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THE ROLE OF TRUST IN AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

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Kathy A. Colville

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ABSTRACT

Much work and research has been carried out on effective school cultures, accountability and relationships. Underlying all that happens in schools, is the notion of trust. But what do we understand about trust? Is the definition of trust consistent amongst everyone? How is trust defined? Is trust a valued or even an identified component of successful leadership? Does trust underpin all that we do and what, if any, are the commonalities of trust?

Central to this thesis is the notion that trust and trusting relationships play a pivotal role in the culture of a school and that without trust a school ceases to be as effective as it has the potential to be. The purpose of this study was to consider existing research and information and to attempt to establish a definition of trust, while identifying the place that trust is perceived to have in an effective school culture. While seeking to establish a baseline understanding of trust and peoples' perceptions of trust, it was also the purpose of this study to examine the dichotomy of trust and accountability. This looked at the challenge of building and maintaining trust while meeting individual and school accountability tasks. Consideration was also given to high-trust/low-trust situations and to whether they are actually the same situation, just seen through different eyes.

The literature review examined what an effective school culture might look like and how trust impacts on this culture and, ultimately, on student learning. The literature review also defined trust and the skills, actions or emotions which contribute to trust and for whom these aspects of trust are a reality. The understanding that trust in the school situation is based on having common values and goals was evident in the literature. Trust was defined as being critical in the role of leadership and it is inherent in the way that principals act and lead and that it impacts greatly on the effectiveness of the relationships within a school and on student learning.

Eight principals from a range of school sizes, with a gender balance of participants, took part in this research. All were involved in separate, semi-

structured interviews, which provided the data for grounded theory analysis. Three distinct findings emerged from this process. These were the notion of what it means to be trustworthy, the role of the principal in extending trust and the dichotomy of trust. The results of this qualitative study suggested that the modelling of trust through daily actions and the empowering of staff were found to be important aspects in developing and maintaining trust within schools as was the competence, experience and knowledge of the principal. “Walking the talk” and valuing staff as individuals as well as professional members of the school organisation, were critical aspects to effective leadership. Prior experiences in which low trust was evident, informed the practice of these principals to develop philosophies of high trust.

Within the final chapter in the Recommendations for Further Study which could add to current research by considering in more depth, specific relationships involving high trust. Six recommendations for further study were discussed in this final section.

This study concludes that trust is significant in effective school cultures. It is a fragile emotion and action that can quickly be undermined and decimated and conversely, needs to be actively worked on to be maintained and developed to a high trust model. Being aware of and considering trust will assist principals and their colleagues to enhance effective school cultures, which will impact positively on student learning outcomes.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The focus for this study is to examine the concept of trust and to attempt to identify both the significance of trust and the practical applications of trust as they pertain to the school as a worksite. Ultimately, the role of trust must be about improving the quality of learning and education within that institution. The implications of trust and trusting relationships for principals are ones that would seem to suggest that the concept of trust needs to be looked at more closely. It would seem that consideration should be accorded to the development of healthy, trusting relationships to ensure a positive and effective school culture exists that enhances the learning opportunities for our students.

Purpose of Study

As a principal, and deputy principal, and throughout my career in education, I have been totally committed to the concept of the team. Having seen, on countless occasions, the impact of the power of the team and the effectiveness of the collaborative style, I have wanted to look deeper into what makes it all work. I believe in an inclusive, collaborative, transformational, style of leadership with a strong sense of social justice and again I wanted to consider what the scaffold or 'glue' was that could make this style of leadership effective. Burns (1978), as cited in Caldwell & Spinks (1992) contends that "...leadership must be more transformational than transactional, with the former implying a capacity to engage others in a commitment to change, assurance of a secure place to work for a commitment to get the job done" (p. 19). This description of the difference between transformational and transactional hints at a sense of trust with transformational and a lack of trust in transactional.

Five years ago, I began to hear the term professional trust and it quickly became embedded in my professional vocabulary until I began to question just what professional trust was. My role as an Advocate and Counsellor with NZEI Te Riu Roa, (New Zealand Educational Institute) has deepened this interest as trust, or the dissolution or destruction of trust, is often exposed as being pivotal in

situations of conflict, misunderstandings, miscommunication and deteriorating relationships. The philosopher Annette Baier (1985), states “Most of us notice...trust most easily after its sudden demise or severe injury. We inhabit a climate of trust as we inhabit an atmosphere and notice it as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted” (p. 239), and it would seem that in general, this is the case. The process of rebuilding trust, hinges then on identifying what trust is. How can it be rebuilt if we don’t know exactly what it is? Many writers have defined their understanding and concept of trust, (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Frowe, 2005; Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002; Kydd, Anderson, & Newton, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998) with some common characteristics, that of benevolence, vulnerability, competence and integrity. The process of determining an explanation is difficult. Tschannen-Moran et al, 1998, state:

Studying trust is like studying a moving target because it changes over the course of a relationship, and the nature of a trusting relationship can be altered instantaneously with a simple comment, a betrayed confidence, or a decision that violates the sense of care one has expected of another. (p. 2)

This indeterminate nature of trust became very evident in initial and, informal discussions with peers about trust and what might be constituted as trust. The resulting opinions varied considerably. You may often hear teachers make comments in relation to trust and yet the definition of trust in each situation would probably be described by those involved in very different ways.

As I moved from eight years in principalship, during which time I had afforded little thought to the role of trust as a specific part of leadership, to a position as a Deputy Principal of a large school the concept of trust, being trusted and being trustworthy began to form questions in my mind. Along side the questions of trust arose various questions about leadership styles and the role of power and the dichotomy of power and trust. Is it more difficult to maintain a high level of trust in a larger school or is it much more important to ensure that trust is maintained at a high level in all schools? Such were the questions that permeated my thoughts on this concept of trust that promoted my intent to pursue the research into this topic.

Bryk and Schneider (2002) state that “Little attention has been focused on the nature of trust as a substantive property of the social organisation of schools, on how much trust levels actually vary among schools, and how this may relate to their effectiveness” (p. 12). My interest has specifically focused on the notion of trust in effective school cultures, between whom the trust exists, how it is built, nurtured and maintained. My perception is that a tension exists between trust and accountability and therefore this has the potential to impact on the culture of a school. As an educator, I am constantly seeking to enhance my understanding and practice of leadership and I anticipate that the findings and outcomes of this research on trust may be of significance in developing leadership, practice, collaboration, and reflective practice and in enhancing effective school cultures. This study endeavors to investigate the role of trust, in leadership and effective school cultures as perceived by eight principals. Through this study I will investigate how trust is regarded within the leadership philosophy of the eight principals involved and how this plays out in their leadership practice. Consequently, there may be a suggestions that a further in-depth look at trust may be required as part of a school’s professional development programme.

Research Question and Organisation of the Report

The research question which is the focus of this research and report is; ‘How do principals perceive the concept of trust and its importance in the leadership of effective school cultures?’ The thesis is structured in the following way. Chapter One has outlined an introduction to the study and the reason for pursuing the subject. Chapter Two is the literature review which as Burns (2000) states is a “stimulus for your way of thinking” and it “should be a sounding board for ideas, as well as finding out what is already known and what specific methodologies have been used” (p. 390). The literature review is presented in three predominant themes. The first theme is Trust Considered and the second theme is Trust in Context. The final theme for the literature review is Trust Deficit or Low Trust. Chapter Three focuses on the methodology for this research project and this includes the Research Design, Qualitative methodology, Methods of Data Collection and the final section is on Ethical Concerns and Validity. This is followed by the Research Process and Data Analysis Phase. Chapter Four is an

analysis of the findings and the final chapter, Chapter Five discusses the findings, makes recommendations and gives a statement of conclusion. These chapters will be followed by the list of References, which were used to support this study and the final section is the Appendices, consisting of all letters and agreement forms utilised in this research process.

The following chapter, Chapter Two presents the literature review on trust.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review presents three predominant themes in relation to the concept of trust and the role of trust in the educational setting. The first theme, considering trust, is concerned with the definition of trust as an individual attribute and what is required to establish and maintain a trusting relationship. In reviewing the literature on trust, a definitive, all encompassing statement to determine the meaning of trust, was elusive although common elements and understandings were evident. The elements of trust as presented in the literature, will be examined with the implications of this for individuals and schools. The second theme, is trust in context and how this impacts on the organizational culture of a school and the role trust plays in leadership. The final theme for this literature review is low trust or the erosion of trust in a school setting and the implications of this for leadership and effective school cultures.

Trust Considered

In the review of the literature the defining of trust was considered, and presented through a variety of lenses, psychological, sociological and economic (Lewis & Weigert, 1985). Bryk and Schneider (2002) considered trust with reference to philosophical and religious writings and from the differing theoretical perspectives such as rational choice and group theorists. The complexity and multiple facets of trust was evident in an attempt to clarify and define trust. Perspectives were considered in order to isolate a definition and to reach an understanding of the concept of trust. Despite the significant literature on trust a solid and conclusive understanding was elusive (Barlow, 2001; Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002; Lewis & Weigert, 1985). Baier (1986) alludes to the “phenomenon” of trust that we all feel that we know about, that we are aware of, but we really don’t notice it or how it plays out in our lives (p. 234). Despite this, we respond to and act on trust with our friends, peers, associates as well as with people that we don’t know or even that we dislike intensely. Dasgupta (1998) suggests that trust is at the heart of all transactions yet “economists rarely discuss

the notion” (p. 49), however it is what makes business interactions possible, the glue that allows business to proceed.

In the following section trust will be clarified and this will be followed by an examination of the literature pertaining to the different facets of trust: vulnerability and risk, shared norms and values, benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability and competence.

Clarifying Trust

The literature suggests that trust is something that we acknowledge exists but in fact we give very little real thought as to how it exists (Baier, 1986), to understanding and valuing trust (Barlow, 2001) and how or why we are able to use or misuse trust. Trust is not something that we physically and deliberately do rather it is an unseen, unvocalised exchange or transaction (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998) at a level specific to a given situation with given individuals or groups and this causes us to become aware of its existence. Trust is considered to be an “essential human resource” (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002, p. 343), but one that we often treat lightly and take for granted. Trust is something we accord to someone or something that may not necessarily be done with much thought in some situations and in other, very serious consideration is given. Trust is an essential human resource because we are unable to control how others act and respond and we can’t always have contingencies in place for times of need (Frowe, 2005).

Trust is an ever changing phenomenon responding to different contexts (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2004), and different relationships between different individuals which suggests that trust can be considered in contextual terms and situational terms. (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002). Lahno (2001), posits that genuine trust can be classified as an emotion and emotions in general are not always subject to logical and rational control which supports the idea that trust may not always be logical or rational or in fact given deliberate thought and attention, rather it could be an emotional reaction.

The Penguin dictionary gives the following definitions of trust:

trust n la confident belief in or reliance on the character, ability, strength, honesty, etc of somebody or something. **b** acceptance of the trust of something, especially without proof: **b** care or custody:

trust v la to rely on or believe in the truthfulness, accuracy, ability etc of (somebody or something). **b** to place one's confidence in (somebody or something); to rely on. **2** to expect with confidence; to assume: *I trust you are well; We'll see you soon, I trust.* **3a** to place (somebody or something) in a somebody's care or keeping; to entrust **b** to be confident about allowing (somebody to do, have, or look after something **4** (often + to/in) to place one's confidence or dependence in somebody or something. (Penguin, 2001, p. 960)

All of these facets of trust have become evident either collectively or in part, in the associated literature.

Vulnerability and Risk

Vulnerability in this context is the handing over to or empowering someone else with knowledge or items that are valued so that if the other person abuses this vulnerability, the potential loss could be much greater than the potential gain they could make by trusting the person (Baier, 1986; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Gambetta, 1998; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Lahno, 2001; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Luhmann, 1998; Rousseau et al., 1998; Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Zand, 1972, , 1997). Trust is the factor that allows a person to assume that another person or persons will act in his/her best interest, and that they will have the competence, the intent and the disposition to look after what it is that has been entrusted to them (Mishra, 1996). When a person entrusts someone with information to carry out an action or empowers someone to do something, that person who has given the trust has put themselves in a position of vulnerability (Mishra, 1996; Tyler & Degoey, 1996).

The individual who wants to trust another person will only do so if they believe that that person will act honourably on his/her behalf in a way that will not harm them. Rousseau et al., (1998) augment this statement by identifying risk as "one condition considered essential in psychological, sociological and economic

conceptualizations of trust” (p. 395). Lahno (2001) supports this position but further contends that, “In a trust situation, one person allows another to exercise a certain amount of control over matters that are of some importance to him. A trusting person is vulnerable” (p. 171). Much of the literature refers to the state of vulnerability and therefore risk, that is inherent in the concept of trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Frowe, 2005; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Lahno, 2001; Rousseau et al., 1998). Trust and risk go hand in hand. The risk is in recognizing and knowing the capability and capacity to be wronged or harmed and the possibility of suffering an unpleasant consequence (Deutsch, 1958) but still being prepared to place trust in that person or group of people (Luhmann, 1998; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Bryk and Schneider (2002) discuss the perspective of rational choice theorists who posit that “trust contributes a calculation whereby an individual decides whether or not to engage in an action with another individual that incorporates some degree of risk” (p. 14). In order to make this calculation both parties use prior knowledge and prior relationships to judge whether a trust situation should occur. The risk involved in the reciprocity of trust is in the not knowing exactly how the other party will respond or act (Mishra, 1996; Rousseau et al., 1998). The act of trusting allows for the opportunity of malevolence by those being trusted. So as Rousseau et al (1998) states, “... risk creates an opportunity to trust, which leads to risk taking” (p. 395).

The trust in a situation of vulnerability becomes apparent when the person affording the trust has and shows the confidence in the other party that they will not misuse or breach that trust. “Reasonable trust will require good grounds for such confidence in another’s good will, or at least the absence of good grounds for expecting their ill will or indifference” (Baier, 1986, p. 235). In essence, an individual recognizes the risk that if he/she doesn’t trust, he/she may in fact be better off than if he/she trusts and this trust is not fulfilled (Deutsch, 1958), or, as Mishra (1996, p. 265) states, “taking action where the potential for loss exceeds the potential for gain.” Groundwater-Smith & Sachs argue that this risk is accompanied by durability. They suggest that there is “a confidence that the trustworthiness of the other is reliable and dependable” (2002, p. 345).

Trust then is the giving of authority or power to someone, knowing or hoping that they will act in the best interests of the person who trusts them with some level of assurance or confidence (Gambetta, 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). In order for this assurance or confidence to occur, a person must have some prior knowledge, or preconception of the person or group to be trusted. Communication or the establishment of a level of relationship is therefore implicit so that this confidence and prior knowledge allows a person to be aware of the motives of another person or group. This understanding and acceptance of people's intentions and motives allows trust to be maintained (Gambetta, 1998). Trust therefore, usually comes with some prior interaction although Baier (1986) contends that, "Trust can come with no beginning" (p. 234). Having a core understanding of others or knowledge of their values can be a precursor to establishing a trusting relationship but without any prior knowledge of the other person the level of risk increases.

Shared Norms and Values

Understanding and recognizing shared norms and values gives a starting point from which trust can grow. In some cases, these preconceptions may not be warranted. For example, one could assume that the first interaction of the day that a teacher has with either individuals in his/her class or the whole class, would be a positive one. This would be an assumption that is a given understanding within the culture of a school but the face value of having shared values may not actually be a reality. In this context norms are the unstated expectations, which can develop both formally and informally while values are the "conscious expression of what an organisation stands for.... Values are a deeper sense of what is important" (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 26). The development of shared values and goals are "the glue that connects people together in meaningful ways" (Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 25).

In conceptualizing the core of trust, Barlow (2001) specifies that a set of standards or expectations is implicit in the concept. This is endorsed by Bryk and Schneider (2002) when considering religious and theoretical writings on trust:

...this perspective roots trust in a shared set of primary beliefs about who we are as persons and how we should live together as people. Individuals

understand, by virtue of their socialization in families, religious institutions, and communities, that they have a responsibility to “do what is right” and expect others in the social group to do the same. (p. 15)

This underlying sense of core values or shared norms is also evident in Bryk and Schneider’s review of group theory in which they assert that after being in an organisation or group, the long term interactions and connections begin to have their own place or value. “Individuals come to define themselves as connected to that person or organisation (for example, “These are my friends, my school, my community organisation”) and undertake subsequent actions because this identification is meaningful to them” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 15).

