

Future Leaders, Future Schools

December 2022 Edition



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2 - 4 May 2023

Cape Town | South Africa



ICP Convention Aspiring School Leaders

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Centre, Cape Town**

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Heads of Department and
Educators**

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“You’ll Never Walk Alone”



You Don’t Walk Alone

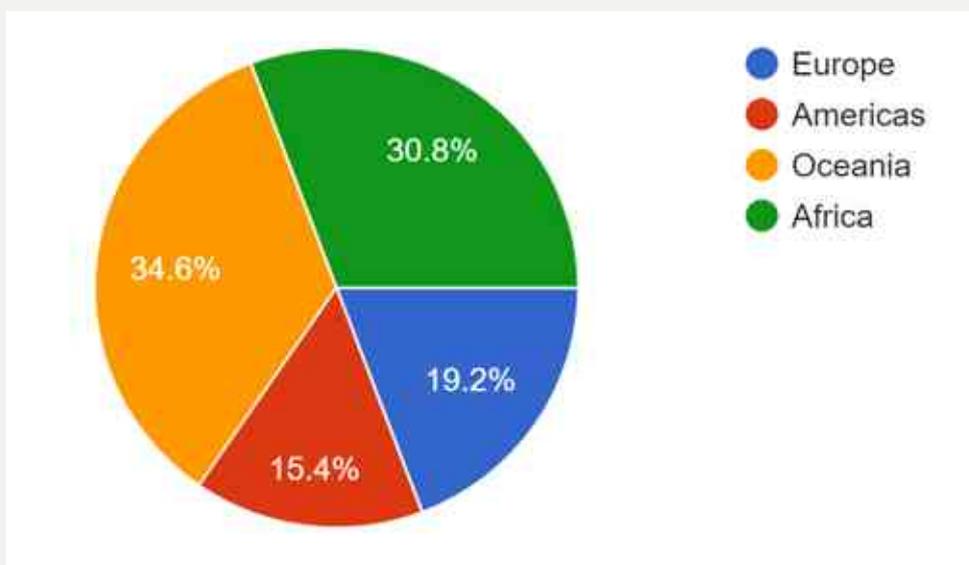
Professor Peter Kent - ICP President

Alongside my family and love of porridge, the other great passion of my life is following Liverpool Football Club. LFC is famous for its anthem ‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’ and I can still remember being challenged to sing it by members of Council when I was elected President in Shanghai (I did and the resulting sound was not pretty!)

The problem for many of us in the leadership community is that we often feel that we do walk alone. A sense of being isolated and the only one who is facing this particular problem is one of the biggest causes of stress for leaders, wherever they are in the world. I have found that the same can also be true for leadership associations, who can feel that the challenges they are facing are particular to their own jurisdiction.

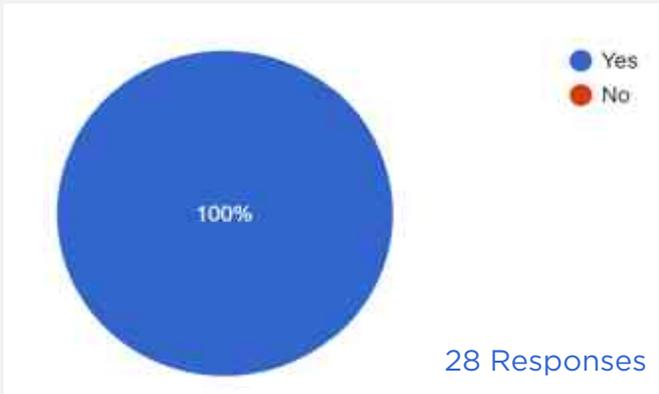
For this reason I found ICP’s Pre-Council survey particularly powerful, since it offered the chance to demonstrate that both the challenges and opportunities faced by leaders are often the same, regardless of where we find ourselves. Yes, context and the way in which these issues impact upon us might vary, but the fundamental issues are surprisingly consistent.

We had 28 responses from across the ICP family:



Our survey had been drawn together by Nancy Brady, our Executive representative for the Americas, and focused upon issues raised by her regional group around the recruitment and retention of leaders. The response to the first of our questions demonstrated the problem very clearly:

Have your school leaders reported an increase in workload over the past 2 years?



When you have a **100% agreement** from nearly 30 countries across five different continents, it speaks for itself. Responses from our members illustrate what has been happening: Wellbeing, workload and ongoing stresses related to pandemic logistics dominate the everyday life of principals

For this reason when 86% of respondents report a change in job satisfaction over the past two years I do not think they are telling us that the role has become more fulfilling:

Comments from members tell their own story:

Financial stresses linked to COVID, staffing and lack of relievers, how to reengage students and concern about how to make up lost learning time have increased anxiety. They are stressors that are not easily solved within education alone and they are underpinned by equity issues.

As the pressures and workload associated with being a leader increase, so the job becomes

less fulfilling. In part this reduction in job satisfaction relates to leaders being taken away from their core role within the school:

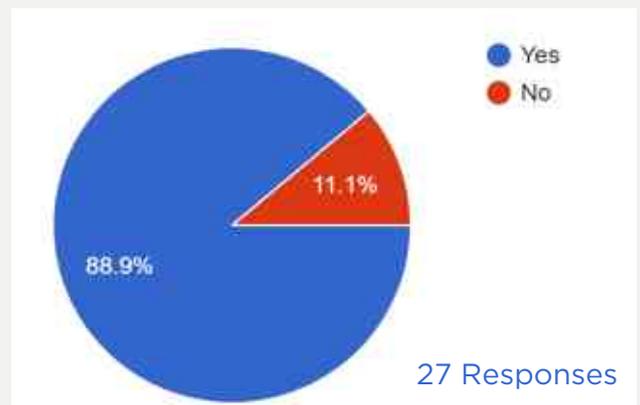
Having been extremely responsive and responsible COVID logistics managers, school leaders need time and support to refocus on teaching and learning

Over regulation and compliance administration is taking us away from learning

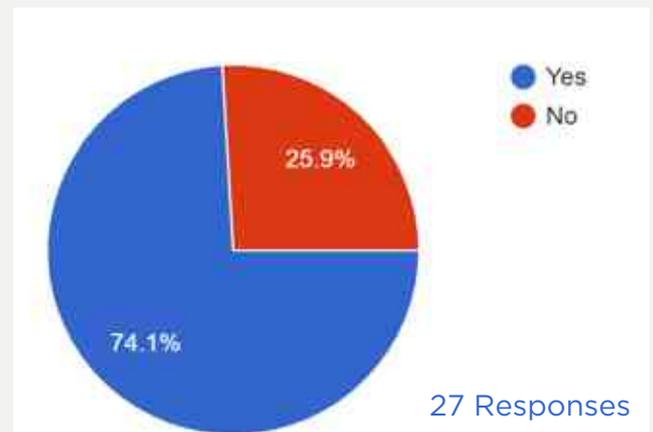
Data from Professor Phil Riley has indicated that while Irish school leaders enjoy their job the sheer quantity of work is the top stressor for them followed closely by a lack of time to focus on teaching and learning

