

Report on the 2007 NSW Secondary Deputy Principals' Association Welfare Survey

Overview.

This survey was conducted in September 2007 and is a follow up to a similar welfare survey conducted in 2005.

In total 235 secondary Deputy Principals from across the state completed the survey up from 186 in 2005. 116 respondents were from Sydney regions and 116 were from non Sydney regions with 3 not identifying their region. All regions had a good number of respondents except the New England region which had only 5 respondents. Of the 235 respondents 100 were female.

While the modal age range was 51-55 years (39% of respondents) 50% of deputies surveyed were young than 50 years with 11% being less than 40 years. Sydney North, Sydney, New England and North Coast Regions combined had only 2 deputies under the age of 40.

32% of the sample had less than 2 years experience in the job and 59% having less than 4 years experience. 15% had 8 or more years experience. 50% of Sydney West and Riverina and 39% of Sydney Region had less than 2 years experience.

Comment

These last two statistics combined have implication to us as an association and DET in terms of support and professional development that needs to be provided to ensure the leadership density of our schools.

All types of school from PSFP to middle plus Socio Economic Schools were represented as were schools with large ATSI and NESB populations.

The survey covered the following areas; Support Networks, Communication, Workload, Occupational Health, Policies and Procedures, Experience of the Deputy Principalship and Future Directions.

Support Networks

45% of the sample reported strong local networks with the North Coast (69%) and Hunter/Central Coast (66%) reporting the strongest network systems. The strength of the networks has significantly improved since the 2005 sample. Still 34% reported either not strong networks or no networks with 63% of these responses coming from Metropolitan schools. Sydney South West and Sydney West were greatly over represented in having poor or no support network.

6% of the sample indicated that they have regular reciprocal visits while 34% said they have had more than 1 visit to another school. The strongest regions were Western Region, Sydney Central, North Sydney and North Coast. 32% have no visits with the Hunter/Central Coast (50%) and Sydney South West (40%) being the highest in this area.

83% of deputies reported that they feel that as a senior executive that they either share issues and co-manages the school or are involved in regular discussions about the running and direction of the school. 13% felt that they were only involved in the administration of the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That NSWSDPA with the local regional DP associations should seek meetings with the Regional Directors or their representative in all regions to discuss possibilities for strengthening deputy principal networks.

That the local DP associations work with the Regional Directors and their Professional Learning Teams to develop leadership density at the senior executive levels of the school by

- 1. planned shadowing, mentoring, induction programs and interschool visits for deputy principals and**
- 2. the DPs being actively involved in the professional learning and leadership training of aspiring DPs within the region.**

It is suggested

- that regional DP network meetings and conferences are published in the regional Professional Development Plans
- that SEDs on visits to the school meet with the full senior executive to discuss school, area and regional issues and
- that some time during the year the Regional Director/SEDs are invited to attend local DPs' network and professional development meetings.

Communications:

a) Professional dialogue;

- Sources of Support and Advice;

Most deputies report that in this area their expectations were met or exceeded and there was a similar pattern across the state regarding their dialogue with Principals, SEDs, Regional Staff, school executive and school staff.

Personnel or groups not meeting expectation had much greater variance across regions. This included 25% of the Hunter/Central Coast and North Coast had concerns with the support and advice of their SEDs, 25% of the Illawarra with regional staff. The major concern was that 44% of deputies from the western region felt that support & advice from their principals did not meet expectation. 25% of deputies across the state reported that had never been approached by their SED (40% of Metropolitan & 50% of Western Region)

158 of respondents said they had not been approached by the NSWSDPA's Welfare Officer.

- Quality of Professional Dialogue

Only 13% of the samples said that their expectation was not meet. This has shown an improvement on the 2005 survey. The Riverina was significantly less then the other regions.

No dialogue with regional Student Welfare/Equity Staff and Other Regional staff varied from 20 to 40% between regions. 3 non metropolitan Regions (Hunter/Central Coast, North Coast and Western) reported no dialogue with their professional learning teams (15 to 20% of the samples).

- **Communication Strategies**

There was a strong overlap from all regions regarding those communication sources that respondents reported as “informative”, “easy to use” and valued. The least informative, most difficult to use and/ or not valued were Regional/district publications and “Side by Side”.

On the other hand the DET email was valued by 93% of respondents and DET Curriculum Support Materials was valued by 96%. Both of these were up since 2005.

In 2005 28% of the survey did not value the NSWSDPA Website and this has now fallen to 17%.

Note: There was no strong correlation between time as a deputy and the knowledge of these communication sources.

Deputy Principals Workload

Like in the 2005 survey there was no pattern in the teaching workload of deputies across the state. 13% reported no teaching load. The average teaching load has risen from 8.3 hours per fortnight to 9.2 hours. Some deputies are teaching their full load of 18.6 hours per fortnight. There is no correlation between location, size or type of school in this data.