Tschannen-Moran (2004) delineates between shared values and attitudes. Shared values are identified as the fundamental, inherent standards that people aspire to maintain “loyalty, helpfulness and fairness” (p. 49). Attitudes are the way people think about other people or groups, “Attitudes are evaluative in nature, and values are a key means people use to evaluate each other” (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p. 49). Therefore, individuals form attitudes about others based on the way they perceive the others work from their value base. If a person does not appear to have the same value base or actually works against that, then trust is unlikely to be enhanced or could be broken or the risk heightened. Lhano (2001), defines two categories in the emotional nature of trust, the second of which is that a person perceives a situation of trust as “one as which shared values or norms motivate his own actions as well as those of the person being trusted” (p. 171). People will generally offer trust to those who they believe hold the same sense of obligation and co-operation which has been learned through involvement in similar cultural structures (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

The role of educational organisations is to promote quality learning and implicit in this are standards and expectations that should be the norm for all those involved in the school. School culture is about “core assumptions values and beliefs” in relation to school and to education (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992, p. 70). Within the school each individual should have a clear understanding of what their role is, what their obligations are and also what the roles and obligations of others are (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). It is this shared understanding of norms and values, the

goals and expectations of those within the organisations, that promote the establishment and maintenance of trusting relationships. The concept of culture and effective school cultures will be discussed later in this literature review.

As Sergiovanni (2001) commented it is the “trusting relationships and the development of a culture of respect” (p. 70), that allows individuals to come to a working relationship with pre-set expectations and norms which guide them in making judgements about what will be appropriate and what they should query in the work context (Barlow, 2001). Sergiovanni (2001) further suggests that teachers will respond much more naturally to the norms of their peer group and their values and beliefs than they do to “management control” (p. 6). This management control in relation to trust will be further explored in the section on Trust Deficit. (p. 27) Trust therefore includes both vulnerability and shared norms and values but there are more dimensions to trust than just these two. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) identify “The Five Facets of Trust” and it is through these that a clearer definition of trust begins to emerge.

Facets of Trust

The five facets of trust identified by Hoy & Tschannen-Moran (1999), are those of benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability and competence. It is the presence of these characteristics and the conscious or subconscious making of judgments based on these that allows people to put themselves into situations of vulnerability and risk. Bulach (1993) as cited in Barlow (2001), also refer to the vulnerability aspect of trust when one feels confident of the best intentions of the other party in relation to “character, ability, truthfulness, confidentiality and predictability of others in the group” (p. 13). A direct link between Bulach’s and Hoy et al’s (1999) is evident, as it is also with Mishra’s (1996) “Trust is one person’s willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is a) competent b) reliable c) open and d) concerned” (p. 261). Cummings & Bromily (1996) suggest three aspects of trust, defining this as the belief in another individual or group and that individual or group

- a) make good faith efforts to behave in accordance with any commitments both explicit or implicit
- b) is honest in whatever negotiations preceded

such commitments and c) does not takes excessive advantage of another even when the opportunity is available. (p. 303)

Zand (1972) defines trusting behaviour as;

Consisting of actions that

- a) increase ones vulnerability,
- b) to another whose behaviour is not under ones control,
- c) in a situation which the penalty (disutility) one suffers if the other abuses that vulnerability is great then the benefit (utility) one gains if the other does not abuse that vulnerability. (p. 230)

The first of the five facets of trust is benevolence and this is, described in the Penguin Dictionary (2001) as the disposition to do good. Benevolence as an aspect of trust is the belief that a person's well-being, or something they care about, is going to be protected by the person who is being trusted, that the person being trusted will always act in the best interests and with the best of intentions to the person who is the trusting party (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001; Zand, 1997). In the school situation, benevolence is evidenced by the supporting of staff, confidentiality, positivity and fairness. Benevolence also reflects the concern of the participants that not only should the relationship not be harmed but there should be evidence of personal regard for others (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). As with the concepts of vulnerability and risk, so too are there two sides to benevolence. When an individual experiences a benevolent interaction, he/she is more likely to act in a benevolent manner towards the other person (Deutsch, 1958). Tyler and Degoey (1996) develop this concept by asserting that people will respond more favourably to authorities when they perceive benevolent responses than they will when there is no evidence of caring and only a clinical interaction occurs. Tschannen-Moran (2004) makes the important distinction here in that it is not incumbent on a trusting relationship that one or both parties like each other. It is asserted that you can trust a person yet have little friendship, she suggests that "it may be more likely that you will trust those you like and like those you trust" (p. 22). I further contend that for benevolence to be of significance in trusting relationships it must be perceived as genuine benevolence. An example of this is for someone to have a personal view and a professional view of an action and in certain circumstances both may be referred to. In this situation, it is likely that the

benevolence is perceived to be not genuine while others may claim that the person is merely being honest.

Secondly, honesty is an aspect of trust identified by Tschannen-Moran (1999) as “character, integrity and authenticity” (p. 188). Kirkpatrick & Locke (1991) link integrity and honesty as being an essential component of leadership. They contend that being honest is about being trustworthy while integrity is the follow-through of stated actions. Barlow (2001) supports this but further contends that having strong convictions and the ability to inspire others, are indicators of a person’s honesty (Barlow, 2001). Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) state “A correspondence between a person’s statements and deeds characterizes integrity. An acceptance of responsibility for one’s actions and avoiding distorting the truth in order to shift blame to another characterizes authenticity” (p. 188). In a trusting relationship there is an expectation that ways of behaving and responding will be done in an honest and honorable manner (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002). Tschannen-Moran (2004) explain this further by suggesting that dishonest behaviour may be more damaging to a trusting relationship than any other facet of trust as this dishonesty could be perceived as an “indictment of a person’s character” (p. 23). Following through on stated actions or intent and taking responsibility are indicators of authenticity and honesty. These characteristics may also be seen through a person’s openness, the willingness to admit failings and mistakes, and to share this knowledge, experience and leadership.

Third, openness is reflected in the ability of a person to share information, thereby taking a risk and putting themselves in a position of vulnerability. This openness is always within the context of discretion and the person sharing the information should be trusted to do no harm, unintentionally or otherwise (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). How readily leaders or principals share information with teachers is important in establishing trusting relationships. This is usually a reciprocal process so that the person who is party to the information is more likely to trust the person with their information and individuals know that their trust will not be exploited. Mishra (1996) identifies both openness and honesty as dimensions of trust that people have in their leaders and the importance of this in positive working relationships. Teachers who work in a culture of trust and openness are

also open and willing to share. This results in a positive climate for school improvement (Zand, 1997).

The fourth facet is reliability. Inherent in this is a sense of predictability. Predictability by itself does not constitute reliability, as there are predictable actions that are harmful and negative. It is when the predictability is combined with the will and intent to look after, look out for, care for another person or group that reliability becomes evident in trust. Barlow (2001) notes that successful leaders tend to be more resilient, resourceful and robust. School leadership can be a stressful occupation and it is the ability to cope and function effectively under stress as well as normal times that ensure that the reliability of a principal can be trusted. Not only does reliability manifest through resilience but is also evidenced in other ways. The literature suggests that follow-through is pivotal for teachers and other individuals to be able to establish trust in the principal. Introducing a new idea or change and failing to follow through with implementation, the provision of resources, time and additional support is likely to cause cynicism and to damage existing trust (Nanus (1989) cited in Mishra, 1996; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Follow-through is the link between what is said and the action that supports the stated intention (Mishra, 1996). Teachers need to be confident that they can predict how a principal will act or react in the myriad of situations that face them in the school situation and that there is consistency in the reaction and support given. Teachers need to know that in crises, the leader can be counted on and that their trustworthiness will be judged by their reliability and dependability (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Mishra, 1996; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Good (1998) defines this by stating that “trust is based on an individual’s theory as to how another person will perform on some future occasion, as a function of that target person’s past or previous claims, either explicit or implicit, as to how they will behave” (p. 33). If a teacher does not know for certain how a principal will respond due to their unpredictability, there is potentially little or no trust in the principal. Reliability in words and actions is therefore an important aspect of trust as are the notions of expectation and predictability (Deutsch, 1958).

Fifth, competence in a trusting relationship is when you can be reliable and benevolent and act with the very best of intent but unless you have a degree of

competency it is difficult for others to trust that you will succeed on their behalf. The ability to make competent decisions is critical to the level of trust that people will have in their leaders (Mishra, 1996). Barlow (2001) suggested that “Trusted leaders are engaged in self-improvement” (p. 28) and Kouzes and Posner (1999), in Barlow (2001) further contend that:

leadership doesn't depend on mystical qualities or inborn gifts but rather on the capacity of individuals to know themselves, their strengths, and their weaknesses, and to learn from the feedback they get in their daily lives – in short, their capacity of self-improvement. (p. 28)

The trust that individuals have in the principal is not just an outcome of learning on the job, the resolution of conflict, the problem solving and circumstances beyond their control, it is also the professional development which enhances the competency of the principal. Dalla Costa (1998) cited in Barlow (2001) supports this by stating:

Trust by itself is not enough, but must be backed up by learning, intelligence, skills and the confidence to address the challenges of change. Matching competence with hopes and expectations is very difficult, and not everyone can rise to the demands of trust. (p. 21)

As we reflect on the definition and role of trust it becomes evident that in all human experiences, there is an element of trust and that the more trust is utilised, the more trust is likely to exist (Gambetta, 1998). People who trust are more likely to be considered to be trustworthy (Good, 1998) and we become more inclined to trust others when we see evidence or suggestion that they trust us (Lewis & Weigert, 1985). Trust, is implicit in all that we do at varying levels. Trust is situational and contextual and the next section of the review will consider trust in the education context.

Trust in Context

School culture, trust and leadership are intrinsically linked. In this section, these will be addressed through examining the literature on school culture, developing and maintaining trust and finally high trust with a focus on leadership. The

research question for this study refers to effective school cultures so, as part of defining school culture, consideration will be given to what it means to be effective.

School Culture

Culture is often described as the way that things are done at an individual school or organisation. Beare, Caldwell & Millikan (1989) refer to culture as a state when a group of people share the same world view, when their paradigms are consistent with each other or are sufficiently homogenous in their core assumptions, then a common culture emerges, “The group becomes tribal” (p. 18). It is about the things that are special and particular to that school and staff that sets it apart from other schools and their staff (Sergiovanni, 1984). Commitment, passions, enthusiasm, history and innovation and a commonality of actions, communication and behaviour are reflected in a positive school culture (Beare et al., 1989). Culture is the behind-the-scene way that a school or organisation functions, the unseen ways of being and doing, the beliefs and assumptions that inform behaviour over time (Deal & Peterson, 1999). The effect of school culture directly impacts on student learning. Peters (2004) directly links success with trust:

The highest achieving classrooms are ones where the students trust, respect and care about their teacher because that teacher trusts, respects, cares and expects great things from them. This is also true for the highest achieving schools. The staff trusts, respects and cares about the principal and each other because the principal and other staff members trust, respect and care about them, and they are all working toward the same thing, a shared mission that ultimately targets student success. (p. 1)

The culture of sharing and caring based on respect and trust was also identified by Deal and Peterson (1999) as a component of a successful school culture. The literature further explains culture as a set of interdependent individuals who are involved in one place at a certain time and who work together to establish an identity through answering questions, confronting problems, and establishing shared answers (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Maehr & Midgley, 1996). The characteristics of such a school culture, as defined in the literature, enable a focus on student teacher learning and purpose (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Sergiovanni,

1984), an identified history, stories from the past which include rituals and ceremonies, (Prosser, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1984; Smyth, McInerney, Lawson, & Hattam, 1999) a focus on collegiality, quality and achievement (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992), positive beliefs and assumptions (Avis, 2003; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Prosser, 1999), equity, efficiency and empowerment (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992), open communication (Brewster & Railsback, 2003; Prosser, 1999; Tschannen-Moran, 2004) and a physical environment that reflects the culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1984). Beare, Caldwell, & Millikan (1989) summarise the impact of culture in effective schools when they state that:

... what seems to be emerging as a much more powerful factor about the acknowledged 'best' schools is that they have developed a culture, milieu, environment, atmosphere, a culture corporis, which in a myriad of ways, influences how well children learn. (p. 18)

School culture is defined in many ways but what is evident, as Sergiovanni (1984) contends, is that the stronger and more understood the culture of a school is, the school is better able to move towards its stated goals and objectives. The leader's role in developing and maintaining an effective school culture is of considerable importance. This will be discussed later in this chapter. Through successful relationships, this shared understanding and development of a positive and effective school culture will emerge.

The question for this study refers to 'effective school cultures' so it is important to identify what is meant by effective in the educational setting. Murrhiy (2002) contends that "...to be an effective, it must be meaningful and all members of the school community must feel they are 'normal' and belong" (p. 25). The concept of effectiveness indicates a stated purpose and the achievement of that purpose. Sergiovanni (2001), also refers to effectiveness as focusing on "the development of capacity" that will ultimately bring about a measurable improvement in performance (p. 53). An effective school culture then, is one that ensures that all students have the opportunity to reach their potential by having access to and mastering a broad range of experiences, knowledge and skills. In an effective school the focus is on student learning and purpose (Beare et al., 1989). Caldwell & Spinks (1992) endorse this and discuss the three aspects of "quality,

effectiveness and equity” (p. 71), in school excellence and they link this with the values of “efficiency and empowerment” (p. 71). Sergiovanni (1984) further contends that this effectiveness and excellence is far more than just facts and figures and the suggestion is that it is a result of the culture:

We know excellent schools when we experience them, despite difficulties in definition. In excellent schools things “hang together”, a sense of purpose rallies people to a common cause; work has meaning and life is significant, teachers and students work together and with spirit and accomplishments are readily recognized. To say excellent schools have high morale or have students who achieve high test scores or are schools that send more students to college, misses the point. Excellence is all of these and more. (p. 4)

Having an effective culture then results in positive outcomes for all concerned and to be effective the literature suggests that trust must be present. The development and maintenance of trust will be discussed next.

Developing and Maintaining Trust

How trust is built, maintained and enhanced is critical to effective cultures. The literature suggests that a basic trust exists in all relationships and interactions and that this can either be damaged or destroyed by peoples’ actions or it can be built on and strengthened. Barlow (2001) asserts that a supportive culture or environment combined with collaborative skill will result in high levels of trust. It is the high quality, positive relationships between the individuals of a school which impact on the culture of a school which will ultimately lead to school improvement. Where trust exists and is an accepted norm and people are focused towards a common good, issues are readily resolved. This is in contrast to low trust relationships which will implode into interpersonal conflict when problems arise (Lewis & Weigert, 1985).

Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (1998) identify three different stages in the development of a trusting relationship. The first stage, deterrence based trust, is an initial, provisional trust where one person assumes that the other person or party will sustain the association but that any transgression will result in the dissolution of the relationship. The second stage is when the parties feel confident that they

can predict how the other party will act in given circumstances and this is known as “knowledge based trust” (p. 337). The third stage of developing trust is identity based trust, “Where there is complete empathy with the other parties desires and intentions. Each of the parties understands and appreciates the others desires to such an extent that each can effectively act in the other’s stead” (p. 337). In building trust in schools, perhaps the greatest obstacle is the past and events that have impacted on the level of trust. Brewster & Railsback (2003) posit that, “Identifying the specific cause of mistrust in the school and making a sincere commitment to address them is the first and probably most important step” (p. 11). Low trust will be discussed later in this chapter. Brewster & Railsback (2003) identify ten steps when planning a process of building trust: demonstrating personal integrity; showing that you care; being accessible; facilitating and modelling effective communication; involving staff in decision-making; celebrating experimentation and supporting risk; expressing value for dissenting views; reducing teachers sense of vulnerability; ensuring that teachers have basic resources and being prepared to replace ineffective teachers. These reflect the five facets of trust as identified by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) and the need to be aware of the characteristics of trust that must be focused on to ensure that trust is a reality in the school culture. Blaze and Blaze (2001) cited in Brewster and Railsback (2003) state “Without trust a school cannot improve and grow into the rich, nurturing micro-society needed by children and adults alike” (p. 18). Focusing on the building and maintaining of trust within a school community and placing credence on increased educator trust is likely to have positive effects on the meaningful and enduring change in schools. Once this culture of trust has been established so that it is implicit in all relationships within a school, a culture of high trust would be expected to emerge.