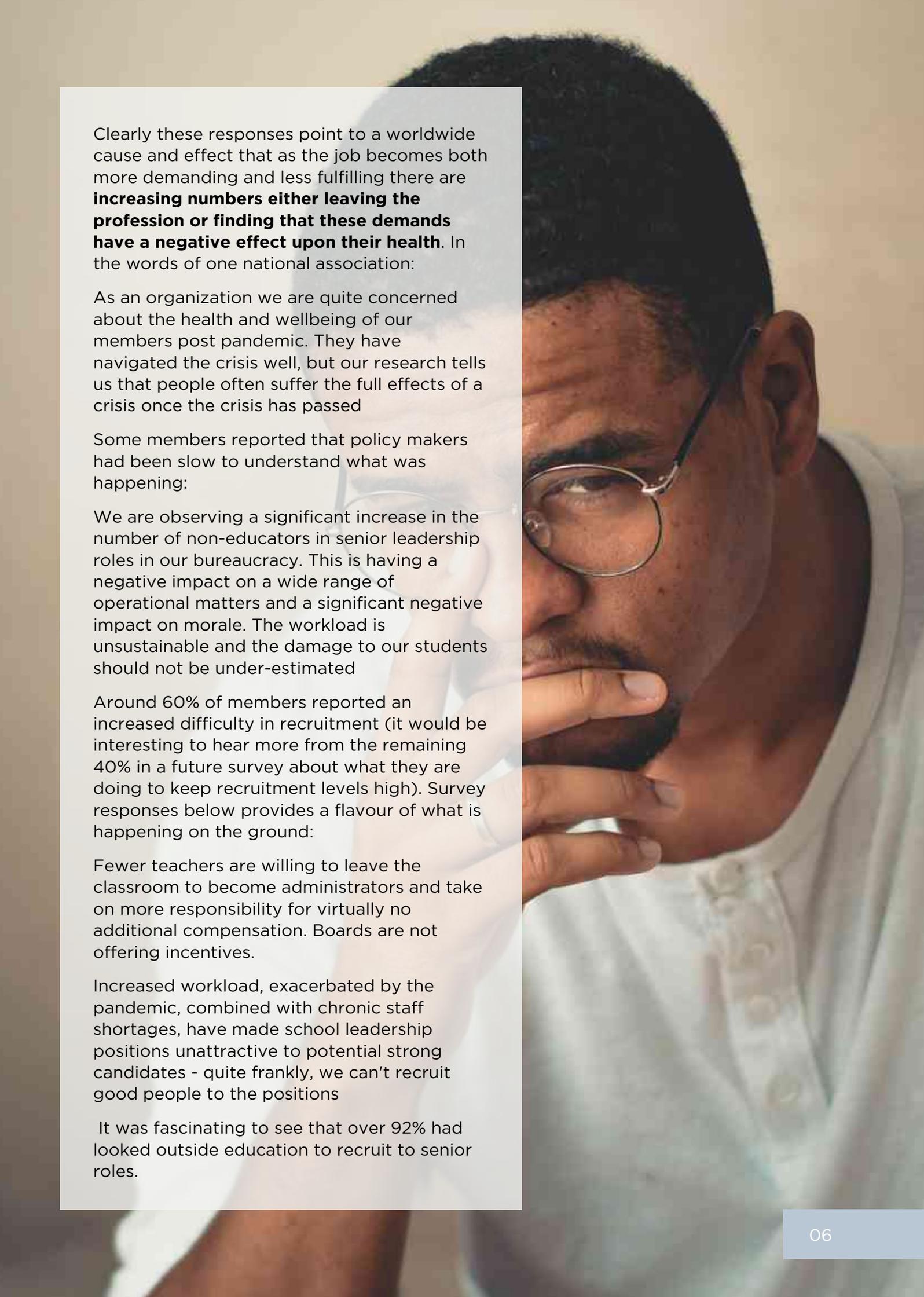
As a consequence, the next two responses are perhaps to be expected:

Have you seen an increase in Principals/ Vice Principals/School Leaders retiring over the last 2 years?



Have you seen an increase in school leaders accessing sick leave over this period of time?





Clearly these responses point to a worldwide cause and effect that as the job becomes both more demanding and less fulfilling there are **increasing numbers either leaving the profession or finding that these demands have a negative effect upon their health.** In the words of one national association:

As an organization we are quite concerned about the health and wellbeing of our members post pandemic. They have navigated the crisis well, but our research tells us that people often suffer the full effects of a crisis once the crisis has passed

Some members reported that policy makers had been slow to understand what was happening:

We are observing a significant increase in the number of non-educators in senior leadership roles in our bureaucracy. This is having a negative impact on a wide range of operational matters and a significant negative impact on morale. The workload is unsustainable and the damage to our students should not be under-estimated

Around 60% of members reported an increased difficulty in recruitment (it would be interesting to hear more from the remaining 40% in a future survey about what they are doing to keep recruitment levels high). Survey responses below provides a flavour of what is happening on the ground:

Fewer teachers are willing to leave the classroom to become administrators and take on more responsibility for virtually no additional compensation. Boards are not offering incentives.

Increased workload, exacerbated by the pandemic, combined with chronic staff shortages, have made school leadership positions unattractive to potential strong candidates - quite frankly, we can't recruit good people to the positions

It was fascinating to see that over 92% had looked outside education to recruit to senior roles.

Whilst this is not a negative, since it is important to make use of talented leaders from all walks of life, it does highlight the need to ensure that they are provided with training and preparation for the specific demands of educational leadership. For this reason it was striking that over 92% of members reported that they had put in place their own training to support colleagues taking on leadership roles.

Having read the survey results, it might come as a surprise to hear that this was the most positive and optimistic Council I have attended.

We did not travel all that distance to share our complaints, rather to work together on constructive and workable solutions. In doing this, I think we all found that there was a particular power in discovering that we did not walk alone and that we were all facing a set of common challenges.

As a result of the different places that we work in it is unlikely that there is one single solution, but when speaking both to members of our own organisations and policy makers we can now say that these issues of workload, recruitment and retention are faced by school systems across the world.



ICP Council Plus - World Cafe Reflections

Michael Hall - Asia-Oceania Representative

As delegates gathered for the first face-to-face gathering of ICP Council since the Covid pandemic interrupted our existence, a sense of exhilaration, eagerness and expectation filled the meeting room at the Fairmont Hotel in downtown Singapore. Our hosts, the Academy of Principals Singapore had, as is usual for this fabulous ICP member, prepared meticulously for our arrival and for the occasion itself. Everything was in perfect order and even the food would prove to be a highlight – which is something that can't be said for every event we school leaders attend in our professional lives.

Just as our ICP President Professor Peter Kent is a passionate leader, educator, and fanatical Liverpool FC supporter, I unfortunately suffer the ignominy of being a 'mad' Wallabies (Australian Rugby Union team) supporter and this experience doesn't do much for my contentment and serenity. Recent performances extend my suffering as 'we' suffer defeat after defeat – New

Zealand All-Blacks (again), Argentina, France and now even Italy – with only a very unconvincing victory over Scotland to maintain my sanity and kindle my hope. I daren't ponder what the outcome against the mighty Irish might be as another defeat will no doubt, fill my executive colleague from that emerald isle with immense glee.

