

## Chapter 2

# The PALL Approach

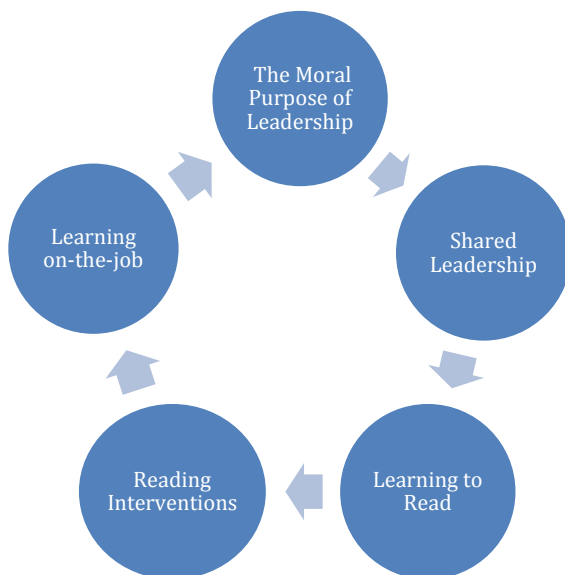
This chapter commences with an explanation of five positions on which the design of the Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALL) Program is based. We then show how five linked professional learning modules (leadership for learning, learning to read, gathering and using reading achievement data, designing and implementing literacy interventions, and evaluating those interventions) were coupled with between-module tasks supported by leadership mentors over a 2-year period. To critique the appropriateness of PALL's "time-rich" and "context-related" program design, we use a list of criteria drawn from the research literature on leadership learning (Dempster, Lovett, & Flückiger, 2011). In conclusion, we summarize the purposes, key questions and data-gathering methods used in six research studies which accompanied the PALL Program over a 5-year period.

### PALL Positions

As preparation for the PALL Pilot got underway, the question was raised about how a pilot project concerned with literacy could possibly make a difference to learning and achievement on all literacy elements—speaking, listening, reading, writing and multiliteracies. Discussions resulted in reading being the number one choice because of its foundation for other aspects of literacy and its significance for learning over a lifetime. In addition, speaking and listening received attention as they are known precursors for reading. Once this position was taken, a number of other firmly held research-derived positions were adopted—five in all (see Johnson et al., 2014, pp. 7–8), as Fig. 2.1 shows. Each of the positions is explained below with reading improvement in mind.

The first two positions relate to leadership and both were represented in Fig. 1.1 in the previous chapter.

**Fig. 2.1** The five PALL positions



1. **The moral purpose of leadership:** Compelling research evidence (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; MacBeath & Dempster, 2009; Masters, 2009; Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development [OECD], 2008; Robinson, 2007, 2009) shows that quality leadership makes a difference to children's learning and achievement when it is focused on working together on an agreed common moral purpose—in this case the improvement of children's reading because of its important "capacity to function" purpose (Sen, 1992) for citizens in modern economies.

The second position brings out an important difference between *leaders* and *leadership* suggesting that positional leaders should create partnerships to capitalize on the benefits of shared leadership:

2. **Shared leadership:** Achieving improvements in learning and reading achievement requires shared leadership inside the school and partnerships reaching out into the community (Bishop, Berryman, Wearmouth, & Peter, 2011; Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009; Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Konza, 2012; McNaughton & Lai, 2009). The partnerships closest to the formal learning needs of children are those arranged by positional leaders with teachers, eventually co-creating coalitions of teacher-leaders who are committed to the moral purpose of reading improvement as a means of ensuring that the lives of students are enhanced through literacy. That said, sharing leadership broadly and deeply within the school to include students and then moving beyond the school to include parents and family members as leaders of reading is easier said than done in low-SES situations and minoritized cultures where English is a second, third or fourth

language. We address this troublesome matter in Chap. 8, pointing to some of our research findings on PALL successes and failures in making the position on shared leadership work in practice.

The third position taken by the PALL Program is the approach to the teaching and learning of reading. We agree with the view that the “reading wars” (the longstanding conflict over the benefits of phonics or the preference for “look and say” methods of teaching reading) must be put aside in the face of accumulated, replicated and verified international findings on what it takes to learn to read (Konza, 2011), particularly for students who struggle:

3. **Learning to read:** National and international research confirms that learning to read requires explicit attention by parents and teachers to the reading BIG 6: (i) early and ongoing oral language experiences, (ii) phonological awareness, (iii) letter-sound knowledge, (iv) fluency, (v) vocabulary, and (vi) comprehension (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005; Konza, 2011; Loudon et al., 2005; Rowe & National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy [Australia], 2005).

The term BIG 6 was coined and used by Deslea Konza in the original PALL Pilot Project. It has continued in subsequent programs because it has been found to be a very useful conceptual framework for teachers at all levels in primary schools (and beyond) as they identify strategies which contribute to improving their students’ reading. More than this though, the BIG 6 has been shown to be helpful for principals who need to know the research support for these important components of reading. After all, it is principals who manage school resources—people, funds, equipment, materials and time—and they need to know where to direct them if reading is to be improved. A more detailed account of the use of the BIG 6 framework and its research base appears later in Chap. 3. A discussion of research findings about how PALL schools have used the framework and the effects it has had on professional capacity, classroom teaching and children’s reading achievement is presented in Chap. 9.

Position Number 4 concerns what to do when interventions are required. What are the decisions to be made, on what evidence will they be based and is there a system within the school to ensure that individual children’s needs are well known?

4. **Reading interventions:** Interventions in reading should be based on sound qualitative and quantitative evidence to target student needs across the school and a system for dealing with needs should be in place (Dempster et al., 2012; Jacobson, 2011).

Intervention systems used by schools are often based on “waves”, “tiers”, or “levels”. More is said about these later in the chapter (see the description of Module 4). Whatever the organizational structure employed, the PALL position emphasizes the importance of student achievement data, but particularly data from diagnostic assessment processes so that what the student can do is recognized as the starting point for what the teacher and student should do next. In Chap. 9, we discuss some

of the interventions planned, implemented and evaluated by principals and teachers in PALL schools to show the focus, strategies and outcomes recorded.

The last of the five positions behind the design of the PALL professional learning modules refers to the importance of principals learning in their local contexts with personal leadership support over time.