High Trust

In *Rethinking Trust in the Performative Culture*, Avis (2003) identifies social capital as the “social networks and patterns of trust relationship within which the individual is located” (p. 317). He talks about the need to develop this in education. Relationships that are grounded in trust allow for individuals to work in a risk-taking and innovative environment. High trust environments allow people to work individually and in teams, confident that they can have open

communication, take risks, share data be innovative and yet share problems that might evolve without fear of being put down or minimilised (Avis, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Southworth (2002) alludes to the “cultures in which there are high levels of trust, security and openness” (p. 13) which encourage collaborativeness and people feel a sense of belonging to the community of practice. Collaboration and openness in a high trust environment does not exclude competition or individuals within the culture being competitive. Competition as well as team work is part of a high trust environment. Tschannen-Moran (2004) states “Authentic trust emerges when the parties have a deep and robust trust in each other, one that can endure an occasional disappointment or difference” (p. 61) and this may be reflected in competitiveness. It is high trust or deep trust which is the basis of a positive school culture. High trust is not just a relational state but it must also be supported by systems, policies, procedures and rules as well as a positive school culture with clear values and norms (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Fullan (2003) refers to the “culture of discipline” and states that endorses a high trust model:

All companies have a culture, some companies have discipline but few companies have a culture of discipline. When you have disciplined people you don't need hierarchy. When you have disciplined thought, you don't need beauracracy. When you have disciplined action you don't need excessive controls. (p. 9)

While considering high trust in an educational system it is important to consider the role of leadership.

Leadership

The role of the school leader is critical in developing an effective school culture. Individual personality, style, values and commitment contribute to effective leadership and effective leaders will be “morally diligent in advancing the integrity of the schools they lead” (Sergiovanni, 1984, p. 46). The development of an effective school culture will only develop if it is modelled and lived by the leader. Beare et al., (1989) suggests that there is a process of negotiation between the principal and staff as to what this “professional code of behaviour” (p. 238) is and then it is encumbent on all parties to adhere to them. The extent to which a principal trusts his/her staff and in turn the extent to which individuals trust the

leader is an important question. Sergiovanni (1984) defines the concept of “moral leadership” as a relationship where there is an “unequal distribution of power” (p. 13) and within this is the concept of control and the acceptance of that control. The trust of the person is the “assumption that the control will not be exploited” (Sergiovanni, 1984, p. 13). Implicit in most situations is the concept that some people can be trusted more than others. There are significant responsibilities and expectations that go with the person who is considered trustworthy and trusted. In order to establish a climate or culture of trust and respect, the principal must first have extended trust to the staff, based on experience and prior knowledge (Barlow, 2001; Gambetta, 1998; Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

The purpose of any school is the task of educating the students of that school which suggests that the teachers and the principal are dependant on one another for this to happen. Newmann & Associates (1996) cited in Deal & Peterson (1999) identified that an “ethos of caring, sharing, and mutual help among staff, and between staff and students, based on respect, trust and shared power relations among staff” (p. 7), was evident and present as part of the culture of the schools identified as being successful.

Vulnerability is an outcome of this co-dependence between teachers and the principal so the trust dynamics of a school will be evidenced by the principal-teacher relationship. A culture of collective responsibility for student success in a school is created when a principal has established a trusting relationship with staff and consequently the staff build a trusting relationship with each other (Zand, 1997). When a state of interdependence and vulnerability, without anxiety, is achieved then there is the potential for individuals in a school to be able to trust one another. This is authentic trust. Implicit in this must be the acceptance that “errors will be made, failures will be encountered and harm will be done” (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992, p. 75), and in a trusting relationship these issues will be learning opportunities and trust will be intact. In such a culture adults act and are treated as professional individuals and, there is a consistent focus on learning and an identified sense of community (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). However, for these aspects to be inherent in a school culture, there has to be a clear foundation of trust. This trust is shown not just through the acting as a professional and

treating others as professionals but also through a genuine ethic of caring for others. This caring has been defined previously in this literature review as benevolence.

Through an ethos of care or benevolence, school leaders can consolidate the trusting culture so that barriers and potential barriers to student learning can be overcome. Being known as a person of goodwill, integrity and being able to maintain open communication is critical to being accepted as a trustworthy leader (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Inclusive in this goodwill is the commitment to the care and well-being of not only students but staff and community and it is these qualities which engender the trust of others (Brewster & Railsback, 2003). Consideration, respect and support are all evidence of benevolence (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Genuine and authentic care is a pre-requisite for leadership (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). The quality and depth of this caring, is a significant role in the quality of leadership. This ethic of care and benevolence can extend beyond the professional realm and high trust principals will show a genuine concern and advise if necessary in personal issues (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). To be benevolent and to work within and demonstrate an ethic of care could be considered by some to be soft or weak. The principal's care and commitment ensures that accountability for teacher's performance is well established and the tension between task completion and nurturing relationships is an outcome of wisdom and benevolence of the principal (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Sergiovanni (2001) promotes the concept of "idea-based leadership" which:

communicates to teachers that they are respected, autonomous, committed, capable and morally responsible adults – adult professionals who are able to join with the leader in a common commitment to making things in the school work better for the children. (p. 30)

This "idea-based leadership" (Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 30) reflects the act of reciprocal trust within the school environment that is driven by the leader.

Barlow (2001) discusses the need for leaders to have strong personal conviction and to have the ability to inspire others to a common vision. Without the strong conviction the message can become weak and insincere resulting in people's perceptions that the leader is not honest. Attempting to please everyone or trying

to avoid situations of conflict means that at times a principal may not be completely honest with individuals. When this dishonesty occurs and is realized by the other party, the resulting decline in trust may be more wide-reaching than just being focused on that particular incident:

The revelation of dishonest behaviour may be more damaging to trust than lapses in other facets because it is read as an indictment of a person's character. Once a principal has been caught in even a single lie the faculty has lost faith in the word of the principal, trust can be difficult to re-establish because the communication tool necessary to restore trust is now suspect. (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p. 23)

This situation could arise, for example, when a principal takes ownership or the credit for a development in their school when in fact it was not his or hers to own. The staff may then view this principal with a loss of trust and could be unsure of any future situations as to whether this person could be trusted to be honest or to act in their best interest. Good (1998) refers to this type of scenario as the trust being "fatally undermined" (p. 43) which suggests that once this occurs, there is no going back. Low trust or trust deficit will be discussed in the next section of this review.

Trust deficit

When consideration is given to situations of low trust or trust deficit, and what this could look like or how it would manifest in the school situation, the literature suggests two facets pertaining to low trust. These are relationships, and rules and regulations.

Relationships

In any institution in which people are involved there will always be the potential for distrust to occur and Brewster & Railsback (2003) identify the most common barriers to an open trusting culture as:

- Top down decision making that is perceived as arbitrary, mis-informed, or not in the best interests of the school
- In-effective communication

- Lack of follow-through on or support for school improvement efforts and other projects
- Unstable or inadequate school funding
- Failure to remove teachers or principals who are widely viewed to be ineffective
- Frequent turnover in school leadership
- High teacher turnover
- Teacher isolation.

(p. 10)

When there is low trust, individuals move into defensive mode so energy is wasted in unproductive ways, which may result in productivity, effectiveness and openness being compromised. When communication is not open “calculative attitudes towards relationships increase” (Lewis & Weigert, 1985, p. 980), and teachers and principals may be guarded about what they say and who they say it to (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). This may result in the concealing, distortion and disguising of information. (Zand, 1972). As Covey (1989), states “without trust, the best we can do is compromise; without trust, we lack the credibility for open, mutual learning and communication and real creativity” (p. 221).

Trust, according to Covey (1989) is the “highest form of motivation” and having this established allows for a leader to bring out the best in all of the stakeholders in a school (p. 178). The responsibility that this trust brings with it is to ensure that the people involved have access to the support necessary to raise their competency so that they meet the level of trust extended to them (Covey, 1989). As stated previously, initiative and openness in a school culture flourishes in a culture of high trust. Without this trust, cynicism replaces openness and initiative. The trusting relationship between teachers and principals is reciprocal.

To enable conditions of trust to be maintained means that people have to be trustworthy. To trust someone means that person should have demonstrated that they are worthy of that trust by their actions. Where there is a co-dependency between parties as in a school between principal and staff, both parties become “vulnerable and in need of trusting relationships” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy,

1998, p. 11). When this vulnerability exists, the literature suggests that the opportunity for a breakdown in trust, which ultimately undermines or destroys relationships becomes more possible. Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (1998) classify the breakdown of trust into two broad categories, “a damaged sense of civic order and a damaged identity” (p. 338) as based on the work of Bies and Tripp (1996). Damaged identity is defined in the literature could be the result of public chastisement, or criticism, personal and professional insults and unfair or unsubstantiated accusation. Moodiness, irrational outbursts and irrational behaviour, discourtesy and disrespect, destroy trust in interpersonal relationships (Covey, 1989; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991), and it is these behaviours which can result in damaged identity for a person. Emotional stability and control are critical for leaders in maintaining trust and it is incumbent on them to retain a calm, measured approach rather than risking undermining a staff member.

The second classification in the breakdown of trust as suggested by Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (1998) is that of “ a damaged sense of civic order” (p. 338). Some of the conditions and actions that could contribute to the damage of civic order are defined in the literature as broken promises, avoidance of conflict, lack of follow-through, disclosure of confidential information, not meeting responsibilities, requirements, expectations and the standards of the job and the taking ownership of other peoples ideas and innovations. All of these actions contribute to the breaking down of trust and in particular to the damages sense of civic order or the way that things are expected to be done (Brewster & Railsback, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). Once again, it is suggested in the literature that it is incumbent on the leader to behave in ways that avoid the breakdown in relationships, which are the result of the dissolution of trust between inter-dependent parties.

Further to the breakdown of trusting relationships is the act of deliberately withholding of trust without justification as stated in Tschannen-Moran (2004). It is asserted “that it is unethical to withhold trust without good reason just as it is unethical to treat a person unfairly in other ways” (p. 16). It is this withholding of trust which can lead to the implementation of controls and rules. The withholding of trust may be the result of one or two people’s actions, impacting on the

principal to make a decision to the detriment of the larger group of staff. Once a situation arises where rules and controls replace trust in a significant way in a school, I would advocate that this suggests a situation of management rather than leadership. When a leader is mistrustful and acts with no trust in staff, the effects of this are extremely damaging and as Zand (1997), states, leaders “underestimate the corrosive effects of their mistrust” (p. 89). Instead of action on the issue and bringing the issues into the open, Zand (1997) further contends that, “leaders rarely discuss their mistrust with the other person, instead, they act on it” (p. 89). In effective, open leadership, the supporting and mentoring of staff is critical and the openness of the leader to discuss the declining trust is critical to attempting to rebuild the trust. The literature, suggests that open, trusting and professional relationships are essential to maintaining effectiveness in schools so these relationships have to be worked at to ensure they are maintained.

Rules and regulations

The literature suggests that when there is a culture of low or no trust, formal controls and checks could be instituted (Barlow, 2001; Beare et al., 1989; Covey, 1989; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). When a principal does not trust that the goals and values of an organisation are being adhered to, then a more prescriptive process could be put in place which potentially would not allow for any variance in process and delivery of curriculum and in the daily running of the school. Lewis & Weigert (1985) refer to this process as “a course of action based on suspicion, monitoring and activation of institutional safeguards” (p. 969). Sergiovanni (1998) cited in Groundwater-Smith & Sachs (2002) discusses the importance of “social covenants” over “social contracts” (p. 345). When examining leadership and culture these two definitions link closely with transactional leadership and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership involves a transaction or a negotiation to achieve a goal. There may be an external or extrinsic reward for achieving this goal (Gunter, 2001). When social contracts are evident in a school situation, the use of threat or promise of gain, undermine an open, benevolent and effective culture by the very suspicion and cynicism that they promote, results in ineffectiveness in the organisation (Barlow, 2001). Gambetta (1998), concurs with this but further contends that:

Coercian, or at least credible threat has been, and is still widely practical as a means to ensure co-operation; in its extreme form, to ensure submission and compliance. But it falls short of being an adequate alternative to trust. (p. 220)

When too many rules are instituted, organizational effectiveness and trust itself is likely to be compromised (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002; Zand, 1972). In this culture of low trust, control and manipulation of both students and staff can be evident. “Principals use their power and authority to control and discipline teachers and obstruct innovation” (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p. 101). In this culture it is likely that teachers will not perform at their best, will feel negative and resentful and organizational learning will be minimal. Rules and regulations can, therefore, come as a result of mistrust or no trust and conversely trust can be lost in an autocratic or bureaucratic environment where the strictness and adherence to rules as Beare et al (1989) states may destroy “the element of trust in relationships, maturity and the kind of growth that can only come through accepting responsibilities” (p. 199).

Social covenants however, Sergiovanni (1998) contends are maintained by “loyalty, fidelity, kinship, sense of identity, obligation, duty, responsibility and reciprocity” (as cited in Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002, p. 345). These social covenants can be linked to transformational leadership in which the intrinsic motivation of the teachers will “spur employees to go beyond the minimum requirements and give their best for the organisation” (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p. 81). In a culture of transformational leadership a collaborative, professional and supportive ethos would exist which allows teachers to be pro-active in solving problems (Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, Cooper, Lambert, Gardner, & Szabo, 2002).

Trust, as seen in this review of the literature, is complex, elusive, and many faceted. As stated in Sachs & Groundwater-Smith (2002) “...it is important to stress that it is mediated by individuals and that the context in which trust is put to test, influences the degree to which it is practiced” (p. 344).

This review of the literature on trust has highlighted the complexity of defining trust while identifying the crucial role that trust plays in effective school cultures. Evident also from this review of the literature was the lack of New Zealand based literature to give a balanced review of how trust impacts on effective school cultures within the New Zealand context. The focus for and interest in this research will be on principals' perceptions and understanding of trust and how it manifests in the school culture and whether it is something that has to be consciously addressed to ensure that it is robust and sustainable.

The research methodology proposed for this research is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCESS

The research question is: How do principals perceive the concept of trust and its importance in the leadership of effective school cultures?

The purpose of this study is to explore relationships, the role of trust and people's perceptions of trust within the school setting so the appropriate research methodology for this, is one that "attempts to capture and understand individual definitions, descriptions and meanings of events" (Burns, 2000, p. 388). For the purpose of this research therefore, the means to establishing an understanding a group of principal's perceptions of trust are best served through a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research including that of interpretive, and of grounded theory, will be explored, along with the data collection method of structured and semi-structured interviewing which was used to gather the information for analysis. This will be followed by the chronology of this research, the selection process, a comment on the transcribing of the interviews and the data analysis phase.

Qualitative Methodology

When considering and working within the context of social research, two distinct research methods are identified, that of qualitative and quantitative (Burns, 2000; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Corbin & Strauss, 1998; Davidson & Tolich, 1999; Dey, 1993; Mutch, 2005; Scott & Usher, 1999). "Quantitative research and qualitative research have different starting points because they assume different things about the world" (Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p. 19). As time has progressed qualitative research has been accepted as an authentic and relevant research method (Scott & Usher, 1999). Put simply, Tolich & Davidson assert that "qualitative research focuses on reflecting the quality of something" (p. 19). Mutch, (2005) further defines qualitative methods as focusing on stories and descriptions of individuals experiences that allows the researcher and the readers

to form an understanding of particular issues, actions, emotions and situations. Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner (1995), further explain the qualitative approach as “seeking to acquire in-depth and intimate information about a smaller group of persons” and “to learn about how and why people behave, think and make meaning as they do...” (p. 2). Lambert et al., (1995) refer to the “multiplicity of realities’ of qualitative research (p. 2) and that it is the “richness of the quotes, the clarity of examples, and the depth of the illustrations... that should serve to highlight the most salient features of the data” (p. 5). The purpose of this study is to consider perceptions of trust so that the research is based on the stories and narrative of individuals. Understanding the experiences, actions, intentions and beliefs of the participants is critical to being able to discern quality findings. Therefore using a qualitative research approach in this study will best identify how principals perceive trust in their school and the impact of this on school culture.

By working within a qualitative methodology I was able to explore the area of trust, which many principals may not have considered or, considered in any great detail so that the purpose is to “obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods” (Corbin & Strauss, 1998, p. 11). Dey (1993) posits that data has to be the result of delving into information and people’s contributions and therefore be recognized by the researcher as data. Data is not immediately recognizable and waiting for the researcher to pick up and utilize for the purpose of the research. As a novice researcher, I was aware that the findings may not have been immediately recognizable or transparent and that some unexpected findings or trends may have emerged. Also as a first time researcher, I was very aware that I had the potential to hold views and perceptions prior to this research which may have limited, or even blocked, avenues of research. In order for theories to emerge, I had to be cognizant of these pre-conceptions, limited views and ideas so that the theory “which characterizes the normative outlook gives way to multi-faceted images of human behaviour as varied as the situations and contexts supporting them” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 23).

