

Department of Education and Communities

**Final Report
of the Evaluation of the
School-Based Management Pilot**

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Student Administration and Program Evaluation Bureau

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Executive summary

Introduction

The evaluation of the School-Based Management Pilot in 47 NSW public schools commenced in March 2010.

The evaluation sought to understand the manner in which increased recruitment, staffing and funding control in pilot schools was used, and the results that this new authority achieved.

The evaluation included three broad methods:

- Interviews with 40 of the 47 principals of pilot schools and some school administrative staff between March 2010 and November 2010,
- Detailed interviews in 15 pilot schools with principals, school leaders, teachers, students and parents and with key state office pilot participants between November 2010 and September 2011, and
- A constant comparative analysis of data to produce themes and to test these with previous analysis and further data, to develop the evaluation findings.

A progress report in June 2011 provided an initial scan of themes. A planned survey of principals did not proceed in this evaluation, as the *Independent Review of the School-Based Management Pilot* adopted that method of data collection.

Have pilot schools and their student's outcomes improved?

Overall, the evaluation reveals a very positive picture of the how the pilot was received in participating schools and of the use of the pilot functions to create flexibility and school improvement. Most principals and other respondents said that the pilot schools had improved.

One school reported substantial improvement through the pilot: 'attendance is up, suspensions are down, teaching quality has improved significantly and the number of programs on offer have expanded significantly. Upgrading to a deputy principal position and the appointment of two experienced head teachers is really moving the school forward, the school has fantastic vocational education programs that has delivered 11 traineeships for Aboriginal students.'

Many principals said that the pilot contributed to this improvement directly: the 'success with the students who have had transition support is a clear positive outcome from the pilot.' Other principals thought that school improvement was the result of the pilot and other initiatives, that it is 'not possible to unpack the effect of pilot initiatives from the overall activity and other initiatives in operation in the school.' In other cases, 'a combination of factors are delivering improvements, not solely or largely the pilot.'

In another school, the principal said that the length of the pilot 'has allowed the school time to get things in place: programs related to [four new subject areas] are now offered, getting the right staff to implement a whole lot of program ideas has been critical. [It is] early days

yet but students are accessing programs more than planned.' In another school the principal simply said 'we have changed the lives of 50 boys in the mentoring program.'

Another principal said 'it is a different school and way of thinking now, we don't have to role with the punches, we're acting to shape the school, our parents have a reason to be here, enrolments are increasing, whereas before parents would not have sent their children here.'

A number of respondents spoke about school culture and pilot initiatives in some schools. A typical comment from a principal was 'the culture has changed, especially in classroom teaching' or 'the culture was already pretty good. This has enabled us to extend ourselves in teaching and in support of needs as they were identified. This has created a positive buzz in the school. The staff produce really good results.' Another principal said 'yes definitely [the pilot] has changed the culture for the better, and broadened school programs being offered.'

One principal said that the pilot 'has been very constructive in turning around a perception that all the school could expect was under achievement and a culture of bullying and dysfunction. Student assessment results were very poor but now they are improving and the parents are watching this improvement as evidence that the school is improving.'

Another principal said that the school staff had 'worked to improve school culture and student behaviour. This culture work saw teachers being backed up more and supported in their work' and that the 'curriculum has expanded and this has meant more options for teachers...there is now evidence that making change in the school had benefited teachers directly.'

The issue of the impact of pilot initiatives on student results is difficult, if not impossible, to quantify in so short a timeframe. In a small number of cases, improved student outcomes are very clear and there is evidence that they have emerged directly from the pilot initiatives. In other schools, the pilot has been used to improve the whole-school teaching and learning focus, and to support delivery of other specific programs including those of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships. This has resulted in more difficult-to-measure outcomes.

Findings

Pilot schools built workforce capability and quality in teaching and learning

The authority of the pilot was used primarily to develop the capability of the teachers and to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Pilot schools also developed capability in school management and leadership, community engagement, professional development, strategic planning, and school administration. The majority of the pilot investment was in shaping new temporary roles in schools.

International research supports this approach. School-based management is most effective when used to drive improvement in teaching and learning, and hence to improve student outcomes.

A total of 289 temporary appointments were made in the pilot; 118 additional effective full time appointments were supported by pilot funding and 171 temporary appointments were made to unfilled establishment positions within the pilot schools. Hence, pilot schools used both pilot funding and to a larger extent, vacant existing school positions, to deliver the pilot initiatives.

There is an optimism about leading change in the pilot schools which is authentic. The experience of building teaching and learning capacity across schools and communities of

schools is a significant resource for the Department. The experience of pilot schools sends the clear message that school improvement can be driven from the front line and is achievable.

Parents and community were partners in the improvement of pilot schools

The engagement of pilot schools with parents, families and their local communities was highly successful. The development of the school-based management initiatives often involved parents and the community. Parents described a new participation in school planning and in debating the strategies that would support positive change and improve student outcomes. This engagement built social and human capital in communities.

Improving local relationships of trust and respect between communities and schools is a key way to develop social capital. Parents described the positive educational outcomes being achieved for their children and the increased satisfaction with pilot schools and teachers that developed from this success. In several cases parents and principals pointed to increased enrolments as a direct effect of improving community satisfaction with their school.

An outcome of parent and community participation in pilot schools was the development of human capital. There was a clear pattern in pilot schools of parents commencing as volunteer tutors or in other support roles, of building their profile and skills through this activity, and then becoming competitive for government employment, both within schools and in other agencies. In several communities, this pathway was described as important for Aboriginal people achieving employment.

Internationally, parent and community engagement in schooling is growing significantly. Community development has delivered new models of parent governance of schools in the United States and new education leadership opportunities have been created in the United Kingdom for parents and community members.

The pilot principals have valuable leadership experience in improving schools

The pilot provided greater authority to principals over the functions of recruitment, staffing and funding control which delivered more control over the mix and types of teaching and support roles available in their schools. In order to exercise these new functions, principals had to engage with a considerable amount of new information and learning. This means that their collective experience and skills in leading positive change have developed significantly.

Improving the culture of education leadership was also promoted in pilot schools. Principals accepted greater responsibility for local decision making, in return for increased accountability for improving student outcomes. Most principals described collaborative engagement with their staff in planning for pilot initiatives and in local decision making.

Driving the development of workforce capability in schools is challenging. Pilot principals appreciated the support they received from state office in developing flexible staffing proposals and implementing these in their schools. The complexity of the rules around staffing schools and human resource management was simplified in practice through the flexible decision making exercised by principals.

As a result of their experience, the principals of pilot schools have knowledge and skills that would be valuable in supporting any expansion of school-based management.

Pilot schools valued managing their whole-school budget

The identification of a notional whole-school budget for pilot schools required a sustained effort. Managing the school establishment and whole-school budgeting was brought together in pilot schools, and for the first time in NSW the whole budget was visible to schools. This opportunity was very well received by principals.

However, tied grants and program funding were not included in the whole-school budget of pilot schools as such funds are not tracked in one digital system. School establishment data was inconsistently maintained and there was an absence of links between human resource systems and finance systems at the beginning of the pilot. Manual processing steps initially impacted on financial reporting on school budget surplus and deficit, until data cleansing and effective work-arounds came into play. Finally, the ledger structure that creates the financial reporting for pilot schools was complex and did not always support easy management at the school level.

Principals propose that creating one virtual budget that includes all funding for a school would be a valuable addition to the pilot arrangements. They suggest that this be accompanied by the authority for local decision making on resource allocation to meet changing needs.

Without significant manual work-arounds, the Department's legacy systems are not sufficient for the level of business information provided to pilot schools to be continued or expanded at greater scale. The Department is developing new capacity through its Learning Management and Business Reform program which will address this need.

A longer term evaluation framework for tracking pilot school outcomes and evaluating outcomes in any expansion of school-based management would be valuable

The synthesis of international literature on school-based management indicates that articulating the objectives of increased local decision making *ahead of its expansion* should be accompanied by the longer term evaluation of results; for students, for affected schools and for like-schools, that are outside such arrangements. The period of the pilot (2010 and 2011) is too short to draw clear robust links between greater local decision making and widespread improved student outcomes. International research evidence demonstrates that such evaluation takes from five to eight years.

Chapter 1 Evaluation of the School-Based Management Pilot

1.1 Objectives of the evaluation

The evaluation considered the effectiveness and efficiency of the School-Based Management Pilot. The report documents the management of the pilot, and the experience of pilot operation and progress from the perspective of principals, school leaders, teachers, parents and key leaders in regional and state offices. Finally, the report makes evaluation findings to ensure 'the efficiency and effectiveness for a wider application of school-based management in NSW, including features of the pilot that may not be available or suitable for application across the whole system' as required by the terms of reference.

The pilot is an initiative of the Smarter Schools National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality. The pilot occurs in the policy context of *Leading and Managing the School: A statement of key accountabilities for principals in the effective management of NSW government schools* and the *Principals Leadership Capability Framework*.

There are forty-seven schools included in the School-Based Management Pilot as listed at Appendix One.

1.2 The School-Based Management Pilot in NSW

The pilot was variously known as the *School-Based Management Pilot* or the *47 Schools Pilot*. The term *School-Based Management Pilot* is used consistently in this report.

In late 2009 the Director-General of Education and Training announced approval of the School-Based Management Pilot which would increase recruitment, staffing and funding control in selected schools. This announcement was accompanied by a call for schools to nominate themselves for participation in the pilot. Some schools nominated themselves in discussion with their school education director (SED) and others were encouraged to nominate by either their SED or their regional director. A final list of participating schools was proposed by the Office of Schools and endorsed by the Director-General.

The pilot was originally intended to conclude in 2010 but was extended to the end of 2011.

Extensive training and development was a key feature of the implementation of the pilot, for principals, school administration staff and school executives. This training in financial management, human resource management and staffing occurred through 2010 and 2011.

There was also one-on-one support for principals and school staff, both in person and over the phone. This support initially included establishment data cleansing and improvement, developing school budget management capacity, developing proposals for pilot initiatives and negotiating the detail of these with the Staffing Services Directorate. There were also opportunities for all pilot principals to exchange knowledge with one another about needs and how these were being addressed by particular initiatives in other pilot schools. This approach allowed for sharing school improvement practice.

The training and one-on-one support was complemented by regular visits to all pilot schools by the Senior Manager, Schools Pilot. The Senior Manager's approach supported pilot participants to better align administrative functions (including budgeting, staffing, and curriculum framework) with real teaching and learning improvement, based on student assessment data, local school culture, and local community need.

The implementation of the pilot and its costs are canvassed in greater detail in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

1.3 Terms of reference

The terms of reference for the evaluation are:

1. Provide an overview of the School-Based Management Pilot in NSW and a broad comparative analysis of the arrangements in other jurisdictions.
2. Analyse the School-Based Management Pilot model in NSW, including the
 - a. initiatives and management of the pilot
 - b. suitability of the individual functions devolved to schools and those maintained centrally, taking account of external compliance issues and risk management
 - c. nature and extent of staff and community engagement with the pilot including analysis of the confidence of the school community in relation to more local decision making at their school
 - d. impact on the management of schools
 - e. impact on teaching and learning outcomes
 - f. impact of the funding model.
3. Consider improved arrangements to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness for a wider application of school-based management in NSW, including features of the pilot that may not be available or suitable for application across the whole system.

1.4 Governance and conduct of the evaluation

The evaluation had two levels of governance. It was overseen by the Deputy Director-General Schools, who chairs the Schools Program Oversight Group (SPOG), which has oversight of the pilot and responsibility for program direction, and risk and issue management. The pilot is managed by the Senior Manager, Schools Pilot, who reports to the Deputy Director-General, Schools.

A Program Evaluation Reference Group (PERG) provided advice on the direction of the evaluation, and ensures that the perspectives and needs of multiple stakeholders are represented and valued. The PERG comprises representatives of the NSW Primary Principals Association, the NSW Secondary Principals Council, NSW Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations, the Better Schools Program Office, Learning Management and Business Reform, as well as independent academic input.

1.5 Methodology of the evaluation

1.5.1 Methodology

The methodology of the evaluation adopted the approach for building grounded theory pioneered by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This method for collecting and analysing empirical data prescribes comparing all the data throughout the analytic process as the most effective way to knowledge. This constant comparative method is a procedure for interpreting empirical material effectively. It basically consists of four stages: comparing incidents

applicable in each category, integrating categories and their properties, delimiting the theory, and writing the theory. In this case, theory is the evaluation construct and findings.

The first step is data collection, through a variety of methods and assembled in a single data base. From the data collected, the key points are marked with a series of *codes* using Microsoft Excel. In this case, the codes were firstly the terms of reference and secondly the frequently appearing key words of respondents in each category, which are extracted from the text. The data collected amounts to more than 2800 segments of interview data and the total volume of data is around 50,000 words.

The constant comparative method is a process in which any newly collected data is compared with previous data that was collected. This is a continuous ongoing procedure, because the evaluation constructs are formed, enhanced, confirmed, or even discounted as a result of any new data that emerges during the study.

A mixed method approach for data gathering was utilised with qualitative methods predominating, especially interviews, group interviews and focus groups.

In June 2011, a data analysis plan was adopted for use in the evaluation. Significant amounts of financial and human resource data was presented to the evaluation team as a result of this plan. The material detailing the cost of the pilot has been utilised, as has the extensive material provided describing the school-based management initiatives.

Analysis of the financial data describing school budgets and bank balances demonstrated that the picture of school funding was incomplete. Available information was provided in a timely manner and in the prescribed form, but it does not represent the whole picture. Not all funding to pilot schools is able to be identified in real time as there is no single central process for allocating resources and there is no single digital record of program or tied grant funding to schools. Without certainty on the completeness of the financial picture, further analysis would have no integrity. Secondly, in the absence of the concept and the reality of an identifiable whole-school budget in non-pilot schools, there was no possibility of comparison between pilot schools and other schools or even a state average. The opportunity to undertake this analysis is not lost, records remain and it may well be that future evaluation might accommodate this analysis.

A comparison set of like-schools was identified in discussion with regions and it may be that this is a useful contributor to any longer term evaluation of results or outcomes that may be undertaken. This list is attached at Appendix Four.

Finally, it had been originally planned to conduct a concluding survey of principals to reflect on their experience through the whole pilot. This plan was overtaken by the *Independent Review of the School Based Management Pilot*, which conducted its own principal survey.

1.5.2 Collection of evidence

The table below illustrates the relationship between each of the terms of reference, the evaluation questions, evidence and methods.

Table 1: Evaluation methodology framework

Term of reference 1 - Provide an overview of the School-Based Management Pilot in NSW and a broad comparative analysis of the arrangements in other jurisdictions		
Evaluation questions	Evidence	Method
1.1 What is meant by school-based management?	Definition of school-based management as it applies to the pilot	Definition and scope of the program
1.2 What has been the experience of school-based management in other jurisdictions?	What has occurred in other jurisdictions in relation to school-based management?	Literature review
Term of reference 2 - Analyse the School-Based Management Pilot model in NSW, including the a. initiatives and management of the pilot b. suitability of the individual functions devolved to schools and those maintained centrally, taking account of external compliance issues and risk management c. nature and extent of staff and community engagement with the pilot including analysis of the confidence of the school community in relation to more local decision making at their school d. impact on the management of schools e. impact on teaching and learning outcomes f. impact of the funding model.		
Evaluation questions	Evidence	Method
2.1 What are the functions that have been devolved to schools in the pilot?	Proposals from each school	Review of proposals from each school (actual initiatives)
2.2 How appropriate have the devolved functions been?	Stakeholder views in schools, regions and state office	Interviews and group interviews with relevant school staff, regional directors, SEDs, and state office staff
2.3 What accountability, compliance and risk management issues have arisen in relation to the devolved functions?	Stakeholder views in schools, regions and state office	Interviews and group interviews with relevant school staff, regional directors, SEDs, and state office staff

2.4 To what extent and in what ways are the school-based decision making prerogatives of the pilot being used?	- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of pilot data: - the nature and usefulness in terms of educational improvement of the proposals and initiatives from schools (focus on staffing mix variation) - the scale and breakdown of the funding that has supported change - the source and destination of monies that enabled changes in the school(s) - the quantum of monies and staffing variations/recruitment applied to ensure change - the nature and extent of Staffing Services, Financial Services, and ITD Services support required, and the results produced as a result of the support - stakeholder views in schools, regions and state office about whether the school-based decision making prerogatives are being used effectively for staff, students and parents	- Forensic analysis guided by expert advice on appropriate methods which may include: - cost effectiveness analysis of pilot initiatives - business process analysis of whole-school budget management, school data cleansing activity - application of state office policy, and the nature and impact of learning and teaching (and related) improvements in the 47 schools - interviews and group interviews with relevant school staff, regional directors, SEDs, and state office staff
2.5 What has been the impact of the management and funding model of the pilot?	- Analysis of the introduction and management of the pilot - Analysis of whole-school budget management, the scale of pilot funding, and the initiatives supported with this funding - Stakeholder views in schools, regions and state office	- Process and financial analysis of the introduction and management of the pilot - Forensic analysis guided by expert advice on appropriate methods which may include cost effectiveness analysis of the funding model including additional funding, savings achieved, and results achieved - Interviews and group interviews with relevant school staff, regional directors, SEDs, and state office staff

2.6	Has the trial helped schools in the pilot better focus their effort?	Stakeholder views in schools, regions and state office	Surveys, Interviews, group interviews and focus groups with relevant school staff, parents, community members, students, regional directors, SEDs and state office staff
2.7	What new systems have been developed to support the trial and the 47 schools?	Stakeholder views in schools, regions and state office	Interviews and group interviews with relevant school staff, regional directors, SEDs, and state office staff
2.8	Has the trial highlighted possible improvements in DET administrative systems and procedures?	Stakeholder views in schools, regions and state office	Interviews and group interviews with relevant school staff, regional directors, SEDs, and state office staff
2.9	What impact has the trial had on student learning outcomes?	- Stakeholder views in schools, regions and state office - Relevant data	- Surveys, Interviews, group interviews and focus groups with relevant school staff, parents, community members, students, regional directors, SEDs and state office staff. - Analysis of relevant data
2.10	What has been the nature and extent of staff and community engagement with the pilot?	Stakeholder views in schools, regions and state office	Surveys, Interviews, group interviews and focus groups with relevant school staff, parents, community members, students, regional directors, SEDs and state office staff.
2.11	Has the confidence of the parent bodies and the school community perception of their school's value, grown as a result of their engagement in the pilot?	Stakeholder views in schools, regions and state office	- Surveys, Interviews, group interviews and focus groups with relevant school staff, parents, community members, local business - Analysis of relevant data

Term of reference 3 - Consider improved arrangements to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness for a wider application of school-based management in NSW, including features of the pilot that may not be available or suitable for application across the whole system.		
Evaluation questions	Evidence	Method
3.1 What features of the pilot are suitable for application across the whole system?	- Stakeholder views in schools, regions and state office - Relevant financial and human resource data	- Interviews, group interviews and focus groups with relevant school staff, parents, community members, students, regional directors, SEDs and state office staff - Analysis of relevant data
3.2 What features of the pilot are not available or suitable for application across the whole system?	- Stakeholder views in schools, regions and state office - Relevant financial and human resource data	- Interviews, group interviews and focus groups with relevant school staff, parents, community members, students, regional directors, SEDs and state office staff - Analysis of relevant data
3.3 What improvements can be made to the program?	- Stakeholder views in schools, regions and state office - Relevant financial and human resource data	- Interviews, group interviews and focus groups with relevant school staff, parents, community members, students, regional directors, SEDs and state office staff - Analysis of relevant data
3.4 What implications exist for wider application of school-based management across schools?	- Stakeholder views in schools, regions and state office - Relevant financial and human resource data	- Surveys, Interviews, group interviews and focus groups with relevant school staff, parents, community members, students, regional directors, SEDs and state office staff - Analysis of relevant data

1.5.3 Timeframe and sequencing of visits

The evaluation commenced in early 2010 with interviews with principals and school administration managers. Interviews were undertaken in two phases: March-November 2010 and December 2010-September 2011. The first phase of interviews were conducted using the initial interview instrument (see Appendix Two) and the second phase was undertaken using the second set of interview instruments (see Appendix Three).

All 47 schools in the pilot have been visited at least once and a number of schools have been visited more than once, particularly in those areas where a community of schools. In certain school visits in the second phase of data gathering, interviews also occurred with local Parents and Citizens representatives, school council representatives, school executive members, teachers, and students.

In addition, a range of interviews have been conducted with state office stakeholders including the Senior Manager, Schools Pilot, officers from Staffing Services Directorate, and officers from Financial Management, and a number of regional directors, school education directors and school development officers.

A full list of pilot schools and interview dates is at Appendix One.

1.5.4 Risks and issues

Four risks were identified in the risk identification and mitigation planning for the evaluation. The following table outlines this approach.

