



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

NSW DoE School  
Leadership Institute  
**Leadership for  
Learning Frameworks**



# Foreword

---



## Identifying, developing and sustaining high quality school leadership is crucial for lifting the performance of education systems.

At the core, school principals need the capabilities to lead positive and sustained improvements in teaching that can impact on student learning and life trajectories.

The NSW Department of Education's School Leadership Institute is committed to investing in 'leadership for learning' capabilities at all levels of the system. In 2018, it commissioned the Aspiring Principals Leadership Program, the first of a series of leadership programs to be sponsored by the Institute.

The APLP has been co-designed by University of Wollongong academic staff and members of the SLI team to meet the needs of NSW public school principals. It is based on strong international evidence and experience about effective school leadership and contextualised for the specific NSW context and education policy frameworks. Access to the program is highly selective, requiring prospective participants to provide written and digital evidence of their suitability for more senior leadership roles. The first cohort of participants completed the program in March 2020, and a further three cohorts have begun or been selected for successive programs.

This report reflects on a key aspect of the APLP, the conceptualisation and design of the three leadership frameworks co-designed and utilised in the program. It describes three substantive outcomes of the design process:

- *The Leadership for Learning Analysis (L4LA)*, which provides 360° feedback on five key capabilities required to lead effectively in NSW public schools;
- *The Leadership for Inquiry and Innovation* framework (L4I&I), which articulates the key stages actions and guiding questions underpinning participants' leadership inquiries; and
- The six *Leadership Mindsets*, ways of thinking that participants are encouraged to use as they frame their approaches to school leadership.

Reflecting on the co-design experience, the report explores the principles underpinning these three frameworks and identifies some opportunities to understand and evaluate the impact of these frameworks in practice. Education systems everywhere acknowledge the need for more leaders, and the need to support current leaders to more effectively improve learning outcomes and lead complex change. This report provides a useful contribution to both the theory and practice of leadership development.

On behalf of the SLI Advisory Board, we thank Kylie Lipscombe, Sue Bennett, Paul Kidson, Paul Gardiner and Ann McIntyre for their work on the thoughtful report that they have prepared.

**William Loudon and Simon Breakspear**  
International Advisors, NSW DoE School Leadership Institute

# Table of Contents

---

|                                                               |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Foreword.....                                                 | i   |
| Table of Contents .....                                       | ii  |
| Tables and Figures .....                                      | iii |
| Abbreviations.....                                            | iv  |
| Report Purpose.....                                           | v   |
| Report Structure .....                                        | v   |
| Background .....                                              | 1   |
| School Leadership in NSW Public Schools.....                  | 4   |
| Leading learning in NSW public schools .....                  | 4   |
| Policy context .....                                          | 5   |
| Local Schools, Local Decisions .....                          | 5   |
| Great Teaching, Inspired Learning .....                       | 6   |
| School Planning requires design strategy.....                 | 6   |
| The Principal Workload and Time Use Study .....               | 7   |
| Principal Role Description .....                              | 7   |
| Aspiring Principals Leadership Program .....                  | 8   |
| Engagement Elements.....                                      | 9   |
| Leadership for Learning Frameworks.....                       | 10  |
| Leadership for Learning Analysis .....                        | 10  |
| Leadership for Inquiry and Innovation.....                    | 11  |
| Leadership Mindsets.....                                      | 11  |
| Research Methodology .....                                    | 12  |
| Participants .....                                            | 13  |
| Data collection.....                                          | 14  |
| Data analysis.....                                            | 14  |
| Findings.....                                                 | 15  |
| 1. Why were the frameworks developed?.....                    | 15  |
| Student-centred school leadership.....                        | 15  |
| Collaborative approach to leadership and decision making..... | 16  |
| Leadership efficacy.....                                      | 16  |
| Self-reflexive and context informed design .....              | 17  |
| Developing sustaining leadership practice .....               | 18  |

|                                                                                               |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 2. What principles informed the design of the frameworks? .....                               | 19 |
| Empathy for the NSW DoE’s moral purpose .....                                                 | 19 |
| Generative dialogue .....                                                                     | 20 |
| Context immersion .....                                                                       | 22 |
| Thought processes and guiding ways .....                                                      | 23 |
| Discussion .....                                                                              | 24 |
| The moral imperative: Student-centred leadership .....                                        | 24 |
| Design thinking .....                                                                         | 24 |
| Interrelated Frameworks .....                                                                 | 25 |
| Scaffolds for action .....                                                                    | 25 |
| Recommendations .....                                                                         | 26 |
| How can the SLI understand and evaluate the impact of the three frameworks in practice? ..... | 27 |
| 1a. Case study research .....                                                                 | 27 |
| 1b. Longitudinal research .....                                                               | 27 |
| How can the SLI ensure the frameworks are responsive to a changing landscape? .....           | 28 |
| 2a. Continuous evaluation and development .....                                               | 28 |
| 2b. Responsiveness to new policies and research .....                                         | 28 |
| How can the SLI enable and expand the utilisation of the frameworks beyond the APLP? .....    | 28 |
| 3a. Adapt and adopt the frameworks across different stages of school leadership .....         | 28 |
| 3b. Examples of practice .....                                                                | 29 |
| Authors .....                                                                                 | 30 |
| References .....                                                                              | 32 |

# Tables and Figures

---

|                                                       |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Table 1: Overview of Participants .....               | 13 |
| Table 2: Opportunities and strategies .....           | 26 |
| Figure 1: Leadership for Learning Analysis .....      | 10 |
| Figure 2: Leadership for Inquiry and Innovation ..... | 11 |
| Figure 3: Leadership Mindsets .....                   | 11 |
| Figure 4: SLI Development Continuum .....             | 29 |



# Abbreviations

---

|         |                                                                     |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AITSL   | Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership             |
| APLP    | Aspiring Principals Leadership Program                              |
| GTIL    | Great Teaching, Inspired Learning- A blueprint for action           |
| LSLD    | Local Schools, Local Decisions                                      |
| L4I&I   | Leadership for Inquiry and Innovation                               |
| L4LA    | Leadership for Learning Analysis                                    |
| NSW DoE | New South Wales Department of Education                             |
| SLI     | New South Wales Department of Education School Leadership Institute |
| UOW     | University of Wollongong                                            |

# Report Purpose

---

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of a commissioned research study by the University of Wollongong (UOW) for the NSW DoE School Leadership Institute (SLI). The study is focused on examining the conceptualisation and design of three Leadership for Learning Frameworks implemented as part of the Aspiring Principals Leadership Program (APLP).

# Report Structure

---

This report first presents a background to the study including a discussion on the rationale of the APLP including the co-design approach utilised between SLI and UOW. Next, is an overview of the policy and contextual landscape in which school leadership development in NSW public schools is situated. Following this, descriptions of the three Leadership for Learning Frameworks designed by the APLP program team are presented. An explanation of the methodology of this research study follows, including a description of the research participants, research approach, and analytic approach. The findings of the study are reported and discussed, then recommendations for the SLI are presented.

# Background

---

**The APLP addresses the now widely recognised need for ensuring sufficient quantity of principal leadership for the future.**

The Aspiring Principals Leadership Program (APLP) has its genesis in the NSW Department of Education’s School Leadership Strategy (NSW DoE, 2017). It reflects the moral purpose of the Department’s Strategic Plan, 2018-2020, to be “Australia’s best education system and one of the finest in the world” (NSW DoE, 2018b, p. 1). The APLP responds to two important findings from research into the leadership contexts present in NSW public education:

- that effective school leaders create positive and high expectation learning cultures, actively develop teacher professional learning, and ensure both are directed toward student improvement (CESE, 2015), and,
- that principals need their own professional learning support which is “meaningful for their school and their context” (Deloitte, 2017, p. 5).

These findings are consistent with wider academic literature (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020) and approaches to principal preparation in other jurisdictions, both national and international (AITSL, 2016; Schleicher, 2012; Watterston, 2015). The APLP addresses the now widely recognised need for ensuring sufficient quantity of principal leadership for the future (OECD, 2019). This is not a new challenge, with projections for leadership

succession in some jurisdictions and sectors painting concerning prospects regarding sufficient numbers of applicants nearly 20 years ago. Five years ago, estimates by the NSW Department of Education (NSW DoE) suggested that up to “30 percent [of NSW government school principals] have already reached notional retirement age” (CESE, 2015, p. 2).

To respond to these challenges, the SLI, led by Director Joanne Jarvis, adopted a view that a co-designed aspiring principals’ leadership development program would best achieve the NSW Department of Education’s School Leadership Strategy (NSW DoE, 2017). Working in partnership with scholars and practitioners within NSW government schools, the SLI sought to develop a comprehensive program to develop and support the next generation of school principals for NSW public schools. It was to be informed by the Australian Standard for Principals (AITSL, 2019), yet finely nuanced and responsive to the contextual complexities of NSW public schools. The APLP also needed to be grounded in the twin goals that “every student is known, valued and cared for... [and]...every student is engaged and challenged to continue to learn” (NSW DoE, 2018b, p. 1).