I was also aware that as a researcher my values and beliefs could give rise to bias as Cohen et al, (2000) state “interviewers and interviewees alike bring their own, often unconscious experiential and biographical baggage with them into the interview situation” (p. 121). Being aware of this potential for bias assisted me to minimize the possible negative impact of my own experiences and understandings, of the selection of questions, prompts and the analysis of the data. A further consideration was my familiarity with the concept of trust. As Tolich and Davison (1999) explain, it could have been “difficult to comprehend those things that are normally taken for granted” (p. 17). Through my work as an advocate and counselor, and in my current position as deputy principal in a large school, I hope that I was able to read information and situations with a clarity and understanding that allowed me to recognize the variables which the data produced. Once this was achieved the aim was to be able to provide principals and teachers with information and insights of the role of trust in effective school cultures; so that there is potential for improvement and enhancement in teaching and learning in this area (Mutch, 2005).

Interpretivist

Within qualitative research methodology is the interpretivist approach. This study is clearly situated within the bounds of interpretivism. Dey (1993) refers to the interpretive approach as that of presenting detailed and comprehensive accounts and understandings of “social phenomena”, (p. 2) which includes how the actors read and understand the individual’s experience. It is this process of interpreting that allows for research that is not necessarily definitive, to be pursued. Scott and Usher’s (1999) description of the interpretivist approach is appropriate for this study:

The process of meaning-making and negotiation over meaning is always a practical matter for individuals in the sense that it is located in their social practices. Situations are interpreted and whilst these interpretations looked at ‘objectively’ may be faulty or misleading, they reveal for research the shared nature of social reality. (p. 25)

In many discussions with peers, friends and associates, prior to and during this research journey, two phenomena became evident. Firstly, many people had

simply never thought of trust as something to be identified and singled out for discussion, it was accepted that it just is. Secondly, people had such differing ideas on exactly what trust was that the variables provoked an excitement that theories would emerge from such a study. Interpretivism is therefore a logical context to work in for the purpose of this study on trust. Glaser & Strauss (1967) cited in Cohen & Manion (2000) point out “Theory is emergent and must arise from particular situations; it should be ‘grounded’ in data generated by the research act. ... Theory should not precede research, but follow it” (p. 23). Grounded theory will be discussed next.

Grounded theory

A theory is a statement, specific to an area of research that establishes an “explanation about phenomena” (Corbin & Strauss, 1998, p. 22). A theory is much more than just looking at groups of data. The grounded theory approach was used for data analysis in this study. The collection of the research data, the analysis of the data and the resulting theory which develops are each a linking and essential part of the research process. The emerging theory will not attempt to cover all aspects of the study in detail but being grounded in the given data; the resulting theory should cover most of the applicable behaviours and perception (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). As the theory emerged from the data through analysis and reflection it was supported by examples from the data and the theory did not precede the research process but it emerged as a result of the research (Cohen et al., 2000). Within the grounded theory approach to data analysis in this study the “constant comparative method” (Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), was used to ensure that the continued checking and cross-checking of the data produced accurate findings.

In order to achieve this constant comparative method, “conceptual categories and their conceptual properties” were developed from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1999, p. 35), by using methodical grouping and coding the conceptual categories were identified and divided into themes. The themes consist of several propositions. It was through this process that theory emerged as a result of being able to understand the participants “interpretation of the world around them” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 23). Reflexivity was also part of the process in this research

as stated in the “ ‘finding out’ how meanings, including the meanings given to and generated by research, are discursively constructed within the research process” (Scott & Usher, 1999, p. 19). “Reflexivity” in this context means that we always remain part of the social world we are studying, so we can attempt to understand that world only from our daily experience of life” (Tolich & Davidson, 1999, p. 37).

Being receptive to emerging ideas and being able to recognise new themes, in the approach to the data gathered assisted in the process of generating theory from the research in which it was grounded. While bringing some prior knowledge and experience to the process of analysis and theory generation I had anticipated that I would be able to “suspend initial ideas, hunches and hypotheses, and enter the research site willing to learn how any why informants think and/or act as they do” (Tolich & Davidson, 1999, p. 17). This research topic is one that concerns the concept of trust, and trust is very much part of our daily lives and this may have made the analysis or concepts difficult to define. As Tolich and Davidson (1999) state:

Yet in many situations the subject matter is overly familiar because it is part of everyday existence. Familiar locations or topics are difficult to research since it is difficult to comprehend those things that are normally taken for granted. (p.17)

Being able to suspend pre-conceptions and beliefs assisted in making this research process an open one that allowed a theory to emerge from the process of research.

Methods of Data Collection

Interviewing

Individual interviews with eight principals constituted the data collection method for this research. These interviews were semi-structured to allow for “a more valid response from the informant’s perception of reality” (Burns, 2000, p. 424). Participants could talk about the situation they were in and how they interpreted this (Cohen et al., 2000). Put simply, “an interview is a conversation with a purpose” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 79), and it was through these conversations that the perception of trust was sought and understood. The

interview method of data collection allows the interviewer to put the participant into their context and to ascertain the base from which they respond. Seidman (1998) as cited in (Dilley, 2004) defines the interview process as providing:

... access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researcher to understand the meaning of that behavior. A basic assumption in in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience. Interviewing allows us to put behavior into context and provides access to understanding their action. (p.128)

The interview questions could be reiterated if the participant was unclear about how to respond or, what was being asked of them. The interviewer can also prompt if a response was unclear or incomplete. By using the interview as the data collection method, participants are able to reflect on their practice and beliefs and respond in depth, informed by their own experiences, values and understandings (Partington, 2001), to the questions rather than have quick responses that would be the likely outcome of a questionnaire.

Although the interview questions used in this research were planned prior to the interviews, they took the role of an interview guide, which allowed participants to digress and explore their thinking on particular issues. Using semi-structured interviews allowed me as a researcher to try to establish an understanding of the participants view of life on the issue of trust. Lincoln & Guba (1985) as cited in (Westbrook, 1994) identifies the differences between structured and semi-structured by stating the:

...structured interviewing is the mode of choice with the interviewer *knows what he or she does not know* and can therefore frame appropriate questions to find out, while the unstructured interview is the mode of choice when the interviewer *does not know what he or she doesn't know* and must therefore rely on the participant to tell him or her. (p. 244)

My position in regard to the interview type for this research topic on trust is on a continuum between structured and semi-structured as there were avenues I wanted to pursue so that I could understand, clarify my thinking and find explanations for and these were reflected in my questions. I was also aware that the participants could put forward new information, ideas and perspectives that I had not

anticipated or considered, thereby showing me what I did not know (Westbrook, 1994). The semi-structured process also allowed the participant to question, or respond or digress into areas of their own interest or experience (Tolich & Davidson, 1999).

Responsibilities as an interviewer

As a research interviewer I had certain responsibilities, both ethically, as will be discussed in the next section, and also from the perspective of being the most effective interviewer that I could be. My initial responsibility was to put the participant at ease and to establish a rapport with the participant. As seven of the eight principals were known to me prior to the research process, this rapport was quickly established. It was also incumbent on me as the interviewer to keep the momentum of the interview at an appropriate pace so that the information followed the thought of the participant and pauses and interruptions didn't destroy the natural flow of the dialogue. Burns (2000) suggests that "the interviewer also has the responsibility of keeping the participants attention focused on the task, and for keeping the interview moving along smoothly" (p. 582). Once the interview process was completed it was also incumbent on me to return the transcripts as quickly as feasible for the participant to read, edit and return.

Ethical Concerns and Validity

Ethical concerns

The research process is an exciting one that will usually involve people other than the researcher and central to ethical considerations is the concept of doing no harm (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). Without due diligence and consideration harm can occur even though it may not be obvious. As we work through the interview process we had to ensure that the information was safeguarded but so too were the rights of the participants. Equally, the rights of people or organisations who may have been mentioned in the interviews, had to be protected (Mutch, 2005; Scott & Usher, 1999; Tolich & Davidson, 1999). Specifically, it was incumbent on me, as the researcher, to ensure that the "subjects' rights and values" were not compromised or "threatened" by the research (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 49).

For this research project an application was submitted to School of Education Ethics Committee of the University of Waikato and this was approved in June 2006. Potential participants were identified, contacted and informed consent sought for their involvement in the research process. Informed consent is a process that ensures the participants are fully conversant with the requirements and focus of the research process, how the information will be stored, accessed, interpreted and presented. Once the participant has this information they then can choose either to be part of this process or they can choose to decline (Tolich & Davidson, 1999; Wilkinson, 2001). Having an open and transparent research process was important to ensure potential misconception or deception would not occur.

As a researcher I was also aware of my responsibility to ensure sensitivity in my use of the data and to be “careful about publishing information revealed serendipitously in the study” (Tolich & Davidson, 1999, p. 72). Cohen et al, (2000) use the term “betrayal” (p. 63), to describe this situation and I attempted to ensure that no situation could arise where there was potential for any of the participants to be put in a position of “embarrassment” or “suffering” (p. 63) as a result of my research.

Maintaining confidentiality is essential. Tolich and Davidson (1999) define confidentiality as when “the researcher can identify a certain person’s response but promises not to make the connection publicly” (p. 77). As my data collection was through an interview process, I had in-depth knowledge of the content and the participant and therefore it was critical that I did not reveal identities in my research findings. I fully understood and accepted however, that some of the participants may have chosen to discuss their interview and the topic of trust, which their staff and colleagues, thereby potentially identifying themselves in the research process. It was incumbent on me as the researcher to ensure, that in every way possible, confidentiality was maintained.

I was very aware of the small size of the educational community in New Zealand and this therefore gives the opportunity for people to identify school sites and individual participants, as stated by Tolich and Davidson (1999):

This is what we mean when we say New Zealand is a small town. Along with the other ethical principles, a consideration of this smallness needs to become the overriding rule, and acknowledging this means that ethical issues have to be thought through carefully before you begin. (p. 78)

The use of pseudonyms were a central to ethical consideration for this study, for both principals and school sites.

As a researcher it is incumbent on me to be mindful and proactive in relation to ethics at every part of the research journey. It is also very important for the participants to know that they had the right to withdraw at any stage. This meant that they could decline to respond to any question, they could withdraw their data from the interview process or withdraw their consent for their data to be included in the research.

Validity

For the findings of a study to be considered valid, a researcher must ensure that “the extent to which a question or variable accurately reflects the concept the researcher is actually looking for” (Tolich & Davidson, 1999, p. 31). The vehicle for collecting data in this research topic was the interview process and to ensure that the resulting findings were valid it was essential that my questions were going to produce the information that was required for this purpose. Burton & Bartlett (2005) similarly state that “If our methods are at fault, then the findings will be invalid and the research worthless” (p. 27). Qualitative research is recognizing that “multiple realities” and “socially constructed meanings” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 12), are present and allow us to see the world through the eyes and understandings of the participant. In this project, the results are an accurate accounting of the information given by the participants, which ensure the validity of the findings. The interview transcripts were returned to the participant for checking and ensuring that the transcript was recorded accurately. The validity was also ensured “through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached” and also through the “objectivity of the

researcher” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 12). It was the thorough examination and comprehension of the data produced that further ensured validity.

Research Process

Chronology of the research

The research process spanned the months from March 2006 to February 2007. The data gathering, using interviews, took three weeks. It was a further six weeks until all transcripts were completed and returned to the participants for checking. The data analysis phase took place over a two-month period with the final draft of the thesis presented in February 2007.

Selection of participants

The selection of principals used the following criteria. I elected to seek principals from outside my own region, but within an hour to an hour and a half of travel time from home. Within the selection I also sought to have a balance of school size, and participant gender. I chose not to select principals that I knew well as this could suggest a bias in my research and findings if I selected principals I perceived to be in high trust situations, or conversely low trust situations. The process involved an agency list of all schools in the selected region. The numbers were drawn until the eight principals within the criteria were selected. The principals were then contacted by telephone. When they had informally agreed to be involved the Individual Letter to Potential Participants was sent to them (Appendix 1). Also included with the letter was the Informed Consent Form (Appendix 2) and this was either returned by post to me or collected at the interview. The interviews were all conducted at the principal’s school site which was the preferred location for all participants. The duration of the interviews ranged from fifty minutes to one and a half hours and each of the interviews were recorded by audiotape and subsequently transcribed.

Once the transcript of each interview had been completed it was forwarded to each individual principal for verification and editing if required. The Return of

Transcript Form (Appendix 3) was included with the transcript for each principal as was the Release of Transcript for Use Form (Appendix 3A).

Transcribing

I employed someone to assist with the transcription of the eight interviews and this person completed the Transcriber Confidentiality Form (Appendix 4) and returned this to me. A discussion was held as to what was to be recorded in terms of the “ums” and “ahs”. I requested that these be taken out and this process could be linked to the denaturalization process that is defined in Oliver, Serovich, & Mason (2005) in which “idiosyncratic elements of speech (e.g. splutters, pauses, non-verbals, involuntary vocalizations are removed” as opposed to naturalism, in which “every utterance is transcribe in as much detail as possible” (p. 1273). The denaturalized approach, is more commonly utilised by grounded theorists in the search of data for meanings and perceptions. Cohen et al, (2000) contend that much transcription “becomes solely a record of data rather than a social encounter” (p. 281) and for this reason it was important to take additional notes and to make observations through the interviews that support the transcribed interview. Once the interviews were transcribed, they were returned to me, printed and forwarded to the participants for their checking and alteration. Each party signed the Release of Transcript for Use Form (Appendix 3a) and returned it to me.

Comprehension

Data collection and the analysis of the data is central to the process of qualitative data. It is important to note that the collection and analysis of data is not a simple process but one that takes time and an astute and perceptive researcher to identify information or data as it lies within the discussions and transcript. Dey (1993) states that “data are not out there waiting collection, like so many rubbish bags on the pavement. For a start, they have to be noticed by the researcher, and treated as data for the purposes of his or her research” (p. 15). Dilley (2004) concurs with this by stating that “comprehension and understanding key components of qualitative research are conditional philosophical considerations that are necessarily individualistic” (p. 130). Being in education has ensured that my comprehension skills are well developed however as a novice researcher my skills

in comprehending what the data was presenting to me, were challenging, and perhaps are “ultimately unteachable by any method than trial and error” (Dilley, 2004, p. 128). Seidman (1998), p. 110-111, cited in Dilley (2004) states:

Researchers must ask themselves what they have learned from doing the interviews, studying the transcripts, marking and labeling them, crafting profiles, and organizing categories of excerpts. What connective threads are there among the experiences of the participants they interviewed? How do they understand and explain these connections? What do they understand now that they did not understand before they began the interviews? What surprises have there been? What confirmations of previous instincts? How have their interviews been consistent with the literature? How inconsistent? How have they gone beyond? (p. 128)

With these questions as the scaffold for the interpretation of the data, accurate analysis should result.

Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of organizing and understanding what the participants have said and then categorizing and recognizing themes and patterns (Cohen et al., 2000). With data analysis “The intention is to move from description to explanation and theory generation”(Cohen et al., 2000, p. 148). The data for this research was derived from the individual interviews of the eight participant principals. The transcripts of the data were read in full, three times, prior to the formal process of analysis. Highlighter pens were then used in subsequent readings to highlight the emerging categories and themes. Once this had been completed, the highlighted sections of the transcripts were then coded to identify the emerging propositions. These propositions were then ‘tested’ or ‘compared’ by gluing all the coded statements relating to each proposition on a sheet of card to ensure that the proposition, these and categories were grounded in the data. The data were then listed and identified for the number of participants who had put forward each particular idea and the number of time it was referred to. This ensures constant checking and cross-checking for accuracy of the information.

Throughout the data analysis I constantly reflected and challenged my assumptions. The implications for this research were that the findings and theory

that were generated would assist principals, leaders and staff to reflect on the role of trust in their relationships within their school and to build on these to ensure that the effective school culture is enhanced. It was also important that the participants felt that this process and the findings are of value to them and to others. The categories that emerged were to be trustworthy, to extend trust and the dichotomy of trust. The findings raised additional questions and areas for discussion as the understanding, reflection and learning moves beyond the completion of the study. These findings are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Through the analysis of the data, three major categories emerged. These were the notion of *what it means to extend trust*, *to be trustworthy*, and *the dichotomy of trust*. Each of these categories were supported by two themes which were further defined by propositions. These will now be presented with supporting examples from the data.

To Extend Trust as a Principal

The first category of findings to emerge from the data was to extend trust. The category then divided into the two themes of the implementation of trust and relationships.

The Implementation of Trust

The first theme of The Implementation of Trust is supported by the following propositions;

Defining trust was a difficult process

Valuing people is important in building trust

The empowering of staff reflected the trust of the principal

Principal expectations provide a benchmark for trust

Principals role model trusting practices

Trust is important in the culture of a school.

Defining Trust Difficult

Defining trust was a difficult process and is central to this research and the definitions are interspersed throughout the findings. This section looks more closely at what the data tells us about principals definition of trust. Principal D described trust as being a “*very, very important concept*” and yet acknowledged that it was easier to see when trust didn’t exist that when it did. Principal D explained it as:

... *It’s sort of like homeostasis. It’s something you always hope or expect will be there and when it is there, you don’t say “oh,... it’s a trusting*

environment. I feel really comfortable about it,” it’s your expectations fulfilled. But when it’s not there, all this negative focus quickly energises people, sometimes spiral.