Table 2: Risk identification and mitigation

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation strategy
Industrial action in schools	Possible	Major	Accept the risk
Lack of maturity in implementation of some initiatives	Possible	Moderate	Greater depth of analysis of more mature initiatives and increased visits in semester two 2011
Changes in school personnel	Likely	Moderate	Accept the risk and undertake additional evaluation visits as needs are identified
Potential changes to commitment to the pilot	Unlikely	Minor	Accept the risk

The first and fourth identified risks were accepted. The second risk eventuated, and was accentuated by multiple initiatives over the period of the pilot. The proposed mitigation strategy was applied. The third risk also emerged and interviews will be conducted with all principals in schools where there has been a change of principal or an extended relieving arrangement.

1.5.5 Evaluation budget

The original evaluation scope had a projected budget of \$133,000 over both the 2009/10 and 2010/11 financial years including \$82,000 from the Pilot budget and \$51,000 from the Office of Schools (Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau). An additional \$40,000 from the Office of Schools (Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau) was budgeted for 2011/12 for preparation of the final report.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 What is school-based management and why adopt it?

The World Bank (2011) defines school-based management as a decentralisation of authority from central government to the school level. It aims to improve the delivery of education and its quality, by giving a voice and decision-making power to local stakeholders, and through this process it is argued that school-based management can improve education outcomes and community, family and school staff satisfaction. This study builds on and significantly expands earlier intensive work on school-based management (The World Bank, 2009 and 2007b).

The World Bank (2011) reports that the literature on school-based management contains four key ideas for improving local schools: increased choice and participation, a stronger role and voice for citizens, transparency of school performance, and strengthening the rewards for schools that deliver effective services.

Caldwell defines school-based management as ‘the systematic decentralisation to the school level of authority and responsibility to make decisions on significant matters related to school operations within a centrally determined framework of goals, policies, curriculum, standards and accountability (Caldwell, 2005, p. 1).’

In all places where school-based management has been implemented that there has been an increase in authority and responsibility at the school level (Caldwell, 2005, p. 2). Further, ‘centralisation is indicated when control, uniformity and efficiency are preferred, and decentralisation indicated when freedom, differentiation and responsiveness are preferred. The challenge is to achieve a balance of centralisation and decentralisation (Caldwell, 2005, p. 4).’

The World Bank (2011) proposes four models that account for where decision making authority is vested in school-based management:

- Administrative control – authority is devolved to the principal
- Professional control – authority is devolved to the teachers
- Community control – authority is devolved to parents or the community
- Balanced control – authority is balanced between parents and teachers.

Drawing on the experience of school-based management globally, the World Bank (2011, pp.129-130) outlines the key issues that they recommend be settled as part of any adoption of school-based management including:

- Specify what is meant by school-based management – the autonomy and accountability must be explicit, functions transferred clear and the person or entity to which they are transferred also transparent, along with a clear statement of resources and clarity about the model by which their expenditure will be decided
- Consider capacity issues – plans for developing the capacity of those managing these initiatives are essential
- Identify what is to be achieved and in what timeframe – the research evidence indicates that substantial improvements may take between five and eight years, it is important to frame expectations that are realistic

- Establish process, output and outcome goals – it is important to measure indicators before, during and after the initial stage of the implementation, to be able to measure impact
- Publish the detail of the planning steps necessary to achieve the goals – there are many combinations of components of school-based management and it is critical to be clear about what the chosen model will deliver in practice.

Decision making about the shape of the school-based management should be based on local evidence and an evaluation method should be chosen that is appropriate to the program, timeframe and resources.

The World Bank (2011) concludes that most countries whose students perform well give schools substantial authority to shape local education provision and decide the allocation and management of resources.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) examines what makes schools successful and provides findings on school-based management for the first time in a volume on cross-country analysis (OECD, 2010). In PISA in 2009, principals were asked where responsibility for allocation of school resources, curriculum and student assessment was located, and the OECD created two composite indices from this information: the index of school responsibility for resource allocation and the index of school responsibility for curriculum and assessment (OECD, 2010, p. 68).

The OECD finds that the prevalence of school autonomy to decide curricula and assessment relates positively to the performance of school systems, particularly performance at the higher levels of reading (OECD, 2010, p. 41). In contrast, greater responsibility in managing resources alone appears to be unrelated to a school system's overall student performance (ibid.). They find that a student who attends a school with above average autonomy scores 2.6 points higher in reading than a student attending a school with an average level of autonomy, where all schools in a system post achievement data publicly (OECD, 2010, p. 41).

The OECD (2010, p. 105) finds that the issues of autonomy, evaluation, governance and choice interact to constitute a framework in which schools experience the incentives and capacity to improve. Schools in education systems that have greater autonomy over curriculum and assessment tend to have better performing students and where 'schools are held to account for their results by publishing achievement data' and where they have greater autonomy in resource allocation - schools perform better than those with less autonomy (ibid.). This particular form of accountability through publishing results is a relatively weak measure, particularly if such transparency is not part of a comparable national reporting system.

In countries where achievement data is not published, but there is local accountability for resource allocation, schools generally perform worse. While some features of autonomy and accountability are associated with better performance, this association is variable (OECD, 2010, p. 105). In particular, the combination of local accountability (publishing results) and transparency appear to produce positive results, rather than either policy element in isolation (OECD, 2010, p. 106).

The OECD recommends that countries develop a framework of accountability and autonomy that aims to improve student and school outcomes (OECD, 2010, p. 106).

In a working paper on improving school performance in Australia the OECD argues that adopting less centralised management of schools is indispensable to increasing school autonomy and choice (OECD, 2009). The OECD argues that school principals should be given autonomy in recruiting and rewarding teaching staff in order to attract and keep experienced

teachers. Changes to the system of teacher career progression are promoted, as the current system caps salaries nine years after graduation in the public sector. Further, it is recommended that teacher remuneration systems should create appropriate incentives to move teachers to where they are needed most. It is argued that these measure would help to keep the best teachers in schools and thereby support improving quality (OECD, 2009).

They argue that a marked shift of enrolment from the government to the non-government school sector shows that parents and students are willing to exercise choice, but that competition among schools is still limited. However, in separate research, the OECD also acknowledges that countries that operate systems in which schools compete for students, do not necessarily experience schools performing better (OECD, 2010, p. 106).

McKinsey & Company (2010) have examined how the world's best performing school systems keep improving. They place Australia among the group of good schooling systems that are challenged to become great. They argue that increased school-based decision making is critical to achieving this improvement. Two key areas are identified for moving from good to great for Australia: self-evaluation in schools nurtured by schooling systems, particularly through making performance data more available, and providing schools with the flexibility to pursue specialised programs appropriate to their students through increasing local decision making on pedagogy.

2.2 Evaluating school-based management

Meta analysis of research in Australia and four international studies led Caldwell (2007, p. 30) to conclude that school-based management will deliver 'no impact on learning unless purposeful links are made at the student and classroom level.'

De Grauwe (2005) (quoting Caldwell, 1998, p.14) notes that 'the evidence of direct cause and effect relationship between school-based management and improved outcomes is minimal.' De Grauwe notes that various factors are known to influence student outcomes including the quality of school leadership and teaching. To have any chance of improving outcomes school-based management must include capacity building within a school.

De Grauwe (2005) uses this idea to argue for equitable and flexible school capacity building and school-based management policy that treat higher and lower performing schools differently in terms of the amount of devolved authority they receive and the extent and nature of capacity building support they may need to achieve quality improvement.

Evaluation of school-based management can directly assess impact, determine how outcomes are affected, and inform policy on improving programs (The World Bank, 2007a, p. 2). Successful impact evaluation requires three elements: definition of the intervention and a stating of objectives, target population and implementation detail; detailed data over an appropriate time-frame that measures the response of students, teachers, school leaders and schools; and counterfactual comparison to identify what happens for those without the intervention (ibid.).

Process outcomes are also useful for identifying whether autonomous schools exercise greater authority over their own management than non-autonomous schools and informing whether, and the extent to which, reform has touched teaching and operation (The World Bank, 2007a, p. 9). Overall, it is desirable to select for each treated school a non-treated school which is most similar in terms of observable characteristics. These schools can constitute a comparison group (The World Bank, 2007a, p. 22).

Significantly, qualitative methods allow in-depth study of selected issues, cases, or events and can provide critical insights into perspectives, the dynamics of reform, and the reasons behind

results. Combining methods is a useful vehicle for meeting a program's information needs (The World Bank, 2007a, p. 34).

School-based management was found to offer significant opportunity for mixed-method evaluation including the analysis of the context in which reform was introduced, the decision making dynamics in each school, and the perspective of different actors on the autonomy process. This provides rich evidence of highly variable local contexts in which programs are being implemented. (The World Bank, 2007a, p. 35).

Finally, the report provides a list of key issues that evaluation of school-based management should address:

- Allow longer time frames as effects differ in the short and long term, it can take five years before a successful school-based management program can achieve results in student learning outcomes (Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown, 2003, quoted in The World Bank, 2007a). New evaluations need to follow a cohort of students over several years in autonomous and comparable schools. Evaluations must also collect information on changes in school organisation and climate over the same period (The World Bank, 2007a, p. 38).
- Explain the mechanisms by which increased autonomy affects education
- Identify implementation and management costs of school-based management
- Consider if school-based management increases schooling inequalities
- Aim to produce research that delivers empirical credibility to school-based management (The World Bank, 2007a, p. 39).

Qualitative evaluation is critical to ensure context, culture and the relationships between teaching and learning changes and local decision making are understood (The World Bank, 2007a, p. 40).

The OECD (2011) also offers advice on school-based management evaluation. They argue that creating more effective links between national student assessment data, school evaluation and teacher performance is critical. This includes examining the relationships between career structures for teachers and teaching standards. In addition, externally validated school evaluations are one useful component of the data required for school improvement.

2.3 School-based management globally

2.3.1 Charter schools and pilot schools in the United States of America

The charter school movement emerged as an idea of Ray Budde in 1974 and was first implemented in legislation by the state legislatures of Minnesota in 1991 and California in 1992 (Kolderie, 2005).

Charter schools are created and provide free school education to eligible students under a specific contract or charter granted by a state legislature or other authoriser. The charter also exempts these schools from certain state and local rules. Charter schools are governed by a local group or larger organisation, some are for-profit, and many have entry determined by lottery as a result of over subscription of demand (Department of Education (USA), 2011). Charter schools receive government funding and have varying degrees of autonomy from local education bureaucracies, this autonomy differs from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

In the 20 years to 2011, 5000 charter schools have been established in 40 states. Despite this growth, there is little research on how these schools operate and how they impact on student

learning, particularly for the 61% of charter school students from minority backgrounds and 49% from financially disadvantaged backgrounds (Gross, 2011, p.16). An emerging view is that charter school organisation, curriculum and classroom practice looks very similar to traditional public schools (Gross, 2011, p.16). 729 charter schools were managed by for-profit organisations, and 813 were managed by non-profit or community based organisations in 2009/10 (Bulkley, 2010).

The growth of independent schools, including charter schools, constitute a priority for the Obama Administration in the *Race to the Top* education initiatives and are an important part of extending schooling to those in greatest need (Gross, 2011). A significant continuing focus for many charter schools is educating students from backgrounds of disadvantage. In 2008/09, more than 30% of charter school students and 19% of traditional public school students came from backgrounds of high poverty, defined as more than 75% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (Department of Education (USA), 2011, p. 24).

In some states, including Massachusetts, pilot schools have been created, these schools are free to determine their own budgets, staffing, curricula and scheduling but remain part of the local school district and remain subject to collectively-bargained pay scales and seniority protections. These schools are viewed as a middle ground between public schools and charter schools (Boston Foundation, 2009).

Charter schools are the major form of school-based management in the United States of America and have grown rapidly. In 2009, there were 4,600 charter schools in 40 states and the District of Columbia. These schools had enrolments of more than 1.4 million students and waiting lists of more than 365,000 potential students. State imposed caps on the growth and number of charter schools exist in 26 states and the District of Columbia (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2009).

62% of public charter school students are 'non-white' and 48% of students come from backgrounds of disadvantage compared to 45% non-white and 45% from backgrounds of disadvantage in all public schools (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2009). In 2009, charter schools students were 28.5% white, 29.7% black, 24.6% Hispanic and 3.9% Asian (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2009). Finally, in 2009, 90% of charter schools were start ups that had been created as independent self-managing schools and only 10% were conversions from previous public schools (ibid.).

In 2010, 2% of charter schools were virtual schools that offered their instruction over the internet and are free of brick and mortar locations and physical attendance requirements for students. In 2003, there were 60 cyber charter schools in 13 states and this had grown to 195 schools in 26 states with 105,000 students (Brady, Umpstead, & Eckes, 2010). The major positives identified for virtual charter schools include expanded access to education, provision of significantly increased curricula choices and significantly increased access to technology, which is often provided free to students to facilitate their participation.

Lake, Dusseault, Bowen, Demeritt, & Hill (2010) report on their national study of charter management organisations in the USA. These organisations are non-profit entities that manage public K-12 charter schools. Charter schools are argued to receive less funding than regular public schools, despite having unique start up costs from acquisition of land, buildings and capital equipment. Charter management organisations developed as a mechanism to deliver economies of scale through managing a number of schools together. Major philanthropic organisations and several wealthy individuals have invested more than US\$500 million in charter school management in the decade to 2009 (Lake & others, 2010, p. 3). The US Education Secretary has called for greater replication of charter schools by charter management organisations (ibid.).

Charter management organisation (CMO) schools are concentrated in nine states and the District of Columbia and are particularly concentrated in big cities, including Los Angeles, New York, New Orleans, Chicago, Washington DC and Houston. The charter schools operated by CMOs serve primarily low-income and minority populations similar to the surrounding public school districts. CMOs offer longer school days than traditional public schools, 7.4 hours compared to 6.2, and they place primary responsibility for student achievement on teachers, whose performance is individually rewarded. In some cases, including in New York, CMOs are partners in school district wide improvement strategies.

CMOs have struggled to attain financial independence and philanthropic support accounts for 13% of operating budgets in 17 CMOs. The possibility that CMOs might dominate local education provision and crowd out existing stand alone charter schools is a concern expressed by some (Lake & others, 2010, p. 6).

A major national study of the student achievement and other results of CMO charter schools is forthcoming from the National Charter School Research Project.

2.3.2 The Academies programme and Free schools in the United Kingdom

Academies are publically funded schools, that are independent from local education authorities and Department for Education control, including being allowed to waive the national curriculum. Three academies commenced in 2002 as joint ventures between private organisations and government, which together provided capital for buildings and facilities, while government funded the delivery of education (Machin & Wilson, 2005). Academies were originally focussed on improving schooling in disadvantaged areas with historic under-performance of students. Curtis, Exley, Sasia, Tough & Whitty (2008, p. 6) found that many early academies had demonstrated 'visionary leadership in innovation and pedagogy' and found that as academies paid between £18,000 and £32,000 more to principals each year than traditional government supported schools, there was a real possibility of a drain of the most talented head teachers to academies.

In May 2010, all schools became eligible to convert to academy status and these fell into two broad groups: *sponsored academies* that were established to address under performance in areas of disadvantage and *converter academies* which were created from existing schools of various types.

Many outstanding schools were among the first approved for conversion and from May 2011 existing schools that convert receive an added resource incentive, an estimated 10% boost to their funding, which is the funding that had previously been provided to the local education authority to support that school (Wilby, 2011).

In January 2011, there were 407 academies; 272 sponsored and 136 converters (Committee of Public Accounts, 2011). By 5 September 2011, there were 1,300 academies in the UK and this number is growing by at least one per day (Department for Education, 2011a). By May 2012, one third of all secondary schools in the UK will be academies (Wilby, 2011).

Free schools are non-profit making, independent, state-funded schools that are established through the proposals of parents, teachers, charities, universities, businesses, or educational groups. The first 12 free schools opened in September 2011 (Department for Education, 2011b).

The Secretary of State for Education articulates the key driver of this expansion; 'we want a school system in which teachers have more power and in which they are more accountable to parents' and that 'as the OECD argues "countries where schools have greater autonomy over what is taught and how students are assessed, students tend to perform better" (Department for Education, 2011c).'

Of the 629 academies operating at March 2011, 91 are faith-designated academies, 52 replace faith-based predecessor schools, and the balance are new schools. In addition, 14 free schools have been approved that are faith-based (Department for Education, 2011d).

Many not-for-profit organisations own and operate academies and free schools. A leading not-for-profit education provider, E-Act, currently has 11 academies and intends to have 250 within five years, which is of a scale that would make it larger than all but 16 local education authorities (Wilby, 2011).

Profit making companies are not permitted to own state funded schools in the UK. They may however, manage particular services (school financial management, information technology support), operate academies, and even operate education authorities (Wilby, 2011). The demand for such private sector support arises through groups of local citizens without previous education expertise sponsoring free schools or promoting the need for academies.

Bald, Harber, Robinson, & Schiff (2010), writing for the Policy Exchange, have highlighted what they argue is an emerging risk of extremist political and religious thought being promoted within academies and free schools in the UK. The Secretary of State for Education has responded to these perceived threats, establishing a new due diligence team within the Department for Education 'who will rigorously police any application for public money, including free school applications....we will reject any proposers who advocate violence, intolerance, or hatred, or whose ideology runs counter to the UK's democratic values (Department for Education, 2011c)'.

2.3.3 School-based management in Sweden

Swedish free schools were established in the early 1990s, when the government opened up the public school system to non-public actors. Similar to municipal schools, Swedish Free schools are free of charge, provide school health care, provide mother tongue tuition and are controlled by national and regional school inspectorates (Wiborg, 2010, p. 10). Although free schools need not follow the national curriculum, the education they provide must develop comparable skills and knowledge and comply with the general objectives and values of the national curriculum. (Wiborg, 2010, p. 10).

Unlike municipal schools, Swedish free schools take various forms, from small parental cooperatives, to schools with a particular educational approach or subject specialisation, to schools which are run by large for-profit education companies. (Wiborg, 2010, p. 11). By the late 1990s, the majority of free schools had adopted a generalist educational approach, and the fastest growing type of private schools were not the parentally promoted schools, but the for-profit schools run by private companies.

In the twenty years from 1980 to 2001, Blossing & Ekholm (2008) studied the effects of the decentralisation of authority and decision making over school budgets from central policy makers to the local municipalities and local principals, teachers and students in 35 Swedish comprehensive schools (*grundskola*) which students attend from ages 7 to 16.

The changes observed include an increased consultation with teachers on school management, increased team work among teachers, school evaluation based both on student achievement and teacher assessment, and significant student democracy. The authors do not describe parents or community members (other than local municipality politicians) as participants in school decision making.

Swedish companies are significant education providers and operators of free schools. One provider, IES, runs 23 state funded free schools, and is positioning itself to enter the UK market

to take advantage of the opportunities arising from the expansion of the Academies Programme and the emergence of Free schools.

Wilby (2011) notes that between 1995 and 2007, the period of significant expansion of free schools in Sweden, the PISA maths and science scores fell by 48% and 42% respectively in that country.

2.3.4 School-based management in the balance of the European Union

Eurydice (2007) has reviewed two decades of school autonomy policy in Europe. They map the relative position of each country on a number of measures and reveal a diversity of policy and local management characteristics, with evolution over time, and significant differences between countries. Spain, France and the United Kingdom began school-based management reforms in the 1980's and Germany and Luxembourg are implementing them at present. Different objectives have been served with school autonomy including improving school and local democracy and improving the quality of education.

2.4 Evaluation of school-based management: what does it achieve?

2.4.1 Meta-analysis and evaluation

The World Bank (2011, p.102) has found that school-based management is a key education policy feature in many countries, including those with high, medium and low incomes but that the volume of 'carefully documented, rigorous impact evaluations' is small compared to the very large number of school-based management programs around the world. They report extensive studies on the effect of school-based management on changes in the dynamics of schools, the involvement of parents and the effect of this on teacher actions, and positive effects on repetition rates, failure rates, and dropout rates. They have found a mixed result for effects on student achievement results.

It is argued that timing of evaluation is significant. The World Bank (2011, p. 99) report on meta-analysis of more than 232 studies, 1000 observations and 29 programs found that school-based management takes up to five years to produce fundamental changes at the school level and about eight years to improve student assessment results.

The World Bank (2007a) provides a detailed, technical guide to impact evaluation in school-based management.

2.4.2 Charter school evaluation

The 2009 evaluation of charter school performance in 16 states by Raymond (2009), published by the Centre for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University, reflects a research partnership with the participating states. This research is the first significant national evaluation of charter school performance in the USA. It comprises a longitudinal student-level analysis of charter school impacts for more than 70% of charter school students.

The methodology of this study involved creating a virtual twin for 84% of charter school students matched on demographics, English language proficiency, and participation in special education programs or subsidised lunch programs. Student learning improvement was assessed in three ways including national charter school impacts, a local analysis of charter school results (by state), and examination of the performance of charter schools compared to local traditional public schools. Ultimately, the methodology graphs a point in time quality curve that relates average student achievement growth in each charter school to the performance that would have been realised in traditional public schools by the virtual twin student. Raymond (2009) notes that the focus on student learning gains as the sole measure of charter school and student

performance leaves other influences unexplored including school curricular, location, size, safety and culture.

