, and knowing our mission and values, what we are doing and what is expected of us, We encourage a clear communication network. The leadership team should always be available to assist staff when required. We always try to show teachers and students that we value their effort by talking to them.
H	Being positive and rewarding, providing clear expectations that you demonstrate, lead by example and be optimistic.
I	Being frank about school expectations, influencing them by showing them the results of their effort and talking positively about them.
J	Helping staff to understand and know the students. Train staff to use appropriate strategies to the management of student challenging behaviour. Meet, discuss and follow up on incidents.

Appendix F15

Table 17 How Principals Promote Cross-Teaching Faculty Support

School	How Principals Promote Cross-Teaching Faculty Support
A	Promote cross teaching faculty support- meetings, early education program meetings once per forty-night, communication
B	Use of leadership teams
C	Communication network
D	Use small teams and coordinators
E	Meetings and staff development
F	Specialist teachers join classes twice per week. Staff gives feedback to each other to improve teaching practice' We use those more enthusiastic to model for others to observe. We use the collaborative teaching model we do not dump programs onto teachers because that would lead to program failure.
G	Specialist teachers coordinate activities and curricula. We have a clear communication network.
H	Structure and nature of the leadership team is very important. A coordinator of faculties is important.
I	Use of management coach and modeling are important.
J	We use a collaborative management approach and we model the management process, avoiding feelings of isolation and improving communication networks. We aim to see success through a shared view of the school ethos.

Appendix F16

Table 18 How Principal Build Staff Confidence to Share Responsibilities for the Management of Student with Challenging Behaviours

School	How Principals Build Staff Confidence
A	Being bold to make changes, flexibility and allowing other teachers' contributions, trying different approaches and variations. Give as much knowledge as available especially to new staff, give them opportunity to talk and discuss
B	Drafting a framework on what staff needs to do for each behaviour level and provide this to new staff. Recording incidents of behaviour system and encouraging staff to be more proactive towards change. Putting together a research document showing requirements of the program and sell the program
C	Providing staff professional development, mentoring and resources and giving them the opportunity to practice.
D	Send teachers for training in regional curriculum programs. For example teachers can attend seminars and reported back to the entire staff, support teacher for example use of intercom for teachers to buzz when they encounter challenging behaviour, modeling and talking about how they manage the situation. Support and reward their effort.
E	Providing training and support, listening to their concerns and acting, talking about strategies which could be put in place to deal with particular challenging behaviours and to ensure that there are follow ups, making them feel they are not isolated.
F	Professional development and provision of relevant resources
G	Facilitate communication with senior staff, section leaders and teachers from other schools. Establish the need for the innovation, present evidence and data, give them the support they need e.g. resources, and keep involving them. Providing support and listening to their ideas make them feel they are not isolated. Present data, explain the innovation, support the staff, through cultures, resources- sustain the innovation let them see results,
H	Communicate the importance of a program- provide a working framework-system of recording incidents-support the teacher for example by providing an intercom, recognise a need and use committees. Provide support when things go bad, talk about it, involve staff and students –not being afraid of making changes, try different approaches to change- send teachers for workshops
I	Talking about feedback, follow up and open communication channels, consulting with the staff on what they want, supporting the victims, and educating the perpetrators. Facilitate support from the management team.
J	Set up collaborative teams to provide support and encourage building of relationships, use same philosophy for them to know what the principal is after and is heading to, involve them right from the word go, explain and exchange ideas. Acting as a team player- being positive and rewarding, lead by example, provide clear expectations, and demonstrate professional sense continuously and relentlessly. Be optimistic and supportive by being visible throughout the school, providing timely and relevant information

Appendix F17

Table 19 Types of Challenging Behaviour, the Most Challenging and the Most Prevalent Behaviour