In 2018, potential program partners were invited to submit expressions of interest to partner with the NSW DoE SLI in developing the APLP. The University of Wollongong's School of Education was selected as the preferred partner and commenced co-design of the program with SLI staff, along with an expert consultant from the SLI Advisory Board. Representatives from the key principals' associations contributed to the review of key elements of the program as they developed and both the NSW Primary Principals' Association and the NSW Secondary Principals' Council provided critical input to the program's overarching goals, principles, and key design components. A coherent thematic phrase guided the program development throughout the co-design phase: Leadership for Learning. This is discussed in detail in the *Findings* section of this report.

Critical to the co-design approach of the APLP is the concept of 'evidence-informed', rather than 'evidence-based'. An 'evidence-informed' approach values knowledge and insights gained through research and practice without privileging it beyond the scope of critical inquiry. It critically evaluates the appropriateness and usefulness of knowledge through the lens of contextual needs and capabilities. It honours the subjective knowledge and efficacy of practice built up over many

years by experienced school leaders, and values multiple ways of knowing, including indigenous epistemologies, student voice, and perspectives of culturally or socially disenfranchised communities (McKnight & Morgan, 2019). 'Evidence-informed' approaches to leadership development align with extensive research literature which eschews a 'one size fits all' approach (Brezicha, Bergmark, & Mitra, 2015).

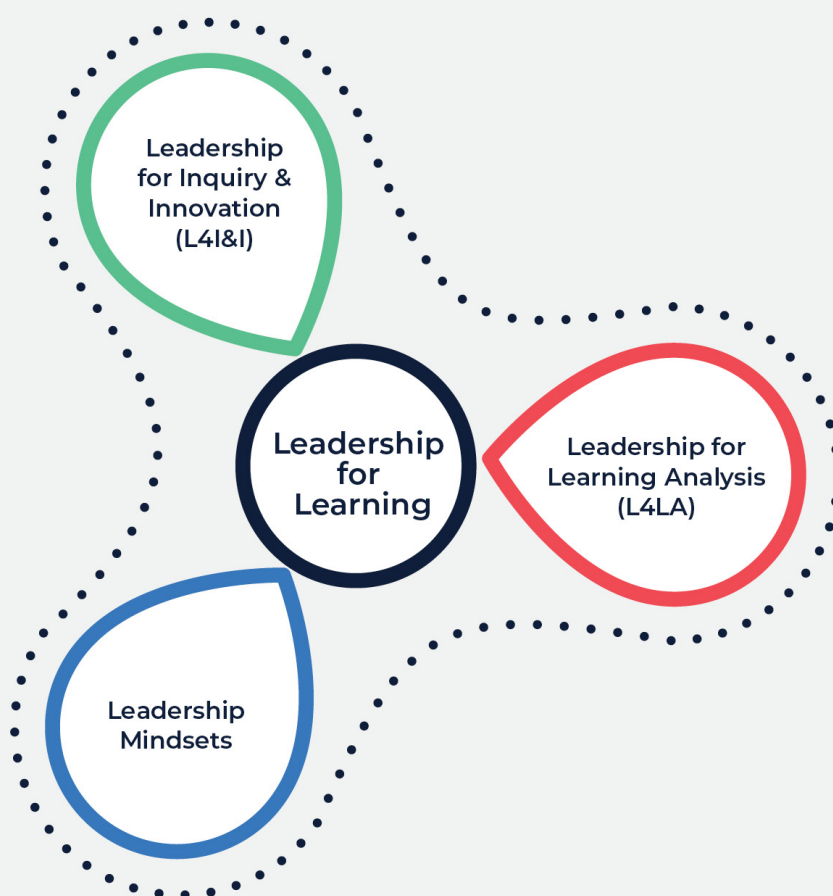
In 2018, over a four-month period, the APLP was co-designed by project team members from the SLI and the University of Wollongong (UOW). The program was designed in consideration of five key participant outcomes derived from the SLI:

- capacity to lead school improvement, innovation and change
- understanding of the leadership practices that have the greatest impact on student outcomes
- capacity to lead collaborative, evidence-informed professional learning to improve teaching and student learning
- personal and interpersonal qualities to lead with influence
- capacity to confidently lead the strategic organisation of the school.

The structure of the program is detailed in the *APLP Engagement Elements* section of this report.







Three frameworks, the focus of this research project, were conceptualised and co-designed as part of the APLP and are now used across the program curriculum. All three frameworks use processes of reflexive inquiry. This is a stance towards knowing and acting which seeks not just for an individual to develop understanding but to do so within the complex relational contexts of a school community (Hill, Burns, Danyluk, & Crawford, 2018). The Leadership for Learning Analysis (L4LA) is a 360° survey which gives aspiring principals insights into their leadership practices based on the views of supervisors, leadership peers, and teachers. This process underscores the relational basis of effective leadership. The Leadership Mindsets describe the frames of thinking that leaders are cognisant of when preparing to enact behaviours and actions.

The Leadership for Inquiry and Innovation (L4I&I) is used to guide leadership inquiry in schools and to support aspiring principals to engage meaningfully in program elements and build their leadership capacity through a school leadership inquiry. Each of the frameworks is detailed further in *Overview of the Leadership for Learning Frameworks* section of this report. Although each framework is situated within the APLP as a coherent program, their prime function is to benefit participants' schools through their "own independent research capacity and capability" (Harris & Jones, 2019, p. 3) well beyond the scope of the APLP. Together, the frameworks are designed for aspiring principals to develop knowledge of self, of context, of inquiry, and of collaborative leadership to better equip them to take up the role of principal with confidence.

# School Leadership in NSW Public Schools

School leadership is most effective when responsive to the contexts in which it is located (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020).

## Leading learning in NSW public schools

The NSW DoE is one of the largest and most diverse education systems in the world with 2207 schools supporting approximately 798,000 students (CESE, 2019). In 2018 there were 1604 primary schools, 401 secondary school, 113 special schools or schools for specific purpose (SSPs), and 66 community/central schools. More than half of all schools were located in major cities, while over 18% (408) were in outer regional, remote, or very remote locations. Socio-educational diversity is considerable, with 46% of all schools having a Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI) value greater than 110, while 30% have a FOEI value less than 50. Over 25% of secondary schools were either selective (fully or partially) or include specialisations (e.g., visual arts, technology, sport, etc.); single-sex schools represent 9.6% of all secondary schools.

NSW DoE Annual Report data (NSW DoE, 2019a) indicates over 25% of primary principals are teaching principals who hold the dual responsibilities of teaching as well as the leadership of small schools. School leadership roles in primary schools include 3,616 assistant principals and 718 deputy principals. There are 434 secondary principals in NSW public schools.

School leadership roles in secondary schools also include 3,796 head teachers and 737 deputy principals.

Leadership succession for NSW public schools remains a high priority. The 2019 workforce profile analysis for public schools, drawn from the age profiles of permanent NSW public school teachers data (NSW DoE, 2019b) indicates that 15.64% of current principals are over 60 years of age and 57.54% are over 50 years of age. Largely due to current workforce demographics, the projection is that in any year approximately 10% of schools will require a newly appointed school principal (NSW DoE, 2019b).





## Policy context

The current educational policy landscape in the NSW Department of Education includes a series of reforms that significantly influence the role of school leaders. The two key reform areas of *Local Schools, Local Decisions* (LSLD) and *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning- A Blueprint for Action* (GTIL) (NSW DoE, 2013) were designed to enable increased school authority (LSLD) and effective teaching through evidence-informed policy cohesiveness (GTIL). These reforms have resulted in significant changes to the role of principal in NSW public schools. For example, evidence from research commissioned by the NSW DoE (Deloitte, 2017) identifies concerns about the impact of LSLD on principal workloads.

### **LOCAL SCHOOLS, LOCAL DECISIONS**

The LSLD reform included the provision of increased funding, and increased discretionary allocation of funding, to enable principals to make local decisions based on school planning priorities which improve outcomes for students (NSW DoE, 2012). A key component of LSLD was the introduction of the *Resource Allocation Model* (RAM). The RAM enabled more funding to be allocated to those schools with the greatest needs. The key dimensions that shape this model include

student socio-economic status, Aboriginality, language background, learning needs, and location. The fundamental purpose of the funding is to address the disparity between educational outcomes that are closely related to socio-economic circumstances. Under the policy, principals were given authority to spend discretionary funding on the employment and development of staff and enhanced learning support with the aim to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The implementation of policies designed to increase opportunity for devolved local decision making has resulted in an increased focus on school leadership accountability. This focus on leadership accountability operates on two levels. One is the level of compliance to government policies while the other is the outcomes resulting from increased opportunities for decision making. The outcomes are defined as both student learning outcomes as well as the evidence of a range of learning conditions as defined within the *School Excellence Framework* (NSW DoE, 2017). The increased opportunity for school decision making regarding the allocation of resources has the potential for increased transparency, accountability and expectations in order to meet these requirements.