The results of this study indicated that in 2043 charter schools, 37% of charter schools posted gains significantly below what students would have achieved had they remained in traditional public schools, 46% of schools had gains indistinguishable from average growth in comparison schools, and only 17% of charter schools experienced student achievement growth significantly greater than what students would have achieved they had remained in traditional public schools (Raymond, 2009).

Black and Hispanic students were found to have significantly worse results, but charter schools have better academic growth results for students from relatively poor backgrounds and those learning English. Students in special education programs have the same outcomes (Raymond, 2009). Finally, students do better in charter schools over time. First year charter students do worse, but students in their second and third years in charter schools see significant positive achievement gains.

There has been methodological criticism of this work, that now appears to have receded. The results vary significantly from state to state and between policy environments, with much more positive and much more negative results being reported for individual jurisdictions in particular domains.

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2010) have assessed performance of charter schools in a different manner. Reflecting the statutory obligation for all schools to demonstrate adequate yearly progress under the terms of the *No Child Left Behind Act (2000)*, they have found that in 2007/08, 39% of charter schools did not achieve this benchmark.

A major evaluation examined the achievement of 93% of charter school students in New York utilised a methodology based on the use of lotteries to fill school places (Hoxby, Murarka, & Kang, 2009). Each New York charter school is required to hold a lottery whenever applicants for enrolment in that school exceed places. Hence, more than 94% of charter school places in New York are filled by lottery. The evaluation method used random allocation of students into two cohorts, those students that were successful in the lottery and moved to a charter school, and those that were not and remained in public schools.

Hoxby & others (2009) found that charter school applicants were much more likely to be black, much less likely to be Asian, and much more likely to be poor than the average student in traditional New York public schools. On average a student who attended a charter school from kindergarten through to grade 8 would close 86% of the achievement gap in maths and 66% of the achievement gap in English. By comparison, those students who were unsuccessful in the admission lottery, stayed in the same class and the same public schools did not close the achievement gap by much, but did improve their performance and achieved results that were better than the norm across the USA (Hoxby & others, 2009, p. viii).

Hoxby & others (2009) also found that certain policies of charter schools had associations with better effects on achievement including a longer school year, more time devoted to English each day, a small rewards and small penalty discipline policy, teacher pay based somewhat on performance, and a mission statement that emphasises academic performance.

The Boston Foundation (2009) found large positive effects for charter schools at the middle and high school levels; for each year of attendance in a charter school, student achievement rose by 0.09 to 0.17 standard deviations in English and 0.18 to 0.54 standard deviations in maths relative to those attending traditional public schools in Boston. These significant results are put into a different perspective by the observation that a 0.5 standard deviation is half the black –

white achievement gap in these schools. The results for pilot schools were ambiguous and not as positive.

The issue of charter school performance, compared to that of traditional public schools, is the subject of significant political debate in the USA. Joel Klein, who for eight years ran the school education system in New York state, is an advocate of both reform of teaching and of charter schools. He cites the example of a New York charter school, Harlem Success Academy (Klein, 2011). This school randomly selects students by lottery, and they are from largely poor and minority backgrounds. 88% of its students are proficient in reading and 95% are proficient in maths, compared to six local traditional public schools for whom only 31% of students are proficient in reading and 39% proficient in maths. Klein argues that Harlem Success performs at the same level as New York's gifted-and-talented schools.

Klein argues that a key factor in the success of charter schools is the freedom from local education district control, and more controversially, freedom from the influence of teacher unions whom he argues act to protect the interests of teachers and not the needs of students. He argues for three essential reform elements: rebuilding the K-12 education system on a platform of accountability, attracting more graduates into teaching and using technology differently to support learning.

Shatkin & Gershberg (2007) used a case study method to study the effects of school-based councils and the participation of parents and community members in school leadership. They argue that the growth of such accountability is one of the forms of school-based management. They explored particularly the governance and accountability impacts of parents in education leadership and the flow on effects on local community development. Their study schools were located in Texas, Chicago, Hawaii and Kentucky.

Chicago in particular provided significant authority to parents and community members through school councils that were elected by the community and included six parents, two community members, two teachers, one student (in the case of high schools) and the principal. In the first school council elections in Chicago in 1989, 313,000 people voted for 17,000 candidates for 5,420 council positions in 542 schools.

In Hawaii, the emergence of charter schools was found to be a direct result of dissatisfaction of parents and community members with the existing roles and authority available to them as participants in school councils. This led to new advocacy around developing charter schools.

Shatkin & Gershberg (2007) found that local community development provides leadership experiences for parents that sometimes opens up employment in classroom support, teaching and in community development organisations. Similarly, new policy directions decided by school councils have delivered additional services within schools and have flow on impacts in communities through increasing health care access and literacy assistance. New initiatives included English language tuition for adults, family resource centres, youth centres and parent networking centres co-located in schools.

In some schools, with principals with a collaborative style and evident social capital in the local community, parent participation in governance that led to improvement in schools which in turn improved community-school relations. These positive forces were found to contribute to increased social capital in the broader community (Shatkin & Gershberg, 2007).

In Texas, a more explicitly community development focussed model was used in local governance and school-based management. In that case non-government organisations worked with local communities to identify potential leaders. These leaders then held local meetings to broaden dialogue and knowledge on educational issues. This introduction led to parent academies in which parents were educated on the social, economic and political issues

impacting on improving educational outcomes. Finally, accountability sessions were held in which local politicians and school leaders listened and responded to parent needs and concerns (Shatkin & Gershberg, 2007).

Shatkin & Gershberg argue that these experiences with local school councils have delivered 'new education and extra-curricular programs, enhanced social service delivery, leadership development, and enhanced mutual trust, understanding and obligation among school communities (2007, p. 610).' Critically, parent involvement was found to begin with passive collaboration and is argued to grow into parent participation which includes a strong and active role for parents and other community members in decision making (Shatkin & Gershberg, 2007, p. 590).

2.4.3 The Academies programme evaluation

The UK Committee of Public Accounts has found that the Academies programme has achieved significant success (Committee of Public Accounts, 2011). Most sponsored academies have seen increases in student achievement compared with their predecessor schools, and these results are improving at a faster rate in academies than in comparable public schools with similar intakes (Committee of Public Accounts, 2011, p. 7).

In 2010, the UK National Audit Office (NAO) found that most academies were achieving increases in academic attainment for their pupils compared with predecessor schools. The NAO summarises findings from the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills on performance of early academies and concluded that 67% of academies were outstanding or good in overall effectiveness, which is significantly higher than either schools with similar intakes or later academies. The NAO found that all academies had achieved rapid improvements in student attendance, and that high initial rates of student absenteeism had declined at a faster rate than schools with similar intakes.

The NAO made a number of recommendations for the future of academies. Two in particular seem to be immediately relevant; in order to facilitate value for money assessments, it was recommended that government clearly articulate performance expectations for schools that had decentralised local decision making, and that it was necessary to develop standards to measure local academy governance arrangements, in the same way as financial management or staff performance can be assessed (NAO, 2010).

Allen (2010) has examined how the challenges of non-random allocation of students between a sample of academies and traditional government schools with similar intakes can be overcome in the evaluation of relative results between the two systems. She has concluded that there is little evidence that academies and their students are outperforming traditional government schools. She cautions that her findings do not necessarily extend to academies more widely.

The predecessor to the current UK Department for Education commissioned a five year evaluation of academies in 2003. In this evaluation, PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) found that there was an overall positive trend in student achievement in academies. Many academies were performing better than the national average, despite variation across the cohort and a lower level of prior achievement for students (PWC, 2008, p.8). The notion of an academy effect being responsible for bringing about change was rejected, and PWC argued that mutual learning and sharing across academies would support a more consistent pattern of achievement.

The contribution of sponsors who have supported the start up of some early academies (up to a ceiling of £2 million) was highly valued and the personal connections of sponsors, including business or personal associates, or the employees of their companies, was also a significant positive factor.

Up to 30% of principals were judged to be outstanding and generally principals were seen to be visible in the academies, interested in the pupils and active in dealing with poor staff

performance (PWC, 2008, p.13). Finally, the quality of teaching was found to be variable, and there was an ongoing issue in increasing the rating of lessons to either good or outstanding.

2.5 Australia

2.5.1 Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

The ACT has had a policy of school-based management since 1976 and this was extended to include whole budget management responsibility and facilities management in 1997. The terrain includes shared decision making between principals and the Department of Education for the teaching and learning domain; centrally administered staffing formulas but with principal autonomy over staff numbers, composition and classification level; central curriculum guidelines for primary and secondary but autonomy for upper secondary curriculum is devolved to individual colleges; global school budget and principal responsibility for management of finances and facilities.

Watson (2004) evaluated school-based management in the ACT and found that it was a 'valuable extension to those school decision-making responsibilities upon which the ACT education system is founded.'

Caldwell (2007, p. 54) reports the view of some ACT principals that because of the small size of the Territory, it can feel like the Department is closely scrutinising schools, without being closely supported. Both principals and the Department emphasised that larger schools with more experienced principals wanted more autonomy and required less support, while principals of smaller schools with less experienced principals were much more likely to require support with issues like facilities management. Principals identified the need for better support for aspiring principals and for a more coherent and comprehensive principal training practice.

Allen Consulting Group also evaluated school-based management in the ACT. Their key findings included the view that:

'the flexibility in financial and human resource management afforded schools under school-based management is considered an important strength that must be retained over the longer term. Moreover, the direct linkages between schools and the community that school-based management brings, primarily through the functions of school boards, is considered to be an aspect of the model that is worth preserving and strengthening (2009, p. v).'

2.5.2 New South Wales (NSW)

Gamage reports that the discussion of school-based management began in NSW in 1973 with a discussion paper on *The Community and its Schools* which proposed the establishment of school boards in some schools and was followed by a second attempt to establish school boards in 1983; both initiatives were opposed by the NSW Teachers Federation (1996, p. 127). The third attempt to introduce school councils occurred from 1990. This project was successful in introducing schools councils as voluntary policy initiatives, but little real decision making authority was given to these councils (Gamage, 1996, p. 132).

Caldwell (2007, pp. 56-65) reports that NSW has a centralised curriculum and that schools have some authority in how students are grouped together for teaching and learning; decisions on the mix and remuneration of staff are made centrally; the levels of funds provided to schools are determined centrally and the Department provides 'constraints' on how tied funds may be spent.

Since 2009, NSW has undertaken a School-Based Management Pilot. The Minister for Education has recently announced a consultation on empowering local public schools: 'we made an election commitment to move more decision making to schools and local communities. For too long public schools have had their capacity to adapt to meet the needs of their students

stymied by bureaucratic red tape and overcentralised command and control (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2011).’

2.5.3 Northern Territory (NT)

Caldwell (2007, pp. 66-71) reports that there was discrepancy between the views of the Department in the NT and those of principals. He argues that this is partly explained by the small NT population and the sparsely populated but large land area which means that the majority of schools are very remote from the centralised oversight and control. Despite these views, there was agreement that the frameworks for teaching and learning were established centrally but that principals believed they had significant local authority to decide implementation.

The Department employs teaching staff in the NT and teachers are placed in schools based on the needs expressed by principals, while local school councils employ non-teaching staff. There was consensus that the curriculum was established centrally as was education planning.

There are relatively large numbers of principals in the NT on four year contracts, and non-renewal of contracts was found to be more prevalent than in other jurisdictions. All teacher and principal positions are advertised nationally.

2.5.4 Queensland

Caldwell (2007, pp. 73-80) reports that school-based, state and district officers all have some input into which resources are provided to schools and how they are spent and that the level of resourcing varies depending on student needs. Principals in Queensland exercise significant autonomy on teacher appointment and transfer and school staff members and parents are involved in principal selections.

There is a mixed picture around choice of school and availability of places for enrolment including a limited capacity for parents to enrol their children out of area (all local students must be serviced first), certain students may be excluded from enrolment and children with special needs may be directed to larger or better resourced schools. Principals would like to have greater authority over the allocation of their budgets, and discretion exists only around non-labour components.

De Grauwe (2005) has categorised school-based management changes in Queensland as changes to the structure of the education bureaucracy to project less control over schools, and provide more support, and to reduce the distance between the school and the local support office. This was effected through moving from a regional to a district structure.

Cranston (2002) found that in response to school-based management in Queensland, six principals of primary schools had to develop new skills including: strategic leadership and management skills; increased knowledge of national development and research in educational improvement; knowledge of organisational and culture change from domains broader than education; increased capacity to lead through issues and times of uncertainty; and interpersonal skills including supporting teachers, staff, parents and community members to understand new developments in education and in managing local schools.

Cranston (2002, p. 6) finds that the roles required of principals ‘ebbed and flowed’ largely through external influences and included the need for transformational leadership and at times a requirement for more focussed management. Over time the language of school-based management faded as the day to day business of the school took precedence and the school returned to a greater focus on meeting the needs of students using increased local decision making. Cranston argues that as the role of principals change, the associated learning, development and support for principals might also need to change to ensure that the support

and performance framework within which schools operate supports system policy and responsive local learning and teaching.

Nobbs (2006) doctoral research examined the relationship between school-based management, student assessment and school outcomes in Queensland. He synthesises success criteria that should be used in any expansion of school-based management including rigorous judgements on school readiness to take on school-based management, an implementation process that builds school capacity, and the development of knowledge sharing that allow schools to learn from others.

The Queensland government have not foreshadowed any expansion of earlier school-based management in their newly released white paper on education reform (Department of Education and Training (Qld), 2011).

2.5.5 South Australia (SA)

Caldwell (2007, pp. 81-88) reports that SA establishes central guidelines for teaching and learning, including hours of tuition for particular curriculum areas, allocates resources to schools at the state level, and prescribes how these resources are to be spent. The curriculum is established centrally. School funding is based on student enrolment and some funds provided are tied to specific activities.

2.5.6 Tasmania

Caldwell (2007, pp. 89-93) reports shared responsibility for teaching and learning decision making between the Department and principals with some divergence of views about who could make which decisions. The condition of employment and remuneration levels were centrally established with principals having some authority for employing short-term staff. Not surprisingly, there was also a difference of opinion as to the authority various actors played in establishing the curriculum and in educational planning, but there was agreement that the centre has a significant role. There was consensus that the state had the authority for allocation of resources and capital works to schools.

2.5.7 Victoria

Caldwell (2007, pp. 94-102) reports that Victoria has the highest level of autonomy of school in any Australian state or territory. Significant authority for deciding classrooms pedagogy residing with principals in Victoria, within the context of a centrally prescribed learning standards framework. Schools are responsible for the selection, number and professional mix of staff, within the limitation of the budget, and schools have complete authority over the employment of short-term staff. Principals are responsible for allocation of 94% of a schools budget. Principals may recommend the dismissal of staff to the centre, and usually the regional director makes a decision on such recommendations. There was some disagreement among respondents about the adequacy of applicants for the principalship.

Primary principals believed there was little evidence of a relationship between autonomy and learning outcomes but that staff selection was beneficial. Secondary principals felt that poor facilities were limiting the introduction of curriculum and pedagogy for the 21st Century.

2.5.8 Western Australia (WA)

Caldwell (2007, pp. 103-108) reports that there was strong central control of major elements of teaching and learning but that there was local decision making about learning resources and classroom pedagogy. There was a variable picture about local selection of staff, there had been greater local selection but this had been rescinded as there was a statewide teacher shortage at that time. Those in Perth were strongly in favour of local selection, but those in rural and remote areas found that their schools had difficulty attracting and retaining teachers. Levels of remuneration and conditions of service were established centrally and staff are public servants.

The school curriculum was centrally determined with some local authority for subjects and pedagogy selection by schools however, in Yr 11 and Yr 12 there was much less choice about curriculum. Funding and facilities management was largely centrally controlled.

In 2009, the WA education minister announced that a group of 34 government schools would be 'empowered with greater freedom to make decisions best suited to the needs of their students and local communities' and would be known as independent government schools (Lampathakis, 2009).

These schools have greater budgetary control, are able to award contracts and sell individual assets valued up to \$150,000 and award and vary contracts up to that value, select their own staff, exercise more flexibility in relation to curriculum (including offering the International Baccalaureate) and they may expel students, without needing central approval. These independent government schools continue to be bound by existing industrial agreements, apply the same fees and charges, and are bound by the *Education Act* in the roles, functions and liabilities of school councils (Department of Education (WA), 2011a).

There are now 207 independent government schools in WA schools (Department of Education (WA), 2011b).

2.5.9 Catholic schools

Caldwell (2007, pp. 109-117) reports that in addition to state and territory policy framing decision making, Catholic schools also have a Catholic Education Commission in every state and territory and a diocesan education office for each local region. This means that there are multiple impacts on decision making and the potential for 32 sets of decision making frameworks for the 32 Australian dioceses. Despite these layers of administration, Catholic schools operate on the principle of subsidiarity that requires decision making to occur as close as possible to the people affected.

The majority of teaching and learning decisions are made at the school level, but within a number of frameworks. There is significant variation between dioceses around teacher employment and remuneration. Many of these schools have schools boards, and some roles (principal, deputy principal and religion director) are appointed by the school board, so the authority of principals is shared in some areas with local actors.

Decisions about curriculum and schools funding are shared between Commonwealth, state and territory involvement, along with that of local diocese. However, principals exercise significant autonomy in local educational planning and delivery.

2.5.10 Independent schools

Caldwell (2007, pp. 118-126) reports that independent schools often operate as independent organisations whether as companies limited by guarantee or incorporated associations. Generally, however the boards of these organisations establish the policy and principals have broad authority to implement this policy in the operation of the school. Independent schools operate within some state frameworks for learning and teaching but usually have high autonomy in making local teaching and learning decisions. These schools have high autonomy in making decisions about staffing and remuneration, usually framed by the board and by the relevant industrial provisions.

Independent schools have high levels of autonomy in the management of school finances and facilities. Another feature, is that some independent schools operate as a system like that of the Catholic system, an example is the Anglican Schools Corporation in NSW.

2.5.11 The Commonwealth and school-based management

The Commonwealth Minister for Education has announced that the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative which will see up to 1000 schools participate in a national pilot in 2012 and 2013. This program is backed by funding of \$480 million to 2018 (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011)

Chapter 3 Initiatives of the pilot

A total of 87 pilot initiatives with 292 human resource elements were approved for implementation in 2010. In 2011, 65 pilot initiatives with 341 human resource elements were approved for implementation.

The pilot initiatives can be divided into four categories:

- School leadership and management
- Improving teaching and learning
- Professional development and planning
- School administrative support and community engagement.

Under the functions of the pilot, 289 temporary appointments were made to deliver pilot initiatives. This figure represents a variation from entitlement for the pilot schools of 118 effective full time positions overall. Of the 289 appointments overall in the pilot, 171 of them were to unfilled establishment positions within the pilot schools. Across the pilot schools the combined total cost of these flexible initiatives was \$20 million over 2010 and 2011.

3.1 Initiatives for school leadership and management

3.1.1 Deputy principals

In 14 schools, 14 effective full time (EFT) deputy principals were appointed to lead improvements in teaching and learning, and to support professional development of staff across the school. Some of these roles had even more specific responsibilities, including managing activity under the National Partnerships on Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities or Literacy and Numeracy (or local initiatives in literacy and numeracy not funded by a National Partnership). Variations on this theme included leading technology teaching and managing welfare including initiatives for reducing suspensions, promoting safe learning or improving Aboriginal student engagement with schooling.

In another case, a school appointed a literacy consultant, at a level that is equivalent to that of deputy principal. This was an example of sourcing specialist skills at the regional level and ensuring through the construction of the role that the position was not drawn into other extraneous issues in the school, as a deputy principal may be, but could focus exclusively on literacy teaching improvements.

The appointment of a deputy principal to increase senior school curriculum capacity across three schools and to expand the subjects available to the whole group of senior students was unique in the pilot, as only the initiating school was a pilot participant. There was only one other case of a school within the pilot using the pilot authority to provide flexibility to schools outside the pilot.

3.1.2 Assistant principals

In 21 schools, 11.45 (EFT) assistant principals were appointed to directly support improvements to teaching and learning, and to lead staff in their areas of responsibility within the school. The majority of these appointments were to support the quality and consistency of learning and teaching. A significant number of these appointments were also to support engagement with schooling and engagement with learning.

One school appointed an assistant principal (non-teaching) in order to retain an experienced executive who otherwise would have been lost to the school as a result of falling enrolments, and the flow-on effect of the staffing formula. This change was needed for only one year as

enrolments were projected to increase from 2012 and the position would in likelihood have been reinstated. This example highlights the value of the pilot for some schools in supporting forward staff planning and for retaining high quality executives in rural and hard to staff schools.

In only one case was a vacant assistant principal position not filled, enabling two teachers to be appointed instead. This initiative increased teaching numbers and relieved the principal of teaching responsibility in order to focus on leading literacy and numeracy teaching and learning in the school.