However, I felt no such frustration, pessimism nor despondency as our remarkable ICP Council Plus delegates enthusiastically engaged with the task of reflecting upon our meeting experiences in the concluding World Café workshop. Expertly set-up by our retiring executive secretary, and masterfully managed by members of the ICP executive, these forums offered colleagues the opportunity to make insightful commentary about the impact on 'governance and policy-setting', on professional practice' and on 'research', that the matters covered in our meeting agenda had navigated.

Naturally, views were influenced by the settings in which our colleagues live and work. Having delegates from around the globe and from nations with hugely diverse educational environments added richness to the conversation that one doesn't usually enjoy when only working in 'one's own backyard'. Governance structures and policy decision-making constraints and freedoms differ so much within member contexts. Professional practices equally have challenges, restraints as well as opportunities depending upon from where our delegates came. And, educational research is contextualised as well as conditional upon the resources available.

Following are just some snapshots of

All countries seem to share the disturbance of “... governments rolling out endless initiatives (that are) in addition to what school leaders are already doing”

delegate's contributions in this session.

Governance and Policy-setting.

- Context matters and the settings in which we work provide either significant opportunity to contribute to policy-making or where governments, employers or others impose very real constraints on our professional capacity to influence.
- For instance:
 - Singapore offers “authority, autonomy and accountability...” to school leaders within a mutually agreed framework for “...educating the nation”. School leaders rotate through the Ministry taking on roles that familiarise them with the functions of governance and policy-making.

- In New Zealand and The Netherlands, “autonomy is with the school leaders”. Here, the narratives about education are positive and school leaders have influenced these.
- In other countries however, the “governance structure is not fit for purpose...” or is so different across the country that national conventions for setting educational policy and enacting exceptional school experiences for students is confusing and impenetrable for school leaders.
- All countries seem to share the disturbance of “... governments rolling out endless initiatives (that are) in addition to what school leaders are already doing”. Many delegates commented that;
 - “Legislative and regulatory demands and administrivia are impacting negatively on the core role of school leaders in educational or instructional leadership”;
 - “Micro-management by bureaucrats in Education Ministries/Departments too often involves them telling school leaders what to do and how to do it, so much so, that it detracts from the leadership of teaching and learning”;
 - “Workload is the issue. Bureaucracy is overwhelming.”.
- Delegates were enthused as “... individual leaders, association leaders and/or system leaders, being afforded opportunities to add professional expertise to designing governance structures and setting policy directions”.

Professional Practice.

- Our school and association leaders attending ICP Council Plus reflected upon how they are uniquely situated to

envisage the future and to devise ways to shape it so schooling suits the way the world is and the ways that might emerge.

- The importance of connections, or relationships and of rich communication was emphasised by all and the challenge of re-thinking how we lead in these ever-changing times was firmly set before us.
- For many of the delegates, the power of student voice was an enthralling enticement presented to them by the students around the globe who created video presentations and from the students from Singapore schools. (See details in Peter Kent's article) As one colleague termed it, "the power of student voice, choice and agency" should not be underestimated as by releasing this power, school leaders can invite students to help reimagine education so it fits with contemporary times.
- Significant for us all was the contemplation of which students are we asking to help shape the future of schooling. How do we ensure 'equity' is a fundamental essence of our consultation and collaborations? How do we assure those that are marginalised or disenfranchised in our communities, that their voices are heard and matter?
- We also reflected upon what is it we have to start doing as well as keep doing well. Importantly, we

also challenged ourselves to consider what it is that that we STOP doing?

Research.

- One of the widely applauded reflections about research was that we (ICP members) have so much wisdom to share we must make opportunity to do so. Associations and individuals who make up our professional groups live and breathe research in both formal academic practices as well as in daily professional endeavour. Future ICP Councils should give occasion for members to share their research and to garner feedback on where to next. Learning from each other is the theme.
- Indeed, it was suggested that the ICP family consider being creators of research questions and foster such research through collaboration amongst members or in partnership with key allies. The shared challenges identified in this most recent Council meeting might form part of research designs with the issue of 'student voice, choice and agency' being one such area of common interest.
- Other possible research of relevance could most definitely focus upon principal/head teacher attraction, preparation, selection, professional development and retention as well as role design and workload and workflow.
- Another idea worthy of continuing was the regular 'simple' surveying of things that matter to our members and that the results of these be entertained as focus areas



The power of student voice, choice and agency should not be underestimated as by releasing this power, school leaders can invite students to help reimagine education so it fits with contemporary times.

for future regional and council meetings.

- Undeniably, this priority of sharing, promulgating and fostering research is in the ICP Strategic Plan. One suggestion was that ICP Executive facilitate a ‘clearinghouse’ function whereby relevant and rigorous research pertinent to school principals/heads in their daily lives could be readily shared via council meetings, conventions, on the website, in blogs and on podcasts or in our regular magazine publications.

And so it seems, from these World Café reflections, we are similar in many more ways than by which we are different. If you didn’t manage to attend this Council meeting then you missed a ‘beauty’. Many have said it was ‘the best ever’! Just as many remarked that the gathering should run a little bit longer and that time spent sharing thoughts, ideas, challenges and wonderings opens the door to all sorts of possibilities.

When our newest member, Fiji Principals Association, could endure an extensive collaborative effort to get Vishnu in attendance, then there is no reason you cannot make the next Council meeting.

We look forward to seeing many more of you in Finnish Lapland in 2023.





Council Plus, as seen through Twitter





Welcome M @WelcomeM18183 · Oct 29

Great to be with school leaders from across the globe. Students voices matter in shaping system programmes. #ICPCouncil22



ICP @ICPConnect · Oct 28

Dr Shirleen Chee President of the Academy of Principals Singapore, speaks about the powerful professional development programme provided by APS #ICPCouncil22



ICP @ICPConnect · Oct 28

Our panel from across the ICP regions discuss the leadership challenges facing them #ICPCouncil22



ICP @ICPConnect · Oct 29

Really pleased to welcome new members from around the globe to #ICPCouncil22, including our first representative from Fiji



Anna Pons @aponsw · Oct 28

Happy to share OECD findings at the #ICPCouncil22 and learn from school principals from around the world, and particularly about the Singaporean seasons in leadership and overall transformation of the education system



ICP @ICPConnect · Oct 28

We are very excited to be holding our 2023 Council in Finland- and would like to thank our Finnish colleagues for their flexibility #ICPCouncil22





ICP @ICPConnect · Oct 28

We are delighted to announce that our colleagues from Kenya will be hosting ICP's next Convention in 2024 #ICPCouncil22



Maria Doyle @MariaDo20518320 · Oct 30

Paul Byrne Deputy Director NAPD accepting a Special Commendation award on behalf of Clive Byrne NAPD at #ICPCouncil22. Clive's unwavering contribution to ICP was deservedly recognised by ICP Council and presented by Dr. Peter Kent President of ICP. @ics@inland @IPPN_Education



ICP @ICPConnect · Oct 29

Students discuss social media and Frank Zappa's advice 'the mind is like a parachute, it only works if it is open' #ICPCouncil22



Wendy Cave @wendy_cave · Oct 29

Think they've nailed it. #ICPCouncil22 @AGPMU2 @AustPrincipals @OGACTEducation



NSW Secondary Principals' Council @NSW... · Oct 29

#ICPCouncil22 Day 2 has just concluded. 65 principals representing 24 principal associations across the world. Important work on sharing research and driving the narrative around school improvement. Staffing, workload and equity have been common themes. @JasonClareMP



Antti Ikonen @AnttiIkonen · Oct 29

@ShereeVertigan just received her #ICPConnect Life Membership from president Dr. Peter Kent. Just a moment later she received the same honor on behalf of past president Alta van Heerden, who passed last Autumn #ICPCouncil22





BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' ... @B... · Oct 29

Our @bcpvpapresident is @ #ICPCouncil22 in Singapore with @PeterJohnston36 & #CarmenEberle, meeting with #Principals from across the globe, discussing our different & similar experiences, building connections, looking at the future of schools, & the future leaders: our students!