School	Types	Most Prevalent	Most Challenging
A	Aggressive behaviour including explosive temper outbursts, physical and verbal aggression towards staff and other students, fighting, threats or attempts to hurt others using weapons, intentional destruction of property or vandalism running away and non compliance.	Physical and verbal aggression towards staff and other students, throwing objects, kicking, hitting and noncompliance.	Physical aggression, lashing out, kicking and hitting staff and other students.
B	Physical and verbal aggression towards staff, other students and property, including emotional outbursts, punching biting, violence, breaking property, intimidation, non compliance and anxiety e.g. autistic kids harming themselves	Physical and verbal aggression	Non compliance and anxiety for example autistic kids harming themselves.
C	Extreme violence to stubborn passivity, behaviour centred towards social and emotional disturbance, destructive acts against school property, defiance, lashing out at staff, ritualistic behaviour associate with autism, and non compliance.	Extreme violence including lashing out at staff, ritualistic behaviour associate with autism, and non compliance	Extreme violence including lashing out at staff, ritualistic behaviour associate with autism, and non compliance
D	Being late for lessons, disruptive behaviour including being out of seats without reason, preventing others from being able to work, excessive talking, being noisy-verbally and non-verbally. Physical and verbal aggression including kicking, throwing and breaking school property, extortion, fighting, not listening to teachers and not getting on with work.	Physical aggression including kicking and throwing and breaking school property	Physical and verbal aggression including kicking, throwing and breaking school property, being noisy-verbally and non-verbally.
E	suckling of thumbs, melt downs, tantrums, yelling, screaming, verbal and physical aggression, withdrawal, rage, emotional, anti social behaviours such as assaults, bullying, drug related incidents and offences against property, refusal to engage, autism related behaviour, emotional, oppositional, uncooperative, disruptive, acting out through screaming and self reinforcing behaviours.	Physical and verbal aggression including behaviours that come with autism including being oppositional, emotional, disruptive, and uncooperative.	emotional oppositional, uncooperative and disruptive behaviour
F	Physical and verbal aggression towards staff, students and property, class disruption, non compliance, absconding extreme violence, physical,	Physical and verbal aggression towards staff and students	class disruption, non compliance, destruction of property, physical and

	verbal, non-verbal and cyber bullying, passivity, and oppositional defiant behaviour.	including disruption of classes.	verbal aggression towards staff and students
G	Vandalism or destruction of property, by turning tables, throwing objects such as chairs, pens, wallets, and bags. Bullying verbal and physical, autistic related like screaming, kicking throwing chairs, self harm and passivity	Physical and verbal aggression, swearing and disobedience.	Physical and verbal aggression.
H	Physical and verbal aggression including running away/leaving school grounds without permission; fighting, threatening, disruption; and anti-social behaviours including non compliance, theft, racial and sexual harassment, meltdowns tantrums, autistic related behaviours yelling, screaming, smearing of faeces, withdrawal and refusal to comply/engage.	Physical and verbal aggression, meltdowns, tantrums, autistic behaviours including yelling, screaming, and smearing of faeces.	Verbal and physical aggression
I	Physical violence to staff and other students including fighting, general disruption and anxiety of autistic students	Physical violence and anxiety of autistic students	Physical violence, verbal abuse and anxiety
J	Extreme violence towards staff and other students including threatening, fighting and intimidation, verbal and non-verbal abuse, class disruption, non compliance, anxiety of autistic students including, self harm, extreme passivity, extreme violence, and oppositional defiance.	Violent behaviours such as physical aggression, throwing things, kicking, destruction of school property and swearing	Extreme violence and anxiety of autistic students.

Appendix F18

Table 20 Summary of the Most Prevalent and Most Challenging Behaviours of Students

Behaviour	Most Prevalent	Most Challenging
Physical aggression	10	8
Verbal aggression	9	5
Class disruption	8	3
Noncompliance	6	4
Anxiety/autistic	5	2
Destruction of property	2	2

Appendix F19

Table 21 Responses of Principals on Strategies commonly used in Specialist Schools