3.2 Initiatives for improving teaching and learning

3.2.1 Head teachers

In 13 schools, 16.5 (EFT) head teachers were appointed to directly support engagement with schooling and student retention. Addressing the challenges of maintaining student engagement with schooling in the context of the New School Leaving Age was popular, along with student mentoring roles. The second major focus of head teachers was supporting technology use in learning and teaching.

Another school chose to appoint a head teacher mathematics as a solution to a long-term challenge in filling the mathematics teacher position in a very remote location. This provided a simple and effective solution to a situation that was not being solved by the existing staffing formula. The flexibility of additional remuneration was the critical step in filling the position.

A further school created a year advisor position to coordinate the development of personalised learning plans for Aboriginal students, to coordinate activity with the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and for delivery of cultural immersion training.

3.2.2 Teachers

A total of 62 (EFT) additional teachers were appointed but not all appointments were full time in all schools. In 40 schools, teachers were appointed for three broad reasons: to improve student engagement with learning; to add teaching capacity in an array of curriculum areas; or to address much more specific issues relating to school or student development needs. In a number of schools, teachers were appointed to address more than one need.

In 14 schools, teachers were appointed to address student engagement with schooling, student retention, and case management of students at risk. An associated focus was facilitating student transitions: from school to work; from Years 6 to 7; from Years 10 to 11; middle-years support structures; tailored support for boys and girls in transitions; and support for senior students and gifted and talented students. In addition, there was a focus on addressing the needs of international students including targeting attendance, study, welfare and health issues.

In 20 schools, teachers were appointed to expand the curriculum offering in:

- Agriculture
- Commerce
- Creative arts
- English as a second language
- Geography
- History
- Industrial arts, including industrial technology and woodwork

- Information technology
- Marine science
- Performing arts: music and dance
- Personal development, health and physical education
- Visual arts including rich task projects, photography, and digital media
- Viticulture
- Webpage maintenance and development.

Teachers were also appointed to provide learning remediation for students, including literacy and numeracy support; language and speech coaching; game based learning support; and personalised learning plans for Aboriginal students. In other cases, teachers were appointed to support their peers in quality teaching and professional learning and New Scheme Teacher support/mentoring. In some cases teachers were appointed simply to reduce class sizes.

In 13 schools, 21 (EFT) school learning support officers were appointed and, not surprisingly, the needs they sought to address mirrored those for which teachers were appointed. These needs included providing learning remediation, including literacy and numeracy support, and supporting student transitions.

Finally, one school engaged tutors for students in dance and music, a second school appointed a general assistant to support maintenance of quality learning environments, and another school contracted speech pathologist time to diagnose speech defects and delays in receptive and expressive language and to develop intervention programs for each affected student.

3.3 Initiatives for professional development and planning

Seven schools used pilot resources to purchase professional development or strategic planning support including:

- A two-day strategic planning workshop
- Casual teaching days to support 70 days of staff professional learning
- Implementing and evaluating the *Achieving Major Shift* program
- Professional development in quality teaching in science, technology and mathematics
- Staff training in quality writing and the quality teaching framework.

3.4 Initiatives for administrative support and community engagement

Sixty-seven schools made appointments to support school engagement and administration, which also provides support for teaching and learning, but usually outside the learning environment. A large focus in this category was school administration. The positions created included business manager (10 EFT), school administration manager (1 EFT) and school administration officer (20 EFT). A second focus was community engagement and business development. A third focus was student engagement and positive behaviour management.

Only one school created a specific Aboriginal education officer position with responsibility for building relationships with Aboriginal students and community. In large part this position created opportunities for Aboriginal community and students to come together for traditional activities including didgeridoo manufacture and performance, along with facilitating a local *Yarn Up* in

which Aboriginal people and other community members could come together to discuss what was needed in the local area – both from the school, but also from other government agencies.

One school appointed a head teacher, with a site management role, to allow the principal to focus on quality teaching and learning. Two schools appointed teachers to manage attendance issues, one to specifically coordinate lunchtime activities (to engage students and better ensure attendance in the afternoons). A third school appointed a teacher to develop bio-sciences partnerships with the community and business organisations and assist in developing bio-science electives that reflected local industry need and employment prospects.

Ten schools appointed business managers; six of these at the clerk 5/6 grade and four at the clerk 7/8 grade. In two cases, individual business managers were shared across communities of schools. One school appointed a school administration manager and 20 schools appointed school administration officers to address the following issues:

- Administration data and systems update
- Administration support for planning and organisation throughout 2011 and support for program administration (Norta Norta, National Partnership on Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities, Schools First, Priority Schools Program)
- Budget support
- Data entry and data analysis of targeted school plan results
- Flexible casual hours from a vacant full-time position
- Increased administration – from part-time position to full-time
- Library support for accession of a 1,200-item pre-school library
- Occupation health and safety processes
- Program coordination
- School-based reports and education week certificates
- Science support
- Supporting performing arts programs
- Technology support
- To remove administrative tasks from the principal's desk and allow the principal to focus on leadership
- Upgrading to school administration officer from a general assistant position.

One school appointed a school learning support officer to support vulnerable, disconnected students whose behaviour and social skills impede learning and another school chose to appoint a farm assistant instead of filling a school learning support officer position on their establishment.

Fourteen schools appointed general assistants to address the following issues:

- Alternatives to suspension programs
- Freeing the principal and teachers from some tasks to focus on the delivery of quality teaching and learning programs
- Maintenance of air-conditioning, school grounds/outdoor learning spaces, and indoor teaching spaces
- Management of building contractors

- Support for occupying a new building.

3.5 What themes emerge from pilot initiatives?

Two themes emerge strongly from this discussion of the pilot initiatives. The first is that the initiatives were focussed on improving the quality of teaching and learning through responding to local need. The second theme is that while an additional 118 effective full time positions were available to the pilot schools (through additional funding), the larger number of 171 temporary appointments were made against vacant establishment positions. This reflects a significant appetite among pilot schools to use all possible resources available to create flexible solutions.

Chapter 4 Management of the pilot

4.1 Visibility and management of the whole-school budget

A key opportunity of the pilot was management of the whole-school budget by principals. This is the first time that pilot principals had visibility of their whole budgets and responsibility for managing the staffing component of school budgets. This was a necessary precursor to exercising the pilot functions of increased recruitment, staffing and funding control and the first time that any principals in NSW public schools have had this extent of budget responsibility and accountability.

Principals engaged with the pilot in a relatively consistent sequence of steps:

- Strategic thinking about what initiatives would support addressing the needs of students and improving the culture in the school
- Identification of the available resources to support possible initiatives
- Discussion with the school executive and teachers on options for initiatives – including in some cases brainstorming and consultation on ideas; and in other cases involving staff in the decision making
- Discussion with parents; usually with the local Parents and Citizens' Association, but sometimes more broadly
- Discussion with senior regional officers
- Development of the initiative and, on occasion, referral to the school education director for endorsement
- Referral of the initiative proposal to Staffing Services Directorate for approval
- Negotiation, discussion and production of final sign-off version of the initiative
- Principal endorsement of the proposal that outlines the initiative.

4.2 Developing and deciding pilot initiatives

4.2.1 Collaborative development of initiatives

The development of the school-based management initiatives in the pilot was notably collaborative in nature, and frequently involved not only school staff and executive, but often parents and the community. In a number of cases there were distinct development and decision processes, where needs and ideas for meeting those needs were canvassed, worked up to some level of sophistication and then decided in a separate process. In other cases, schools gradually implemented a list of initiatives as funding became available during the life of the pilot.

In one typical case, all the staff including teachers, administrative staff and the school learning support officers were divided into three groups for brainstorming about possible pilot initiatives. Through this team work, improving literacy and numeracy emerged as the leading need and team teaching, shared planning and programming, and a particular focus on spelling were identified as the implementation steps. In this case, the school executive undertook their own planning process, and came to a similar conclusion to the three staff working groups. Subsequently, these initiatives were ratified unanimously by the school council and the Parents and Citizens group.

Other variations of this collaborative development theme included consulting the Parents and Citizens members, the school council, and the student representative council. In some cases, this was a process driven by the existing school plan which one principal said was 'evaluated with the staff and Parents and Citizens and led to the conclusion that we needed improved student engagement through technology.'

In the majority of cases, development of the initiatives occurred in consultation with staff. Typically, 'with staff we undertook a think tank that explored ideas for enhancing capacity which produced a long list of initiatives. We then reviewed the school performance data to ensure a close match between identified need and what the data was indicating.' Or in another typical case, 'with staff input and through parent surveys we identified the goal of lifting National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results through reducing class sizes and ensuring teachers had opportunities to improve their skills.'

Identifying local needs and developing initiatives also drew on these inputs:

- Teacher supervision feedback
- Student assessment data and positive behaviour learning data
- Data which indicated that boys were underperforming compared with girls
- Integrated analysis of student performance data, student welfare data such as behaviour reports, and reviewing needs from the school plan.

Finally, there were examples where the initiatives emerged from existing major programs including in one case a desire to support students at risk of an nil award or those not engaging with schooling. In another case, improving student literacy was already a priority in the school plan, but increasing capacity to respond to this need saw the proposal emerge to employ a deputy principal to support Reading to Learn across the school, a significant escalation of effort.

4.2.2 Deciding pilot initiatives in schools

Many pilot schools separated the process of developing possible pilot initiatives from the process of deciding which ones to implement. Once a decision was made in schools as to the nature of an initiative or initiatives, it was necessary to seek the endorsement of Staffing Services for the proposal. Discussion of that approval process comes later in the report, this section focuses on the initiative decision process at the school level.

In many cases it was the principal, or the school executive and the principal, who decided which initiatives to adopt. In a significant number of cases, the decision, as with the development of the initiatives, was shared with other groups in the school, particularly with teachers.

In one case the initiatives were developed by several teachers and endorsed by the principal. In others, there was consultation with teachers and their suggestions were included in the discussion and decision-making at the executive level with no input from parents or the community.

One principal reported that they had consulted the executive on initiatives and had then 'presented our ideas to the staff and parents for their input and decision.' Several principals chose a different approach; close engagement with the community in decision making which was already the norm. In one case, the initiatives 'were discussed with the Parents and Citizens, the student representative council, and teachers before going to the school council for their endorsement.' In several cases, 'a joint sign off on pilot initiatives with parents and the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group occurred.'

4.3 Establishment data quality

Undertaking a data cleansing step was an essential basis for local management of the whole-school budget as it enabled schools to secure all their entitlements under the funding formula. Visibility of school establishments allowed many pilot schools to see where their establishment data was inaccurate, including for example in incomplete records of appointments of staff to schools. Such issues had an impact on the operation of the funding formula.

State office representatives worked with the pilot schools to reconcile their establishment data. This was a new activity in schools. Usually schools do not see this level of detail concerning their budget, and any anomalies between entitlement and allocation of funding are not easily identified or resolved.

Staffing Services Directorate reports that this exercise of establishment data clean-up has led to an improvement in the accuracy and quality of state office data about the pilot schools. Improving the practice of establishment data cleansing raised policy issues that required resolution between schools and state office prior to digital business systems being updated and funding entitlements clarified.

4.4 The experience of principals

Principals expressed their understanding of the purpose of the pilot as providing them with flexibility and autonomy to meet local needs and improve learning outcomes for students, professional development for staff, and the balance between accountability and responsibility for local solutions to enhance school and student outcomes.

The motivation principals reported for seeking to join the pilot included an opportunity for flexibility, preparing for the future of schooling, and an appetite for greater control of finance and staffing within their schools. Some principals reported encouragement from their school education director as a motivator.

The best aspects of the pilot implementation included flexibility, control and understanding of staffing and finances, the opportunity to free the principal from elements of financial management to focus on teaching and learning and improving student outcomes, including delegating varying degrees of financial management to the newly appointed business manager. Overwhelmingly, the principals appreciated that the pilot was well supported by Department of Education and Communities.

Principals were very specific in their description of the worst aspects of the pilot implementation. Not knowing what was possible and the time needed to understand what sort of staffing options may be possible were key early concerns. Understanding financial management procedures and tools was a second issue, highlighting the need for training in financial management. A lack of understanding and information about the purpose of various financial allocations to schools, not being able to use tied grants for pilot initiatives, and the time taken to understand the Resource Planning Tool were associated difficulties. Understanding of staffing procedures and the time taken to get initiatives approved by Staffing Services Directorate were also reported as concerns. Finally, for some principals, the opposition of the NSW Teachers Federation was one of the most difficult aspects of the implementation phase.

A common early view, as expressed by one principal, was: 'It was a very vague start; everyone struggled to get a handle on what was and was not possible.' A common later view was: 'of course there was infrastructure to be developed for a pilot, that was to be expected, but all that seems to work very well now.'

The best aspects of the support provided included the capacity to employ different classifications of staff (for example, paraprofessionals, business managers) and networking opportunities among principals, including listening to what other schools in the pilot were doing. The Resource Planning Tool was described as having initial problems but was delivering accurate reporting by October 2010.

The worst aspects of the support provided included the absence in some schools of an initial grant to implement initiatives, the slow introduction of support material, and the complexity of the establishment of schools and the number of staffing codes and, in particular, the unfamiliar terminology related to staffing and financial procedures. Principals also reported concerns that, following policy guidance, it took time for the initiatives of the pilot to be developed locally, and for approval to be achieved.

For some principals, the major obstacles to successful introduction of the pilot included the need to remain within the Staffing Agreement, which caused some principals to feel overly constrained, the initial staff reactions to perceptions that the school would be run like a business, including for example the erroneous belief of the inclusion of hiring and firing of staff, the disconnection between financial and school-years, and the disconnect between financial and school management and reporting.

4.5 The views of senior regional officers

In some instances, school education directors (SEDs) played a discussion and support role for schools in developing pilot initiatives and in endorsing proposals; however, some SEDs stated that their engagement and approval was not consistently sought. In some cases, regional directors appointed a single SED to support the pilot in their region, and in these cases, principals said they appreciated this coordination role.

A small number of senior regional officers interviewed indicated that principals and schools had been more or differently accountable to their SED for achieving outcomes in the pilot, than for usual accountabilities. In one region the SED has undertaken a substantial role in scrutiny, quality assurance and alignment of pilot initiatives in the relevant schools. There was a general consensus among senior regional officers that the system support for schools in the pilot was timely and accurate. Another SED argued that while principals may want more authority, when difficulties emerge, they also want the back up and support of state office.

Another SED expressed their view in this manner: 'the opportunity for autonomy is welcome, but...there needs to be a significant up skilling of people if autonomy is to become more widespread.' Another SED had a different view: '[my participating principals] were handpicked for good strong leadership. A number of other schools in the school education group now wish they had had the opportunity to participate.'

4.6 How might pilot management be summarised?

Commencing the pilot in schools required a start-up phase. While some pilot schools moved quickly to commence initiatives, in many cases this development absorbed at least half of 2010. This included training around managing whole-school budgets, identification of funds available to support pilot initiatives, intensive discussion inside schools and communities to identify potential initiatives, and the process of seeking approval from Staffing Services Directorate.

The second pilot period might be described as the balance of 2010 and 2011 where schools rolled out successive initiatives, and initial success built greater commitment to the pilot among school staff, parents and communities. Alongside these phases, state office supported schools with financial management tools and other resources. Key challenges included the large amount of new knowledge to be absorbed, the complexity of new financial management and the associated staff establishment management challenge. The key opportunity of this phase was the implementation of new temporary positions across pilot schools to improve teaching and learning.

Chapter 5 Suitability of individual functions devolved

The pilot explicitly provided greater authority to principals over the functions of recruitment, staffing and funding control. This increased authority was used for greater local decision making over the staffing mix and the range of teaching and support roles available in pilot schools. These new or reshaped positions were temporary and limited to the life of the pilot. This flexibility was backed up through the review of proposals from pilot schools for new initiatives by state office which improved risk identification and management.

State office support aimed to ensure that these new positions, roles and tasks in schools contributed to improving learning and teaching outcomes and to delivering a return on the additional investment. In order to exercise these newly devolved functions, principals reported that they had to engage with a considerable amount of new information and learning.

For their part, state office representatives have characterised their support for the pilot schools as management development or management support. The Senior Manager, Schools Pilot and the Pilot Office, working in collaboration with state office directorates including Staffing Services Directorate, School and Regional Financial Operations unit and Salaries Review and Reporting unit, provided a range of direct support to schools including financial management resources and the Resource Planning Tool.

Another major focus of support was training and development on financial and human resource management. The third focus has been on problem solving, provision of advice and acting as a knowledge-clearing-house on potential initiatives that schools may wish to consider. Principals have consistently spoken highly of the support provided by the Pilot Office and they valued the visits of the Senior Manager, Schools Pilot to schools.

Most principals described active collaborative engagement with their staff in planning for pilot initiatives, and many also included their local community in this engagement. In the great majority of cases, the initiatives that emerged from the devolved functions have broad support and reflect the agreed need in individual schools.

The functions of the pilot also allowed for school administration activities to be delivered in a more focussed manner. In one school a business manager was appointed to:

- Promote the use of school facilities available to the community to increase school income and promote the school to the community
- Coordinate development of the school web page for improved community engagement
- Collation of family addresses and the use of these to improve communication with parents for distributing the newsletter, notices of changes to routine, surveys and to maintain the school attendance software
- Reviewing school electronic file organisation
- Developing new financial management tracking spreadsheets for faculty and school budgets
- Managing the pilot finances.

The principal in this school argued that these functions added significantly to their capacity and allowed more teacher time to be focussed on teaching and learning. In this case, the functions of the pilot delivered a new and effective flexibility in a particular school.

Two principals were of the opinion that the pilot has not gone far enough and that they believe that greater authority over decision making should have been allowed. However, most principals said that Staffing Services Directorate approved proposals very quickly, that

the feedback and external scrutiny of initiatives was welcome, and the safety net of the approval process for initiatives was a positive feature that worked well.

Exercising the pilot functions raises the issue of risk management support for decision-making. A key area of risk management support was discussion with schools on whether or not their proposals inadvertently created challenges for the school or the system. This negotiation, and the incorporation of suggested improvements into proposals, has meant that only one initiative was declined approval by Staffing Services Directorate.

The Staffing Services officers providing advice and support to principals included a deputy principal, principal and former school education director, and between them had a considerable breadth of experience in school leadership and improvement, in addition to that usually available in Staffing Services.

Reflecting this expertise, the views of principals in relation to Staffing Services support were almost entirely positive. A common view was: 'staffing approved our proposals quickly, a week at the longest. I was happy and liked to have their feedback, the external scrutiny, and ultimately the safety net that comes from their support.' Another principal expressed the views of many: 'my understanding of the staffing and finance systems has improved through the support I received.'

A small group of principals question the nature Staffing Services oversight. One principal expressed the view: 'there was an obvious lack of depth of knowledge and understanding of innovation in their approach.' Another principal questioned the need for approval from Staffing Services at all, arguing that the extent of the oversight of school decision making by Staffing Services had grown significantly during the pilot.

Finally, only one principal expressed a negative view: 'I never felt that the group in Sydney has been on our side. Not bad, just annoying and drawn out. They have been difficult to deal with.' The SED in this case reflected this point of view saying: 'there were huge and unsettling issues around staffing and funding and relationships were very strained during this period.'

5.1 Principal decision making

A key function devolved to principals was autonomy in local decision making. This section reflects the views of principals and school education directors (SEDs) on the suitability of decision making functions devolved to principals.

One SED summarised a common view: 'the local decision making was fantastic, the principal got to lead and manage the school in a new way, and his peers were very envious of what he could do and also wanted the opportunity to participate in the pilot.' Another SED has noted that: 'being in the pilot has improved the leadership in pilot schools.' A third SED commenting on a pilot principal said: 'he is innovative and had exhausted the available flexibility and broken rules ahead of the pilot starting. He has used the potential of the pilot to the maximum. His initiatives are all included in his school plan, which is adjusted as needs, and his intent and the needs of the school are clear from the plan. All his initiatives have worked well.'

This is a clear endorsement from senior executives responsible for principals in their school education groups of the value of local decision making and the positive difference that pilot functions have made in schools.

From principals themselves, there were typical views including 'there is also room for more delegation to principals and many don't make enough of that opportunity or don't have executives of a calibre to delegate to.' Another principal reports that while they have been

'independent in identifying ideas for initiatives' they always discussed 'initiatives and how they're unfolding in Principal Assessment and Review Schedule (PARS) visits.' Finally, one principal 'appreciated having a proper say in how the school is managed at the local level and the extra resources.'

From the principals too there is endorsement of the local decision making functions available to them in the pilot, even if some wanted this extended.

5.2 Financial management

Understanding and managing the whole-school budget was a key component of exercising the new financial management functions of the pilot. The views of principals in relation to the financial management functions fall into three broad areas. A large group of principals valued the opportunity to manage the whole-school budget and were very happy to engage with this detail as it was the pathway to greater decision making in recruitment and staffing.

A second group of principals found it difficult to manage the whole budget alone and found that the support of the school administration manager or business manager was invaluable. Finally, others argued that while the principal is very competent at leadership of the school, they 'really needed someone to delegate financial management to.'