*...every student, every teacher,  
every leader and every school  
improves every year.”*

The LSLD reforms include a specific focus on the increased authority for school leadership actions in four key areas. These areas highlight the importance of school leader capacity to make decisions, allocate resources, adapt staffing and work locally to support specific school and student needs (NSW DoE, 2012). The increased opportunity for school decision making regarding the allocation of resources to address student needs carries a requirement for increased transparency, accountability and expectations in order to meet these requirements.

### **GREAT TEACHING, INSPIRED LEARNING**

The GTIL strategy (NSW DoE, 2013) articulated key reforms to enable continual improvement in teaching and school leadership in NSW schools. The recommendations influenced the policies and school practices for teacher and school leader professional learning, performance management, accreditation and career progression. These changes have required the leadership of new strategies to promote teacher collaboration and the de-privatisation of the classroom. Lesson observation, feedback, and evidence of practice are required to support new performance development, and teacher accreditation processes.

The GTIL strategy, along with LSLD and the *NSW Crown Employees (Teachers and Schools and Related Employees) Salaries and Conditions Award* (2017), created the opportunity to reconceptualise school executive leadership positions. The traditional models of head teachers leading faculties, assistant principals leading stages, and deputy principals supporting

principals in whole school leadership is changing. In the five year period between 2012 and 2017 there was an increase of 641 executive positions. This included an increase of 100 deputy principal positions and 96 assistant principal positions employed to lead learning and support. It also included an increase of 374 instructional leadership positions (CESE, 2018).

### **SCHOOL PLANNING REQUIRES DESIGN STRATEGY**

The achievement of the goals, such as “every student, every teacher, every leader and every school improves every year” (NSW DoE, 2018b), requires a deep understanding of both current and desired performance. School planning policies introduced in 2015 and revised in 2018 and 2019 have placed an increased emphasis on the use of evidence to guide school planning, reporting, self-assessment and external evaluation. *The School Excellence Framework* (NSW DoE, 2017a) describes key elements of high quality practices across learning, teaching and leading. In consideration of leadership, the four key leading elements are educational leadership, school planning implementation and reporting, school resources, and management practices and processes. The primary focus of school planning has been the use of readily available student outcomes data to establish targets and performance measures in conjunction with Directors Educational Leadership. The complexity of school improvement necessitates a clear strategy to lead inquiry into the impact of current practices as well as engaging in design and innovation to enable an evidence informed planning processes for improvement.



## THE PRINCIPAL WORKLOAD AND TIME USE STUDY

The commissioned study by the NSW DoE on principal workload and time use found that the educational leadership role of the principal is perceived to be negatively impacted by administrative and managerial responsibilities (Deloitte, 2017). The increased authority flowing from the LSLD reform has also increased accountability requirements. Identified strategies to support principals include streamlined departmental systems and increased preparation for the role with further systemic support for principal leadership (McGrath-Champ et al., 2019), and, by extension, preparation for those seeking to assume these roles. The study highlighted that while the key areas of responsibility for the principal remained unchanged, the requirements for the successful execution of these responsibilities had increased along with an increased focus on accountability.

## PRINCIPAL ROLE DESCRIPTION

The new *DoE Principal Role Description* (NSW DoE, 2018a) describes the key accountabilities expected of NSW public school principals. These accountabilities reflect the five professional practices of the Australian Professional Standard for Principals: Leading teaching and learning, Developing self and others, Leading improvement innovation and change, Leading the management of the school, and Engaging and working with the community (AITSL, 2019).

# Aspiring Principals Leadership Program

---



## Engagement Elements

APLP is described as a 12-month intensive and action-orientated leadership program with multiple engagement elements designed as catalysts for leadership learning for NSW aspiring principals (SLI, 2019). A rigorous selection process is used to select participants for the program and includes a written application, digital story, referee check and online learning conversation facilitated by panels of experienced and retired principals.

The program consists of face to face leadership seminars led by world class academics, professional leadership teams facilitated by experienced principals, online resources to support the application of research to practice within and beyond the program, and Connecting to Country, an Aboriginal cultural awareness learning experience. As part of the program, aspiring principals engage in the design and implementation of a unique and highly rigorous Leadership Inquiry aimed at improving student outcomes within their school context. At the conclusion of the program an ePortfolio demonstrating evidence of leadership learning and impact is submitted as a key component of the program validation process. Successful qualification in the program results in a credit pathway into a Master of Education (Educational Leadership) at UOW.

Three co-designed frameworks form the core of the APLP. Each framework is aimed to build the theory, research, practical skills, knowledge, and authentic experience of being a school principal. While each has its own purpose and function, collectively they are aimed at helping aspiring principals develop insights into what makes a difference to learning: learning of leaders, teachers, community and most importantly students.



## Leadership for Learning Frameworks

Three co-designed frameworks form the core of the Aspiring Principals Leadership Program and are the focus of this research project.

### LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING ANALYSIS

The Leadership for Learning Analysis (L4LA) (Figure 1) was designed in partnership between the SLI, University of Wollongong and the Voice Project. In essence, the framework represents key capabilities required to lead effectively in NSW public schools. These capabilities are grouped into the following five factors:

1. Vision and Values: Vision and Voice; Leading Teaching and Learning; High Expectations; Advocacy; Communication; and Engagement;
2. Innovation and Improvement: Continuous Improvement; Intellectual Stimulation; Consultative Leadership; and Efficacy and Optimism;
3. Strategy and Solutions: Time Management; Quality Management; Problem Solving; Decision Making; and System and Resources;
4. People and Performance: Feedback; Empathy; Developing Others; Performance Management; and Working with Others);
5. Health and Happiness: Leadership Resilience; Happiness; Work/Life Balance; and Health and Safety.

The L4LA is an online 360° survey and is completed by all participants, their line manager (e.g., principal) and self-nominated work colleagues. APLP participants receive a report comprising self-reflections mapped against aggregated perceptions of colleagues. This is provided to give aspiring principals insights into their self-perception and the perceptions held by colleagues of their leadership capabilities, and to compare similarities and differences between these perceptions. This informs the development of a personalised Professional Learning Plan based on their leadership strengths and areas for development.



**Figure 1: Leadership for Learning Analysis**



## LEADERSHIP FOR INQUIRY AND INNOVATION

The Leadership for Inquiry and Innovation (L4I&I) framework (Figure 2) articulates the key stages, actions, and guiding questions required to lead inquiry, innovation and improvement within NSW public schools. The framework is designed to engage school leaders in innovation through collaborative inquiry with the aim of examining student, teacher and leader learning in their school context. Inquiry questions are provided for each element of the framework to facilitate thinking and support the inquiry process. Supported by experienced principals as facilitators, participants create and implement a Leadership Inquiry designed to improve student outcomes within their school context. The Leadership Inquiry provides the framework for a Portfolio of Evidence that is submitted for validation at the completion of the program.



© 2019 NSW Department of Education: School Leadership Institute.

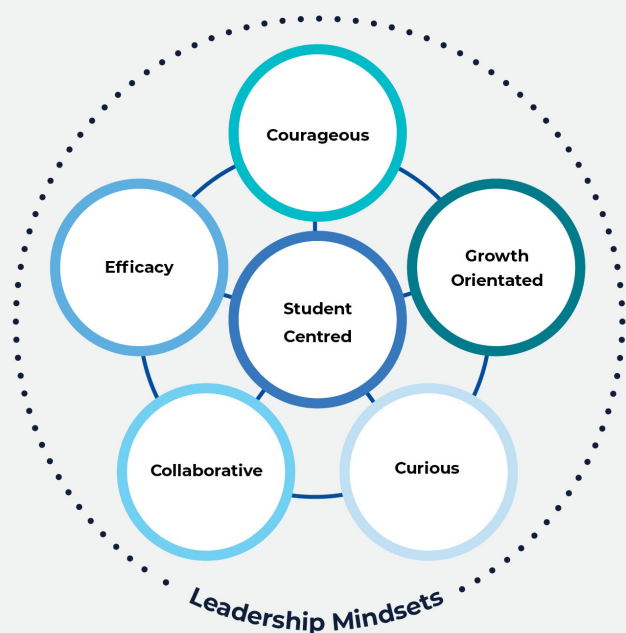
Figure 2: Leadership for Inquiry and Innovation



*The Leadership Mindsets is designed to frame leaders' thinking in order to consider how they perceive and process information that underpins their behaviours and actions."*

## LEADERSHIP MINDSETS

The Leadership Mindsets (Figure 3) is designed to frame leaders' thinking in order to consider how they perceive and process information that underpins their behaviours and actions. There are six mindsets. These mindsets are flexible, interconnected, and can be developed over time. The six Leadership Mindsets enable aspiring principals to view leadership through multiple perspectives. All are purposefully oriented toward reflective leadership action in their school context.