School	Strategies Adopted	Most Effective Strategies
A	The programs used are Bounce Back, Whole School Social Learning, timeout or quiet room or isolation, circle time, community access, the drug education, interpersonal development, student leadership, transition, individual behaviour plans, case management using experts or professional facilitators, one teacher, 2 assistants and small group in every class program, medication, use of rewards, communicating openly and fairly, treating others fairly, building self esteem, ensuring a safe and secure environment, and encouraging friendship	Case management, using specialist expertise or professionals, for example those who provide physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy to students, having and maintaining adequate, competent and confident staff; staff that experiences support and agrees with protocols and procedures, training staff to act appropriately for a situation, being available not in a threatening way, recreating/building relationships, developing students' anxiety through activities such as swimming, avoiding consequences, restorative practices, no punishment and teaching values
B	Programs used are: 'You can do it', awards box draw before school starts, restorative practices, reality theory or choice program, common school language, calling the police for dangerous out of control students	Restorative practices; forget about the past, have a way forward for the future.
C	Programs include use of educational residential unit- an extension of the classroom programs where students learn vital independent living skills, farm- an acronym for flexibility, adaptability, responsibility and management, school ready, community access/leisure time- designed to give each student a sense of worth in their local and global community.	Recording and analysing incidents of challenging behaviour, adequate teacher assistant support, making use of the services of occupational therapists, speech pathologist and physiotherapist, teaching respect and trust, residential unit and farm
D	Programs include 'You can do it' which tries to build intrinsic control in students and encourages independence, teaching resilience, organisation, persistence, confidence and going along; Tribes involving recording incidents.	TRIBES- recording incidents, case management involving both external and internal agents of change, grouping students according to needs, ability and keeping groups small and leadership team being available to support staff and students

E	Programs adopted include bounce back, resilience, restorative practices, circle time- students share giving each other chance to contribute meaningfully and 'Stop, Think and Do'.	1. Restorative practice model supported by bounce back and 'stop think and do' programs, professional learning, having experts coming in, a low student/teacher ratio, meetings involving parents/carers and staff to determine individual Education plans for all students, retaining experienced and dedicated staff, no punishment, managing intrinsic control and teaching values that enable students to develop a sense of trust.
F	Employing a recreation officer and creating recreation clubs, increased assistant support in and outside classrooms, employing a male ex-police officer who assist with violently challenging students, communicate with staff through internet. 'You can do it' across the school aiming to see students more responsible for their own behaviour or managing their own behaviour; CALMER classrooms not taking an incident as a personal attack and focusing on behaviour not the student. When the children are exhibiting challenging behaviour, thus the time they need help most.	Home grown owner club- the whole school involved, it is voluntary on the part of staff, it is happy experience, serves the purpose of reducing problems in the play ground, provides students with some leisure skills and new skills, it is not just taking time, not just busy work they are learning skills at the same time so it is a win-win situation.
G	Used traditional strategies such as having class rules and consequences for breaking the class rules, sitting them at the side of the room, going for time out, going to offices of team leader's, vice principal and principal. Our current strategy is restorative based on relationships, as teachers try to know and understand students, looking at why they behave the way they do. Looking at the motivation for the behaviour instead of punishing the behaviour and connections program.	Connections program- giving appropriate curriculum for individual students, community access, case management, students and staff support, separating all students from the violent student and giving the violent student space then find out the cause of the violence, developing behaviour management strategies, taking advantage of talent, talent identification and development and use of restorative practices.
H	Arts based curriculum-learning numeracy and literacy by doing, using music, visual arts, drama, dance, play, games.	Separating extreme cases, use of the Triad approach; school, home, community, whole school strategies, collectively preparing individual behaviour management plans, keeping incident reports for each child, engaging the right, adequately and suitably trained staff, be