Principal A stated that trust wasn’t accorded specific attention in terms of discussion and development but that it was included in staff discussions of values. Principal F also referred to trust in terms of values and stated that “*trust is having faith and belief and confidence,*” and that it existed when beliefs and understandings were common to all staff. This principal also posited that trust had to be earned and that it was not an automatic thing and was not a given in an educational setting. Principal A contended that trust didn’t just happen that it had to be developed. However, an opposing view was promoted by Principal H who stated:

I think trust should be assumed rather than earned, so I assume that people are trustworthy and professional rather than having to earn my trust. So when I come into a school like this my assumption is that people are professional. I trust them, rather than them having to earn my trust or me earning their trust. It is an assumption I have that they can trust me and I can trust them.

These two opposing views will be further discussed in the following Chapter on Discussions, Recommendations and Conclusions.

Trust can be seen as situational. How similar issues are perceived and dealt with will vary from situation to situation, within an organisation. The organisation will also have expectations and norms that will guide individuals in trust situations. Principal E identified that trust could be situational, and that it “*is a continuum really because it’s different for different people.*” This principal contended that trust is “*different in different situations*” and the variables that came into play reflected a person’s experiences and values. Other principals in the research data alluded to this concept of situational trust. Principal F identified trust as being organizational in nature and further endorsed this by stating that “*that level of trust, without it you haven’t got an organisation. You can truly tell it’s fully functional, operational.*” At a personal level, trust was considered to be between two people who had a mutual understanding of ethics that were important to them. Relational trust will be discussed more fully in the next theme.

Evidence of trust in a school environment was articulated as taking different forms for different schools. This could be classified as organizational trust as it was dependent on which organisation it occurred in. Principal A stated that:

If there are children walking around school during school time, and no teacher is with them, that's fine. There is a staff member in the staff room having a cup of coffee and other staff members walk past, it's not a hassle. That's trust.

Within a different organisation or context this could be seen as an abuse of trust depending on the expectations and culture of the school. This same principal described trust as permeating through the school and that it was something that could be sensed. The high trust was evident in this principal's school when:

Walking in the playground, lots of things happening and it may look like mayhem, it might look a little disorganized but there's no fights going on, no fighting going on in the playground. The kids know the rules but they're falling within them.(Principal A)

Principal F described trust in a school as being reflected in an “energizing environment.” This principal also described the concept of a high trust school as being a very exciting place to be involved with.

Building and Valuing

The next proposition in the implementation of trust is the building and valuing in trust. Working with a base of core values was seen as important in developing trust. The principals contended that if the same message was continually given and the basic core values were the same, the building of a trusting environment could occur. Principal G agreed with this by saying that “*I think part of it is all feeling as though we're all working towards the one goal, being in synch.*”

Being concerned about families was seen by Principal B as a major component of building trust and that this trust was reciprocated by the staff:

And also I'm quite strong on that family comes first so if they've got personal issues that we will accommodate them. That we will work round them and to this day I have never had a teacher who's sort of played on that. But I think as teachers we get almost tunnel vision about our jobs and we just go and go and go. I think that in order to be good, balanced,

rounded teachers we actually shouldn't ignore our families, so I make it quite clear that we will accommodate.

The articulation and understanding of the values and culture was seen as important. This understanding needed to be addressed formally and informally or constantly reinforce the intent or culture of the school. This caring or benevolence was seen as important for all the principals in the building and maintaining of trust and the same principal further encapsulated his/her philosophy on this by saying, *"I think that by treating my staff how I would like to be treated myself, I think that is one of things, that is one of the sort of things that will engender trust."* (Principal B) The principals believed that the staff trusted them to care for them and to show genuine concern for them as individuals.

Principals perceived that celebrating the successes; small and large, both personal and school helped to build trust in a school. This was referred to by Principal A as encouraging the staff to acknowledge and talk about successes. Principal B noted that celebration of success for his/her school was a definite process and that *"we always start every staff meeting with a celebration, let's celebrate what we've been doing."* This celebrating success was part of the open, benevolent process that built and ensured the positive culture in which trust flourished.

Principal F identified that trust is present as a basic level and this state could be changed if it was either enhanced or it was damaged. *"Loyalty, hard work, through commitment to the job, through results, through feedback from other people,"* were ways in which trust was perceived by staff as necessary to building trust and staff who demonstrated these attributes were accorded trust. This focus on building trust was also reflected in the comments from Principal A who referred to collaboration and collegiality as important in a school and that collegiality and co-operation precede a culture of collaboration. Collegiality, cooperation and collaboration all contribute to an effective school culture.

Principal H saw being given responsibility as an act of building or extending trust. This principal reflected that:

When I was a Scale A teacher, about Year 4, I had a principal who just had faith in me, and left me alone because he had faith in me, gave me

responsibility. That was trust and the contrast was when he left the next principal came in and had contrary views, and it made me realize how much the first guy did trust me. So he gave me responsibility, left me alone in the classroom, encouraged me to extend myself and extend children.

This sense of responsibility, of being left alone, yet supported and mentored was recognized by the participants as being valued and all of the principals felt the concept of feeling valued and valuing people as essential to building trust. This was reiterated by Principal E who defined aspects of building trust by stating “*I think it’s never the big things that you do that actually establish, feed and nurture trust, it’s the habit of your consistency and your valuing people. It’s listening to people. It’s making time.*”

Empowering of Staff

The third proposition in the theme of extending trust was that the empowering of staff reflected the trust of the principal. This was considered by the participating principals to be extremely important in extending trust to staff. It was perceived that you give a person a task, a responsibility or a job you left them to work through and achieve this. If shared values, understandings and expectations were in place the trust that was extended to that person would enhance the intrinsic motivation to succeed. Principals trusted that their staff were professional and competent and that if a staff member needed assistance then they would seek it. This was highlighted in the response from Principal C who related, a situation that he/she had worked through:

He’d give you a job on a Tuesday meeting and wanted it done by the following Tuesday and I learnt very quickly he’d ring me up on Thursday and then the Friday, “have you got the job...,” until I finally exploded one day and said if you want me to do the job, trust me. So I based my philosophy around that, that if I gave a person a job, if it’s a huge job they might want to check up with me, but nine out of ten times they can work their way through it...Delegation is very hard but it’s certainly a big part of trust.

In extending trust to teachers, the degree of control over the actions of that teacher is diminished. The teacher has the potential to do harm. The principal has relinquished a degree of control and instead has empowered the teacher by

trusting him/her to carry out a certain function. Being genuine in delegating tasks and not over supervising was seen as important in the development and extending of trust. Principal F stated, "... *You don't have to check up. That the person put their own level of accountability on.*" Some of the principals acknowledged that at times you could see that there were better ways of doing things but that you had to let staff work through the process and trust that in the end the outcomes would be discussed, and the results fine tuned. Empowerment was seen as a situation of high trust when a person was left to do a job without being constantly checked, and in doing so would learn along the way. This was also seen by one principal that if he/she was out of the school for a conference for several days, the senior staff were empowered to manage and would not be phoned regularly. Empowerment is considered to be important in extending trust to staff.

Two principals spoke about not imposing things on staff and if this was needed then trust wasn't present. These principals articulated the belief that they worked in collegial ways and that they trusted their staff to be professional and to see a job through. The empowering of staff is very much a reciprocal expression of trust. The principal extends the trust and the staff respond by showing them enthusiasm and dedication to achieving the task. This was seen by the principals as taking ownership and this led to a high trust model in a school.

Expectations

The fourth proposition was that principal expectations provide a benchmark for trust. One of the principals spoke about the high expectations that he/she held that the staff were knowledgeable and skilled and it was incumbent on him or her to ensure that. This was done through the employment of quality staff and the support and training of the staff. The belief was that the quality of learning in the school reflected the quality of the staff and that the responsibility was the principal to ensure that this quality was in place.

Most of the principals expressed the idea that they viewed their staff as professionals and that they had high expectations that they would function in that way. As Principal H stated, "*Trust would be having competence (and) integrity. That would be paramount to me. And that they are professional and I treat them*

like professionals.” There was a strong indication that in acting like professionals that trust was extended to these people with the expectation that it would not be abused. Principal D referred to the scenario of sick leave and saying that if this was abused by a staff member that *“I’d leave them in no doubt that they have disappointed me.”*

Expectations were seen as the articulation of goals. The setting of boundaries so that everyone knew the ground rules. Once this was in place there was an expectation that everyone was trusted to get on with their job, which is what they agreed to do by employment and adhering to their job description and code of ethics. If these expectations were not fulfilled then the principal concerned addressed these issues. Principal A put these expectations into context by contending that all staff had job descriptions and therefore the expectations of each individual staff member, was made very clear.

Role Models

The fifth proposition that, principals’ role model trusting practices of the qualities of trust is important in extending trust. Four of the principals reflected on how they modelled their way of doing things, their beliefs about the school. One principal identified that in situations of unresolved conflict trust, was often broken and the actions taken to repair this trust was modelled to staff so that future incidents could be resolved by the staff concerned. Principal A described the concept of walk the talk and how you had to be able to admit your mistakes and be honest:

You have to walk the talk as a leader, you also have to walk the talk, that means in terms of being the one to say the hard yards, that’s all part of developing trust. So for me, I try to get people to trust me by trying to model myself that way. (Principal A)

The concept of modelling was seen by Principal H just as something that wasn’t consciously done, it was just how he/she was. This principal saw role modelling trusting actions as a normal part of being. *“It’s not something I set out deliberately to do... I don’t do that, set out consciously to trust people, I do it just with my actions and model it” (Principal H)*. How principals act as leaders can also influence people from a negative perspective so they choose not to behave in

the ways which are being modelled to them. Principal H referred to this when he/she stated *“and how much I learned from the second principal about how not to be a leader.”* Role modelling is very much part of a principals role whether it is done consciously or not. In the desire to extend trust, trust actions should be evidenced in the practice of the principal.

Culture

The sixth proposition in the implementation of trust is that trust is important in the culture of a school. All of the principals in this research supported the importance of a positive school culture and the significant place of trust in the culture. Principal E put this succinctly when he/she stated, *“Well I think it’s [trust] the foundation of effectiveness and the greater the trust the richer the learning and the more effective the school is for families.”* This trust was reflected in the values base that all principals referred to as being implicit in school culture. Significant work was done on discussing the culture, values and common understandings, in one of the schools and this was both a reflective practice and a proactive one in terms of planning for future directions. Principal A also focused on the development of a positive culture and this included trust as an aspect of values that were held to be important:

Talking about your school values and developing your rules and you’re having those sorts of things to do with vision and culture and all the rest of it. That’s when you’re working on that and you do need time, you need to do it you know.

In examining an effective school culture there was consensus that people need to feel valued, that the job did was effective and everything they contributed to the school was appreciated. Equal ownership and the sense of team were significant in a trusting culture.

A point was made by several of the principals that as new staff came on board there was a transition time until they were able to be immersed in the culture of the school. It was important to extend or accord these people trust, trust that they were professional, trust that they would embrace the culture and trust that they would do the best for their students. Principal E also highlighted the fact that

sometimes you needed to slow down to give everyone time to understand and take ownership of the culture:

That's not to say we're perfect and we do have; sometimes, if you can take the analogy of a vehicle travelling along a highway, people do get a flat tyre at times, sometimes people get the speed wobbles and enthusiasm and they just need to pull over and wait for people to get on board.

When considering the importance of trust in the culture of a school, Principal H summed this up by stating *"If you've got a culture of trust, you have a culture in the school that is positive, affirming, people feel good about themselves and that works with children as well. It's definitely going to impact on their learning."* This type of culture of the positive outcome for student learning was seen by all principals as being a desirable situation for their school.

Relationships

The second theme from the category of *To Extend Trust* was that of relationships and this was supported by two propositions;

Trust is critical in school relationships

Collegial trust amongst principals is changing.

Relationships

The first proposition is that trust is critical in school relationships. All of the principals concurred that positive trusting relationships are central to effective schools. Principal E defined trust as being more than just a concept and that it involves *"... values and beliefs. It is something that involves actions and it involves relationships. So it is a quality of behaviour that exists between people."* For this trust to develop the principals contended that there had to be some commonality of interest and this would be evident in a school based relationship, *"Trust cannot exist unless there is at least a shared values base because one has to have a value that trust can build upon"* (Principal D). One principal challenged the thinking on this by discussing the enrolment of refugee children in our schools. Many of these children have come from environments with little or no trust and yet they are expected to demonstrate trusting behaviours.

When asked about the different levels of trust or status of trust, most of the principals responded that it was the same for everyone. As they reflected on this it was apparent that there were differences in the trust accorded to people. Most of the principals had someone that they talked to and trusted more than anyone else. This person was often the Deputy Principal or someone in the senior management team. It appeared to be important to the principals that they had access to someone who they could maintain a trusting relationship with. Principal A suggested that to build trusting relationships you needed to take the time to talk to individuals and to talk with the students.

Two of the principals suggested they may be perceived by some staff in a different way to other staff. Principal A stated: *“That we are expected to trust everybody, but you don’t automatically get that trust back. It can be really alienating and can be lonely.”* This was supported by other principals who felt that teachers often judged people in management a lot more harshly than they judged other teachers. It was contended then, that principals, extend trust to their staff but trust was not automatically returned.

Collegial Trust

The second proposition is that collegial trust amongst principals is changing. Several of the principals commented that they were both guarded and selective about who they trusted and to whom they would converse openly. The result of this Principal D contended was:

There is less co-operation in the education sector than there was and that is reflected in the fact now that teachers used to one socialise with teachers a lot. An in this city that’s dissipated. You’d have to wait for some formal course or something like that to meet your colleagues... We’ve become quite self-sufficient and I think also that people have become guarded.

There was a perception amongst some of the principals that some other principals, often who were very ambitious, would use situations and conversations to their advantage or to the distinct disadvantage of the principal who had shared that information with them. This abuse of trust meant the principals extended trust selectively. One principal aired concerns over the recruiting techniques of other

principals where teachers were head-hunted as a result of conversations which should have been considered to be a safe environment.

To Be a Trustworthy Principal

The two themes that emerged from within the category of being trustworthy were the participants perceptions of what others expected of him/her as the principal and what the participants defined as personal expectations of themselves in relation to trust.

Participants perceptions of others expectations

Principals' perceptions of what others expected of him/her produced five propositions. They were:

Principals believe that communication is an essential element of trust;

Principals value confidentiality;

Principals value openness and transparency;

Principals are trusted through consistency and follow-through; and

Principals must be competent.

These five propositions will now be discussed.

Importance of Effective Communication

All participants referred to the importance of effective communication as an essential element in maintaining trusting relationships in a school environment. The participants acknowledged the necessity of an environment in which people would feel comfortable in airing their views and ideas, which would establish conditions conducive to reaching mutual understandings about learning programmes, issues and proposals. This environment is on a school wide basis, that is whole staff. Principal D stated:

That being able to openly talk about anything challenges the concept of trust, but the mere fact, that you can, and are prepared to talk about it, reinforces that this must be a trusting environment, so, it's a chicken and egg situation. If you haven't got trust, then you're not really going to get a very good conversation... because people will always be concerned with how or what they say... as interpreted by those who may or may not.

Having a system of networks and meetings to provide an appropriate forum for quality communication was seen as important. This forum enabled principals to promote the concept of shared ownership within schools. Communication was articulated as pivotal by Principal A “ *communication is the key, communication is absolutely, you know, vital to that. So we do have meetings for various purposes. I’m always looking at ways to improve communication.*” Having robust communication between teaching staff and principals is critical but one principal took this a step further to reduce the tension or situations where trust could be eroded, by including the administrative executive officers in the staff meetings. This ensured that the administrative staff were up to date and informed on all issues and activities in the school and they felt valued as a member of the culture.

The valuing and respecting of staff, which is dealt with in more depth in a later discussion, was identified by several principals in terms of trust and communication. Principal E highlighted this by stating that:

They know I really value them because they hear from me regularly, verbally. They hear from me in writing, they see the things I do around the school. I say to people that each one of them on the staff is as valuable as I am, it’s just that we have different roles.

It was seen as important that staff should trust that the communication and interactions were respectful and everyone was treated with dignity and courtesy. This trusting environment was articulated in the following statement from Principal B:

... and I’m sure that they know I would never come up with any derogatory comment about them in front of the children and I think they know that I would always treat them positively and with respect and if they were any issues that they would always be discussed privately.