© 2019 NSW Department of Education: School Leadership Institute.

Figure 3: Leadership Mindsets

# Research Methodology

---

This qualitative research study is informed by auto-ethnographic data collection and analysis techniques.

Auto-ethnography is adopted by researchers who seek knowledge about phenomena that is gained, in part, due to their insider knowledge of the field of study not available to others (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010). Auto-ethnographic principles are useful in order to firmly position the researchers within the research, whilst maintaining a commitment to analytical reflexivity to ensure broad application of the study. Two important auto-ethnographic principles were adopted. First, self-identity of the researchers, and as such, their visibility of thinking is represented in the data collection, analysis, shaping, and interpretation of the findings as well as the decision making in the research process (Anderson, 2006; Pace, 2012).

Second, dialogue with participants beyond self (Anderson, 2006) was an important aspect of the research design and data collection. Two additional participants who are not researchers but were members of the project team were interviewed as part of this study.

This study adopted strategies to ensure quality and integrity through reflexivity and transparency in methods, analysis, and reporting. The aim was to produce a credible and trustworthy account that reflects the multiple perspectives of project team members. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, the following strategies were used:

**A clear and detailed account of the methodologies (Feldman, 2003)**

**Member checking of interview transcripts**

**Independent coding by researchers**

**Reflective and thoughtful engagement with the data and analytic process (Braun & Clarke, 2019).**



**PARTICIPANTS**

The participants in this study were the five key project team members (see Table 1). Three are university academics, investigating their own insider knowledge and experience as they contributed to the design of the frameworks. One is the Director of the SLI, and the other is on the SLI Advisory Board. A researcher external to the APLP, and consequently to the design of the frameworks, collected the data for the study. Each participant has been allocated a reference label for reporting purposes.

**Table 1: Overview of Participants**

| <b>Participant and Role in APLP program</b>                        | <b>Involvement in framework development</b>         | <b>Reference for reporting of findings</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Researcher<br>APLP Academic Lead - University<br>Program Developer | Co-designed all frameworks                          | Participant A                              |
| Researcher<br>Academic - University                                | Contributed to the design of the<br>L4LA framework  | Participant B                              |
| Researcher<br>Academic - University                                | Contributed to the design of the<br>L4I&I framework | Participant C                              |
| APLP Program Leader & Director –<br>SLI                            | Co-designed all frameworks                          | Participant D                              |
| APLP Program Developer &<br>Advisory Board – SLI                   | Co-designed all frameworks                          | Participant E                              |



## DATA COLLECTION

The study used semi-structured interviews of between 45-60 minutes based on the two overarching research questions. Each participant was asked to comment on the conceptualisation and development of the frameworks. Participants were interviewed in person or via telephone. Interviews were recorded and independently transcribed, then sent to participants for review, editing (where relevant), and approval. Transcriptions were de-identified by the independent researcher and provided to UOW academic researchers for analysis. Any artefacts identified or provided by the participants, such as policies and planning documents, were also shared and collated to help inform data analysis.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Each transcript was analysed separately by two researchers from UOW and an external independent researcher. The three researchers developed their codes and initial themes individually, then met to present, discuss, and “identify the most meaningful potential themes, the ones that collectively told the best story of the data” (Braun, Clark, Hayfield, & Terry, 2018, p. 855). This collaborative process develops meaningful and holistic understanding through shared and complementary perspectives.

Each researcher presented their codes and candidate themes to the other two researchers, followed by a period of questioning of the codes and themes. Analytic memos (Charmaz, 2014) created by the external researcher were also presented and discussed. Thematic commonalities were identified and agreed. Differences were discussed and agreement reached through excluding, revising, or reconceptualising codes or themes. Salience of revised or new themes was discussed before inclusion.

# Findings

---

This section presents the findings from the data analysis in response to the two research questions.

## 1. Why were the frameworks developed?

The leadership for learning frameworks were developed in the context of, and cognisant of, research, policy and practice. Five key themes emerged from the data that identified why the frameworks were conceptualised to:

1. positioning the importance of student centered school leadership;
2. supporting collaborative leadership;
3. developing leadership efficacy;
4. fostering leadership self-reflexivity in context; and
5. developing sustainable leadership practices.

### **STUDENT-CENTRED SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

Leadership for Learning was the overarching theme of the frameworks and is a phrase used to align the conceptual underpinnings of the program, focused on student-centred leadership. As participants in the APLP are aspiring and emerging principals, Leadership for Learning attempts to define how a learning orientation to leadership development should be focused on the core purpose of education - learning.

Project team members in this study indicated that commitment to student learning and to a student-

centred leadership approach was fundamental to all frameworks and the program as a whole (A). Students and their learning are the central focus of principals in schools (E). The moral purpose of education is described as a “focus on learning” (A) and “to make a positive difference to students” (E). Thus, the frameworks were perceived to encourage leaders to be deliberate in how they lead change and respond to challenges (D) through the lens of what will improve students’ learning.

Further, the program was developed on the underlying assumption that school leaders are leaders for learning (A). This focus on leadership for learning came from a belief that “you need to be an outstanding teacher in order to lead” (D). There was a deliberate choice to focus on the identity of a leader as a student-centred leader (A). The experience of the APLP project team in principalship (B, D, E) and leadership development programs (A, E) is reflected in the need to provide a structure for thinking in complex situations to facilitate effective decision making based on student learning. In this way, decision making using frameworks such as the L4I&I and Leadership Mindsets have a deliberate student-centred lens, focusing decisions and actions closely on student learning.

## COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING

Project team members indicated that the frameworks represent a deliberate approach to decision making and leadership based on a collaborative leadership style (D). The frameworks aim to raise consciousness (A) of how educational leaders develop a culture in which everyone within the school is interested in improvement and is able to work together (E). As an example, the L4I&I framework and L4LA, while advocating that principals are change agents (A), encourages engagement and collaboration with others, including students, parents, and teachers as significant elements of principal responsibility. This approach values the contributions of those who can provide insight to “how the students learn” (A).

Collaborative inquiry (E) was adopted and was particularly evident in the L4I&I and Leadership Mindsets frameworks. Project team members referred to a range of scholars working with collaborative approaches both to learning and leadership (e.g., Louise Stoll, Linda Darling-Hammond, Alma Harris, Michael Fullan, Richard DuFour, Andy Hargreaves, and Helen Timperley). Consequently, a deliberate process of leadership for improvement in collaboration with others (D) was embedded in these two frameworks. For example, the L4I&I requires the aspiring principals to develop and lead a site-based leadership inquiry embedded in their school context (A). The suggested and guiding questions in each stage of the inquiry encourage aspiring principals to work and seek contributions from and work others (A) so that together they are “willing to collaborate and look closely at the work that they’re doing” (E). This develops collective responsibility, and decisions are made by understanding that the best approach to improving student learning is through engaging with and negotiating best outcomes with those who are involved directly in students’ learning (A).

## LEADERSHIP EFFICACY

The focus on developing leadership efficacy is viewed as a necessary leadership practice in order to effect meaningful school improvement. Efficacy, as conceptualised in the work of Bandura (1997) (E), is a person’s belief in their ability to make a difference and to have an impact on their socially constructed environment. The belief in an ability to affect change and that change is achieved through deliberate action underpins the frameworks. The Leadership Mindsets, for example, are not attributes or innate qualities, but ways of thinking (A). Like a growth mindset itself, they are not innate but can be developed (A).

Project team members indicated that the belief in efficacy, that all students are able to learn, is the “moral purpose of public education” (D, E). The belief in efficacy was expanded beyond students to encompass the teaching and learning of staff and principals themselves. Research cited (e.g., Bandura, McCormick, Tschannen-Moran) (A, D, E) supported the importance of efficacy to a school leader’s self-perceived ability to lead teaching and learning. Leadership efficacy is seen as critical to the development of teacher collective efficacy, considering the view from research (Donohoo, Hattie, & Ells, 2018) that teacher collective efficacy has three times the impact of socio-cultural background on student achievement /learning (E).

Through the conceptualisation of the frameworks, project team members suggested a belief in the ability to effect change also created a sense of curiosity, a desire to understand, and an underlying optimism about what school improvements can enhance (B).



*The Leadership for Inquiry and Innovation focuses on gathering purposeful and specific school based data and employs an iterative design thinking process to make decisions about challenges and strategies for school improvement.”*

### **SELF-REFLEXIVE AND CONTEXT INFORMED DESIGN**

The decision to design frameworks was made in the context of two important dynamics. First, other models of frameworks associated with principal development are not explicitly situated in the NSW public education context (A). Second, as education is saturated with new programs, initiatives, and models, educators often have preconceived ideas in areas such as action research and design thinking. The decision was therefore taken to employ an approach that invites aspiring principals to adopt an inquiry and design approach (C).