Messages from Council: Positive Solutions to Complex Problems

Professor Peter Kent

How do you sum up the messages from such a profound and far reaching event as Council Plus in Singapore? When I spoke about our time together during the final session of Council, I started with the graphic above, using the words and phrases that had struck me over the three days:

Whilst the words need some interpretation, I think they do convey the positive and optimistic mood of our time together.

I told Council that there were ten key messages I had absorbed. The first was that it isn't just you. So often we can feel that we are the only ones facing a leadership challenge, particularly the current ones facing us over recruitment and retention for leaders. Our survey makes it clear that the central issues of rising workload, increased stress and

falling interest from the next leadership generation are common across all jurisdictions. Whilst there is no one solution to these issues, it is important that we continue to share strategies that have worked in our own area. For example, colleagues in Singapore have a nationally agreed policy that protects work-life balance for teachers and leaders and which drew considerable interest from those attending Council Plus.

Similarly several colleagues shared the strategies for mentoring and support that had been put in place in their region and it may well be that some of these can be transferred between countries.

Other problems shared during Council highlighted the need for us to continue to campaign on issues of equity. For example, colleagues from Africa highlighted issues in access to



educational resources and the challenges they were facing in bringing attendance back to Pre-Pandemic levels. During a panel discussion colleagues from Canada, Australia, Europe and Africa discussed the way in which restricted or unequal access to computing facilities had impacted upon their pupils.

However, **Council Plus also highlighted ways in which we can use our network to share powerful practice** e.g. in recruitment; promoting attendance and improving digital literacy. I was very impressed by the power of the data produced by our pre-Council questionnaire and surveys such as this clearly have a role in the future to help us gather opinions and seek solutions. Anna Pons' presentation, sharing different OECD scenarios for the future of schools and education, reminded us all that we need to shape the future rather than it simply happening to us. If we want to ensure that access to high quality education does not depend upon parental income or random chance, then all of us as leaders and leadership associations need to actively engage with the ways in which the patterns of schooling are already beginning to change. In turn this highlights the importance of our continuing close links with OECD and the need for coordinated responses to developments that concern us.

I was very struck by one message emerging from our panel discussion, that we need to **play an active part in looking for opportunities to promote leadership and counteract negative narratives**. Patsy Agard, President of the Ontario Principals Council, highlighted the trap

we can all fall into of accepting negative views, such as the ‘I wouldn’t do your job for any money’ comment that many of us hear at social functions. Unless we play an active part in telling others how much we enjoy being a leader and what a great job it is, it is unlikely that others will do it for us.

I know from feedback and conversations with those who attended, that the need to listen and respond to student voice was one of the areas that made a particular impact upon colleagues during Council Plus. We watched an excellent video in which students from Ireland, Ontario, New Zealand, Latin America and Kenya responded to four questions:

- What will schools of the future look like?
- What do you think students need from schools for the future?
- What have students learned from the last few years?
- What message would you give to future school leaders?

“...we need to play an active part in looking for opportunities to promote leadership and counteract negative narratives.”

We then heard from a live panel of students from Singapore. In every case the young people concerned were remarkably articulate, assured and perceptive. All of us came away from Singapore inspired to look for ways to make increasing use of the experiences

and insights of students as we lead schools into the future.

At the end of our meeting in Singapore, I asked myself why Council Plus had been such a powerful experience. As mentioned earlier, it would be easy for it to have simply focused upon the shared problems that we were all facing. Instead we found that coming together to understand and learn from one another was a powerful and uplifting experience. This process is at the heart of what ICP offers to its members and something that we should stress in the future when encouraging others to join the organisation or to attend Council meetings.

As part of this, the phrase that I heard most frequently during our time together was ‘we have more in common than I realised’.

We came from nearly 30 countries across five continents, yet found that the shared experience of leading our schools, communities and colleagues profoundly bound us together, as we sought to find common solutions to challenges facing leaders across the world.



Empower Students

Empowering Students to Shape our Schools and Societies

Anna Pons, OECD Project Lead and Analyst & Lawrence Houldsworth, Analyst

Sometimes it can be a student that makes the whole world sit up and pay attention. Fridays for Future, one of the largest student-led movements to have taken place in recent times, has made headlines and voiced society's environmental concerns on this inter-generational issue.

“Students want to have a say on their future; on the type of societies that they will live in, on the habits and behaviours that will shape their future day-to-day”

Students want to have a say on their future; on the type of societies that they will live in, on the habits and behaviours that will shape their future day-to-day, and the relationships that will bind us

and the natural environment together going forward. These all take root in the classrooms of today.

The climate crisis is just one example of the many challenges that our education systems need to prepare our students for. By raising their voices, students have not only reminded us of the importance of listening to them but they have also reiterated the need to transform our very education systems to better empower them in facing a future of surprises.

It is about giving all students agency over their learning. Student agency can be understood as the ability and the will to positively influence their own lives and the world around them.

The OECD Education 2030 Learning Compass defines students agency as **the capacity to set a goal, reflect and act responsibly to effect change**. Thus, it is about acting rather than being acted upon; shaping rather than being shaped; and making responsible decisions and choices rather than automatically accepting those determined by others. Furthermore, when students are agents they are more likely to have “learned how to learn”. This is an invaluable skill in a world in which students are likely to take different jobs and manage multiple real and virtual lives.

Our education systems have historically not placed enough emphasis on student agency. For instance, in terms of climate education, its main focus has traditionally been limited to climate literacy.

There is an important place for this; building foundational scientific knowledge is important, for example, to ensure that students have a deep understanding of the causes and consequences of climate change; know how to assess scientifically credible information; communicate about climate issues in a meaningful way to others; and make informed and responsible decisions about climate-related actions. Indeed, PISA 2018 revealed that only 8% of students were able to differentiate fact from opinion, reiterating the critical role that foundational skills play in the ability to exercise agency.

However, building knowledge alone might not lead to significant changes in students’

behaviours, attitudes and mindsets on climate matters. In PISA 2015, about nine out of ten students (88%) across OECD countries were in schools where climate change and global warming are topics in the formal curriculum. While eight out of ten (78%) students reported that “looking after the global environment” was important to them, only an average of 57% reported feeling empowered to do something about global problems like climate change.

How can re-think and re-imagine pedagogical approaches and learning environments that give students greater agency? From July 2021 to December 2021, the OECD, UNESCO and Education International ran a joint initiative to gather teacher insights on what makes a

difference in student agency to act and lead on climate matters. Overall, about 850 teachers from 157 countries shared their climate initiatives and participated in five global dialogues on teaching for climate action together with

their peers, teacher educators, school leaders, organisations and climate experts.

