

## **F-01: Leading and managing smaller schools in Australia**

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In Australia, the demographic patterns and huge landmass have resulted in a large number of small schools. Those schools are those schools by teaching principals with not more than 150 pupils. Non-availability of research data and the concerns expressed by principals led to this project. The sample consisted of 50 schools with 429 respondents comprising principals, teachers, parents and community. Methodologies employed were an empirical survey and interviews. Data were compiled from 243 responses and follow-up interviews with 58 respondents.

The difficulty in time management due to contractual obligations, inadequacy of principal relief time for administration and unplanned interruptions while on class-room duty were major problems faced by principals. Inadequacy of: office accommodation, work areas for staff and library accommodation, inadequate funding for support services, professional development, and insufficient parental participation were identified as other major problems and issues. Need to organise composite classes, lack of transport and other facilities, difficulty in attracting and retaining competent staff, lack of career path opportunities and lack of adequate recognition for smaller schools' needs were some concerns expressed by principals. School councils and parents and Citizens Associations were considered as useful instruments in managing schools. Most stakeholders compared smaller school atmosphere to that of a large family. Isolation was considered a small price to pay when compared to the benefits derived. The data suggested that pressing problems and issues should be addressed quickly with an increase of the number of principal relief days.