The core instrument of the leader’s self-reflexivity is the L4LA framework. This framework is a 360° survey, a reflection tool (B), that allows leaders to self-reflect and gather peer data on “observable behaviours” (D) of their leadership practice. The framework gathers evidence of a leader’s current strengths and areas of need from three sources: self-reflection, manager, and peers (A, B). The L4LA framework is not an instrument designed for accountability but for gathering evidence of practice for self-development (A). It is a learning tool to generate growth in leadership capacity (A) and capabilities (E) so leaders can “examine

current practice” (E) and plan their own learning and professional development. The focus on development includes post-survey support from Principal Facilitators within the APLP (A) to assist leaders as they respond to the evidence from the instrument (A). The survey was also designed in the context of the School Excellence Framework (E), the School Leadership Capability Framework, and the AITSL Professional Standard for Principals (A, E). These policy contexts informed development of the L4LA, through the lens of the team’s extensive collective practical experience. This ensured the survey was relevant to the day-to-day practice of a principal, that it would “work in the context of a school” (B), as well as facilitate growth in self-awareness and leadership capacity.

The L4I&I similarly reflects the design of the APLP. This framework was developed to support aspiring principals to respond to their specific school leadership context, given “a school-based problem needs a school-based solution” (E). The L4I&I focuses on gathering purposeful and specific school based data (A, E) and employs an iterative design thinking process (C) to make decisions about challenges and strategies for school improvement.



*The design thinking process...prepares leaders for the possibility that some of the challenges do not have easily identifiable solutions and that rushing to a solution is often counter-productive.”*

## **DEVELOPING SUSTAINING LEADERSHIP PRACTICE**

The frameworks put in place processes, mindsets, and actions that focus on school improvement that is systematic, collaborative and learning/student focused (A, B, D, E). The APLP assumes that leadership is “complex, multi-faceted and [under] constant pressure to make effective decisions” (A). As such, while the frameworks were conceptualised and designed as part of the co-design process of the APLP (E), each was also designed as a tool to support aspiring principals well beyond their formal involvement in the APLP (A).

The frameworks, in their focus on thinking, acting, and reflecting, establish long term habits and proficiencies that will inform leadership practice in schools. Specifically, the frameworks aim to raise consciousness of ways of thinking (Mindsets) that facilitate leadership for improvement (A). These mindsets can inform the actions of leaders, in their inquiry and self-reflection (D), in their own school contexts, and throughout their career. These leaders will have opportunities to understand their strengths and limitations and articulate their leadership priorities and goals (A). The L4I&I process aims to create inspired leaders and principal-ready graduates (B) who utilise a scaffold for evidence-

informed decision making for school development and improvement (A). The L4I&I scaffold includes community engagement and collaboration.

The process of improvement is systematic and deliberate, involving phases of ideation, trial, and evidence collecting, feedback and adapting, piloting and monitoring (A).

The design thinking process (detailed further in the following section) that also underpinned some of the development of the framework (C) prepares leaders for the possibility that some of the challenges do not have easily identifiable solutions and that rushing to a solution is often counter-productive (C). This is often an atypical approach to problem solving in schools (C). As such, L4I&I supports living with this ambiguity and encourages leaders to continue to seek evidence and collaborate (A) to find strategies when there are unknowns and no immediate answers (C). This approach was seen to be part of the strength of the project and the program (C). While the L4I&I is a useful support to aspiring principals in their Leadership Inquiry as part of the APLP, it is also an important lens for school leaders with their day to day practices (A). In this way, the framework is seen as an important program element but also as a supportive frame for all school leaders in schools.





## 2. What principles informed the design of the frameworks?

Four major principles are identifiable across the framework development process. There is consistency across each of the five interview transcripts about these principles, the most significant of which is the foundational importance of moral purpose.

### **EMPATHY FOR THE NSW DoE'S MORAL PURPOSE**

The design principle of empathy is clearly visible amongst the academic project team members. A series of empathic inquiry processes early on in the design phase probed the particular contexts of NSW public education (A). Similarly, the process from its commencement “was seeking to understand a little bit more about the problem that [the SLI was] trying to address” (C) with a view to developing theoretically informed and practically oriented professional learning relevant “to the real world of being a school leader” (D).

These empathic approaches highlight the strong moral purpose around student-centred leadership within the context of NSW public education. The program theme, Leadership for Learning, is the lens through which all other program elements are seen. There is widespread agreement across the project team that learning is the moral purpose for each of

the relevant school level constituencies: aspiring principals, teachers, and students. The program was designed to equip aspiring principals with knowledge and capabilities for developing:

leadership learning, so what are you learning about yourself as a leader; teacher learning – what do teachers need to learn or what are they learning; and then, most importantly, why do teachers and leaders need to continually learn – because we need to continue improving student learning (A).

Beginning with this overarching purpose positions each framework as both a subordinate element of the whole, and a complement to each other. These conceptual relationships were designed to ensure “everything we do [has] a direct alignment” (A) to meeting student learning needs.

The frameworks are also perceived to reflect the broadly described values of NSW public education (D, E). Aspiring principals are expected to hold genuinely to these core values and act consistently with them, showing commitment to inclusive social purposes of public education and the leadership practices required to support these. The frameworks were designed to support them to develop their commitment to and skills in “getting the very best for every child, no matter what their background capability” (D). They are expected to be strongly invested in the notion that “we believe that we can make a difference in the lives of all students irrespective of their background” (E).



*Students are the central focus of decision-making, and the ultimate beneficiaries of decision-making rather than other adults in the school.”*

The phrase “moral purpose” was pervasive across interview transcripts, establishing its conceptual imperative. Although B and C do not use the exact phrase, perhaps reflecting the differing emphasis of their roles within the overall program, both consistently locate the purposes of the program and its design as “really deeply contextual – it goes back again to this idea that you can identify a problem but you’ve got to understand it within the context that you’re in” (C). In reference to the selection of a 360° survey, an essential criterion was the ability of the tool to “have built into it those values and aspirations” (B) which underpin NSW public education.

The phrase ‘student-centred leadership’ is identified as a more explicit and defined moral purpose for which the frameworks are designed. It is located centrally in the graphic representation of the Leadership Mindsets, and reflects a firm commitment that:

students are the central focus of decision-making, and the ultimate beneficiaries of decision-making rather than other adults in the school (E).

This concept is explicitly linked to the core values of NSW public education (D, E), while referring to this also in the wider language of student-centred leadership (A). An early prototype of the Leadership Mindsets located student-centred as one of six elements within the larger wheel graphic, until it was agreed that “key decisions need to be about the impact that it’s going to have on

students and student learning” (E). The centring of the image, therefore, reflects the centrality of student-centred leadership as the moral purpose underpinning the program.

Beyond the very strong and clear moral purpose detailed above is a commitment that the APLP equips aspiring principals to realise this through practical experience. By locating students at the core of the Leadership Mindsets, D and E emphasise that actions which support student learning flow from the interrelationship of the six elements. Rather than being purely a lens through which contextual situations might be understood, the Leadership Mindsets are a framework which honours “the relationship between values and beliefs and actions” (E).

### **GENERATIVE DIALOGUE**

Generative dialogue is a powerful and meaningful collegial interaction which empowers “participants to stay engaged, sharing trust and mutual respect, while working towards a common goal” (Petta, Smith, Chaseling, & Markopolous, 2019, p. 59). It is professionally generous towards colleagues who possess diverse backgrounds and experiences, which fittingly describes the five participants in this research. Utilising generative dialogue throughout the process of framework development is evident across all transcripts. Each project team member references others at some point, and reveals positive regard for the differing perspectives and experiences represented across the project team.



*Experience in wider system and national leadership roles added rich perspectives.”*

Three design thinking processes are evident, which collectively represent interactions characteristic of ideate, prototype, and testing phases:

- a. Co-design of the APLP: all project team members indicate a strong and explicit commitment to co-designing the overall program and its constituent frameworks. Respectful and collegial trust characterises the co-design processes identified. Specific reference is made to the goals of the SLI across the co-design phase; for example, early ideas developed by UOW personnel were “taken to the table originally and then developed further with the Department of Education Project team” (A) to reflect the team’s “moral purpose of student learning” (A). As a specialist in design thinking, one of the academic members of the team (C) was brought in to help develop core concepts of the overall program, yet noted “(D), (A), and (E) had done lots of work on this together before I came into actually a co-design meeting”. Similarly, early co-design meetings as free-form ideation meetings (B) in which design team members were encouraged to “throw concepts around” (A) were described;
- b. Stakeholder consultation. The SLI actively engaged with the two principals’ associations and the NSW SLI Advisory Board in the design phase of the APLP. The contribution of association representatives to the overall design is specifically mentioned (A, B, D, E), highlighting its importance to the overall project. For example, there is explicit acknowledgment of the value of having these representatives contribute to “one of the meetings where we were framing up and making sure we had the elements of the

- School Leadership Capability Framework embedded in the 360° instrument” (E); it is similarly acknowledged that this contribution reflects prior experience with NSW DoE policy contexts, rather than their association’s representative role (D);
- c. Prior practical experience. Three project team members have direct experience as principals. This was acknowledged by each of them as significant, and collectively this represented “over thirty years’ principal experience” (A). Additional experiences were noted such as “a school superintendent [and as]... the New South Wales representative in the development of the Australian Professional Standard for Principals” (E). Such experience in wider system and national leadership roles added rich perspectives (A, E). Additionally, previous experience in “principal development and leadership development programs” (A, E) contributed valuable temporal and contextual perspectives. Although (C) did not specifically have school principal leadership experience, her experience undertaking “a lot of educational design work” (C) was seen by other members of the design team as significant; for example, the decision to engage in a design thinking process extended to seeking “an expert in that area [i.e., (C)] to come in and help us think through what [responding to complex contexts] looks like” (A). Inclusion of experienced principal facilitators in the design phase, along with representatives of the principals’ associations, was an important component of the program as they contributed insights from current contexts and practices (D, E).