The pedagogies behind many of the insights submitted placed students at the centre. Teachers demonstrated that the shift towards more student-centred learning can take a variety of forms, in particular placing a firmer focus on student decision-making and tailoring the learning experience to recognise students’ prior knowledge about climate change and interests in specific areas.

“
...PISA 2018 revealed that only 8% of students were able to differentiate fact from opinion, reiterating the critical role that foundational skills play in the ability to exercise agency

Some examples include **Ana Piñeiro**, a teacher from Spain, who used enquiry-based and embodied pedagogies to recycle masks and reduce the waste caused by the pandemic; **Kan Tanahashi**, a principal from Japan, who engaged students in experiential and service-based approaches to solve local energy problems; and, **Kavita Sangvi**, a principal from India, who involved the entire school community in designing and implementing more sustainable initiatives.

Interestingly, these approaches did not diminish the role of teachers in the classroom, but rather teachers and students were both elevated into the role of facilitators, learners and co-creators of knowledge exercising collaborative agency.

Ana Piñeiro
Teacher, Spain



Watch the video submission from Ana Piñeiro, a teacher from Spain, who empowered her students for climate action using enquiry-based and embodied pedagogies to develop solutions for global waste caused by the pandemic.

[Click here to watch!](#)

Kan Tanahashi
Principal, Japan



Watch the video submission from Kan Tanahashi, a school principal from Japan, who empowered the students and teachers of his school to use experiential, service-based, and embodied approaches to solve local energy problems.

[Click here to watch!](#)

Kavita Sangvi
Principal, India



Watch the video submission from Kavita Sangvi, a principal of a school in India, who initiated and created the right conditions for implementing climate initiatives across the entire school.

[Click here to watch!](#)

Fostering student agency – whether around climate matters or other global challenges – pushes us to re-think our primarily compartmentalised view of education. Despite the complexity, interconnectedness and multidimensionality of climate issues, teaching and learning about them have traditionally been confined to single subjects, such as science and geography,

and to certain age groups like lower and upper secondary students. Yet, climate education can cut across different grades and subject areas. For instance, the aforementioned initiative highlighted a range of powerful ideas at the primary level, including students being challenged to explore food security, nutrition and changing agricultural patterns at the same time in order to re-design their school canteen.

Finally, a third area for consideration to further student agency is creating a school climate in which expression and failure are better encouraged and supported. How students judge their abilities, and how afraid they are of failing, can shape their feelings, motivation and behaviour (PISA). In PISA 2018, on average across OECD countries, 84% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they can usually find a way out of difficult situations, and 56% agreed or strongly agreed that, when they fail, they worry about what others think about them.



Digging down deeper, **fear of failure** was a concern that affected girls more than boys in nearly every education system, while more socio-economically advantaged students typically reported more self-confidence in their abilities than their disadvantaged peers.

A natural question is therefore what comes next; **how can aspects furthering student agency be adopted and developed in a school setting?**

What stands out is how central a role school leaders play in supporting teachers and building a shared vision for implementing climate education in schools. On the one hand, participating teachers reported that school leaders can help mobilise and allocate necessary resources and materials that support more active pedagogies and innovation in the classroom.

After all, embracing these innovative, more student-centred teaching methods might be new and challenging for many teachers. Participating teachers reported having few opportunities to learn about climate matters and active pedagogies; having overloaded curricula with limited flexibility and time for lesson planning; and the absence of strong support for professional exchange and collaboration at the school level and beyond. School leaders could work around these obstacles by increasing opportunities for teachers to refine and enhance their practice through specific professional development and collaboration focused on building greater student agency into teachers' practice.

Another important strand is **building a shared vision for the school**. Thus, school leaders can create space for and foster a culture of interdisciplinary and school-wide climate action projects. This could take the form of school leaders helping to turn schools into green learning spaces that show what sustainability looks like in action and that send a clear message that the school values its role in shaping the local environment. Similarly, it could also be building partnerships with the local community, where students can have opportunities to exercise their agency.

Today, schools find themselves with a unique opportunity. Schools have always been transformational spaces; where passions are unearthed, communities forged and careers built. Rarely though is there such an opportunity to profoundly

shape our collective future. Empowering students with the agency to develop and grow into the active green-minded citizens that they want to be can help to transform the prospects of our societies and our planet.

Across countries, many classrooms and schools are already pioneering new ways to lay the foundations for a more sustainable future. Sometimes change begins small – one young fearless student on a Friday – but grows to impact the whole world.

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Empowering Students to Shape our Schools and Societies

Anna Pons, OECD Project Lead and Analyst & Lawrence Houldsworth, Analyst

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Research Focus

Ireland, Australia and Finland

Over recent months member associations have produced several different pieces of research into the challenges facing school leaders and possible ways to overcome them. We thought we would take the opportunity to share three of them with you.

Research Paper 1: Roadmap to Sustainability

Firstly, our colleagues in the Irish Primary Principals Network, led by President Brian O'Doherty, have produced a powerful exploration of the competing demands that are placed upon school leaders. Their **Roadmap to Sustainability** combines detailed analysis of the issues faced by Principals

alongside a series of carefully considered potential solutions. The full report can be found at [Primary School Leadership: The Case for Urgent Action - A Roadmap to Sustainability by Irish Primary Principals' Network - Issuu](#) . Below we reproduce the concluding recommendations from the report:

The value of school leadership

We know school leadership is shaped by the school's context; we know that it has a moral purpose to make a positive difference and we also know that it is most effective when it is shared. Most importantly, we know that it matters. It's a very simple equation – effective school leaders mean effective schools and effective schools mean better outcomes for children. Therefore, making sure that school leaders can dedicate themselves

to delivering effective leadership must be a system imperative.

Leadership capacity, effectiveness and sustainability are compromised. The system relies heavily on school leaders to implement change and mandated reform, at both school and system levels. As a result, and because school leaders do not have a clearly defined role, that role has expanded year on year. Every set of policy guidelines, every piece of education legislation and every circular has added, and continues to add, to the list of tasks and responsibilities and that fall to school leaders.

Our analysis of these documents highlighted that all of them include tasks and responsibilities in the area of managing the organisation but less than a quarter of them have tasks and responsibilities in the area of leading teaching and learning, which is central to the core purpose of school leadership.

Through our member survey, school leaders told us that they do not have enough time for the things that are most closely aligned with their core purpose and spend too much time on areas that are least closely aligned with that core purpose. 97% of the respondents to our survey told us that the key issue that undermines the sustainability of their leadership role is the number of tasks and responsibilities that keep them from their core purpose. In short, we are consistently limiting the capacity of school leaders to focus on their core purpose – to do the job they signed up to do.

This is not only having a detrimental impact on leadership effectiveness but also on the sustainability of those leadership roles. School leaders currently

rate the sustainability of their roles at less than 4 out of 10. We also know the toll that this is taking on the health and wellbeing

97%

of Leaders feel that the sheer quantity of tasks keeps them from their core purpose

of our school leaders. The data from the Irish Principal and Deputy Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey (2022) tells us that there is increased incidence of burnout, depressive symptoms, sleep disorders and stress. The scores are double and sometimes more than double those of the healthy working population. The researchers state that urgent action is required to address the issue of the role and workload of school leaders.