There was an understanding that the staff could trust the principals to communicate with them appropriately in all forums.

The principals talked about having communication lines open and they hoped and trusted that individuals would feel that they could discuss anything with them. They saw this as a reciprocal process in that the staff should feel that they can trust the principal in this communication process. One principal recognized that if

a person didn't feel comfortable talking to them then the Deputy Principal could be approached and this was seen as a trust situation. The concept of having open conversations as opposed to specifically discussing an issue was put forward by one principal and this led to clarity and both parties were able to move on. For this to happen, there has to be a basis of trust present.

Communication was also seen as crucial in developing trusting relationships and articulating goals, attitudes and courtesy with students. This was highlighted by one principal who spoke of engaging students in discussion about the school culture (Principal F). Having open communication with parents was considered important and two principals commented on having to be pro-active in this situation. Both principals noted that parents didn't necessarily come into the school for conversation but meeting at the school gate, doing bus duty or crossing duty, and the Saturday sports events were excellent opportunities to engage parents in the communication process. This is seen as building the trust of parents both in the principal and in the school. Principal A linked trust and communication by stating:

When things happen in school, that you can see there's a glitch, all of a sudden there's a breakdown in communication. To me a breakdown in communication is a breakdown of trust. Communication and trust go hand in hand. Without a doubt. There are so many ways of communicating and generally everything I've had to sort out comes about through just that lack of communication in an appropriate manner. (Principal A)

Communication was considered then, by the participants to be highly important in the maintenance of trust within their schools and wider community and every opportunity to enhance that communication, was utilised.

The second aspect of communication is listening and the ability to do this and do it well was considered by all principals as being very important in being trustworthy. Being able to identify people's state of mind was also considered as a skill that one principal spoke about and this highlighted the importance of being able to listen, to being trusted to listen. Listening was not only important in dealing with issues and on a one to one basis but as Principal E noted, *"professional conversations is a really, really important part of this high level*

trust that you have.” Listening carefully in this type of conversation was perceived as giving trust to and valuing of the people who were prepared to be part of the discussion. This principal also stated that “*principals must listen with our eyes as well as listen with our ears*” (Principal E) so that much more is picked up than just idle conversation.

Confidentiality

The second proposition in what others expect of the principal is that of confidentiality. Trust is very closely linked with confidentiality as it involves the person taking a risk by giving information to the listener, in this case the principal in various situations. At a personal, one to one level this is critical in situations of trust. The principals all recognized that the staff had to be able to trust that when they came to them with a concern, dilemma or situation, that they would be afforded not only courtesy and the opportunity to talk, but that what was discussed could be aired openly without judgment or pre-conception. Critical to this process was confidentiality, which the participants saw as a non-negotiable aspect of trust. In order for staff to trust the principal, the principal had to show that he/she would honour the interaction with confidentiality. The principals recognised that trust was reciprocal. The trust in this sort of confidential conversation was also highlighted further by one principal who saw that not only should confidentiality be present but staff expected him/her to be consistent and fair in dealing with the issue and with how the information was handled. This aspect of confidentiality was also seen as important in peer discussions for example, that a poor attestation was dealt with internally and it stopped there. Principal D stated:

But they can trust me to keep it internal. That I don't go down to the pub and talk about such and such and so and so, it's on site and it's not about them as a person per se. It's about their role as a teacher.

Openness and Transparency

The third proposition is that principals perceive that there is an expectation of openness and transparency. While this can be linked closely with communication participants identified it as being slightly different. Being open and transparent as a means of maintaining trust is seen as critical so that staff knew what was going on, there were no hidden agendas and no surprises. Principal F saw this as a

process for retaining the trust of the staff and establishing the collaborative culture:

I articulated my beliefs and tried to lead by example. I said “look, I like to deal with things up front, put my cards on the table,” and hope that others would sort of do that in return. Trying to work for a collaborative environment here. (Principal F)

Principals valued and modelled an open and collaborative leadership style. Principal B defined trust as:

A healthy working relationship between people, heavily relationship based I think, which encourages openness and so that people are able to speak, speak up and say how they feel and think about things and being accepting of others opinions and being willing to listen to people and to make informed decisions on the basis of that. And actually respecting people for themselves as well. (Principal B)

Stating your goals or position, can also sit alongside the idea of giving a view of the big picture. Often in larger schools, staff are focused on their class and what they are directly involved in. Being open about the big picture and sharing information and goals allows a trust to be established. The principal is trusted to act for the greater good. As Principal D stated, *“In other words I share with them the big picture stuff and all of a sudden they get [their head] round [it] and say yeah, it does make sense because...”* This openness was perceived as important to a trusting environment so that staff were able to rationalise the decision making process and outcome. This is also relevant in Board of Trustees relations where openness between the principal and the Board members is seen as critical to a trusting environment. When this openness exists I believe, the parents are comfortable with working together with the principal and staff to achieve their goals and to deal with all situations.

Being open was also seen as important in that principals could trust staff to support them in times of need. Principal A was quite open in stating to his/her staff, when he/she needed support. *“I have just learned to articulate the things all the time. Now, when I’m feeling down, if I’m feeling that their expectations are unrealistic, I articulate that, as they would to me.”* Once again, this is seen as the reciprocity of trust and the openness that was shown to staff, which was a trusting

action, was often returned in like, by the staff to the principal. Openness is also seen as critical by the participants to avoid potential problems developing. As one Principal stated *“It’s just about being open. I’ve also learnt that problems don’t go away unless you do something about them”* (Principal G). It was perceived that issues needed to be brought out into the open and dealt with otherwise there was a risk that trust would be damaged. Then, a process of rebuilding that trust would need to occur.

Consistency and Follow-through

The fourth proposition is that principals perceive that they are trusted through consistency and follow through. Consistency of actions and responses was seen as an essential element in being trusted. Principal A describes follow-through as, *“An essential dimension of trust is being, is acting on your words, action. Actions on words. Whether those words are pleasing or displeasing to the receiver, acting upon what you say.”* One of the principals referred to the situation where he/she was almost predictable in many situations and this is supported by the comments of other principals. They all supported the idea that staff expected a consistency in the way the principal behaved, responded to situations and the way they supported staff and groups within the school. The principals identified this consistency as being critical to the level of trust in their school. This was put into context by stating:

So that I’m consistent, almost predictable, in some situations. I’m certainly not predictable in others, in terms of years. I think that it’s never the big things that you do that actually establishes, feeds and nurtures trust, it’s the habit of your consistency and your valuing people. (Principal D)

Consistency and fairness and giving reasons for actions were considered important to maintain trust. Principal H recalled a situation as a young teacher where he/she, or any member of the staff at the time, would be told one thing and then something else would happen. The effect of this was a decline in trust and the principal often reflected on this and has modelled his/her own principalship on ensuring that this did not happen and that there was consistency in his/her practice. One of the principals who has worked with and supported other schools

in crisis, noted that low trust and lack of confidence in the principals of such schools often resulted from the inconsistency in the practice of the principal.

Being consistent with follow-through also enhances the trust environment and principals articulated that this was important for staff to have. It was perceived that staff trusted that follow-through would occur in a variety of ways. Firstly, principals felt that they were trusted to have clearly stated goals and intentions and to see these through to completion. This follow-through included support in the form of time, resources and principal input. Principal D's comment illustrates this point:

I follow things through which means I have, first of all, to declare quite explicitly, exactly what it is so that they can actually say well I know that he always does that so therefore I will always be able to do this and it becomes a foundation on which they can work with confidence.

This was endorsed by other principals in this research with most of them reflecting that if they made a commitment they would always see it through and this was an essential element of trust.

The second situation, in which follow-through was deemed to be important, was in dealing with issues within the staff. There was a sense that sometimes staff watched situations to see how it would be handled and how consistent the processes were that were put in place. Principal G related a specific event in which:

The trust they had in me was looked at very closely as to see how I actually dealt with this particular issue, did I listen to them, not only did I listen to them, did I do something about it.

The follow-through, and the consistency of the follow-through, was seen as important to the maintenance of trust within the school.

The third situation, in which all principals perceived as essential to trust in their school, was that of follow-through with student issues. Principal H discussed the immediate follow-through when he/she was notified via a card system that a teacher needed assistance with a student. This card indicated an automatic response was required and the staff knew that they could trust the principal to

respond straight away. Principal F talked about the staff trusting him/her to act appropriately in student behavior situations, *“If you hand a problem over to me, like the discipline of a child, that you must trust that I will do my best to sort of, handle that.”* The principals recognize then that follow-through is important in the maintaining of trust and for them to be considered to be trustworthy. Principals felt that they were trusted to be calm and rational to handle things when required, and always to be proactive in follow-through. Another principal further endorsed this but also added that you are more likely to receive trust as a principal by the fact that you acted upon an issue even if the outcome was not expected or welcomed. The fact that the principal had followed-through was what was important.

Principal Competence

The fifth proposition is that principals must be competent. Being competent means being professionally capable and confident. Foremost for the principals was that they were there to do the best for the children in their school. One principal articulated this as saying that this was *“It’s just that intrinsic thing. It comes from within ... that I expect them to know that I’ll always do the best by children, that decisions I make are in the best interests of children in this school and the staff”* (Principal H). It was perceived that if the principal acted in a professional way and showed his/her competence, that other people would follow and the same competence and professionalism would be apparent. This was further clarified by one principal who contended that it was not sufficient to be warm and friendly, to earn trust but that these attributes had to be accompanied by competence and knowledge.

An attribute of being competent was being decisive. The ability to make informed decisions, which reflected the experience and wisdom of the principal was viewed, as important as was the resilience of the principal and their ability to handle things and not fall apart. Principal F explains this as:

You don’t fall apart, be able to make decisions, be decisive, all those sorts of things, you know, that the teachers hope that the principal can do. You’ve got a certain amount of knowledge and understanding and skills that go with the job.

Being decisive also included the ability and the knowledge that they could and would be able to make the final call. A principal was perceived to be competent if he/she could make the call without prevaricating or avoiding the issue, regardless of the fact that the decision may not please everyone.

The competence of a principal was also perceived as the ability to have a well organised and well planned school with systems and structures in place to ensure that everyone is clear about their roles and how things work. One principal described this, *“I think that they trust I will, almost hope, or expect or demand the school is well organised, that it is well resourced, systems in place to support...”* (Principal C). Part of being well organised and well planned is also being knowledgeable. The ability to ad lib in some situations is an advantage but in the school setting being organised and well planned is essential to the basis of trust as is being fully conversant with what you are talking about, promoting or implementing. Principal D highlighted the need for competence by saying:

I want to be accurate or at least to the best of my knowledge. I consciously make certain I don't make things up. I think about the implication if it's a big picture thing before I actually speak because I know that when I choose my forum...

All of the principals in this research referred to competence as being significant to the trust in their school and that their staff had high expectations of the competence of their principal.

Principals Self-expectations

The second theme that emerged from the category of being trustworthy was that of the principal's self-expectations in relation to trust. This produced four propositions, these were;

Trustworthy principals were benevolent

Principals showed respect and were worthy of respect

Trustworthy principals demonstrated integrity

Trustworthy principals were honest.

Benevolent

The first of these propositions involves benevolence and this can be described as the intent to do good or good will. It would appear that the reciprocity of trust indicates that the extending of trust to someone will see that trust come back in some form. Principal A quoted a saying that he/she lives by which epitomizes the concept of benevolence in a trusting relationship. This is “*No-one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.*” This statement is significant for school principals as it suggests that caring and benevolence supercedes the knowledge or competency of a principal. Principal H put the concept of benevolence into perspective for his/her leadership by stating:

I try and get the teachers to take a day a term, R and R time. If they're feeling stressed or really whacked, I'd like them to take Friday off, that's high trust. I try and push them out the door. ...I guess then you don't have the problem. We get less sick days because of it.

There was strong concern that the reason for being at school, the learning of the students, was not compromised by the outcomes of benevolent actions. The reciprocal side was that more effort, more enthusiasm resulted from it. Knowing their staff was seen by most of the principals as very important. This knowledge and understanding of staff extended to their families and was described by one principal as recognizing that people have other lives and teaching was a job. Inherent in the concept of benevolence is, as Principal E contends, forgiveness and acceptance and an individual capacity to handle this. This principal stated:

Unless you know how to accept people and unless you have the ability to develop frameworks of understanding from that persons perspective as you listen to them, then you can very easily transpose some of what is valid for you, onto that other person. (Principal E)

Respect

The second proposition was that principals showed respect and were worthy of respect. Once again the reciprocity of trust is evident in that when respect is accorded to someone it is implied that they are respected in return. The four principals in this research who referred to respect all spoke of being able to listen to people and to respond in an appropriate manner. These four spoke of experiencing respect in that they were able to discuss and off-load to someone

they trusted and that they were treated respectfully. This means that they were listened to and valued but what they had to say was put in context and therefore change did not necessarily occur:

...but I had an ear from someone who was superior to me in terms of hierarchy. To be able to off-load and to be valued, what I had to say. But as I said it wasn't all about getting my own way. Just knowing you had a person to be able to off-load to, a person you respected, I respected.
(Principal A)

One principal alluded to situations where respect and trust can be abused and it was suggested a level of accountability was necessary as in some situations respect and trust were interpreted by a teachers that the principal could be manipulated.

Principal F spoke of the respect over time for his/her role. The driver for this principal was the learning of students and *“to keep improving the quality, of teaching and learning at this school.”*(Principal F) Principal F also reflected that *“people have come to respect me for that and also that I support teachers, you know, just helping them with their jobs and things, it's come with time”* (Principal F). To be considered trustworthy then, principals perceived that they had to extend respect to others and in turn they would be respected for their professionalism, fairness and commitment to their role as providing quality learning and teaching.

Trustworthy and Integrity

The third proposition was that trustworthy principals demonstrated integrity. This can be described as adhering to a set code or holding the moral high ground. Principal D referred to this aspect of trust *“and that's the sort of trust I'm talking about in terms of leadership and I think the principals in a community have a responsibility to lead and to lead with honour and with reasonable high moral ground.”* Principal A also reflected on the concept of integrity and expressed to hope that his/her staff would recognize this principal's integrity through his/her actions and deeds. Integrity is also identified in the data for this study as making the hard call as commented on in the section on competence. This shows the integrity of the principal when they can make a decision when others may

perceive it as not the correct decision. In making the decision the principal has taken the high moral ground and stuck to his/her principles and therefore his/her integrity would not be compromised. To be trustworthy then, the participants perceived that a principal should be respectful of others and that others viewed the principal with respect at a personal and professional level.

Honesty

The fourth proposition from the theme of being trustworthy was that trustworthy principals were honest. Honesty showed up in reflective practice where Principal H talked about having identified some of his/her weaknesses, then when employing a new Deputy Principal, they were able to look for someone who would provide a balance for these areas of weakness. The honesty showed through in the self reflection by the principal and in the ability to discuss this with others, ultimately ensuring that the best-case scenario was made available to the school. The principal also saw this honesty as close to the openness that was discussed previously. Honesty was also seen by Principal E as critical in the feedback process. He/she noted that over time his/her written and oral feedback was much more specific and able to be acted upon. Less of the warm fuzzy was appearing in the feedback, but what was relayed to the teacher was honest and open, and appreciated by the staff concerned.

The Dichotomy of Trust

The third category is the Dichotomy of Trust and this has one theme, the permanency of trust. This is supported by three propositions;

- Low trust situations can provide a learning platform for principalship
- A tensions exists between trust and accountability
- Trust can be a fragile state.

Low Trust

In the proposition that low trust situations provide a learning platform for principalship is the suggestions that what is being modelled can be considered – what not to do. Most of the principals had experienced a situation of low trust

which when reflected on, had informed their leadership practice. Principal H relayed an incident when as a young teacher he/she was taken to task by an inspector regarding an internal trust issue of which he/she was totally unaware. This principal was not invited to put his/her perspective on the discussion and the unfairness of the situation guided this principal in latter years to always listen and trust that there were two perspectives of any situation.

It was the first time that I'd known the principal felt that way... I found it unbelievable... I felt undermined, I felt a complete lack of trust, I felt very negatively towards the new principal... I just felt gutted actually.

(Principal H)

A second principal experienced a very similar situation of low trust as a young teacher and the way in which it was handled made a lasting impression, which informed the leadership style of this person so that he/she did not behave in this manner in dealing with situations and staff as he/she moved into principalship. One of the principals spoke of being in situations with their Board of Trustees Chairperson where the chairperson repeatedly showed that he had no confidence or trust in the principal which undermined the principal in his/her job and he seemed to relish the opportunity to block the principal and undermine him/her wherever possible. This situation was only resolved when the chairperson was not re-elected to the Board of Trustees and everyone was able to move on in terms of trust and confidence and in achieving the goals for the school. Principal G stated, "...basically in the end I just humoured him, got on with the job as best I could, it was very difficult but I just humoured him." One principal spoke of starting in a new position and having to work through low trust and suspicion, and that this lack of trust was often subtle. In this situation the low trust was recognized and the process of building trust was put in place.