5. **Support for leaders' learning on-the-job:** Leadership learning is maximized when leaders are supported in their schools in implementing reading interventions by valued mentors (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; Dempster, Lovett, & Flückiger, 2011; Huber, 2011).

The idea of support in context by mentors points to a major design issue when planning professional learning away from the school in modular format. If learning on-the-job is to be maximized, then learning away from the school must enable participants to grapple with the knowledge, tools and tasks which they might modify, adapt and apply with others on the school site. How each of the PALL modules responds to this position is explained largely through the repertoire of follow-up tasks accompanying the five modules—tasks where the role of mentors and shared leadership come right into play.

In the next section of the chapter, we explain the 2-year PALL Program with its first year dedicated to participation by principals in a sequence of five leadership learning modules, and the second year devoted to the implementation and evaluation of interventions to improve reading.

## The PALL Leadership Learning Modules

The PALL modules (from Dempster et al., 2012, pp. 6–8) were conducted at five 1-day professional development sessions that included exposure to follow-up activities all principals would undertake back at their schools. The five modules with their follow-up activities are shown in shorthand in Table 2.1 and then described in detail below.

### *Module 1: Leadership for Learning—What the Research Says*

The first module explained how the leadership for learning (LfL) framework had been synthesized from five research reports into the connections between leadership and learning (see Leithwood et al., 2006; MacBeath & Dempster, 2009; Masters, 2009; OECD, 2008; Robinson, 2007). The synthesis, or Blueprint (LfLB) as it has been called during the project, has been explained and illustrated in Fig. 1.1 at the conclusion of Chap. 1. In this module there were three major emphases: first, the moral obligation of those engaged in education to leave no stone unturned in efforts

**Table 2.1** The PALL leadership learning modules and corresponding follow-up tasks

Modules	Follow-up tasks
<b>Module 1.</b> Leadership for learning—what the research says	Completing a school profiling instrument Conducting a leadership dimensions ratings survey
<b>Module 2.</b> What leaders need to know about learning to read	Adapting and using a literacy practices guide
<b>Module 3.</b> Leading data gathering and analysis	Administering a classroom reading assessment check Developing a classroom reading assessment calendar
<b>Module 4.</b> Designing, implementing and monitoring reading interventions	Adapting an intervention planning format for school use
<b>Module 5.</b> Intervention evaluation and future planning	Planning using a sample evaluation template

to improve the reading ability of children; second, to understand the nature of leadership in social settings such as schools, by embracing the concept of shared leadership; and third, the need to understand the local school and its community circumstances deeply, particularly those circumstances influencing the teaching and learning of reading.

### Follow-up leadership tasks for Module 1

- (i) Adapt and complete a School Profiling Instrument cooperatively through discussions initially undertaken by the principal and teachers with the Leadership Mentor (see the School Profiling Instrument in Fig. 2.2).
- (ii) Seek staff ratings of the strength of Leadership for Literacy Learning dimensions evident in the school (see the Leadership Dimensions Ratings Survey in Fig. 2.3).

### School Profiling Instrument

The School Profiling Instrument addressed many more matters than those associated with literacy. This was a deliberate strategy to help principals, whether newly appointed or of more lengthy tenure, to think systematically about the context in which they were working; in other words, to “read” their local contexts. For new appointees, the task was considered quite demanding, particularly in schools where little record keeping was evident. For experienced principals, the task was less onerous, but its value lay in developing a comprehensive picture of their school’s circumstances. Reference to the use of the School Profiling Instrument in the research program which accompanied PALL is made later in the chapter.

During the Module 1 workshop, principals examined the School Profiling task and discussed how they would go about completing it, where possible, using existing information. The use that might be made of information in particular fields

<i>Profile Fields</i>	<i>Guidelines for Principals</i>
1. <b>The school's demography</b> – (i) its Socio-Economic Status (SES) index as used for classification purposes by sector authorities; (ii) where necessary, the Indigenous student profile; and (iii) significant local factors in the community such as particular cultural groups; (iv) the school size; (v) class size; (vi) transience; and any other relevant demographic information considered informative	The introduction to the profile should combine some explanatory text about the school with tables and figures addressing each of the six items in this field. For SES, the Australian Bureau of Statistics Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSED) index and decile level should be used.
2. <b>The school's mission and values</b> – as they are represented in school documents	The school's mission and values (or like terms) should appear as text.
3. <b>The school's governance processes</b> – the structure and function of the school's Board, Council or Advisory Council as applicable	This information could be produced in diagram form where appropriate. If not, a brief description should be provided.
4. <b>The school's leadership positions and responsibilities</b> – (i) those represented in official positions; and (ii) those created informally within the school itself (e.g., a literacy coordinator)	A list of official positions with a brief description of their responsibilities should be provided (positions for which there is dedicated level-specific remuneration) followed by a description of unofficial or informal positions (those for which there is no added remuneration).
5. <b>The school's staff complement and demographics</b> – (i) age bands of staff, (ii) gender breakdown, (iii) years of experience, (iv) duration at school, (v) how staff are deployed, (vi) whether there is specialist support available for particular needs, and (vii) whether the Principal has the authority to recruit and appoint teaching staff	The information here should be provided in tabular form supported by text. For (i) use the age bands 21-30; 31-40; 41-50; 51-60; and over 60. For (ii) use the following experience bands: 0-5 years; 6-10 years; 11-15 years; 16-20 years; and more than 20 years. Use the same bands for (iii). Use text to provide brief explanations for staff deployment, specialist support and authority to employ staff.
6. <b>Committee/organizational structures</b> – how the school is organized for key purposes (e.g., curriculum programming, teaching, assessment, reporting)	This information could be produced as a diagram showing school committees and their responsibilities. If not, brief descriptive text will be necessary.
7. <b>The school's approach to aspects of literacy learning</b> – features of literacy learning as they apply across the year levels. Are there specific literacy programs in place? Interventions? If so, how are students identified? Who is responsible for intervention? What model/s of intervention is/are used?	A general description of the school's approach complemented by explanations of specific programs or interventions. Brief descriptive text addressing the five questions will be helpful.
8. <b>Literacy related co-curricular programs</b> relevant to aspects of literacy (e.g., a writers' group, public speaking or debating groups, school newspaper, drama or musical productions, etc.)	Again, brief descriptive text outlining the nature of and participation in these programs will be helpful. A table recording participation could be included where appropriate and available.