		available, calm, non threatening, create a relationship that meets students' sensory needs.
I	Strategies include separating challenging students from the audience by evacuating or locking out or in, getting police assistance with violent students, use heavy blankets, ask parents to assist by taking the child home for further management by a private specialists e.g. psychiatrist, psychologists	Training by a behaviour management coach who assists staff and students, use of visual cues, not to be angry or raise voices, non threatening approaches, short conversations, visual prompts like, how to dress how we speak and being friendly. Redirecting the kid to main task or a different activity, provide challenging programs for students, team work, communication involving parents, being proactive to problems and reasonable teacher student ratios.
J	Programs include whole school individual education programs, effective communication, using therapists e.g. occupational therapists to help students with sensory needs, a balanced curriculum, giving children time to choose, choosing behaviours to deal with and those to live with, getting to know the children well, provide alternatives before the behaviour explode, categorising behaviours into minor class room management for teachers and assistant and major school wide management for leadership teams and specialist	Providing an effective communication system, being aware of their sensory needs and addressing them appropriately, separating students from violence, give students time and space, talking and investigating what agitates them, completing incident reports, discussing them, and using them for current and future management planning, avoiding use of restraint, aim to achieve success together, adopting programs that support, management of challenging behaviour, good staff student ratio, implementing whole school strategies effective to particular student challenging behaviour.

Appendix F20

Table 22 Reasons and Examples for being Innovative

School	Innovative Program
A	Agree whole school approach- Need a range of programs. Innovative programs such as coaching programs for staff and teaching children to know and understand their rights e.g. through “you can do it” program is very important, experts from another school spoke about positive behaviour support, early intervention strategies revising basic rules, time out rooms
B	Agree innovative programs can be used to reduce incidents of student challenging behaviour-students do not need consequences-need teaching leading to respect and trust, promote positive school culture
C	Agree growing pains, circle time, farm, need a range of programs to reduce incidents of student challenging behaviour , using experts, therapists, trial and error, residential programs talk, talk and talk, three adults in each class reality theory, restorative practices, encouraging small successes.
D	True – before Tribes the school did not use a consistent proactive approach to promote appropriate student social reactions. Each form of behaviour is unique; therefore innovation to meet the spur of the incident’s moment is essential.
E	True, programs should be created within the school to enable ownership, staff part of the decision-making team, commitment and good will in staff. Establishing base rooms, curriculum options, challenging and engaging programs, horticulture, driving education program, advance life saving program in partnership with South Melbourne life saving clubs, First Aid CPR, VICAL program, maintenance club, home craft program Hospitality program
F	True, programs that are most successful are the ones that have grown from within rather than bring an external program into the school. Staff feel they have ownership of a program if they are part of the decision making process of creating the program So we rely on staff commitment and good will otherwise no program can take off the ground without them
G	True, social skills program, ‘you can do it’, program, sexuality programs, human relations program, you can do it program, establishment of a well focused pastoral care system, restorative practices
H	True arts based curriculum Behaviour tracking for timetable setting organise groups and talent identification. Innovation at the spur of the moment is important because each incident is different and unique. Make expectations clear.
I	Making use of a management coach. “Solving a jigsaw” started as a program to combat domestic violence and it teaches children to speak up when they are being bullied. “You can do it program” a social program teaching children to be confident and getting alone. Growing pains- goes through all ages on behaviour, professional development involving external agents of change on student engagement, expectations of staff students and families, intervention strategies, revising basic rules, reviewing approaches across the school-observe practices within the school- behaviour management consultant-could not fix our problems staff have a duty to implement innovative programs, consultants encourage staff to take up challenges-modelling, professional workshops.
J	Agree staff should be able to feel they are in control. CALMER Classroom-concentrate on behaviour not student, give them options, do not restrain students retain their dignity-use the department of human services and families