The deputies are still evenly divided as in 2005 whether a deputy principal should have a teaching load.

RECOMMENDATION: That the NSWSDPA should discuss with DET the significant differences in workloads of Deputy Principals and continue to pursue discussion with DET regarding the teaching load of Deputy Principals.

Occupational Health

Only 9% of the total sample disagreed with the statement that “the role of the deputy principal leads to great personal satisfaction”. This is down from 30% in 2005.

Only 11 respondents indicated that they were not coping professionally and 4 of these were in the Sydney South West Region.

27 respondents indicated that the having problems coping personally (only 5 indicated that they needed support). 5 of these 27 came from the Sydney Region and 6 from the Hunter/Central Coast.

Asked if the role was affecting aspects of their health 60% indicated that it was affecting them physically (2005 less than 50%), 52% psychologically (2005 – 50%)

and 38% socially (2005 – 50%). For physical and psychological there was an even spread between male and female. A higher level of females to male reported being affected socially.

24% reported that they are not stressed at work while 11% said they were always stressed at work. The rest reported sometimes being stressed at work. 37% registered that they are unable to relax at work with these mainly coming from Sydney South West and the Hunter/Central Coast. 41% said they are able to switch off at home but 33% said they had trouble sleeping. The concern was 65% of Western region and 57% of the Riverina have trouble sleeping.

49% regularly attended deputy's meetings up from 28% in 2005. 22% reported they never attend DP's meeting with the highest been in Sydney South and South West. 81% reported they enjoy professional interaction and 73% said they talk socially to their colleagues.

Unprofessional Behaviour & Harassment

No. of Respondents report unprofessional Behaviour and Harassment

| By: | Number | Comments |
|------------------|-------------|--|
| Senior Officers | 12 | Twice as many females as males – None from Sydney or Sydney North |
| Principals | 20 | None from Sydney or Sydney North |
| School Executive | 38 | Slightly higher number of females reported here. Particularly evident in Sydney West and the Hunter/Central Coast |
| School Staff | 69 (30%) | Highest frequency of response was in the Sydney South West, Hunter/Central Coast and North Coast. This down from 69% in 2005 |
| Students/Parents | 49 (21%) | Highest in Sydney South West, Hunter/Central Coast and North Coast. Down from 34% in 2005. |

40 to 50% of each regional sample reported some incidence of threat except North Sydney with only 2 reports. The highest number of threats was verbal evenly spread between students and parents. The physical threats mainly came from the students

The question regarding where they felt valued as a deputy reflected the above results except by the “System” where 75% of respondents didn’t feel valued by “the System”.

Comment:

While there was little correlation with any other variables of location or time as a deputy there was a strong correlation between responses on the health of deputies and their reporting that they were in schools where staff are not functional. Many were also in schools classified as PFSP and with ATSI student populations.

Policies and Procedures

This area showed a large improvement since 2005. The large majority of respondents indicated that they either “had been trained and were confident or “had not been trained and were confident” in all, listed policies except for “Money Matters”, “School Manual on Financial Matters” where 50 to 75 % of respondents from each region indicated little knowledge. There was also little knowledge of “Managing SASS having Performance Difficulties”, “Enrolment of Students with Special Learning Needs”, “Management of Serious Incidents”, “School Development Policy”, “Professional Development Policy” and “Gifted and Talented”.

Others that deputies reported they were using with some difficulty includes “OHS Management”, “Teachers Experiencing Difficulties” and “Responding to Allegations against Employees in the Area of Child Protection”.

A large majority of respondents across the regions reported that they used the “Suspension & Expulsion Procedures” but there was unfamiliarity with the “Description of the role of the parent support person” and the “Review and Appeals Process”.

Similarly, while respondents were familiar with the Procedures for “Managing Teachers Experience Difficulties” they had little knowledge of, included in priority order; ‘Ensured Teacher Performance is Monitored’, ‘Worked through the Various Attachments’, ‘Explained to all staff the basic principles’, ‘Developed and Monitored the Implementation of an Improvement Program’ and ‘Trained Executive to Act as Supervisor’. These are the same findings as those from 2005.

COMMENT: The identified gaps in the knowledge and skills base of these policies and procedures that relate to the core business of quality teaching and learning programs would appear to be significant gaps in those who are likely to relieving leaders of schools.

RECOMMENDATION: That the NSWSDPA meet with DET to ensure that the learning about these policies and procedures should form a central component of any inservice professional learning programs for deputy principals.

The Deputy Principalship

This section related to the experience of becoming a deputy principal and future plans. It was divided into a subsection for deputies in their first two years of appointment and those with more than two years experience.