Fig. 2.2 School profiling instrument

9. <b>Facilities and resources for the school's literacy program</b> – are there dedicated resources or facilities for particular literacy purposes? Are these readily available?	Descriptive text outlining available literacy-related resources including the extent of the school's library, student borrowing patterns (with figures if possible), whether the school has quiet reading corners, outside reading courts, accessible visual media resources, special relaxed writing spaces and so on.
10. <b>Literacy targets</b> – are there specific goals articulated for different year levels, particular children or groups of children? Who determines these?	School targets may have been derived from NAPLAN data or from state-wide standardized testing. Targets could be in the form of improving "distance travelled" by students or they may be related to "narrowing the gap" between one school's achievements and other "like schools". List specific targets as they have been defined in words and figures as appropriate and applicable.
11. <b>Teachers' professional development</b> – (i) who is responsible for literacy PD? (ii) how is professional learning organized and accessed by teachers? (iii) the extent of professional development specific to literacy amongst the staff? and (iv) how is PD disseminated across staff/year levels/school?	Each of the four questions should be addressed in brief descriptions of what has been occurring in the school up to this point in time. Where it is known how many staff members have attended specific literacy in-service education programs in the last 1–3 years, this should be reported (along with how many have not).
12. <b>Teacher induction</b> – how does a teacher new to the school know what to teach and what to assess?	A brief description of the induction procedure extended by the school to new teachers should be outlined here. Particular reference should be made to how teachers are made aware of the school's approach to literacy learning and assessment.
13. <b>Teacher satisfaction</b> – reports of how satisfied teachers are with their place and conditions of employment (schools usually have access to existing data on this matter)	For the next three data fields (13, 14 and 15) brief descriptions providing analytical and interpretive accounts of teacher, student and parent satisfaction should be provided. This would be best outlined in a series of conclusions drawn from survey data where this is available.
14. <b>Student satisfaction</b> – reports of student satisfaction with their school (again usually available in existing data)	As for 13
15. <b>Parent satisfaction</b> – reports of parent satisfaction with their children's school experience (again usually available in existing data)	As for 13 and 14
16. <b>Attendance and absentee figures</b> – usually available in existing school data	These data should be reported in tabular form. If historical data are available (say for the last 3 years) this may prove helpful for comparative purposes.

Fig. 2.2 (continued)

<p><b>17. <i>Student literacy achievement</i></b> – measures already obtained through state and national testing regimes. What school-based measures are already in place? What baseline data are available?</p>	<p>The year's NAPLAN (National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy) data should be employed to show as a minimum: (i) where the school lies above or below the benchmark, and (ii) where the children are placed in band levels of achievement in each area of literacy at each year level.</p>
<p><b>18. <i>Parental involvement in literacy learning</i></b> – a description of the ways in which parents are included and involved in the school's literacy program either within the school or at home</p>	<p>A brief description of how parents are engaged (or not) is essential. Text could be accompanied by figures reporting parental participation where these are available.</p>
<p><b>19. <i>Links to the community</i></b> for particular literacy purposes – including the professional community</p>	<p>Again, a brief description of particular community links would be helpful (e.g., is there school engagement with a local library, is students' writing shared in the community and so on, are researchers and other professionals engaged in any way directly with the school?).</p>
<p><b>20. <i>Literacy strengths and needs</i></b> – a description of the school's greatest strengths, areas of expertise, and/or programs in the area of literacy</p>	<p>This may be a qualitative judgment statement but it may also be a conclusion backed by referring to data available to the school.</p>
<p><b>21. <i>Literacy priority area</i></b> – an open question such as the following: What do you believe is a priority area for your school if it is to improve literacy outcomes for students?</p>	<p>Again, this may be a judgment call but it may also be a priority backed up by reference, for example, to data relevant to teachers' professional development, students' performance or parents' participation and engagement.</p>

**Fig. 2.2** (continued)

was also raised. For example, how professional learning should be conducted at a school in the light of the age and experience of the staff always provokes careful thought about how on-the-job literacy learning might be organized. Of course, the School Profiling Instrument was not presented as an exhaustive list of fields but rather enabled principals to adjust it or add to it according to their reading of the context.

### **Leadership Dimensions Ratings Survey**

The second follow-up task, a Leadership Dimensions Ratings Survey, was introduced to principals at the Module 1 workshop and there they completed it themselves (see Fig. 2.3). In doing so, each principal was asked to make personal responses to the following two questions:

1. How strongly would I rate the implementation of each of the Blueprint dimensions in our school and what evidence do we have to support my rating?
2. To which of the dimensions do I believe we should now turn our attention?





Participants recorded their rating on the 10-point scale followed by a brief statement about the evidence they believed supported the rating. This was followed with a group discussion to share ratings and evidence related to the second question before turning to a third question:

### 3. How might we best use this instrument back at school?

The third question always raises a range of possibilities. Suggestions such as the following have been common:

- principals checking their own ratings and evidence with those of their leadership teams;
- scheduling open discussions with members of staff after they have completed the instrument and all responses have been aggregated; and
- adding descriptions to each of the dimensions to further clarify meaning before administering it to members of staff.

The major benefit of the discussion stimulated by this instrument is the shared knowledge of what it takes to lead the teaching and learning of reading and the critical role played by all members of staff in actualising each of the Leadership for Learning dimensions.

Finally, integral to Module 1 was the completion of a self-assessment instrument called a Personal Leadership Profile (PLP). This instrument was designed to give participants the opportunity to reflect on the knowledge and skill needed to undertake leadership actions known to connect their work directly and indirectly with learning. The 36 items shown below were derived from the studies cited in Chap. 1 and they add descriptive detail to each of the dimensions of the LfLB.