5.3 Recruitment and staffing

The use of greater local decision making functions around recruitment and staffing was overwhelmingly positive. A common view expressed by a SED was: 'the pilot gives schools the ability to employ a diversity of personnel to meet local needs, a response that is not based in, or constrained by, a formula. It has given a unique power to principals to make decisions in the best interests of students and the school.'

Another SED's view expresses a variation: 'the opportunity to change the category or mix of staff was welcomed. We used a deputy principal to lead change in literacy. That person is now relieving as principal elsewhere. Tremendous system wide capacity building arose from the school-based management pilot.'

Finally, a principal describes a common approach: 'all opportunities for pilot positions have been filled by expression of interest and merit selection. A staff representative has been included on all selection panels.'

5.4 The cost of implementing the pilot in state office

The total cost of state office support in implementing the pilot was \$3.37 million. This figure does not include the additional pilot funding provided to schools which is detailed in Chapter 3. The Senior Manager, Schools Pilot and the Pilot Office working in collaboration with state office directorates; including Staffing Services Directorate, School and Regional Financial Operations and Salaries Review and Reporting units delivered the following:

- The notion of a whole budget for each pilot school
- A nearly real time financial reporting tool in the form of the Resource Planning Tool and fortnightly updates
- Manual workarounds to deliver the interface between human resources, payroll and finance systems

The majority of the pilot support cost was in the use of experienced business analysts to synthesise the financial information that was critical for principals to effectively manage their school budgets. This effort consumed 43% of the total cost of supporting the pilot.

Table 3 School-Based Management Pilot Calendar Year Cost Estimates

	2009	2010	2011	TOTAL	%
<i>Employee related expenses</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	
Office of Schools Project Management	\$37,882	\$217,395	\$251,052	\$506,329	15%
Business Analysts	\$151,528	\$669,472	\$642,016	\$1,463,016	43%
Information Technology		\$106,278	\$85,056	\$191,334	6%
Human Resources		\$381,827	\$366,319	\$748,146	22%
Finance		\$126,617	\$231,022	\$357,639	11%
Other operating expenses		\$51,583	\$51,161	\$102,744	3%
TOTAL	\$189,410	\$1,553,172	\$1,626,626	\$3,369,208	100%

Support of this complexity was necessary as the current legacy business systems are not capable of providing the integrated financial management information necessary for whole-school budget management at the local level. The Learning Management and Business Reform program, the Student Administration and Learning Management component, and the SAP finance system promise to address this capacity shortfall over time.

The next greatest cost of the support for the pilot (22%) was in human resources services. Leadership of the pilot by the Senior Manager, Schools Pilot accounted for 15% of the support costs. Finally, financial management (11%), information technology (6%) and other expenses (3%) made up the balance of the pilot support costs.

5.5 The suitability of functions devolved

The pilot has provided greater authority to principals over the functions of recruitment, staffing and funding control which has delivered greater control over the staffing mix and the range of teaching and support roles available to pilot schools. These were clearly effective functions of school-based management and they were rapidly adopted by the majority of principals and schools.

In terms of the functions that might have been added to those available, some principals wanted to see greater control of decision making about school staffing, particularly greater local merit selection of teaching and other staff. A significant number of principals wanted to include all tied grant and program funding in the whole-school budget, in order to maximise local responsiveness.

Chapter 6 Staff and community engagement

6.1 Teachers and other school staff

The overwhelming view of senior regional officers, principals and those teachers who were interviewed was that teachers and other school staff had been positively engaged in pilot initiatives, had in many cases benefited directly from them in their schools, or had experienced and acknowledged the positive things the initiatives were delivering for students and pilot schools.

A typical principal view would be 'the staff reaction was very positive about the initiatives and how they contributed to the smooth running of the school .' Another principal observed that 'staff are involved in the pilot initiatives and there is participation and ownership of initiatives' or 'that staff are very committed to the program and can see the benefits of it.'

This very positive view is perhaps linked to previous engagement: 'the whole staff has been fully supportive of the initiatives. The initiatives are mainly a continuation of what was being implemented previously.' Another principal expands on this idea: 'the feedback from staff is good. There are more people in school, the right people, right morale and team work.' This positive experience with the pilot and the positive impact of initiatives in schools is leading to a 'perception that staff are more willing to take things on, with the understanding of additional support.' And that the 'staff reaction was very positive and contributed to smooth running of the school.'

Another principal said 'a hearts and minds engagement has occurred' and they 'engaged staff in a conversation which helped improve their performance.' In one school the principal regularly 'surveyed staff and in the last results, 95% said they feel supported by senior staff. There is good participation of staff in after school activities and cooperation at every level in collaborative management of the school.' Another school's 'staff are surveyed annually using Zoomerang and the most recent result indicates 94% are satisfied.' Principals argue that the satisfaction of staff has increased as a result of the pilot and that this 'is attributable to increased staff numbers and greater flexibility.'

A very small number of teachers in the pilot schools overall, and a number of teachers in several schools, opposed the pilot at the outset. It is not clear that significant opposition to school-based management remained in any of the pilot schools at the end of 2011.

In some schools, pilot initiatives were slow to begin as a result of industrial activity. In one school a 'staff survey on school culture this year, following the industrial relations challenges at the outset of the pilot found that the issue was impactful, but the staff see those problems as done and dusted now.' In another school 'rejection of the union opposition to the pilot occurred by the unanimous vote of the staff (including the union delegate) and was quite extraordinary, as was the confidence of the staff that they'd be better off with the pilot than without.'

One principal reports that 'the Teachers Federation representative in the school was invited to participate in the local implementation committee but they refused.' The principal 'simply said "this is coming and you need to be part of it."' The principal says the 'union came to the school and asked the staff to opt out of participation in the pilot and only the Teachers Federation representative voted to opt out. All the other staff wanted to stay in the pilot.'

One principal reports that in the end 'the Teachers Federation did a lot of scaremongering, and it was necessary to tease apart the myth of school-based management compared to the reality. What has transpired is that the school wants and needs more say in managing its affairs.'

Finally, one school provided a 'parent information session where parents had the opportunity to discuss their thoughts, feelings, needs and concerns about the new initiatives. Parents were reassured by this information and discussion. In addition to the regular methods of accountability, the staff members now feel confident that "I'll have a strong effort to report" to the parents.'

6.2 Parents

The majority of schools reported that parents were supportive of the initiatives, particularly where there was a clear link to improving support for classroom teaching. For example, a number of principals reported that the parents in their schools liked the purposeful focus on developing reading that they had adopted.

The principals that actively engaged their parent body in the pilot reported much more parent support for their initiatives than those that didn't. As discussed above, this engagement was around developing and deciding the pilot initiatives including providing information about possible alternatives, and discussion of potential initiatives and their impacts. This commonly occurred through regular channels, such as Parents and Citizens' meetings, school councils, and more informal opportunities for discussion. In a number of schools, this engagement extended to formal surveying of parents to identify the needs of students, to involve them in priority setting and decision making about initiatives. In several schools such surveys occur regularly every year, and were in place prior to the pilot, but were useful mechanisms for pilot engagement.

One primary school principal described engagement with parents over a sustained period of several years leading up to discussion of the pilot initiatives. The initiatives in this school resulted in smaller class sizes and stage teaching. Parents in that school were pleased with the exposure of the students to a wider range of teachers in stage teaching, the individual tuition provided for those requiring assistance with reading and numeracy, and improvement in their children's reading and speaking. In the same school, the whole staff was involved in identifying and deciding the actual initiatives to be adopted.

In an interview with a group of parents at a primary school, there was a range of responses to enquiries about the pilot initiatives and their impact. One parent drew a direct connection between the 'buzz about the school in the town' from pilot initiatives and increased kindergarten enrolments in 2011. Other parents at this school were very happy with the student behaviour improvement across the whole-school that was a direct result of the pilot initiatives. They argued that this allowed many children in the school to better engage with their lessons. The principal of this school confirmed that, for the first time in ten years, there is a waiting list for kindergarten for 2012. Overall this group of parents was very happy with the pilot and the school and were actively promoting the school in the community as a result of the positive achievement they perceived.

In another school, parents were pleased with the smaller class sizes and reading support provided to their very young children. They reported that specific intensive speech therapy interventions that had been provided had achieved excellent results. Their attitude to the school was summarised by one parent who said 'you only have to ask and the school responds to the need.'

A significant number of principals described their engagement with parents in terms of communication through information provision, particularly through emails and newsletters, and through providing updates to Parents and Citizens groups. Similarly, this consultation also involves consultation on the school plan and school targets. Many of these principals describe seeking the support of parents for pilot initiatives.

In some cases, Parents and Citizens group participation in developing pilot initiatives has led to communication and updates on pilot implementation. A typical principal says 'they have always been supportive of the move to decrease class sizes and get highly qualified teachers; this is just an extension of that, and made easier across the school by the flexible use of funds. In only one case, did a principal sound a warning note about parental engagement: 'the Parents and Citizens group come from a well-to-do background and they don't need to consider the needs of all the students. It is very easy for this group to make decisions that are in their own interests. They can't see the students and families that are not engaged with the school.'

One principal described improved parent engagement with the school that goes beyond communication to an appreciation of the pilot initiatives. One principal says parents are 'very happy as their children are involved in smaller Kinder and Yr 1 classes with reading tutoring and therapy sessions. They are very happy with the results.' Another principal says that 'parents are happy and feel like the improvements they are noticing in their children are as a result of pilot initiatives' and that this has led to 'increased involvement of parents' in the school. Another principal says that he 'sees the staff as the custodian or caretaker of quality education in the school on behalf of the community, and the parents say to him "you're making it into a private school" and for them that includes elements of improving quality and local decision making linked to better outcomes.'

One parent said 'I have a high confidence level in the school' and 'I bet you're waiting for me to say something negative, but there's nothing I can say – things are going very well.' Another parent says: 'you only have to open your mouth and ask for assistance to receive it.'

Another smaller group of schools describe a deeper engagement with parents. In one of these, parents 'value the learning opportunities provided based on success of one initiative, and the Parents and Citizens group were requesting the same initiative for a different group.' In another school, the principal undertook 'engagement to ask parents about the benefits of the pilot for their children' and in another 'parents wanted to know about group work in classes, and began a dialogue about deeper questions of quality teaching.'

In a number of cases, parents have been employed in schools after an early experience in volunteering, perhaps in classroom mentoring and coaching. Parents have been employed in school learning support and Aboriginal education positions.

Parents come from varying positions of advantage or disadvantage. In one community, the principal said 'this remote town had less opportunity than other places and it was therefore all the more important that the school provide constructive engagement.' In another community the principal said 'we undertake Zoomerang surveys and consultation with our engaged parents, the school is in a sweet spot being a public school which is able to use its considerable resources flexibly. The school council is clear about its role and is supportive.'

Finally, one principal argues that 'strong open governance structures are critical for staff and parent buy-in and for improving performance – schools are accountable to their communities' and the principal says this 'works through the school council which meets eight times a year and considers the financial position, student results and broad school directions.'

6.3 Community

In addition to engagement with parents, many principals go beyond this terrain to an active engagement with the broader community. One principal's view is typical of a significant number: 'all principals should be in collaborative partnerships with their local community and accountable

to their communities. A key element of this is a responsibility to explain how something works.' In one case, a business development manager was appointed under the pilot to 'work constructively with local community and business' to generate employment opportunities for students and to ensure that the nature of the curriculum and the skills of students in bio-technology was coordinated with the needs of local industry.

Another principal reports 'a buzz around the school in the community, both public schools have benefited, at the expense of enrolments in the Catholic school, possibly from smaller classes and literacy coaching. Parents believe there has been a change in literacy and are enjoying spreading the word.' Another principal has invested time in 'liaison with businesses promoting individual sports and student athletes. This has achieved five scholarships for swimming worth \$500 each.' As a result the school has seen one student succeed at the state level in swimming.

Another principal says that 'raising the school leaving age has opened a whole new community engagement opportunity, particularly with local businesses and parents who want their children constructively engaged in activities that lead to employment.' In another school, a similar story was reported 'there has been an increasing number of people involved in the school, such as industry type people, these people are very engaged, very confident about the school and where it's going.' Yet another similar view is 'there is a new perception in the school that collectively the school community is in control of its own destiny. The additional skill sets that the pilot has enabled the school to secure have supported meeting local need through local solutions.'

One principal views the pilot and the new relationships with community as 'an issue of ethical transparency with the community and school – involving people in the decisions about their lives is critically important and helps focus people on the bigger objectives.' These examples are striking in the immediacy of the perceived link between schooling and local social and economic development.

Where local community engagement is absent, there is the potential for other problems. One parent said 'local participation in decision making is very important to parents in our town. In the past they didn't feel they had a voice, and had a secret meeting off-site at the swimming pool. Parents are now involved in planning, considering the school budget and in selecting staff. If you have a problem now – you approach the school and they're onto solving the issue straight away. The parents definitely want more say and to help tailor service to need.' Often small changes make a difference: 'the community have responded positively to the improved appearance of the school.' And in another case, the pilot initiatives were received 'very positively, a local accountant offered to undertake the accountancy for the pilot for free.'

One principal described a longer term change that the pilot has supported: 'in 2006, there was a negative view of the school as waifs and misfits, we had a high proportions of students with behaviour challenges. This has changed through engagement and improving the culture of the school, now enrolments are increasing and there is a buzz about the school in town.'

This positive community feeling has led more than one pilot school to report increased enrolments: '30 out of 33 prospective kindergarten students are enrolled at the school in 2011. The local Catholic school is decreasing in size. The community will want to have the smaller class sizes maintained.' Another principal reports 'increased demand for placement at the school, stories from students are the best advertisement for the school, parents love it.'

Another parent says 'the school is very important to [remote town], the school is now excellent, the image was not very positive in the past and people would say "Na, I'll just send my kids to [another remote town]" to school. I used to say that was pointless because the kids would just come home and play with the same kids they would have been with all day if they'd been here at school. It is hard to say if this is solely [principal's] leadership or if the pilot has also played a

role.' In yet another school, one parent said the 'school hasn't always enjoyed strong community support but it certainly does now.'

The perspectives of communities on pilot schools are not always positive. In one school the principal explained that partly as a result of the relative disadvantage of the area, their school was not highly regarded in the regional centre that it was situated in. The principal said 'school numbers are declining. People are enrolling their children because it is a smaller school, not because it is better.' In another area, a SED explained that the region overall was 'bleeding students' from the top 25% of families measured through the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) and that public schools needed to 'offer the full range of subjects to compete with Catholic or private schools in that area.'

6.4 Aboriginal people and community

In some cases, engagement with Aboriginal people and community in pilot schools has been very successful, and Aboriginal parents interviewed were extremely happy with their schools. In one pilot school, there has been a positive effect on school culture from the activities to improve Aboriginal participation in the school. The year advisor supporting Aboriginal students has regularly attended local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group meetings; has developed personalised learning plans for Aboriginal students, and delivered a better planned and executed National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week of celebration. The school's Aboriginal support group is meeting regularly: 'the year advisor position has been very successful in delivering specific outcomes. The confidence of Aboriginal families in the school has improved significantly.'

In another remote school there have been 'complaints about pilot initiatives from community members but mostly these have been objections from one faction or another about appointments. These have even progressed to appeals against merit based selections in several cases.'

One principal advised that 'Aboriginal community engagement needs to start very early in planning of initiatives and to be built from positive relationships – nothing else works.' This perspective was repeated by Aboriginal people, principals and senior regional officers. One [principal] noted that 'with a school that had 85% Aboriginal students it was important that relationships were developed and that students were chipped quietly.' Another principal said 'Aboriginal communities don't like being restrained by formulas and rules – working with this dynamic is the most useful approach.'

There have been significant positive results in several schools: 'the additional pilot resources have provided cash to try different initiatives and to better manage student welfare. An example of each student's dental health assessment and treatment undertaken at [X] Aboriginal Health Service and follow up treatment provided – each appointment sees a student, a relative and a teacher/aide travel to [X]. This support is highly appreciated by the community and has very positive results for the students.'

The experience in pilot schools of working with Aboriginal people and community varies from 'there is a huge Aboriginal involvement with the school at [remote town]. This is a very desirable and positive force, but it presents the principal with unique challenges' to another perspective 'there are not a lot of aboriginal families in the school, only six out of 194 students have identified as Aboriginal.'

An example of Aboriginal community engagement beginning in education and gradually transforming how a community views its own resources and advocates for its needs was provided by a principal: 'Yarn Up is a time where people in the community can sit down and

share views about everything going on in [remote town]. This leads to a working party taking up issues and working on them together. A lot of *Yarn Up* time used to be spent on the school, now hardly any discussion is needed as its working so well. These days the focus is more on health. *Yarn Up* is independent, community controlled and has the authority to discuss whatever it wants – [principal] engages and responds as requested.'

In this school, an Aboriginal parent who had initially been involved in *Yarn Up* and had volunteered in supporting student engagement with Aboriginal culture is now employed as an Aboriginal education officer.

6.5 Have the pilot schools and their culture improved?

There was a clear statement from many principals and other respondents that they believed that their pilot schools had improved. One school adopted a report framework to gather staff views on pilot effectiveness which is distributed each term and the collated results presented at the beginning of the next term. These results are shared with families and community and serve to keep the school plan and activities focussed on real needs for that term.

In another school, the principal said is it 'not possible to unpack the effect of pilot initiatives from the overall activity and other initiatives in operation in the school.'

In one school a substantial story of school improvement through the pilot was articulated: 'attendance is up, suspensions are down, teaching quality has improved significantly and the number of programs on offer have expanded significantly, upgrading to a deputy principal position and the appointment of two experienced head teachers is really moving the school forward, the school has fantastic vocational education programs that have delivered 11 traineeships for Aboriginal students.'

In another school, the principal said that the length of the pilot 'has allowed the school time to get things in place: programs related to [four new subject areas] are now offered, getting the right staff to implement a whole lot of program ideas has been critical. [It is] early days yet but students are accessing programs more than planned.' In another school the principal simply said 'we have changed the lives of 50 boys in the mentoring program.'

Another principal said 'it is a different school and way of thinking now, we don't have to role with the punches, acting to shape the school, parents have a reason to be here, increasing enrolments, whereas before they would not have sent their children here.'

One parent reported: 'since [principal] has been at the school there is a very distinct change: the attitude of the students has improved and they now wanted to come to school, the engagement of parents with the school has increased, the teachers are much more open and accepting, and the quality of education in the school has increased.' Another parent said of her school 'the community feel and culture here is completely different than [another town], here everyone is so approachable.'

One principal said that they had 'worked to improve school culture and student behaviour. This culture work saw teachers being backed up more and supported in their work. In addition, the curriculum has expanded and this has meant more options for teachers. When the pilot commenced, the culture in the school was good but there is now evidence that making change in the school had benefited teachers directly.'

Another principal linked student outcomes to school improvement: 'to build a skills base for future employment for students, for life and social skills including work and links to employment in the local community is very important to the school.' In another school the 'success with the students who have had transition support is a clear positive outcome from the pilot. In other cases, a combination of factors are delivering improvements, not solely or largely the pilot.'

One principal said that the pilot 'has been very constructive in turning around a perception that all the school could expect was under achievement and a culture of bullying and dysfunction. NAPLAN results were very poor but now they are improving and the parents are watching this improvement as evidence that the school is improving.' In a similarly illustrative school the principal said 'the parents are really happy about smaller classes, increased one on one teaching, and similar ability groups. Parents are reporting changes already in their children's reading. Parents know about the literacy and numeracy focus as the majority of students in the school are involved.'

Other principals recognised that school leadership was critical in developing and maintaining performance cultures in schools: 'leadership is judged to be the key factor in maintaining the culture' and 'not the pilot.' Another principal said that 'a restructure in management and a total change of school leaders meant that our culture has experienced renewal.' One regional senior officer said 'unfortunately, because it was a new school there was pressure from other schools to take their underperforming staff on transfer and this has presented challenges in building a constructive culture.'

Another principal commenting on an educational community said 'the initiatives supporting transitions to high school gave more exposure to high school for primary students, this exposure has never been possible before. The pilot provides flexibility for meeting changing needs in schools.'

In other cases, significant culture improvement has been attributed to the pilot which has 'legitimised a devolved dialogue among the staff about what best meets need and builds a positive culture over time. Teacher assessment of "what's in it for me?" is a powerful motivator for staff engagement.' Another principal said 'the feedback from staff and students is very positive. However, it's too early to see any change in student outcomes.' Finally, one principal reported 'there has been a cultural shift for the school, it is a calmer school, we have solved our behaviour challenges through effective student engagement, every teacher and every class has benefited.'

6.6 Has staff and community engagement been effective?

The mechanisms for engagement with staff and community members shared similar elements in many pilot schools. These included participation in identifying needs, developing solutions and deciding which solutions might be most appropriate for the needs of the school. In the case of the staff, this engagement included surveys, discussion in staff meetings, dialogue in subject areas and stage teams, and in small groups. Many respondents said that this engagement with staff was greater than usual and that this shared planning and delivery was a welcome opportunity to shape the school in new ways. Staff engagement has been effective and has developed and grown through the pilot.