A solution focused approach to ensuring effective and sustainable school leadership

This report aims to be solution focused and we have endeavoured to explore the key issues, and advocate for what needs to happen to ensure school leadership of the highest quality in our schools as well as a leadership role that is sustainable. To that end, we have considered | what constitutes effective school leadership | what preparation for leadership should look like | how best to recruit school leaders | how to create the time and space to lead | how leadership can be shared and supported more effectively | what needs to happen in the governance space.

We have made recommendations in each of these areas and will work with the education partners towards their implementation.

Summary of recommendations

We have made specific and detailed recommendations relevant to each section from Chapter 3 – Effective Leadership & Core Purpose through to Chapter 8 – Governance. The following is offered by way of a broad summary of those detailed recommendations.

1. The role of the principal and that of the deputy principal should be **clearly defined** and delineated to better ensure that the focus of school leadership can be maintained on their core purpose of leading teaching and learning
2. The defining of these roles should be based on a **shared understanding** of what constitutes effective school leadership in the Irish context and take account of the domains and standards detailed in the Quality Framework for Leadership and Management in Looking at our Schools (2022)
3. Tasks and responsibilities that are not aligned with that core purpose **should be redistributed** with a consequential reduction of workload
4. An increased capacity for **shared leadership**, increased and improved administrative support and a governance structure that is developed and formally supported and thus fully capable of discharging its compliance and oversight functions should assist this process
5. The process of preparation for leadership should be shaped and informed by this **clearer understanding of the core purpose of school leadership** and should not be generic
6. There should be three stages in that preparation and induction process:
 - a. pre-appointment (aspiring leaders)

“Relevant and specific opportunities and supports for the development of leadership capacity should be made available at each of the three stages of the process (as detailed in Chapter 4 – Preparation for Leadership) both formally and informally.”

- b. post-appointment but prior to taking up the role (newly-appointed principals)
 - c. after taking up the role (newly-practising principals)
7. Relevant and specific opportunities and supports for the development of leadership capacity should be made available at each of the three stages of the process (as detailed in Chapter 4 – Preparation for Leadership) both formally and informally
 8. A consistent, national recruitment and appointment process, underpinned by the principles of HR best practice and supported by mandatory training for those engaged in recruitment, should be developed
 9. Additional and sufficient release time for teaching principals and deputy principals should be sanctioned to better ensure their capacity to discharge their leadership and management duties and to better facilitate a collaborative, co-leadership approach
 10. Administrative status as a principal or deputy principal should be provided based on the number of staff that are being led and managed and not on the number of children enrolled in the school
 11. All schools should have access to an adequate level of administrative support provided by staff who are appropriately skilled and remunerated
 12. Greater account should be taken of the leadership demands of the different school contexts and supports and resources should be tailored to assist in meeting those demands – a “one size fits all” or generic approach does not work
 13. There should be a mandatory preparation and induction programme for newly-appointed and newly-practising deputy principals with access for all deputy principals to rigorous and relevant mentoring and coaching
 14. At post-primary level, the threshold for the appointment of extra deputy principals has changed, reflecting the extra demands now on leadership at that level. Primary school leadership should also be examined with a view to similar provision being made.
 15. Professional development should be provided to leadership teams to foster and embed a culture of shared leadership in all schools. This should include, but not be limited to, access for all school leadership and management teams to professional development on how to optimise collaborative practice, and the provision of team coaching

Research Paper 2: Principal Recruitment and Retention

Secondly, Andrew Pierpoint, President of the Australian Secondary Principals Association, recently co-authored with Amanda Heffernan (Senior Lecturer in Education at Manchester University) a research paper into **Principal Recruitment and Retention** for the Principals Australia Research Foundation. Once again the paper shrewdly identifies a series of issues relating to recruitment and retention, whilst also offering a set of carefully considered solutions. The full report can be found at https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/222712348/ASPA_Attraction_Retention_Final_Report_July_2022.pdf and the Executive Summary of their research is shown below:

Executive Summary

This research project focuses on issues of attraction and retention in relation to Australian principals. The project was developed in response to serious concerns about a crisis in principal health and wellbeing, against a backdrop of looming shortages and attrition of principals in Australia. Similar issues are echoed around the world, leading this research to meaningful implications for schooling systems and leaders worldwide.

16. A review of the role and structure of Boards of Management should be undertaken, as a matter of urgency, prior to the formation of new Boards in 2023
17. A clear distinction between the governance function of the Board of Management and the leadership and management of the school should be made
18. Boards should be constituted and operate in accordance with governance best practice including, but not limited to, mandatory training for all Board members, specific roles for each Board member and rotation of membership to ensure some continuity
19. Legal, financial, human resource, health and safety and building/maintenance expertise should be available on a cluster or regional basis to all schools or through a meso-level structure. Strategic leverage of a digital infrastructure and regional hubs could achieve this; opportunities in this regard exist post-Covid.

IPPN believes that implementing these recommendations would have a profound effect on leadership effectiveness and sustainability. We have a shared responsibility to current and future school leaders, to their school communities and most importantly to the children in those schools to ensure progress on the implementation of these recommendations. The time for action is now.

¹ The complexity of this issue is that each state and territory is responsible for education in its own jurisdiction, making a coordinated national approach particularly challenging. However, focus group participants suggest that until a clear picture of the issue is evident across jurisdictions, the scale of the challenges of attracting and retaining principals will remain opaque. A national approach could also ensure sharing of effective strategies and programs to attract, support, and retain leaders in the profession.

The research sought perspectives from **current, former, and aspiring principals**. Key findings are presented below. It is important to note that one key finding is the lack of a clear picture at a national and state/territory level regarding the scale and scope of the problem of attraction and retention. Focus group experts noted that each state/territory 'counts' teachers differently (i.e., they reported that some states include registered teachers in their workforce numbers, which skews the issue of workforce supply and shortages as those teachers may never intend to work again).

Focus group participants suggested that politics are getting in the way of having a clear understanding of the scale of the issue, as well as the development of strategies to address the issue. They

A fundamental finding of this project is therefore that clear and transparent data needs to be gathered about issues of principal attraction and retention, including 'pipeline' data such as middle leaders and aspiring leaders.

suggested that no state or territory wants to be the first to clearly state the scale of the problem of principal shortages and burnout.

Principal Attraction & Recruitment

- The research explored **barriers** towards people applying for principal

positions. These barriers included:

- Concerns about the **workload and emotional intensity** involved in the principalship
- Concerns about the **impact of the principal role** on leaders' own health, wellbeing, and families / relationships
- Concerns about the all-encompassing nature of the principalship
- Barriers in identification and recruitment, including **gender and equity issues, 'inner circle' networks**, and adequate preparation and training to take on the role
- The research explored **motivations** for people aspiring to the principalship. These included:
 - Opportunities to develop, nurture, and support teachers
 - Opportunities to lead change and develop positive school cultures
 - Opportunities to make a difference and help young people reach their potential
 - The research highlighted a concerning trend in a **lack of applicants** for principal positions (issues raised included number of applicants, as well as suitability of applicants)
 - The research sought **advice for aspiring leaders** from experienced principals. They described the importance of having a supportive and trusted mentor, having a clear understanding of the challenges and realities of the role before taking it on, and having a strong sense of self before becoming a principal.