### **Shared Moral Purpose**

- 7. Set high expectations
- 8. Build vision and set directions collaboratively
- 11. See that goals are embedded in school and classroom routines
- 21. Ensure consensus on goals

### **A Strong Evidence Base**

- 5. Ensure that both school and system data are gathered
- 17. Pursue systematic data gathering across the school's responsibilities
- 29. Plan for student learning based on data
- 31. Monitor student learning based on data
- 32. Share accountability tasks with teachers based on classroom, school and system data

### **Conditions for Learning**

- 13. Manage resources strategically
- 15. Align financial resources to priorities
- 19. Provide a safe and pleasant physical environment

- 24. Ensure social and emotional support for learners
- 25. Celebrate teacher and student successes
- 33. Apply resources to the conditions of learning

### **Curriculum and Teaching**

- 1. Actively oversee the school's curriculum program
- 3. Coordinate and manage the teaching and learning program
- 4. Observe teachers in action directly and provide specific feedback
- 22. Maintain commitment to curriculum priorities
- 26. Display a keen interest in students' classroom work and achievements
- 34. Participate actively in curriculum decision-making

### **Parent and Community Support**

- 10. Include parents as integral to the school's learning programs
- 14. Be active in the local community and the professional communities
- 18. Seek the input of professionals beyond the school
- 27. Involve wider community support to improve learning
- 30. Network with other schools and teachers on good practice

### **Shared Leadership**

- 8. Encourage team work amongst teachers
- 9. Plan school organization structures to support improved learning
- 23. Support collaborative work cultures
- 28. Share leadership systematically with teachers

### **Professional Development**

- 2. Promote skills in data analysis and interpretation through PD amongst teachers
- 12. Ensure that teachers engage in extended learning about school priority areas
- 18. Seek the input of professionals beyond the school
- 20. Support, evaluate and develop teacher quality
- 35. Concentrate on the development of deep knowledge about key learning areas
- 36. Play an active "hands on" role in professional development.

The 36 items were randomized and then listed in the order shown above in the PLP survey instrument reproduced as Fig. 2.4. It has been completed twice during the PALL Programs by over 250 principals (we return to this fact and its findings in the later chapters of the book).

Principals handed in their completed surveys at the module workshop and received their PLP reports approximately two weeks later (see Dempster et al., 2012, pp. 18–19). They were informed that the instrument would be administered a second time more than a year later for comparative purposes. The reports remained confidential to each participant though they were encouraged to discuss their profiles with their leadership mentors or others of their choosing.

**How to complete the Profile:**

You are asked to rate the extent of your knowledge and skill about each of the leadership actions listed. The questions focus on aspects of leadership known to be linked with learning. Please tick the point on the scale that reflects your judgment.

		<i>Limited</i>	<i>Sound</i>	<i>Very good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
<b>The status of my knowledge and skill to:</b>					
1.	Actively oversee the school's curriculum program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Promote skills in data analysis and interpretation through PD amongst teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Coordinate and manage the teaching and learning program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Observe teachers in action directly and provide specific feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Ensure that both school and system data are gathered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Encourage team work amongst teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Set high expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	Build vision and set directions collaboratively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Plan school organization structures to support improved learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	Include parents as integral to the school's learning programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.	See that goals are embedded in school and classroom routines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.	Ensure that teachers engage in extended learning about school priority areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13.	Manage resources strategically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.	Be active in the local community and the professional communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.	Align financial resources to priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.	Participate as 'leading learners' with teachers in professional development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	Pursue systematic data gathering across the school's responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18.	Seek the input of professionals beyond the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19.	Provide a safe and pleasant physical environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.	Support, evaluate and develop teacher quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.	Ensure consensus on goals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22.	Maintain commitment to curriculum priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Fig. 2.4** The personal leadership profile survey

<b>The status of my knowledge and skill to:</b>	<i>Limited</i>	<i>Sound</i>	<i>Very good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
23. Support collaborative work cultures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. Ensure social and emotional support for learners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. Celebrate teacher and student successes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. Display a keen interest in students' classroom work and achievements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. Involve wider community support to improve learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. Share leadership systematically with teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. Plan for student learning based on data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. Network with other schools and teachers on good practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. Monitor student learning based on data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32. Share accountability tasks with teachers based on classroom, school and system data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. Apply resources to the conditions of learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. Participate actively in curriculum decision-making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. Concentrate on the development of deep knowledge about key learning areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36. Play an active 'hands on' role in professional development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Fig. 2.4** (continued)

### ***Module 2: What Leaders Need to Know About Learning to Read***

Module 2 demonstrated the complexity of the reading process and the importance of the research-based BIG 6 mentioned earlier as an organizing pedagogical framework, namely:

- (i) Linguistic knowledge: the underpinning importance of early oral language and literacy experiences and the significance of ongoing exposure to effective language use at home and in the child's out-of-school life;
- (ii) Phonological awareness, and in particular, phonemic awareness;
- (iii) Letter/sound knowledge;
- (iv) Vocabulary;
- (v) Fluency; and
- (vi) Comprehension.

These six key elements of learning to read are explained in detail in Chap. 4 with reference to the international research literature from which they are drawn.

**Follow-up leadership tasks for Module 2**

- (i) Develop consultatively, from an example provided, a local school version of a Literacy Practices Guide (LPG) and undertake classroom visits with teachers using it to record observations for later discussion.

**Sample Literacy Practices Guide**

The original LPG was introduced by Deslea Konza in the PALL Pilot Project. It covered aspects of literacy in general and reading in particular. The guide was designed as a means for principals to develop an understanding of classroom literacy activity by observing what was happening. Specific domains addressed included classroom environment, and in the teaching of reading, evidence of phonological awareness and letter-sound knowledge, vocabulary prompts and reinforcement, fluency and comprehension strategies. Aspects of each of these which lent themselves to observation were included in the LPG which was presented in the form of a checklist and an aide to reflection as shown in the two examples below (see Figs. 2.5 and 2.6).

It is easy to see how the checklist shown in Fig. 2.5 might be used in discussions with teachers. It would focus attention on important supporting aspects for effective literacy learning, helping both principals and teachers to develop improvement agendas as well as initiatives for further environmental enhancement.