Less than two years’ experience.

ii)

- a) Improving preparation to become a deputy- The only suggestion of any significance from 18/74 (24% of total sample) responses was the assigning of a Mentor both before and for a period after appointment. This suggestion came from all regions but was least mentioned by respondents from Sydney South West. *This repeats the findings from 2005.*
- b) Experience of the first six months of appointment- while there were a wide range of responses the most frequent can be categorised as:
 - ‘a steep learning curve’ – 16/70 (25% of total sample) and from all regions;
 - ‘exhausting/full on/overwhelming’ - 15/70 (21% of total sample) from all regions;
 - ‘challenging/very challenging’ - 12/70 (17% of total sample) from one Sydney region sample (Central) and 5/6 Non Metropolitan regional samples;
 - ‘support’ from principal and staff- 9/70 (13%) from five regional samples.
- c) Most significant initiatives- again while there was a wide range of multiple responses from 70 surveys there were three dominant categories of initiatives:
 - Student welfare/management/discipline- 23/71 (32% of total sample) across all regions;
 - Curriculum initiatives- 10/70 (14% of total sample) across four regions, particularly Sydney West (4) and Hunter (4) regions;
 - Professional learning programs- 8/70 (11% of total sample) from four regions, Sydney South West and West, Hunter and North Coast;
 - Quality Teaching/Learning/Assessment and Public Relations (newsletter, school image etc) each were reported by five respondents mainly in Sydney Metropolitan region samples.

More than two years' experience.

- a) Most successful contributions- while there was a wide range of responses from 102 surveys there was one dominant category reported by 41/102 (40% of total sample) across all regions. This was Welfare for both Students and Staff. This response was particularly important in surveys from Sydney South West and North and Hunter, Illawarra, and Riverina regions where 50% or more of respondents reported this initiative.

The second most frequently mentioned initiative was concerned with Professional Learning (15/102) followed by Quality Teaching/Assessment. All other initiatives were reported by less than ten respondents.

COMMENT: Responses to these questions demonstrate that at least for deputies responding to this survey their major initiatives have been and continue to be in the core areas of teaching and learning and programs that support and enhance these rather than mainly in administration. This means that respondents to this survey have been able to retain 'big picture' goals and not become bogged in the daily administrative tasks. It is the retention of the 'big picture' goals that many reported as one of the major challenges that they face.

58% of the sample indicated that would be applying for Principal positions as compared to 52% in 2005. The desire to apply for Principal positions was higher in the metropolitan area where 66% indicated that would apply. Only 25% up from 23% would apply for DET positions outside the schools.

178 respondents provided an answer regarding retirement. There was little indication of early retirement. Results revealed an increasing number of retirements from 2008/9 (8) to peak in 2014 (18) dropping slightly in 2015, peaking again in 2017 (15) dropping again in 2018 (10) and 2019 (5) and rising again in 2020 to 11.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. That the NSW DPA and its officers present the information from this report that is relevant to SEDs, Regional Directors and other Directors to assist in the professional preparation and learning of secondary deputy principals in NSW public schools.**
- 2. The professional learning needs of a significant number of NSW state secondary deputy principals identified in the current survey responses be the basis of planning and implementation of any professional learning programs for deputy principals provided by the NSW DPA or the DET at district, region and system levels.**
- 3. That the NSW DPA should either organise or lobby the relevant regional and system personnel to establish the following two initiatives:**
 - i) a) identify and establish a data base of secondary deputy principals who are prepared to act as Mentors to neophyte deputy principals;**

b) on notification of appointment to a deputy position, and if possible prior to taking appointment, make formal arrangements for the newly appointed deputy, if they so wish, to have a Mentor, preferably in the same district as they have been appointed, provided. This Mentor will be available to the newly appointed deputy for up to 1 year from date of appointment.

ii) organise opportunities for newly appointed deputies, at least in their first year of appointment , to visit other secondary schools and deputy principals, and encourage such visits to become a regular part of the induction of deputy principals.

4. That the NSW DPA should continue to implement Welfare Surveys but that subsequent surveys are adapted to make responses to some questions more valid, and thus useful, and the collation and analysis of responses quicker and more efficient, including the possibility of computer scanned survey formats.

5. That the NSWSDPA with the assistance of DET seek to maintain a data base of all secondary deputy principals in NSW, then accurate numbers of secondary deputy principals in each region in NSW. This will provide important insight into the validity and reliability of samples completing any future surveys in each region.

6. That NSWSDPA with the assistance of DET through its email system develop group email facilities for All State and Regional Deputy Principal Groups.

7. That the NSWSDP association working with DET develop strategies to address the significant issues for the Deputies of Sydney West and South West identified in this survey.

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