There was a greater diversity of mechanisms for community engagement in the pilot. Some schools had pre-existing boards or councils. These forums supported the decision to apply for participation in the pilot and continued to play active roles in considering needs and in supporting the recommendations of the principal and staff to undertake certain initiatives. In many more cases, the Parents and Citizens groups supported in the initial decision to participate in the pilot, the shaping of pilot initiatives and in monitoring the achievements of the school.

In other cases, parents who were volunteering their time in schools were able to be employed in a variety of new or expanded roles in schools, and so were able to join with teachers in shaping new student outcomes. In other situations, the pilot created new roles for community

engagement around for example the needs of Aboriginal people, vocational education, student attendance and alternatives to suspension, school administration, and in engaging with students and families from language backgrounds other than English. A number of schools maintain ongoing surveys of parents to allow participation in policy discussion and decisions in schools. In one school this involved regular communication to more than 800 households, and the opportunity for on-line participation in surveys on policy.

Parents and community members notice and support school improvement and are more satisfied where school improvement is occurring. As one principal said 'there has been significant appreciation from parents whose children benefited from the transitions project.' Through the pilot there is a clearly identifiable continuum of engagement among parents and community members across pilot schools. This engagement, and the perceived achievements of pilot schools, have developed parent and community satisfaction in many schools. This has arisen through engagement and participation in planning, developing and deciding initiatives, receiving regular updates on activity and then in many cases, seeing the results of the pilot initiatives in school culture, improvement and in the outcomes for their own children.

However, without excellent leadership and deep authentic engagement with teachers and other school staff, no school improvement is possible. It is clear from the pilot that in most pilot schools the majority of staff have engaged with the opportunities to better tailor teaching and learning to local need, and in many cases, this shared engagement of staff and community is perceived to have delivered improvement in culture and achievement for pilot schools.

Chapter 7 Impact on the management of schools

The flexibility of the pilot supported the management of schools. Principals said the flexibility helped the school focus its effort including: that they were able to respond to need by implementing initiatives more quickly; that the additional resources helped meet previously unmet needs; and that the pilot presented an opportunity to focus on literacy and numeracy.

Principals also said that the flexibility that would best help the school focus its effort included: staff selection on merit that is responsive to local decision-making; variations to the staffing mix; more flexible use of grant and program funding; a business manager; and more flexibility in procurement, including purchase of capital items.

7.1 Staffing

The largest component of an individual school budget is the staffing allocation. Not surprisingly, the detailed description of the pilot initiatives in Chapter 3 reveals that most involved variations to staffing in the school. From the outset it was agreed that all of these arrangements were temporary and would cease at the conclusion of the pilot.

Principals have described the evidence of the attitudes of teachers to the pilot as including, enthusiasm for the additional staffing where this was available, and growing staff support once they were informed about what could be done with available funding to assist them in their work, rather than any prospect of resources being withdrawn.

In group interviews with teachers, they expressed their views on the impact of the pilot on the management of schools, including: that the culture of learning amongst staff has increased as a result of the pilot; that this cultural change is positive; that there has been an increased input from teachers and an increased contribution to the school, through more substantial staff and stage meetings dealing with the 'nitty gritty' of teaching; that the executive and staff are working more as a team; and that these changes have allowed for a big focus on understanding where each student's learning is up to and in 'getting students to where they should be.' Teachers stated that if an individual teacher is in their own classroom with their own class all day they can't do much more than reach the upper and lower achievers. Through team teaching much more one-on-one support is possible.

Other teacher views include:

'I was on maternity leave when this was being planned – I was very happy to come back to the new arrangements; we are able to provide better planned and better quality lessons for students'

'Staff welfare has improved'

'Teaching is better this year, and the school more relaxed. There are peers to talk to and discuss practice with: I feel I am achieving all I need to and in a more comfortable manner'

'Teachers are needing to prepare more work, as they are getting through their lessons more quickly, and students are learning more'

'The extra teachers have made a big difference; more time is being spent in professional development, in support for one another as teachers, and in collaboration.'

Principals reported that the opportunities offered to staff to secure their engagement in the pilot included: clarification of the boundaries of the pilot; for example, continued operation of

the Staffing Agreement; an expression of interest process used for deciding higher duties and temporary teaching appointments; and the participation of staff in developing and deciding which initiatives to implement; and surveys of staff views.

Suggestions for bolstering staff engagement included: provision of additional resources to schools; greater staff involvement in decision-making, planning, implementation and management; obvious evidence that initiatives respond to school, student and community needs; and local planning. A number of principals noted that there was no need to bolster staff engagement as they were already supportive and engaged.

The majority of principals stated that the pilot was an improvement on conventional Department administrative systems. Four principals stated that it was not an improvement and a further seven were unsure if it was an improvement or not.

For those principals for whom the pilot was not an improvement on the conventional administrative systems, their reasons included: the administration and approval processes for proposals were inconsistent with the intent of the pilot; they needed greater financial management skills to meet pilot requirements; and the pilot demonstrated the initial lack of knowledge of principals in finance and human resource management.

In describing the two most important changes to administrative systems that would enhance school-based management, principals raised the following issues: all the school funding and staffing responsibility should be given to the principal; five-year contracts for all executives in the Department; increased flexibility in the use of tied grants; increased flexibility in position descriptions and position types, including support staff; greater input to the nature of local capital works; greater input to maintenance; and the authority for principals to be able to choose staff, including an interview for transfer staff.

The most helpful aspects of the pilot included: the additional resources; discovering staffing costs for the first time; expanding their knowledge; flexibility; professional development workshops for principals especially on financial management; and the experience of shared initiatives and working together with other schools in their local community.

The principals also commended the support that they receive from state office, particularly in the 'bias to yes' in the consideration of initiatives.

One principal's view was typical: 'The continuity and constancy of staff supporting the pilot was appreciated, exceptional service regarding finance, reports and information. The policy advice was excellent, the SharePoint site is very good.'

Another view was that 'the current support is very adequate on the end of the phone, people able to follow things through.' However, another said that they 'did not think the state team focussed enough on the teaching and learning imperatives at workshops and briefing sessions, but were too focussed on finance and not on student learning outcomes. Should have specifically made the link between the pilot and student learning outcomes or achievements.'

A principal offered comments that were also typical: 'we were happy with the pilot arrangements, finance and staffing approval, quick responses from system, a week at the longest, system worked well with [Staffing Services member] approval, SED kept in the loop, happy and like to have feedback and external scrutiny, safety net.'

Yet another principal said that 'the default to yes principle has supported principals innovating and they really need to take some risks if they are to improve. The flexibility of the pilot has definitely allowed initiatives that support other program opportunities to grow.'

For their part, Staffing Services Directorate reports that the pilot has been ‘an exciting opportunity to get closer to schools and to understand more of the support they need.’ The complexity and workload of Staffing Services Directorate has increased, but they report that this is a very useful chance to examine what the future needs of schools might be, and to explore how Staffing Services Directorate may need to change to respond to those needs. In particular, they report that it is a chance to examine what the Staffing Services Directorate role might be in a more devolved system.

This view on the importance of preparing for supporting schools in a different manner is consistent with the views of schools themselves. As one principal said ‘a difference in the management of the school, and global implications for staffing, has happened. I now understand the whole staffing process, and am aware of each staff member’s cost, makes you aware of what happens in the wider world.’ One typical view: ‘I understand now how staffing works from a system perspective, especially in relation to on costs.’

This changed terrain can present new opportunities: ‘one assistant principal is retiring and two years ago it would not have been possible to consider a conversation where the teachers were given a choice of replacing the position or using the resources for something else. Now there is much more flexibility in the thinking in the school.’ Another principal was keen to emphasise: ‘the school has a blend of experienced and new teachers; decisions related to staffing still based on quality, not on replacement cost.’

There remains ‘a significant challenge attracting experienced executives to [remote school] and to the region more generally. It was necessary to make the new deputy principal position permanent to attract a quality candidate, but this is not funded from the pilot, although the authority for the role is as a result of the pilot.’

Overall, principals said that ‘staff welfare improved’ in the pilot schools.

7.2 School planning and reporting

The process of identifying need and creating initiatives was reported by principals to be developmental. A scenario might include trying one or more initiatives, then identifying new funding, new needs, or new opportunities for additional initiatives. The experience was said to be similar to a continuous improvement approach by one principal. In addition, the process appears to have matured with knowledge, familiarity and the confidence of previous perceived success.

Principals reported that the first initiative was the most difficult, and that they needed to put one initiative in place in order to undertake the next step. Opportunities also arose through listening to the experience of other principals. There are also accounts of growing professional understanding among principals that developed as they exercised pilot flexibility around staffing.

As the announcement of the School-Based Management Pilot was out of sequence with the school planning cycle, there was an immediate disconnection between the identification of local need and the collaborative planning to meet that need, which is reflected in the annual school planning process, and the new opportunity of identifying pilot initiatives that might also better support learning and teaching.

It does not appear that there was a rigorous or widespread attempt to link school-based management initiatives to the school planning process for 2010. Only one principal reported making explicit connections. The link between the initiatives and the school planning process in 2011 was reported to be much stronger.

Typically principals said that 'the initiatives have all been recorded in the school plan and have helped to change the mindset of the staff, as the resources have been devoted to identified need.' Another principal expressed a common view: 'the school developed a school management plan and considered the implications for changes to the school resource plan in order to support the pilot initiatives.' Other schools 'use Zoomerang to garner community involvement in strategic planning.' Still others report that 'all initiatives are in the school plan along with their funding source, a discipline that has been driven by the Smarter Schools National Partnerships.'

Other issues raised by principals included the disconnect between the input based program reporting and the framework for the annual school report. Those principals maintained that it was difficult to focus on improving outcomes when reporting was not consistently expressed. Further, there was significant demand among principals to have the ability to combine all school resources and focus the effort not through the lens of individual program funding amount, but on the shared view of the needs of local students.

It was felt by principals that there was room to improve school planning and reporting significantly particularly as a mechanism for tracking principal accountability in any expansion of school-based management.

7.3 Business systems

An improved business system with connections to SAP and the Student Administration and Learning Management initiative of Learning Management and Business Reform was argued by many principals to be a useful suite of systems to support the improvement of schools. However, it was also agreed that this will take some time to deliver and leaves a continuing capacity shortfall.

In the meantime, more training on current systems and processes for principals and relevant school administrative and support staff was desirable, in order that they might better understand how the various Staffing Services and Finance systems operate within school contexts.

The overly complex and extensive account codes were particularly discussed. These were said to not support school-based management in an intuitive manner. An example provided was an audit of Casual Employment Payroll System (CEPS) codes in 2009, which demonstrated that there is an underdeveloped knowledge of what account codes are and how they work. This raises the question of how some principals are exercising their financial management delegations with variable knowledge of account codes and the potential flow-on impact on accuracy in financial reporting and management.

The Department is developing new business system capacity through its Learning Management and Business Reform program.

7.4 Executive role

There was appreciation from the staff respondents of the 'hard work of school executives' who were considered 'to be experienced and positive.' A number of schools created new school leadership positions using the pilot authority. Fourteen schools created deputy principal positions. One senior regional officer supported 'the notion of principals proposing deputy principal roles rather than assistant principal roles as pilot initiatives. Deputy principals can lead and supervise staff across the school, something the assistant principal cannot do. There is also an expectation of a deeper quality of leadership from a deputy principal.'

Another principal used pilot funding to provide mentoring, coaching, professional learning and program support for the assistant principals in their school. This development support cost a similar amount to a day of deputy principal time, but was able to be provided consistently irrespective of demands on executive time. The principal also argued that the approach had the benefit of developing all the assistant principals, not just the one selected for an appointment to deputy principal, and supported improvements to teaching and learning across the school.

In 21 schools, almost 12 effective full time appointments were made to assistant principal positions, although in reality many of these positions were part time. One principal said that 'the appointment of assistant principals to mentor younger staff was very effective. Performance improvement is about the capacity of teachers.' The principal argued that with this executive mentoring support 'a high performing culture has been able to be supported in a manner in which it couldn't before.'

A model adopted by one school was to split 'one day per week of non-teaching time for each of the five assistant principals instead of appointing a deputy principal to a vacant establishment position which avoids competition among the assistant principals and builds collaboration among school leaders.'

Finally, one school engaged beginning teachers in leading the school: 'an important element in mentoring new teachers as leaders is to allow two teachers each year to sit in and observe the discussion and work of the school executive. This gives them exposure to the balancing required in making decisions and the reasoning behind decision making processes.' This experience was described as very valuable by those participating teachers.

7.5 The business of running the school

The pilot experience was one of significantly increased knowledge and responsibility in the business of running each school. Thirty one appointments position to support the business of running pilot schools, including to business manager (10 EFT), school administration manager (1 EFT), and school administration officer (20 EFT) positions.

Typically one principal said that 'due to increasing enrolments, the school was entitled to additional administrative support hours. The school would receive a greater return on this administrative support investment by creating a more senior position that could exercise some functions on delegation including risk management, maintenance, financial management, and occupation health and safety.' This principal reported that delegations of these functions had freed up a great deal of their time for educational leadership, remarking particularly how much of the principal's time seemingly small tasks like managing risk assessment and consent from parents for school outings had actually taken up.

Another principal said: 'the advent of the business manager position in this school has allowed me to focus more on leading teaching and learning. The bureaucracy is increasing the workload on principals. This principal argues that the physical establishment of schools needs to be reviewed, that there is a qualitative difference in what an administrative position that is full time and senior enough to have delegated authority can achieve, compared to just extending school administration manager or school administration officer hours. As the Business Manager role has administrative hours and conditions, it has proved very useful to have someone available during school holidays when maintenance or building work can be done at the school.'

Principals also reported unexpected efficiencies: 'the business manager has really driven the school in a paperless direction, I'm really happy with much more use of digital processes for managing the school, it's much more efficient. The business manager also manages building work for 12 other [non-pilot] schools.'

The role of school administration manager has also changed. As one principal said 'it's a different job now, with the higher level of skill and knowledge required, the role is to manage with a customer service focus, increased expectations regarding finance, with the school managing aspects previously handled by regional or state office.' New requirements were also introduced to school administration officer roles for example: 'as promotional manager, they secured multiple scholarships for students from local businesses for sport and dance.'

Additional general assistant time was also highly valued: 'the school is better presented, the front gardens create a good first impression, new benches are being provided in the grounds for students, and the school looks clean and neat.' In other cases, additional support is provided for professional facilities management. This allows teachers 'to focus on quality and maintain their interest in teaching the students.'

The increased demands of financial management in the pilot was also a driver of increased financial management support and expertise. One principal said: 'we all need a degree in accountancy to deal with the new budget management demands and much better training.' Another principal agreed with this sentiment but said that 'business managers are a great idea but it depends on finding the right person with great skills.' Overall, there was consensus among pilot principals that 'more training is needed on financial management aspects of the pilot.'

Chapter 8 Impact on teaching and learning outcomes

The majority of pilot schools implemented initiatives with the intention of improving teaching and learning and many principals and teachers report improvements as a result. However, the issue of the impact of pilot initiatives on student results is difficult if not impossible to quantify in so short a timeframe. In a small number of cases, improved student outcomes are very clear and there is evidence that they have emerged directly from the pilot initiatives. In other schools, the pilot has been used to improve the whole-school teaching and learning focus, and to support delivery of other specific programs including those of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships. This has resulted in more difficult-to-measure outcomes.

For the future, it is proposed that detailed analysis of student assessment data be undertaken to determine if any causal links can be identified between the pilot initiatives, improved learning outcomes, and student results. International research demonstrates that between five and eight years are required to demonstrate improvement in student learning outcomes as a result of school-based management initiatives.

8.1 Student engagement

Principals were asked about engagement with students, alongside discussion about engagement with parents and communities. What emerged was a continuum of engagement of students and of student participation in deciding and delivering initiatives. At one point, this engagement involved 'understanding the needs of students' as the basis of the pilot initiatives but not consulting them directly. In another school the principal reported that 'the student representative council is consulted and involved in decision making.' In yet another school, a principal reported that the 'initiatives are born out of students' interests and abilities.' Finally, at another point in the continuum of engagement, one principal reported that 'increased engagement of students, led to more positive interaction in the classroom.'

Parents and school staff noticed benefits from greater engagement with students in the pilot. One Parents and Citizens leader said 'students are talking more to parents this year about what's going on in school.' Consistently, teachers and principals reported that 'attendance at the school has increased.' Another parent said the school was now more 'focussed on what students can do and the benefits for students.' A principal reported that 'lesson observations showed evidence of increased student engagement across the school.' Finally, a parent said 'for sure things are a lot more positive now and the evidence for this is the surprisingly large number of families who are now giving the school a go with new enrolments.'

There was also evidence of student engagement with learning and schooling. In one school teachers reported:

'The classes are getting through a lot more work than they were last year and all students are having their needs better catered for. The students are more focused on learning, are engaged with the school, and particularly like having more contact with different teachers rather than the same one all the time. Fewer students are cruising under the radar, and more students are getting focus and attention from more teachers which really caters for their needs. Transitions have been better supported, across stages and between classes, through teachers retaining contact with students and in sharing expertise, experience and knowledge between teachers.'

In another case, a principal described the support for a partnership between a pilot school and 17 organisations that delivered education for young mothers of high school age, using school facilities. The pilot funding supports both a teacher and provision of childcare while other

agencies provide case management and other services as needed. In other situations, these young women might well have been alienated from education.

In one school, there were 15 students in Year 10 at risk of a nil award or of leaving school early. Through the pilot, a teacher with a careers background was engaged to work with this group. The intervention involved understanding where each student was at, and assessing their capacity to successfully complete school work. If continuing at school was the consensus, supporting them to catch up their work, with one-on-one tutoring was provided. If leaving school was the consensus, then the teacher supported them with developing a resume, applying for jobs, and going to interviews. All 15 students are now either in employment or proceeding through Year 11.

As the principal said: 'the transitions initiative has been demonstrably successful .. as a result of the support from the transitions officer.' This is an impressive example of flexibility in engagement with students delivering outcomes that meet the student's needs, and build capacity and success.

Finally, in a remote school a parent described her son needing speech therapy, along with several other students, which the school organised through an in-person visit to the school from the Royal Far West therapist followed by weekly therapy sessions via video conference with a tutor present in the room with the student. The parent said that 'her son has come along in leaps and bounds and is now participating in class, putting his hand up and having normal conversations with others, and talking normally at home and at school.'

8.2 Learning

Parents described 'a big focus is on understanding where each student's learning is up to and in getting students to where they should be' in one pilot school. This comment typifies the discussion of parents, teachers and principals on improving learning in pilot schools. Another parent said 'I'm very happy with the school this year, the teachers have finally got their act together, I'm very happy with the early morning routine, students do the most difficult literacy and numeracy work when they're fresh, the school is listening to student needs, listening to parents, and following up on what students need.' These perceptions of parents were echoed in one school by teachers 'classroom observations and parent feedback provide strong evidence indicating alignment of teaching, learning and classroom practices.'

Principals described how this new focus came about: 'the school had identified what the needs were and wanted to make a difference to student learning.'

One principal says that another impact of this renewed focus on student learning is improved 'student attitude, there is a perception by staff that there have been less problems in the classroom and playground and a reduced number of suspensions.' Similarly a teacher said 'students get excited when they see another teacher in their classroom, the variety is stimulating. Students like working with others at similar levels, it is more engaging for them and they are able to work collaboratively. This gives them more ownership over their learning. The opportunities for mixed ability groups are also valuable as are the streamed reading groups.'

Improving literacy and numeracy were frequently occurring learning objectives. One teacher said that their school adopted a 'particular focus on literacy and numeracy using previous tools/training and informed by SMART data.' Another teacher said that their school had adopted a 'capacity building view based on quality teaching model where the goal was to change the way teachers talk to students (positive behaviour for learning) and the way they teach students (quality teaching).'

8.3 Teaching

Among pilot schools there was a notable positive feeling towards teaching. One teacher commented 'teachers are more excited about teaching, more staff brings more enthusiasm, the school has a bubbly feel, and all these things make it a better place to learn and work.' Another teacher said 'teaching is better this year, more relaxed, there are peers to talk to and discuss practice with, I feel I am achieving all I need to and in a more comfortable manner.' This positive feeling was supported by professional development on teaching: 'collaborative, supportive and collegial culture and professional learning across the school is valued by the staff and is closely aligned to school targets.'

Principals reported: 'staff comments in relation to reduced class sizes, increased engagement of students in Stage 1 and more positive interaction in the classroom in Stage 3 led to a reduction of suspension rates in 2010.' Another principal said that 'the ability to individualise teaching with smaller class sizes was valued. The staff appreciate the professional respect they are given.' Another principal said: 'more time is being spent in professional development, support for one another as teachers and in collaboration.' In a number of pilot schools principals characterised the pilot initiatives as 'the school's focus on quality teaching has received a positive reception and is thought to be working well.'

In a school that introduced stage teaching, the teachers said 'the workload is different, instead of delivering a lesson to one class once only, it is now possible to repeat and practice lessons with different groups and to share programming by stage with supporting teachers as part of the teaching team providing ongoing professional development. We are more excited about our job and everyone is on the same page.' In another school teachers said: 'with smaller classes, there are fewer reports for teachers to complete, fewer parent interviews, but higher levels of responsibility for teachers. The time saved has been directed into more individualised teaching and a better understanding of each student's ability and welfare.'

Improving literacy teaching was also a strong theme. In one school teachers said they were seeing a 'greater depth of educational outcomes, opportunity for staff and students to undertake new literacy and writing initiatives and to build capacity in the school.' In another school the principal said that 'lesson observations and programs demonstrated explicit and systematic teaching of literacy.'

In several schools the ability to choose male teachers was discussed. One principal said that the 'critical issue is the right staff, with the boys mentoring program the co-ordinator is charismatic, relentless, driven, lovable. He applies goals to the program and the boys, builds teams, encourages the boys, hangs in there, contacts parents.' In another school, a principal said that they were 'very happy that there are significant numbers of male teachers in the school.'

One principal said that better system and local support could be provided for planning and programming to: 'provide better programs, release instructional leaders and make more use of paraprofessionals.'

Support for beginner teachers and confidence in their capacity was emphasised by several principals: 'I advertise vacancies with the words *strong beginner teacher support program*. I like to employ beginning teachers as they can be shaped and guided into the new school culture. In 2011 the school is supporting nine teacher accreditations in one year (8 out of 13 teachers are new scheme). The deputy principal spends 50% of his time and principal spends 10% of his time supporting this accreditation.'

Other principals repeated this confidence: 'beginner teachers are open and willing to learn and the school embraces them. They are enthusiastic and have great energy and pace.' In another school 'the deputy principal role enables provision of significant beginning teacher induction

including cultural immersion, spending time with Aboriginal elders, and behaviour management training. This delivers better support for beginning staff than in other schools and allows for a careful step-up in behaviour management.'

8.4 Behaviour management

One pilot principal said 'restorative justice is an important part of the new behaviour management regime in the school.' A parent in the same school said the 'principal's use of a merit list to reinforce positive student behaviour has worked wonders.' In another school the principal said that 'there is no need for the engagement class for students with challenging behaviours in 2011. The creation of an engagement class in 2010 meant that the behaviour of all classes improved.'

Typically, one principal said: 'positive teacher feedback, positive behaviour learning and class behaviour management have been successful - fewer referrals and a higher level of responses to low level behaviour problems have been effective.' In another school the principal said 'when our students are suspended and go to the regional behaviour class, we work intensively to ensure they are reintegrated back into the school within six weeks.'

8.5 Learning for professional practice

Pilot principals described effective participation in communities of learning, within communities of school in the pilot, with other schools and principals in the pilot, and with schools in their local area outside the pilot. In one community of schools in the pilot they developed 'harmonised practices across the community of schools, peer to peer learning and collaboration, shared learning resources across schools.' Another pilot said that 'changed perceptions of other schools in the local community, [pilot school] has influenced other schools in the area who are now implementing or adapting the mentoring program or about to implement similar initiatives.'

In one case where a school is part of a learning community: 'the classrooms are more open and there is practice sharing across classrooms in a way that didn't happen before the pilot. The pilot has also seen the development of support for teachers in their classrooms (while teaching) in the form of professional dialogue and as an extension of the learning community.' In another school leaders reported that they 'have participated in professional development within their school and they have worked in teams to develop resources within the educational community including a one page description of science teaching that was simple and practical and ensured greater consistency across the educational community, including across primary and secondary schools.'

In one region a pilot principal used resources to employ a coordinator to work across all schools in the school education group: 'a key role is modelling collaboration across the schools. Joint senior school curriculum delivery, common subject selection resources, and supporting administrative staff across the schools in the background.'

A senior regional officer said that there is a 'raised level of conversation between SED and schools. Schools are more mature. There is more capacity building.'

Principals called for more collaboration: 'a knowledge clearing-house in which new initiatives are described is a good way for principals to access knowledge and identify potential solutions to needs in their schools.' Another principal called for 'development of a best practice document outlining pilot initiatives with information about what worked well.'

Staff professional development in schools was also a major feature in pilot schools. One principal was 'able to support the professional development program and had time to follow this up in stage meetings. Staff were initially opposed to working closely with the students unless there was time to follow-up and implement the activities.' In another school 'a key focus of the initiatives is to support teachers with learning and teaching coaching and mentoring from the deputy principal and principal.'

One teacher said 'bouncing ideas off one another stimulates development. In some schools learning new ways of doing things is a problem. I've learnt more here since the beginning of the year than I did in my last two years.' Another principal said 'we have built some sustainable professional development into the pilot.'

8.6 Student assessment

One principal linked 'improved higher school certificate results for boys in 2010' to pilot initiatives. Another principal said that 'the return has been in seeing the NAPLAN improvements, although these improvements had begun prior to the pilot.' Other principals consistently made comments like this one: 'time will tell whether it is a successful program. It's too early to see improvements in student data.' Finally, other principals made comments like: 'the performance of the school in student assessments has improved over time and continues to improve.'

Chapter 9 Impact of the funding model

9.1 The operation of the funding model

One premise of the pilot was that schools might generate 'savings' through identifying unexpended funding or projected savings in their budgets. Hence, an immediate question was raised by principals: In what form, and with what regularity would principals be provided with 'surplus and deficit' statements and updated budget information?

Principals reported that this tangible expression of 'visibility' proved challenging to deliver immediately, owing to the disparate business systems used for financial management and the challenge in tracking staff movements into and out of individual schools. State office representatives confirmed that the consequence of these factors was that it took some time for budget and funding clarity to emerge including the identification of savings to fund pilot initiatives.

The second funding process for the pilot was to calculate average staffing funding to schools and to provide additional pilot funds to those schools that were under the average (and no additional funds to those schools that were over the average). State office representatives reported that this calculation relied on arriving at agreed and correct staffing establishment information and budgets for each school – a process of step-by-step improvement that in some cases also slowed implementation of pilot initiatives. It was reported that this was a very resource intensive exercise.

Significantly, many schools used flexible pilot authority to reshape vacant establishment positions, and to make temporary appointments to these positions.

In discussing whether or not pilot initiatives were sustainable in 2012 without pilot funding, many principals said they could continue some but not all of their initiatives. In many cases principals had access to residual National Partnership funding that could be used to continue initiatives. In other cases, principals argued that they couldn't be expected to return to managing their school within a centralised decision making framework after the pilot experience arguing that they didn't need additional funding, they wanted greater authority to use their establishment positions more flexibly.

9.2 The need for reporting tools

At the beginning of the pilot, there was an absence of appropriate financial reporting tools for principals to use in managing their whole budget. Some principals have argued that there wasn't enough planning overall on how reporting would be managed, which led to a lot of manual work-arounds and policy development for state office to get the pilot underway. However, principals now report widespread support and comfort with the Resource Planning Tool.

Staffing Services Directorate has argued that the real cost of running a school is more transparent as a result of this pilot – particularly given that the schools in the pilot represent a mix of size, place and complexity of need. The biggest variances in such modelling are the complexity created by the thirteen-step teacher pay grade and the unpredictability of retirements from the teaching service. It is argued that this pilot has added significantly to the body of knowledge around the actual cost of operating a school.

9.3 Whole-school budget management

Many principals reported benefits in managing their budget as a whole, without separation into various elements; such as program, pilot, or grants. They reported that this flexibility made intuitive sense in schools and maximised the flexibility available to respond to local need. Other principals felt constrained by program and tied grant boundaries and managing their budgets in separate categories. The pilot also delivered greater flexibility in implementing other initiatives, particularly the National Partnerships on Literacy and Numeracy and Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities. It appears that this flexibility has facilitated other program objectives, but it is not possible to quantify this outcome.

The majority of principals expressed a sentiment similar to this: we 'should have more flexibility at local level with more focus on student outcomes and the ability of school to be more global with funds.' Another principal said 'it is essential to understand your budget and how it all works, in order to best support the students. A greater knowledge of costs and on-costs related to staffing is needed.'

Another principal was 'clearer about staffing processes now and had chosen staff on merit rather than because they were less expensive and savings could be used elsewhere. However, the majority of staff still come on nominated transfer.' Another principal said that 'long service leave savings have been significant, but employing the cheapest person is not the best strategy, the best person should be employed.' Another principal said that 'the school has a relatively young staff and so has had access to a significant surplus in both years of the pilot.'

Another principal said the 'school has had no dedicated pilot funding but has freed up some money through long term leave of more experienced teachers, who have been replaced by appointing new graduates, many of whom the school established relationships with through its more than 100 practicum students per year.'

For current and aspiring principals it was argued that there is an assumption that they can step up to the mark and manage a multi-million dollar budget from a standing start. According to one senior regional officer, 'this needs careful reflection to find out if it is the case, and if it is not there need to be system wide strategies for building capacity.' Respondents argued for improved financial management training and one said that '23,000 sub-dissections in the budget, that's the problem. It needs to be simpler.'

Principals asked for 'some in-depth training with the school administration manager and senior executives to develop a cash flow approach to budgeting that would include all aspects of the budgeting process.' Another principal said that they were 'not sure that there is a real need for fortnightly financials, each term would probably be enough. This is a way in which a broader role out of school-based management might be achieved without massive cost.'

9.4 Resource Planning Tool

The Resource Planning Tool was developed to deliver financial management capability and surplus and deficit financial reporting to pilot schools. Typically, it took pilot principals and schools some time to become accustomed to this tool, to work to clean up their establishment data, and through this method to ensure that their financial reporting was accurate. The majority of principals described this process of engaging with the Resource Planning Tool and the bigger task of managing their school budgets for the first time. One principal said this represents 'a difference in the management of the school, and has global implications for staffing, I now understand the whole staffing process, and am aware of each staff member's cost.'

A typical description by a principal is: 'the support has been great, it's not a hard tool to use, the hard part is making decisions about where to allocate funds. Took me 3-6 months to feel competent with Resource Planning Tool. The new tool is more accurate.'

Describing the financial management experience, a principal said 'more support with reading the Resource Planning Tool would have been useful, although it has helped develop useful financial management practices. The school has recently been in deficit according to the Resource Planning Tool and that this has been very impactful on the school administration manager. This situation has required much closer attention to human resource expenses coding.'

Another principal said: 'you need a principal and school administration manager who are good at excel, a real dependency on this software is necessary for financial management.' One principal said 'the initial problem was that the finance data indicated that we were in the red financially and it took till September 2010 to clarify that picture, which turned out to actually be a surplus of \$150,000. If I had had earlier accurate financial advice then the pilot initiatives would have been able to begin earlier.' A principal said that 'previously I had no access to staff management, this input has been the biggest change and gaining understanding of staffing and finance. Still not sure about surpluses and losses. Working with staffing variations is a lot of trouble and adds one more layer of things to do.'

While the Resource Planning Tool catered for school financial management, 'there was no recognition in the financial management support provided for the pilot of the community of schools. The business manager had to develop work arounds to support budget analysis.' Similarly, a principal said that the 'other impact is that the National Partnership on Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities accounting process is inconsistent with the pilot and very challenging to use, which makes budgeting very difficult.'

Chapter 10 The wider application of school-based management in NSW

This chapter focuses on the future. It explores potential improved arrangements to enhance efficiency and effectiveness for a wider application of school-based management, including features that may not be suitable for application across the whole system. In meeting this need, it goes beyond the evaluation of the current pilot, to the apply the experience of pilot schools to any future expansion of school-based management.

International experience demonstrates that the advent of school-based management runs the risk of seeing student results decline, especially in the short term. This is most likely when students move to new self-managing schools. Supporting students to (re)achieve results similar to those in their old schools, or to improve their results depends on a single factor: the quality of teaching and learning in self-managing schools.

The majority of those interviewed indicated overwhelming support for the expansion of school-based management. No respondent favoured the removal of school-based management authority from pilot schools. No respondent favoured an expansion of school-based management utilising less functions or autonomy than had been available in the pilot. Indeed, some pilot principals argued that they and other schools should have greater autonomy, particularly in staff selection and in whole-school budget management.

10.1 Respondent views on expansion of school-based management

10.1.1 Support and autonomy

All pilot principals wanted some support from outside the school. Staffing Services was perceived to have a continuing role by many respondents. A typical view, expressed by a principal was: 'at what point can we make decisions? However, there is a risk of making errors so it is good to have support.' Many principals suggested that the current roles of the school education director, regional director and regional office should continue. Other principals sought central policy support with accountability for results focussed locally (examples included a school board or school council) rather than current formal lines of accountability to senior regional officers. No principal explicitly sought independence from the public school system.

Student welfare was an example of where most respondents wanted the support and policy guidance of state office, in order to effectively solve local problems. It was agreed by many that the accountability for student welfare should rest with the principal, with school-based decision making within a central framework and guidelines. The positive behaviour for learning approach was referenced repeatedly as a useful and effective model that combined appropriate local decisions with effective central policy support.

10.1.2 Sharing knowledge about what works

Training and development was a major theme in discussion of future school-based management. Not surprisingly, the necessity for financial management training for principals, school executives, administrative staff, teachers and potential schools leaders was promoted for inclusion in any expansion of school-based management. It was argued that developing professional learning networks among these groups of staff may be a useful model for sharing expertise and problem solving, particularly at the level of actually managing a whole-school budget, and managing a school in a new manner.

Respondents suggested that aspiring principals need a mentor. It was also argued that the executive level staff in schools needs significant capacity building as many principals are about to retire and succession needs to be carefully planned.

Training and development in 'an understanding of how staffing works' including 'what's possible, and to be creative and more flexible' was proposed by one principal, reflecting the views of several. Principals suggested that training should be focussed on teams of like-schools grouped together who could share additional management resources, perhaps on the model of the business manager, and some principals said that the business manager was a resource that could be shared between schools to maximise the return of investment.

There was widespread support for an school administration staff to undertake analysis of data and to support developing flexibility within the school through modelling potential new roles. Some principals called for involvement of the 'engaged parents more in the training opportunities so they too could share in the local management journey.'

The need for development of a best practice resource that documented pilot initiatives and provided information about what worked well was a widespread idea. It was argued that such a resource could be a living and growing legacy of the pilot and that it might well develop from the existing SharePoint site. Such a resource was seen as a useful potential basis for widespread professional learning. It was argued that this might well be complemented by pilot principals coaching and mentoring those new to school-based management.

10.1.3 Curriculum

Principals were generally supportive of the Board of Studies role in establishing a central curriculum. No principal or other respondent called for curriculum to be decided locally. There was a degree of interest in being able to have 'local flavour, with school responding to local needs' by one principal. Another principal noted that with the increased school leaving age, it maybe that two different credentials (as in Queensland) was required.

10.1.4 Assets and procurement

There were mixed views about where decision making for asset management and school maintenance should be situated. Some principals felt that their focus should be on education leadership and that state or regional office should be responsible for these functions. Other principals, and the majority of those in remote areas, felt that local decision making in these areas was more effective and that priorities were clearer at the front line.

There was significant appetite among principals for greater local control of procurement. One principal described the process of purchasing a new tractor. The school had limited amount to spend and were offered a local trade-in on the old one. However, they were not allowed to procure the tractor locally where they would have gotten a better trade-in and a better price. Finally, they also had to pay to have the tractor purchased from a Sydney dealer transported to them. The principal said that this decision was counter intuitive in the community, as 'everyone knew they could have gotten a better local deal.' One principal had a different perspective: 'procurement should be consistent across government irrespective of Departments, the best possible deal should be achieved and little choice is really required.'

10.1.5 Staffing

The authority of the pilot was largely engaged to create new temporary positions using pilot funding, and in many more cases, through the flexible use of vacant establishment positions. The flexibility and responsiveness that these appointments provided were highly valued by principals and pilot principals wanted this authority retained in their school.

Indeed, many pilot principals argued that this authority should be extended more broadly in NSW public schools. Some pilot principals argued that all schools should be able to select their staff. Some principals wanted to have both the option for a state wide staffing processes and local selection, including the right to interview and select/reject those proposed for transfer. Others argued that 'system capability development strategies that actually work' were required, rather than what the 'restrictive' transfer system. Some principals and several senior regional officers argued that staff should be appointed to a school education group and shared as required, in a more flexible manner, between schools and within a region. Several principals argued that the 'Staffing Agreement is an impediment to quality education.'

One principal said they preferred to have a choice about staffing and particularly liked the flexibility with staffing that the pilot provides: 'for example, the ratio of male students to females is 60:40 and the school could therefore do with a few more male staff, but it is difficult to meet this need with the transfer system.' However, the same principal is also a supporter of the transfer system and thinks it delivers incentives, allows for priorities to be addressed and staff to be treated compassionately.

In considering where higher duties decisions should be taken, most respondents said that these should rest with the principal.

10.1.6 Decision making and accountability

The majority of pilot principals argued for their schools to continue to have access to school-based decision making authority once the pilot concluded. Typically, one said: 'hopefully [the pilot authority continues] now that we've experienced school-based management, it would be hard to go back to not having that authority.'

The most frequently expressed view was that principals were happy to accept accountability for results in their school, if they had the necessary authority to make the decisions necessary to shape those results, including choosing the staff in the school: 'if I am to be accountable then I have to have the authority to approve initiatives in my school. If I approve then I am happy to accept accountability.' Some principals argued in this manner: 'assessment results of students from the classroom, NAPLAN and the higher school certificate should be the basis of performance' assessment of school leaders.

Another principal argued that the Department should allow all 'the flexibility, responsibility and therefore accountability to run the school as required to achieve improved student outcomes.'

10.1.7 The role of the principal

Respondents argued that the role of the principal was changing. This change is not solely driven by the pilot, but significant changes have occurred as a result of it. Principals said that their role was becoming more management focussed and described the increased administrative responsibilities, saying this leaves too little time for leading teaching and learning. One principal argued that 'there is usually an enthusiasm for new initiatives among principals but each new accountability adds to the overall weight without a looking at the total responsibility and whether there is a match between requirements and skills/experience and whether there is time to do it all.'

A common view among SEDs was that 'continuous training is required for principals and executives. The executive level needs significant capacity building as so many principals are about to retire and succession needs to be carefully planned.' It was argued that it is important to identify the capacity among potential leaders for thinking about higher level reform, financial management, driving strategic change, improving student outcomes, identifying how the school is performing through self knowledge and reflection on evidence,

and community engagement. An improved state-wide leadership framework was promoted to articulate new development pathways for aspiring principals.

A question that was asked repeatedly in the context of any expansion of school-based management was: how might the principalship remain about education provision without having to be drawn into local management issues that are not central to quality teaching and learning?

10.1.8 Expanding school-based management

One senior regional officer suggested that in any expansion of school-based management the Department might 'let principals nominate their school to participate and invite them to select the areas in which they will exercise greater decision making authority from a menu or similar.' A principal proposed a slightly different model: 'aspiring principals and principals not on the trial should perhaps have the opportunity to know what some schools have done - more of a fruit basket to choose from than anything else.'

A number of principals said that the criteria for selection of schools in any expansion of school-based management should include leadership and management capacity of principals, strong relationships with staff, and that the school is consistently tracking up in terms of its results. Another principal said that 'having just been trained as a mentor, my only suggestion here would be to link-up an existing pilot school and a new school. Whilst there were superb in-services to discuss programs, the budgeting process and so on, it is difficult to get your head around quickly.'

Several SEDs argued that should school-based management be expanded, the leadership depth and knowledge in schools needed to be a particular consideration in deciding if the school was ready to participate. One principal proposed that the Department 'pick the best six pilot schools with principals that loved the pilot. Use them to train aspiring principals. Put them on a help-line to offer collegial support.'

Finally, a senior regional officer said 'if the pilot was expanded...additional support and training would be required' and 'perhaps a SED would need to devote more time to supporting them. Good operators would be required, experienced principals, competent in financial management, good with planning, clear in their understanding of their school and its direction.'

10.2 Pilot features that were effective or efficient and might be extended

10.2.1 Increased local decision making improved school planning, reporting and collaboration

The 2010 annual school reports of many pilot schools reflected the activity and achievement of particular initiatives in 2010. In 2011, there was considerable evidence that pilot initiatives had been incorporated into school planning. One school described at length how this has worked for them:

'Through 2010, the school considered the areas of need that they thought they could impact on and discounted the issues where they couldn't think of an approach that would have impact and be sustainable. This development involved seeking ideas from parents, staff and the executive. Examples of initiatives used by other schools were provided and the possibilities for the school were discussed widely. The school captains and vice-captains were also consulted.'

Update reports on planning were provided in the school newsletter. A range of possibilities were discussed and eventually the school executive decided on the current

initiatives. The school then developed a school management plan and considered the implications for changes to the school resource plan in order to support the pilot issues.'