LITERARY PRACTICES GUIDE K(PP)-YR1		Not observed	Some evidence	Ample evidence
Focus is on explicit teaching of phonological awareness, letter/sound knowledge and high-frequency sight words		-	√	√√
CLASSROOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Room design supports whole group, small group and individual instruction</li><li>• Comfortable, well-organised informal reading area</li><li>• Children's names displayed</li><li>• Environmental print; labelling of resources, days of week, calendar, etc</li><li>• Organisation of environmental print e.g. word families</li><li>• "Living" word walls e.g. stickies, new words appearing</li><li>• Accessible reading resources e.g. rhyming dictionary, picture dictionary</li><li>• Range of text types in room: narrative, information, etc</li><li>• Children's work displayed</li><li>• Picture alphabet displayed</li><li>• Imaginative play area (dress-up/shop/kitchen, etc)</li><li>• Sets of magnetic/plastic letters for each child to manipulate</li><li>• Evidence of community, family involvement, e.g. business or community partnerships, family reading nights, mentors</li></ul>			
	Comments			

**Fig. 2.5** The classroom environment section only of the literacy practices guide for junior primary years (see Dempster et al., 2012, p. 32)

LITERARY PRACTICES GUIDE R-YR1		Self-reflection	Principal/peer reflection
Focus is on rich language development, explicit teaching of phonemic awareness, letter/sound knowledge and sight words			
CLASSROOM	Room design supports whole group, small group and individual instruction		
	Comfortable, well-organised informal reading area		
	Children's names displayed		
	Environmental print; labelling of resources, days of week, calendar, etc		
	Organisation of environmental print e.g. word families		
	"Living" word walls e.g. stickies, new words appearing		
	Accessible reading resources e.g. rhyming dictionary, picture dictionary		
	Range of text types in room: narrative, information, etc		
	Children's work displayed		
	Picture alphabet displayed		
	Imaginative play area (dress-up/shop/kitchen, etc)		
	Sets of magnetic/plastic letters for each child to manipulate		
	Evidence of group composition displayed		
	Home readers		
	Evidence of community, family involvement, e.g. business or community partnerships, family reading nights, mentors		
	Comments		

**Fig. 2.6** The classroom environment section of the literacy practices guide adapted for junior primary years (see Dempster et al., 2012, p. 32)

Figure 2.6 provides space for teachers to record reflections followed by the principal’s or other peers’ views. The records, when compared, create an interesting agenda for discussion.

The idea of the LPG was a very important adjunct to the leadership learning for principals during Module 2. This provided a means for them to reacquaint themselves with reading in classrooms so that they were better prepared to participate actively in on-the-job professional learning with their teachers. Again, it was emphasized that the LPG was but a guide or starting point, open always to local adaptation through conversations between principals and teachers across the year levels. Later in Chap. 9, evidence is presented about the use to which the LPG was put and with what effect.

*Module 3: Leading Literacy Data Gathering and Analysis*

The third module picked up the “sound evidence” theme highlighted in the LfLB presented in Module 1 by focusing on the importance of evidence-based diagnostic assessment processes, planning and decision-making. The module took a strengths-based approach to children’s reading achievement, relying on diagnostic assessment as the essential strategy to uncover specific learning needs. Assessment tools for each of the BIG 6 were introduced and principals again practised the use of

the Disciplined Dialogue process (see Chap. 4) as a prelude to using it with members of staff and others in their local contexts.

**Follow-up leadership tasks for Module 3**

- (i) Have teachers provide information on the classroom assessment practices, diagnostic and other tests they use in the monitoring of children’s reading progress in aspects of the BIG 6.
- (ii) Develop a school-wide calendar using a template provided to document assessment for learning processes used across the year.

Principals were introduced to two tools during Module 3 to help them with their follow-up tasks. In the first of these, they were asked to complete individually, a Classroom Reading Assessment Practices Check (Fig. 2.7) listing all of the diagnostic tests and assessment practices of which they were aware as a prelude to undertaking an assessment audit back in their schools.

This practice session almost always reveals the somewhat limited knowledge principals have of just what is being used in the school, by whom and why. Additional information during the module provided criteria by which judgments about the quality of assessment practices and tests can be made, making it possible, following the audit, to refine the assessment materials and processes considered to be worthy of use in the school.

The second task asked principals to arrange for the development and completion of a Classroom Reading Assessment Calendar using the findings from the Classroom Reading Practices Check. An example of the two-part template is shown in Fig. 2.8.

**A Classroom Reading Assessment Practices Check**

The figure allows for recordings of assessment practices at each year level for each of the elements of the BIG 6.

**Teacher:** .....

Year Level	Emergent Literacy	Oral Language	Phonological Awareness	Letter-sound Knowledge	High Frequency Words	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Fluency
Year 1								
Year 2								
Year 3								
Year 4								
Year 5								
Year 6								

**Fig. 2.7** Classroom reading assessment practices check



Teacher: ..... Year Level: .....

**An annual classroom schedule**

School-wide approved assessment tools	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1.												
2.												
3.												

**A schedule to monitor children’s ongoing progress and achievement across the year**

The classroom focus of assessment	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec

Fig. 2.8 A classroom reading assessment calendar

At the Module 3 workshop, principals were asked to discuss how a Classroom Reading Assessment Calendar might be designed to enable teachers to document which school-wide approved assessment tools would be employed for the whole class and which for particular groups of children at different times during the year. They also discussed whether a classroom teacher might need two calendars, the first for annual planning class-wide, the second for ongoing monitoring purposes, that is, assessment for learning with particular individuals or groups of children (as suggested by Fig. 2.8). Usually, the use of a calendar was discussed by principals and teachers in year-level groups so that an agreed upon school list of assessment

PRINCIPALS	CLASSROOM TEACHERS
<i>Manage mandated requirements in literacy assessment (e.g., NAPLAN)</i>	<i>Carry out mandated requirements in literacy assessment (e.g., NAPLAN)</i>
1. Seek agreement on whole school level priorities in reading, noting particular classroom and student issues	<b>(a)</b> Participate in setting whole school level priorities, noting particular classroom and student issues
2. Seek agreement on whole school diagnostic reading assessment tools	<b>(b)</b> Participate in reaching agreement on the reading assessment tools to be used across the school
3. Ascertain professional learning needs related to diagnostic assessment and its use and implement PD as necessary	<b>(c)</b> Identify personal PD needs and learn how to use school agreed diagnostic reading assessment tools
4. Implement annual classroom planning for diagnostic reading assessment with teachers	<b>(d)</b> Discuss children’s progress with previous teacher and use information in planning classroom reading assessment
5. Put in place a cooperative practical student reading achievement tracking system for classroom use	<b>(e)</b> Implement the classroom assessment plan using achievement data to develop whole class, group and individual strategies for reading improvement
6. Monitor the tracking system for reading trends and the system’s effectiveness for each child	<b>(f)</b> Keep track of children’s progress during teaching using the school’s tracking system
7. Report to teachers and others (children, parents, caregivers) on overall school reading standards and quality	<b>(g)</b> Provide timely and targeted process feedback to children on their achievement and improvement (and do so with parents, caregivers)
8. Return to Step 1 with teachers	<b>(h)</b> Return to Step 1 with the principal

**Fig. 2.9** Who does what in reading assessment?

practices and tests could be produced. This undoubtedly led to the discontinuation of some practices and the introduction of others. However, with the information they now had, principals had the knowledge to help them better allocate school funds on quality assessment materials fit for different purposes across year levels.