*Immerse yourself in specific environments to understand first hand who you're designing for."*

## CONTEXT IMMERSION

The design thinking process of empathy requires designers to “immerse yourself in specific environments to understand first hand who you’re designing for” (Dorley, Holcomb, Klebahn, Segovia, & Utley, 2018, p. 4). Framework development reflects this immersion and respects the specific context of NSW public education as the environment for which the program has been co-designed.

While there was no specific link to precise aspects of policy, the frameworks were developed to “reflect” (E) relevant policies. The policy landscape was described as “internalised” (D, E). Project team members’ own evidence-informed practice and lived experience of school leadership, both as principals (B, D, E) and as leaders of principals (E), ensured that the framework was developed within the parameters of existing policy (E). For example, the Leadership Mindsets were developed to ensure they resonated “with lived experience of school leadership” (B). The development of the frameworks modelled the reflective practice and collaborative dialogue built into the program, resulting in development of frameworks which “capture the experience of practice” (B).

While the L4I&I and the Leadership Mindsets were developed specifically for the program,

the L4LA adapted a pre-existing tool which was comprehensively modified to reflect the context of leadership in NSW public schools. The Voice Project was chosen because of the extensive research base underpinning their existing validated research instrument (A, B), their willingness to amend their instrument to accommodate the needs of the SLI (D), and the scalability and sustainability of the instrument (E).

The L4LA is thus a modified version of the Voice Project’s validated 360o survey specifically to meet the requirements of the SLI (D). Originating from research in leadership effectiveness conducted by the Voice Project (Langford, Dougall, & Parkes, 2017), past research in NSW public schools (E), and the experiences of the project team, the L4LA was consciously designed to be constructive and focused on improvement and self-reflection, not performance or appraisal oriented (A). As the Voice Project’s experience was not in NSW public schools (A, E), amendments modified the language of the survey (D) and introduced essential ideas considered to be missing. Amendments were generated through a collaborative and consultative process (A, D) including discussion with, and feedback from, primary and secondary principals’ associations. Their feedback was then integrated into the survey (A). The language of the questions was also amended to ensure it focused on observable behaviours (D, E).



## THOUGHT PROCESSES AND GUIDING WAYS

Central to design thinking is a reflective and purposeful slowing down in the quest to find solutions. Novice designers rush to solution and implementation phases, while sophisticated and experienced designers acknowledge “there’s no perfect solution; maybe there are many solutions” (C). The design of the Leadership Mindsets and LAI&I frameworks encourage aspiring principals to consider decision-making from multiple perspectives; evaluation feedback from aspiring principals has noted that “this frame of thinking has really helped me slow down” (A) as a consequence of the guiding questions. As aspiring principals develop their inquiry project using the LAI&I, each of the five elements and guiding questions shift focus and emphasis, based on the contextual needs and any changes which may emerge during the process, assisting them to “be more thoughtful about what they are seeking to improve and how they intend to go about it” (D). There is a strong

belief across project team members that the framework:

does not suggest that change equals improvement. Rather, users of the framework are given guidance to refer to each section iteratively, starting from ‘learning’, then depending on their school needs and context, they can follow key stages in any order (D).

This supports aspiring principals through processes of ideation, prototyping, and testing, all the while “raising [their] consciousness” (A) of how and why the inquiry is responding to their identified contextual needs. It is a set of guiding ideas “to scaffold their thinking and activity” (C), rather than a prescribed approach. The language of each sub-element and guiding questions are designed specifically to work against hasty, reactive, or simplistic decision-making, helping “delay deciding what the solution to the problem is going to be, while you work around competing different solutions” (C) or “rushing to action before understanding the nature of the problem” (D).

# Discussion

---

The Aspiring Principals Leadership Program focuses on equipping prospective principals with tools, behaviours, and practices to create and generate school improvement in a deliberate, collaborative, evidence-informed, self-reflective, and contextually appropriate way.

## The moral imperative: Student-centred leadership

The findings of this study highlight that both the intent and design principles of the frameworks are situated in an implicit philosophy which emphasises leadership that is focused on positive improvement rather than change for its own sake (Robinson, 2018). This focus manifests itself in the primacy of principal identity - the person of the leader. As such, the focus on student learning and how they lead informs the program's emphasis on the principal as the leader of learning - that being an exemplary pedagogue is key to leading a NSW public school.

The student-centred leadership frameworks are based on research and policy which places student learning at the heart of schooling. They are based upon the fundamental understanding that the moral purpose of NSW public schools is to offer each child opportunities to learn. The frameworks are based on an underlying belief in the power of efficacy and agency (Bandura, 1997). A leader's belief in their ability to positively improve

themselves and their contexts is seen as key to effective educational leadership (Donohoo, Hattie, & Ells, 2018), while positive mindsets (Dweck, 2012) take an optimistic stance towards students and their achievements.

## Design thinking

Design thinking informs the conceptualisation of the frameworks on both the macro and micro level. First, the overall process adopted by the project team utilised design thinking. The process involved highly consultative and collaborative approaches to ideate, develop, trial and prototype, refine, and redesign through feedback to create and evaluate the frameworks and elements of the program. The project team was a collaborative consultative group that developed the frameworks around recent research and members' extensive research, teaching and leadership experience, both in schools and in relevant educational leadership research. Further, a significant feature of the program is the decision to create an instrument that reflects the specific context of NSW public education and which avoids preconceptions and

presumptions about research instruments used in schools. The L4LA, while based on a validated instrument created for and used in non-school contexts, has been modified to reflect the values and attitudes of NSW public education as well as the lived experience of leadership in that context. The focus of the L4I&I avoids formulaic negatives of known research methods in schools, while also creating a unique collaborative, contextually focussed research design that guides improvement. Second, on a micro level, aspiring principals are encouraged to apply the frameworks in an iterative and recursive way. For instance, leaders will return to the Leadership Mindsets to inform responses to problems identified through the L4I&I research and consult stakeholders to ideate, devise, and trial solutions to the challenges they face.

## Interrelated Frameworks

The frameworks are interrelated and interconnected and inform each other. They are a system within which leadership is scaffolded and should not be viewed in isolation. The frameworks focus on leadership as a self-reflective practice through actively seeking contextually derived evidence and feedback. The frameworks are not linear or sequential but are iterative and recursive. They are about improvement of thinking and practice. This is most clearly evident in the Leadership Mindsets which are frames of thinking, internal compass points, rather than strategies, for leaders to apply to structure decision making. They influence how principals see their work. They provide the lens through which leaders will approach their learning and design the learning of others through, for example, the L4I&I framework. The Leadership Mindsets focus on leadership actions which improve leaders' learning, the learning of staff, and positively impact student learning. The Leadership Mindsets framework is intended to manifest in enacted behaviours in the other two frameworks.

## Scaffolds for action

The frameworks provide scaffolding for action. The L4I&I reinforces the need for leadership to be evidence-informed, collaborative, and deliberate, based upon the values and attitudes of NSW public education, and focused primarily on its moral purpose – positive student learning for all students, in all schools. Leaders are encouraged to research and collaborate to approach challenges, and to commit to a deliberate shift in understanding and practice supported by evidence and multiple perspectives. The collaborative nature of the research within this framework ensures school communities are invested in school improvement and are consulted and co-opted into the process. The frameworks value contextually rich evidence, from a range of perspectives, so that the strategies employed respond to the specifics of the school's contextually specific challenge.

The frameworks invest in creating self-aware and flexible leaders who consult their learning community for feedback on their practices. Concerned solely with observable behaviour, the L4LA framework is a resource for self-improvement, and not accountability. It encourages a willingness for self-reflection upon evidence gathered from multiple perspectives to improve their leadership practice. Like all the frameworks, it is a deliberate rather than ad hoc process. Feedback on practice informs the leader's planning for their own learning, to better lead the learning of their staff, and to ensure the best outcomes for student learning. This focus on action encourages both a willingness to collaborate and a flexibility to shift perspectives based upon evidence. The use of collaborative processes and gathering evidence to inform decision-making builds in a deliberate slowing down of leadership actions. This is designed to ensure leadership actions are effective, appropriate, and responsive to the moral purpose of improving student learning.