Appendix F21

Table 23 Other Additional Information

School	Additional Information
A	There needs to be consistent across the school for challenging behaviour to be managed well. The principal leads/ expects this consistency. Consistency may only be gained through innovative practice
B	Never expel students, bad day ignored the next day; schools have to be resourceful to manage themselves
C	Never expel a student; schools are alone in facing challenging behaviour, no external assistance on challenging behaviour
D	principal through teams support, generates innovations that can assist in the management of student challenging behaviour
E	Innovations should benefit the kids, staff to realize that they are there for the students
F	Schools feel very much alone in dealing with challenging behaviour, there is no Support; no understanding of how challenging this behaviour can be and the impact they can have on staff. So we have to be resourceful, innovative and strategic. There is no support for schools experiencing challenging behaviour. So school leadership should be committed and cannot be reliant on external forces or the department of education and early childhood.
G	Anything that goes on in a school starts from the principal through the leadership team, make sure you are looking at the welfare of teachers and students, support should come from the principal and leadership team. Avoid stressful moments for staff. Know the direction in which the school is going
H	The principal is one of the pace setters in the process of change.
I	Take a leading role in professional reading from department bulletins; learn from other principals-consulting others and adjusting to suit my school. Work as a team for successful management of challenging behaviour. Behaviour management rewards when it is positive. The school should be caring and safe for all. Challenging behaviour is one of the top issues in our discussions as principal. Principals are proactive and reach out for help from other sources because the department is not very helpful when it comes to management of daily incidents of challenging behaviour in special schools. Small classes assist management of students with challenging behaviour in special schools. An alternative setting should set up for challenging students with 70 and above IQ.
J	Provide other staff with moral support, financial resources, having things to try keep the optimism, keep others going. No matter what we do, there is always more to learn.

Appendix G

Vignettes

Appendix G1

Vignette 1

John habitually scuffed his boot against the wall and made it dirty. Before staff development on management of students with challenging behaviour we would stop John from any other work and make him clean up the mess. After staff development, one of our staff members closely observed and examined records about John's behaviour and established that he seems to enjoy cleaning the mess. After all John loved to see staff on punishment with him as they supervised him and miss their lunch or go home late. It was also observed that he messed around when he had a challenging task before him. So after discussions with staff, we decided to change our plan of action. We would not make him clean up the mess but redirect him to task at hand. After a number of ignored incidents, John lost interest in messing up walls. Staff members were no longer worried or interested in dirty walls. They were interested in getting him do the task. So he eventually abandoned the behaviour. This incident taught us that when working with behaviourally challenging student we should not give much attention to the effects of the behaviour but to what the student should be doing and avoid wasting his and others learning time.

Appendix G2

Vignette 2

We realized that we had students who were highly challenging. They were challenging because we were not giving ourselves time to know and understand them. So we appointed an assistant principal whose main role is attending to student challenging behaviour and providing support to staff during incidents. This particular assistant principal works closely with staff, professionals and families managing each case and so far results are positive. We have learnt that students need to know you love and care for them and that you want to make a difference in their lives.

Appendix G3

Vignette 3

We had 4 extremely challenging students who disturbed the learning process for the rest of the students in their classes. The assistant principal, who was trained to deal with challenging behaviour issues in the school, observed that the students were not coping with the curriculum in the class room. We were offering them an inappropriate curriculum so she suggested creating a different curriculum for them. We created a new program called 'connections' program where we pulled one teacher out of the class room got money to pay another teacher to replace him, a male youth worker and an assistant. The youth worker works with the teacher we pulled out of the classroom for two days per week while the assistant works with him for the three days left. The challenging students' day begins with numeracy and literacy with the rest of the students. Then the teacher and youth worker or teacher and assistant take the challenging students out of school to do activities that promote feelings of self worthy and team building. The activities include discussions as to why students exhibit challenging behaviours and strategies to defuse the behaviours, bike riding, and indoor rock climbing, going to the gym and swimming. They join the rest of the school at lunch time. This program gives the rest of the class the opportunity to get on and learn which they could not do with these students in their classes. A different curriculum and a new focus for these students brought sanity into our school. Thanks to the innovative deputy principal.

Appendix G4

Vignette 4

We could not run our daily school programs effectively because most students exhibited challenging behaviour during lesson and break times. We employed a recreation officer to help staff during breaks and a male ex-police officer on call to assist staff when challenging behaviour occurs at any time. The ex-police officer has been very assistive, proactively and reactively, to the recreation officer and the rest of staff members during breaks and lessons times. He responds to all calls quickly and handles incidents professionally. The school is now in control of student challenging behaviour because of the effort of the two officers and especially the ex-police officer. The leadership team now only deals with extreme cases.