A sequence of strategies aimed at defining the tasks principal and teachers are expected to perform was recommended to accompany staff discussions on the development of the Classroom Reading Assessment Calendar. This document (see Fig. 2.9) was discussed at the Module 3 workshop and many principals took it back into their schools as an agenda-setter for local modification and settlement.

***Module 4: Designing, Implementing and Monitoring Literacy Interventions***

The aim of Module 4 was for principals to learn about the factors that are important for teachers to plan evidence-informed strategies for reading improvement with children, supported by their families. The idea of waves, tiers or levels of assistance was used to direct attention to whole-class needs, the needs of particular groups of

children or the special needs of struggling individuals. The importance of devising a system to facilitate improvement action planning was seen as paramount. In other words, nothing should be left to chance. The trilogy of “numbers, names and needs” was presented as essential in identifying Wave 1, Wave 2 and Wave 3 children by name and need. This kind of action constitutes a system for improvement, something the literature underscores as essential in schools. Principals engaged with these ideas and with the planning processes necessary to produce evidence-based reading interventions for particular aspects of the BIG 6 with children from different waves in mind. The influence of aspects of the LfLB on teachers’ pedagogy, children’s learning and parent support were also matters brought onto the planning agenda.

#### **Follow-up leadership task for Module 4**

- (i) Develop a Reading Intervention Plan with teachers using a Sample Intervention Planning Format ready to implement in the following year.

During Module 4, much attention was given to the need for a system of intervention to be accepted as integral to the organizational structure of the school. Without a system for intervention, the chances of particular children “falling through the cracks” are exacerbated. Indeed, the research evidence on the need for an intervention system is undeniable (e.g., see Jacobson, 2011). The notion of waves of intervention has already been mentioned and principals were asked to contemplate this against the arrangements they presently had in place to track children’s progress and identify their needs. The upshot of the day’s experiences was the challenge to return to school, equipped with a Sample Intervention Planning Format concentrating on BIG 6 interventions but drawing into the planning process, influential dimensions from the LfLB (see Fig. 2.10).

Practice in the explanation of the components of the Sample Intervention Planning Format during the workshop enabled principals to ready themselves for similar discussions at their schools. It also clarified the significance of responses to the LfLB questions included in the format. Much attention was given to the implications particular interventions might carry for any necessary additional staff professional development, the management of students’ feelings as they were isolated or grouped for specific intervention action or the information and involvement of parents and family members in support of intervention goals for individuals.

### ***Module 5: Intervention Evaluation and Future Planning***

The last of the modules provided an opportunity for principals to learn about the conduct of a school-level evaluation of the effects of their Reading Interventions. Leaders were asked to keep two purposes at front of mind when designing the evaluation:

**Intervention purpose and focus:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Rationale (the evidence base):** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Synopsis of the intervention action:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Steps to consider**

	<b>Who (which students) will participate in the intervention action and on what evidence?</b>	<b>What aspect/s of reading will be covered by the intervention action and what will be done with what resources?</b>	<b>When will the intervention take place? e.g. sessions per week, during literacy block?</b>	<b>Who will be responsible for the intervention action?</b>	<b>What will be the duration of the intervention action? How long will the initial phase last?</b>	<b>How will we monitor each aspect of the intervention action?</b>
<b>Wave 1</b>						
<b>Wave 2</b>						
<b>Wave 3</b>						

**Given the focus of our intervention actions, what aspects of the Leadership for Learning Blueprint do we need to consider?**

What do we need to do in professional development?	What do we need to address in the conditions for learning?	What aspects of our curriculum program do we need to focus on?	What parent/community issues need to be addressed?	How do we ensure leadership is shared and that we are well organized?	How do we monitor each aspect of the intervention?

**Fig. 2.10** Sample intervention planning format

- Purpose 1—to ascertain the value of actions considered important in contributing to improvements in reading (using the dimensions from the LfLB as the source—see Fig. 1.1); and
- Purpose 2—to ascertain whether there were any changes being seen in children’s achievement.

Purpose	Key questions	Data sources	Data methods
<b>Primary purpose 1</b>  To find out about changes in the reading comprehension teaching and learning experiences in which children are engaging and their effects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are teachers explicitly teaching comprehension strategies (e.g., 'STARS' 12 strategies), 'SPRINGBOARD' 6 strategies?</li> <li>Does the classroom organization promote differentiated learning (group work, levels, alignment to individual skills)?</li> <li>What can children tell you about comprehension strategies?</li> <li>What actions are in place to support Wave 2 intervention at Future Heights?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>middle school teachers</li> <li>middle school students</li> <li>literacy coach (LC)</li> <li>head of curriculum (HOC)</li> <li>learning support teachers (LST)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>teacher* survey/ questionnaire/ interview</li> <li>student survey/ questionnaire/ interview</li> </ul> <p>* includes LC, HOC, LST</p>
<b>Primary purpose 2</b>  To ascertain if there are any changes being seen in children's achievement in reading comprehension.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there measurable improvement in student outcomes in reading comprehension?</li> <li>Are there specific strategies that show particular strengths or trends?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>middle school teachers</li> <li>middle school students</li> <li>literacy coach</li> <li>head of curriculum</li> <li>learning support teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PAT-R tests (March/September 2010)</li> <li>NAPLAN results</li> <li>PROBE results</li> <li>student report data (individual and aggregated)</li> <li>CARS reports</li> <li>anecdotal reports from teachers</li> </ul>

**Fig. 2.11** Sample evaluation template completed by one school (extract from Dempster et al., 2012, p. 48)

Module 5 took principals through three necessary steps in planning school-based evaluations—defining the **purpose** of the evaluation, identifying appropriate data-gathering **processes** and determining how to **use** the data.

### Follow-up leadership task for Module 5

- (i) Plan and conduct an evaluation of the effects of the Reading Intervention in the second year of the PALL Project as a basis for further work using a Sample Evaluation Template.