# Recommendations

---

The research findings highlight the contextual, evidence-informed, and integrated approach to the conceptualisation and design of the three frameworks developed for the APLP.

Three opportunities for further development of the program are identified, with suggested strategies overviewed in Table 2.

**Table 2: Opportunities and strategies**

| <b>Opportunity Areas</b>                                                                                     | <b>Suggested Strategies</b>                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. How can the SLI understand and evaluate the impact of the three frameworks in practice of school leaders? | a. Case study research<br>b. Longitudinal research                                                        |
| 2. How can the SLI ensure the frameworks are responsive to a changing landscape?                             | a. Continuous evaluation and development<br>b. Responsiveness to policy and research                      |
| 3. How can the SLI enable and expand the utilisation of the frameworks beyond the APLP?                      | a. Adapt and adopt the frameworks across different stages of school leadership<br>b. Examples of practice |





*Longitudinal studies of participants has the potential to inform system leadership development both nationally and internationally.”*

## How can the SLI understand and evaluate the impact of the three frameworks in practice?

### **1A. CASE STUDY RESEARCH**

The findings from this research suggest the frameworks provide scope for school leaders to develop strategies for effective student-centred leadership. However, a limitation of this research is both its auto-ethnographic methodology and its sampling strategy of those who developed the program. To gain better insights into the efficacy and impact of the frameworks, the SLI are advised to conduct a series of case studies with a range of participants from the program, preferably across a number of cohorts involved in the program. This should include a range of contexts (rural/metropolitan, primary/secondary, high/low socio-economic status, etc.) to inquire into how the frameworks connect with the ongoing work of aspiring and current principals. The inclusion of participants from across cohorts would enable the SLI to evaluate the ongoing development of the program, consistent with the co-design processes which underpin its development.

### **1B. LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH**

Related to Recommendation 1a, the SLI are recommended to undertake longitudinal research of the APLP and its frameworks. This would permit analysis of longer term effects of the frameworks and the program as an adequate preparation for leaders. This is also consistent with research approaches which examine the impact of time on leadership practices, particularly across periods of change.

The first phase of the APLP (Cohorts 1-3) represents 145 participants, while the second phase (Cohorts 4-7) anticipates delivering the program to a further 300 participants. Taken together, this represents a significant sample population to research in the years beyond the conclusion of the formal program. Given the NSW DoE is the largest educational jurisdiction in Australia, as well as one of the largest in the world, longitudinal studies of participants has the potential to inform system leadership development both nationally and internationally. Research priorities might explore the perceived efficacy of the frameworks for participants when assuming principal leadership, and alignment of the frameworks to the lived experience of participants on assuming principal leadership. Comparisons to other longitudinal principal leadership surveys (Riley, 2019) should be made.

## How can the SLI ensure the frameworks are responsive to a changing landscape?

### **2A. CONTINUOUS EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

The APLP project team is committed to ongoing formative evaluation and redesign throughout the program. Typically, aspiring principals are asked to respond to surveys about presenter engagement, relevance of the material, principal facilitator and professional leadership team effectiveness, and administrative support functions. Each report is presented to the SLI for their reflection, feedback, and suggestions for future program delivery. Such feedback is reflective of the responsive, co-design process adopted throughout the program. Continuation of this process, with specific evaluative items that seek feedback on the frameworks in practice, will ensure the frameworks continue to meet the needs of aspiring principals and maintain the contextual primacy of principal leadership in NSW public schools. As the APLP continues to develop, consideration of how the frameworks align to new APLP program curriculum will be required.

### **2B. RESPONSIVENESS TO NEW POLICIES AND RESEARCH**

The policy landscape for leaders in NSW public education will continue to exhibit the need for change (Louden, 2019). Findings from this study highlight that current policy informed some of the development of the frameworks and, as such,

the SLI will need to respond to new and amended policies which may impact framework enactment. Similarly, and related to Recommendations 1a and 1b, the SLI should use findings from case studies and longitudinal research of the frameworks in practice to consider changes that may be useful for the application of them by school leaders.

## How can the SLI enable and expand the utilisation of the frameworks beyond the APLP?

### **3A. ADAPT AND ADOPT THE FRAMEWORKS ACROSS DIFFERENT STAGES OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

The findings reveal that one of the intentions in conceptualising the APLP was to support aspiring principals both throughout the APLP and beyond its formal conclusion. While each of the frameworks were designed with aspiring principals in mind, they do have applicability to wider contexts of leadership. The Leadership Mindsets and L4I&I include frames of thinking and actions that would be useful for teacher leaders through to experienced principals. The L4LA categories may also be relevant for different stages of leadership, although it must be noted the items in the L4LA survey instrument are contextually aligned to aspiring principals. As the SLI continues to respond to and develop the Leadership Strategy (NSW DoE, 2017b), it may be useful to consider how the





*...it is recommended to collect and share examples of how the frameworks are positively enacted in schools.”*

frameworks developed as part of the APLP can be adapted and adopted across different school leadership development programs. This would support the notion that leadership development is most effective when seen as a continuum (AITSL, 2019; OECD, 2008).

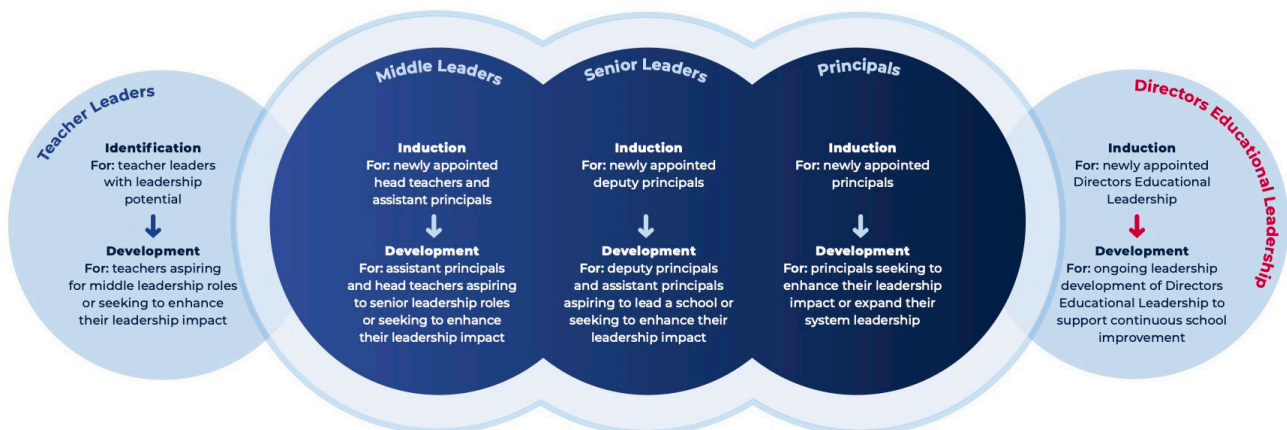
One useful strategy for expanding the use of the frameworks may be to consider the recently developed SLI School Leadership Development Continuum (Figure 4). The continuum describes opportunities for leadership learning through a sequential pathway. As the SLI develops new professional learning programs across the continuum, the frameworks may be considered and adapted to these differing stages of leadership. This would support a systematic and coherent approach (AITSL, 2015) to leadership development.

It should be noted, however, that more extensive research is recommended (see Recommendations 1a and 1b) to develop better understanding of the frameworks in practice before expanding them across other leadership stages and programs.

### 3B. EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE

The frameworks are a structure designed to support school leadership. Currently, they are conceptual, based on suggested frames of thinking, actions, and behaviours for aspiring principals. Following on from Recommendations 1a and 1b, it is recommended to collect and share examples of how the frameworks are positively enacted in schools. This would provide opportunities for the intent of the frameworks to be shared as real life applications of leadership practice in NSW public schools.

## School Leadership Institute Development Continuum



© 2019 NSW Department of Education: School Leadership Institute

Figure 4: SLI Development Continuum

# Authors

---

This research project was completed by a team of academics from the School of Education, University of Wollongong (UOW), in partnership with Ann McIntyre, international advisor of the NSW School Leadership Institute Advisory Board.



**DR KYLIE LIPSCOMBE**  
Senior Lecturer in  
Educational Leadership

Dr Kylie Lipscombe is Senior Lecturer and researcher in the School of Education (UOW). She is the Associate Academic Program Director of Educational Leadership and leads the design and delivery of the Master of Education (Educational Leadership). She is passionate about the nexus between educational leadership and practice, and how leading impacts both teacher and student learning practices. Her program of research works closely with leaders, teachers and children in the fields of educational leadership, teacher collaboration, professional learning, and digital literacy.