Several principals spoke of situations where rules and regulations were put in place as the results of low trust but which ultimately reinforced the idea of low trust. As Principal H stated:

Some schools, not many, are quite dictatorial; they say you will be at school by 8 o'clock in the morning, or 7.30 in the morning. You will stay, you won't be able to leave work until 4.00pm, which I think is farcical.

This principal trusted staff to be professional and recognized that people had different work times, different commitments and if the quality of teaching and learning was at risk then that would be addressed. Low trust was also evidenced in some in-school relationships where different levels of trust would be attributed to certain people as a result of their negative actions. As Principal D stated, “*Well sometimes you don’t resolve it, you just learn to live with it, that you take people out of the trust cycle.*” Principal D spoke of the low trust model when it comes to the Government and how so much auditing has been put in place to the detriment of everyone but the result of negative actions of a few people. This principal referred to the low trust model as having rules and regulations which impacted on the workload of everyone. The principals saw it was such rules that reinforced the concept of low trust.

Tension

The second proposition of the Permanency of Trust is that a tension exists between trust and accountability. All of the principals acknowledge that there were times when there was a tension between trust and accountability but that it did not have to be intrusive or break the trust relationship. If a job was not completed or a deadline was not met, this reflected on the teacher but it did not mean that the teacher was no longer trusted. It was suggested that trust involved dialogue and honesty in contrast to accountability, which was a checklist of things to be done. When trust was present, it was considered by principals to be a factor in improving accountability. Principal D put the relationship between accountability and trust into perspective by explaining

... Trust is a bigger concept than accountability. It’s a biggie. Whereas accountability is just a small building block. I mean some people use it interchangeably and think it is the same thing, but if someone’s accountable it doesn’t necessarily mean they’re trustworthy. ... I mean a thief can be very accountable but I wouldn’t build a trusting relationship with such a person if I was in a moral position. (Principal D)

Principal A asserted that “*trust is developing a professional dialogue and honesty and accountability is simply a checklist of what you have and haven’t done*” but went on to contend that though trust and accountability are linked the trust between people can improve the level of accountability.

The attestation and appraisal process also highlighted the tension between trust and accountability but most of the principals asserted that it was the type of approach that was taken with appraisals that would determine the level of tension. Most principals recognized that open, professional dialogue was critical in ensuring that accountability was in place and that trust remained intact.

Fragility of Trust

The third proposition of the Permanency of Trust is that trust can be a fragile state and three of the principals spoke about this. All of them commented that it takes very little to undermine and /or lose trust but that maintaining trust required on-going work. As Principal A stated:

I think that's just one point I've really found you know, whereas I knew when I came into this job that I was a person of integrity etc but I had to really prove that again and again and again and you can't take it for granted, you cannot take trust for granted.

Principal D referred to the fact that one person, perhaps a new staff member, could alter the dynamics of a school and “*rock the foundations of what has existed for many years.*” The state of trust them, is considered by these three principals, to be a fragile state that needed constant evaluation and attention. People needed to be professional and to have open dialogue to reinforce relationships.

These principals saw trust as a condition that existed but could be harmed or lost which would suggest that there are differing levels of trust. This is opposed to the thinking of one of the principals who believed that “*To me real trust knows that it's always there, that it doesn't get compromised, not that it has shades of grey amongst it*” (Principal D). Despite this most of the principals suggested that there were different levels of trust for different events between different people.

The next chapter will discuss these findings and will consider the implications of them.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This final chapter begins with a summary discussion of the findings of the research study. This will be followed by discussions and implications of the individual categories, *To be Trustworthy as a Principal*, *To Extend Trust as a Principal* and *The Dichotomy of Trust*. Recommendations for further study and a concluding statement will follow the discussion on the three categories which emerged from the findings

Discussion

All of the principals in this study strongly believed in the concept of trust and in creating a trusting environment for their staff. The expectation was that they, in return, would be trusted. Cook, Hardin & Levi (2005) acknowledge that people are “mutually dependant on one another” (p. 32) and this is how trusting relationships are reflected in the school environment. The reciprocity of trust became evident in the findings and for all the situations that were discussed by the principals.

Baier (1986) stated “We inhabit a climate of trust as we inhabit an atmosphere and notice it only as we notice air, when it becomes scarce or polluted” (p. 234) and my findings are no different. With one exception, the principal’s had not considered the concept of trust in isolation, in relation to school culture, school effectiveness and leadership, prior to this process. When undertaking any professional development or reflecting on their practice, trust would be inherent and even significant in this process but not addressed as a specific topic on its own merit. This suggests that trust is part of who we are and how we do things. I further contend that as professionals there is an inherent status or drive to be trusted and to be trustworthy. One principal had, prior to my initial contact, undertaken professional reading on trust as it specifically related to leadership, as part of his/her on going mentoring and professional study.

Significant in this study was the place of role modelling and “walking the talk”. Just as it was suggested by Baier (1986) that we don’t really notice trust, the principals’ modelled trust, without thinking specifically about it, it is just how it is. All of the principals spoke of a low trust situation, which helped to inform their practice and their leadership philosophy, on the right way of doing things. The principals also, all reflected that they worked in a high trust model and this had been informed by experience in high trust situations that they had worked in. The three categories of what it means to be trustworthy, to extend trust and the dichotomy of trust, will be discussed in this next section and compared against the relevant literature.

To be Trustworthy

Deutsch (1958, p. 268) states that being trustworthy “implies that the trustworthy person is aware of being trusted and that he is somehow bound by the trust which is invested in him” and my findings support this literature. The ways in which a person is considered trustworthy are many. At the foundation of trust and trustworthiness, the principals believe, is communication and this directly impacts on the level of trust within a school. It is important that as leaders they establish systems and processes to ensure that communication is two-way, it is effective and efficient and that it is both written and verbal. The principals also stated that staff should feel safe and confident to speak in whichever forum best suits their needs as described by Tschannen-Moran (2004). Being safe suggests that a person can have input without fear of rejection or put-down or, that they in turn will be put in the spotlight or be made accountable in a manner that leaves them feeling vulnerable and at risk. A teacher could trust that his/her dignity would be respected at all times and that he/she would not be undermined. The expectation was that this was how a trustworthy principal would consistently act.

Communication systems are not only to inform but also to provide and receive feedback, discuss, negotiate support and challenge. The principals acknowledged that staff expected them to have systems in place and to have a culture of openness that allowed communication to flow freely and this supports the literature that suggests it is the volume of communication as much as what is actually written that enforces trust in the principal and in the organisation (Deal &

Peterson, 1999). Principals also identified that their role in modelling effective communication was pivotal to a successful and trusting environment and this is also given as one of the ten steps, in Brewster and Railsback (2003), in building trust. As two of the principals noted, the quality of their communication had altered as they had developed in their principalship in that the feedback they gave had become much more specific and less 'warm fuzzy'. It was felt that the staff appreciated this feedback and saw it not only as a genuine acknowledgement of work done but also as part of a learning process. Tschannen-Moran (2004) also identifies that maintaining open communication is critical to being accepted as a trustworthy leader and this was supported in my findings. The principals felt that staff appreciated it when they were given a message that they may not have liked, but the open way that it was delivered was acknowledged.

This study found that good communication is an essential part of any school, organisation or relationship. Caldwell & Spinks (1992) identify that within the school there are varying groups for whom effective communication is critical, the staff, the students and parents. Two of the principals specifically spoke about being pro-active in engaging parents in conversation so that an informal level of communication took place as well as the many more formal structures that are part of school life. This supports the literature which contends that principals earn trust by demonstrating to parents that they care for their students and that their practice is based on goodwill (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

Conversation and communication was also part of people feeling valued, therefore enhancing the building of trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). This is supported in the findings when the principals identified engaging students in conversations informally and in regard to culture and school programmes as important in building trust in their school. Part of the communication process was that of confidentiality and all principals saw this as absolutely essential for staff and students to trust them. Confidentiality as a component of trust is putting yourself in a vulnerable position so that the other person, the principal in this case, could cause potential damage to the confider (Baier, 1986; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Gambetta, 1998; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Lahno, 2001). Communication therefore, involves vulnerability and risk and I contend that in a high-trust

situation people weigh up the potential risk and then act on the decision to trust and this is supported in the findings of this study.

The principals saw openness and transparency as integral in healthy and positive communication. For a trusting environment, openness and transparency of words and actions were essential. One principal indicated that it was important for staff and communities to understand the why of schooling and this was achieved through being open and transparent. The literature confirms this and suggests that teachers who work in a culture of trust and openness are also open and, willing to share (Zand, 1997). While openness is important in the development of trust it was understood by the principals that there were times when information was not shared if there was little purpose in the sharing, or if someone or something would be disadvantaged by this action.

The study found that a culture of openness was very desirable from the point of conflict resolution. If issues could be brought into the open the opportunity for amicable resolution was much higher. The principals perceived that consistency and follow-through were essential for their staff to trust them. One of the principals felt that they might have been seen as predictable. This is seen in the literature as positive when it is combined with the will and intent to look after or look out for another person. Kirkpartick & Locke (1991), Mishra (1996) and Tschannen-Moran (2004), endorse this by noting that leaders can be counted on in a moment of crises. The principals' all perceived that staff expected them to behave consistently in response to situations and in the way in which they supported their staff.

Consistency was considered as part of the culture of trust in a school. Follow-through was also seen as a component of trust and all of the principals acknowledged the absolute necessity of this follow-through. Principals understood that staff, students and parents expected and trusted that their principal would respond and act to a situation particularly if they had made a commitment to do so. McCall & Lombardo (1993) suggest that the most successful managers followed a formula, which endorsed the importance of follow-through: "I will do exactly as I say I will do when I say I will do it. If I change my mind, I will tell

you well in advance so you will not be harmed by my actions” (as cited in Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991, p. 53). This was supported in my findings when two of the principals specifically referred to making clear statements of intent and then following this intent with action. Follow-through and consistency are essential elements of trust, trusting relationships and an effective school culture. Follow-through and consistency are critical in developing trust in and consistent lack of follow-through will cause trust to be lost.

The findings of this study indicated that being competent and knowledgeable and credible are important components of being considered trustworthy and this is supported in the literature (Mishra, 1996). The principals acknowledged that it was important for them to be seen by staff as both knowledgeable and competent and this is endorsed by Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991), “If someone is going to lead, followers want to know that person to be more capable in some respects than they are” (p. 55). One principal cited the fact that his/her teaching staff probably are more knowledgeable in the area of curriculum delivery but his/her strengths lay elsewhere. The trust therefore, is reciprocal. The principal trusted the competence of the teacher to deliver the curriculum while the teacher trusted the principal in other areas. Cook et al, (2005) define competence and motivation as the two main components of trustworthiness and this supports the findings that in the absence of competence in a particular area, the trust of the principal would be considered in terms of the motivation of the principal. Pivotal to all principals was that no matter what the decision was in any situation, the principal had the best interests of the students at heart. The principals also contended that to be competent, systems and processes had to be put in place to ensure that everyone was cognizant of their roles and responsibilities. The literature supports them by highlighting that lack of competency can be attributed to a principal if “disrespectful interactions are evident, standardised organisational routines are absent and the failure to provide support or address issues” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 24). People’s perceptions of principals with these deficits can be very quick and to the detriment of the school. Trust will be eroded and destroyed very quickly if such incompetence is evident.

The second theme that emerged from the findings was that there were expectations of the principal at a personal level. Significant here was the statement from one principal that, “No-one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.” This statement epitomizes the concept of benevolence, respect, integrity and honesty. This aspect of benevolence and care is reflected in the literature which recognises that genuine, positive, relationships are essential to achieving effective results (Fullan, 2001).

The principals discussed the importance of integrity and which can be seen as closely linked with follow-through in that honesty, being truthful and keeping promises are features of integrity (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). The principals also identified honesty as an essential component of trust and saw that not only did the staff have the expectation, of honesty, and integrity in actions and responses, but also that the staff appreciated this (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002). This was supported in the findings in particular when one principal hoped that his/her staff would recognise the principal’s integrity through his/her actions and deeds.

Respect was considered by the principals to play a significant role in trust. Acting respectfully and being respected were important so respect is reciprocal for the trusting environment (Cook et al., 2005). Respect in the school situation is defined in the literature as identifying that everyone has a different but equally significant part to play in the education of students (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Being respected is also linked to having credibility and this is an essential component of being trusted both as a professional and at a personal level. Benevolence, respect, integrity and honesty were all attributes that principals saw as essential in developing and maintaining a high-trust model and this is supported in the literature (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

To Extend Trust

An important finding of this study was that principals needed to extend trust to staff and this was considered through two themes, the implementation of trust and relationships. The first finding from the implementation of trust was that the defining of trust was a difficult process. The principals suggested some commonalities in a definition. Having common beliefs and understandings were

seen as important in trust. Different views as to how trust was established were evident in the findings. Gambetta (1998) suggests that a person gives the impression of trusting while keeping their options open until further actions or information becomes available so that they can decide to trust or not and this was supported in the findings when it was suggested that a minimum or starting point existed as a basic level for everyone. This concurs with Baier (1986) contending, "Trust can come with no beginning" (p. 234). The findings also suggested that trust didn't just happen, that it had to be earned, that it was not just a given thing. Prior knowledge of a person, their motives and their actions provides a basis for making the decision to trust or not to trust (Gambetta, 1998). Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (1998) are more specific and identify three stages of trust, "the initial provisional trust" which is supported in the findings, the second level of "knowledge based trust" (p. 337), in which a person can predict how a situation may evolve. The third level or stage is "identity based trust" (p. 337), where a person fully understands and can predict the other person actions and responses and this is supported in the findings when the concept of knowing someone, having prior knowledge, was discussed. It would seem that a base level of trust does exist as in many situations, no prior knowledge is available and as our social world has become so vast, it is impossible to know something about everyone or every organisation. From this base level or "provisional trust" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998, p. 337), trust can be eroded or built upon as relationships develop. As Hart (1998) contends trust is the "middle of a continuum" (p. 187), and it is therefore the beginning point to more from once further knowledge is gained.

The findings suggested that shared values, benevolence and caring for the person not just as a staff member but as a family person with outside interests was important in the development of trust. Celebrating successes, communication and empowering were all seen as part of the building of trust. The findings suggested that principals recognised the importance of empowering staff and that the empowering of staff reflected the trust of the principal. Two of the principals specifically recalled events that had occurred in their younger teaching years when they had tasks allocated to them but were not actually empowered to see these through in the way that they wished. Constant checking undermined the desire to work through the process to complete the task and this resulted in a lack of trust of

the principal. Empowerment was regarded by the principals as a high-trust model and that they had to “step back and let them go”, even when it was obvious that a more expedient way of doing things was apparent. Empowerment meant letting staff work through a process then providing feedback about alternative ways of doing things. This is endorsed in the literature when it is suggested that empowered staff can be confident that the communication is open, they can take risks, be innovative without fear of rejection, being put down or minimalised (Avis, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). This is further endorsed by Caldwell & Spinks (1992) when they acknowledge that failures and mistakes will occur, but the trust will remain on the condition of trust exist in which the people are treated as professionals (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Empowerment of staff, without constant checking is evident in both the literature and the findings as being significant in the trusting relationship particularly when the principal is empowering the staff.

Some of the principals stated that principal expectations provide a benchmark for trust. Principal expectations had to be clearly stated and understood and it was in doing this that a culture of trust was enhanced. One of the principals stated clear expectations that his/her staff would behave as professionals in all facets of school life and inherent in this is the focus on learning. The literature supports the findings as shown when Barlow (2001) discusses the need for leaders to have strong personal conviction and this coupled with the ability to inspire others through clear and concise expectations supports the principals’ contention that expectations provide a benchmark for trust. Sammons (1999) refers to the importance of teachers having high expectations of students which clearly supports learning and the effectiveness of this is supported through the high expectations that the principal has for the staff. By having clear expectations, the principal enhances the trust that teachers have in him/her.

The setting of goals, the adherence to standards which reflect the norm and values of the school, as well as the more formal processes such as current job descriptions, allow the principal to set standards that must be adhered to. All of the principals believed that it was essential that Principals role model trusting practices. All of the principals saw role modelling or “walking the talk” as

something that they did without consciously setting out to do it. Modelling of trusting practices was perceived by the principals as being part of the norm. Fullan (2001) advocates the importance of role modelling in that it may impact on the performance of the organisation. In a high-trust organisation the reciprocity of trust is important. For staff to trust the principal, the principal must model trusting behaviour and model leadership that the staff know that they can rely on and trust.