Principal Retention

- The research explored the **reasons principals leave the role early**. These reasons included:
 - A sense of a lack of support from systems, senior leaders, and policymakers
 - The effects of the role on their health and wellbeing
 - An increasing focus on compliance and risk-management, which takes them from their core purpose of leading education
- The research explored **principals' perspectives on workload**. They described:
 - Not just a high volume of work, but an intensity in relation to the type of work being required
 - Significant impacts on health, wellbeing, work-life balance, and principals' families
 - A heavy focus on compliance and reporting, and highly bureaucratised systems which put an additional burden of work onto schools and principals
 - A need to revise the legal responsibilities and delegations within schools so that principals can share accountabilities and work appropriately (for example, with other school leaders or with business managers)
- The research asked what would have made principals remain in the role for longer. Responses included:
 - More support for principals
 - More focus on education and less on compliance and accountability
 - If their health had not been impacted by the work

What Principals Want System and Policy Makers to Know

- The research asked principals what they wanted to **tell system leaders and policymakers**. Their responses included:
 - A need for **meaningful and targeted support** and help for school leaders
 - A consistent theme that principals do not feel trusted by increasingly risk-averse systems, and that this is stifling their ability to undertake their work
 - The importance of raising the status of principals' roles, and recognising the deeply complex work they undertake each day

Research Design

Fieldwork for the project was undertaken between May 2021 – May 2022. The research was supported by a scan of the literature and policy in this space.

Research methods included an anonymous online survey (149 respondents), followed by interviews with current, former, and aspiring principals (8) and focus groups with Principals' Association Executives (3 groups) designed to gather illustrative data and receive feedback on initial findings. Please refer to Appendix A, B, and C for more detail on the research methods and on respondent demographics.

Recommendations for Action

Attraction

1. Develop contextually relevant principal preparation programs. These should include targeted formal approaches and opportunities for identification, development, and support into the role – these programs need to consider diversity of applicants and move beyond informal networks that raise equity issues.
2. Develop and invest in formal mentoring programs for aspiring principals. These programs should include release time for identified and experienced principals to be trained and supported to act as mentors, including specific time for shadowing and mentoring. Mentoring programs should consider long-term succession planning and workforce strategy for targeted positions in schools which experience high rates of turnover and shortages of applicants.
3. Develop a national campaign to recognise the complexity and importance of school leaders' and teachers' work. The status of the profession is frequently cited as a concern for those working in schools. Principals and teachers cite a perceived lack of political and public support as a barrier towards attraction as well as retention.
4. Work with national and state Principals' Associations to develop and lead high-quality induction programs for new principals. These programs should be grounded in contemporary research into the work of educational leaders and ideally developed in partnership with research experts.

Retention

5. Support meaningful workload reduction efforts led by principals. These could have a national and state/territory focus. The same issues are evident across Australia, though they require localised contextual responses. A sustained cross-system, cross-sector effort towards these changes is a critical first step towards meaningfully reducing workload.
6. Invest in mental health and wellbeing support for principals. Principals have cited the need for proactive support rather than reactive support. Some states/territories are trialling effective approaches towards this with great success (for example, Peer Clinical Supervision groups in Victorian public schools).
7. Redefine the role and position description of the principal to clarify and sharpen the focus and purpose (including considering redistributing accountability and delegations).
8. Realign system and school balance towards proactive support for principals, rather than monitoring and compliance. This would work towards addressing concerns from principals about a lack of trust from risk-averse systems.
9. Work with Principals' Associations around the country to develop high-quality leadership development programs for principals at different stages of their careers. This recognises the different needs principals have at different career stages – e.g., beginning, mid-career and end of career (recognising that principals have significant knowledge and expertise at this stage of the career, providing them opportunities to 'give back' to the profession). As with

Recommendation 4, this should be grounded in contemporary research about educational leadership and could be designed and delivered in partnership with education researchers.

Other

10. Develop a **clear and transparent** approach towards measuring data associated with attraction and retention (e.g., number of applicants per position, turnover rates, aspiring leader statistics). Without a clear understanding of the scope and scale of the issues associated with attraction and retention, it is unlikely that meaningful systemic change will be effective.

Research Paper 3: Finnish Principals' Survey

Finally, Antti Ikonen and Toni Lehtinen from Surefire have recently published a summary of the 2022 Principals Health and Wellbeing survey. Once again, whilst some of the findings are worrying, our Finnish colleagues go to great lengths to put forward constructive and thoughtful solutions to the problems faced by leaders in Finland and across the world:

Principal Barometer 2022:

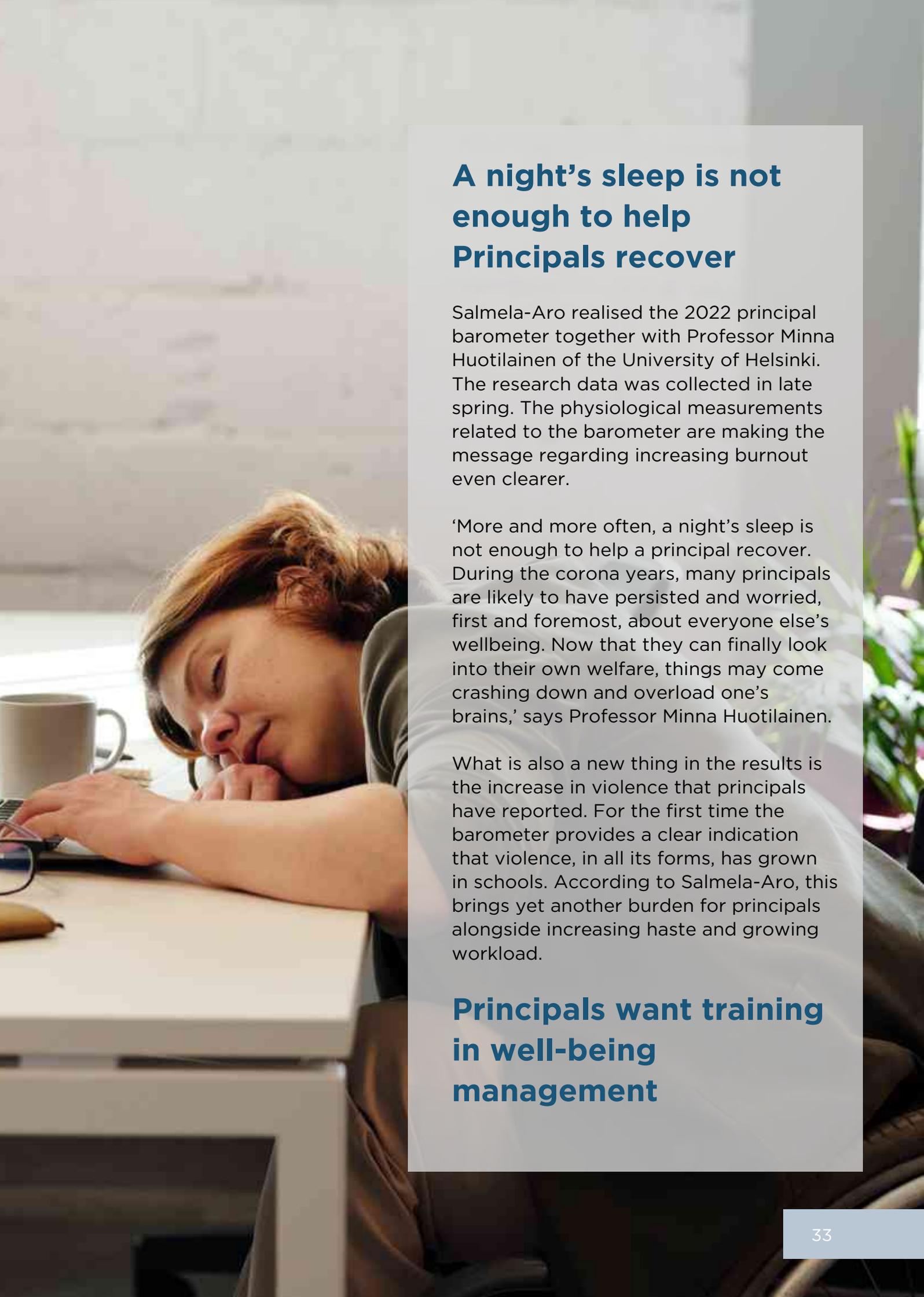
One quarter of principals in burnout – schools subjected to unrealistic demands