Discussion during the final module workshop centred on an efficient way to plan and implement a school-level evaluation. With respect to reading, two purposes for the evaluation were discussed: what were the effects particular strategies had on teaching and children's learning, and secondly, what changes in student achievement were evident? Principals examined a number of Reading Intervention Evaluation Plans and critiqued their potential efficacy in preparation for evaluation planning with their own teachers. The example which follows as Fig. 2.11 shows one school's summarized evaluation plan using the sample template.

The point to be made from Fig. 2.11 is that evidence should always be gathered against the twin purposes of reading intervention evaluations. The first purpose aims at examining the effects of changes on teaching practice; the second is directed to investigating changes in student achievement. The one without the other leaves an evaluation incomplete. In other words, outcomes can only be improved when there are changes in process. Therefore, process change needs to be seen as fundamental to school-level evaluation. Hence the reference during the module to the questions derived from the LfLB dimensions shown in Fig. 1.1. A final task for principals and teachers after the conduct of the evaluation was the preparation of a brief report for which the following headings were provided:

1. Context;
2. Description of the reading problem or intervention focus;
3. Purposes of the evaluation (No. 1 and No. 2 as explained above);
4. Data collection methods; and
5. Conclusions: commendations and recommendations.

Further reference is made to the use of these headings by principals when the results of the school-level evaluations are discussed in later chapters.

### Summary

So far in this chapter we have explained the informing positions on which the PALL Program was based. We have provided a description of the five leadership learning modules and the follow-up tasks expected of participating school principals. These task expectations reinforce the critical importance of leaders' obligation to acknowledge and work with the enabling and constraining features encountered in their local contexts. In short, the program design rests on the sure knowledge that the context always counts in leadership activity (Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2016). All PALL follow-up tasks called for school-level discussions in which principals

engaged with teachers in shared approaches to the leadership of pedagogy, diagnostic assessment, intervention planning and evaluation of reading improvement and the factors which contribute to it. We now step sideways to make some judgments about the quality of the PALL Program design, particularly as it applies to professional learning, before returning in the concluding part of the chapter to explain the accompanying research program.

## **Judging the Quality of the PALL Leadership Learning Design**

The design of the PALL Program is consistent with many of the findings from the research literature on what constitutes effective leadership learning and development. A 10-point summary of those findings is found in a review commissioned recently by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (Dempster et al., 2011). We use a precis of the 10 criteria (Flückiger, Lovett, & Dempster, 2014) to critique the design and implementation of the PALL Program as it has been described above (see Table 2.2).

Based on the evidence presented in Table 2.2, we are confident in making the claim that the PALL Program of professional learning meets the conditions applying to the 10 criteria for effective leadership learning. The fact that the program has continued beyond its original pilot with new participants every year since its introduction is a testimony to the quality of the program design and evidence of its practical relevance to principals facing the question of how to lead their schools towards student reading improvement.

The last of the criteria refers to the need for programs of professional learning to be *effects-oriented*. Because we knew that there had been long-standing criticism (Bush, 2009) of professional learning programs which failed to take on that task, this knowledge acted as a gauntlet to us in planning the PALL Research Program which follows.

## **The Accompanying PALL Research Program**

The research program which accompanied the school-based work by PALL principals and their teachers concentrated on the impact of the leadership actions undertaken and the effects of reading interventions on teaching, student learning and achievement. Six studies in all were carried out over the period 2010–14. Three of those studies followed the research design of the original Pilot Project Study which concentrated on the program's effects on principals themselves and on activity in their schools; a further study applied the general design of the Pilot Project research to ascertaining the effects of the PALL Program as it was adapted

**Table 2.2** A critique of the design and implementation of PALL

Criteria for making judgments of quality	Evidence in making judgments of quality
<b>Criterion 1: <i>Philosophically and theoretically attuned</i></b> Programs for school leaders need to be philosophically and theoretically attuned to both system and individual leadership needs (Dempster, 2001; Hopkins, 2008)	The two key components of this criterion are evident in the PALL Program—the needs of education systems for visible improvement in reading and principals’ knowledge needs of what it takes to lead the teaching and learning of reading
<b>Criterion 2: <i>Goal-oriented</i></b> Professional learning programs need to be goal oriented with primacy given to the dual aims of school improvement and improvement in student learning and achievement (Bishop, 2011; Day et al., 2010; Hallinger, 2011; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009)	Re-engaging principals with the moral purpose of leadership and its expression during PALL as improvements in reading achievement for all children (whether Wave, 1—whole school, Wave 2—small groups, or Wave 3—individuals) responds to the dual aims of this criterion
<b>Criterion 3: <i>Informed by the weight of research evidence</i></b> Professional learning programs should be informed by compelling research evidence on school leadership and pedagogical matters (Hallinger, 2011; Huber, 2011)	The positions and modules in the program were research based. Available meta-analytical studies were used to show accumulated evidence of the validity of the LfL Blueprint dimensions and the reading BIG 6
<b>Criterion 4: <i>Time-rich</i></b> Leaders’ professional learning programs need to provide opportunities for spaced learning sequences interspersed with collegial support, in-school applications and reflective encounters (Huber, 2011)	This criterion was addressed in an extensive 2-year program of professional learning. Out-of-school learning was followed by intensive activity back at school. Learning on-the-job between modules was given sufficient time for principals to implement the tasks expected of them
<b>Criterion 5: <i>Practice-centred</i></b> There is a strong focus on the importance of leaders taking knowledge gained in professional learning programs back into their schools in ways that maximize the effects of leadership capability (Bush, 2009; OECD, 2008)	The follow-up tasks attached to each module provided the means for principals to undertake practice-centred work back at school. The PALL Program also provided resources in the form of readings, tools and processes designed to link the LfL Blueprint dimensions with practical activity
<b>Criterion 6: <i>Purpose-designed</i></b> Professional learning programs need to be purpose designed for participants’ specific career needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; McKinsey & Company, 2010; OECD, 2008)	While the principals involved in PALL differed in career experience, most led schools where literacy achievement was problematic, thus creating a need for knowledge and strategies known to contribute to reading improvement
<b>Criterion 7: <i>Peer-supported</i></b> Feedback to leaders from within or beyond the school is helpful in transferring theory and knowledge into improved practice (MacBeath, 2006; Robertson, 2008; Swaffield, 2004)	Most PALL participants were supported at different times by experienced principals who acted as mentors to participants as they carried out the module follow-up tasks and planned and implemented reading interventions with their teachers