The literature suggests that trust is identified as a component of a successful school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999), and this is evidenced in the findings of this study. The principals all perceived that trust is important in the culture of a school. Culture was discussed and identified by the principals as being a situation in which all people felt valued and they identified common understandings for their particular group. The literature suggests that culture consists of underlying beliefs and a way of doing things which subsequently informs how people behave. And it is interesting to note that one of the principals referred to the time aspect of developing culture and implementing new ideas and practice. Allowing people to understand, appreciate and contribute to an effective culture was also noted by one of the principals in relation to new staff coming on board. There is not an instant acceptance and knowledge of the culture of a school. Time is needed for a new staff member to immerse themselves in the culture in which trust is pivotal. The literature and the findings suggest that trust is central to an effective school culture and this is supported by Cook et al, (2005), when they further highlight the reciprocity of such a culture.

Relationships are at the heart of trust and trust must be at the heart of relationships. In considering this, two propositions emerged and the first is that trust is critical in school relationships. There are a myriad of relationships between individuals and between groups within the school setting and these relationships are based on trust. Avis (2003) contends that relationships that are grounded in trust allow for individuals to work in a risk-taking environment. Although the link between trusting relationships and risk-taking wasn't specifically addressed in regard to relationships, it was apparent throughout the dialogue of the principals. Tschannen-Moran (2004) contended that in a situation of high-trust the "occasional disappointment or difference" (p. 61) would be

tolerated and the level of trust in the relationships would not be affected. What is interesting is that the principals perceived that there were different levels of trust relationships within a school. Some people could be trusted with certain knowledge. Some people could be trusted to do certain things. I contend that within a culture of trust there are different relationships and different levels of trust between individuals and groups and this is referred to previously as situational trust. These levels of trust are evident when principals spoke of having a person that they had a much closer professional relationship with. Having a mentor or someone they could confide in or off-load to was important. This type of relationship was a high trust model. This differing level of trusting relationships is supported in the literature where it is acknowledged that principals recognise the differing levels of trust (Zand, 1997).

Also evident from the findings was that collegial trust amongst principals is changing. This was not something that was specifically mentioned in the literature and in fact may be specific to the New Zealand context only. As the changing structure of education has impacted on schools we now have an education model more aligned to business. Competition has increased as a result and the same level of trust between principals is not evident. The ethical approach of some peers was questioned as competition between schools increased. One principal spoke of the loss of the social contact between principals so that now contact was often through professional meetings so that collegial relationships were no longer there. Having a trusting relationship with your colleagues, I believe, is essential for the well-being and the learning of all principals and their schools. One of the principals referred to members of their network as not being so professionally trustworthy and therefore it is evident that different levels of relationships occur in all contexts. Trust therefore is both situational and contextual.

The Dichotomy of Trust

Low trust situations can provide a negative starting point or platform from which to build principalship. This study found that having experienced work in low trust situations, principals were able to reflect on what it was that had occurred and this helped to develop their own leadership style. In two of the situations experienced, the principals, as young teachers were unaware that anything was wrong or not as

it should be, until an outside agency became involved and they were informed about the situation. Brewster & Railsback (2003) identified the barriers to an open trusting culture and it is evident from the findings of this study that many of these barriers are still in place in certain schools. Does this suggest that as young teachers in relation to trust, we are at the “blind faith” end of the trust continuum until we become assimilated into the culture of a school, or until something goes wrong? What was interesting is that some of the principals identified that you cannot always resolve situations. Sometimes it is expedient to just live with a situation rather than to try to resolve it.

This study found that a tension exists between accountability and trust and that this tension did not have to be intrusive or damage the trusting relationship. It was noted by the principals that accountability was merely checking off tasks and you could be accountable with or without trust. However, it was also contended that when staff met the requirements of accountability then the level of trust was endorsed. Kirkpatrick & Locke (1991) state that “effective leaders are not tolerant of those who reject the vision or repeatedly fail to attain reasonable goals” (p. 57) which supports the findings that there is a tension between accountability and trust. This accountability can be linked to the follow-through which is supported in the findings to be so critical to trust. The literature also supports this by suggesting the constant lack of enforcing accountability, can destroy trust in the principal (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

Of significance in this study was that principals were prepared to make the hard call; the decision, ensuring that there is a rigorous approach to teaching and learning. Trust was not presented as a soft option. Trust is critical in “opening the path to the knowledge and abilities within each person” (Zand, 1997, p. 90). Without this trust, the true potential of teachers may go unrealised and the quality of learning, creativity, collaboration and commitment may be compromised.

The findings of this study suggest that trust can be a fragile state and this is referred to in the literature. Frowe (2005) contends that we can never accurately assess or control how others will react to events and it is this uncertainty that can erode the level of trust that is established. Principals referred to the reality that

trust can be undermined every easily and quickly in some situations. This is particularly so in how they were viewed as a principal. Bryk & Schneider (2002) and Tschannen-Moran (2004) refer to changing trust in different contexts and relationships and this, I contend, is a significant issue. Trust is not a 'blanket' thing and because a person is deemed to be trustworthy it does not mean that everyone trusts them or that they are trusted all the time. Within the school context there is a co-dependency between principal and staff and this suggests a level of vulnerability and the need for "trusting relationships" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998, p. 11). When vulnerability exists it becomes easier for a situation of mistrust or eroding of trust to occur and yet vulnerability is a key component of trust. The findings concur with the literature that trust is something that has to be constantly worked at to maintain a positive relationship.

The literature suggested that when trust was absent in leadership then rules and regulations were put in place to ensure that some level of performance was achieved (Barlow, 2001; Beare et al., 1989; Covey, 1989; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). While the findings of this study suggested that in situations of low trust, individuals might receive varying levels of trust, the implementation or enforcing of rules and regulations was not evident. In a situations where rules were implemented to replace trust, I would suggest that this indicates a system of management, rather than leadership. The literature, tells us that effective leaders are trustworthy and extend trust to others which is evidence of leadership and therefore, if this trust is absent and strict systems are enforced, the leadership could actually be management.

A new consideration emerged during the findings relating to refugee children who had come from diverse backgrounds and had lived in situations of little or no trust. These children come into our society, and schools in which, I believe, there are high levels or trust and they have to learn how to live within these different expectations. How do we engender trust with these students? This suggests an area for further examination.

Recommendations for Further Research

Six areas of interest developed while working through this research. Firstly the concept of trust did not appear to be specifically addressed through professional development and on-going learning for leadership in New Zealand and yet this would seem to be critical in understanding and developing positive relationships within the school context. To understand the potential dynamics the principal deals with, requires an understanding of how trust impacts at all levels of relationships. There is an increasing focus of attention internationally on the role of trust, not only in education but also in the business world and this endorses the proposal that trust be given a more significant place in our leadership training and reflective practice to ensure that quality learning opportunities are available to all students.

Secondly, the literature review did not discuss any variables in the way that male principals are perceived to extend trust or are trustworthy, compared to their female counterparts. Although the issue of gender was not specifically addressed in this study, there was a hint in the findings that female principals had to work harder at being trusted by staff and by the community. This is an issue that I would anticipate as an area of future study.

Thirdly, the literature discussed the implementation of rules and regulations as a replacement when trust is eroded or does not exist. A specific focus to determine whether a rules and regulations type of leadership is actually management, not leadership would be an area for future study. To take this concept a step further would be to contend that leadership without trust is therefore, management not leadership. This could also be extended to consider what it is to be a professional and to examine why, in general, professionals are considered to be trustworthy. The link between being a professional, a leader or a manager is worthy of further investigation and consideration.

Fourthly the situation of refugee children being assimilated into the trusting environment of a school is a fascinating concept. This was raised in one of the interviews and although it wasn't explored in this study, it would be interesting to

pursue. Do we address this issue anywhere in the inclusive programmes we use for children? Do we meet the needs of these children in this area?

Finally, the findings revealed that as young teachers, some of the principals found themselves in situations of very low trust and were consequently made very vulnerable both personally and professionally. These situations helped these people in the long term to inform their leadership practice on the pitfalls of leadership and how not to act. Understanding leadership, and leadership training and development is now readily available and one would hope that our young teachers do not have to deal with similar situations or leadership styles as they set out on their careers. To consider trust from the teachers' perspective would be a logical progression from this study of principals' perception of trust.

Conclusions

This study set out to examine the concept of trust in leadership and how this impacts on school culture. Through the study a consistent picture was shown of principals working in high trust situations and modelling effective values and strategies that endorse this level of trust. The values and beliefs of these principals were evident and these informed the leadership philosophies, which had evolved with experience and time. These values and beliefs were not just professional and learning values and beliefs but they were personal beliefs and values, which showed through as high moral leadership. It was evident that these principals epitomized what they expressed – they walked the talk!

These principals rarely identified the concept of trust as a focus area for research or discussion and yet they perform in a predominantly high trust model. This suggests that as Baier (1986) contends, we accept that trust is there, we don't consider it as a topic but we live with it, use it and don't really think about it. However, the differing levels of trust, within a staff did give an insight into cultures that are not always high trust. This study has highlighted the need for consideration to be given to trust as a stand alone topic to gain a full understanding of the concept and how this impacts on school cultures and enhanced learning outcomes for students.

This study has added to our knowledge of trust and the role this has on effective school cultures. Through the readings and the findings this study has attempted to ascertain a definition of trust and ultimately how this can impact on student learning. Understanding trust is critical in the relationships that principals have with their staff, students and community. This knowledge and implementation of trust will impact on the level of effectiveness of a school culture. The study has recognized that there are aspects of trust that are not negotiable for principals within their personal relationships and within the school context. Respecting the dignity of others, being honest in all dealings, being open in communication and being benevolent were personal attributes that were inherent in the lives of the principals. Being competent and following-through with actions are also critical aspects of being trustworthy and I suggest that without these characteristics it would be difficult for a principal to be an effective and successful leader.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Individual letter to Potential Participants

547 Cambridge Road
Tauranga
K84educ8@hotmail.com

Date

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to assist me with my research project that I am proposing to undertake. The research is being undertaken towards completion of a Master's thesis supervised by the Academic staff at the University of Waikato.

The research is to consider the role of trust in effective school cultures, defining and identifying the dimensions of trust and trusting relationships within a school environment. The intent of the research is that the findings may inform leadership development and practice and enhance effective school cultures.

My research question is specifically

“How do educators perceive the concept of trust and its importance in the leadership of effective school cultures?”

While there may not be any direct or immediate benefit to you, you will be contributing to research that could influence the professional development of teachers and principals. You may find that this creates a reflective process for you that you wish to pursue with your peers.

Confidentiality is critical and as a participant, you have my assurance that I will do everything in my power to protect your identity and confidentiality. I have attached a letter of consent that outlines specifically, your protection as a participant throughout the research process. You will be referred to as a pseudonym (Principal 1) and there will be pseudonyms negotiated for your school name and the names of other people who you may mention in your contributions.

Should you change your mind about your involvement, you have the absolute right to withdraw at any time up to two weeks following your receipt of the transcript of our interview.

There is no obligation for you to take part. If you wish to proceed with your participation, please complete the attached Informed Consent form and I will discuss this with you and collect it at our interview. Please feel free to phone me should there be any questions you would like to ask or if there is anything you would like clarified.

I have two supervisors from the University of Waikato who are assisting and supporting me throughout this research process. They are Dr Jan Robertson (jan@waikato.ac.nz) and Dr, Jane Strachan (jane@waikato.ac.nz). Neither of the supervisors will know the identity of the participants in this research. Should you have any concerns throughout the research process, you are able to contact them directly by e-mail or by telephone 07 838 4500.

I will contact you within the week to confirm your willingness to participate and to answer any further questions you may have. If you are willing to proceed, I will negotiate with you, a suitable time and venue for the interview and to receive your Informed Consent form.

If you choose not to be involved in this research, this will not harm the research in any way.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely

Kathy A. Colville (Mrs)

Phone: 07 543 9240

Mobile: 027 571 4508

Appendix 2

Informed Consent Form

I _____ consent to becoming a participant in the Master's research being conducted by Kathy Colville on the role of trust in an effective school culture. I have read the letter outlining the requirements and I have been given the opportunity to seek further clarification and understanding of the research topic.

I understand that the research undertaken will contribute to a Master's thesis supervised by staff at the University of Waikato and in its final form will be available for reading by a wider audience.

I understand that the research will involve one individual interview with me that will be recorded, transcribed, kept securely, and returned to me for comments and amendment. A person who will sign a confidentiality form precluding discussion of the interviews with anyone other than Kathy Colville will do the transcription of the interview.

I consent to discussing openly my observations and experiences around my experience as a principal. I understand that all published quotes will avoid disclosing my identity, the name of my current school and the names of others referred to within my interview by using generic terms or pseudonyms. However, I understand that in a small scale research such as this it may be inevitable that quotations and rephrasing might be attributable to me if others learn of my involvement. I understand that I will have the opportunity to review the transcript and make amendments and/or deletions, with this in mind.

I consent to my views or direct quotes being part of a Master's thesis and subsequent conference papers and articles.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from all or part of the research at any time until two weeks after receiving the transcript of the interview. Should I have any

concerns or complaints, I can contact Dr. Jan Robertson, and Dr. Jane Strachan at the University of Waikato.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Full name: _____

Address:

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Appendix 3

Return of Transcripts

547 Cambridge Road
Tauranga

K84eduk8@hotmail.com

Date

Dear

Enclosed is a transcript of the interview conducted Thursday 12 October 2006. The script was transcribed by Mrs L. Umbers and she has signed a confidentiality agreement, but beyond that it is confidential to you, me and to my University of Waikato supervisors. The text is saved on my computer and is accessible only by my password.

The transcript is verbatim, except for the removal of fillers (Umms, ahhs) and unnecessary repetitions. Because it is raw data it does not have the refinements of written language so may seem disjointed in some places. The raw data will be used as short excerpts to highlight key ideas and themes, and it may be rewritten slightly so that it is fluent within an academic text. You will not be identified as the author of the quote.

I would appreciate you reading the transcript and adding, deleting or altering any parts you wish so that it accurately reflects your views. Make comments on the transcript itself and return it by mail with the accompanying form releasing the transcript for use.

If you have named particular people, and they are relevant to a theme that develops, you may choose a pseudonym to protect their privacy. You can indicate this on the transcript.

During the next two weeks you are free to withdraw from the research. If you would like to do this please indicate on the release of transcript form. If I have not heard back from you by Friday 28 October 2006 then I will assume that you do not wish to make any changes.

If you would like to discuss the transcript before returning it, please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Kathy A. Colville (Mrs)

Appendix 3a

Release of transcript for use

Name of participant :

I have received the transcription of the interview and have read it. The following ticked situation applies.

_____ The transcript is acceptable as raw data provided that the conditions agreed to on the original consent form are met. I have made no alterations.

_____ I have corrected the text of the transcript. Once these alterations are made the text is acceptable as raw data provided that the conditions agreed to on the original consent form are met.

_____ I want to withdraw from the project. Please destroy any data you have collected from me.

Signed _____ Date _____

Kathy Colville
547 Cambridge Road
Tauranga

Email: k84eduk8@hotmail.com

Appendix 4

Transcribe confidentiality

Transcription Confidentiality Agreement

I agree to transcribe the interviews and discussions for Kathy Colville's research project with the University of Waikato. I understand that all the material in the interviews and discussions is confidential and I agree to discuss it with nobody except Kathy Colville. I will save the transcripts to disc or pen drive that will be available to Kathy only. I will delete the information from my computer once Kathy has received the disc or pen drive.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please print name also: _____

Appendix 5

Individual Interview Question Guide

How long have you been in teaching?

How long have you been in principalship?

Tell me about a time in your career when you have experienced high trust. What was it like? How had this developed?

Tell me about a time in your career when you experienced low trust and how you overcame or resolved this.

Tell me about your perception and understanding of trust?

What would you define as the essential dimensions of trust?

In what ways do you show or give trust to members of your staff?

In what ways do you expect to be trusted by your staff?

In what ways do you think staff expect trust from you? What is it that they trust you to do?

How have you built or maintained trust in your school, now or in the past?

Can you think of a time when trust was broken? Tell me about that time.

Do you feel there is a tension between trust and accountability? How is this evident in this school? How does this affect your practice?

What part does trust play in an effective school culture?

Do you believe that the level of trust in the school impacts on student learning? In what ways? (between you and the teachers)(between the teachers and students...)

Appendix 5a
Confidential Information

Principal 1. (etc)

School size: U

Primary Intermediate Full Primary Area School Special Character

Years of service:

Years of Principalship:

Gender: