Over the course of 2007–08, authors Larry Smith and Dan Riley conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with a sample of 39 school principals across Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Their objective was to establish how well school principals felt that they were coping with the myriad non-educational management tasks they are expected to perform.

The short answer was – not very well. Without exception, the principals interviewed stated that the business dimensions of school leadership were occupying a significant and ever increasing proportion of their professional lives, even though they considered their primary role to be leadership of teaching and learning.

While educational matters were seen as extremely important, they were not seen as urgent and, as one principal said: “could be put on the back burner.” On the other hand, business agendas needed to be addressed urgently lest they cause major problems for the school.

Generally, the interviewees said that they were far from confident in dealing with business management matters, adding that they felt they had received inadequate preparation for the business component of their role prior to their appointment.

In response to these findings, the authors have written a handy 132-page “how to” that principals can turn to when confronted with the myriad non-educational management tasks they are expected to perform. The book also deals with the weaknesses in the traditional in-service system now referred to as ‘personal development’ of which both principals and teachers must attend as a part of the government’s wage agreements. One in particular cites “leaders’ low levels of ownership for the in-service education system.”

The book states “effective leadership will not emerge from teaching alone or from a qualification but from an increased attention to what leaders need to learn to increase the explicit links between knowing and doing.”

A Collective ACT – Leading a small school explores the characteristics of, the context for and the challenges to successful leadership. The research and the cases present a strong argument for better understanding this distinct context of leadership.

Barb Ady

Let’s Play! 100 popular games for children

Shelalagh McGovern

Rockpool Publishing
ISBN 978921295348
RR $19.99

The games are grouped by age (5–6, 7–9 and 10–12 years) and by the level of physical activity involved – from quiet indoor to outdoor chancing.

Author Shelalagh McGovern is both a mother and an aerial and physical theatre performer. She takes a systematic approach to organising structured play in Let’s Play! 100 games for children.

The games are grouped by age (5–6, 7–9 and 10–12 years) and by the level of physical activity involved – from quiet indoor to outdoor chancing.

Though the publisher’s blurb describes it as “a fun book for parents” teachers will find old favourites and many new games to engage their classes.

The description for each game include: age ranges; number of players; set-up time; formation; space; equipment; directions; variations of the game to suit teachers, children, and the available space.

There are 250 colour photographs of children playing the games, and an excellent table of contents to make choosing a game to play quick and easy. Let’s Play! 100 games for children is a valuable resource for teachers of children from five to 12 years.

Barb Ady

For all your daily teaching news and past issues (downloadable free) of Education Today visit: www.minniscomms.com.au/educationtoday