(continued)



**Table 2.2** (continued)

Criteria for making judgments of quality	Evidence in making judgments of quality
<b>Criterion 8: Context-sensitive</b> Incorporating real-life school-based problem-solving activities (Hallinger, 2011; Huber, 2011) in professional learning programs ensures that knowledge and theory connect with practice and action (Huber, 2011)	This criterion was at the heart of the application of the out-of- school modules experienced by principals. The tasks and tools provided for post-module activity required translations by principals with their teachers so that what was implemented made sense to all in the local context
<b>Criterion 9: Partnership-powered</b> Professional learning programs are enriched by the support and engagement of external agencies (Brundrett & Crawford, 2008)	The APPA partnership with university personnel underscores this criterion as intrinsic to the program from the outset. Leadership mentors external to participating schools added to that partnership
<b>Criterion 10: Effects-oriented</b> Professional learning needs to be accompanied by a commitment to the evaluation of its effects on leaders and the associated school practices to which the learning applies (Bush, 2009)	A research program has accompanied each of the PALL Programs conducted in Australia on which this book reports. Six studies have documented the effects of the program on school principals, as well as the impact it has had on teachers and children's learning and achievement

for work with principals of schools with significant Indigenous communities. With the title *Principals as Literacy Leaders with Indigenous Communities (PALLIC)*, this project included seven school case studies. The last two studies in Tasmania and Victoria in 2014 were also designed as case studies in order to get closer (than the Pilot Project Study) to classroom teaching and learning activities and their effects on student learning.

### ***The Pilot Project Research***

The main purpose of the Pilot Project's accompanying research program was to ascertain the effects of involvement in the project:

- (i) on principals' personal leadership and literacy capabilities (particularly in reading); and
- (ii) on their use of these capabilities in their schools (Dempster et al., 2012, p. 10).

Four specific areas were identified for study:

- (i) Research focus one: The impact of the professional development modules.
- (ii) Research focus two: The impact of the role of the literacy leadership mentors.
- (iii) Research focus three: The impact of PALL on principals' capabilities.
- (iv) Research focus four: The impact of PALL on schools and student literacy achievement (Dempster et al., 2012, pp. 11–12).

A mixed-methods approach to data gathering was considered the most useful for the participants in the project and so there was a need for data to be drawn from multiple perspectives on the research purpose and questions. Mixed-methods

research combines both quantitative and qualitative methods in single-study design (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) and is well supported in the literature (Brannen, 1992; Flick, 2007; Punch, 2005; Thomas, 2003). This approach was considered to best match the project's purposes because, as Wiersma and Jurs (2005, p. 277) argue, mixed methods provide a "more complete understanding of the phenomenon being investigated" than individual methods alone can do.

### ***Data Collected***

The following data were collected during the Pilot Project Study research:

- School Profiles completed twice—at the beginning of Year 1 and at the end of Year 2;
- School evaluation reports on school reading interventions;
- Personal Leadership Profiles pre- and post-participation in the PALL Program;
- Principal questionnaire and interview;
- Teacher questionnaire and interview;
- Leadership Mentor interview;
- NAPLAN data; and
- Leadership Mentors' aides-memoire.

## **Case Studies**

### ***Research Questions***

There were three central research questions that guided the case studies:

1. What were the effects of your school's planned leadership actions on teachers and their teaching?
2. What were the effects of your school's planned leadership actions on students and their learning?
3. What were the effects of your school's planned leadership actions on student achievement?

### ***Methods/Data Collection***

Multiple visits to each school were conducted to gather data on leadership activity, classroom teaching, student learning and achievement at agreed points in the year (usually each term). The purpose of these visits was to gather data on what actually

happened in the light of reading improvement interventions. Consistent with the improvement imperative of action research, the researchers undertook to process and analyse the data gathered from each school after each school visit. This was fed back to the school as a series of comments and questions that emanated from the interviews. The feedback was designed to assist the school principal and teachers in their reflection and subsequent action. The final report to each school not only looked backwards at what had happened but also challenged the school to think about future development. The data-gathering methods in each school site were as follows:

- Interviews with principals from the schools;
- Focus group discussions with selected teachers involved in reading interventions (4–5 participants in each);
- In some cases focus group interviews with parents were also conducted;
- Gathering of lesson plans to supplement focus group discussions of successful reading interventions;
- Gathering of student work samples for later analysis;
- Student learning experience survey regarding their reading improvement experiences; and
- Access to baseline student data used by the school to monitor reading progress and achievement.

In the chapters which follow, we draw from the accumulated data and findings from our six studies to discuss evidence of the effects of the PALL Project on the leadership of reading and its impact on student learning and achievement.

## Conclusion

This chapter has focused on explanations of the research-informed positions on which the PALL Program of professional leadership learning has been based. It has also provided descriptions of the workshop modules experienced by principals in preparation for the implementation of a series of follow-up tasks in their schools related to the leadership of reading improvement. These descriptions enabled us to assemble evidence of the approach taken to professional development in the program against 10 criteria defining quality leadership learning design. The evidence tabled suggests that the PALL Program houses valuable experiences for principals while it encourages them to use their positional leadership powers to enhance the shared leadership of reading locally. We concluded the chapter with a listing of the research data-gathering methods employed in six studies carried out across six of the eight Australian states and territories.

In the next chapter, we add greater detail to the brief explanation of the central hub of the LfLB—the use of evidence and disciplined dialogue to establish a strong moral purpose—followed by a more detailed account of the reading BIG 6 than that

provided in Module 2 above, showing what is essential knowledge for principals if they are to be active participants in the shared leadership of reading improvement in their schools. Added to this, we bring to bear on the discussion, evidence from our research about the impact and effect of the BIG 6 framework on leadership action, classroom teaching and student learning. Subsequent chapters then consider the background knowledge base and the evidence gathered from the PALL research related to each of the other dimensions of the LfLB, looking at shared leadership, professional learning, leadership support and parent and community interactions, before considering the evidence associated with the impact of PALL on principal and teacher learning and student engagement and achievement.

Leadership and Literacy

Principals, Partnerships and Pathways to Improvement

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