**PROFESSOR SUE BENNETT**  
Head of the School of Education,  
(UOW)

Professor Sue Bennett is Head of the School of Education (UOW). She is an internationally-recognised researcher in the area of teaching and learning with technology in higher education. Her research prioritises supporting higher education teachers to improve their design practices through integrating information and communication technologies effectively. Her research also explores how digital technologies can be used effectively to enhance student learning.



**DR PAUL KIDSON**  
Lecturer in Educational Leadership

Dr Paul Kidson is Lecturer in Educational Leadership in the School of Education (UOW) as well as an experienced principal. His research is in principal leadership, school governance, and enhancing positive school cultures. He has twelve years' experience as a school principal as well as extensive experience in principal leadership development. His training and experience with coaching methodologies has been applied in mentoring programs for aspiring principals at both state and national level; his commitment to leadership development includes mentoring eight of his own staff into principal leadership positions.



**DR PAUL GARDINER**  
Lecturer in Creativity, Pedagogy,  
Drama, and Creative Arts Education

Dr Paul Gardiner is Lecturer in Creativity, Pedagogy, Drama, and Creative Arts Education. He recently commenced in the School of Education (UOW) having previously worked at the University of Sydney. He has significant experience in course design and academic project management, and is an experienced qualitative researcher with particular focus on in-school research. In addition to his academic experience, he has 12 years' experience in middle leadership positions (academic and pastoral) in secondary schools.



**ANN MCINTYRE**  
International Advisor for the NSW  
DoE School Leadership Institute

Ann McIntyre is an experienced principal, superintendent, and NSW state policy leader. She is internationally recognised for her work in quality teaching, leadership, and school and system improvement. As the Director of Professional Learning and Leadership in NSW public schools, she designed system innovations and reforms that significantly enabled teacher and leader quality. She is the Australian researcher for the International Teacher Policy Study with the University of Stanford. Her most recent research focuses on the interrelationship between policy and practice in examining how high performing educational systems empower teachers and leaders to achieve strong results. She is the NSW President of the Australian Council of Educational Leaders, advisor with the AITSL School Leadership and Teaching Expert Standing Committee and international expert in leadership development for the NSW Department of Education School Leadership Institute Advisory Board.

# References

- AITSL (2015). *Preparing School Leaders: Effective Preparation for Aspiring School Principals*. Retrieved from [https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/preparing-future-leaders-effective-preparation-for-aspiring-school-principals.pdf?sfvrsn=38aaec3c\\_0](https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/preparing-future-leaders-effective-preparation-for-aspiring-school-principals.pdf?sfvrsn=38aaec3c_0)
- AITSL (2016). *Evaluating your Principal Preparation Programs: A Practical Guide*. Melbourne: AITSL.
- AITSL (2019). *Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the Leadership Profiles*. Carlton: Education Services Australia.
- Amiel, T., & Reeves, T. C. (2008). Design-based research and educational technology: Rethinking technology and the research agenda. *Educational Technology & Society*, 11(4), 29-40.
- Anderson, L. (2006). Analytic autoethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35(4), 373-395.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W. H. Freeman.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589-597. doi:10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., Hayfield, N., & Terry G. (2018). Thematic Analysis. In P. Liamputtong (Ed), *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences* (pp. 843-860). Singapore: Springer.
- Brezicha, K., Bergmark, U., & Mitra, D. L. (2015). One size does not fit all: Differentiating leadership to support teachers in school reform. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 51(1), 96-132. doi:10.1177/0013161X14521632
- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2015). *Effective Leadership*. Sydney: NSW Department of Education.
- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2018). *Local Schools, Local Decisions: Evaluation Interim Report*. Sydney: NSW Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/images/stories/PDF/LSLD-interim-report.pdf>
- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2019). *Schools and students: 2018 Statistical Bulletin*. Sydney: NSW Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/images/stories/PDF/2018-schools-and-students-statistical-bulletin.pdf>
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing Grounded Theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Deloitte Consulting Pty Ltd. (2017). *Principal workload and time use study*. Sydney: NSW Department of Education.
- Donohoo, J. Hattie, J., & Ells, R. (2018). The power of collective efficacy. *Educational Leadership*, 75(6), 40-44.
- Doorley, S., Holcomb, S., Klebahn, P., Segovia, K., & Utley, J. (2018). *Design thinking bootleg*. Stanford: Hasso Plattner Institute of Design. <https://dschool.stanford.edu/resources/design-thinking-bootleg>
- Dweck, C. (2012). *Mindset*. London: Robinson.
- Ellis, C; Adams, T., & Bochner, A. (2010). Autoethnography: An overview. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(1), Art. 10.
- Feldman, A. (2003). Validity and Quality in Self-Study. *Educational Researcher*, 32(3), 26-28.
- Harris, A., & Jones, M. (2019). Leading professional learning with impact. *School Leadership & Management*, 39(1), 1-4. doi:10.1080/13632434.2018.1530892
- Hill, S. L., Burns, A., Danyluk, P., & Crawford, K. (2018). Critical conversations on reflexive inquiry in field experiences. In E. Lylle (Ed.), *The negotiated self: Employing reflexive inquiry to explore teacher identity* (pp. 183-196). Leiden: Brill Sense.
- Langford, P., Dougall, C., & Parkes, L. (2017). Measuring leader behaviour: evidence for a “big five” model of leadership”. *Leadership & Organizational Development Journal*, 38(1), 126-144. doi:10.1108/LODJ-05-2015-0103
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020).

- Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5-22.
- Louden, W. (2019). *NAPLAN Reporting Review Prepared for COAG Education Council*. Melbourne: Education Services Australia. Retrieved from <http://www.educationcouncil.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Reports%20and%20publications/NAPLAN%20Reporting%20Review/Final%20Report.pdf>
- McGrath-Champ, S., Stacey, M., Wilson, R., Fitzgerald, S., Rainnie, A., & Parding, K. (2019). Principals' support for teachers' working conditions in devolved school settings: Insights from two Australian States. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 47(4), 590-605. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143217745879>
- McKnight, L., & Morgan, A. (2019). A broken paradigm? What education needs to learn from evidence-based medicine. *Journal of Education Policy*, doi:10.1080/02680939.2019.1578902
- Nevo, I., & Slonim-Nevo, V. (2011). The myth of evidence-based practice: Towards evidence-informed practice. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 41(6), 1176–1197. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcq149
- NSW DoE (2012). *Local Schools, Local Decisions*. Sydney: NSW Department of Education and Communities.
- NSW DoE (2013). *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning: A blueprint for action*. Sydney: NSW Department of Education and Communities. Retrieved from <https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/wcm/connect/b3826a4c-7bcf-4ad1-a6c9-d7f24285b5e3/GTIL+A+Blueprint+for+Action.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=>
- NSW DoE (2017a). *School Excellence Framework Version 2*. Sydney: NSW Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/related-documents/school-excellence-framework-version-2.pdf>
- NSW DoE (2017b). *School leadership strategy*. Retrieved from <https://education.nsw.gov.au/media/schools-operation/School-Leadership-Strategy-2017.pdf>
- NSW DoE (2018a). *Principal Role Description*. Sydney: NSW Department of Education.
- NSW DoE (2018b). *Strategic Plan: 2018-2022*. Retrieved from <https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/media/documents/strategies-and-plans/NSW-Department-of-Education-Strategic-Plan-2018-2022.pdf>
- NSW DoE (2019a). *NSW Department of Education Annual Report 2018*. Sydney: NSW Department of Education. Retrieved from [https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/media/documents/Annual-Report-2018\\_Online.pdf](https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/media/documents/Annual-Report-2018_Online.pdf)
- NSW DoE (2019b). *Age profiles of permanent NSW public school teachers*. Retrieved from <https://data.cese.nsw.gov.au/data/dataset/age-profiles-of-permanent-nsw-public-school-teachers>
- SLI (2019). *Aspiring Principals Leadership Program Overview*. Sydney: NSW Department of Education.
- OECD (2008). *Improving school leadership*. Paris: OECD.
- OECD (2019). *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and school leaders as lifelong learners*. Paris: OECD Publishing. doi:10.1787/1d0bc92a-en
- Pace, S. (2012). Writing the self into research: Using grounded theory analytic strategies in autoethnography, *TEXT Special Issue: Creativity, Cognitive, Social and Cultural Perspectives*, 1-15.
- Petta, K., Smith, R., Chaseling, M., & Markopoulos, C. (2019). Generative dialogue: A concept analysis. *Management in Education*, 33(2), 53–61. doi:10.1177/0892020618780978
- Riley, P. (2019). *The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey: 2018 data*. Fitzroy: Institute for Positive Psychology and Education, Australian Catholic University.
- Robinson, V. (2018). *Reduce Change to Increase Improvement*. San Francisco: Corwin.
- Schleicher, A. (Ed.) (2012). *Preparing Teachers and developing school leaders for the 21st Century: Lessons from around the world*. Paris: OECD Publishing. doi:10.1787/9789264174559-en
- Watterston, B. (2015). *Environmental Scan: Principal Preparation Programs*. Melbourne: Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.