

**Leadership Succession in Schools –  
An Approach to Developing a Leadership Philosophy  
in Teachers**

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## Certificate of Originality

I, Cheryl Margaret Bell, certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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All research procedures reported in this thesis received the approval of:

- University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee,  
UTS Approval: HREC REF No. 2006-175
- NSW Department of Education and Training SERAP Committee,  
DET Approval: SERAP 06. 384

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## **List of Abbreviations**

DBR	Design Based Research
DBRC	Design Based Research Collective
DP	Design Principles
FRPC	Facilitated Reciprocal Peer Coaching
GROW	Acronym for Goals, Reality, Options, Way forward (also known as Wrap-up)
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
LLI	Leadership Learning Intervention
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NSW	New South Wales
NSW DEC	New South Wales Department of Education and Communities
NSW DET	New South Wales Department of Education and Training
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PLLD	Professional Learning and Leadership Development
PPA	Primary Principals’ Association
SERAP	State Education Research Approvals Process
SLELU	School Leadership and Executive Learning Unit
SPC	Secondary Principals’ Council
SSNP	Smarter Schools National Partnerships

## Abstract

Recent trends within the NSW state school context point to possible concerns for succession planning and leadership capacity building in the future. The trends indicate a potential reduction in the number of aspirants for school principals' positions. The study investigates how the inclusion of experienced teachers might expand the target group for leadership succession. The purpose of the study is to address an apparent knowledge gap in leadership learning and development for this group and a lack of preparation of teachers for effective and sustained succession into the principal's role, in often challenging and complex contexts. The study explores the research question: What are the ways in which an intervention can promote leadership learning, development and succession in schools?

The study draws on three key learning theories: Argyris and Schön (1978), Isaacs (1993) and Kolb (1984). These theories underpin ways to achieve effective leadership development through the use of experiential and reflective learning strategies. The literature reviewed suggests that leadership strategies, focused on collaborative work-based practices such as "Facilitated Reciprocal Peer Coaching," leadership projects and informal conversation, together with iterative cycles of inquiry and reflection, promote the capacity building essential for quality leadership development. This study explores whether these leadership strategies motivate experienced teachers to engage in leadership development activities and build their leadership philosophy.

This study is distinctive because it uses elements of Design Based Research (DBR) methodology to collect data on the participants' experiences of a Leadership Learning Intervention (LLI) and the researcher's observations of leadership development. Data were gathered from interviews, the LLI itself, participants' learning journals and the researcher's observations. The LLI focused on collegial groupings of participants working on a range of experiential and reflective learning activities. These collaborative learning processes broadened the participants' understanding of the nature of leadership, fostered their attitudes and beliefs about leadership and developed contextual expertise. As a result of the processes used in the LLI, the participants developed Design Principles for leadership learning and development. The findings, drawn from the Design Principles and the data sources, led to the identification of four major factors for enhancing leadership learning, development and succession with experienced teachers in NSW state schools.

The research is significant because it addresses a gap in knowledge, regarding the impact of learning processes, on the engagement and motivation of experienced teachers in ongoing leadership development. Further, the study provides valuable insights for future leadership development programs that explore ways to support experienced teachers to achieve their goals and develop self-confidence in their abilities.