Appendix G5

Vignette 5

One family was not compliant but was difficult with the school when asked to take away their child who exhibited dangerous challenging behaviour. The principal said:

At one time some parents were very savage at me when I called them to collect their child because he was exhibiting challenging behaviour. They did not want to hear that their child was exhibiting behaviour that disturbed the whole school. They believed that since the child was dually enrolled the two schools especially our special school would be responsible for defusing the behaviour. They believed that our school would have the capacity to defuse and stop the behaviour without their involvement. So they did not want to get involved in this issue. We couldn't agree so the student was indefinitely suspended. Since then the family and the child have not come back to us.

Appendix G6

Vignette 6

A known challenging and violent student, who has punched a number of teachers in the head, punched and hurt other students by pushing them over and throwing things really charged at the assistant principal one day. The dramatic event took place when it was least expected. If the assistant principal was not on the other side of the fence, she would have been smashed and hurt badly in the head by the student. However the police were called to address the attack and they came immediately, hand cuffed the student, took him for questioning and correction. After this incident the student is not coming to school.

Appendix G7

Vignette 7

During the interview one principal stressed the need to train staff on use of direct intervention in managing student challenging behaviour and was quick to show me a swollen upper arm with still obvious tooth-marks from an incident that had happened a day before the interview. A student had been exhibiting self injurious behaviour, so the principal and other senior teachers were trying to defuse the behaviour. During the intervention process, the principal was bitten by the student on her upper arm. Although the school finally managed to defuse the behaviour with the help of parents, the principal had been hurt. This incident shows how dangerous direct intervention can be when applied to highly challenging students

Appendix G8

Vignette 8

The principal briefly gave an account of how the reality theory and choice making theory were practically used to stop challenging behaviour that had been recurring in their school. The victim was a 16 year old student believed to have some mental health problems. The student habitually exhibited some anxiety driven aggression to staff, self and school property. The school believed the student had some mental health problems so a mental health officer was engaged for assistance. One day the student threatened the mental health officer with a knife. In this incident the student was locked up at the hospital and police were called. The police handcuffed him and was under their custody for a couple of days. While in police custody he was examined by a specialist doctor and it was established that he was normal and nothing was wrong with him. The police questioned and cautioned him and sent him back to school. The student experienced reality and learnt the importance of making wise choices (Reality and choice making theories applied). After the incident staff talked to the student and showed him the way he should behave and asked if he wanted the same treatment in future. The student vowed he would never again. Now he does not only know that it is bad to be involved in aggressive behaviour but that it is unacceptable and that the law will take its course if such and other related behaviours are exhibited in public. So for 2 years he has avoided exhibiting challenging behaviour in the school. When he feels disturbed he chooses to pack his bags and go home. He can now make wise choices because he has realised the seriousness associated with consequences of exhibiting aggressive behaviour in a school.

Appendix G9

Vignette 9

When children are at their worst that is the time they need us most. We are experiencing a whole school problem with Peter but the good news is that we share responsibility with our competent assistants. Peter cannot be left on his own at any time in the school so we take turns to assist him. If left unsupervised he is aggressive with other students. Peter is a traumatised student, traumatised at the early stages of his childhood. His parents are separated. He lives with his mother. His mother was jailed last year and is going to jail again this year. So the child is always vigilant and alert thinking about his traumatic experiences. His mind is preoccupied with these experiences and what could happen next. He is worried because his mother will be going to jail again. He is in dilemma as to who will look after him when his mother goes back to jail. His father is not reliable and does not seem to care, for he has recently visited him during weekends. The boy is unable to learn academic stuff because he has too many things to think about. For example he does not know whether his mother will pick him up after school because the police are always following her up. He is a really traumatised child. He cannot write, read and cannot read music language but fortunately, we discovered that he has interest in music. One staff member volunteered to teach him to play the piano by rote though. We are happy, we identified his talent. At least he can now play a few songs. We have effectively structured and implemented his individual program together as a team and we are getting there and he is getting better but is not there yet. We have also assisted Peter by inviting the department of human services into his life and they have provided excellent counselling for him. This problem has taught us that when children are at their worst they need us most.