In a short period of time, exhaustion among Finnish principals has more than doubled and is starting to have a serious effect on school communities' well-being. The results of the recent principal barometer indicate that spreading oneself too thin in crisis situations takes its toll and show how many of the expectations that Finnish schools are subjected to are unreasonable, says the President of the Association of Finnish Principals, Antti Ikonen.

School management is further burdened by the well-being challenges of children and young people, and for the first time, violence is a growing concern for principals. We need swift and strong measures in the resourcing of schoolwork, states Ikonen.

The number of principals suffering from exhaustion is greater than ever before, and now one in four principals has burnout. Things have taken a dramatic turn for the worse in three years: since 2019, the number of burnt-out principals has increased by about five per cent each year. Academy Professor Katarina Salmela-Aro is extremely worried about these results.

'Teachers started recovering last spring, but this positive development seems absent when it comes to principals. Principals have been responsible for crisis management and for the coping of teachers, families, and students. Stretching oneself comes with a price and the related risks are now realised in the latest barometer. Principals, in turn, name the lack of teachers as one new source of stress' Salmela-Aro tells us.



A night's sleep is not enough to help Principals recover

Salmela-Aro realised the 2022 principal barometer together with Professor Minna Huotilainen of the University of Helsinki. The research data was collected in late spring. The physiological measurements related to the barometer are making the message regarding increasing burnout even clearer.

'More and more often, a night's sleep is not enough to help a principal recover. During the corona years, many principals are likely to have persisted and worried, first and foremost, about everyone else's wellbeing. Now that they can finally look into their own welfare, things may come crashing down and overload one's brains,' says Professor Minna Huotilainen.

What is also a new thing in the results is the increase in violence that principals have reported. For the first time the barometer provides a clear indication that violence, in all its forms, has grown in schools. According to Salmela-Aro, this brings yet another burden for principals alongside increasing haste and growing workload.

Principals want training in well-being management

In addition to the corona pandemic, the impact of Russia's offensive warfare has been reflected in schoolwork in many ways. At the same time, there are high expectations for schoolwork and school communities' well-being – and superiors are the ones who carry the official liability for all this.

Principals must survive with the resources they are given, and this can very easily lead to ethical stress: knowing what should be done, but lacking the resources to get it actually done. One might ask if principals are by now required to possess unlimited resilience, that is, psychological ability for recovery. In order to share the managerial burden, our schools need more vice-principals, says president Ikonen.

According to Ikonen, the work of principals entails an increasing amount

of people management and support for the entire school community, but in addition to resources, principals lack sufficient training for this. The government programme promises to develop school management, and we cannot wait any longer for this to happen. The principal barometer also examined the training needs of principals for the first time.

On the positive side, **principals are now mainly hoping for training in well-being management.** This is something we must now tackle, states Academy Professor Salmela-Aro.

A photograph of a man and a woman sitting at a table in a meeting. The man, on the left, has a beard and is wearing a light-colored blazer. The woman, on the right, has long, dark, curly hair and is wearing a light-colored blazer. They are both looking at a laptop screen. A white text box is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

“...the work of principals entails an increasing amount of people management and support for the entire school community, but in addition to resources, principals lack sufficient training for this”



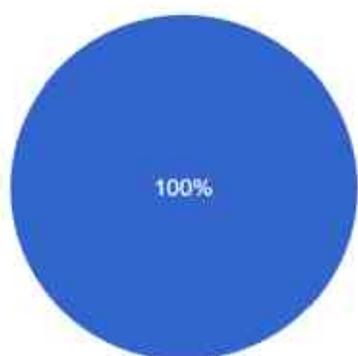
Council Plus Feedback from those who attended

What went well?

- Everything!
- The entire conference was exceptional. I valued the interactive style and the workshops that allowed us to really connect with and hear from colleagues. The student panel was wonderful. Food was fabulous.
- The organisation of the day and the excellent facilitation.
- The connections made and the sharing of ideas what challenges educational leaders are facing worldwide. There are so many similarities.
- Good mix of presentations and opportunities to discuss among ourselves. Effective activities to help us get reacquainted and meet new colleagues. Loved the student voice morning.
- Networking, student voice, OECD presentation. Overall format. Accommodation and conference facilities.
- The hospitality of the Singapore principals - it was outstanding.
- I really enjoyed the conversations with another principals. Of course, it's important to have some presentations too, but the conversations should be at the point.
- The flow of the programme - one session built upon the previous session.
- The total event was outstanding. Connecting again face-to-face was of huge value and the agenda contained pertinent and important issues confronting us all around the globe.

Personal Learning Points

- We are the very lucky ones in Europe...and need to continue to help other parts of the world.
- Equity is a big issue that we as ICP need to embrace and respond to.
- Student voice is a **must** for all sectors.
- We have so many similarities but political impacts can limit educational opportunities. We have some absolutely awesome leaders.
- If we are to grow our leadership in education across the world ICPs role is critical!
- That teacher supply is a worldwide challenge which needs to be addressed ASAP.
- That we have much to learn from one another. In fact, we have much to share to solve some of the common issues we face.
- As a global advocate of learning and leadership we have work to do.
- Perspective is a great leveller when you compare what is occurring globally in education.
- Strategies to mitigate principal workload from other jurisdictions.
- I had three learning points that I took away from Council Plus:
 1. The experience of being in an international meeting
 2. The commonalities of education issues facing world educators
 3. How I could develop network with my regional colleagues to continue to empower the school principals of my country
- Education is global. All countries face almost similar problems. Education unites all cultures.
- In all our jurisdictions we face similar issues - but the solutions are not a 'one size fits all'.
- Even the word 'equity' means different things in different contexts. Despite the differences, innovative ideas can be found everywhere - and can be part of individual country's 'next steps'.
- The educational system's similarities, both positive and negative, are remarkable!
- That we must share more of what solutions we have. We are good at pointing out problems and not so great at sharing success stories. Plus, student voice is now more essential than before with the times as they are changing so rapidly.



I would recommend ICP Membership to those in countries who have not yet joined the organisation

22 Responses