Another school described their planning process:

'The school has a relatively young staff and so has had access to a significant surplus in both years of the pilot. Consultation occurred with the school council, student representative council and the Parents and Citizens. Consultation also occurred with the staff who undertook a think tank that explored ideas for enhancing capacity without deskilling staff. This produced a long list of initiatives which was then considered against school performance data to ensure a close match between identified need and what the data was indicating. This preparation directly supported the development of the school plan for 2011.'

In one region, a SED reported that each time a new pilot initiative was commenced the principal updated the school plan with new performance targets, allocated funding and submitted the updated plan for approval by the SED.

In these cases, the schools used broad local decision making to define pilot initiatives, to integrate initiatives with existing school improvement, and to state what they intended to achieve in their school plans. These examples demonstrate the value of integrating local decision making very closely with school planning and reporting, of engaging a wide range of participants in planning and school improvement, and of transparently signalling to school and community members what the intention of the school was in any given year.

This discipline of integrating local decision making and school planning and reporting is a key element for inclusion in any expansion of school-based management.

10.2.2 Whole school improvement was supported by local decision making authority

Respondents said that the authority of the pilot supported effective implementation of other program or tied grant activities in their schools. Examples of these include the four pilot schools who participated in the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy and 19 pilot schools who were participants in the National Partnership on Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities.

A number of principals of schools involved in several whole school improvement programs said that the authority of the pilot was useful for delivering activities across their suite of programs, as one principal expressed it: 'The change program has some way to go. It is critical to continuing the initiatives that the school have access to staff not simply cash.' In support of this idea, a number of pilot schools said that they expected to be able to maintain their pilot initiatives through 2012 using the resources of the National Partnership on Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities.

This area demonstrates that school communities who are participants in other whole school improvement initiatives might well have the capacity to quickly engage with any expansion of school-based management. Secondly, it maybe that it would be useful to make school-based management available to schools as a tool for use in any circumstance where funds are provided to achieve whole-school change.

10.2.3 Engaging teachers in school decision making

The overwhelming view of principals and those teachers who were interviewed was that teachers and other school staff had been positively engaged in pilot initiatives, had in many cases benefited directly from them in their schools, or had experienced and acknowledged the positive things the initiatives were delivering for students and pilot schools.

In one school they regularly 'survey staff and 95% say they feel supported by senior staff. There is good participation of staff in after school activities and cooperation at every level in collaborative management of the school.' Another school's 'staff are surveyed annually using Zoomerang and the most recent result indicates 94% are satisfied.' Principals argue that the satisfaction of staff has increased as a result of the pilot and that this 'is attributable to increased staff numbers and greater flexibility.'

Teachers are critical participants in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The participation of teachers in school-based management has improved their satisfaction and improved the outcomes of their schools.

10.2.4 Engaging communities in school-based decision making

The engagement of parents and communities in school-based decision making has increased their satisfaction and has created opportunities for them to participate in school improvement, as volunteers and in a number of cases this had led to them becoming employees. This is one of the most successful areas of the pilot.

In the UK, parents are leading the creation of new schools, and are involved in the governance of academies that were formerly controlled by local education authorities. In the USA, government offers development for parents who wish to become more involved in leadership of local education provision and parents are elected to positions which manage local schools and schooling systems.

The participation of parents and communities in improving teaching and learning is a valuable and essential inclusion for any expansion of school-based management.

10.2.5 Whole-school budget management

Many principals reported benefits in managing their budget as a whole, without separation into various elements; such as program, pilot, or grants. They reported that this flexibility made intuitive sense in schools and maximised the flexibility available to respond to local need. Other principals felt constrained by program and tied grant boundaries and in managing their budgets in separate categories. The pilot also delivered greater flexibility in implementing other initiatives, particularly National Partnerships on Literacy and Numeracy and Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities. It appears that this flexibility has facilitated other program objectives.

The creation of a virtual budget for each school in any expansion of school-based management would be a useful element.

10.2.6 Flexible use of establishment positions

Principals argued that a key disadvantage of the pilot is that it did not allow for creation of permanent positions. Some principals felt they would be able to attract better candidates if they were able to offer permanent roles. In particular, attracting school leaders with a depth of learning and teaching experience was seen as more challenging than appointments based on 'relieving arrangements from within the staff inside the school.'

Secondly, the large number of temporary appointments using vacant positions demonstrates that principals saw significant value in more flexible use of their existing establishments.

Together these issues demonstrate that flexible use of school establishment positions is a key feature for inclusion in any expansion of school-based management.

10.3 Pilot features that may not be suitable for application across the whole system

It is estimated that pilot schools received \$20 million in pilot funding in 2010 and 2011, in addition to their usual entitlements under the staffing formula. It appears unlikely that this level of additional funding is sustainable in any expansion of school-based management. Other options like making more flexible use of existing staff establishments (see 10.2.5) would appear to be more sustainable alternatives.

The issue of the capability of the Department's current business systems and their ability to provide school level financial management information for any expansion of school-based management presents a challenge. The method of providing this information in the pilot involved business analysts in the Pilot Office and officers from the Schools Finance Directorate working together using system workarounds. As one regional director said this level of support is 'expensive to continue, and a continuing overhead as school-based management evolves.' This view seems accurate. One principal suggested that fortnightly financial management information detailing surplus and deficit for pilot schools was too frequent and that monthly or even quarterly statements might be adequate. This suggestion may prove useful. Resolving this capability issue will be a key challenge in any expansion of school-based management.

The review and approval of local decisions on pilot initiatives by the Staffing Services Directorate presented opportunities and challenges in the pilot. The majority of principals, particularly in the start-up period in 2010, appreciated the support and guidance of the experienced school leaders employed in Staffing Services. Other principals felt that the requirement for such intensive and centralised review and approval was inconsistent with the spirit of local decision making.

It is not clear from the international literature that school-based management usually involves intensive scrutiny by central education authorities of decisions at the school level. It may well be that a middle ground is achievable for any expansion of school-based decision making. One approach might be to dispense with an approval process if a proposed initiative is similar to one that has already been scoped, costed and approved for implementation. To some extent the policy settings around this issue may well depend on the appetite for allowing schools the freedom to explore new options for meeting their needs, and for accepting the associated risks of this approach.

Finally, a significant expansion of school administration support generally, and of business manager positions specifically, across public schools in NSW would be a significant additional and ongoing expense in public education. Certainly, two communities of schools in the pilot appointed a business manager each and shared the resource effectively within their respective communities. In another case, a pilot school shared their business manager with 12 other schools in their local area to support a building program. It may be that making more flexible use of existing school establishment positions is a sustainable mechanism for providing additional administrative support, if local decision making supports such a need.

Appendix One - School-Based Management Pilot schools and sequence of evaluation engagement

School	Visit 1 Date	Visit 2 Date	Visit 3 Date
Alstonville High School	02 Dec 10	28 Jun 11	
Anson Street SSP	24 Mar 11		
Blaxcell Street Public School	22 Sep 10		
Castle Hill High School	24 Mar 10	31 May 11	
Chatham Public School	16 Nov 10		
Collarenebri Central School	16 Mar 11		
Cromer Public School	23 Nov 10	20 Jun 11	
Denistone East Public School	09 Nov 10		
Dubbo South Public School	25 Mar 11		
East Maitland Public School	26 Nov 10		
Evans High School	30 Nov 10		
Finley Public School	9 Mar 11		
Gillwinga Public School [#]	02 Mar 10	16 Nov 10	11 Mar 11
Glendenning Public School ^{##}	06 Dec 10	20 Jun 11	
Grafton High School [#]	01 Mar 10	15 Nov 10	11 Mar 11
Grafton Public School [#]	01 Mar 10	15 Nov 10	11 Mar 11
GRC Hurstville Boys High School	23 Apr 10		
GRC Oatley Senior Campus	23 Apr 10	24 Nov 10	
GRC Peakhurst High School	23 Apr 10		
GRC Penshurst Girls High School	06 May 10	25 Nov 10	
Harrington Street Public School	20 Sep 10		
Illawarra Senior Campus	22 Nov 10		
Ingleburn Public School	06 Dec 10		
Kariong Mountains High School	25 Nov 10		
Kellyville Ridge Public School	24 Mar 10		
Kempsey High School	16 Nov 10		
Kyogle High School	03 Mar 10	02 Dec 10	27 Jun 11
Kyogle Public School	03 Mar 10	03 Dec 10	27 Jun 11
Liverpool Boys High School	23 Nov 10		
Loftus Public School	19 Nov 10	25 May 11	
Menindee Central School	11 May 11		
Narara Valley High School	25 Nov 10	17 May 11	
Narrabri West Public School	15 Mar 11		
Newtown High School of Performing Arts	04 Nov 10		
Plumpton High School ^{##}	01 Dec 10		

Plumpton House SSP ##	30 Nov 10	23 Jun 2011	
Plumpton Public School ##	01 Dec 10	20 Jun 11	
Punchbowl Boys High School	23 Sep 10		
Shalvey Public School	01 Dec 10		
South Grafton High School #	01 Mar 10	17 Nov 10	11 Mar 11
South Grafton Public School #	02 Mar 10	17 Nov 10	11 Mar 11
Tamworth West Public School	14 Mar 11		
Thurgoona Public School	10 Mar 11		
Toronto High School	26 Nov 10		
Towradgi Public School	22 Nov 10		
Westlawn Public School #	02 Mar 10	17 Nov 10	11 Mar 11
William Dean Public School ##	30 Nov 10	20 Jun 11	

Schools within the Grafton Learning Community

Schools within the Plumpton Education Community

Appendix Two - Data collection phase one, protocol

Principal interview

Evaluation question	Preliminary “probe” questions (PQ)
Introduction	PQ1 How long have you been principal / SAM in this school? PQ2 Is this your first school as principal / SAM? PQ3 If not, in what other schools have you been principal / SAM? PQ4 Is your school involved in other National Partnership programs? If so, which ones? PQ5 If Yes, has your involvement affected your participation in the SBM Pilot?
General	PQ6 What do you see as the purpose of the SBM Pilot? PQ7 Why did your school join? PQ8 Best and worst aspects of its implementation? PQ9 (a) Of the support provided? Materials (e.g. Participating School Instructions)? Advice and support? (b) What funding have you been given for this pilot? PQ10 What have been the major obstacles to the successful introduction of this program?
Q1. Impact on teaching and learning?	PQ11 Examples of resources reallocated to improve teaching and learning?
Q2. Enjoy confidence of school community?	PQ12 Evidence of attitude of school community? Teachers and parents? PQ13 Can you suggest strategies to bolster confidence?
Q3. Type of staff engagement with trial?	PQ14 What opportunities were offered to the staff to secure their engagement?
Q4. Degree of staff engagement with trial?	PQ15 (a) Evidence of staff engagement? Survey with staff (b) Where has the initiative(s) come from? Ideas from principal? Whole staff? Executive team? School community? Other? PQ16 Can you suggest how their engagement might be bolstered?
Q5. Extent to which prerogatives are being used?	PQ17 Which of the following prerogatives is being utilised: • Budget (Global Funding) 2011 • Have you used other funding sources? If yes, please detail. • Staff allocations (Human Resources) • Maintenance • Equity Funding • Professional Learning. PQ18 Why is each of these prerogatives being exercised? PQ19 Or NOT being exercised? • Budget (Global Funding) • Staff allocations (Human Resources) • Maintenance • Equity Funding • Professional Learning.
Q6. Ways in which prerogatives are being used?	PQ20 Does your school plan (requested by the SBM Pilot) include any of these prerogatives? Which ones? • Budget (Global Funding) • Staff allocations (Human Resources)

Evaluation question	Preliminary “probe” questions (PQ)
	• Maintenance • Equity Funding • Professional Learning. PQ21 If your school is using any of the following prerogatives how is that prerogative being used? • Budget (Global Funding) • Staff allocations (Human Resources) • Maintenance • Equity Funding • Professional Learning.
Q7. Helped the school focus its effort?	PQ22 Has the flexibility available helped the school focus its effort? PQ23 If so, how? PQ24 If not, why not? PQ25 What sort of flexibility would best help the school focus its effort?
Q8. Improvements in DET administrative systems?	PQ26 Are these measures, an improvement on the conventional DET administrative systems? PQ27 If so, in what ways? PQ28 If not, in what ways? PQ29 Can you name the two most important changes to DET administrative systems that would enhance school-based management? PQ30 What have been the most helpful aspects of this program?

Appendix Three - Data collection phase two, protocol

Principal interview

Discussion point	Link to ToR
Initiatives implemented in the school	
How were the initiatives determined?	2a
• How was the “need” identified? • How was the initiative determined? • What input came from staff / executive / students / parents / community / system? • School plan and annual school report considerations • If there is a Business Manager, what duties are they performing?	
Why?	
Have the initiatives implemented in your school been effective?	2c
• Did they meet their intended purpose? • How do you know? • How have they improved student outcomes?	2d 2e
Will the initiatives be continued in 2012? How? Why?	2a, 2e 3a
Has the culture in the school changed as a result of the initiatives, or being in the pilot? Staff attitude? Student attitude? Parent / community attitude? Interrelationships between the groups?	2c 2d
Management aspects	
Would you do anything differently if the pilot were to begin now, given the knowledge you have, experiences gained?	2a 2c
What management aspects have arisen through the pilot?	2a
• Relationship with school plan and annual school report • Manager vs leading teaching • HR • Budgeting • Maintenance; cleaning • Keeping casual teachers; etc	2c
Has the pilot affected your understanding of school management?	2a
• Staffing • Industrial issues; etc	2c
What has been the impact of the pilot on industrial relations in the school?	2a, 2b 2c
What has been the “return on investment” of being in the pilot?	2a
• Budget cost • Time; people cost; etc	2c
Would you recommend to other principals to participate in the pilot if they had the choice? Why? Why not?	2a 2c
Are the initiatives implemented in the school included in the 2011 school plan?	
• Is it possible to have a copy of the plan?	

Approval and accountability

What approval measures should be in place, if any, prior to initiatives being implemented?	2a 2c
o Local decision only?	3a
o SEDs or Regional approval?	
o State Office approval?	
o Other?	
What accountability measures for principals, if any, need to be improved / enforced if the pilot were to continue?	2a, 2c 3a
Thinking about school-based management in general, where along a continuum should the decision-making responsibility lie for various aspects of school management?	2a 3a

System decisions ← Initiatives → Local decisions

Curriculum
School hours
Student welfare
Assets
Maintenance
Staffing mix
Higher duties of staff
Hiring staff
Use of funds (tied grants)
Promotion of school
Other?

Where should the decision-making accountability lie for each element?	2a
- Principal?	2c
- Executive?	3a
- P&C or School Council?	
- SED or Region?	
- State Office?	
- Other (e.g. Industrial Relations Directorate; Staffing; Finance)?	
In relation to school-based management, what support for principals could / should be changed?	2a 2c

Engagement aspects

What has been the reaction to the pilot of: executive / staff / students / parents / community?	2b
Have parents / other community members been engaged with the initiatives in any way?	2b
o Communicating with them	
o Discussing proposed initiatives	
o Participating in decision making - receiving feedback and acting on it	
o Other	
Have teachers been engaged with the initiatives in any way?	

- o Communicating with them
- o Discussing proposed initiatives
- o Participating in decision making - receiving feedback and acting on it
- o Other

Have students been engaged with the initiatives in any way?

- o Communicating with them
- o Discussing proposed initiatives
- o Participating in decision making - receiving feedback and acting on it
- o Other

What do you think has been the effect of the pilot on the confidence of the school community in the school? How do you know?

What sort of response would you get if you asked the above question of the following stakeholders?

- A school community member
- An Aboriginal parent
- The parent of a Year ... student
- Any of the teachers
- A member of the executive
- A SAO
- The SAM
- Your SED
- Anybody else

Professional learning and training aspects

As a result of being in the pilot, have you identified any training needs that you require? Any of the staff require? 2a
2c

If the model were to be implemented more widely, are there any training needs for aspiring principals? 2a
2c

Teacher instrument

Initiatives implemented in the school

- What is your role in the [xx] initiative?
- Were you involved in decision making about the [xx] initiative?
- Did the initiative(s) meet their intended purpose?
- Has the pilot changed learning and teaching in the school?
- Has the pilot changed your work or your role as a teacher?
- Has the [xx] initiative benefited the students? How do you know?
- Has the culture in the school changed as a result of the initiatives?

Management aspects and accountability

- Has the school involved staff, students and parents in decisions about the pilot?
- Has your understanding of school management changed?
- Have teachers' interests, needs, abilities and systemic requirements influenced the nature of the initiative?
- Have students' interests, needs, abilities and systemic requirements influenced the nature of the initiative?

Engagement aspects

- Has your students' engagement with their learning changed as a result of the [xx] initiative? How do you know?
- Has the pilot changed the confidence in the school of the school community?

Professional learning and training aspects

- Has being involved in the pilot identified any training needs for teaching staff?

Parent instrument

Initiatives implemented in the school

- Do you know about the [xx] initiative?
- Has the [xx] initiative benefited your child(ren)? Why do you say that?
- Has the culture in the school changed as a result of the initiatives?

Management aspects and accountability

- Has the school involved you and other parents in decisions about the pilot?
- Did students' interests, needs, and abilities influence the nature of the initiative?

Engagement aspects

- Has your child(ren)'s engagement with their learning changed as a result of the [xx] initiative? How do you know?
- Has the pilot (xx initiative) had an effect on confidence of the school community in the school?

SED instrument

A. Initiatives

- What are the highlights of the pilot?
- Where have issues arisen in relation to the pilot?
- Are there areas that principals have sought advice / guidance in?

B. Management aspects

- The role of the principal?
- The role of the SED?
- If school-based management were to be expanded, how would you select the schools?

C. Approval and Accountability

- Accountability implications for principals
- Accountability implications for SEDs

D. Engagement

- Has the pilot changed confidence of the school communities in the schools in your SEG?

E. Professional learning and training

- Merit selection of principals
- Has involvement in the pilot changed training needs for principals, SASS, teaching staff, aspiring principals, others?

Regional Director instrument

A. Initiatives

- What are the highlights of the pilot?
- Where have issues arisen in relation to the pilot?

B. Management aspects

- The role of the principal?
- The role of the SED?
- Have industrial relations issues arisen from the pilot in your region?
- System responsibilities – what support should the system provide to schools?
- School responsibilities – what should a school be responsible for?
- If school-based management were to be expanded, how would you select the schools?

C. Approval and Accountability

- What accountability measures for principals, if any, need to be in place if the pilot were to continue beyond 2011? SEDs? RDs?
- Risk / audit issues
- Reporting

D. Engagement

- Has the pilot changed confidence of the school communities in the schools in your region?

E. Professional learning and training

- Merit selection of principals
- Has involvement in the pilot changed training needs for principals, SASS, teaching staff, aspiring principals, others?

Appendix Four - Proposed comparison schools

Pilot school	Comparison school
Alstonville High School	Mullumbimby High School
Anson Street SSP	Carenne SSP
Blaxcell Street Public School	Auburn West Public School
Castle Hill High School	Pennant Hills High School
Chatham Public School	Cundletown Public School
Collarenebri Central School	Mungindi Central School
Cromer Public School	Harbord Public School
Denistone East Public School	Chatswood Public School
Dubbo South Public School	Orana Heights Public School
Evans High School	Doonside High School
Finley Public School	Deniliquin South Public School
Georges River College Hurstville Boys High School	Randwick Boys High School
Georges River College Oatley Senior Campus	Sydney Secondary College Blackwattle Bay
Georges River College Peakhurst High School	Blakehurst High School
Georges River College Penshurst Girls High School	St George Girls High School
Gillwinga Public School	Nana Glen Public School
Glendenning Public School	Hassall Grove Public School
Grafton High School	Coffs Harbour High School
Grafton Public School	Narranga Public School
Harrington Street Public School	St Johns Park Public School
Illawarra Senior Campus	Warrawong High School
Ingleburn Public School	Hammondville Public School
Kariong Mountains High School	Lake Munmorah High School
Kellyville Ridge Public School	Kellyville Public School
Kempsey High School	Westport High School
Kyogle High School	Evans River Community School
Kyogle Public School	Casino West Public School
Liverpool Boys High School	East Hills Boys High School
Loftus Public School	Oyster Bay Public School
Maitland East Public School	Ashtonfield Public School
Menindee Central School	Brewarrina Central School
Narara Valley High School	Lisarow High School
Narrabri West Public School	Narrabri Public School
Newtown High School of Performing Arts	Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design
Plumpton High School	Jamison High School
Plumpton House SSP	No SSP in comparison sample
Plumpton Public School	Hassall Grove Public School
Punchbowl Boys High School	Belmore Boys High School
Shalvey Public School	Noumea Public School

South Grafton High School	Toormina High School
South Grafton Public School	Kororo Public School
Tamworth West Public School	Oxley Vale Public School
Thurgoona Public School	Lavington Public School
Toronto High School	Morisset High School
Towradgi Public School	Tarrawanna Public School
Westlawn Public School	Maclean Public School
William Dean Public School	Madang Avenue Public School

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